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### Summary Report: Local activities to implement Micropolis guidelines from the survey carried out by Wawerskie Centrum Kultury in November 2023-April 2024

Editor: Małgorzata Smoczyńska

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1. **Micropolis Guidelines for Wawerskie Centrum Kultury**

As a result of the discussions within Micropolis project and the local survey, Wawerskie Centrum Kultury has named the following **challenges** that our organisation needs to face in order to build a strong local community. As a response for these challenges we named also following **Micropolis Guidelines** – that means the actions that can help to meet the challenges and can be tested within the project.

The biggest challenges of our organisation in the community-building aspect (according to the survey and our observations):

1. STRONGER BONDS: Many local inhabitants don’t have closer bonds with neighbors and the local community (even if their attitude is positive) and just the easiness to meet new people. Our challenge may be **to help the inhabitants to meet new people and to make closer bonds with other inhabitants of the district.** There is also a challenge – how to attract people to more quality community-building activities instead of only the anonymous mass events.
2. **COMMUNITY EDUCATION**: The survey disclosed that the **active participation** in the local community is one of our biggest challenges and the value that is weak and unrecognized in Wawer. Only 20% of respondents belongs to a local community and only 31% feels actively involved. **It turned out that the main reason for it may be the lack of** knowledge how to join and how to act (and what for). So our huge challenge is **taking care of a large educational need in our district to teach and inspire local inhabitants** – not only about why it’s important to be active but also how can they act, how to start, what are the possibilities.
3. **NETWORK OF LOCAL ORGANISATIONS: As another obstacle was named** „lack of groups or communities where I would like to join” - that means that either they don’t know local groups and communities or there is not enough such groups. So another important challenge for us is to **make a stronger network and promotion of local organisations – so that they are more visible and can inspire local inhabitants to join and be more active.**

**There is a scarce cooperation between various active inhabitants and organisations and also a feeling of tiredness among many social volunteers** who work for the local community (as they work mostly on their own, using too much of personal energy). That’s why we see the need of **more integrated network** of people who actively create small local communities – so that the communities can grow and attract more inhabitants and **create a synergy of cooperation** – so that the community projects are organised by the bigger groups of people, including public and private sector, not only by the small group of volunteers.

Basing on above challenges, we named following **Micropolis Guidelines** to be implemented within the period of November 2023-April 2024

1. **Professional education of our team on building strong communities** - learning how our projects can help the Wawer inhabitants to build stronger local bonds with neighbours and with the local community – as an answer to the challenges No 1. and 2.
2. **Creation of a network of local organisations** – as an answer to the challenges No. 3
3. **Educating Wawer inhabitants how important is the active participation in the local community, inspiring what are the options and how to start** – as an answer to all 3 challenges.
4. **Actions carried out in November 2023-April 2024**

**STEP I: Professional education of our team on building strong communities** - learning how our projects can help the Wawer inhabitants to build stronger local bonds with neighbours and with the local community

We decided to start from an education of our team and our organisation – as before we have never made such a great focus on the topic of creating the local community and we also needed some inspiration, some professional knowledge and some brainstorming within the organisation.

**Action 1: Participation in a conference “How to increase a municipal power” 7.11.2023:** [**https://instytutpokolenia.pl/konferencja-6ofr/**](https://instytutpokolenia.pl/konferencja-6ofr/)

We had the luck to be participants of a very inspiring conference organised by Instytut Pokolenia (The Generations Institute). The conference was presenting the most successful 25 Polish municipalities or village communities that participated in the training programme on how to build strong communities basing on local identity and strong local bonds supported by a cooperation of various local organisations. Four members of Micropolis Team have learnt about many fascinating Case Studies how they improved their communities thanks to the participation in the training programme. That gave us the final ideas what we want to implement, we also started a cooperation with the Generations Institute and they promised to support the Micropolis project with their know-how.

**Main inspirations**:

* After analysing the problem of depopulation of small towns and villages, the researchers from the Generations Institute found out, that there is one key reason, why people want to stay in their town (or come back there after studies) or not.

4 areas of life were very important (economic situation, educational possibilities, health and recreation options, cultural life), but over it – two aspects were crucial and decisive: 1. Durability of social bonds, 2. The Identity.

* …….. [I will summary and add more the details later]

**Action 2: Series of workshops prepared for our organisation run by the experts from Generations Institute - 4.01.2024 and 8.02.2024**

As a follow up of the conference, we organised the individually designed for us workshops on how to build stronger local bonds and identity in Wawer district.

Three experts from the Generations Institute were teaching a group of 17 participants (6 members of Micropolis Team, 7 employees from our organisation responsible for creating the programme of cultural activities, 4 local activists) – how our projects can be more successful in terms of creating strong local community. During individual presentations of what each participant does for a local community, we had the chance to start some networking processes between people who normally work in different parts of the district and to exchange the know ledge and ideas between our employees and the local activists. Many brainstorming sessions gave us the idea how to build the identity of Wawer district and how can we develop our projects so that they better serve the local community. We also worked on creating such kind of event that can both integrate local activists and local inhabitants around the concept of local community. **As the result** of two workshops we produced the clear idea of the event called “The Celebration of the Local Community”

* …….. [I will summary and add more the details later]

**STEP II: Creation of a local network**

**Action 1: Creating a database**

We started the process of creating the network from the brainstorming within the organisation – what local communities and organisations we know, with which activists we have already cooperated, etc. The WCK director sent an e-mail to the branch coordinators and to the person from the municipality to prepare a database of contacts to people and organizations from Wawer with whom they cooperated this year in organizing events for the local community. Each branch of our organisation prepared it’s own list and after it, we expanded the database in a process of a desk research of all kinds of local organisations from Wawer

 in the Internet.

**Action 2: Invitation to the common events**

We tested various ways of inviting the local activists and organisations to be a part of a local network. We have sent the invitations to three types of events - to give the choice and test which proposal will be most attractive and successful.

We invited to:

1. Take part in the educational workshops how to build the community (only 8 activists had time and interest for it, only 4 participated);

2. Take part in the networking brunch (the interest was substantial, we had 31 participants);

3. Participate in the “The Celebration of the Local Community” – actively: sending us the texts and materials to the Catalogue of Local Activists or passively: coming to the event and taking part in the celebration (the response was high, over 30 organisations and initiatives were gathered in the printed Catalogue and over 30 local activists were present during “The Celebration of the Local Community”).

As first contacts via e-mails were mostly not successful and not responded, the consistent correspondence and attempts to contact people via mobile phone enabled us to get in touch with most of the organisations and activists that we intended to gather in a network. Everybody who participated in one event, was later more willing to participate in other events, that was a proof for us, **that creating a network is a process basing on meetings and doing things together** (even if the “things” are small and not very demanding – as sending some information to the Catalogue or just participating in one event).

**Action 3: Networking brunch for local activists: 24.02.2024**

The event had several goals to achieve:

* To enable various local activists from Wawer and organisations working with the local community (including our cultural centre) meeting in one place, to know something more about the projects each of the participants do and look for some cooperations and synergy in the works for the local community
* To present the Micropolis project, it’s ideas and the result of local survey, the potential it has shown but also the challenges that our local community faces: i.e. the need of a stronger network and promotion of local organisations – so that they are more visible and can inspire local inhabitants to join and be more active.
* To tell them more about the idea of the event: “Celebration of the Local Community” and to invite them to be present in the Catalogue of Local Activists

The “Networking brunch” turned out to be a huge success and all the goals were fully achieved. The most fascinating thing that we observed, was following: it was a first time when most of the local activists felt appreciated and noticed for the things they do voluntarily. We saw the great need of being seen and heard and an extremely positive energy that this possibility gave to them.

**STEP III: Educating Wawer inhabitants how important is the active participation in the local community, inspiring what are the options and how to start**

**Action 1: “Celebration of the Local Community” and the Catalogue of Local Activists - 21.04.2024**

This event was planned as the link between the network of local activists/organisations and the wider group of local inhabitants – who may be interested in being more active in a local community but – as our survey showed – look for more inspiration how to act or the information – what organisations are active in the district, etc. It was supposed to mobilize both groups - local activists and local inhabitants – to meet and talk around the topic of the local community and to celebrate it together. During the event we wanted to inspire them that the community has a great power and to show the potential of our district (it’s fascinating uniqueness, the active people and their projects, the most interesting and inspiring events in the district, but also some challenges that we face). We also wanted to start the process of education about community values – saying why the strong community and the participation of local inhabitants is so important and how to support it.

In order to meet the above goal, we designed the event in a following way:

* The Event was planned as a part of a Wawer Film Club (that is a new but highly successful initiative that focuses on **building the community around film discussions**) and started with an extremely inspiring documentary “Until the last drop” (“Do ostatniej kropli”: [https://www.filmweb.pl/film/Do+ostatniej+kropli-2023-10038566](https://www.filmweb.pl/film/Do%2Bostatniej%2Bkropli-2023-10038566)). The movie of Polish director – Ewa Ewart (that gained many prestigious film awards), tells the story of a serious ecological problems connected with rivers, how the local communities fight for it and how huge is the power of active people.
* After the movie, we organised a meeting and a discussion with the director, Ewa Ewart, what made the event highly attractive and gathered over 200 participants. Many moving words were said – also from the local activists fighting for the rivers and nature in Wawer district. Very inspiring were also the reflections of Ewa Ewart, who is planning a huge educational project for Polish schools and promises that her film is only a beginning of a greater community movements fighting for the ecological values.
* The second part of the meeting was the official presentation of Micropolis ideas and actions, including **the Catalogue of Local Activists** (that was printed for this event and distributed among the participants). We also awarded the local activists that joined the network and the project with **the Certificates of The Local Community Creators** and we thanked them officially for their great involvement for the local community. We were underlining how important and inspiring is what they do and we invited everybody to join forces with our Local Activists.
* The next part was the local community celebration around the beautiful **Wawer Community Cake**. It was a time and **space for networking.**
1. **Results of the implemented actions**

All the steps and actions that we planned, were supposed to educate both – our employees and local organisation but also the local inhabitants on how to build strong local communities and also to create the local network.

We have the feeling that on the one hand, it worked well – we started the process and achieved some first steps on the way to the strong local community. But on the other hand – we see that the process is long and demanding and needs a lot of long-term actions, so that the group of active citizens will be constantly growing.

What we definitely managed to accomplish, was **gaining quite a lot of innovative and effective knowledge and inspiration how to build the local communities** and to widespread it within the organisation. We see that this knowledge is changing our way of thinking – we start to understand better how important role we have in creating the local identity and the strong bonds among the local community. Thanks to it we managed to create some brand new projects basing on the new know-how.

Our great success is also **the creation of a network of local activists** – they all underlined that our efforts and actions gave them a lot of fresh energy and motivation. They could meet each other, exchange inspirations and hopefully – there is a potential for more cooperation and projects that join small local communities into bigger ones.

Thanks to all above actions, **we understood how important are the people who are actively involved in a local community** – especially that this is only a very small representation of the inhabitants who are ready to dedicate their time and energy to do something for a community. But in many cases their energy is burning out if they don’t get some support from other organisations or activists in the district – to help them implement their ideas and to appreciate their work. And this may be also the role of municipalities or culture houses.

Another nice effect of our actions – **we started looking at the district as a one huge organism** and looking for such elements of local identity that are common, that can join people from the whole district and make them proud of it. What is crucial to build a strong local community.

We really hope that our action will lead to the greater cooperation of various organisation that will help to create more innovative projects, also more synchronised in time (to avoid to many projects in one time) and will give also the synergy effect to our job as there will be less duplication of the same work and better access to the final recipients (as each organisation reaches different inhabitants and there will be possible the cross-promotion of the projects). We intend the local network of Wawer organisations to be a long-term cooperation platform with long-term cooperation goals.

We still face the big challenge of educating Wawer inhabitants how important is the active participation in the local community, inspiring what are the options and how to start. We hope to organise the “Celebration of the Local Community” annually and develop it into a form of festival of the Wawer Community organised simultanously by many local organisations to promote the community values and the idea of Wawer community, to discuss the benefits of being locally active, to present the local success stories, to promote local organisations and the possibilities how to be active and to show the local inhabitants how many organisation works on Wawer, how valuable is to be active in the local community, how to start and what is possible. The main goal for the future would be to increase the number of people active in the local community and we are going to write it into our organisational strategies and cultural programmes.