RURALITIES

IO1: RURALITIES HANDBOOK AND CURRICULUM

ACTIVITY 2 NEEDS ASSESSMENT

TOPIC 5 – SUMMARY OF THE MAIN NEEDS OF RURAL COMMUNITIES TO THEIR REINFORCE PARTICIPATORY PROCESSES AS OUTLINED BY THE INTERVIEWS INCLUDING RESULTS OF THE PRESENTATIONS AND DISCUSSIONS DURING THE VIDEO CONFERENCE

1. Introduction

The objectives of the needs and impact assessment of the RURALITIES project, is to explore the perception and opinion of rural areas citizens regarding the notion of participation and the main challenges they face, in general.

The needs assessment method follows the classic methodology based on questionnaires and interviews during the project cycle. The knowledge creation process based on the evaluation of the good practices and the assessment of local needs will follow commonly agreed guidance and questionnaires. In the case of the experience evaluations, the method of storytelling will be applied, where the processes of citizen participation will be presented through the analysis of the continuous interaction between the involved parties (citizens, stakeholders and local authorities), and of the different tools and methods used by them, for achieving a common agreement on the development of the neighbourhood.

In the initial stage of the project, parallel to the good practice evaluations, a survey based on questionnaires and local empathy interviews have been realized with local stakeholders and citizens by each partner organization, in order to make a first mapping of local needs. The main needs and challenges regarding inclusion and participation in their communities as well as their perception on gaming tools have been identified. The results of these interviews are summarized in this document by the leaders of the work package, CRN and the University of Thessaly.

Interviews with local citizens were organized in partners countries after the Training event in Toulouse in January 2020, following a common methodology and asking a set of six common questions in order to start the discussion. Partners had the freedom to modify the questions according to their target group. The core questions are the following:

1. *In your opinion, which are the main challenges that rural communities often face?*
2. *Are there significant obstacles, difficulties in your (rural) area*
3. *Have you ever participated in local community activity events?*
4. *What are your experiences of your local community activities?*
5. *Are you aware of the non-formal learning activities?*
6. *When was the last time you have participated in interactive activity (e.g. game, other)?*

The results of the interviews were presented during the online call and were summarized on a shared virtual working board (MIRO). The main messages and outcomes are depicted on post-its notes regarding the three main topics of GAMING, PARTICIPATION, RURAL COMMUNITIES.
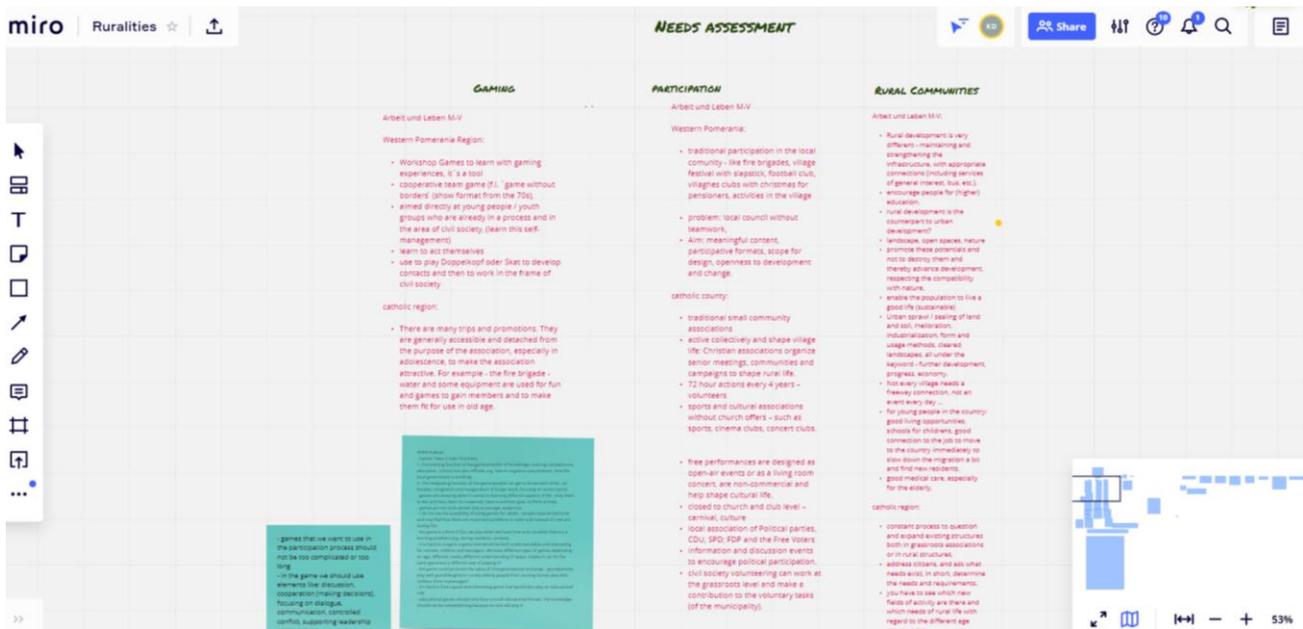
2. Summary and general impressions presented by the partners

Situation in rural communities/areas
Lack of infrastructure
- Problem of services- availability and quality (medical care, Schools / Kindergarden
- for ex.)
- Public transport – private transport
- Technical development (4G / 5G/LTE)

Different interests/needs/wishes/ perspectives of conflicts.
- Generations
- interest groups
- citizens and new residents (esp. new residents from urban regions)
- Refugees and Citizens
- Gender (for ex.: more young women then young men are leaving small communities)
- advantag or disadvantage

Conflict „Nature" and Industrialization (Jobs)
- New energy-projects
- Streets/Highways
- Large projects (factories/shopping mall in the suburbs of cities,…)

Demographic development
- Decline of inhabitants
- Less young people
- Temporary inhabitants (f.e. tourism-sector)

Quality of public spaces
- Common places
- Access

Merger of communities – difficulties due to the context of intermunicipalities

<u>**Participation**</u>
Possibilities
- Short term actions in the civil society (f.e. cultural/social actions)
- long term activities like decision making processes in the community (Citizens' action group, political party, hearings for planing processes …)
- take part in traditional Associations in the community (firefighters, football club, church, ...)
- Memberships in a political parties, associations

Assumptions
- Education of the Inhabitants
- Time is needed, when people are involved in local activities
- To know tools and methods fort o support the process (technical, financial and organizational)
- People get involved, when the topic is important for themselves, affecting their daily life
- Recognition as an actor of the stakeholders
- A posture of respect and openess
- Acceptance that there are constraints that need to be taken into account
- People share a common perspective

Problems
- Intentions of the organizer – selfish or for all citizens
- The use of political tools by activists
- Activists won't be heared by the Citizens

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- Acces to institutions/curses (only for members …f.e.)
- The base of participation in a community –(f.e. if there are a lot of people who are involved, it could motivate more or less people…?)

➢ **Limits** expressed by elected officials
➢ the lack of representativeness of the participants
➢ the risk of finanical slippage
➢ the blocking of the project
➢ the risk of manipulation by certain players

➢ **Limitations** expressed by citizens
➢ The failure to take into account the contributions of the consultation in the financial decision
➢ Lack of transparency in project development

Positive results from an participatory process
- Individuals work in a collaborative manner which enhances social cohesion
- Residents develop all the skills and networkst that are essential to avoid social exclusion
- Notion of sustainability, sonce residents „own" their local community and they are confident and have the skills to sustain developments in their rural area

Gaming

Games have 2 main function for educators:

1. The training function of the game (transfer of knowledge, training competences, education - school, but also officials, e.g. how to organize consultations, how the local government is working)

2. The integrating function of the game (people can get to know each other, ice breaker, integration and inauguration of longer work, focusing on some topics)

Positiv effects for Gamblers

- is a source of motivation and fun
- is an opportunity to exercise certain skills (reflection, actions, ...)
- allows to involve the person as an actor
- allows all participants to participate, including those who are shy or anxious.
- reduces the fear of error and failure
- develops the consideration of rules and mutual respect
- allows people to collaborate with each other
- allows the appropriation, the learning of knowledge and concepts.

Description of an process – perhaps for the game (following text is writen at Part 2 Empathy Interviews):

How to structure an active rural community

1. Common decision on what needs to be changed
2. Build trust and alliances with people who can help achive change (stakeholders)
3. Develop a local strategy for change based on participation and needs oft he local population
4. Agreement on partnership structure and clarification of roles
5. Preparation of an action and funding application

Questions:

Is the situation in the rural region fully described – what is missing?

For example: Lack of cultural events or all the positive points about a life in rural areas.

Do people have another point of view about living in the country side of cause the Covid-19 Virus?

What would make a life in an rural area attractive?

What can people do for to have a good life in the countryside?

What kind of knowledge and competences do people need for to start a process?

Could this be transfered with the game as a tool?

Do we have a common understanding of „rural area"?

Main aim of the game?