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## Project management competencies for regional development in Romania: analysis from “Working with People” model

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### Abstract

This paper shows the skills and competences (technical, behavioural and contextual) affecting regional and rural development in Romania. The methodology used is based on the model of Working with People (WWP), which integrates elements of social learning and planning and Project management international models, which integrate competences that have an influence on regional development. WWP model is the result of experience in rural development planning from the research group GESPLAN at the Technical University of Madrid in several European contexts and emerging countries.

The results show that the main skills and competences for regional development in Rumania are focused on three components: technical-entrepreneurial, social-ethical and political-contextual. Experience lessons in the first years of the Romanian National Rural Development Network (NRDN) demonstrate the right project management approach for Regional Development, exceeding the “technical” approach of the management and emphasizing the behaviour of individuals and the contexts where they work. This new way of thinking opens up new fields of research in regional development projects planning, evaluation and management. These three dimensions are necessary for effective management and implementation of projects and programs under conditions of regional development.

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## 1. Introduction

The first models of regional development planning, presented between the decades of 1950 and 1960 promoted the technique as the solution to all problems. In these models the infallible instrument for regional development was the blue print project, based on engineering, scientific rationality, top-down approaches (Bond and Hulme, 1999), the dominance of the quantitative and a top-down planning. This "technical" approach causes a clear urban-rural dichotomy, resulting in numerous conflicts with settlements in rural areas (Chisholm, 1962), land use planning (Clark, 1982), society division (Moore, 1984). In Europe, this technical approach is reflected in national policies for regional development planning with a strong orientation towards production.

Given the failure of these regional development models, new values and trends emerged in developed societies (Cazorla et al, 2013). Since the early 90s various authors refer to the emergence of *postmodernism*, especially in relation to cultural and ideological changes in rural areas (Cloke, 1993; Halfacree, 1993; Murdoch & Pratt, 1993; Philo, 1993). In this new phase, which reflects the lack of novelty of the industrial capitalist society, society becomes "old" (Cazorla et al, 2013). Other of the values that are consolidated in post modernity, and provide a novel approach to development, is the territorial approach to planning (Friedmann & Weaver, 1981).

As it is remarked in a recent literature by (Cazorla et al, 2013), After several modifications of this instrument in 1985 and 1988, this new territorial orientation of regional development was confirmed as the main route to social inclusion and to counteract the undesirable effects of previous guidance, based on eminently functional criteria

In the absence of effective measures for rural development in the European Union (EU), new strategies arose based on the concept of "endogenous development" (Musto, 1985; Garofoli, 1992; Cazorla, et al, 2005). But endogenous development requires the creation of new local organizational structures (Bryden & Scott, 1990) to achieve local control over the development process. Within this context, in 1990 the European Initiative LEADER was created (EU, 1990) as a new experimental approach to regional and rural development. The specifics of the initiative have been described in numerous investigations (Moseley, 1995; De los Ríos-Carmenado et al, 2011), adding new elements to the regional development. Thus, the LEADER initiative has reached a level of maturity as a model for rural development (Cazorla et al., 2005), so that the learning activity of such initiative in the EU is applied in the broader context of rural development planning.

Romania as a New Member State of EU benefits 12.3 billion euros concerning the National Programme for Rural Development for 2007-2013. The axes and the priorities of rural development during 2007-2013 are: Priority AXIS 1: Improving the competitiveness of the agricultural and forestry sector, (sectorial measures); Priority AXIS 2: Land management, (mixed measures); Priority AXIS 3: Diversification of rural economy and the quality of life in rural areas, (territorial measures); Priority AXIS 4 (LEADER): building local capacity, promoting private-public partnership, promoting cooperation and innovation; improving local governance.

As to project management, the Romanian National Rural Development Network (NRDN) is a very complex social project that aims to rural development. The NRDN general objective is to implement a new rural development management approach based on social learning to enhance the implementation of the National Rural Development Program. The NRDN has to enlist the energy of all actors in the rural development process, and to promote an effective flow of information, exchange of ideas and good practices, and sustains cooperation organizations and institutions which are involved in rural development (NRDN, 2012).

Working with People (WPP) is a concept which synthesizes the evolution of the 'modern project'. It proposes a new project management approach for regional development in post-modernity in rural areas (Cazorla and De los Ríos 2013). Key to the WPP conceptual framework is 'planning as social learning' and a 'new postmodern sensibility' (Cazorla et al. 2005, De los Ríos et al. 2011, Cazorla et al. 2013). The name Working With People was chosen to convey the need to overcome the traditional technical-economic vision of project management for regional development, and the need to focus on individuals' behaviour and the context.

As (Cazorla et al 2013) argues, within the WPP model project management approach for regional development results from the balance between three dimensions of competences: technical, behavioural and contextual. The aim of this management approach for regional development is to achieve a balanced role of actors and an empowerment in the four areas of a social relationship system: political, public, private and social. In its application in the framework of rural development project, the WPP model builds on the following principles and values: a) respect

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