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PARTNERSHIP OF SCIENCE AND BUSINESS IN SOCIALLY INNOVATIVE PROJECT MANAGEMENT

PARTNERSTWO NAUKI I BIZNESU W ZARZĄDZANIU PROJEKTEM INNOWACYJNYM SPOŁECZNIE

Summary: Due to the modern developmental challenges, more and more often in the discussion of the transfer of knowledge, new technologies and modernization of the intelligent economy there appear social innovations. An effective way of promoting the implementation of social innovations seems to be indirect actions, involving the creation of a good climate for innovativeness, entrepreneurship and creativity. The examples of such activities dedicated to improving the quality of local space are intensively developed networks of cooperation between the sectors of science and economic activity. The aim of the study is characterization of the role of science and business partnerships in the effective management of projects, in particular socially innovative projects. The paper offers mainly descriptive method on the example of an application project entitled “NEMO Creativity Station – Social Innovation for Communes.” The object of the research is a socially innovative service offered to users of the local public space in Polish communes, promoting mentally and physically healthy lifestyle.

Keywords: partnership of science and business, social innovation, project management.

Streszczenie: Wyzwania rozwojowe powodują, że coraz częściej w dyskusji dotyczącej transferu wiedzy, nowych rozwiązań technologicznych i modernizacji inteligentnej gospodarki pojawiają się innowacje społeczne. Skutecznym sposobem wspierania wdrażania innowacji społecznych wydają się być działania pośrednie, polegające na stwarzaniu dobrego klimatu dla rozwoju innowacji, przedsiębiorczości i kreatywności. Przykładem takich działań nakierowanych na poprawę jakości przestrzeni lokalnej są intensywnie tworzone sieci współpracy pomiędzy sektorami nauki i aktywności gospodarczej. Celem opracowania jest charakterystyka roli partnerstw nauki i biznesu w efektywnym zarządzaniu projektami, w szczególności projektami innowacyjnymi społecznie. W artykule zastosowano głównie metodę opisową, wykorzystując przykład aplikacyjny projektu pt. „Przystanek kreatywności NEMO – Innowacja społeczna dla gmin”. Przedmiotem badań jest społecznie innowacyjna usługa oferowana użytkownikom lokalnej przestrzeni publicznej w polskich gminach, promująca zdrowy styl życia.

Słowa kluczowe: partnerstwo nauki i biznesu, innowacja społeczna, zarządzanie projektem.

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1. Introduction

Research on the role of technological progress in social development led to the urge to stimulate the process of seeking innovations by countries, e.g. through developing appropriate pro-innovative policies. This is seen in Poland, as well as in other European countries or on the level of European Union [*Empowering People, Driving Change...* 2011]. In the recent years it has also been recorded in the Lisbon Strategy of 2000 and in the current Europe 2020 Strategy [http://ec.europa.eu/europe2020/index_en.htm]. An important element of the EU development strategy and its member states (but also the USA) is support of the so-called social innovations [Kwaśnicki 2015, p. 2]. The problem of the definition of a social innovation and the question whether it is reasonable to distinguish that type of innovation and recognize it as the basis of development has become a subject of turbulent discussions among the scientists, economic practitioners and local authorities.

Social innovations [Chesbrough 2003] to a large extent base on the open innovation paradigm [Wyrwa 2015]. It is mainly a bottom-up process, largely spontaneous, without imposing the way it should look like by the “top-down factors” (the government, politicians, central institutions, etc.). A more efficient way of supporting the development of social innovations seems to be indirect activities that create a positive atmosphere for the innovation development, entrepreneurship and creativity [Caulier-Grice et al. 2012]. An example of good practices in this extent is partnerships of academic education and science with the sector of economic activity, dedicated to actions of eliminating unfavourable phenomena on the labour market, in turn speeding up the development of knowledge-based economy.

2. The cooperation of science and business for intelligent development

In modern economy, the key role is played by knowledge – both collected by entrepreneurs and the one taken from external sources. This knowledge is currently considered to be the basic source of innovations, and the ability to develop and implement new technologies seems to gradually become an integral part of the strategy, not only for enterprises but also for whole economies. One of the tools to realize this challenge is the cooperation and stimulation of enterprises’ efforts for the developmental-researching activity. It becomes a particularly important determinant of intelligent development that is based on creating modern solutions and technologies, not copying them. It is all about research being realized by scientists on a better level and corresponding to the economic needs, meanwhile having the results of this research acquired and used by enterprises in their activities. Building the partnerships of science and business brings mutual benefits. For the

science sector, this means increasing the range of influence on economy, increase of employment through the creativity development and the innovative potential of students and researchers, as well as increasing the significance and role of scientific units as the propellers of innovations. On the other hand, the main benefits coming out from the cooperation of enterprises with the science sector are: acquiring new contacts, recipients of technology and getting new markets [Szwed 2014]. Irrespective of the specifics of their activity in a given branch, enterprises should be driven by international criteria of effectiveness based on the premises of network paradigm and try to include the well-known in literature collaborative planning method in their development strategies. Thanks to it, in the case of discrepancy of positions, by means of discussion and argumentation, it is possible to achieve results that would be better than a “mechanical” compromise between the preliminary positions of sides based on voting. Such an attitude is an additional inducement to more and more intense development of partnerships on different areas and with different subjects, as well as getting benefits on that account. Therefore, there are suggestions to create networks of cooperation with representatives of the science world by companies when developing and implementing innovative products. It is recommended because then their knowledge and experience would create an added value of new investments and, at the same time, they would contribute to maximizing the benefit and minimizing the risk of project implementation. In that way, thanks to the cooperation with scientists, the following things should be provided: the persistence of socially approved goals and enterprise priorities, getting procedures in order and stabilizing work on preparing and implementing a product through its constant evaluation and monitoring. The changes are inscribed in the very term of evaluation and surely they will be necessary in the face of changing conditions. The thing is that they should be predictable to some extent, based on interdisciplinary discussion, and simultaneously explained essentially, basing on the most current knowledge possible, provided by a scientist. The actions undertaken towards that direction also help consider an enterprise as not willing to belong to the group of Schumpeterian imitators of innovation, but as deserving the title of the innovation creator.

It is also worth mentioning that building the competitive advantages and tightening the cooperation among business, science and self-government is one of the priorities of the new period of the EU programming. About 76% of the EU funds in the perspective of 2014–2020 in the field of scientific research and innovation will be devoted to supporting enterprises in conducting the research-developmental activity and increase of transfer of knowledge to the economy [<http://www.mir.gov.pl>]. Both from the points of view of the Europe 2020 Strategy claims and the goals introduced within the Regional Operational Programs for 2014–2020, it is very important to provide constant communication between the economic entities, scientific-research centers and the representatives of the territorial self-government.

An example of such actions dedicated to creating the network of cooperation between the science and business, financed by the local government, is the Urban Program of Supporting the Cooperation of Higher Education and Science with Sector of Economic Activity “Mozart” operating in Wrocław [Wrocławskie Centrum Akademickie 2015]. Partnerships created within the Program¹ exist to improve the quality of public local space and as a consequence accelerate the intelligent development. Moreover, a scientist receives a unique chance to enrich the so far gathered knowledge with practical experience, and further adapt the cooperation results in his or her educational, organizational and scientific-research activity conducted at a university. In return, a scientist offers a transfer of economic knowledge to an enterprise to improve the operating business model through increasing the effectiveness of communicative-developmental and sales actions of a company. All the activities undertaken within the partnership, apart from the already described effects, aim at supporting the labour market of Wrocław by enabling the companies to get access to the intellectual potential of scientists.²

3. Social innovations as an answer to modern developmental challenges

The development of innovative societies is one of the greatest challenges of the 21st century. The European Union particularly stresses the construction of an effective cooperation between science and society as well as the connection of scientific perfection with social consciousness and responsibility (see more: [Social Innovation Found 2014]). The results of the scientific research ought to serve society, and the information about the results of the research should be accessible for all the interested – such an attitude to science is to contribute to finding an answer to all the social and civilization challenges, *inter alia*, connected with [Wygnański 2015]:

- climate changes;
- new geopolitical situation (new poles of growth and modification of their meaning);
- demographic problems (isolation, solitude, old age);
- problem of the resources being limited and the optimization of their consumption;
- intercultural conflicts/tensions;
- rapid urbanization;
- permanence of the change.

¹ The author within the “Mozart” program conducts a project in partnership with the Nexus New Technologies SA enterprise in Wrocław.

² The project, realized by the author within the “Mozart” program also serves this purpose and has an interdisciplinary character.

The aforementioned identified problems determine the need for functioning in new spaces, where the dynamic and mobile subjects are getting organized in a network, so as due to the support of high-tech solutions [Miszczyk 2010] produce/promote innovative products with respect to the rules of sustainable development. In these environments, as soon as possible, appropriate actions should be undertaken in favour of recognizing the potential and the possibility of supporting the social innovations perceived as the precursor of new economic forms and the catalyst and driver of the intelligent space development. Such actions, supported by the work of entrepreneurs, scientists and self-governments, should clearly contribute to freeing the greater potential of innovation and creativity among local societies and as a consequence improving the quality of their labour markets and propagating the rules of social inclusion. Spatial units in which favourable conditions will be created to the development of network organizations and socially mature innovative systems have a chance to change (increase) their position in the integrating milieu.

Changes taking place in the structure of social population, in customary patterns, in human attitudes, and even in the general culture of a nation can be an expression of social innovations. They are developing as a result of the technological, economic and social changes that have taken place since the times of J. Schumpeter, or even earlier. However, in these new conditions the social innovations cease to be the main resultant of technological, managerial or organizational innovations [Olejniczuk-Merta 2013, p. 26]. They become an active hub of spreading the knowledge, ideas and concepts of consumers' actions, as well as the users and potential users of various goods and services who draw on the familiarity of their own needs and the needs of the group to which they belong and who have a vision and ideas for their satisfactory fulfillment. They are often called: *user driver innovation*, *open innovation*, *crowdsourcing*. The key traits of social innovations are: relative novelty, practical implementation, connection with real social needs, emphasis on effectiveness and emancipatory character. They can subdue to be spread by various social groups. Nonetheless, taking under consideration the aim of the article, a particular attention was turned to comprehension and development of social innovations by scientific-business coalitions.

Social innovations are frequently experimental social actions focused on improving the quality of life of persons, societies, nations, companies, environments or social groups [Phills et. al 2008]. Their experimental character results from the fact of introducing very unique and disposable solutions on a great scale, the final effect of which is often hard to predict. It is about the additional effects which are able to entail the implemented social innovations. The ambiguous character of social innovations is resulting *inter alia* from the diversified sources of their development. To their creation can contribute paradoxes (inversions), hybrids of the existent elements or the bridges connecting various disciplines and sectors, as the aforementioned partnerships of science and business.

The significance of innovations for the economic and social development is undisputable; however, the progress should regard in an equal degree the increase of economic, social and ecological effectiveness, possible to be achieved thanks to eco-innovations. Such solutions of technical, planning, organizational or social character can be implemented in any type of territorial units, organizations or undertakings. However, particularly those fields of activity that, thanks to their character, extent or scale, have a significant influence on the environment ought to be the matter of interest of socially eco-innovative thinking. This concerns such areas as education, communal economy, self-governmental politics and the whole sphere of public utility service and public management.

4. Specifics of the management of a socially innovative project illustrated by the example of “NEMO Creativity Station”

The project called “NEMO Creativity Station – Social Innovation for Communes”³ is a proposition satisfying the needs of local society and allowing for raising the effectiveness of self-governmental management. Educational activities and network cooperation planned within the project realization are factors of spreading knowledge about social innovations. It is not enough for the contemporary human to have once gained skills and competences to maintain the attractiveness on the labour market and be able to adapt to the changing economic conditions. Everyone has to be ready to attend further lessons, which requires a flexible and open mind. This openness should be shaped starting from the very first years of life and the lowest education levels. It is also worth noticing that the current processes of learning take place in various places – at home, during practicing sports, entertainment and having fun – the school has lost the monopolistic position in this regard. That means that it is necessary to create new mechanisms and forms of education that better correspond to the needs, as well as the possibilities of contemporary children. The perfect place to equip students not only with knowledge, but rather skills of self-improvement (physically and mentally), skills of finding information and interpreting it, cooperation in team and critical thinking – would be the “NEMO Creativity Station,” providing that the forge of well-educated young generation and the incubator of creative workers for

³ The project entitled “NEMO Creativity Station – Social Innovation for Communes” is carried out by the author in partnership with the Nexus New Technologies SA company, financed by Urban Program of Support for Cooperation of Higher Education and Science with Economic Activity Sector “Mozart” – partnership of science and business (2014/15 edition) on the basis of the regulation issued by the President of Wrocław and the Act no. XXIX/652/12 of Wrocław City Council of July 5, 2012. In the article the author used internal source materials of Nexus New Technologies SA company.

whom searching for innovations will be a natural need, not transcending beyond the common (imposed) standards.

The idea of the project “NEMO Creativity Station” is to take the young generation from the hands of hopelessness, filling their time with safe, pleasant and useful activities during the time when their parents are at work. So it is worth changing the dull bus stop for an innovative “NEMO Creativity Station,” where they will be able to safely play, learn and be raised. Their leisure time should be filled with sport activities to develop curiosity for the world and give them a chance to realize their passions [Nexus Nowe Technologie 2015]. This project is an undertaking that allows not only to build sport objects, but also to build a healthy society. “NEMO Creativity Station” plays teaching and educational roles when parents more and more often work during afternoons and evenings. For those who are unemployed, “NEMO Creativity Station” is a chance to find a new job. It is also a place for: appropriate development of children and teenagers (by providing them with modern sport infrastructure, especially the swimming section); fight with diseases of affluence; build relations in the youth community in the spirit of sport and culture; integration of youth with disabled peers; be raised according to the sport culture; shape and strengthen creative and entrepreneurship attitudes (thanks to multimedia common-rooms, interesting educational workshops and lectures) (compare [Pol, Ville 2008]).

Moreover, “NEMO Creativity Station” is an innovative program on the scale of Poland, with its idea allowing for utilizing talent and energy of children and teenagers in the fields of sport, culture, recreation and their hobbies. In addition, the object which is one of the project’s products has a chance to be used for many other purposes and by a wide spectrum of users, thanks to which also the representatives of various social groups can benefit of it. Locations of “NEMO Creativity Stations” should include problematic areas of big cities (including suburban districts) and territories with harder access to such kind of objects.

Within the project there is an idea to create modular, architecturally simple sport-recreational-cultural objects without any design whims that could consist of: swimming pool of different sizes, gymnastic halls (optionally with audience), multimedia common-room, small centre of SPA and rehabilitation, the back office and microincubator of entrepreneurship. By definition, this building is to be energy saving or having a passive way of utilizing recycled sources of energy. It is designed in the extent of a low-budget and low-cost object. The modularity of the building enables each commune to choose elements that suit it by size, price, functions, etc., adjusting it to its needs. Such an object has one verified, simple project that can be applied on the commune territories, simultaneously limiting the costs of each acceptance and verification [Nexus Nowe Technologie 2015].

The strategic aim of the project is the improvement of children and teenagers’ life standard (as well as other social groups) in communes by the activity of “NEMO Creativity Station” and the promotion of a physically and mentally healthy lifestyle. Detailed objectives are: extending the educational and sport offer of a commune,

promotion of tourism attractiveness of a commune, creating positive image of a commune by elaborating and developing innovative system of cultural-recreational service system, support for local small and medium enterprises and creating new work places [Empirium-Group 2015].

The results of the project for each of the target groups were identified in six spheres: social, economic, technological, educational, ecologic, health. To the social benefits coming from the implementation of the service we can include: prevention of addictions, change of attitudes and beliefs, elimination of the phenomenon of being socially excluded, promotion of the role of a family, support in creating innovative solutions, development of skills and talents. To the economic benefits without a doubt we can include: improvement of competences, education of inhabitants and their adaptation skills to market changes, development of innovativeness and competitiveness of the economy, improvement of space attractiveness, modernization of a local labour market and an increase of resource utilization effectiveness. On the other hand, among the results in the area of technology it is worth mentioning the advanced systems of: vertical and horizontal termoisolation, spray applied hydroisolation and acquisition of renewable energy sources using steered photovoltaic cells, thermal collectors and wind turbines. The aforementioned results determine other ones, referring to the ecological education, i.e.: enriching the knowledge in terms of designing and the landscape architecture, improving the quality of conditions of natural environment. Educational benefits for potential “NEMO Creativity Station” users are most of all the realization of integrated programs (knowledge, skills and attitudes) and the rich offer of developmental trainings. Furthermore, the health benefits connected with efficient implementation of the “NEMO Creativity Station” are much diversified, with exemplary ones: rehabilitation of sick and disabled, prevention of diseases or preventive programs “Work-Life Balance” [Empirium-Group 2015].

It is worth stressing that the management strategy of the “NEMO Creativity Station” project including the international criteria of effectiveness of managing projects uses the method of collaborative planning. In relation to the aforementioned method, in project actions many actors are involved (Capital group in which the Nexus New Technologies SA operates; Innovation Plus Centre European Association; architectural office; marketing, training and PR workshops; green infrastructure management workshops; Wrocław University of Economics) having rich experience and qualified knowledge necessary for optimal preparation, realization and implementation of the integrated social innovation. The offer of “NEMO Creativity Station” is complex and provides potential recipients with solutions in terms of possibility of financing their investment. The Design-Build-Finance model is suggested here, in terms of which the financing of the own input takes places in the form of liability buyout with a prolonged deadline of payment [Nexus Nowe Technologie 2015]. Moreover, the project group, having qualified HR resources, offers its help for a commune in applying for financial sources, both national and foreign.

5. Conclusion

In the dynamically changing reality, societies face new problems, the resolution of which requires acquiring new competences. Moving to a creative, learning economy makes various entities face serious challenges. As an answer for them in the transforming environment, new organizational forms ought to be created, with more effective structures of flat organizations based on decentralization, multidirectional communication, networking and innovations, in particular the social ones [Miszczyk 2012]. This kind of innovation (*milieux of social innovation*) plays a crucial role in the modern development, including the changes that are taking place in the functional structure of intelligent units. Using social innovations that, on the one hand, are absorbed by a specific spatial-economic setting and, on the other hand, are diffused, altogether allows making the economic activity more modern, reducing the costs of production and increasing the effectiveness as well as introducing new products and creating earlier non-existent demand on the market. An appropriate relation in these processes supports the intensification of a *benchlearning* process, which in turn strengthens the potential of a given subject and its position on the international arena [Nicholls, Murdock 2012]. To increasing the competitive advantage of a unit or a social group, initiatives such as the presented “NEMO Creativity Station” might come useful. This project allows efficient management of the social change by: attractive educational offer (multimedia common-rooms, interesting educational workshops and lectures), innovative technological solutions, complex health care, conscious use of public space, evolutionary ecologic attitude, strengthening the local entrepreneurship (microincubator for small and medium enterprises), shaping and strengthening the creativity attitudes (forge of creative talents) as well as social and business integration.

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