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Utilisation of the natural potential of rural areas for social inclusion

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Abstract: The paper presents selected results of the sociological research focused on social inclusive activities that use and are located in the natural environment of rural areas. The paper is based on the contemporary form of the concept of a fully integrated modern society, and deals with the implementation of this concept within the strategy of social inclusion in both the European and Czech context. The authors have created, based on secondary research, a typology of social inclusive activities within Czech rural areas. Primary research, consisting of a questionnaire survey, was used to study the awareness of these issues among the rural population. Based on the selected results of both the primary and secondary research, the authors conclude that a possible path to social inclusion, is, alongside specific social services, social farming, which harmonizes the potential of the rural natural environment with the attitudes of the rural population (the actors and observers of social inclusive activities within their locality). The ongoing research is focused on monitoring barriers to the development of this business sector, which are crucial for the rural actors.

Keywords: inclusive activities, local natural potential, rural municipalities, social exclusion

An eternal question in sociology is how to harmonise the right to individual autonomy with the needs of social integrity. In the contemporary debates, this question is answered by the concept of a cohesive (inclusive, fully integrated) society. It is in this context, that the concept of social inclusion has been formulated, which is now a common feature both of the academic discourse and public political agendas.

The Common European space, to which the Czech Republic also belongs, emphasizes processes leading to social cohesion through solidarity (Silver 1994). This effort is currently more and more connected with the urgency of solutions to horizontal social disparities caused more often by the cultural, rather than economic differences and factors. It could result in social exclusion conceived as the position of individuals and groups outside of the mainstream of society (Giddens 2001). The difficulty of addressing the threat of social exclusion is multiplied by the complexity and functional differentiation of the contemporary society (Luhman 2000). This is also

influenced by its typical feature – the individualization and the risk of the absence of solidarity (Beck 1992; Bauman 2004).

CONCEPT OF SOCIAL INCLUSION IN THE ACADEMIC DISCOURSE

There are various notable tendencies in the academic discourse about the concept of social inclusion. As mentioned above, one of them is a shift of focus towards the horizontal social disparities (Giddens 2001). Another one might be expressed in terms of the priority of the principle of equity over the application of the principle of equality when solving social disparities. It is currently increasingly accepted that inequality could be equitable and equality inequitable (Mareš 2006). However, it should not disrupt integration, and it is possible only in the presence of solidarity. Solidarity can thus be considered as the means of cohesion.

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This discourse takes place in the wider context of a reconceptualization of the welfare state. A major element of this reconceptualization is a changing relationship between the state and citizens. For these reasons, the concept of citizenship, especially European citizenship, is also included in the framework of social inclusion. Social exclusion can be defined as the exclusion from the full political and social citizenship (Andersen 1999). Atkinson (2000) highlights the development of a discourse focused on social disparities that moves from a direct focus on poverty to the extension of full political and social citizenship. The author associates the overcoming social exclusion with four types of institutions, which support:

- civic integration (political and legal system),
- economic integration (labour market),
- social integration (welfare system),
- interpersonal integration (family and community system).

Social exclusion appears in the failure of even a single one of these four types of institutions.¹

It is possible to recognize two approaches in the current discourse concerning social inclusion. The first of these is integrative, which requires that the members of society have access to goods under the conditions of the equality of opportunity, and they have their basic needs met. Gray (2000) and Cousins (1998) argue that the inclusive strategy of the EU is based on this approach. The second is a redistributive discourse, which relies more on the welfare state organizing the redistribution of social wealth. Levitas (1996, 1998) adds that applying the principle of equity in redistribution is quite difficult within the contemporary complex society.

The social situation is, in the present period, complicated by the process of extraordinarily heavy spatial migration. Atkinson (2000) is not optimistic about the question of “European citizenship”, which supposes social inclusion. He highlights strong tendencies towards the separation of the geographically designated nation – insiders from outsiders (non-citizens). Byrne (1997) anticipates that their existence within the European space could be considered as a burden on the welfare state and a drag on the economy. A

climate, which prefers economic growth and competitiveness, reduces the chances of enforcing the “European citizenship”.

The phenomenon of strangers is broadly discussed by Bauman (2000). This is a basic principle of social relations using the classical pair “Us” and “Them”. The crucial factor is not necessarily the geographical space or nationality. It could be any distinguishing feature, which becomes a factor for social exclusion. This is due to the fact that this process takes place in the society in which solidarity is absent. Therefore, Potůček (2006) emphasizes, that cohesion is not only a fight against poverty and social exclusion, but also a factor in the solidarity creation. Bourdieu (2001) calls for new forms of solidarity that correspond to a globalised world. According to him, this new type of solidarity could be widespread, based on network principles in the framework of a pan-European social movement. This type of neoclassical social movement should be focused on the goal of a “European welfare state” – an entity with functions that form a counterweight to global companies, which represent new forms of the global power. This movement should also control the governments of states that organise the political, legal and financial subsystems supporting inclusive measures.

Considering the discourse on social inclusion, it is possible to observe that the concepts which define social inclusion are not unambiguous. The particular concept of social inclusion employed here determines a comprehensive approach to social policy. It should consist of developing abilities of those socially excluded or at risk of social exclusion to adapt to the life conditions within their particular society. It should also consist of institutional changes, which simplify this adaptation and enable their participation (Mareš and Sirovátka 2008).

SOCIAL INCLUSION AND PUBLIC POLICY AGENDA IN THE CZECH REPUBLIC

The situation of social inclusion/exclusion in the Czech Republic is evaluated based on the comparison of public policy documents about social exclusion

¹Similarly, Mareš (2006) defines inclusion as a dynamic and multidimensional process with four basic dimensions – political, economic, social and cultural. Inclusive measures include all those that remove barriers to the mobility of the marginalised and disabled (to any extent) people within both the physical and social space of the society. Inclusive measures also allow these people to participate in the life of the society and to make autonomous decisions about their lives.

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and inclusion from different European states. The documents show that the Czech Republic pays attention to the economic dimension of social exclusion and hence also its solution by inclusion in the labour market (as it is similar in all European states). There exists a relatively widespread compliance in identifying social groups threatened by social exclusion within European states. However, there are some endangered groups (indebtedness, households without labour income, drug-addicts) omitted in the Czech Republic. The Czech Republic pays a close attention to the analysis of the present state of social inclusion/exclusion, which is well prepared. The objectives and monitoring indicators suffer from a lack of the necessary concreteness (Rákoczyová 2006).

The first experiences with implementing the concept of social exclusion and inclusion in a public policy agenda in the Czech Republic were reflected in the “Strategy of Social Inclusion 2014–2020” (MLSA 2014), which was processed by the Department of Social Inclusion of the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs of the Czech Republic. This document consists again of a detailed analysis of the current situation, which connects social exclusion with poverty (measured as the income poverty, material deprivation and low labour intensity) and deals with the economic and demographic development in the context of the labour market situation. There persists a significant emphasis on the economic exclusion. A basic measure of social inclusion is considered to be social work projected at the local level. This emphasizes supporting the access to and the maintenance of employment. Attention is also paid to social services, the access to education, housing and health care, ensuring reasonable life conditions and also on the support of so-called “further inclusive services”. Also mentioned are those endangered social groups, which were omitted from the above-mentioned documents. A special attention is paid to regional disparities and local approaches to solving social exclusion. This consists of the coordination of the work of local actors and the involvement of the private and civic sectors in social inclusive activities. The main organisation that monitors and evaluates the fulfilment of the above-mentioned strategy is the Commission for Social Inclusion of the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs of the Czech Republic, which consists of the representatives of state

administration, self-government, the non-profit sector, academic community, professional and employers’ organizations. Despite the fact that each separately elaborated field is structured towards identifying the main problems, risks and barriers, termed and addressed measures, it is possible to assume that this document could not be used as a specific methodical guidance for social inclusion implementation and the control of this implementation without elaboration in further materials.²

RURAL SOCIAL INCLUSION

Neither the academic discourse nor the public policy agenda in the Czech Republic reflect the perspectives of rural or urban society with respect to social inclusion. The public policy agenda pays attention to various aspects of social inclusion at the local level (regional and local disparities and often also the issue of ethnic minorities). The role of municipalities as the executors and coordinators of social work and social services is emphasized (MLSA 2014).

The discourse concerning rural social inclusion is focused on several important issues. The most general issue concerns the differences between social inclusion in rural and urban areas. Philip and Shucksmith (2003) state that social exclusion is as much a problem for the rural communities as it is for urban communities, whose problems tend to receive more attention from the politicians, media and public. Rural areas are also more threatened by social exclusion due to the sparsity of population, spatial peripherality, the lack of social services, the specificity of labour market and a decreasing interest in volunteering (Reimer 2004; Shucksmith 2012). The second issue concerns social groups threatened by social inclusion in the rural areas. Here, the most commonly mentioned are women, older people, younger generations (after graduation), children from problem families and farmers – sorted in the descending order (Shortall 2004; Alston and Kent 2009; Warburton et al. 2014).

The third main issue concerns the promotion of social inclusion. Williamson et al. (2004) state that the role of the community and voluntary sector organisations and their participation in partnerships have increasingly been recognised as central to promoting

²One example is the document “Identification of social exclusion within municipalities and regions”, elaborated by Synková (2014). This is a methodology intended for the local action groups operating in rural areas, which is also our object of interest.

social inclusion. With regard to the research in the Czech Republic, it is also important to mention that their participation is seen as a means to promote social inclusion especially among the new member states and lagging rural regions (Shortall and Warner 2010). In this context, it is possible to promote rural social inclusion through the participation of the marginalized and under-represented groups in community-based organisations, activities and events (Shortall 2008). Information and communication technologies are also mentioned as the means of promoting social inclusion in rural areas, especially with regard to the labour market problems and spatial peripherality (Novo-Corti et al. 2014).

Considering the main theme of our paper, it is also necessary to mention the study of Milbourne and Doheny (2012), which indicates high levels of satisfaction with the social contexts of place, linked to the close-knit nature of community, the richness of informal local support mechanisms, the contentment with local services and the older people's inclusion within the key aspects of rural society. In general, the natural environment and social network within rural areas have a positive impact on social inclusive activities. However, one problem is the accessibility of public and social services (Shergold and Parkhurst 2012).

It is only partially possible to use the information obtained from the above-mentioned publications and the discourse concerning rural social inclusion, because the information is based mainly on the data from rural development programs and the analysis of statistical data – not on the research into the attitudes of the rural population to social inclusive activities. On the other hand, an approach based on the research into the awareness of rural population about social inclusion in rural areas should be considered as innovative.

MATERIAL AND METHODS

Within the framework of the research project of the Internal Grant Agency of the Faculty of Economics and Management, Czech University of Life Sciences

in Prague in 2014–2015, attention was paid to the perception of social inclusion in rural areas. The issue was, for the purpose of the empirical research, reduced to a phenomenon identifiable by the ordinary rural inhabitants – social inclusive activities that ensure labour, health and social rehabilitation of the groups at risk of social inclusion.

In the regional development documents, rural areas, when compared to towns, are conceived as the spaces with more factors limiting development. On the other hand, rural areas possess the advantage of natural potential. For these reasons, the research focused on the issue of social inclusion connected with the natural potential of rural areas.

Secondary the research focused on social inclusive activities realised within the rural areas³ of the Czech Republic. For this purpose, the publicly available databases were used – in particular the Regional Catalogues of Social Services (at NUTS 3 level), the Catalogue of Social Services Registered by the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, the Catalogue of Sheltered Employment (jobs for people threatened by social exclusion), the List of Rural Community Schools, the database of educational projects implemented by the Local Action Groups and data on social farming provided by the Association for Ecology and Agriculture (AREA viva). The first aim of the paper is to create a typology of the above-mentioned social inclusive activities. The typology was created with the aim of systematizing the available according to the criteria derived from the data itself (see below). The aim has a descriptive character in compliance with the requirements to provide systematically organized and nontrivial information about the researched issues.

The primary research, employing a questionnaire survey, was focused on:

- (a) knowledge of the rural population about social inclusive activities conducted within rural areas,
- (b) attitudes of the rural population to the usage of the natural potential of their place of residence for social inclusive activities intended for specific social groups at the risk of social exclusion (according to the Strategy of Social Inclusion of the Czech Republic).⁴

³According to the methodology of the Czech Statistical Office, rural municipalities were considered to be those with up to 2000 inhabitants. This methodology was used for all cases with the exception of the Rural Community Schools, which could be located in municipalities up to 5000 inhabitants (according to rules provided by the National Network of Rural Community Schools).

⁴Ethnic minorities were not deliberately included in the selected groups due to the possible influence by the publicized problems with migrants.

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Thus, the subject of the research includes solidarity (the main principle of cohesive society) though in limited dimensions. The second aim of the paper is to consider the distribution of attitudes of the rural population to social inclusive activities using the local natural potential of their place of residence. The distribution is bound by generation, gender, civic participation and economic activity (employees or employers). Thus, the research question focuses on the level of solidarity (indicated by these attitudes) and the objects of solidarity (indicated by the identification of social groups at the risk of social exclusion).

Considering the secondary research, the data was processed using a typological procedure to create a typology of social inclusive activities in rural areas of the Czech Republic. Despite the fact that all systematically elaborated sources were used in creating it, we are aware that the typology created could not be complete.

Considering the primary research, the questionnaire survey and statistical procedure were used for the data processing. The questionnaire focused on the appreciation of the local natural potential, the awareness of using the natural environment for inclusive activities, the knowledge about inclusive activities within the respondents' locality, thinking about the possibilities for using the local natural environment for inclusive activities and the preferred target groups for these activities. The survey was done within 9 Regions (NUTS 3) in the Czech Republic, and in each of them 2 or 4 rural municipalities were selected. This represented in total 22 rural municipalities – half of them with social inclusive activities identified by the secondary research (see above) and half of them without these activities. Quota sampling according to age, gender and level of education was used. A total number of 687 questionnaires ($N = 687$) was used for data processing. The procedure chosen for the data collection led to the following structure of the sample: 53.6% of respondents are from the municipalities with inclusive activities and 46.4% from the municipalities without inclusive activities; 52% are female and 48% male; 30.5% of the respondents are 35 years old or younger, 40.1% are between 36 and 54 years and 29.4% are over 55 years of age; 38.3% of the respondents have the primary education or an apprenticeship, 36.4% have the secondary education and 25.3% have the tertiary education; 15.3% of the respondents are entrepreneurs, 54.3% are employees and 30.4% are economically inactive; regarding their participation in public life within the municipality,

5.5% of the respondents are members of a municipal council, 14.3% of the respondents are active within local associations and 80.2% of respondents do not play an active role in rural development.

The IBM SPSS Statistics Ver. 23 was used for data processing. The Pearson's chi-square test was used to consider the tests of the hypothesis on dependence or independence (particularly variables on thinking about the possibilities for using the local natural environment for inclusive activities). To obtain information about the direction of dependency-adjusted residuals, a contingency table was used. Regarding testing mean differences, the non-parametric tests for ordinal variables were used (appreciation of local natural potential and awareness about using the natural environment for inclusive activities) – particularly the Mann-Whitney Test for dichotomy sorting variables (e.g. gender) and the Kruskal-Wallis Test for other sorting variables (e.g. education, age, economic activity, public participation). In the second case, the Bonferroni Post Hoc Tests were used for the multiple comparison. Mean differences of another variable (preferred target groups for inclusive activities within locality) were tested using a T -test for dichotomy sorting variables (e.g. gender) and the Oneway ANOVA for other sorting variables (e.g. education, age, economic activity, public participation), in the second case, the Bonferroni Post Hoc Tests for multiple comparison were also used. All variables and dependencies were tested at the usual 5 or 10% significance level (statistically significant factors are depicted within the table in section Results and Discussion).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Typology of social inclusive activities located in the Czech rural areas

There exists a wide variety of social inclusive activities within the Czech rural areas, which are still not sufficiently systematically analysed. Within this paper, we create a typology of inclusive activities based on 1123 organisations (about one third of them operating within more than one rural municipality) that provide social inclusive activities within the Czech rural areas. The typology is formed mainly on the basis of the following criteria: the type of activity with regard to agriculture (connection/non-connection with agriculture), the role within social

Table 1. Typology of social inclusive activities within the Czech rural areas

Factors	Types/share (%)			
	Connected with agriculture	Non-connected with agriculture		Inclusion by education
Type of activity (with regard to agriculture)	9.6	79.2		11.2
Role within social inclusion	Providing services in social inclusion 44.9		Employing people in social inclusion 55.1	
Capacity (clients, beds, created jobs)	Small scale (up to 50) 56.0	Medium scale (51–100) 22.5		Large scale (above 101) 21.5
Means of providing services	Terrain 25.7	Residential 44.3	Ambulatory 7.5	Combination 22.5
Methods of rural space utilization	Natural potential 31.5	Social potential 6.5		Combination 62.0

inclusion (providing services or employing people threatened by social exclusion), the capacity from the perspectives of the number of clients, beds or created sheltered employment, the way of providing services (terrain, residential, ambulatory) and methods of rural space utilization – the usage of the natural or social potential (Table 1).

It is possible to identify three basic groups of social inclusive activities from the perspective of the type of activity (with regard to agriculture). The first and the most frequent type is activity not connected with agriculture, which is extended far behind the sphere of inclusion by education and activities directly connected with both the conventional and organic agriculture. In this context, it is possible to think about the insufficient usage of potential, which is supplied (regarding social inclusion) by rural areas in connection with agriculture. However, this situation is reflected within the working document prepared by the Ministry of Agriculture of the Czech Republic, which is focused on social farming.

When looking at the role within social inclusion, the organisations that provide sheltered employment prevail, while those providing social inclusion services lag slightly behind. When the share is considered according to the number of clients or created jobs, the situation differs. There the number of clients of social services prevails, with the share of 69.8% against the 30.2% share of the created sheltered employment. This is also related to the fact that the organisations providing social services within Czech rural areas are on a larger scale than those providing jobs in social inclusion. The average number of clients of the organisations providing social services is 27.2,

but the average number of employees is 9.6 per one employer providing sheltered employment.

Another important factor of the typology is the means of providing services. Here the residential services prevail over the terrain and ambulatory services. It is possible to illustrate the complexity of inclusive services provided by the 22.5% share of organisations providing social inclusive services using some combination of all the above-mentioned forms.

Regarding the following primary research, it is important to also mention the typology of inclusive activities according to the methods of the rural space utilization. From this perspective, the natural potential is significantly preferred against the social potential (familiar environment). The highest proportion of inclusive activities use a combination of natural and social potential, but from the available sources, it is not possible to identify their internal proportions. From the above-mentioned facts, it is possible to infer that social service providers are aware of the importance of the natural potential of the Czech rural areas. The answer to the question of whether and to what extent rural inhabitants are also aware of this potential is provided by the following section based on the primary research.

Attitudes of rural inhabitants to social inclusive activities in their place of residence

This section provides selected results of the questionnaire survey (see the Material and Methods) section. The rural inhabitants' appreciation of the natural environment and surroundings of their residence was assessed.⁵ Their knowledge of the means of assistance

⁵This variable consists of 11 items (evaluated on the scale from 1 = best to 5 = worst), which were grouped into 4 sections: (a) abiotic factors – air and climate, weather and temperature, water, soil, light (daylight, public lighting etc.),

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available to disadvantaged social groups located in rural areas was also examined.⁶ This introduction to the issue was followed by three interconnected questions focused on: the consideration of the respondents about these issues, the evaluation of whether these activities take place in their place residence on a sufficient scale and if not, to which groups (according to the preferences of the respondents) the activities should be extended.⁷

The appreciation of all particular items of natural environment and surroundings of the place of residence is close to the very good mark (2) – it oscillates around average values of 1.75 (natural space and beauty of the landscape) to 2.57 (built up area). The most appreciated is the group of aesthetic factors (always evaluated higher than the average value of 2), followed by a balanced appreciation of the groups of abiotic and biotic factors (the range of values 2.06– 2.24). In the last place, there are technical factors of the natural environment and surroundings (always exceeding a very good rating by at least half a point, meaning a minimum value of 2.5). Similarly, the oriented research usually focuses on the quality of life within rural areas. The quality of life is investigated according to various factors, while the natural potential factors are the best evaluated. These factors are usually called like environment or the appearance of the municipality. Natural space is within these researches indicated as the most common connotation with rural areas (Majerová et al. 2006).

According to the results of our research, the knowledge of various means of assistance for disadvantaged social groups (to be able to integrate to a common way of life) cannot be evaluated as satisfactory. The most widespread knowledge is of rural housing in special homes (seniors, disabled etc.) and organised healing stays in the countryside. The lack of knowledge of these two means of assistance occurred in one fifth to one quarter of the respondents. One third of the

respondents did not know of the sheltered housing and animal assisted therapy. Two fifths of the respondents did not know about temporary stays in special homes in rural areas (e.g. asylum houses) and special help centres in rural areas (e.g. care centres, drop-in centres or crisis centres). One half of the respondents did not know about the use of natural environment for providing sheltered employment in agriculture and the connected sectors. It is not surprising that a higher level of knowledge of these institutions for social inclusion could be seen in groups of people that participate in the public life and are tertiary educated. More interesting is the fact that this type of knowledge is more evident in women and entrepreneurs (against their counterparts).

More than one third of the respondents (37.6%) confess that they never think about these things in connection to their place of residence, and another 19.1% of the respondents think about it only because they became participants in this research. It is possible to conclude that our questions were not new for only two fifths of those surveyed. However, only 7.5% of the respondents mention that they often think about the possible means of assistance to the disadvantaged social groups located in their place of residence.

The evaluation of knowledge of the means of assistance was followed by a question focused on the evaluating the possibility of a greater utilisation of their place of residence for these activities. Only 60% of the respondents dared to assess this issue and one third of them thought that the current utilisation is sufficient. This then leaves 284 respondents (two fifths of the total and two thirds of those responding to this question) who considered that the utilisation should be greater. Only these respondents gave preferences regarding for which groups' the assistance could be directly organised within the municipality where the respondents live. There was an unequivocal preference

(b) biotic – flora, fauna, (c) aesthetic – natural space, beauty of the landscape, nature and landscape as a place to live, (d) technical – built up area.

⁶9 means were mentioned: organised healing stays in the countryside, rural housing in special homes (seniors, disabled etc.), temporary stays in special homes in rural areas (e.g. asylum houses), sheltered housing, special help centres in rural areas (e.g. care centres), animal assisted therapy (canistherapy, hippotherapy), therapeutic communities in rural areas, sheltered employment in agriculture, sheltered employment in sectors connected to agriculture (particular disadvantaged groups were mentioned in the question).

⁷The following groups were offered to mark 1–3 in order of preference: seniors, people with drug addiction problems, vulnerable children and youth, disabled people, chronically and terminally ill people, mentally disabled people, vulnerable families with children, victims of domestic violence and crime. Because at the time of the research the problems began to be connected to a high migration of ethnic groups, we deliberately did not include this disadvantaged group in the research.

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for seniors (2.01)⁸, second came disabled people (2.79), the following two places were shared by vulnerable children and youth (3.20) and vulnerable families with children (3.24), followed by the victims of domestic violence and crime (3.43), mentally disabled people (3.53), chronically and terminally ill people (3.54) and finally people with drug addiction problems (3.77). Seniors are preferred above average by the respondents

who participated in the public life, the entrepreneurs, prefer vulnerable children; young respondents prefer the disabled people, and families are also preferred by the entrepreneurs and by people in the middle age. Victims of domestic violence and crime are preferred above average by the primary educated respondents and by young people; mentally disabled people are preferred mainly by the employees.

Table 2. Statistically significant dependencies between the knowledge and attitude variables and profile (sorting) variables

Variable – attitudes, knowledge	Profile (sorting) variables (<i>p</i> -value)				
	gender	age	education	economic activity	participation
Air and climate (appreciation of natural environment)	0.356	0.487	0.005	0.660	0.339
Weather and temperature (ditto)	0.542	0.053	0.100	0.573	0.251
Soil (ditto)	0.866	0.434	0.013	0.439	0.291
Light-daylight, public lighting (ditto)	0.003	0.733	0.744	0.670	0.504
Flora (ditto)	0.004	0.862	0.683	0.248	0.672
Fauna (ditto)	0.035	0.426	0.858	0.065	0.764
Group – biotic factors (ditto)	0.004	0.669	0.751	0.098	0.846
Natural space (ditto)	0.012	0.983	0.587	0.331	0.680
Beauty of the landscape(ditto)	0.011	0.607	0.225	0.600	0.389
Nature and landscape as a place to live (ditto)	0.001	0.882	0.990	0.657	0.330
Group – aesthetic factors (ditto)	0.001	0.903	0.822	0.422	0.856
Built up area – technical factor (ditto)	0.090	0.079	0.417	0.966	0.746
Healing stays in the countryside (knowledge)	0.052	0.126	0.001	0.006	0.000
Rural housing in special homes (ditto)	0.400	0.326	0.004	0.021	0.150
Temporary stays in special homes (ditto)	0.019	0.196	0.001	0.006	0.007
Sheltered housing (ditto)	0.016	0.555	0.027	0.034	0.321
Special help centres (ditto)	0.008	0.503	0.004	0.042	0.011
Animal assisted therapy (ditto)	0.171	0.328	0.000	0.001	0.030
Therapeutic communities (ditto)	0.051	0.274	0.000	0.001	0.005
Sheltered employment in agriculture (ditto)	0.025	0.947	0.007	0.046	0.000
Sheltered employment in sectors connected to agriculture (ditto)	0.160	0.881	0.009	0.021	0.036
Aggregate knowledge of ways of assistance	0.001	0.516	0.000	0.000	0.000
Thinking about utilisation for social inclusion	0.098	0.089	0.261	0.280	0.000
Evaluation of utilisation for social inclusion	0.711	0.110	0.098	0.018	0.038
Seniors (preferred group)	0.241	0.000	0.510	0.544	0.007
Vulnerable children and youth (ditto)	0.095	0.043	0.563	0.258	0.134
Mentally disabled (ditto)	0.290	0.030	0.083	0.776	0.400
Victims of domestic violence and crime etc. (ditto)	0.429	0.001	0.227	0.089	0.117

The figure excludes attitude variables where no statistically significant dependency on at least one of the profile (sorting) variables was identified. Bold numbers indicate statistically significant differences and dependencies.

⁸The number shows preferential value formed by the 1st, 2nd and 3rd order of choice, the number 4 was used to encode groups without an obtained preferential choice.

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From the results, we can deduce a low level of solidarity indicated by the knowledge of means of assistance for the disadvantaged social groups, thinking about social inclusion and the evaluation of possibilities for using of the local environment for inclusive activities. It is again possible to discuss these results alongside research focused on the quality of life within Czech rural areas. The results of this research refer to the missing social services (mainly terrain and ambulatory) intended for seniors and disabled people (Majerová et al. 2009). Similar results considering the lack of public services (and particularly social services) in rural areas stem also from the studies conducted in the Great Britain (Milbourne and Doheny 2012; Philip and Shucksmith 2003). However, these results do not express solidarity, because they are focused on the needs of the respondents and not the needs of others.

The subsequent phase of data processing tested dependencies between the attitudes and knowledge of social inclusive activities and profile characteristics of respondents as sorting variables – gender, age, education, economic activity and public participation (see Material and Methods). The main purpose of this sorting is to identify which of these characteristics of the social horizontal differentiation affect solidarity (according to its researched indicators) more and in which way. Table 2 depicts the obtained results.

Table 2 shows that the issue of knowledge and attitudes towards carrying out social inclusive activities in rural areas in the place of residence is the most profiled by gender, followed by education and economic activity equally, less by the public participation and the least by age. It also shows that profiling is most significant in the variable monitoring knowledge of means of assistance (this is not profiled only by age). It is also possible to observe profiling in those variables focused on the evaluation and consideration about the adequacy of the utilisation of local natural potential for social inclusive activities (these are the most profiled by the public participation). The appreciation of local natural environment is less profiled, being significantly profiled only by gender, and the preferences of disadvantaged groups that can be subject of support within the respondents' municipality (it is profiled by age).

Profile according to gender

Women (against men) evaluate all the observed groups of factors of natural environment of their

residence more favourably. They also have a better knowledge of the means of assistance available for the disadvantaged groups to be able to integrate to a common way of life – especially the temporary stays in special homes, sheltered housing, therapeutic communities and sheltered employment in agriculture. They are also more likely than men to think about the possibilities for utilising the local natural environment for social inclusive activities. From these facts, it is possible to derive their greater motivation to evaluate the sufficiency/insufficiency of the realisation of these possibilities. They think (more often than men do) that the local natural potential should be used more intensively in this way. The order of preferences concerning which disadvantaged groups might operate some organisations within the locality, is the same for women and men. However, the preferences of women are more evenly spread between all the disadvantaged groups researched. The preferences of men are more sharply defined (the difference of preferential values between the most preferred group and the least preferred group is 1.54 in case of women and 1.84 in case of men).

The attitudes and acting of women (against men) are more relational-oriented and from this fact, there results a higher social sensitivity. In addition, the fact that rural women are more often faced with social exclusion (Shortall 2004; Alston and Kent 2009; Warburton et al. 2014), could explain their higher sensitivity to social inclusive activities. It is also supported by a higher level of participation of rural women in the voluntary sector (Williamson et al. 2004).

Profile according to education

Tertiary educated people, contrary to the respondents with both lower levels of education, evaluate the group of abiotic factors of the local natural environment higher, and conversely they evaluate lower the group of aesthetic factors. The knowledge of all means of assistance for disadvantaged groups increases with education – this can especially be observed when considering rural housing in special homes, temporary stays in special homes and therapeutic communities including animal assisted therapy. There is not any difference between the tertiary and secondary educated people considering other means of assistance, while less knowledge was observed among the primary educated respondents. In addition, the frequency of thinking about these issues in connection to the

place of residency increases with the level of education. Tertiary educated people again more often state that the natural potential of municipalities should be used more intensively in this way. They often prefer those groups that in general do not belong to the considerably preferred groups – mentally disabled, chronically and terminally ill people. Their choice of preferences is the most sharply defined (the difference of preferential values is 1.8, followed by the primary educated – 1.69 and secondary educated respondents – 1.59).

As mentioned above, social inclusion is an issue raised at the beginning of 21st century. It is thus possible to interpret our results as showing that mainly tertiary educated people from the lay public know more about social inclusion. They also think more often about this issue and are more open-minded.

Profile according to economic activity

Entrepreneurs and employees, in contrast to economically inactive people, evaluate better the group of abiotic factors of the local natural environment. Entrepreneurs, contrary to employees and economically inactive people, also evaluate better the group of biotic factors (particularly fauna), while employees, contrary to entrepreneurs and economically inactive people, also evaluate better the group of aesthetic factors. The best knowledge of the ways of assistance for disadvantaged groups is demonstrated by entrepreneurs (particularly of sheltered employment in the sectors connected to agriculture and temporary stays in special homes). The data show that entrepreneurs mainly deal with this type of social assistance according to the law (sheltered employment). Employees think most often about social inclusive activities connected to the place of residence, followed by entrepreneurs, and economically inactive people think the least frequently about these issues. There is not any difference between entrepreneurs and employees considering the evaluation of possibilities for utilising the local natural environment for social inclusive activities. It is not possible to observe any difference in preferences concerning which group should be preferred for social inclusive activities within the locality when considering the economic activity of respondents. The above-mentioned research findings indicate (together with the higher knowledge of entrepreneurs) a low willingness of rural entrepreneurs to actively participate in social inclusion. Other results of our research confirm that

only 7.5% of supported employments are located within rural municipalities; however, about 25% of the population of the Czech Republic live in such areas. The preferences are the most sharply defined among the economically inactive people, showing significant preferences for seniors (the difference of their preferential values is 1.8, followed by employees – 1.67 and entrepreneurs – 1.56).

Profile according to public participation

Those active in the public participation better appreciate both abiotic and biotic factors of the local natural environment. Among all participants it is possible to distinguish the subgroup of municipal councillors, who are (against the participants in local associations and the non-participants) more critical of both the aesthetic and technical factors of the local natural potential.

Active public participants, especially the subgroup of municipal councillors, have a significantly better knowledge of all the considered means of assistance for the disadvantaged groups (included constructed aggregated knowledge). The data show (similarly to the profile according to the economic activity) that local governments deal with the establishment of organisations providing social services according to the law. Municipal councillors also think about these means of assistance most frequently. However, the second group of participants, the members of local associations, is more critical of the adequacy of the utilisation of the natural environment for social inclusive activities. They are followed by the municipal councillors and only then by the non-participants.

Among those groups for which the considered means of assistance are intended, seniors are especially preferred. The preferences are the most sharply defined among the municipal councillors, who have a strong preference for seniors and chronically and terminally ill people (the difference of preferential values, 2.47, is the highest in comparison to all groups according to all profile characteristics). The research findings indicate that it is influenced by the age structure of rural municipalities. The age structure of rural municipalities (excepting the suburbs) is typical by an increasing share of seniors, which is the current challenge for the municipal councillors and the local government in general. The participants in local associations more often prefer victims of domestic violence and crime and mentally disabled people. The difference of preferential values of the participants in

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local associations is 1.93 and it is the lowest among the non-participants – 1.57.

Profile according to age

Older respondents (against the young and middle aged) are more critical of the group of biotic factors, and of the factors of weather and temperature from the group of abiotic factors. Young respondents (against older and middle age) are more critical of light (daylight, public lighting) and they evaluate soil better from the abiotic factors. Among the middle aged a negative attitude to the technical factors of local environment, the built up area, is typical. Knowledge of various means of assistance for disadvantaged groups is highest among the middle aged (especially of organised healing stays in the countryside, therapeutic communities and temporary stays in special homes). Older respondents demonstrate knowledge only of those means of assistance which affect them – rural housing in special homes for seniors. There is not any difference between age groups regarding thinking about these issues in connection to place of residence, with the exception that young respondents often (against older respondents) responded with “It had not occurred to me until now”. Middle-aged respondents (against young and older aged) were often able to evaluate the adequacy of the utilisation of the local environment for social inclusive activities, including the consideration that more intensive utilisation would be possible. It is possible to observe some differences of preferred disadvantaged groups as assistance recipients within the municipality. The young and middle aged generations (against the older generation) prefer victims of domestic violence and crime more, middle aged (against the older generation) prefer vulnerable children and youth and vulnerable families with children more, older respondents (against young and middle aged) prefer seniors and also chronically and terminally ill people more. Preferences are sharpest defined in the group of older aged respondents and these increase with age (the difference of preferential values between the most preferred group and the least preferred group: young – 1.32; middle aged – 1.58; older aged – 2.23).

Our results could be only partially discussed alongside the results of the international research project SHARE – Survey of Health, Ageing and Retirement in Europe, in which the Czech Republic also participated in 2006 and 2007. This research mostly discussed the intergenerational solidarity and indicates its low level

in the Czech Republic (Havlíková 2012). Our results are compatible with the results of the above-mentioned research. Young people are the least interested in inclusive activities. In cases where they are interested, they do not prefer the assistance for seniors.

CONCLUSIONS

The idea of a cohesive society based on the concept of social inclusion is the contemporary expression of the desire for a society with a high integrity that does not deny the autonomy of individuals. In contrast to the second half of the 20th century, it emphasizes the need to be able to solve the horizontal social disparities not only in their economic aspects (poverty), but also in the social and cultural aspects (citizenship) as it is stated also by Geddes and Benington (2001). However, it takes place within a society that is typified by a low level of solidarity. Because solidarity is considered as the main factor in creating a cohesive society, we focused our research mainly on the problems of solidarity with regard to social inclusive activities using the rural natural potential.

The paper focuses on the selected aspects of social inclusion, bounded by the rural areas of the Czech Republic. The paper presents results of the research answering the following questions: How are social inclusive activities distributed within Czech rural areas; how does the rural population perceive these activities; and how do they think about the utilisation of the natural potential of their place of residence for these activities.

The typology of social inclusive activities in rural areas, which we created based on the secondary research, consists of 1123 organisations carrying out these activities. The vast majority of these organisations are not focused on agriculture. There is a slight majority of organisations providing sheltered employment for people/groups threatened by social exclusion, over those providing social services for these people or groups. However, the share of inclusive activities in rural municipalities (where 25% of the population of the Czech Republic live) is significantly lower (7.5% of sheltered employments and only 2.3% of registered social services) than within the remaining municipalities (where 75% of the population live). In this context, it is positive that a document prepared by the Ministry of Agriculture of the Czech Republic focuses directly on social farming. The implementation of social farming in practice of the Czech Republic

could increase social inclusion regarding the labour market. It could also enhance the knowledge, positive attitudes and in general solidarity with disabled people who are able to work. We find out that the knowledge of rural population about the employment (using the rural natural potential) of people/groups threatened by social exclusion is the lowest (against the other ways of social inclusion), despite the fact that the respondents evaluate local natural potential of their place of residency as very good (especially considering the aesthetic, but also biotic and abiotic factors). The research findings indicate that sheltered employment is relatively often connected by the rural population with organisations providing social services. Rural people then have the awareness of the clients of these social services (the number of clients also exceed the number of employees at sheltered employment) and from them especially the clients of residential social services (who are also more numerous than the clients of terrain and ambulatory social services). However, from the results of other research focused on the quality of life (Majerová et al. 2009), the terrain and ambulatory social services are especially missing within rural areas. Thus, the services that facilitate the lives of disadvantaged people (mainly due to the age, physical disability or the care for a member of family) are missing. It is possible to conclude that rural people associate the issue of social inclusion (if they perceive this issue at all) only with the classical form of social inclusive activities. We suggest that a greater awareness of this new issue is determined by the gender differences in attitudes and activity, a higher level of education and the engagement with the legislative framework (which relates to the competences of rural entrepreneurs and local governments).

The above-mentioned results indicate, and the question directly focused on this issue within the questionnaire confirms, that the majority of the respondents do not deal with the issue of social inclusion. It is therefore possible to state, as a positive side effect, that the questionnaire survey acted (especially for the younger respondents up to 35 years), as a “public awareness activity”. However, it cannot be expected, that this research will increase solidarity both intergenerationally and towards various social groups threatened by social exclusion. In this context, it can be noted that in our experience the main interest of rural population was in the ethnic minorities – migrants. This interest was manifested mainly as the refusal of solidarity. The respondents very often expressed their positive opinion about the fact that

this group was not included in the research. It would have probably negatively affected the response rate of the questionnaires and the quality of the results obtained.

Only those who perceived and thought about the issue of social inclusion even before our research, evaluated (by indicating their preferences within the questionnaire survey) the adequacy of the utilisation of the local natural potential for inclusive activities. Splitting the respondents in this way increased the validity of the results, because the declaratory and the unsubstantiated statements were not included. It is not surprising that the respondents usually adopt a negative attitude. According to our opinion, this includes a certain sluggishness to the issue of social inclusion within their attitude. This sluggishness is not addressed only to the local environment but also to the society as a whole, which is generally evaluated as not solidary enough. This type of society is normatively defined in the literature as an inclusive society. From this perspective, stronger opinions were shown by women, economically active people and also the narrower categories from the groups according to education and civic participation – only the tertiary educated and people participating in the local associations.

No significant intergroup differences were found regarding the preferred social groups for which some of the inclusive activities could be organised directly within the municipality. With regard to the frequently discussed socio-political issues – the demographic development and social weakness of families – there were, unsurprisingly, significant preferences for seniors (they are preferred especially by the seniors themselves and also by the municipal councillors) and vulnerable families, children and youth. On the other hand, low preferences were expressed for the groups including people with drug addiction problems, chronically and terminally ill people and mentally disabled people. The low preference for the latter two groups deserves a close attention especially in connection with the development of diseases in the 21st century. However, these issues are rarely publicly discussed. Visible demonstrations of solidarity without a previous knowledge of these issues could not be assumed. This connection was confirmed during our research.

A crucial conclusion can be considered to arise from connecting the selected results of the secondary and primary research – the social inclusive activities carried out by rural actors confirm the possibilities for

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utilising the local natural environment for inclusive purposes, but mostly outside of the agriculture. The observers of such activities (rural residents) highly appreciate the local natural potential and think that there are significant gaps in its utilisation for social inclusive activities. This consistency between rural actors and rural residents can be supplemented by the examples of good practice from abroad (Room 1999; Fazzi 2011; Mincyte 2011) to argue in favour of the expansion of social farming as an opportunity accompanied by the minimal subjective barriers (shared attitudes and their realisation). The ongoing research is focused on monitoring and analysing the objective barriers (institutional framework).

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