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Sustainability and effectiveness of social force activated under the participation in social and cultural projects implemented in Warmia and Mazury

Trwałość i efektywność sił społecznych aktywowanych w ramach uczestnictwa w projektach społeczno-kulturalnych realizowanych na terenie Warmii i Mazur

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Introduction

Warmia and Mazury is a region perceived by the public as a charming place, with outstanding tourist and recreational value. It is known as the land of a thousand lakes, although, in fact, their number exceeds two thousand. For the visitors to the area, it is a venue for rest and relaxation, while for the inhabitants of the region it is a place where they have to deal with many existential problems on a much larger scale than in the other parts of Poland. The problems they often face include high unemployment, poverty, low income, internal and external emigration, rural depopulation, communication exclusion, impaired access to cultural goods and the Internet, and other problems. In addition, there is much less social cohesion or willingness to take action for the local community. The Warmians and Mazurians are less integrated and less involved in building civil society and developing their local communities. Consequently, many socio-cultural projects are being implemented in Warmia and Mazury to stimulate local communities to act. The project facilitators often encounter several barriers in their implementation resulting from the fact that the contemporary inhabitants of Warmia and Mazury form a post-migration community which has been formed as a result of the influx of various population groups into these areas and has a multicultural and diverse attitude towards its place of residence.

The interest in the issue of sustainability and effectiveness of social force activated within the framework of social and cultural projects carried out in the Warmia and Mazury region has been influenced by both subjective and objective factors. Subjective reasons are dominated by a desire for a better understanding of the conditions leading to less social activity and the willingness of the inhabitants of Warmia and Mazury to undertake community actions. Socio-cultural project activities are being implemented in all regions of Poland, but their impact on the activation of project participants in Warmia and Mazury seems to be lower. The objective reasons for the decision to carry out research include clear gaps in scientific research identifying the category of social force with regard to their practical implementation. In order to examine the conditions related to environmental factors influencing the course and results of socio-cultural project activities carried out in rural and small-town areas of Warmia and Mazury, it is impossible to disregard knowledge of social and historical conditions. The impact of these conditions is crucial for the understanding of the creation of a new regional identity for Warmia and Mazury.

The aim of this paper is to show the role played by project activities of a socio-cultural nature in the context of stimulation and sustainability of social force carried out in local communities in the Warmia and Mazury region in the assessment of the participants in those activities. In an attempt to clarify the subject of the research, it has been recognised that an important area in which processes to discover, trigger or support social force in local communities may emerge is the area of activities defined as project-based, with particular emphasis on projects of a socio-cultural nature. Therefore, the social impact of this type of activity on the ground (in this case in the Warmia and Mazury region) is the subject of the undertaken investigations.

The implementation of the presented research objectives required formulating questions enabling multifaceted identification of the subject of research. This paper will present the results of research answering the following research questions:

1. How do the respondents evaluate the role of social leaders in activating the local community?
2. What factors, in the opinion of the respondents, influence the sustainability of the community activity after the project has been completed?
3. How did the implementation of the projects translate into the dynamics of changes in social activity in the community?

The answers to the questions posed during the research provide a basis for the identification of basic conditions related to the stimulation of social force in local communities in the conditions of project activities.

The subject matter and the nature of the issues addressed required that a research strategy respecting its multi-faceted nature be adopted. The initial assumption was to recognise the opinions of the participants of the projects to which they are directed. Traditional survey studies (Babbie 2007, pp. 267–301) were used as the basic method, which allows the identification of trends appearing in the studied areas and to observe their changes, depending on selected factors. This activity requires the planning of a specific way of constructing research tools, which allow for the aforementioned combinations. An original research tool was developed for the study: a questionnaire addressed to project participants. An anonymous questionnaire survey was carried out in the period from October to December 2018. 86% of the respondents filled in the paper questionnaire, while the remaining 14% of the respondents filled in the same questionnaire online, through the free Google Forms web application. Quantitative data collected during the surveys were analysed using methods of descriptive statistics and non-probabilistic sampling. It was a deliberate choice and was based on making choices based on specific criteria adopted by the researcher using knowledge of the population under investigation and in accordance with the stated purpose of the study (Babbie 2007, pp. 204–205). Non-probabilistic sampling is a popular type of sampling often used in social research. In this project, it concerned the selection of a pool of socio-cultural projects carried out in the years 2008–2018 in small towns in Warmia and Mazury. Here, the research sample consisted of all of the participants in the selected projects. Considering the nature of this selection, during the analysis of the obtained empirical material, special care was taken when generalising the conclusions from the data obtained in this manner (Babbie 2007). The research carried out in villages and small towns in Warmia and Mazury involved 175 participants of socio-cultural projects.

Warmia and Mazury – a region shaped by history

In order to examine the conditions related to environmental factors influencing the course and results of socio-cultural project activities carried out in rural and small-town areas of Warmia and Mazury, it is impossible to disregard the knowledge of social and historical conditions. The impact of these conditions

is crucial for the understanding of the creation of a new regional identity for Warmia and Mazury.

Warmia and Mazury is a region that has been subject to many political and administrative changes over the centuries and, consequently, social changes. Comprising two separate historical lands – Warmia and Mazury – it is now seen as a single entity, which was triggered by the post-war treatment of this region as a “Regained Land”. The transformations that significantly affected the formation of the community living in the area in its current form took place in different dynamics and were extremely complex. The difficult inter-war period, the chaos of World War II and the turbulent post-war years have stimulated processes of social mobility unparalleled in other parts of the country (Domagała, Sakson 1998). They provided the basis for building a specific social and economic structure and the social force balance.

The end of the Second World War led to great destruction in the areas of present-day Warmia and Mazury, both in terms of material and demographic resources. The advancing front caused significant damage in both urban and rural areas. The devastation concerned primarily infrastructure, ruined by the retreating Wehrmacht troops as well as the devastation and looting of the Soviet army. Towns were more than 50% destroyed in terms of the building construction, gas, sewage, water and electricity systems. There was also little left of industry, with losses estimated at 80–90% in individual sectors. The situation in agriculture was equally difficult. The greatest losses were recorded in farm buildings, where about 20% of all farms were damaged or completely destroyed and livestock was scarce (Gieszczyński 1999).

The population living in the region was also extremely affected. Before the Soviet offensive, East Prussia had a population of 2.3 million, while in March 1945 only about 400 thousand of them remained, which accounted for about 17% of the previous population (Gieszczyński 1999). This was mainly the result of the forced evacuation of the German population fleeing the approaching second Belarusian Front. This exodus of residents resulted in numerous civilian casualties. But there were also many victims among the German population, who decided to stay in their ‘small homelands’, and among the Warmians and Mazurians, who, even if they spoke Polish, were treated as Germans by the Russians.

The rule of the Soviet military commandants, which lasted until the end of summer 1945, also had a devastating influence on Warmia and Mazury, although the Polish administration officially took over in May. This period of several months is often described by historians as the most difficult time in the history of modern Warmia and Mazury.

The deserted area of the Regained Territories soon began to be populated by settlers from various regions of pre-war Poland. The settlers came to the towns and villages of Warmia and Mazury in successive waves from mid-1945 to 1950. The year 1950 is referred to as the final date of the major settlement processes in Warmia and Mazury (Domagała, Sakson 1998). However, the so-called second repatriation should be also mentioned here, i.e. the mass transfer of people from the Soviet Union to Poland between 1956 and 1959. At that time, 26,500 Poles from behind the Bug River were settled in the Olsztyn region (Korejwo 2016).

Over the years, the mosaic of people with different territorial origins has been constantly changing in the lands of Warmia and Mazury. It was formed by four main ethnic groups. The largest community was made up of displaced persons from the so-called 'central' Poland, mainly from the Kurpie region and Mazovia (about 25% of the incoming population). The population of the borderland, consisting of repatriates from Vilnius and Volhynia, was represented by nearly the same number (about 22% of the settlers). The third-largest group was the native population (about 18% of the inhabitants). The fourth group consisted of the Ukrainian population from the south of Poland relocated in 1947 as part of the "Vistula" action, which represented about 10% of the population (Domagała, Sakson 1998). This ethnic and cultural mosaic was supplemented by Belarusians and Roma (Sakson 1998, p. 152).

In the years 1945–1949, the population movements administered by the State Repatriation Office involved 580,544 people, of which 273,882 were resettled from eastern lands and 306,662 from central Poland. Between 23 April and 14 August 1947, 24,072 people were deported to Germany. According to data of the State Repatriation Office, from the beginning of the action until the end of 1948, 65,398 Germans were displaced, and by the end of 1950, 71,931 people of German nationality left Warmia and Mazury (Achremczyk 1992, pp. 51–65).

To summarise this complex situation, it can be concluded that after the end of the Second World War in Warmia and Mazury, state, political, economic, religious, population and national relations radically changed.

Creating the regional identity of the "new Warmians and Mazurians"

Warmia and Mazury is a young region in social and cultural terms. After the Second World War and the modification of Poland's borders, the predominant East-Prussian regionalism in the area disappeared quite rapidly. However, the

process of gradual identification of successive generations of new inhabitants of these lands with their region commenced. Regionalism, understood as a social movement based on regional culture, history and the needs and aspirations of the inhabitants, is particularly important in the process of seeking their own identity by local communities, building a system of values, undertaking local civic initiatives and developing regional self-government (see: Poniedziałek 2011, p. 52).

This complex social process is taking on a special shape in the case of this region and especially applies to national relations in Warmia and Mazury. Their characteristic feature was the double-track nature of the processes taking place in this area. On the one hand, it was the disintegration of entire local communities made up of the former inhabitants of the area, i.e. Germans, Warmians, Mazurians, Jews and Russian Old Believers. On the other hand, processes of shaping new local communities were initiated. These communities were largely made up of the various population groups that came to this region after 1945, and their construction is characterised by its extraordinary complexity and varied dynamics (Domagała, Sakson 1998, p. 6).

The indigenous population after 1945 was a demographically old and feminised group, and significantly differed in its structure from the incoming population. The population was over 80% rural (Sakson 2001, p. 16). However, due to the specificity of the region, two-thirds of the incoming population also settled in rural areas, creating a mosaic of different nationalities and cultures. The social climate was difficult. It was dominated by distrust towards "others", towards neighbours, who often presented unknown customs and based their community on different relations and principles. The resettlers brought with them their regional identity and customs which, for a long time, served as a substitute for their abandoned homelands. They lived with a sense of temporariness and lack of roots for many years, still not sure that Warmia and Mazury would really become their home.

For this reason, among other things, antagonisms dominated the first period of creating local and regional ties, leading to the isolation of individual groups and the formation of prejudices and stereotypes.

Over the years, the groups of displaced persons underwent processes of gradual stabilisation, adaptation and social integration with varying dynamics and patterns (Sakson 1998, p. 48). An important element, and an initial stage of integration, is adaptation – implying adaptation processes mainly toward the material conditions of the new environment. It is also accompanied by social processes involving the mutual observation of the cultural behaviour of

different groups living in the same territory, which usually becomes the starting point for reducing mutual distrust and breaking down barriers.

The researchers point to the four most important features of the demographic development of the society of Warmia and Mazury in the post-war period which emerged from the analyses. The first to be mentioned is the region's 'youth' resulting from the high birth rate. The second and third characteristics are related to 'migration', i.e. the considerable spatial mobility of the population. The former concerns the nearest territory, while the latter involves a significant share of the region's population in foreign emigration. The fourth feature is the 'rural origin' of the population, which has an impact on its culture (Beba, Pijanowska 1998, p. 31).

The shape of the emerging post-war community of Warmia and Mazury was also influenced by the government policy, which was different with regard to the three groups: Poles, indigenous populations and representatives of national minorities (Germans, Ukrainians, Roma, Belarusians). In relation to the latter two groups, a policy of re-Polonisation or Polonisation was pursued, assuming full cultural and national assimilation of the refugees. In the case of the German population, the aim was to displace them. Meanwhile, in groups of Poles of different origins, the creation of new inter-group social ties was supported (Sakson 1998, p. 154).

The following decades contributed to the creation of a new regional identity, which was influenced by the mosaic of settler cultures and the history and culture of the indigenous Warmia and Mazury inhabitants. In this region, communities serving as a foundation for civil society were formed more slowly than in the rest of Poland.

The beginning of the 1960s started a period of gradual domination in the region of Warmia and Mazury of the so-called new social ties and a growing sense of social stability and integration (Sakson 1998, p. 265). This was manifested, among other things, in the levelling of cultural patterns and the building of mutual coexistence between different population groups in the region and in the establishment of relations between the Polish population and minorities. It was undoubtedly caused by the time that changed the 'temporary' approach of the displaced persons to their stay in the area and the generational change that followed. For the young generation born in Warmia and Mazury, the relations found here provided the starting point, not the social rules and structures brought by the settlers (their fathers and grandfathers) from the areas of their original settlement (Sakson 1998, p. 268). The research carried out in the Warmia and Mazury region during that period made it possible to identify

the essential manifestations of the integration process, which were indicated by the inhabitants themselves. These included, above all, mixed marriages, joint decision making, work for the benefit of the whole community, absence of nicknames and conflicts based on nationality, both among adults and children, assessment of people by virtue of their value rather than their national origin, close cooperation between young people in youth organisations and outside their structures (Sakson 1998, p. 269). While there were still some tensions between the various groups, a community was obviously emerging.

The analyses of processes related to the development of regional identity in Warmia and Mazury indicated the importance of dilemmas related to the national identity of its inhabitants. Despite the Polonisation activities carried out by the authorities and the diasporic nature of the national and ethnic minorities living here, it is often claimed that double or multiple identities, characteristic of the population of a socio-cultural border area, have developed among the residents (Sakson 1998, pp. 277–278). It was only in the 1980s and 1990s that the approach to the functioning of national minorities in Poland underwent significant changes. The period of Polonisation was finally closed by building a space for the fully-fledged functioning/living of national minorities throughout the country.

Contemporary inhabitants of Warmia and Mazury form a post-migration community, which has been formed as a result of the influx of various population groups into these areas, has a multicultural character and a varied attitude towards its place of residence. With regard to local and regional communities, it should be stressed that they are not the followers of regional structures, either of those found on the ground or those brought in by particular groups of the immigrant population. In this respect, they represent a conglomeration of different regional cultures.

The role of social activation in creating social force in local communities

Involvement of human force and resources in the local community plays an important role in the development of that community.

The concept of awakening human force has its references in many European, mainly French-speaking countries. These concepts relate to socio-cultural animation or are located in the area of social welfare, in connection with social work – social animation (Szmagański 1999, p. 270). Andrzej Olubiński stresses that important role in activating social force is played by

norms and rules of practical behaviour, such as respect for the value of each person and the creation of conditions and opportunities for the realisation of their developmental potential, recognition of the individual as an autonomous, active, creative, subject of change, and a belief in the positive change of the community by activating the forces inherent in it, enriching the life experience of individuals through their participation and involvement in solving various problems and directing social force towards transforming the community and having an influence on events. Researchers combine the concept of social strength with the categories of social support, environmental education and empowerment (Marynowicz-Hetka 2007, pp. 70–71). Social support includes undertaking specific targeted actions by some people for the benefit of other people or groups who, due to different circumstances, are in a difficult situation (Marynowicz-Hetka 2007, s. 70). Social support means the establishment of a relationship which may optionally include qualified professional activities or activities remaining outside the professional sphere.

Recently, an empowerment-related orientation (Gulczyńska, Granosik 2014, p. 16), referred to as “awakening human force” as a result of environmental impacts directed at individual individuals or social groups, has gained particular importance (Marynowicz-Hetka 2007, p. 71). Researchers place empowerment in the middle of two opposing perspectives: analytical, learning-related and joint community organisation to improve socio-economic living conditions (a perspective focused on fighting oppressive practices and institutional power) and practical, including learning resourcefulness to improve people’s living environment (a perspective focused on restoring social participation and integration) (Marynowicz-Hetka 2007, p. 71; Gulczyńska, Granosik 2014, p. 16). Practical sources of empowerment can be found in the environmental education concept proposed by Wiesław Theiss (1996). According to this researcher, this concept is based on two key ideas: comprehensive and lifelong education and the participation of the non-governmental sector, supporting the development of society and the state through various forms of activity by citizens, shaping their social identity and autonomy (Theiss 1996, p. 72). Thus understood community education consists of various activities and processes, including technical, educational and organisational support for individuals and groups through community work, discovering local resources and forces and positive environmental factors, referred to as empowering, or bringing people and groups together to take community action, which can ultimately contribute to community development (Theiss 1996, p. 72). Therefore, community education takes place in a space where educators and

social workers, as well as other representatives of the local community, such as local leaders or community animators, can take action.

The category of social force relates, consequently, to the process of reorganising the living environment of people, groups and communities based on their own strength (Marynowicz-Hetka 2007, p. 70). The concept of social activity, which makes an important element leading to the development of an individual's personality and serving to satisfy both personal and social needs, is inseparably linked to the activation and stimulation of social force in local communities. Activity leads to the personal development of the individual. It is the greater the more it serves the needs of the individual, referring to the motivational aspect. Władysław Adamski identified two types of factors determining social activity, the first of which relates to the personal needs of the individuals involved (e.g. self-esteem, the need for social recognition), and the second to the social needs reported by the work environment and social organisations to individuals (Górnikowska-Zwolak 1992, p. 216). Resources, which should be developmental for the individual or group, play an important role in developing the activity in local communities. Agata Cudowska, referring to the social environment, points to the following groups of resources:

1) types of social interactions; 2) the level of awareness of individuals, families and the local community, enabling undertaking joint undertakings and overcoming crisis situations; 3) strength of social bonds in the environment and social support network; 4) the level of integration and capacity of the environment to address social issues (...); 5) actions taken in the local environment in order to strengthen its continuity and stability (Cudowska 2017, p. 207).

Local communities require animation and social animators, and there is a need for actions aimed at stimulating hidden and overt social, individual and group forces in order to overcome passivity, cocooning or alienation of individuals and communities. This is where the socio-cultural animation emerges, which is intended to unite, bind and link local communities. Animation means

an internal process within the personality of the human being which not only revives, activates and stimulates action, but above all, reveals within itself creative forces, creative possibilities and opportunities for expressive behaviour (...) is a process of self-discovery (Kargul 2012, p. 157).

Contemporary animation is aimed at the transformation of value systems, activating community social force as a stimulus for social and cultural

transformation. In undertaking animation activities in the local environment, a common vision of the members of the group, setting out the direction of activities and changes we want to make in our own community, becomes extremely important. Well organised cooperation, as stressed by Bohdan Skrzypczak, is

a fundamental dimension of environmental intervention and consists in promoting values and creating conditions for shaping and developing social competences, thus facilitating the transition from individual to collective actions and from adaptation to anticipation of new social solutions (Skrzypczak 2006, p. 81)

– which leads to the development of the local community. The effects of the animation activities are, above all, an increase in knowledge, expansion of the information field, development of skills, changes in attitudes, changes in the hierarchy of values and changes in cultural patterns. The consequences of these efforts include activity, creativity, social affiliation, sociocentrism, innovation in action, inspiration of action, etc. (Włodarczyk 2017, pp. 160–161). The aim of an animation activity is to create conditions to enable individuals and social groups to reveal hidden creative forces, to stimulate expression and to shape interpersonal bonds and ties with the world of nature and culture (Jedlewska 2003, p. 34), to form an attitude to social activity in the environment. The activity in the field of animation is a space where intergenerational meetings of various cultures, views, thoughts and visions take place. It is a place to build/create/construct/consolidate relationships in various implications, including local – social community, local – global institutions, participants – animators, animators – local community or participants – local community.

The promoter, the creator of animation activities is an animator, acting in various professional or social environments. An animator is “a person who knows how to animate, stimulate action, try to breathe in the soul, creating an atmosphere in which everyone can be themselves, trying to give meaning to interpersonal relations by enabling people to truly communicate” – Józef Kargul (1997, p. 133), is a “catalyst for change” (Skrzypczak, Jordan 2003, p. 15). In undertaking activities for the benefit of local communities, an animator may rely on two variants of work: passive and active. In the first case, the individuals with whom the animator will interact will be the subject for him/her to be stimulated and shaped by influencing them. The animation activity will therefore focus on the implementation of different projects/activities/undertakings aimed at people, but without involving them in their implementation. In the second case, on the other hand, the animator reveals a subjective approach, which is

to see individuals as being able to act independently and take the initiative; this means openly and collectively participating in the process of changing/transforming the environment. Animators will, therefore, build and/or strengthen the environment and interpersonal relations, give energy to the participants to undertake activities for the benefit of the local community.

The role of social leaders in activating the local environment – results of own research

It is assumed that the role of project facilitators (animators) is to activate social force in individuals and social groups, and thus to stimulate pro-social attitudes and strengthen social bonds in the local community. The role of leaders is crucial for introducing a change and is very complex. It is important to establish relations and build ties with project participants, and to have a good understanding of the conditions of the local community based on the diagnosis. These skills, combined with the diversity of tasks and functions faced by the animator, including stimulating activity, activating interpersonal, intergroup and institutional relationships in the local community, appears to represent a difficult task to achieve.

The nature of the project activities undertaken by the animators has an impact on the assessment of the leaders' influence on activating the local community (chart 1). The greatest effects are brought about by the systematic, continuous impact on the participants of the projects, so the nature of the animators' work undoubtedly influences the course of socio-cultural changes, including the effects and durability of the animation. According to the participants, 57% of the project leaders worked with the community in a systematic, continuous manner. This is quite a large group, since up to 38% of the animators carried out their activities in a task-based manner, moving from one task to another. The nature of the activities undertaken by 5% of the project animators was perceived by the participants as episodic and, in this case, it is difficult to expect a lasting change in the environment. After all, change is a process, not a state.

The analysis of the research results shows that the participants of the projects assessed the impact of the projects in which they participated on stimulating local activity as very high (about 82% of responses) (chart 2). Only about 14% had difficulty in estimating this impact, and about 3% of the participants declared that the project did not affect the activation of local communities.

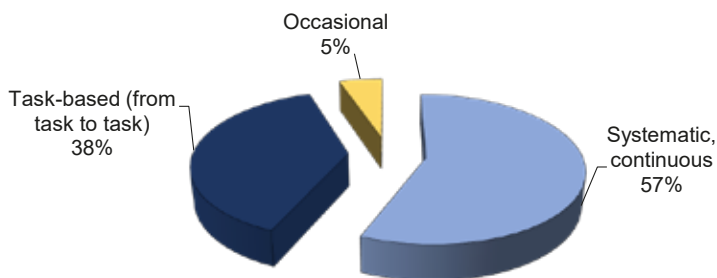


Chart 1. The nature of project activities – participants (N = 172)

Source: own research.

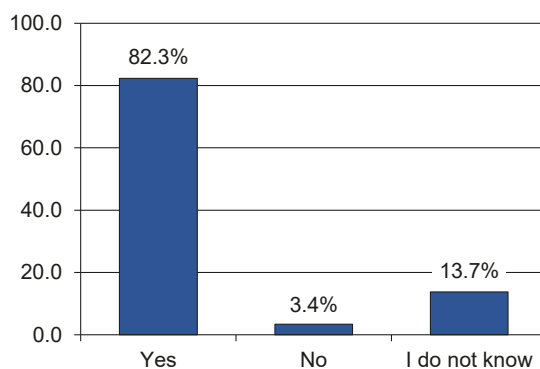


Chart 2. The effect of the project on stimulating local activities – participants (N = 174)

Source: own research.

The survey examined whether the organisers of socio-cultural projects managed to introduce changes in the local community (chart 3). According to nearly 70% of participants, the project facilitators were able to implement these changes. One in four of the participants (27%) had a problem with the opinion on this issue, while 5% declared that the animators did not make any changes in the environment.

The study made it possible to determine the extent to which, in the opinion of the respondents, the project activities translated into socio-cultural activation in the local community (chart 4). The study defined the degrees of impact of the project on activation, while a high degree meant that beneficial changes were introduced, the effects of which were noticeable both during the project

duration and are now noticeable; a medium degree meant that the changes introduced are still noticeable today, although to a lesser extent than during the project lifetime; and a low degree meant that changes were noticeable only during the project lifetime.

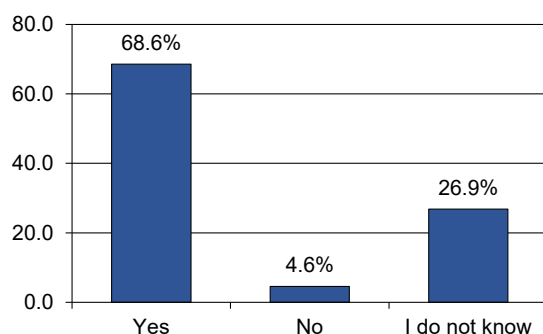


Chart 3. A change introduced in the local community by animators in the opinion of participants (N=175)

Source: own research.

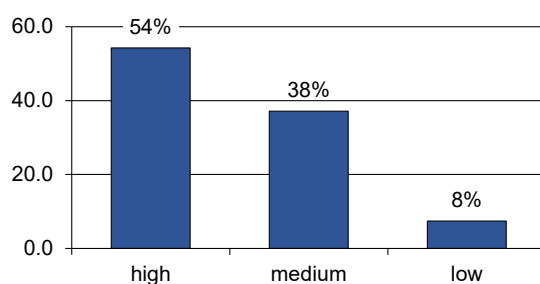


Chart 4. The effect of the project activities on social and cultural activation in the local community – participants (N=173)

Source: own research.

In the surveyed group of project participants, more than half of the respondents, 54%, indicated that activation had a high impact on social and cultural activation in the environments where the projects were implemented. This result suggests that the projects have brought about positive, lasting change in more than half of the cases and have contributed to increased socio-cultural activity, even after the project activities were completed. A quite large

group (38%) were people who considered that the changes introduced are still visible today, although to a lesser extent than during the project lifetime. In turn, 8% of the respondents stated that the activation of the local community ended with the completion of the projects.

In view of the limitations related to the length of publication, the authors arbitrarily chose one of the variables – the age of respondents. The age of the respondents significantly affected the perception of the extent to which the project activities translated into community activation.

The analysis of the research results shows that the project activities received the highest rating in the youngest age group. In their opinion, the impact of the project has translated into positive changes both during the project and at present. Less than a third of young people rated the examined effect as average. Participants aged between 21 and 60 similarly assessed the extent to which the project affected activation. Seniors were the most sceptical group as regards the extent of the impact. Only one-third of them declared that they saw the effects of the project reflected in an increase in social activity in the environment (chart 5).

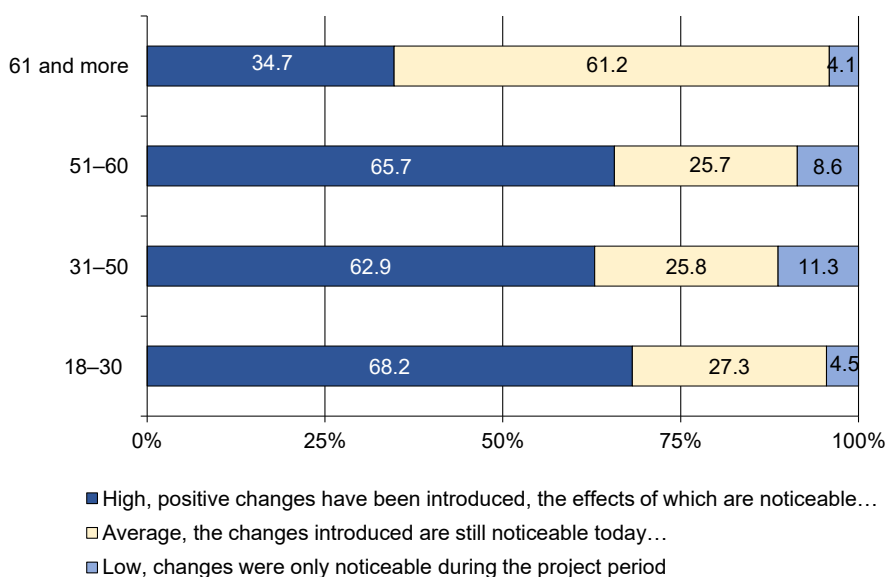


Chart 5. The extent to which the project activities have translated into socio-cultural activation in the local community and the age of project participants (N = 168)

Source: own research.

Factors affecting the sustainability of environmental activity after project completion

The research shows that many factors influence the sustainability of community activities after the project is completed. The table 1 shows the most important of them. It can be concluded that the participants most often considered that the lack of project financing is the main factor affecting the decrease in the sustainability of activities after the end of the project (80.4% of the responses). In the second place, the respondents considered that the sustainability of the activities was influenced by the withdrawal of animators/project facilitators from the activities (68.1% of the responses).

Table 1. Factors affecting the sustainability of the activity after the end of the project – participants (N = 175)

Factors affecting the sustainability of the activity	Affected	Did not affect
End of project financing	80.4%	19.6%
Withdrawal of animators (project facilitators) from activities	68.1%	31.9%
Absence of local leaders willing to continue the activities undertaken in the project	63%	37%
Absence of leaders willing to sustain the activity in the local community	61.8%	38.2%
Impossibility of using the existing base	54%	46%

Source: own research.

In the third place, the participants pointed to the absence of leaders who would like to maintain activity in the local community (63% of responses). In the case of the respondents, the indicator of a lack of local leaders who would like to continue the activities undertaken in the project was ranked fourth. The last element affecting the sustainability of activity is the indicator concerning the inability to use the existing base. This problem is recognised by more than half of the participants.

Leaders significantly affected the sustainability and effectiveness of the stimulated social force, as reflected in the activity of individuals and social groups. The analysis of the research results indicates that almost half of the animators during the project activities focused on strengthening both existing leaders and creating new ones (chart 6).

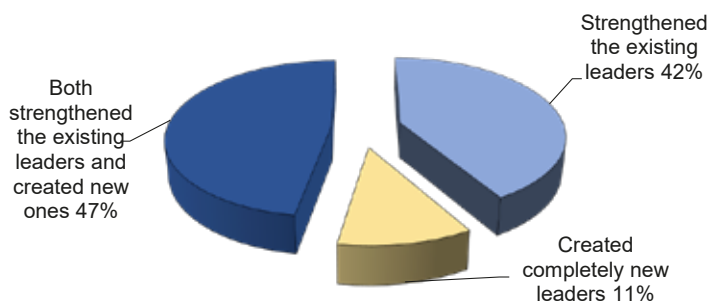


Chart 6. The impact of project facilitators on the creation of leaders/activists in the local community – participants (N = 173)

Source: own research.

In almost 11%, the animators focused on creating completely new leaders in the community. 42% of the animators did not search for new leaders while implementing the projects but focused on strengthening the existing ones.

Impact of project implementation on the rate of changes in social activity in the community

The analysis of the research results shows that participants see a high dynamics of changes in the local community, resulting from participation in socio-cultural projects (table 2).

Table 2. Dynamics of changes in the local community brought about by participation in a socio-cultural project – participants (N = 175)

Factors determining the change in the community	Change	No change
Improved cooperation between community members	95.9%	4.1%
Increased social awareness	94.8%	5.2%
Increased social activity	93.9%	6.1%
Use of creative potential of individuals from the local community	91.5%	8.5%
Established cooperation with other organisations and institutions	91%	9%
Use of resources/environmental assets	89.3%	10.7%
Involvement of existing creative groups	89.1%	10.9%

Source: own research.

The participants indicated in the first place (95.9%) that participation in the project had an impact on improving cooperation between members of the community, i.e. greater social integration and better communication within the group. In the second place (94.8% of responses), the respondents indicated a high range of changes in the environment, understood as raising public awareness. In third place (93.9% of responses), the respondents reported a change related to the increase in social activity after the end of the project as an effect of the project participation. Nearly 94% of the participants indicated an increase in social activity. A slightly lower number of participants (91.5%) observed high dynamics of changes regarding the use of the creative potential of individuals from the local community. Over 91% of the respondents declared that their participation in the project had an impact on establishing cooperation with other organisations and institutions. 89.3% of respondents noted the use of resources/environmental assets. The involvement of existing creative groups in project activities was ranked last. However, it should be emphasised that this was still nearly 90% of responses although this concerns the smallest number of responses.

The variable differentiating the answers provided by the respondents as regards changes in the local community resulting from project activities is age. The youngest participants of the projects noted the largest range of changes in the community. Nearly 61% of people in this group marked a large extent of growth in the category “Increased social awareness”, there was no person in this group who did not observe these changes (chart 7).

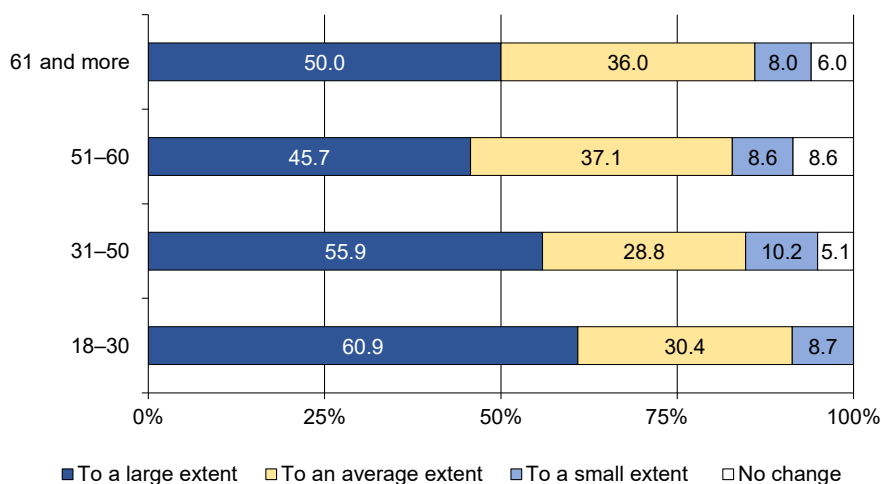


Chart 7. Increased social awareness and age of project participants (N = 167)

Source: own research.

Similarly, in the category “Improved cooperation between community members”, more than 70% of people aged 18–30 indicated a wide range of changes; while such responses were also provided by about 50% of respondents in the other age categories. It is also worth emphasising that none of the youngest respondents indicated the category “No change” (chart 8).

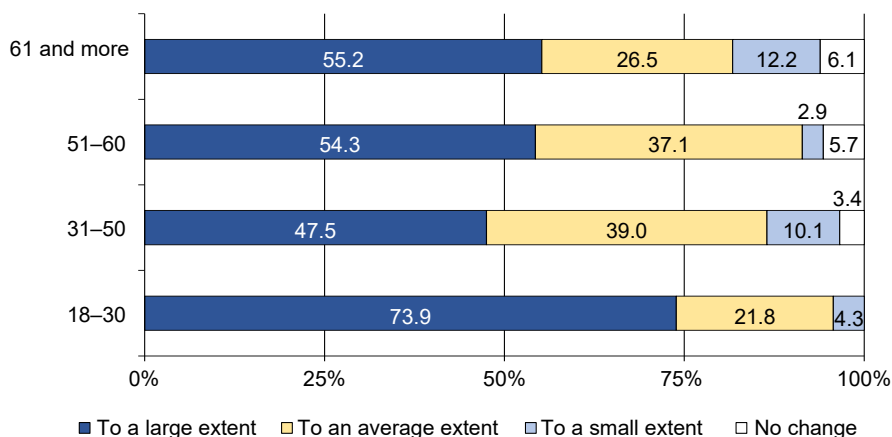


Chart 8. Improved cooperation between community members and the age of project participants (N = 166)

Source: own research.

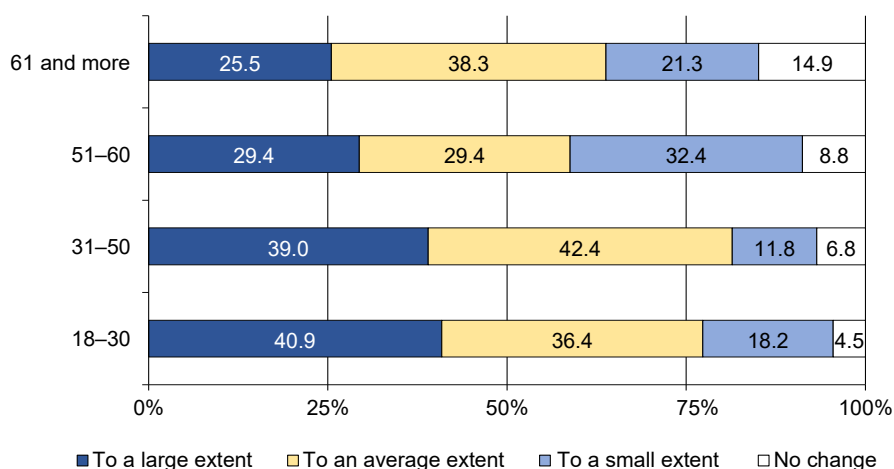


Chart 9. Established cooperation with other organisations and institutions (N = 162)

Source: own research.

Moreover, the youngest respondents (40.9% of responses) much more frequently than the other age groups observed a high dynamics of changes after completion of the project as regards establishing cooperation with other organisations and institutions. This opinion is shared by 39% of people aged 31–50, 29.4% of people aged 51–60 and 25.5% of people over 60 (chart 9).

A large range of changes concerning the use of the creative potential of individuals from the local community was reported by half of the respondents in the 18–30 age group (chart 10).

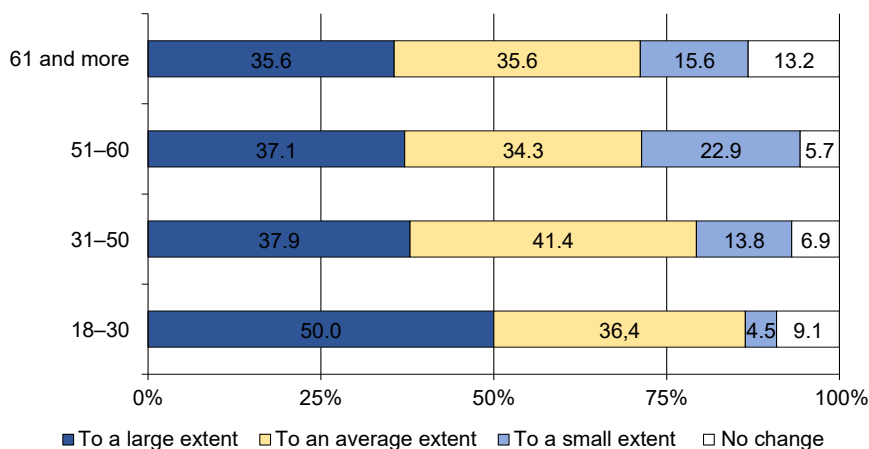


Chart 10. Use of creative potential of individuals from the local community (N = 160)

Source: own research.

The remaining age groups accounted for about 35.6–37.9% of the responses. The youngest respondents (about 61% of responses) observed that the project has brought many changes leading to increased social activity. It can therefore be concluded that the change in the local community that takes place after the project is completed is most noticeable by the youngest respondents.

Conclusions

This paper analysed the living environment of the Warmians and Mazurians in villages and small towns from the perspective of social and historical changes after World War II. The creation of a new regional identity was considered to have had a crucial impact on the current level of social activity in the region. The research carried out shows the effects in the context of the sustainability

and effectiveness of the stimulated social force brought about by conducting socio-cultural projects in the villages and towns of Warmia and Mazury. To summarise, it can be assumed that one of the clearest indicators of the activation of social force in the local community is the stimulation of activity among its inhabitants. The analysis of the results of the research shows that, in the opinion of the respondents, carrying out projects of a socio-cultural nature had a positive impact on stimulating this activity. More than two-thirds of the participants in the projects considered that the project facilitators managed to introduce changes in the local environment with only episodic indications suggesting its absence. More than half of the respondents considered that the impact of the project activities on social and cultural activation in the local community was high. This impact was rated lower only by people over 61 years of age as compared to other age groups. It is also important to point out that, in the opinion of project participants, the majority of animators focused on introducing a permanent change in the community, i.e. one that will not expire after the project is completed. Three-quarters of the participants stated that the project facilitators created or strengthened leaders/activists. In the opinion of this group, during the implementation of projects, the existing leaders were strengthened and new ones were created. Just as important as discovering or stimulating social force is their sustainability in the community. The research has succeeded in ranking the factors that may adversely affect the sustainability of activity in the local community after the projects are completed. The data obtained demonstrate that participation in socio-cultural projects brings significant changes concerning both the creation of social force in the local community and the improvement of their effectiveness and sustainability.

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SUMMARY

Warmia and Mazury is a young region in the social and cultural sense, creating a post-immigrant community that was formed as a result of the influx of various population groups to these areas. The article describes the process of creating a cultural identity

in Warmia and Mazury and the role of social activation in building social forces in local communities. This article aimed to show the role played by socio-cultural project activities in the context of stimulation and sustainability of social forces conducted in local communities in the areas of Warmia and Mazury in the opinion of the participants of these activities. These analyses were based on empirical studies.

KEYWORDS: local environment, social forces, social and cultural projects, Warmia and Mazury

STRESZCZENIE

Warmia i Mazury to region młody w sensie społecznym i kulturowym, tworzący społeczność postmigracyjną, która ukształtowała się w wyniku napływu na te obszary różnych grup ludności. W artykule opisano proces tworzenia się tożsamości kulturowej na ziemiach Warmii i Mazur i rolę, jaką gra aktywizacja społeczna w budowaniu sił społecznych w środowiskach lokalnych. Celem niniejszego artykułu było ukazanie roli, jaką odegrały działania projektowe o charakterze społeczno-kulturalnym w kontekście pobudzania i trwałości sił społecznych prowadzone w środowiskach lokalnych na terenach Warmii i Mazur w ocenie uczestników tychże działań, na podstawie badań empirycznych.

SŁOWA KLUCZOWE: projekty społeczno-kulturalne, siły społeczne, środowisko lokalne, Warmia i Mazury

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