

CULTURE AND SOCIAL CAPITAL IN LOCAL COMMUNITIES

The Case of the Italian Community of the Puerto Neighborhood of Mar del Plata

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The Port neighborhood of Mar del Plata, current and potential tourist attraction, has a distinct identity from other neighborhoods of the city, characterized by the presence of a community of Italian immigrants and descendants of that nationality, which preserves an important intangible heritage integrated among other things, for its numerous religious feasts. Focused on the importance of analysis of local communities and stressing the need for their participation in projects that involve them, this study investigates the characteristics of the social capital of Port community's stakeholders involved in the organization of the aforementioned feasts, in order to determine the feasibility of a subsequent valorisation of its cultural heritage in pursuit of tourism development and as an alternative of conservation. From this perspective, we present the main research results obtained from the application of a qualitative approach, given the specificity of its main objective, which required immersion in the daily life of the community under study, assessment and intention of discovering the perspective of its participants about their own world, and consideration, description and analysis of the words of these people and their observable behavior.

KEY WORDS: *social capital, local development, local community, intangible heritage, Port District, Mar del Plata.*