

New possibilities of identifying social capital for its use in sustainable rural development

Nové možnosti identifikace sociálního kapitálu pro jeho využití v trvale udržitelném rozvoji venkova

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Abstract: In relation to sustainable rural development, the paper starts with the question of its conditions. One of them is social acceptance of various projects or programmes. This issue is joined with the co-ordination of human activities. The mechanism facilitating the co-ordination in contemporary societies is related to social capital. Its concept is outlined through the references to the basic literature about the topic. Using content analysis, based on the quantification of the categories created through the analysis of the literature about the topic, the social capital in selected municipalities is investigated. The main aim of the paper, however, is to show the role of this method in social capital fast identification. Although the approach necessitates further elaboration, it can be considered as the first important step in the practice of development activities. The background of the paper reflects the challenges of the World Bank concerning the elaboration and development of the new methods of measuring social capital.

Key words: social capital, sustainable rural development, content analysis

Abstrakt: Článek v souvislosti s trvale udržitelným rozvojem venkova oslovuje otázku předpokladů tohoto rozvoje. Jedním z nich je sociální přijatelnost různých projektů či programů. Tato záležitost je spojena s koordinací lidských aktivit. Tu v soudobých společnostech umožňuje především sociální kapitál, který je ve vstupní části článku přiblížen v odkazech na základní zdrojovou literaturu. Metodou obsahové analýzy, založenou na kvantifikaci kategorií vytvořených rozborem zdrojové literatury, je sociální kapitál sledován ve vybraných obcích. Hlavním cílem práce je však především představit roli této metody při rychlé identifikaci sociálního kapitálu. I když tento přístup vyžaduje ještě další a soustavnější rozpracování, má testování možností dané metody praktické vyznění pro připravovatele rozvojových projektů a odpovídá požadavkům Světové banky na nové způsoby měření sociálního kapitálu.

Klíčová slova: sociální kapitál, trvale udržitelný rozvoj venkova, obsahová analýza

INTRODUCTION

The issue of rural development becomes more and more one of the priorities of the EU agenda, and they also achieves an increased importance in the EU member states national policies. To confirm this statement it is easy just to look, for instance, into planned changes in the proportion of spending concerning two pillars of the reformed Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) in 2007–2013. Based on the agreement of the EU leaders at the European Council in October 2002 in Brussels, it is assumed the existence and the implementation of the strict budget ceiling as for the overall expenditure (in nominal terms) which is rela-

ted to market support and direct payments. For each year 2007–2013, this expenditure shall be kept below the 2006 figure (increased 1% per year). However, this ceiling will not be applied as for the spending related to rural development, i.e. to the second pillar of the CAP. This decision of the European Council emphasizes the importance of the orientation toward multifunctional agriculture and less favorable areas (Fact Sheet 2003).

Observing the discussions about rural development as the priority in the reformed CAP, it is evident that participants address not only economic and technical, or environmental dimensions of this development but they also highlight and refer to social area. Such orien-

tation is documented in the Cork Declaration on rural development from 1996 or in the Salzburg Declaration on rural development from 2003. Outlined mutual connections and overlapping of economic efficiency, environmental friendliness and social acceptance are in accordance with prevailing understanding of sustainable development (Keller 1997; Moldan 2001; Svatoš 2004).

The dimension of social acceptance in sustainable development is important from the point of view of this text. Social acceptance as one of the components of sustainable rural development is often related to the ways how people perceive and interpret suggested and implemented measures of rural development policies (for instance, do they accept them as beneficial, or do they refuse and reject them as unfair?). And because the perceptions and interpretations of the world guide human activities, the ways, in which people consider rural development, influence their activities in the sense of their costs, including transaction costs (Mlčoch 1997). What is concerned it is not the perception and interpretation of the world done by isolated and atomised individuals but perceptions and interpretations of the groups of people, of individuals with their relations and interactions with others. Therefore, the *social* acceptance is emphasised.

Social acceptance is the phenomenon becoming more obvious in overcrowded post-industrial societies. They are the societies where the utility value of all goods tends to zero because their utilisation is not socially co-ordinated due the existence and activities of large groups of people (Bělohradský 2002). An example can be the urban sprawl. The growth of private housing in the hinterland of large cities can be considered as economically irrational (necessity of time consuming and often costly commutation to jobs located in the city centres results in the necessity to possess second housing in the city to avoid everyday commutation and traffic jams). Moreover, this kind of housing often decreases the quality of life (just to mention separated families, when a wife with children stays all week in the neighbourhood of new houses built in the city vicinity, while a husband spends weekdays nights in the apartment in the city; another element concerning the quality of life is the insensitive architecture of new urban sprawl developments which devastates rural landscape). One reason of these problems is, as mentioned above, the lack or the low level of social co-ordination of activities. As a result of outlined situation, a social acceptance of any such type of development decreases and the development is not sustainable. Empty rurbanized settlements in the hinterland of the large cities, traffic jams on the roads joining these settlements with the

city centres are just some examples of serious problems and risks for future sustainable development (Rural Developments 1997).

Social co-ordination of activities appears to be a necessary condition of the social acceptance of various activities, projects or programmes, and therefore also of the sustainable development. The transaction costs grow without appropriate co-ordination, the development is not sustainable any more, and is not therefore socially acceptable. That is why it is important to search for the mechanisms and conditions of social co-ordination.

THE GOALS OF THE PAPER AND METHODS USED

Social acceptance, which is one of the components of sustainable development, will be understood in this text in its relation to the co-ordination of activities of people because the co-ordination is the background for the social acceptance. Both social acceptance and social co-ordination are related to the ways how people perceive and interpret various events and processes, they are related to human interactions and relations, and to institutions (giving the order to the society), which originate in human interactions. These areas are the fields of interests of social sciences, including sociology (Berger 1991).

The paper will attempt to highlight the possibilities of the identification (and because of the practical outcomes, the fast ways of identification are needed) of some indicators showing the ways (conditions and possibilities) of the co-ordination of activities of large groups of people which make the activities to be socially acceptable and therefore sustainable. So-called social capital is considered to be the fundament of the co-ordination of activities. Social capital is such an asset of an individual or of a society, which consists in the relations existing among the people (Portes 1998).

Because the length this text does not allow the implementation of detailed quantified identification of social capital (for instance the World Bank uses the tools /called SOCAT/ of more than 200 pages of questionnaires and interviews), and because not only quantification but also understanding should be addressed, it was necessary to search for other approach and technique. In this respect, the text continues ideas of S. Hubík (2004) who tries to test methodology able to measure as well as to understand social capital. Therefore, the idea in this text is to find and to use such method, which would not be long as for the time available, would not need extended tools, would not

be extremely costly, and would bring new possibilities for identifying the social capital in the sense of combining understanding (qualitative approach) with quantification. They are, by the way, also the issues required by the World Bank when speaking about methodology concerning social capital measurement. Therefore, another goal of this paper is to outline fast and not very costly method of finding social capital and defining its role and use in sustainable rural development. Such method (in sociology sometime called as the research technique) can be used in the preparation of the concrete strategies, programmes or projects in certain localities or regions to work in them with the backgrounds of social co-ordination of activities.

To achieve suggested goals, it is possible to use documentary research (document study) based on the content analysis. Such an analysis, which represents non-direct research technique, enables the quantification of formerly non-quantified data. This method is described in details in many textbooks of sociology (Giddens 1989, Jandourek 2003), and also in textbooks about the research in social sciences (e.g. Bailey 1987; Disman 1969).

The source material for elaborating and for the first testing of this method used in identifying social capital is the Czech journal *Ekonom*. This selection was influenced by the role of mass-media in modern world (Giddens 1999). Another reason was critical appraisal (evaluation) of the available documents in mass-media, which is one of the basic requirements concerning documentary research through content analysis of documents (Disman 1969). This journal is systematically engaged in the issues of regional development (and not only in Czechia) both from the point of view of actors of development and structures the actors act in and which they also create. Especially the articles in the section *Ekonom na cestách* (Travelling *Ekonom*) describe the problems of regions or show them in the form of popular case studies of localities framing problems into their broader context. This paper will use all numbers of this weekly journal in 2004 till the number 20. In these numbers, the articles addressing the rural communities will be studied.

Document study based on the content analysis (according to Bailey 1987) is in our case structured technique of document analysis in which the investigator firstly constructs the sets of mutually exclusive and exhaustive categories. In the next step a researcher records the scope, frequency and the evaluation of the context (if it is possible) in which every out of

investigated categories is used in the analysed document. To do it, the recording units must be defined. The recording unit for the purpose of this paper will be the size (area) in cm² of analysed articles in the journal *Ekonom*. The articles itself represent so-called contextual units (i.e. the material which has to be studied to define the recording unit in a correct way).

Differing from the classical content analysis, the method implemented in this paper is used not only as a technique helping to describe apparent content of whatever message in systematic, objective and quantitative way but also as a way helping quick identification of social capital and showing its role and potentials in sustainable development of rural communities. It is because of the needs of practical solutions, which cannot wait long time till profound research in social capital is done.

MATERIAL

There is a general agreement among social scientists that the co-ordination of activities (i.e. the achievement of the order in the collective actions of individual people) is related either to the mechanisms of market (Hayek's cosmos – endogenous spontaneous order which makes possible and guarantees the co-ordination of activities), or to the mechanisms of management – governance, regulations (Hayek's taxis – order organised from outside and thus guaranteeing and making possible the co-ordination of activities). In both cases we are facing the relations among people. That is why we are also interested what are “the assets”, which are embedded in these relations. The second questions is how these “assets”, which can be used, facilitate the activities of an individual or a collective entity to achieve “profit” consisting in skilled co-ordination of activities.

When we are speaking about the assets related to the interactions of various actors, we can also speak about social capital because it is considered as an investment in social relations with expected returns in the marketplace, or, in other words, as the resources embedded in a social structure that are accessed and/or mobilised in purposive action (Lin 2001). Social capital is a “basic stock of assets” of society, returns of which are available in several consequent time periods (Buchanan 1996). The purpose of such social capital, existing in the form of laws as a sort of “public goods” is, according to Buchanan, the limitation of extremely egoistic behaviour of people in the favour

¹ The World Bank due to operative reasons relates the use of this multi-dimensional concept only to norms and networks, which facilitate collective activities.

of common but not solely one way oriented profits. Contemporary, almost classical definition of social capital, which is also accepted by the World Bank¹, was developed by R. Putnam (1993). He characterises social capital as follows: features of social organisation such as trust, norms and networks of civic engagement, which can improve the efficiency of operation of society through facilitating co-ordinated activities. He refines and develops J. Coleman (1988) for whom social capital represents these social structures, which enable people to achieve their goals in an easier way. In more extended way, social capital is defined by Falk and Kilpatrick (2000). According to them social capital is a product of social interactions with the

potential to contribute to social, civic, and economic development of localities. The interactions originate in knowledge and identity (close to human capital) and in the same way interactions use and build social capital. The nature of social capital is based on various qualitative dimensions of the interactions in which social capital originates – i.e. the quality of internal and external interactions related to particular community, its historicity, vision of future, reciprocity, trust, shared values and norms. The approach of the last mentioned authors considers social capital as a phenomenon which is always in the process (it is being formed, created all the time). It is because social capital is apparent only in the moment when it is used,

Table 1. The percentile coverage of the social capital indicators in the investigated texts

Investigated indicator (measured in % of the text size, in which the indicators is addressed in relation the whole text analyzed)		Name of the community									
		Potštát		Josefův Důl		Jesenice u Prahy		Zlatníky-Hodkovice		Protters (Austria)	
		note 1	note 2	note1	note 2	note 1	note 2	note 1	note 2	note 1	note 2
Interactions (relations), norms, values connected	collaboration inside	8.1	16.1	0.0	0.0	18.6	33.0	8.1	19.1	5.7	13.0
	conflict inside	0.0	0.0	22.9	45.0	15.4	27.3	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
	collaboration outside	3.5	6.9	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	6.7	15.8	0.0	0.0
	conflict inside	24.9	49.4	5.5	10.8	4.8	8.5	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Beliefs and trust	exist	11.0	21.8	7.5	14.7	4.8	8.5	0.0	0.0	12.0	27.5
	do not exist	0.0	0.0	2.5	4.9	0.0	0.0	3.7	8.7	0.0	0.0
Visions, knowledge	exist	0.0	0.0	11.6	22.7	8.8	15.6	13.4	31.7	26.0	59.5
	do not exist	2.9	5.8	1.0	1.9	0.0	0.0	10.4	24.6	0.0	0.0
Belonging to community	exist	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	4.0	7.1	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
	do not exist	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Size of analyzed text total (in cm ²) – without pictures and titles		471		300		341		369		286	
% of total text appropriate for the analysis of social capital		50.4		51.0		56.4		42.3		43.7	
Main problem described in the text		relations to army (military base)		fires in locality (recreation centre)		developing village (Prague vicinity)		reactions to threats (by-pass road)		coping with joining EU (wine farmers)	
General development of the community described in the text		problems, depends on external relations		problems, depends on internal relations		dynamic, internal potentials for development		depends on future, strong internal potentials		coping with change using internal potentials	

Note 1: % in which the concrete indicator of social capital is addressed in the entire text in all possible ways of the use of this indicator

Note 2: % in which the concrete indicator of social capital is addressed only in the text which contains various indicators appropriate for the analysis of social capital in all possibilities ways of use of this indicator

although it is always embedded in our relations. It makes the possibility of its measurement more difficult, if using direct techniques of investigation. A little bit different understanding of social capital can be found in the works of P. Bourdieu (1985). More than with the collective of equal and free actors (equities), as Coleman, Putnam or Falk with Kilpatrick do, he relates social capital with unequal positions (hierarchies) of individuals creating social strata (classes). According to P. Bourdieu, social capital is a part of symbolic capital and consists in the wealth of relations and interactions of an individual. It contributes to and defines his/her (social actor's) social status. It is a sort of a "credit" a person has, his/her reputation, honour, the source of his/her virtue or distinction, which is based on the amount and quality of his/her social relations.

Based on the above outlined definitions of social capital, it is obvious that its elements are mutually interconnected. These elements will be used as the categories for the content analysis, and they are:

- **Interactions** (co-operation /including the networks of civic engagements and associations/ or conflict inside localities or outside the localities);
- **Norms** (rules of conduct, institutions) and **values** (ideals about what is desirable) which work as the fundament for interactions;
- **Trust** and **beliefs** (the issues related to reliability of myself, of others and of institutions);
- **Knowledge** and **visions** related to the locality (the perception and interpretation of the events and processes);
- **Identity** (belonging to the local community);
- **Position of a person in the local community** (the amount /"wealth"/ and the quality of the relations of an individual, his/her "credit" prestige).

RESULTS

The journal *Ekonom* published in its first 20 numbers in 2004 5 articles highlighting the life and the problems of concrete villages. Four out of them were located in Czechia and one in Austria. The titles of the articles suggest about the circumstances of the development in these municipalities. *Stesky vesnice, která byla městem* (Complaints of the village which used to be a town) in the case of Potštát and *Střepy zašlé slávy* (What is left from former glory) in the case of Josefův Dvůr suggest big problems. *Lapeni obchvatem* (Captured by a by-pass highway) in the case of Zlatníky-Hodkovice poses the question how to cope with the negative impacts of road infrastructure development. *Kupředu s jasnou hlavou* (Ahead with

a clear head) in the case of Protters in Austria shows possible ways of coping with problems emerging as a result of change (Austrian EU accession), and *Nevěřte mapám* (Do not trust the maps) is about the development of the village in the Prague vicinity.

In all these articles, the total size of each text was measured. The next step in measurement was the size of the text, which in various contexts addresses the indicators (categories of analysis) presented in the previous section. The results of measurement are documented in Table 1.

DISCUSSION

Looking at the results of measurement and analysis, which was implemented to suggest and to demonstrate the possibilities of content analysis for the quick identification of social capital (therefore only 5 articles from January–April 2004 were selected as a pilot case with an aim to test, if the possibilities of the use of content analysis can be confirmed), it is obvious that in all analysed articles about 2/5–3/5 of the size of the text can be used for the work related to the search of the indicators of social capital and for its measurement through content analysis.

If the conflict situation (the case of Potštát and especially of Josefův Dvůr) is not balanced through certain mechanisms of collaboration (i.e. through the sources of social capital, as it is in the case of Jesenice), than the development is problematic and its outcome is not positive in the sense of sustainable community development. However, the conflict (and especially the conflict inside the community) does not always necessitate to result in almost unmanageable problems and limitations of the development. On the other hand, if the conflict is balanced through the co-operation in the community (based on values and norms shared by all community members, their visions, trust and belonging to the community), it can be shifted into the welfare of all community as the cases of Jesenice (or eventually of Protters) documents. Rewording A. Smith, we can say that in this case, we are facing the invisible hand of social field thanks to which conflict is turned into common benefit of the community dwellers. This transition is guaranteed through successful co-ordination of activities of individuals pursuing their own interests (and therefore being primary in the relations of conflict), i.e. through the existence of social capital enabling the acceptance of the development and its sustainability.

Higher level of co-operation, which balances the negative impacts of conflict in Jesenice, which enables manoeuvring of local administration in Zlatníky-

Hodkovice facing the pressures related to the construction of the Prague highway by-pass, and which enable to cope with the impacts of EU accession in Protters facing the legacy of the scandal resulting from adding glycol to wine, confirm the role of social capital (i.e. the assets and investments in the relations among people) in rural development. However, the role and power of social capital is evident (and it is the case when social capital is measurable), if social capital is used. The context of its use concerns the reactions to processes and influences eroding the system (i.e. especially the conflicts). Because the researchers cannot be always "in the field" when social capital is fully used (the case of direct research techniques), the development of in-direct research techniques (like document study) is needed.

The conflict is necessary condition of operation and identification of social capital. The conflict represents the social context in which beliefs and trust originate (which is evident from the analysed text). Also the visions how to cope with problems originate in conflict. Both mentioned issues are documented in the case of Potštát and Josefův Důl. It is evident that the outcome of the conflict is related to the trust and beliefs, but also to the visions of future. The visions originate either spontaneously or they are introduced in an organised way from outside. Because the institutions, trust in which must be especially emphasised for the sustainable development, are socially constructed (see Swedberg, Granovetter 1992), we should also consider social constructivism as the theoretical background of investigation of social capital. As documented by J. Kabele (1998), they are the vision (social constructions), which govern our activities in the difficult periods of changes. When looking at the villages that passed the change with success (Protters) or which are in the successful phases of development (Jesenice), it is evident the importance of visions and trust (almost 2/5 of the entire text in the case of Protters, and almost 1/5 of the whole text in a case of Jesenice, where also the belonging to community is counted together). On the other hand, none of the analysed articles refers to the "credit" of an individual as the background of the co-ordination of activities. Compared to Putnam's understanding of social capital, its Bourdieu's understanding is not present in the analysed texts in measurable indicators.

CONCLUSION

Albeit content analysis was implemented on a very limited amount of 5 articles (this number can be starting point of the criticism concerning this

paper), a conclusion can be done that the content analysis is a suitable tool for the fast analysis of social capital if direct measurement is not possible. Documents describing the colourful life of communities can be used. Not the official statistical documents, but rather mass media and other public documents seem to be suitable for this reason. The existence of social capital is necessary for successful coping with problems in community and for positive outcome of the conflict (outcome which means the benefit for the whole community). The identification and the usefulness of social capital is evident especially in the time of conflicts and problems. Social capital is the mechanism, which enables to co-ordinate activities and to moderate the conflict into the shape usefulness for all community. In this way it is the necessary mechanism for achieving sustainable development.

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