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Social sustainability: networking, researching, teaching

The major goals of the paper is to overview the theoretical concepts of “sustainability”; “networking”; “researching”; “teaching’ and to share some experiences of strengthening relations between educational institutions and communities using certain types of methodologies in the frame of looking for inovative ways of everydays life.

The author will explore the indicators of sustainable community (peer-to-peer support and assistance, social interaction, sense of belonging and spiritual enrichment, design and facilitate practice sessions and learning forums, community development opportunities and cultural initiatives, community consultation and in depth community needs analysis, ect). In order to achieve social sustainabilty each community has to have "soft social infrastructure“ (term used by Len Duhl, Professor at Berkeley university) contributing to social well-being and including formal human services (health, education, social services, recreation and culture, etc.) as well as informal structure (network of voluntary organizations and social relationships between members and groups). “Social networking” (Castel, 2004) is seen as the second most important way for establishing social sustainability in globalised society by the author.

Also the partnership of Universities, NGO and local community will be discussed on the bases of the concrete case study of cooperation between Social Communication Institute at Vilnius Pedagogical University, some NGO and one of the Lithuanian (Aukstadvario) local community. The author will present some ideas on teaching methodologies of university students „LOLA“ (Looking for Likely Alternatives), „Take a Charge“. These methodologies help students to serve to community members throught obtaining competencies of civic participation, research and communication skills, etc.

Besides that, the presenter will discuss some implementation practises of methodologies mentioned above at national as well as at international level. All insights and conclusions drawn by author will be based on cooperative approach, for example: community member – social educator/social worker - teacher – student and way around.