

INTELLECT AND SOCIAL INNOVATIONS: WHO ARE THE AGENTS OF RESPONSIBLE CHANGE IN POSTINDUSTRIAL RURAL COMMUNITIES?

R. Vilke,
PhD, Senior researcher,
Lithuanian Institute of Agrarian Economics,
rita.vilke@laei.lt

Intellectualization of the economy had made tremendous impact on the way of life in the postindustrial countryside. Much evidence had been collected on embedded responsible social innovations with regard to its prosperous role in rural development. Based on original empirical data, collected in Lithuania in 2017, this study argues, that higher intellectual impetus for postindustrial rural socially responsible innovations belongs to the farmers with attained higher education as they act as core agents of responsible change in rural areas.

Keywords: social innovations, education, rural community, Lithuania.

Intellectual impetus for social change had resulted with numerous transformations round the world in all sectors and spheres of human activity. Diminishing role of traditional agriculture, expansion of services and digitalization keep shaping the quality of life in rural areas. The potential for social transformations in rural community highly depends on the agents of change – local people and their intelligence.

The main aim of this study is to find out, who are the agents of change in post-industrial rural communities? More specifically, this study focuses on farmers' education as intellectual basis of intelligence, which is discussed in relation to their attitudes on initiating and fostering responsible social innovations for local rural communities.

Intellectual framework in fostering social innovation had been widely discussed in scientific literature. In the context of rural development Bock (2012) proposes, that «social innovation may be referred to when identifying society's need for more sustainable production methods, the necessity for collaboration and social learning, and the scope of change needed for revitalising (rural) society» (p. 57), which is also considered in literature as an important part of social responsibility in the name of responsible social innovations for local community involvement and development (Copus, 2016; Dax et al., 2016; Neumeier, 2017; ISO 26000).

Recent studies argue that in the fast changing environment of the 21st century higher educated and therefore more intelligent people hold better intellectual potential for prosperous responsible social innovations, especially in rural areas (Bock, 2012; Patrick, 2013; Huysman, 2014; Fink et al., 2017). Among the main actors of change, farmers are paid with special attention due to their vital role in local community involvement and development (Obach & Tobin, 2014).

Representative quantitative empirical study was performed in January and February 2017. Original data were collected using semi-structured interviews, using 12 types of socially responsible innovations for local community with five-point Likert scale. 1108 Lithuanian farmers took part in the survey under statistical conditions of 3 percent error ($\epsilon=0,05$) and 95 percent ($p=0,5$) confidence level (Schwarze, 1993).

Research results gives evidence for Lithuanian farmers with attained higher education (university or college) being more favorable towards all 12 listed innovations for local community involvement and development compared to less educated (secondary and primary education) farmers (see table 1). The top 3 positions for higher educated farmers are keeping transparent and public-interest-protecting relations with local government (53,50%), taking into account the interests of local

indigenous people when developing the farm (50,30%) and involvement in the community events and traditional festivals (48,6%).

Table 1

Average results of cross tabulation on farmer's education and socially responsible innovations

Level of farmer's education	«Constantly» and «Often» performed social innovations, average %	«Rare», «Very rare» and «Never» performed social innovations, average %
Higher education	68,34%	31,65%
Secondary education	79,06%	20,92%
Primary education	80,96%	19,03%

Source: author's calculations

It was also observed a significant influence of the period of time, when farmers attained their most recent education (Soviet period; before and after EU accession). More recently attained education correlated with more favorable attitudes towards responsible social innovations in local community.

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