

STRUCTURE OF CZECH COUNTRYSIDE BY ENTER EU

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The paper presents a consideration based on the urban practice and pedagogic experience acquired through the permanent solving of rural problematic. The urbanization approach respects the sociological, ecological and economical aspects of rural life, same as witnesses the present state of Czech countryside, pinpointing out some serious problems and characterizes its negative features. Czech countryside is characterized quantitatively. From the qualitative point of view, the present stage can be described by continuous changes in the social structure, vague conception of agriculture development, same as continuous problems with transport in the rural areas. Next key factors are the relations among social groups, diversity of the rural areas and rural depopulation. This consideration results into stating, that if we want to improve the quality of life in Czech countryside, we will have to direct our efforts to education of human sources.

urbanization; agriculture; rural areas; social infrastructure; transport

INTRODUCTION

Present problems of countryside have its own individual form not only in our country and other post-communistic countries but also in Europe and another parts of the today's world. For a long time, the countryside was regarded as a unity of rural area together with its main function – agriculture. The last years' development brought several changes to the ways of farming in the whole Europe. Consequently, amount of manpower in agriculture and forestry diminished to one third in the Western Europe since the end of the Second World War to the break of nineties. It was one of the most important reasons resulting in the desolation of the Czech and European countryside. Thus agricultural politics became very complicated and its greatest challenge is still represented by prevention from a further depopulation.

MATERIAL AND METHODS

The thesis resulted from the experience in urban practice, town planning, scheme processing and assessment of professional public relations like: Society for the Renewal of the Countryside, Countryside Renewal School, workshops, conferences, participation on juries for student competitions with a countryside topics, research works at VÚVA, participation in grant projects from GAČR "Social changes of Czech village", "Extreme hydrological phenomena in river-basins", in project "Territorial planning with reference to extreme hydrological situations" and recently mainly from guarantee of specialized course "Country management and development of rural communities" and from participation in operational team "Tým pro venkov" founded by Ministry of Agriculture. Than it rely on the study material dealing with this subject, e.g. "Development plan of agriculture and countryside in Czech republic for period 2000–2006", "SAPARD" activity, MMR, MZ, "2000a program for countryside renewal".

Notices to countryside development in the Czech Republic

Settlement structure, configuration of landscape and particular country residencies are historically influenced by the agricultural development in our country as well. Village is historically the oldest preserved kind of human residence, associated with agricultural production.

Czech village is a traditional residence, mostly older than towns. For centuries its tradition is preserved by its location in the landscape, its relation to it in different variables and the country architecture. However, it is also shaped by the typical rural population with its specific characters, attributes and problems.

From the viewpoint of the urban concept for rural settlement, the historical observation can be characterized by these basic stages: the longest period of countryside settlement, the period of feudal and capitalistic development, the post-war and in particular socialistic period and the current period of development. All these historical stages are in relationship with many events that influenced the countryside. So it is very difficult to find their most accurate characteristic.

Nevertheless, the last stages – the socialistic, same as the current period brought us such amount of events and changes for our country that they historically do not have an analogy and furthermore heavily affected the countryside.

Lately, it comes to a rapid decrease of labour forces in agriculture and forestry, an irregular decrease of inhabitants, a population ageing, and another problem is an increase of long-term unemployment level in some rural areas. Other areas are threatened by new natural risks like floods, soil erosion, water pollution, and soil dilapidation, damaged forests, and disturbed ecological balance of landscape. These effects go along with other factors: worse facilities, insufficient servicing of funds, limited extends of services, low incomes, obsolete agricultural production and others.

Development and importance of rural areas started to differentiate already under socialism. After 1989, the period of transformation took a place – changes of the proprietary rights, reduction of agricultural businesses with a loss of employment opportunities in the countryside, decrease of the transport services. In 1996 came another disparity among particular regions – authority and responsibility duties were slowly moving from the government administration level towards the local administration and some areas were losing their primary economic potential.

Presently, at the time of EU admission, the Czech countryside is diversified not only from geographical, demographical and ecological point of view but also from economic and social one.

RESULTS

Quantitative characteristic of the today's Czech countryside, a comparison with EU

The Czech Republic, with the occupancy of the 131 inhabitants/km² belongs within the Europe among states with above or average density and has a relatively high amount of small municipalities. A big amount of the municipalities (over 6000 with a number of inhabitants up to 2000) is a typical attribute of the Czech Republic. If the criteria of European Union are used, then over 90% of our country can be characterized as a rural area (Kolektiv, 2000). Over one quarter of inhabitants live in villages, it means 2 667,436 inhabitants at the present time (Majrová et al., 2003). The increase is 44,000 since 1991. However, this growth does not occur in villages with less than 200 inhabitants.

Natural conditions in agriculture meet the European average. The whole agricultural area fills more than a half of the entire extent of the Czech Republic (Kolektiv, 2000).

Duration and quality of funds for housing in the rural areas is below the EU standard. Water pipelines are implemented in 98% of houses, but sewerage system implementation falls heavily behind the EU standards; because it is constructed only in approximately 26% of municipalities (Majrová et al., 2003). A transport network is good. However, a quality of many local roads and accessibility to remote country residencies again falls behind. The electricity network and a system of electric power supplies meet the European standards. Lately, a telephone and internet availability has increased.

Qualitative characteristic

The last sociological researches (Majrová et al., 2003) confirmed that natural factors belong among positives of the contemporary Czech countryside – present a possibility of a more healthy life with a gradually growing importance of the landscape value and the environment.

Far less is valued a quality of economic factors – a convenient position in the centre of Europe, a sufficiency of labour forces, raw materials, soil, a developed agricultural production, a potential of small and average firms, an electrical power availability, a tradition of regional products (Pilsner beer, Olomouc syrečky, ...), a good education, an increasing demand for quality food products, but also an active charge of the cultural and natural legacy, a potential of a travel industry development in a rich cultural potential and traditions (Kolektiv, 2000).

Unused reserves are many a time in human factors too: a developed system of education, a tradition of conviviality, experiences, traditions, regional skills and a new enforced awareness of a sustained countryside, an existence of local associations, non-state non-profit-making organisations, schools of countryside renewal and experiences with the Program of countryside renewal and the competition "Village of year".

Negatives are known rather in rural areas. Some bodies brush with them. At the present era there are economic factors concerned instead of the natural factors (flood risks, erosion...) mentioned already in the introduction – a not still finished identification of the land ownership, low incomes of workers in agricultural and forestry production, obsolete methods and technologies in agriculture, an indebtedness of agricultural works, an insufficient coordination of agricultural companies, an insufficient norm of veterinary and hygienic control, a low proportion of alternative agricultural production, also a small role in the conservation work, a small diversity of activities, narrow range and structure of services, still bad infrastructure facilities, a bad condition of roads, an infrequent transportation, an insufficient maintenance of residential structures and agricultural production facilities, a poor promotion of the distribution.

It follows human factors like: the decrease of inhabitant number in some areas, the senescent population, the relatively lower education and qualification, the worse accession to educational, social and cultural institutions, the increasing level of unemployment as well as a low active public interest in the countryside's problems solution.

Note: One third of streams is classified as highly polluted, plenty of villages have an accession to the basic appointment in excess of 30 minutes, agriculture incomes are the lowest in the national economy structure, less than 60% of municipalities have not schools... (Kolektiv, 2000).

Social context of countryside depopulation

Long-lasting process of the inhabitant number reduction in rural areas (for example about 30% of people removed from the countryside from 1960 to 1991) has stopped in the last period.

This fresh inconspicuous increase of the rural exodus has been the favourable phenomenon – but it has concerned short time results without confirming trend's permanence and stability in the meantime.

The explication of the establishment of the settlement structure with a fragile bent for the identity by endeavour

of many municipalities for an advisable renewal scantily supported by the Estimates would be probably too optimistic. Connections between agriculture and general countryside development or rural areas development must be stressed even in the Czech Republic. A complex development of the rural settlement together with respecting approachable attachments of workplaces, public facilities, service and social-administrative contacts can be included.

The negative contrasts in particular areas and municipalities accentuated by utilization of the county central system equalize a little but influence of the public transportation restriction, diminution of working opportunities and other factors, consequent on the insufficient market regulation in rural municipalities, call over further differences. Existing networks of sanitary and educational institutions survive; social care organization has not built up new domains, required service wear off. From this viewpoint some rural areas and its older immobile population are high endangered.

Farther liquidation, restriction and enhancement of the public transportation participate on negative incidences now too. The corrupted network service is strengthened by failure of the approach to appropriate facilities. This situation is characteristic for the contemporary country.

Note: Withal the transport operation is related directly to the working opportunities and the population stability. A considerable stability factor with the direct urbanization influence is also the presence of school...

Changes in agriculture

At present it concerns finding a new model of agriculture in Europe herewith a balance of market conditions and social dimension. Particular countries will be constrained to give up their own agricultural policy.

Rural areas have been postponed for all the time and agriculture has been underestimated excepting the early post-war period. The concentration of inhabitants into towns and urban agglomerations has fetched inauspicious consequences. The decrease of the rural population started having gradually a dangerous range in Europe.

Country seats and its population alter in accordance with changes appreciating the countryside and mostly the agriculture in the Czech Republic as well. The transformation of the Czech agriculture has its specific features in comparison with stabilized changes ensuing from the development. It makes more complicated situation above all in regard of a transformation of several proprietary forms after 1989:

- a part of workers in agriculture and forestry fell from 32.4% of economically active people in 1950 to 11.8% in 1990 and to 5.6% in 1996 (National Action..., 1997).
- a number of agricultural workers declined 60% to 400 thousand persons since 1989 to 1996 (National Action..., 1997).

- about 80,000 ha of acreage lie fallow and over than 400,000 ha of meadows and pastures are utilized extensively.

Social consequences will appear in addition to economic consequences of agriculture production restricting and will complicate a process of agricultural getting structure. Early in the third millennium life in countryside has generally a future on the assumption that farmers will have an adequate place in it and that the agricultural policy will be managed sophisticatedly and conceptually.

Changes in the public administration structure of the Czech Republic

District authorities administering the Civil Service ended off its activity on the 31st of December 2002. A considerable part of competences was brought to 205 municipalities with the extended scope. This approach should have a positive result but any evaluation of these changes is premature in particular for a wanting concept of the rural politics.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Based on the summarized analyses, it has been possible to start selection of strategic themes that should be resolved for the countryside. They are above all: a diversification of endangered rural areas, a development of human sources and an infrastructural support.

General lacks and causes have been known already. That's why we can outline the most important arrangements which must the resolution of countryside renewal deal with. These arrangements will be a basis for giving some contingent allocations in European Union.

It concerns the following list of arrangements:

- arrangements for the economics diversification: development of small non-agricultural activities, foundation of new enterprises, enable of tourism development, protection and value increasing of the natural legacy.
- arrangements for improvement quality of the life in the country: development of technical infrastructure, and also facilities for the human development, increase of the cultural heritage.
- arrangements for the human resources development: increase of the careers' education, new qualifications acquirement, involvement of informatics to education, and particularly the education serving to increase capabilities of a manager activity in municipalities and micro regions management in consideration of a preparation and a realisation of the local development strategies and studies (courses, schools of countryside renewal).

Some supports and instrumentalities have already existed. It is only the matter of taking advantage of them correctly. Supporting organisations and institutions

which understand dynamic of areas development and provide a technical help has been rising very slowly. There is a very limited approach and often low quality of advisory services supporting entrepreneurs. Existing legislative instruments need to be employed – good worked town and country plan or an urban study, strategic balance-sheet. It is important to know how to use all of the country supporting funds as well: Rural Recovery Programme, SAPARD, LEADER and others. An access to them, an understanding of the principle and a compliance of conditions are not easy for men in self-governments of rural municipalities. Above all it calls for the advance of their knowledge and attainments at decision and it is not an easy task.

Benefit of universities for improving the quality of country life

A real development of human resources by a systematic education is one of examples of a possible increase of managing quality of rural municipalities. The education should enable except a professional teaching also an orientation in a choice of contributions and allocations possibilities to participants for today or near future. Secondary schools and universities should be a platform for this kind of education. They would provide a professional guarantee and a required educational trend by its hinterland and would help in a right grant utilisation by its partnership. The Faculty of Forestry and Environment of the Czech University of Agriculture Prague became firstly a professional hinterland for a possibility of an additional education and an increase of a special qualification in the school year 2003/4. It has been destined for workers of the civil service, the self-government and other professional workplaces engaged in the countryside.

That came about during the opening of the project Management of Countryside and Landscape coming under the Rural Recovery Program and from the grant LEADER which was commissioned in the committee of the Central Czech district. The municipalities' alliance Mníšek's region sitting in Čísovice became a carrier of the grant.

The Faculty closed with the offer to the collaboration and became contractually the professional guarantee of the course Management of the Landscape and the Development of Rural Municipalities.

The course's name predetermines the established aims: to hand over to the course's participants integrated professional knowledge about principles, a disposition and a functional utilization of the rural area, seats and the landscape for a suitable possibility of the planning and managing its renewal or development.

Particularly, it means to build upon the historic-urban development in connection with rural residencies, to understand the purpose of disposition's importance, to remove conflicts of the particular urban features (for example living in new buildings built inappropriately in

connection with countryside area features, project missing technical equipment together with public facilities designated for human development based on new knowledge, widen traffic by providing new possibilities for "on foot" tourists and bikers, find usage for existing agriculture constructions and so on). This knowledge also can help during the process of submission, negotiation and execution of area planning documentation.

The countryside is also searched for vestiges of the natural history's creation, important cultural, landscape and aesthetic virtues, also the conflicts among the particular features are being resolved on the basis of landscape's adjustment knowledge.

Independent and very actual became the problem called "extreme hydrological situations", which covers a bigger part of countryside. No acquaintance of rules, insufficient statement of relevant measures in the landscape planning documentation became important cause of its threatening results. Understanding to the basis of eco-hydrology, maintenance a revitalization of small watercourses, irrigation and erosion – all this knowledge should contribute to the sustainability of the countryside.

Consequent analyze of all of these specific features together with the knowledge of reciprocal relationship or interferences in residencies and countryside founds the basis for finding ways for its renewal.

Practically, the same importance has the ability to orient oneself in the present same as future grant programs, which became available by joining the EU.

All of these goals became a part of study program designated for two semester learning course. For the purposes of course's fulfillment was created a specialized pedagogical team with great practical knowledge and new ideas.

For the purpose of quality theoretical education for first semester were also worked out two publications containing particular lessons with links to other specialized publications. These publications are: "Countryside management and urban area development" and "Countryside renewal".

Summer semester is dedicated to seminar programs, which were worked out in response to the needs and interests of course participants. The topic is to elaborate essay on chosen urban area with complete solution to particular problems in detail. During solving of this theme is possible to consult problems with chosen specialists.

Results are being presented during final exams and thus make the basic part for gaining the certificate. Already the second class is taking place, so it is evident, that the mutual dialogue and activity between advisors and urban area representatives enrich both sides.

But it is still a little soon for final evaluation of course's results.

We are convinced that there is a need not only of the wide professional survey and the knowledge of allocation programmes but also of a direct connection to the particular specialists as a support in the right operative decision. Mayors, corporation members and other civil service workers – everybody on his shoulder the future

of rural municipalities is heard needs it. For all that we believe in valorised returning of spent means to the right place and helping to our countryside. This means were acquired from the LEADER programme of the Central Czech district and the municipalities' alliance Mníšek's region even by a succour of course participants' own facilities at the professional guarantee of the Faculty of Forestry and Environment CUA.

CONCLUSION

Even now it is possible to enumerate many negative aspects of our country life quality. Although they have been transforming they are not acceptable in some rural areas. It is very difficult to find a balanced relation among economic, ecologic, social and political requirements.

Therefore all supports and tools which endeavour for helping the countryside need to be utilized. It seems only correct regulation of allocations for the rural areas sustainable conformation priority problems solution will provide a worth occasion for the development of the countryside progressive strategies and for the effective utilization of the structural funds of European Union.

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Práce je úvahou vycházející z urbanistických a pedagogických zkušeností, získaných při soustavném řešení venkovské problematiky. Urbanistický přístup při respektování sociologických, ekologických a ekonomických aspektů podává svědectví o stavu soudobého českého venkova, upozorňuje na některé palčivé problémy a charakterizuje negativní rysy. Český venkov je charakterizován kvantitativně; kvalitativně je současná etapa popsána změnami a nejasnou koncepcí zemědělství, problémy v sociální struktuře a dopravě na venkově, sociálními souvislostmi vyliďňování venkova, různorodostí venkovských oblastí a sociálních skupin. Výsledkem těchto úvah je konstatování, že pro zlepšení kvality života na českém venkově bude nutné uskutečnit kromě dalších také opatření pro vzdělávání lidských zdrojů.

urbanizace; zemědělství; venkovské oblasti; sociální struktura; doprava

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