

Active social policy as a chance for endogenous rural development

Aktivní sociální politika jako šance endogenního rurálního rozvoje

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Abstract: Since 1990s, the discussion about the Czech social policy emphasizes more the necessity to change this policy from passive state social policy towards an active social policy. The latter includes the activities of people in the frames of formal (e.g. NGOs) and informal groups, and therefore also the concept of civic society is accentuated in this respect. Although this concept might be understood in different ways, its common characterization is a spontaneous non-political self-expression of individuals and their groups (the activity that was suppressed before 1989). Through the self-expression, the individuals realize their particular interests. When thinking about active social policy in the frames of civic society, we might assume that the conditions for its implementation are better for the actors in small rural communities. These more favourable conditions are assumed due to the traits of rural communities – e.g. personal, non-anonymous relations, good knowledge and familiarity with particular social problems, etc. However, the actors who try to contribute to active social policy are constrained/controlled in their activities by other community members. The level of these constraints depends on the configuration of social and cultural capital (Bourdieu). The author of the text is for more than one year involved in empirical research in one Czech village. Using qualitative methods she investigates various social events and actors who participate in active social policy (in relation to those who are supposed to participate in this policy as responsible agents). The author assumes that the participation in active social policy is one of the sources of integrated endogenous rural development, while passive social policy (institutionally backed by the state) is more related to exogenous rural development. However, there is a question how the very actors (active members of rural community) do approach this participation and how the other members of rural community evaluate their activities in the sphere of social policy.

Key words: active social policy, actor, endogenous rural development, passive social policy, social capital

Abstrakt: V České republice se od 90. let stále více mluví o nutnosti přecházet od pasivní státní politiky k aktivní sociální politice, tedy ke konání občanů v rámci formálních (nadací, spolků apod.) i neformálních skupin. V této souvislosti se zdůrazňuje koncept občanské společnosti, který je charakteristický spontánním nepolitickým sebevyjádřením (před rokem 1989 v ČR potlačovaným) jedinců a jejich sdružení, skrze něž jedinci realizují své partikulární zájmy. Dalo by se předpokládat, že podmínky pro uplatnění aktivní sociální politiky v rámci občanské společnosti, které mají aktéři v malých venkovských obcích, jsou příznivější díky charakteru venkovských komunit (osobní neanonymní vztahy, dobrá znalost jednotlivých sociálních problémů atd.). Avšak ti aktéři, kteří se k aktivní sociální politice snaží přispět, jsou ve svém jednání omezováni, resp. kontrolováni ostatními členy komunity; přitom má významný vliv konfigurace kulturního a sociálního kapitálu (Bourdieu). Autorka se již více než rok empiricky zabývá jednou českou vesnicí, kde kvalitativně sleduje jednotlivé sociální události a aktéry, kteří participují na aktivní sociální politice (ve vztahu k těm, kteří by na ni měli participovat). Autorka předpokládá, že participace v aktivní sociální politice je jedním z možných zdrojů endogenního rurálního rozvoje, zatímco pasivní politika, kterou institucionálně zajišťuje stát, je zdrojem pro exogenní rurální rozvoj. Otázkou však je, jak k participaci přistupují samotní aktéři (aktivní členové venkovské komunity) a jak jejich jednání hodnotí ostatní členové venkovské komunity.

Klíčová slova: aktivní sociální politika, aktér, endogenní rurální rozvoj, pasivní sociální politika, sociální kapitál

The paper aimed at social policy applied in rural areas was presented by its author at the doctoral seminar Annual Autumn Graduate Seminar in Rural Sociology held at the University of Lodz in Poland in the section titled Changes in Social capital in Rural Areas. The author has been concerned with the issue of social policy for several years – at the Czech University of Agriculture in Prague, where she is working, she participates in the preparation of realisation of the subject Social Policy and she is studying sociology and social policy at the Charles University. At present, she is mainly interested in per-

ception and possible participation in social policy of people living in rural villages.

THEORETICAL APPROACHES

Social state in the late modernity

Since 19th century, sociologists (E. Durkheim, K. Marx, M. Weber etc.) have discussed modern society ambivalence. Although they spoke about modern society defi-

ciencies, superiority of positive features was emphasised. Nowadays-late modernity analyses approach Weber's thesis (Keller 1996) of increasing bureaucracy carried by material progression, a process combating individual creativity and autonomy. The sociologists engaged in the social policy have arisen pessimistic late modernity conceptions (and since 80's there has been a necessity to reflect social state in the European context) and they have innovated the social state conception – so-called “new uncertainty”.

Surely, theoretical and empirical discussions reflecting modernity consequences are contemporary. Present sociologists (Beck, Giddens etc.) highlight the necessity to analyse late modernity institutions (not only social state institution). Concerning social changes after 1989 and the EU entrance, the Czech Republic struggles with new uncertainty in process of social policy constitution. In the evidence of critical attitudes toward strict economic approaches to the social state, sociologists emphasise not so much a financial crisis as a legitimacy crisis, i.e. problems of public opinion about social state. Referring to the public opinion, phenomena representation crisis has been discussed (Konopásek 1998) and a social secure system as a social institution, which is not quite transparent, constant and inert structure, but autonomous and dynamic actor-network is presupposed. The latter includes two basic actor groups – social state receivers (micro-actors) and institutions providing social security (macro-actors).

The social redistribution among social state clients as a presumption of social state crisis reduction (in respect to the European Commission documents about the European Social Policy) assumes human and social costs for decrease in structural changes. In this context, social policy institutions have to be based on changes from passive social policies to the active social policy. While the positive and active social policy approach (based on two basic social principles – participation and subsidiarity) is being applied, social changes must take place.

Nevertheless, there are two approaches to the applying active social policies process: micro-actors activities (they can actively participate in the social security system to support family members and other people's needs); macro-actor activities (particular organisation does more than a legislative duty).

The author has, relating to social policies actions task (especially the actor's participation in the realising social policies) exploited two completely various concepts – functional structuralist concepts and interpretative sociologist concepts. The core theoretical concept is Habermas's civil society concept¹ (Habermas 2000) at

large was engaged in political and social structural society changes, which caused public clash and private sphere clash. The theoretical approach choice (structuralist and interpretative) following the effort to understand situation in any rural community; on the empirical level it means understanding actor's (rural community members, especially actors occupying a key position – the position of local social policies) interpretation of situation. In the context of the Habermas's concept, these social policies actors (members of rural community presenting informal and common relations, knowledge of unique features and context of each particular situation in rural community) take part in the two communication systems – the first is based on personal, non public opinion (personal information system), the second is based on formal communication (public information system). The extension of the actors participation in the local political power is based on the configuration of using both communication systems.

Social state in the late modernity with the respect to the Czech countryside

The urbanisation is considerably a “reforming” process for changes of Czech rural areas in the late modernity. The author does not deal with the concept of urbanisation as a relatively increasing number of inhabitants living in towns only, but especially as the concept of increasing the number of people accepting urban style of living without any respect for people living in the rural or urban areas. However, the ruralisation has not a mainstream tendency, in a quantitative way of thinking it is the process that can be compared to urbanisation based on repeatedly reflecting (returning to) and respecting traditional rural values.

In the 80's, French rural sociologist J.C. Chamboredon (Hudečková 2001) defined a new conception of rurality related to favourable rural renaissance features². The rural renaissance corresponds to the re-constructed, re-conceptualised social state claim – the delegating responsibility from the social state to the NGOs and also individuals. Thus, it is the claim of active social policy realising.

Sociologists used especially an endogenous rural development concept and exogenous rural development concept in their reflection on rural development. Relating to the exogenous rural development, there are initially external, non-rural sources and on the other side in the process of an endogenous rural development, there are dominant internal sources, i.e. rural community sources.

¹ Habermas perceives a civic society as a sphere of individuals, audience in opposition to the public power, and civil society is an important instrument contrary to the political power domain. The private persons, individuals, have not the least political power, but they can attack the political domain held in public power hands. The power struggle between civic society representatives and public power representatives conceives (or re-conceives) action rules. The actor initialises or realises that action brings dynamism to this society structure.

² The one important characteristic is “re-settlement” of rural areas and various activities embracing potentialities to change the style of living in the rural areas with respect to the basic community character (Librová 1994).

The author's empirical research is based on the hypothesis that the *exogenous* rural development concept corresponds to a *passive* way of setting social policy provision up and *endogenous* rural development concept corresponds to an *active* way of setting social policy. The passive social policy provision is, from the rural community members' perspective, external, accepted by social policy macro-actors, and active social policy is internal, accepted by social policy micro-actors.

When an actor cannot be included within "grey mass" auditorium, a claim to be an important part of civic society is set up and he or she determines himself/herself toward power. These actors used possibilities to be active in social policies and then contribute to the endogenous rural development.

The actors participation as a chance for the endogenous rural development

The actor is involved in human act schema and engaged in a situation in which every actor participates and him/her action is orientated at a certain goal and with available sources³. The chance to achieve or to be closer to achievement of one's goal depends on the "play ground" configuration and sources structure operated actors (Kabele 1998). Then, differences in ways of struggle between actors are distinguished (not depending on the fact whether it is a representative of political power or civic society representative). The way of struggle following the character of the actor's relation enforced one's own will inconsistent to the others.

The author focuses on the issue of action people living in the countryside and asks questions about active social policies circumstances, i.e. a relation between active social policies realising and chance to strengthen the endogenous rural development (Kayser 1990). The latter cannot relatively tie rural community more into any urban sources, into centre, which means that it does not realise exogenous rural development.

The core question remains if social environment (social background) determines social relation features of the action of all actors. The social environment does not include only the community (urban or rural) where actors were born, but also community where they live and to which they are closely related. And social relations in the community can be especially based on the *Gesellschaft* principle (more related to the urban environment) or the *Gemeinschaft* principle (more related to the rural environment). Thus, referring to the rural community structured in the Tonnies ideal type – *Gemeinschaft* features are an evidence of the active social policies "re-construction" (by the micro-actors participation). There are two types of micro-actor relations: *Vergemeinschaftung* (based on

subjective sense fellow-action) or *Vergesellschaftung* (based on rational sense fellow-action with a tendency to even more uniform actor interests) (Weber 1999).

If we give attention to the 1990ies, we can say, that the negative aspects in the post-communist countries development are stronger in the rural areas in the contrary to urban areas. In the 1990ies, consequently to the latter, the course (in Czech Republic, Poland, Hungary and Slovenia) from the primary agriculture production towards the rural development, rural tourism, local "green" production, local community, its traditions, local specialities emerged. The re-orientation more to the rural community is supported by the program Leader. Program Leader (bringing basic principles for the European Rural Development Policy) can be traced to politic-administrative decentralisation; actor network social policy and social capital re-conversion. The redistribution in the program Leader framework is called a participative redistribution included national and regional politic-administrative body; expert and interest groups and local actors (the latter are key objects of the empirical part of the article) (Kováč 2000).

METHODOLOGICAL APPROACH AND EMPIRICAL RESULTS

In the Czech Republic, sociologists have not investigated the active social policy realising in the Czech rural areas yet. In respect to a distinctive point of view, the author has decided to choose qualitative sociological method, but after the quantitative sociological method following qualitative investigation was assumed (using especially the questionnaire inquire on the rural community sample). The quantitative investigation is useful because there are many (5 966 municipalities, 95.7%) small rural communities (less than 5 thousands population) in the Czech Republic (see Table 1).

The author's qualitative investigation object is one rural community, situated in the North-East of the Czech

Table 1. Municipalities in the Czech Republic by the size category (1994)

Size of population	Number of municipalities	Percentage of municipalities	Cumulative percentage
0–199	1 699	27.2	27.2
200–499	2 061	33.1	60.3
500–999	1 215	19.5	79.8
1 000–1 999	646	10.4	90.2
2 000–4 999	345	5.5	95.7

Source: Lacina, Vajdová (2002)

³ The capital volume in the Bourdieu's concept (Bourdieu 1979) can be considered as a source for a certain way of action. The capital volume included three sorts of capital (economic, social and cultural capital) and its configuration determines the actor's action. The economic capital included the assets and incomes, cultural means, the formal and informal education, knowledge and useful social capital contacts.

Republic, 100 kilometres from the capital city of Prague with about one thousand population.

The author, in the first part of investigation, used a technique analysing documents, especially the local chronicle, available statistic data, literary fiction sources and local newspaper (it is edited, usually monthly, by the municipality and it includes basic factual information and also “political” discussions of the municipality representatives and citizens). All these sources help the author to understand more the social community life context and social policy cases that occurred in the village.

In the second part of investigation, the author used another qualitative technique – semi-standardised interviews. Respondents (chosen by snow ball sampling technique) were qualified as important actors of the local political life or they were labelled as important actors by other members of municipality or they could be generally accepted as important actors. Interviews were articulated into five parts by certain social policy sections – family, education, health, unemployment and housing problems. Each respondent identified and described the important and actual history of a chosen problem/problems (note: importance of cases depends on the respondent) and also evaluated the process of the problem/problems and participation of citizens.

During empirical work in one village, the author recognised two problems related to the social policy, in the local people’s perspective these are essential and actual problems – education and housing problems. The most escalated housing problem is the case of the Roma family living in the rural community for more than 20 years. The Roma family became homeless, because they are not able to follow the Czech legal system. (Note: Very important for the context is the fact that the mother and father were not born in the village, but they lived in the children’s home provided by the local council.) Relating to the cultural differentiation, the Roma family action is limited and they need help in communication with the social institution representatives. Then a few local actors (particularly the local physician) support them to resolve the everyday and even uncommon social problems. The local council is in this case in the passive position and contemplates an actor’s action respecting the subsidiarity principle. In accordance to the local council passive position, they are expected to let the Roma family members support themselves and the local municipality will be an active social policy subject when it is necessary. In the village, there are three important actors with different rate of intervention into the Roma family housing problem. The most active is the local physician, who has accepted the responsibility instead of the local municipality, he has accommodated them in his own house and transacted the whole case with the competent social workers. Thus, he has acknowledged that “more seasonable” intervention into the Roma family situation than the local council had presumed is important. Accordingly, the municipality as a social policy actor wanted to intervene only when it is needed for the Roma family. And, the local Evangelic vicar has stood up for the local physician, but he did it at

the moment when the local physician asked him to involve himself in the problem solving process.

The second social policies problem is from an education social policy section. In the rural community, there was a call for the local primary school director position in question. The question has arisen from the local entrepreneur initiative, one of the local council members, because his wife, a char-woman in the local primary school, has had personal troubles with her superior (i.e. director) at work. The following actors are crucial for this case: the “former” and “present” director (the director has been changed), basic school staff, school-children parents and grandparents and the local municipality. The activity of municipality is designed by the Czech legal system, it means that the local council members have to vote to support or not to support the director in his position. And when they do not support him, they have to make a proposal of an acceptable person for the director position. The following actors were engaged: the former local primary school director; the present local primary school director; the mayor and the physician. Although the former local primary school director is able to manage the school in the long term and with systematic perspective with respect to the alternative educational forms, his point of view on the everyday personal and operational problems resolving process does not respond to the local public opinion. But on the other hand, he is responsible for the rural community chronicle and he is the local newspaper editor-in-chief. The present local primary school director – his disadvantage is a non-systematic managing, but on the other hand, he has not a problem to resolve the everyday operational problems and he has been born in the village and now he feels a very strong public opinion support even from the mayor and the majority of local council members. The mayor has the right of veto in the process of voting about the local primary school director position and he used it for the “former” director impeachment. The physician has two different roles in this case: he is a friend of the former director and one of the local council members.

There is very complicated “action play ground” where there had been designed two basic groups (in that case one supported the “former” director and other supported the “present” director) with different configuration of the social and cultural capitals and willingness and chances to realise (endogenous) rural development. A detailed analysis of actors strategies relating with particular community social problems resolving will be published in a special paper based on specific qualitative analysing methods (for example “model of three A” – actors, agendas and arenas).

CONCLUSIONS

Understanding the rural community situation, the author found helpful professor Musil’s hypothesis: the Czech population is not orientated on various possibilities of social services and in this connection, a relation

between the efficient social policy related to social state programs and the micro-social relations quality in the frame of every social institution can be assumed (Musil 2000). Then, the author presupposes people being able to orientate in social state services as typical for the low capacity (volume) cultural (optionally social) capital and these people are dependent on the specialised social state institutions or small informal communities (and it can be a rural community).

Relating to the last, a fact that certain social policy realising principles (that is centralised, from the client's point of view, social services are outside the rural community origin, it is a process which intensifies exogenous rural development) can be substituted by the actors and social institution active social policy (i.e. the policy using rural community sources and it is a process intensifying endogenous rural development and there is also a chance to have more flexible and transparent social policy and better controlled social policy by the rural citizens = public civic society) can be obtained..

Nevertheless, actors participating in the active social policy in the Czech countryside "pull down" an almost ideal effective social state idea, because the successful active social policy realising assumed the fitting configuration of economic, cultural and social capital. In this case, the fitting configuration of capital means: The most important is cultural capital (that is an actor's ability to resolve particular social policies problems or being able to realise particular social projects) and social capital (that is the necessity to have a public respect). There is a question who can be an active social policy actor? The author has stated (based on analysing the interviews with rural community representatives and the active social policy participants) the features of the ideal type of an active social policy actor – in most cases, they have university education, they are younger than 40 years, they were not living in the rural community since their date of birth, but moved there with children (the last feature is weakening social capital the most). In the rural public opinion, their behaviour has been evaluated as good, but free and easy.

From the rural public perspective active social policy actors are in the positive point of view "alternative persons", but in the negative point of view "rebellious persons". The chance to be successful in realising any social policies problems is felt by these actors who are sure that

most of the rural community members need them. In the case of the investigated rural community, it is only the local physician.

The author was concerned with the life in the community for more than five years and has registered that the majority of active social policy actors are contemplating leaving the rural community in the horizon five or ten years. They feel the social capital insufficiency to be respected as a "successful" active social policies actor. But there are social benefits for rural community – "rebellious actor spirit" has brought changes into the local political life: there are political discussions in the local newspapers; local people call the local council the "local parliament"; use political instruments as petitions, the local council sessions are approaching Habermas's concept about power representatives and audience involved community members.

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