

The use of social and cultural potentials in regional development

Uplatnění sociálních a kulturních potenciálů v regionálním rozvoji

T. MAREK, T. MARTINEC

Czech University of Agriculture, Prague, Czech Republic

Abstract: The paper deals with problems of regional (rural) development, especially with social and cultural impact on rural development. In the introductory chapter, authors reviewed economical and sociological concepts related to the Integrated Endogenous Regional Development (IERD). In the main part of the paper, authors discuss the presumptions of successful implementing of the IERD concept in the Czech Republic: 1) How are the opinions of rural people (public opinion) respected in the designed projects; and 2) The responsibility of the project designers to the regionally perceived needs. These two factors should be in harmony.

Key words: development projects, social and cultural potentials, neo-classical theory, theory of growth of poles, post-Keynesian theory, social and cultural capital, integrated endogenous regional development

Abstrakt: Autoři se zabývají problémem regionálního rozvoje, především pak sociálním a kulturním dopadem na rozvoj venkovského prostoru. V první části uvádějí přehled ekonomických a sociologických konceptů, které se týkají IERD. V hlavní části tohoto příspěvku diskutují předpoklady úspěšné implementace IERD v ČR: 1. Respektování názorů venkovské (místní) veřejnosti; 2. Odpovědnost tvůrců projektů k regionálně citěným potřebám. Tyto dva faktory by měli být v souznění.

Klíčová slova: projekty rozvoje, sociální a kulturní potenciály, neoklasická teorie, teorie růstu polí, postkeynesiánská teorie, sociální a kulturní kapitál, integrovaný endogenní regionální rozvoj

As the Czech Republic is going to join the European Union soon and as the impacts of globalisation deepen, a discussion opens on resolving regional disparities (which are in our republic connected with the transition to market economy) including the support of the disadvantaged regions with low GDP and low level of investments, high unemployment, insufficient services and infrastructure and structural difficulties. Rural areas usually have these characteristics. Social-cultural aspects are often neglected regarding rural regional development and the emphasis is put especially on economic and material aspects – quantitative growth of economic development, integration of less favoured regions into interregional division of labour and reduction of developmental inequalities, influence of external factors such as private capital, innovations, entrepreneurial activities and others. These strategies have failed in many cases. Therefore, new approaches to solving the problem of inequalities in regions are needed. Development projects affect (change or strengthen) the order in rural communities, municipalities and regions.

The need to understand social events and cultural differences of individual regions is being accepted. Sociol-

ogists are beginning to be involved in projects of regional development to monitor social persons involved, social nets and local power and to find social-cultural potentials and structures of the given regions. Also our researches we have carried out in Městec Králové and Mělník as a part of our Ph.D. thesis showed that the views of the town's council, which focuses mainly on formal (material) features of the town, often do not correspond with the views of the citizens.

In the doctoral thesis, we want to engage in the problems of the social-cultural potentials utilisation and their influence on the development of municipalities and micro-regions. This article presents an outline of these problems. These theoretic outcomes will be applied to localities of small towns and their environs in the Middle Bohemia. The goal of the empirical research will be to make a diagnosis on the state of local community as a social unit (meaning not only economic but also cultural unit) and to propose ways of reconstruction and mobilisation of the inner resources to develop its economic, social-cultural and social-political functions.

The discussed item is an important part of authors' Ph.D. studies and they will use the conclusions there.¹

¹ This paper was published at the conference organised by the Polish Association of Agricultural and Agribusiness Economists in Koszalin (September 2003). The reason why the authors are publishing this paper again is, that it is nearly impossible to get this publication in the Czech Republic. By this way, the authors are presenting this paper to the Czech scientific public.

ECONOMIC AND SOCIOLOGIC DEVELOPMENT CONCEPTS

At first, let us introduce and briefly analyse the main theoretic bases of the past and current approaches to regional development.

There are three economic development theories – the neo-classical theory, the theory of growth of poles, the postKeynes theory – which were used in research and practice of regional – rural development. These theories state the conditions related to production factors (capital, labour and technological development, their structure and placement) in which a concrete entity (municipality, region, state) would grow. Used strategies are connected by the fact that the goal of traditional regional policy was to increase quantitative economic development. All these theories (Stoehr in Jehle 1998) also presupposed greater integration of less favoured regions into inter-regional division of labour and the reduction of inequalities in development. Measures were based mainly on external factors such as private capital, technologies, innovations, entrepreneurial activities, public funds and external demand (Jehle 1998) and their results were in support of building infrastructure and financial stimulation of production and business societies. These strategies have not brought the expected results.

According to the principles of neo-classical theory, market forces “themselves bring the unequal economic growth to equilibrium” (Jehle 1998). The inter-regional factor of mobility is very important for regional economic growth. Labour moves to regions with the higher possible income, capital flows after the better interest rates. This movement lasts until the factors yields are equal in all regions. The measures of structural policies based on the neo-classical theory are usually short-term ones, they focus on strengthening market forces (competitive environment) – financing the expenses of production factors mobility by the government.

According to the theory of growth of poles, development of region, growth of incomes and of living standards is only possible if it leads to rise of one or more centres with economic power (growth poles). A growth pole can be any kind of territorially concentrated activity (from a firm to a whole regional agglomeration), which has a direct or indirect influence on territorial economic units and which has the ability to positively influence its surroundings and to accelerate economic development. In the places with growth poles, it is possible to reach concentrated incomes, which can be used for solving structural problems in the regions without growth poles. It is the task of structural policy to support the development of growth poles.

In the postKeynes theory, regional development (growth) is determined by demand. A region produces goods for both export and national market. Regional production should focus on the goods for export because they bring an influx of incomes to the region (export surplus). Goods for local market do not lead to increase of demand and therefore are not an impulse for the internal growth. According to the postkeyness theory, export demand is only influenced from the outside. The theory does not consider that widening of export base could be influenced by the internal growth factors. This theory has become a basis for forming the regional policy focused on innovations and investments.

Two sociological concepts, which focus attention on the volitional and intentional action and its bearers – persons involved and rural areas – originated at the same time as the above mentioned theories.

The first concept, concept of re-valorization² expresses the need of space for global society and the need of parity for healthy society (Hudečková, Jehle 1997).

The second concept, concept of locality, is a great help for sociologists who study rural development (Billaud, Allies, Kayser in Hudečková, Jehle 1997). This concept regards redefining and regaining healthy society. Until the 70ies, a locality was viewed in its reduced meaning only as a geographical-demographic demarcation. From the 80ies, a new definition is being sought, the term locality is enriched by the terms identity and solidarity. Both these terms have a common “denominator” in the specific social perception and action connected with collective awareness of problems and requests. A locality is a space of common problems and requests waiting for action. Related are the terms “de-localization” (loss of ability to have own identity and to express solidarity and the loss of the cultural sphere). The concepts show that the views of sociologists and economists are quite different. We can see, from conclusions of both economic and sociologic studies, that measures coming from the outside do not positively influence the development although they are supported by rational economic thought and calculation. Local development cannot function without interventions from the outside but it cannot start and continue without local will and initiative and that is tied with the concept of locality as a social area (Hudečková, Jehle 1997).

SOCIAL AND CULTURAL CAPITAL IN REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Social capital means a form of possession/wealth including contacts and acquaintances, which can be use-

² Rural area is, in this concept, a mean for negotiations of rural inhabitants as preferential owners and users of space, who offer it and exchange it with the goal to reach the fulfillment of their need to be integrated in global space. A sociologist monitors individual persons involved, their grouping together (personalities of rural life, social classes, rural institutions and organizations, municipalities, larger territorial units, state and so on) and their strategies based on relationships of power. The persons involved can be divided into three groups: 1) independent rural inhabitants (their strategy is, in long-term horizon, at least reproduction), 2) those who expand to rural areas (compete for rural areas with the goal of short-term profit, 3) state and its territorial organization (intermediaries of real persons involved, practitioners of territorial policies) (Hudečková, Jehle 1997).

ful and which a person can use thanks to knowing other people. French sociologist P. Bourdieu is the author of the concept of social capital. Along with the economic capital (material possessions) and the cultural capital (education, diplomas, the ability to behave well), social capital presents a part of the general capital. Its size divides individuals into social classes. Many authors (Putnam, Coleman, Giddens) view social capital at the collective level of community or locality (Schuckmith 2002) and regard it as something impersonal (not connected to an individual) that enables co-ordination of activities. This is where the social code originates. If we speak of social capital on the level of collective, then it is the element, which enables co-ordination of our activities and makes out actions less costly regarding transactions. However, the life of society is not only happening on the level of collective (community or locality) but also on the level of individual. Sociology, when speaking of society, does not only speak of this entity but speaks also of people's social lives (Giddens 1999). Therefore, we need to work with social capital on the level of individual. This fulfils the above-mentioned concept of P. Bourdieu.

Cultural capital expresses a complex of acquired qualifications of an individual or a group needed to reach a

certain social status which are connected with the character and the level of en-culturation (process of learning – education, through which one absorbs culture, values and norms of the particular society) (Velký sociologický slovník 1996). Basic principles of cultural capital were pronounced by P. Bourdieu in the frame of his concept of social and cultural reproduction based on the analysis of forms of social actions. According to Bourdieu, both individuals and groups seek integration into the class, which has a privileged position in the society. Cultural capital an individual has depends on how much of cultural capital is accumulated in his family. Cultural capital is divided unequally as well as the economic and social capital.

Social and cultural capital of inhabitants makes it possible to express, assert and defend their interests better and so directly influence their participation in the development of given region.

INTEGRATED ENDOGENOUS REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Strategies of the integrated endogenous regional development are not completely new, they have been dis-

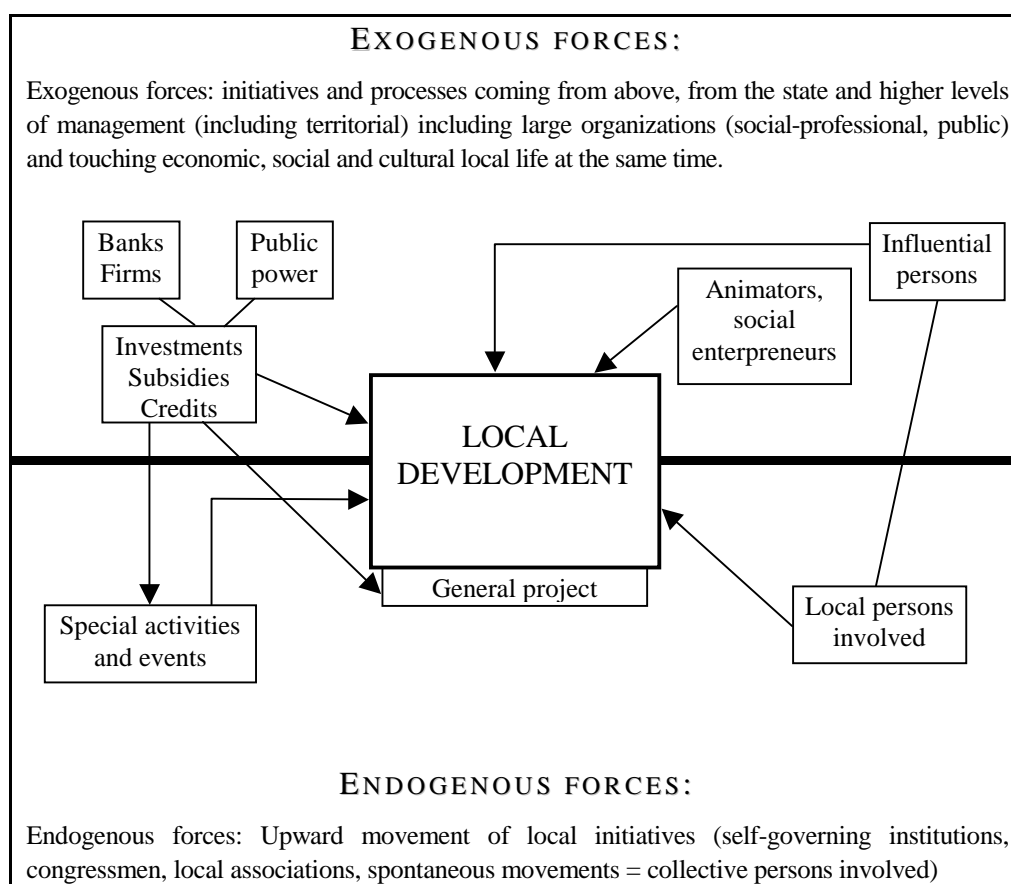


Figure 1. Strategies of the integrated endogenous regional development

Source: Kayser (1990, p. 218)

cussed already in the 70ies. The new thing is that regional policy of the EU for rural areas works with this approach (for example programs Leader and goals of the regional policy of the EU) as is documented by the Cork declaration from 1996.

In this type of development, a locality is not only defined by territory and area, specific historic, cultural and institutional characteristics are considered as well (therefore, there is the word “integrated” in the name of the approach). Territory is a net of social relations. It is also a place where local cultural and other non-transferrable features are arranged in layers over each other. It is a place where people and businesses create a relation, where public and local institutions influence and regulate the society (Garfoli 1992).

The adjective “endogenous” expresses that meeting of initiatives and processes coming from above (from the state and higher territorial units, large professional groups) to the region but also initiatives and processes coming upward from local congressmen, formal and informal groups (these too are key elements of development) are significant. So-called “animators” or “social entrepreneurs” are intermediaries between organised groups and subnational and local initiatives. They are armed by education and experience and their task is to organise relations between individual exogenous and endogenous interventions into development to reach synergy effect.

Strategies of integrated endogenous regional development significantly influence political decisions. A very important role is played, apart from the representatives of both group, also by events, which start up the development (opening of a new factory, building of a highway, natural disaster, local elections and others).

Figure 1 shows how strategies of the integrated endogenous regional development work.

CONCLUSION

Implementation of purely economic concepts of regional development, which did not consider cultural factors and social relations, often failed. To make the developmental policies successful, we have to be able to identify

the reasons for regional disparities and social problems (economic, social-economic, social-cultural, environmental) but the people whom the projects concern should also identify with them. The model of integrated endogenous regional development fulfils these requirements. The core of the approach is to use local potential of development of the municipalities and regions, which are connected with the views of local people and are appropriate for local behaviour and ensure the existence of rules in the locality and help the people to deal with social activities. The emphasis is put especially on the use of non-material (social and cultural) potentials of development, which can strengthen participation of inhabitants in the development because they lead people to definition, assertion and defence of the interests of localities and this way they increase their social and cultural capital. Thus it is possible to prevent negative impacts of globalisation connected with the alienation of human activities from their local context.

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Contact address:

Ing. Tomáš Marek, Ing. Tomáš Martinec, Česká zemědělská univerzita v Praze, Kamýcká 129, 165 21 Praha 6-Suchbát, Česká republika
tel.: +420 224 382 347, e-mail: marek@pef.czu.cz; martinec@pef.czu.cz
