

Svatý Jan pod Skalou: Case study about the integration of small rural settlements

Svatý Jan pod Skalou: případová studie o integraci malých venkovských obcí

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Abstract: Like other small rural settlements, Svátý Jan pod Skalou is dealing with financial and personnel problems within the exertion of public administration. That is why there is necessary to think about the potential integration strategies in a way, which would enable the commune to keep advantages of its own strengths and to solve disadvantages that hinder its future development. Methodical procedures of this paper are compounded of two parts – analytical situation study and formulation of preliminary options of integration strategies of the municipality, and their preliminary evaluation. Those parts also include a proposal of the evaluation tool of the selected strategies. With regard to the proposed strategies (integration with the neighboring village Hostím; joining the microregion – Local Action Group; integration with one of the near-by villages), it seems that the first option is the most beneficial, eventually in the combination with the second option. Those options would ensure a successful development of the municipality as a tourist location on the basis of the endogenous approach to rural development.

Key words: administrative integration of municipalities, endogenous rural development, rural municipalities, microregion, local action group

Abstrakt: Obec Svátý Jan pod Skalou se jako jiné malé venkovské obce potýká s finančními a personálními problémy ve výkonu veřejné správy. Proto je nutné uvažovat o případných integračních strategiích tak, aby obec neztratila výhody svých vlastních silných stránek a řešila nevýhody, které omezují její další rozvoj. Metodický postup je tvořen dvěma částmi – analytická situační studie a formulování předběžných alternativ integračních strategií obce včetně jejich (předběžného) ohodnocení. Součástí je také návrh hodnotícího nástroje zvolených strategií. Z navržených alternativ (propojení se sousední vesnicí Hostím; vstup do mikroregionu – místní akční skupiny; sloučení s některou z okolních obcí) se jeví jako nejvýhodnější první, eventuálně v kombinaci s druhou jmenovanou alternativou. Tyto by zaručily zdárné pokračování rozvoje obce jako turistické lokality při uplatnění endogenního přístupu k jejímu rozvoji.

Klíčová slova: administrativní sdružování obcí, endogenní venkovský rozvoj, venkovské obce, mikroregion, místní akční skupina

Currently there are 6 249 municipalities in the Czech Republic. It is more by half than it was in the year 1989. A considerable wave of municipalities seeking for their independence was seen in the early '90s and this in particular concerned the municipalities with less than 500 inhabitants. It is supposed that the main reason for this tendency was a response to the practice of the '80s of the 20th century, which had been laden

with the center-settlement concept applied within the organization of the Czech settlement structure.

Small rural municipalities have linked the effort for gaining more independence in the system of regional administration with the notion of inhabitants' feelings of local identity¹. From the viewpoint of localities, this inclination can be entirely understood and highly regarded. A more complex look, however, brings in

¹ Local identity expresses the relation between an inhabited space and those who inhabit it. It contains feelings of knowing the inhabited area, trust and certainty and due to this also contentment. Greater knowledge, trust, certainty and contentment are related with greater identification of inhabitants with their local space (adopted from Henkel 1999). Local identity, as a significant social and cultural factor, is considered one of the sources of development of an endogenous nature, which mobilizes and integrates all internal sources in favor of the locality development.

some negative aspects of assessment as well – the settlement structure of the Czech Republic has become severely broken-up (90% of municipals do not reach the number of 2 000 inhabitants, 60% of municipalities do not reach the number of 500 inhabitants), and this fact is related with the potential failures of effective management of economic development (and consequently social development) of localities.

This broader structural point of view justifies the present ideas and efforts for the repeated integration of municipalities. The tendency for a centralized control of municipalities' size can be proved by two recent facts. New act on municipalities (Act No. 128/2000 Coll.) sets minimal size-levels for future efforts of municipalities that would like to become independent. Any municipality that wants to achieve administration independence needs to have 1 000 inhabitants (only 20% of the all municipalities in the Czech Republic exceed this limit). The other trait of the controlled effort for concentration of settlements is a change in the budget setting of taxes. This involves coefficients for distribution of the public budget among the particular size-categories of municipalities. These coefficients increase with the size of municipalities (based on the number of inhabitants in the settlement), respectively size-category of municipals. Large municipalities are favored in comparison with small ones.

At first sight, the integration of small municipalities into a larger whole appears to be a first-hand solution. The experience with the above-mentioned exertion of the center-settlement concept (imposing restrictions on the local government especially in the case of the smallest municipalities) still remains known with respect to its negative consequences for the development of these settlements.

In addition to it, if there is nowadays stressed the endogenous approach to local development (and territorial communities), which goes from "bottom", "inside", it is necessary to look for a solution that will provide municipalities with a relatively high extent of independence within decision-making about their own administration, and at the same time remove their burning problems, whereas the most-frequently mentioned issues are two-fold – paying for long-term investments and a providing qualified exertion of public administration with regard to personnel aspects.

FOCUS AND GOAL OF THE PAPER

Svatý Jan pod Skalou is a very small rural settlement, where 127 inhabitants live. Administrative independence was re-gained in the year 1990, after its loss in 1985 (Svatý Jan pod Skalou had in that time become a part of the municipality Loděnice in the central Bohemia). Despite its rather miniature size and the short contemporary administrative independence, Svatý Jan pod Skalou has proved to have a large potential of its own development. In the year 1996, it achieved the 1st place in the "Village of the Year" competition within the Central-Bohemian region, particularly in the field of cultural and social life. The village succeeded even more in the year 1999, when it was – in the same competition, but at the state level – placed 3rd. This settlement is not experiencing depopulation. What more, since the early '90s, there moved in about 40% of the current number of permanent inhabitants. Those newcomers are mostly young families with children, who at the same time decrease the average age of local population and improve its educational structure. Those are positive phenomena, which are only partially influenced by the fact that the settlement is situated 7 km from Beroun and less than 20 km from the Prague border, with a decent transport connection within the Prague Integrated Transport scheme (since the year 2002).

However, the above-mentioned problems that were stated as the largest obstacles for the development of small rural municipalities (i.e. financial and personnel aspects of the development), affect Svatý Jan pod Skalou with the same intensity just like other municipalities in this size category.

There is therefore a need to think about the eventual integration strategies, which would not make Svatý Jan pod Skalou the lose advantages of its own strengths, and solve the disadvantages that limit its future development. The qualified reflection of this issue draws on the analytical situation study, which leads into a recommendation of the possible alternatives of integration strategies and criteria of their assessment. This paper reports the realization of such study, which also includes the preliminary (ex ante) assessment of the suggested options with regard to the given criteria, so that the merit of each option can be (again preliminary) evaluated.²

² The study was done by Adéla Ševčíková, tutored by Helena Hudečková. The author based her work on the main local documents about the municipality's renewal. This document is, however, already outdated. The author also drew on her diploma thesis "Sociálně kulturní potenciály rozvoje venkovských obcí (případová studie jedné obce zaměřená na lokální identitu)/Social and cultural potentials of rural localities development (A case study of one municipality focused on local identity)" (2002).

METHODOLOGICAL PROCEDURE

Due to the viewpoint of this paper, it is convenient to split the description of the methodical procedure into two parts. The first one, which has been finished, includes a work that had been done in order to form the mentioned analytical situation studies, which are being reported in this article. The second part focuses on another stage of our work – results of the study (in terms of draft recommendations of alternatives of integration strategies marking their advantages with regards to following development of the locality and community) should be passed for expert assessment of the local actors, and provided for public discussion.

The first part of the methodical procedure includes:

- a) Theoretical assumptions for the actual empirical work, which can be divided into two main groups:
 - aa) theoretical inquiry into the endogenous local development and local identity (it serves as a theoretical insight)
 - ab) study of local-administration systems (with focus on integration processes of municipalities) of territories that are spatially and historically “relatives of each other” (it serves as a material for comparative analysis and inspirational thoughts).³
- b) Actual empirical work conducted with the use of:
 - ba) secondary analysis of the selected statistical data (on the village Svatý Jan pod Skalou and neighboring settlements, which are considered for the integration, as well as larger spatial, regional unit)
 - bb) documents study (of a central nature, such as the National Development Plan of the Czech Republic, National Strategic Plan for Rural Development, Rural Development Program and others; of a local nature – such as the Strategic Development Plan of Beroun, the Local Development Program of Svatý Jan pod Skalou, the Chronicle of the village Svatý Jan pod Skalou, the Spatial Plan of the municipality, financial accounts of the municipality, results of the sociological survey that was realized as a part of the author’s diploma thesis and others)
 - bc) collection of primary data that were collected using interview technique (respondents were

the following persons – mayor and other members of the municipality council, managers of the Local Action Group Karlštejnsko, ten local citizens that were sampled randomly), and using the participatory observation (the author Adéla Ševčíková lives in a neighboring village Hostím, and has paid attention to the municipality council for the past six years and has externally worked for one of the local action groups)

- bd) method of SWOT analysis (based on the data gathered by the all above-mentioned ways)
- be) preparation of a report on possible alternatives of integration strategies (based on the SWOT analysis)
- bf) preparation of a recommendation of five criteria for evaluation of the suggested options (each criterion is evaluated in the range 1–5 points), which in particular stems from the collected primary data that were gathered by “soft” questionnaire techniques and observation.

The second part of the methodological procedure suggests local actors, who should be given the results of the analytical situation study for expert evaluation:

- Mayor of the municipality (he is the main representative of the municipality, which should eventually be integrated with another one into a different unit)
- Manager of the Local Action Group Karlštejnsko (he is a non-participating observer, expert, familiar with the local context, however, not “biased with the inside viewpoint”)
- A selected member of the council (the selection will be based on expert aspects with respect to the qualified view on public administration)
- Representatives of local associations (Svatojánská společnost, Svatojánský občan)
- Representatives of important institutions seated in the village (Pedagogical College, businesses)

Public discussion will continue (most likely) in the form of sociological survey about the opinions of citizens living in Svatý Jan pod Skalou about the integration of the village. It is worth a thought, whether to include among the respondents selected temporarily-living citizens, because they include persons, who have got a special expert experience, or the kind of education and the field of professional employment, due to which may become helpful in the decisive process of the integration.

³ The goal of this paper is to inform the public on the content of the case study on the issue of integration of small countryside village. It is not aimed at discussing the possible theoretical assumptions, nor experience from abroad. That is also why the authors decided to significantly confine their literature review.

The mentioned actors will be given the author's recommendation of the options of integration strategies in the form of a tool, which they will evaluate according to the suggested criteria, amend it and revise it. Other citizens will be provided with the revised version of the recommendation in a very accessible form, as a survey that will focus on public opinion on the give issue.

None of the actions, included in the second part of the methodological procedure, has been exerted by the time of the paper's preparation. The analytical situation study was finished in the June 2006. The revision of the author's recommendation (in terms of the expert evaluation) is supposed to be realized by the end of the year 2006. The public opinion survey can then follow after two months.

NOTE ABOUT THE BASIC THEORETICAL ASSUMPTION

We have already stated that this paper accents the aim to report about the realized analytical situation study concerning the potential integration of a specific small village into a larger municipal unit, and that that paper does not deal with theoretical insights into the related issues of the endogenous local development. The authors would like to point out here that they prefer (from the whole range of foreign theoretical accounts of endogenous rural development) those approaches, which besides territory and space (in terms of a geographical approach) attach the same importance to specific historical, cultural and institutional characteristics of localities (in terms of social and cultural approach)⁴. In accord with this stance, a locality is not defined only by the criteria related to size of the territory. The meaning of the term "locality" is here enriched in the sense of "identity" and "solidarity". The common denominator of those expressions is delineation of a commonly inhabited space with the specific social perception and acting that is based on the collectively experienced problems and wishes. The related term "delocalization" then expresses vanishing (a loses) of identity, i.e. the ability to perceive common problems, formulate common wishes and act collectively, in order to realize those wishes. Another related term "relocalization" expresses re-gaining of this ability due to a broad ideological and social movement as well as local development initiatives. The local de-

velopment initiatives are becoming important actors inducing power for the actual (local) development. This position implies that the local development cannot work without external interventions, but cannot start and continue without a local will and initiative (more about this issue can be found in Hudečková, Jehle 1997; Hudečková 1998). That is also why there was at the beginning of this paper raised the question regarding the way that the integration of small municipalities is desirable (due to the economic, managerial and technical reasons), but that it could go astray, if it was realized at the expense of local identity (which means that the integration would consequently follow delocalization, which does not have the administration dimension only).

A NOTE ABOUT A SELECTED EXPERIENCE FROM ABROAD

The way of administrative solution of municipalities integration was used for instance in Germany. There have been exerted reforms of local administrative units in the old federal states. After the re-unification of Germany this process gradually continued in the new federal states. Let us take a closer look on this reform, which went on in the years 2001–2003 in the federal state of Brandenburg.

There were 1 475 municipalities in the federal state of Brandenburg (December 31st 2000), whereas 58% of them had less than 500 inhabitants (in the Czech Republic, it was 59% in the year 2005). The act of the reform of settlement structure and strengthening municipalities administration in the federal state of Brandenburg (*Gesetz zur Reform der Gemeindestrukturen und zur Stärkung der Verwaltungskraft der Gemeinden im Land Brandenburg*), which was passed in February 28th 2001 by the Brandenburg Federal Parliament, set up the minimal level of 5 000 inhabitants. Until-that-time independent municipalities, which were forced to merge, are becoming the so-called local parts (they lose their legal status and independence), and are given a possibility of electing the so-called local councils (that include from 3 to 9 members with respect to the size of municipality), which are chaired by local mayors. The smaller settlements elect only local mayors. The local council, respectively local mayor, represent interests of the former municipality towards the bodies of the new municipality. The local parts can conduct some activities on its own, but

⁴ In particular it concerns the authors: P. Alliés, J.P. Billard, R. Dumbrovits, G. Garfoli, U. Hahne, B. Kayser, Ph. Lowe, N. Mathieu, J. Mengig, W.B. Stöhr, H. Schroers, A.S. Tombeil, K. Töpfer, A. Ziegler (published from the second half of 1980s).

only those that are closely related to the area of this settlement (construction of local communications, keeping-up public places and so on) (Schröder 2003). The reform of the settlement structure was proceeded in two stages. The first stage was called voluntary one (until March 31st 2002). In that time, the number of municipalities decreased to 858. Then there started the stage of organized integration. By the end of the year 2003, the number of settlements went down to 436. At present there are 420 settlements (January 1st, 2006) in the federal state of Brandenburg. Their numbers are not therefore significantly decreasing after the reform ended up.

ANALYTICAL PART OF THE SITUATION STUDY

The analytical part of the study is aimed at the detailed specification of the object – village Svatý Jan pod Skalou – particular attention is paid to the settlement's development (starting with the first written note about the village – in the year 1205), with an emphasis on the 20th century and the current times. The presence is not conceived only in a descriptive way, but also in a problem-oriented way, because it leads into the SWOT analysis.⁵

Svatý Jan pod Skalou entails three localities – the village Svatý Jan pod Skalou and Sedlec, the settling Záhrabská. The center of this whole is Svatý Jan pod Skalou. Among those localities, it was only Sedlec, which used to be an agriculture-oriented locality (at present, it is partly a weekend-house village), but currently farming is not pursued in stake of profit at any of those localities. Svatý Jan pod Skalou have been an important historical and cultural place. In the past, the village served as a pilgrimage, spa, education and temporarily-production place. At present, it is again an educational as well as tourist spot. It belongs among the most-visited settlements within the Central Bohemian region. Tourism represents up the largest economic potential for development of the village.

The history of the village is very well represented by the changes of the local monastery. Its foundation is related to a legend about Saint Ivan (the first Czech Christian hermit). The monastery remained the center of local life until the end of 18th century (it was abandoned in 1758). After that, its buildings served as a manufacture, factory and later on as a spa, which were again later substituted by a catholic

pedagogic institute, social-care facility of the Prague municipality, in the mid of the 20th century the buildings served as a labor camp, prison and finally – in the period until the late 1980s – the former monastery had been given to over the Ministry of Interior. At present the monastery belongs to the church again and is used as an educational institution.

Second half of the 20th century (respectively until 1990s) represents the worst downgrade, typical of depopulation, decay of the village's listed structures, lack of cultural life, which was topped off with the loss of the municipality status in 1985.

In 1990's, there came about a significant revival. As we have already mentioned, Svatý Jan pod Skalou at that time regained the status of municipality, the number of inhabitants has increased and the population structure with respect to age and education improved. Due to the work of the local associations, many cultural sights were restored and enlivened with cultural and social events (by the *Svatojánská společnost* – the Association Svatý Jan Society), a particular attention is paid to environment (this part of the local life belongs to the field of interest of the *Svatojánský občan* – the Association Svatý Jan Citizen). The activities of those local development initiatives, together with the municipal administration, contribute to the already-mentioned development of tourism. This is strengthened by the objective givenness – the settlement is located in the centre of the national Natural Reserve Karlštejnsko and the Landscape Protected Area Český kras; the transport connection in terms of the Prague Integrated Transport Scheme is good, the five-kilometer distance from the highway approach of the D5 road (connecting Prague and Plzeň) is short. In Svatý Jan pod Skalou, tourists can find “history, culture as well as nature”.

There are seated small business in the village (joinery, the producer of wooden and plastic windows, the producer of souvenirs and a retail-store with bicycles and accessories for them), however, the majority of local inhabitants commute to work (to Loděnice, Beroun, Prague). The municipality itself is not involved in entrepreneur activities.

There is a restaurant that also provides accommodation (hotel), library, school sporting field and a college (Vyšší odborná škola), there is no elementary school, grocery store, medical facility or a post office.

In two areas of the village (in Svatý Jan pod Skalou and Sedlec), there has been installed gas-main and cable television.

⁵ At this point, we will just focus on basic factors, which are typical of the village, and the final SWOT analysis. Detailed documentation is deposited at the author of the study Adéla Ševčíková (2002).

Table 1. SWOT analysis of the village Svatý Jan pod Skalou

Strengths	Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Picturesque location in the valley of Loděnice creek and the Land Protected Area Český kras – Many historical and cultural sights – Elements of an existing and well working civic society (the active civic associations, regular volunteer work, good relations between the citizens themselves, as well as between them and weekend-houses inhabitants, etc.) – Engagement and interest of inhabitants about the future of the village – Transport connection with the Prague Integrated Transport Scheme (PID) – The third place in the competition “Village of the Year 1999” – Lasting high attractiveness of the place for permanent living 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Unsettled state of some cultural sights (Saint John the Baptist Church) – Not working cooperation between the municipality leading body and the Pedagogic college (Vyšší pedagogickou školou) – Missing parking lot for tourists – Incomplete basic civic infrastructure (education, shopping, medical facility, post office etc.) – Mayor, who does not exert the office as a full-time job, no full-time employees of the municipal office focusing on the development of the village – Low own financial resources – Missing sewage-system and a sewerage-plant for all inhabitants – Indebtedness of the municipality (due to the constructed gas main) – Low level of the local economic activities in the village (businesses and trading)
Opportunities	Threats
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Start of the new European programme EAFRD (European Agrarian Fund For Rural Development) for the rural development – Suitable location next to the highway D5 and Prague – Increasing tourist attractiveness of the place – Joining the Local Action Group Karlštejnsko (set up in terms of the EU initiative Leader +) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Planned cancellation of the Program obnovy venkova (Programme for Rural Development) – Construction of the high-speed railway track Prague – Plzeň (Nürnberg) – Increasing pressure on the integration of small settlements – Administrative difficulties with preparation of projects for the use of EU structural funds – Strict sanctions resulting from the controls of the Ministry of Finance over the projects funding of the Ministry of Environment and the Ministry for Local Development – Uncontrolled flow of tourists to the village (unless there are finished in time the missing elements of tourist infrastructure – parking lot, information center, etc.)

The municipal budget counts on revenues and expenditures about 1.6 million CZK. Approximately 82% of this amount is made up by tax revenues, the rest of the money comes from leases and sales of land and petit revenues. The loan for building of the gas main has significantly burdened the municipal.

The SWOT analysis points out the strengths, whose benefits shall not be lost in case of the eventual integration of Svatý Jan pod Skalou. On the other hand, the analysis shows weaknesses, opportunities and threats, which have been further considered, whether they could be influenced by the eventual integration, and if so, how (Table 1).

SYNTHETIC PART OF THE SITUATION STUDY

This part of the study, which draws on the analysis, serves as a basis for the discussion on the alternatives of the integration study.

The analysis implies that the village Svatý Jan pod Skalou does not have any other possibility than to set out on the road of development to tourism, which has been already fairly well founded. Geographic conditions, the current structure of economic activities in the village, as well as its current size do not allow for a wide scope of activities. The goal of the study,

however, was not to create a development strategy of the municipal tourism. What remains, is the question, whether the municipality shall stay independent in future, or whether it shall aim at the administrative integration with other municipalities, or at another way of integration.

Not with standing the municipality's choice of a particular option, it is necessary to realize the plan simultaneously with the modification of the current municipal administration. The municipal administration should have at least one full-time employee (eventually a part-time one) – a manager, who would administer municipal activities, projects in terms of the Joint Regional Operational Programme (and programmes that will emerge in the next planning period), and in particular the planned European fund EAFRD⁶. This step is inevitable (despite the fact that a "common" municipality of such size usually does not have those employees) due to the turn of the settlement into a functioning tourist locality and the related preparation for subsidizing the development from new external sources. The municipality does not have to be worried that employing of one person would threaten its budget. Even in the first year, the in-flow of financial sources from external funds can exceed the costs for the employee.

Recommendation of alternatives

In accord with the analysis of the current state of the municipality (with regards to all available sources presented in their methodical parts, and with respect to the estimated development of legislature and political situation in the Czech Republic), there are suggested three basic alternatives of the municipal integration. Some of those alternatives amend each other. It is assumed that after the discussion of experts (that will be proceeding until the end of year 2006), there will emerge another alternative by inspiring combination of the basic alternatives.

The option of integration with the neighboring village Hostím

The first possible option is widening the settlement by a neighboring village Hostím, which currently be-

longs under the town Beroun. This act is mentioned in the former strategic document (Program obnovy obce Svatý Jan pod Skalou (1993)), but it has never been realized. Contrary to this, the locality Hostím once included in the land-use planning documents was later excluded from those documents. In the early 1990s, there appeared an effort to merge both localities. Hostím conducted a referendum, but most local inhabitants, in particular elder citizens, wanted to keep the administrative tie to the town Beroun. Ten years after, the inhabitants of Hostím have changed in favor of those, who respond to the idea of disintegration from the town Beroun positively. The possible reasons may be related to the present experience with the administration of the town Beroun. After the analysis of the Strategic Plan for the Development of the Town Beroun it is obvious, that the town does not count on future investments in the local area of Hostím. Another reason could be the expectations of changes in the financial framework of the European funds, which are directly focused on rural settlements⁷, whereas Hostím is not considered as a settlement of this type, because it forms a local area of the town Beroun. The integration of Svatý Jan pod Skalou and Hostím meets the criteria for defining rural settlements with respect to methods that are used by the EU.

The integration of the both localities seems logical with regard to the geographic aspect. With the integration of the last locality in the valley Kačák, there would be formed a continuous whole of non-agricultural, historically-related villages with a similar structure and development potential. All the localities have got a high potential for tourism and for the development of quality living; it is important to note that this is partially limited by entailing the Landscape Protected Area.

From the viewpoint of Svatý Jan pod Skalou, this option so far represents a neutral solution with the perspective of future benefits. The municipality would grow with the integration of another small village and remain independent. With the integration of another village, the municipality is coming closer to the possibility of reaching a higher size-category of settlements, which means reaching a higher coefficient in terms of redistribution of the shared taxes

⁶ At present, the municipality is being subsidized by the *Program obnovy venkova (Program for Rural Development)*. Its administration is not difficult, however, according to the current plans the programme is going to be dissolved with the start of the EAFRD.

⁷ As rural municipalities in the Czech Republic are considered the municipalities with less than 2 000 inhabitants. In the European Union, there is used a method based on population density. According to this method, rural municipality is a settlement with the density of less than 100 inhabitants per km² (this limit has been decreased by the EUROSTAT from the previous level 150 inhabitants per km² according to the OECD).

(from the previous coefficient for the size-category of 101–200 inhabitants 0.5370 up to 0.5630 for the size-category with 201–300 inhabitants) (Liptáková 2003). The current number of inhabitants in the village would increase by about 72 inhabitants (data are based on the year 2006). If the current trend of inhabitant-inflow continues in the same way, the level of 201 inhabitants will be reached in the year 2008.

The option microregion – local action group

The second option suggests joining an existing local microregion. What seems the most logical, is the idea of joining the microregion Dolní Berounka, while its municipalities do not neighbor Svatý Jan pod Skalou. The microregion Dolní Berounka is right next to the village Hostím. This microregion has been connecting its member villages for a couple of years through cultural events, promotions and a common effort for using subsidy sources. Municipalities of this grouping are of a similar nature as Svatý Jan pod Skalou (they aim at tourism), yet the municipalities of another neighboring microregion Český Kras – Pláně rather tie settlements with prevailing agricultural production.

The environs of Svatý Jan pod Skalou include two local action groups.⁸ The first one is the local action group Srdce Čech, and the second one is Karlštejsko. In case of the first local action group, there are obvious some “ailments” of microregional cooperation, as it is described by Perlín (2005: 573). The goal of the grouping is to gain subsidies for the particular municipalities and not the microregional cooperation. Its activity is too dependent on the leading figure of the group (it is usually the mayor of the largest or the initiating municipality). While the association Srdce Čech covers approximately 1 360 km² with more than 95 thousand inhabitants, the activities are vividly focused on the founding microregion Bratronicko and the village Bratronice. The proceeded activity

therefore violates the basic principle of partnership, which should not favor any elements at the expense of others.

Another local group Karlštejsko was established by the natural cooperation of municipalities around Karlštejn (its seat is in Lety) and nowadays it comprises municipalities from the south-western part of Prague to the southern border of Beroun district. The group operates on a smaller area, covering the land of 400 km² with about 42 thousand inhabitants. Its area is more integrated than the area of the above-mentioned association. This local action group was among the first ones that managed to gain subsidies in terms of the Initiative Leader. One can therefore assume that the reputation, which they have achieved due to this project, will be a minimal guarantee of a successful engagement in other projects. Soon there will be formed a database of projects of member municipalities, which can be potentially subsidized within the Leader Initiative. The opportunity arising from this option assumes a quick decision. There would be no time to wait for the results of a public opinion poll.

This option does not affect too much the independence of the municipality. The municipality just shifts some of its tasks (related to the strategic development of the municipality) and some “aerial” activities (organized on the whole area of the local action group, such as constructing children’s playground) up to the large territorial unit.⁹

The option integration with a neighboring municipality

The increasing pressure on mayors of the smallest municipalities regarding the integration with other municipalities is obvious in cases, where there is no full-time mayor and where it is (due to the lack of human resources) hard to manage the difficult administrative procedures. What is crucial for Svatý

⁸ Local Action Group (LAG) is a local organization representing a partnership of public and private sector, which gives proposals and sets plans of development activities that draw on active participation of public, voluntary and business sector within a given area. The set-up of a local action group is the condition for using subsidies in terms of the Initiative Leader aimed at rural development (Hudečková et al. 2006:152).

⁹ Perlín (Hampl and Müller in Perlín 2005) talks about the so-called two-leveled local government, which ensures the independence of municipalities in the common agenda, as well as the cooperation on the microregional level. On this level, there would be exerted more complex competences by independent experts in the field of the development of the give area. This system at the same time assumes effective control by the engaged municipalities. The proposal on the Act about municipalities includes a new form of inter-municipal cooperation (a different form the current voluntary association of municipalities) – the so-called gathering of municipalities, which should enable cooperation in complex issues of independent activities, such as the program of economic and social development, cooperation within decisive right towards natural and legal persons, etc.

Jan pod Skalou is the question, which neighboring municipality it should join.

One of the options is to integrate directly with the Beroun town. This joint would significantly reduce the independent decision. On the other hand, Svatý Jan pod Skalou can achieve an advantageous position of the attractive tourist location, from which the town may benefit. However, the town Beroun is too large in comparison with the locality with 130 inhabitants (almost 150 times larger) and the integration with such a small municipality would be (despite the mentioned tourist potential) a burden for the town. Activities related to exerting of the local-administration in Svatý Jan pod Skalou, which would become a peripheral area of Beroun, would draw on the capacities otherwise-belonging to the town.

Another option is to join the neighboring municipality Loděnice, from which Svatý Jan pod Skalou became separated in the early 1990s. The years of the common administration, however, do not bring good memories to the locals and this fact may severely hinder the suggested integration. Yet, this kind of integration is more probable than joining Beroun, with respect to the similarities of municipalities' size and character. This fact reflects common interests in revitalization of the Loděnice creek (Kačák), which were summarized in the programme of the micro-region Povodí Kačáku, broken up in the year 2006. Economic activities of both municipalities differ (but less than Svatý Jan pod Skalou from Beroun). While Svatý Jan pod Skalou aims at tourism, in Loděnice there is situated GY Digital Media, which is one of the most important producer of sound- and data-media in the Central and Eastern Europe, and a mid-sized construction company Jež Ltd. with about one hundred employees. Both municipalities are connected together by the interest in development of the tourism. The particular products of tourism can form convenient complements¹⁰, there is frequent traffic connection between them.

Another settlement, which is nearby (about 2 km airline) is the village Bubovice. On the road, which connects Bubovice and Svatý Jan pod Skalou, there is located the village Hostím. There could be therefore eventually realized a combination of the first and this option, i.e. integration of the villages Hostím, Bubovice and Svatý Jan pod Skalou (the settlements are located in space in the shape of a triangle). By

this, the villages could pick up the tradition of integration from the 18th century, which resulted from the geographic location and a common governance of the Svatý-Jan's Monastery. The direct road Svatý Jan pod Skalou – Bubovice (where horse carriages used to travel) is nowadays used only as a tourist path. A disadvantage is the different structure of economic activities in both villages – Bubovice focuses on agriculture and lacks cultural potential for the development of tourism. Besides that, there is no public transportation between the villages. Each of the possible options of integration with a neighboring village would mean a loss of independence of Svatý Jan pod Skalou, because all the mentioned villages are larger than Svatý Jan pod Skalou. One can assume that Svatý Jan pod Skalou would become a local-part of the other village. There could be interrupted the successful start of the village's development, particularly due to problematic position and realization of the current development initiatives in the village (*Svatojánská společnost*, eventually *Svatojánský občan*). The *Svatojánská společnost* closely cooperates with the local council and parish administration. By the change of the cooperating actors (in terms of local identity and the cooperation as the locality's attributes – see the note about the basic theoretical assumption), this cooperation would probably diminish.

Evaluation of the options

The result of the proceeded analysis is also the choice of five criteria for evaluation of the suggested options. They are going to be evaluated with a scoring method on the scale from one to five. The highest score (five points) means the highest accord between the desired and real state with respect to the given criterion.

Specification of the criteria

1. Acceptance of the selected strategy by inhabitants of the village (acceptance by the majority of inhabitants of Svatý Jan pod Skalou = 5 points)
2. Usage of the endogenous potential of the municipality (the highest possible extent of the use of internal sources of various kinds = 5 points)
3. Implementability with respect to financial requirements of the strategy (gain of external financial

¹⁰ Svatý Jan pod Skalou offers many historical, cultural and natural monuments and a technical sight (museum of mining). There are often held cultural events: concerts of classical or church music, exhibitions, country night. There is available an accommodation in a hotel. Municipality Loděnice regularly offers cultural events, accommodation in a camp and family hostels, a few quality restaurants, shop, as well as technical monuments, fewer cultural and natural sights.

- sources related to municipal expenditures → relatively high = 5 points)
4. Sustaining independent decisions of the municipality (remains unchanged = 5 points)
 5. Keeping or increasing the prestige of the municipality (remains on the current level or increases = 5 points).

Evaluation of the suggested options of the integration strategy

The option of integration with the neighboring village Hostím

- Ad 1) Due to geographic proximity the local inhabitants keep in touch, and there are many kinship relations between the inhabitants of both settlements. While this option counts on another development of tourism, it is necessary to consider and “medialize” the advantages of tourism (4 points)
- Ad 2) This option includes maximum mobilization of the inner sources of the municipality. The option counts on the engagement of local inhabitants in the municipal development plans, which includes employing 1 person; tourism brings another possibility of economic activities of the inhabitants (5 points)
- Ad 3) The option counts on employing one person, which would be profitable due to the use of external grant and subsidy sources, therefore financial costs would not be that high. The integration implies a higher revenues as well expenditures of the municipality. The municipality will have a great chance to reach higher coefficient of redistributed tax incomes, fixed costs per one inhabitant would decrease, and at the same time the necessary operational costs related to number of inhabitants would increase (3 points)
- Ad 4) The municipality will remain completely independent (5 points).
- Ad 5) The integration will not threaten current prestige of the village, which is particularly based on a single settlement unit – Svatý Jan pod Skalou (5 points).

The option microregion – Local action group

- Ad 1) Most inhabitants are worried about a closer integration with other units and seek only its immediate advantages. It is important to inform citizens more about the advantages of establishing associations such as the local action group (3 points).

Ad 2) The use of endogenous sources is determined by the activity of representatives of the municipality and the interests of the local action group/microregion, this, however, determines activities of the local action group. One can assume intensive usage (4 points).

Ad 3) The option is based on employing one person that would additionally facilitate communication with the supreme organizations. With respect to the satisfaction of collective interest, one can assume that the municipality will lose and pay more money during the first years, until the time when there “comes its turn” in investment projects. Chances of gaining external financial sources are increasing (4 points).

Ad 4) Independence in decision processes will not be threatened in terms of common activities, in case of solving (upper) regional questions of strategic development of the village, there will occur the influence of higher-levelled unit (4 points)

Ad 5) The integration will not threaten the remaining prestige of the municipality (5 points).

The option integration with a neighboring municipality

Ad 1) Most inhabitants are worried about the closer integration and the related loss of the village’s independence, the integration would be refused (1 point)

Ad 2) Usage of endogenous sources would be managed in accord with the interest of higher administrative unit – another municipality (1 point)

Ad 3) The municipality would lose the possibility to directly decide about its financial matters, the possibility of gaining subsidies from external financial sources would be more difficult (1 point)

Ad 4) The municipality would lose its independence (in case of the integration with a village of a similar size, the loss would not be so important) (1 point)

Ad 5) The prestige of the village would be decreasing, it would be determined by the extent of pursuing its own interest in the integrated municipality (3 points)

CONCLUSION

While Svatý Jan pod Skalou belongs to one of the smallest municipalities in the Central Bohemian region, it is one of the prettiest places there. Municipal

officials tried to attract new citizens, and in spite of their growing numbers, there occurred no social conflict. Their citizens are aware of the peculiarities and the original character of the locality, where they live. Without waiting for an external support, they have decided on their own for many demanding reconstructions of the Svatý-Jan's monuments. A high level of the locals' identity is one of the important elements of the endogenous potential and a prerequisite of the successful application of the integrated endogenous development. Another development of the village certainly depends on the amount of financial sources. Finishing the gas main has financially exhausted the municipality; at present it tries to obtain subsidy from the Ministry of Environment, which would enable to pay the eight-year loan sooner.

With respect to the current financial situation of the municipality and to the possible external financing based on the Program obnovy venkova, Společný regionální operační program, subsidy programs of the Central Bohemian Region and the future European funds (starting the year 2007 this would include financing from the newly-established funds in accord with the National Development Plan for the years 2007–2013, such as the integrated operational program/the IOP, the regional operational program/ROP etc¹¹), there can be enlisted the most important investment acts in the following years:

- demolition of the wall at the building of the former monastery, which was built in 1950s when the object was used as a prison (2006)
- starting construction of the municipal water main (2007)
- adjustment of the public space in Sedlec (children's playground, sporting field, St. Ivan's chapel financed from the private sources) (2007)
- construction of a parking-lot for tourists (2007)
- general reconstruction of the historical center of the village (Svatý Jan pod Skalou), it follows a detailed regulation plan including details of the present buildings, based on a competition of students of the Faculty of Architecture (Czech Institute of Technology) (2008)
- Establishing a municipal museum in the building of the current Municipal Administration (former school), followed with a souvenir shop and facilities for tourist; moving the Municipal Administration to another building (2008)
- Proceeding repairs of the St. Maxmilian Chapel

In the period of ten years, the municipality does not plan on constructing the sewage system, i.e.

the missing element of standard infrastructure of settlements (gas main, sewage system, water main), because regarding the above-mentioned facts it is not possible.

It seems that the most advantageous option of the suggested integration strategies is the option number one (22 points), eventually in combination with the second option (20 points). Those two options would ensure a successful continuation of the started trend of developing tourist locality with respect to the use of endogenous approach to the development. This also implies that the municipality should (besides its focus on investments to technical infrastructure) aim at the tourist infrastructure and support of the social and cultural potential of the village:

- Setting up places for gathering of local inhabitants (with regard to the fact that there is no playground and sporting field, which would meet the needs of mothers with children)
- Organizing social events that would support relations between the locals and the people who have moved in the village, which would facilitate the integration of the newcomers (with respect to the significant growth of inhabitants in the last 15 years), because their active engagement in the local development is desired
- Settling relation and enhancing cooperation between the municipality and the Pedagogic College (there are recognized reserves of the development potential)
- Preparing the locals for the increasing number of tourists, including informing about the potential benefits of tourism for the inhabitants and the municipality (with regard to the results of a sociological survey in 2002, which showed that the inhabitants were worried about a potential loss of privacy and their peace due to the growing tourism)

The least advantageous option is the possibility of a direct integration with a neighboring village (7 points). The most important cons are related to the second and fourth criterion of evaluation, i.e. the possibility to use the endogenous potential of the village and to preserve independence in decisions (in case of those two criteria, there is the highest difference in scores between the first two and the third option that were evaluated).

As was stated in the methodological part, the authors suppose that there should follow other steps in the case that the village would face a decision about the integration into a larger whole (either an administrative one or a cooperating one):

¹¹ We do not state more details, because the document is still being prepared. It is available only in a draft version from January 2006 (<http://www.strukturalni-fondy.cz/index.php?show=000009009002008> [cited 19. 6. 2006]).

- Expert assessment for the purpose of finishing the evaluation tool of integrating possibilities of the municipality and the various solutions
- Submitting the finished tool to social actors in the village in terms of respecting the endogenous approach to the own development, and proceeding with a public opinion poll (survey)

The authors admit that there might appear another integration option, with regard to the future development of the village and external changes). They do not assume that that the question of a possible integration could be tackled in a qualified way, unless there are suggested and evaluated the possible options.

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Arrived on 26th September 2006

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