



Knowledge-based development models.

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Abstract

A region is the functional connection and integration of geographically close urban areas, agglomerations, settlement units, and infrastructural networks characterized by the gradually growing importance of neighbourhood contacts. The basis of the creation of a region is the territorial blending of society and economy, and an awareness of close interrelatedness between local communities, based on historical grounds and the regional competitiveness.

Summary

To survey, analyse and adequately develop the human potential of the region is a priority of the knowledge intensive development model. When analysing regional competitiveness, the interrelated development opportunities of cognitive society and economy shall be considered, and the multidimensional survey of society and economy should be its starting point. To reveal the development potentials of a given territory, we need to determine the measurement units relating to the processes we are observing. This unit cannot be but the competitiveness of each area.

Factors of competitiveness: Economic structure, Innovation, Accessibility, Qualified human resources

Key words:

Region and territory development, territorial competitiveness, territorial analysis, territorial diagnosis

Knowledge-based development models

1. Introduction

The knowledge-based society of the coming century has a strong dynamics in which information technology makes information access, storage and transmission increasingly faster, cheaper and easier. This development requires a three-folded role from human development programs. First, it has to effectively transfer more and more knowledge and skills adjusted to cognitive society. Second, it has to find the ways in which we do not get lost in the loads of information. And third, it has to set new ways of human resources development. If these do not happen, European society might become divided: there will be those who could only interpret things and others could only apply them, while some other people will move to the periphery. It means that those who know will be separated from those who do not. For a cognitive (knowledge-based) society, decreasing the distance between these groups is really at stake.

This type of human resources development is not simply a social and individual program to learn cultural assets, but it is an investment into human capital which produces knowledge capital and its development is in the interest of man as a resource. In this process, education and training is an investment (using private, family, corporate, social and state sources) as well as a production cost.

Modernisation assumes continuous innovation where the objective of learning (life-long learning) is to produce competencies and to allocate them – i.e. to create a proper balance of the demand and supply of competencies. Accordingly, knowledge society requires a different role from learning, education and qualification. On one hand, it calls for an education system and quality which serves technical and technological demands. On the other

hand, it has to prevent the division of societies by giving a chance for the disadvantaged to catch up through special programs.

At the beginning of the 21st century, in the domestic spatial structure, cognitive society shows a strong differentiation. The capital city is significantly separated from other parts of the country in terms of elements of the knowledge society and economy. It could be stated based on the absolute figures of the characteristics and on per inhabitant values as well. In addition, it could be said that the cognitive social and economic competitiveness and development greatly depends on the size of the settlements. As a result of urban development, the countryside is becoming increasingly poorer and lags behind. Moreover, the community, solidarity, co-operation and relationship network is breaking up fast that used to facilitate the preventive and survival ability of village communities.

However, state interventions – mainly investments using state funds - of the last decade have not considerably improved the chances of rural inhabitants to make income.

Most of the regions that marginalised at the beginning of the 90's could not present positive figures by the turn of the Millennium. Whereas the economic advantage of those regions that started to develop after the Regime Change has multiplied, compared to that of the disadvantaged regions, which is proved by several research results. In the last couple of decades, we have started a research and development project in the marginalised small region to develop complex programs to change its competitiveness and human potential.

2. Diagnosis and analysis

Surveying the characteristics, strengths and weaknesses of a particular region and examining the relations between the region and its inhabitants and the relevant tasks are all involved in diagnosis. Each regional development process should start with this step.

But how shall we carry out this diagnosis? What shall be the scope of analysis and evaluation in a regional development project? How shall we avoid the obstacles of a simple technical approach so that we could find the real means of local mobilisation and animation? How shall we adjust the different times that influence the life of a project i.e. the long period thinking about the development of the region and the short time for decision making?

The regional information system ('Coactive Local Space') developed by the research team of the Pécs University during several projects provides the answers and the solutions to the above questions.

The 'Coactive Local Space' is the central part of the 'Regional Intelligence' project. It is a collection of tools and methods providing a basis for diagnosis and for the implementation of development projects. The 'Coactive Local Space' is built on the network of participants involved in regional development and participation-based observation and activity-based evaluation are its core elements.

The aim of the system is to give a precise description – by continuous monitoring – on the overall conditions and problems of the region and to identify key issues. The strong regional links require that those involved are organised into networks since only that way could we provide the most precise picture. This necessitates a wide-range of co-operation. The 'Coactive Local Space' ensures information flow to improve local knowledge and to support the decision making process and the

follow-up activities of those involved in regional development.

The system includes four functions supplementing each other:

- technical function (information collection and exchange, data processing and analysis)
- animation function (mobilisation, structuring and managing participants)
- transferring observation into elements that support decision making and action
- function evaluating the impact of actions and co-operation work on regional development (principle of continuous monitoring)

When analysing regional competitiveness, the interrelated development opportunities of cognitive society and economy shall be considered, and the multidimensional survey of society and economy should be its starting point. Therefore, in research and analysis we need indicators of training and qualification, and of social, health, mental hygienic and demographic status as well as microeconomic figures. In addition, the role of civil organisations should be assessed; cultural indicators and figures related to telecommunication coverage, infrastructure and other indirect local indicators are also required. It is needed so that social activity or inactivity could be examined from different perspectives thus obtaining information on the causes and development opportunities.

To survey, analyse and adequately develop the human potential of the region is a priority of the knowledge intensive development model.

Earlier in Hungary, human resources research and development has not been regarded as the basis for regional development but only as a supplementary tool. However, socioeconomic factors influencing economic competitiveness include significant human factors as well. In successful regions, the knowledge base of manpower is high and could flexibly

adapt to changes. Developments of the 90's also show that opportunities created by social and economic changes were utilised best by regions that did not only have a favourable geographical location but they had the appropriate human potential, too. This determined their future investment and development opportunities. As a result of the technical and technological development of the knowledge-based society, the demand for skilled and qualified workforce will increase. This partly arises from the technological development of the industries and partly from the fact that knowledge intensive industries will become more dominant in the economic structure.

In the 90's, foreign capital inflow was a major process. The concentration of foreign capital strongly correlates with socioeconomic indicators. In regions attracting significant amounts of foreign capital, the rate of unemployment is lower and the income level is higher. This is why those empirical analyses are essential that have been investigating the criteria for selecting the company location or seat of investors (mainly of foreign investors).

These indicators are important for us because qualitative and quantitative features of human resources are included among major factors considered during selecting the company location. In such case, qualification does not exclusively or primarily mean formal school education but rather flexibility and the ability to adapt. Accordingly, the investors expect vocational training providing a general base to which internal training could be later provided. Labour is one of the most space (residence) specific production factors, thus it plays an increasingly

significant role in location selection of economic players and in the design of economic spatial structure.

When examining social and economic spatial structures, unemployment as a key indicator of regional differences is of primary importance. From a social perspective, the rate of unemployment is critical while for economic players the number of unemployed and the volume of free workforce are essential.

The lack of education and qualification has become a deviation in knowledge society. Active participation in democracy and effective contribution to economic development requires more and more complex skills and competencies. The private, social and professional life of each person involves unavoidable and often difficult decisions which he or she has to deal with. Development chances of communities or regions depend on whether there are very poorly educated groups of people rather than on the general 'literacy' level of the population. Therefore, it has become generally accepted that governments, authorities, companies and individuals all have to contribute to life-long learning.

Operating a modern economy and society has entailed the increase of the 'knowledge demand' in almost all sectors. This has required new responses from societies in developed countries. We could only respond to this challenge by increasing the number of people involved in education and by providing the time for them for learning and training. It shall be an objective to create a 'learning society' since operating and running an ever more 'knowledge-based society' is becoming impossible without this.

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