

# **SMART COUNTRYSIDE for the 21<sup>st</sup> CENTURY**

***Abstracts of the 7<sup>th</sup> Moravian Conference  
on Rural Research EURORURAL ' 20***





## **SMART COUNTRYSIDE FOR THE 21ST CENTURY**

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## Foreword

The 7th Moravian Conference on Rural Research EURORURAL takes place in the summer of 2020. The period of preparation and holding of the conference was affected by the COVID-19 pandemic, which decisively reduced international travel. However, as we did not want to break the developed tradition, we decided to organize the conference online. At the same time, we hoped that this opportunity would allow the participation of colleagues who could not attend our conference personally due to collisions with other events, health, financial causes and other reasons. On the other hand, we were aware that we are entering a little-explored terrain and our intentions would not reach widely the international professional public.

For the online conference, there are completely different requirements. Above all, it is necessary to address the issue of event attractiveness for participants, when there is no opportunity to meet colleagues, attend a social program and visit interesting places during excursions. So we offered participants the opportunity to publish long abstracts of their contributions, which we present in this proceeding. We also offered the possibility of submitting manuscripts to the *European Countryside* journal for a significantly reduced price. However, the main attraction remains the possibility of exchanging views and ideas between experts on rural issues within Europe.

No special requirements were placed on the form of contributions. It could be regular articles, presentations, posters, or even other relevant forms. No special requirements were placed neither to the topics of the contributions provided as these would relate to rural issues. Due to the present situation, the topics were expanded to include a discussion on the possible consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic on European rural development.

For the actual course of the conference, a space for each paper was created on the conference website. This part of the website was coded and paying conference participants received a password. During the week of the conference, participants had the opportunity to comment on each of the papers and the authors had the opportunity to respond. After the conference, the authors were allowed to edit their contributions to a certain date, and then the contributions were published online to the general public.

This collection of abstracts contains 19 papers, which were sent to the conference organizers on time. The authors came from nine European countries. The participation is lower than usual at regular EURORURAL conferences. On the other hand, we managed to keep the tradition and gain valuable experience on how to organize online conferences. Although we believe that travel will be allowed by the time of the 8th Moravian EURORURAL '22 conference, we will be able to consider the online form as one of the offered alternatives for professionals who are not able to attend the conference personally for any reason.

Received contributions cover various topics of rural development. Their spectrum reflects the current problems of European rural development. We already look forward to receiving some elaborated papers for their eventual publication in the *European Countryside*.

Milada Šťastná, Antonín Vaishar



## BUILDING LIVELIHOODS AND COMMUNITY RESILIENCE IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF LOCAL FOOD SYSTEMS

**Vilma Atkočiūnienė<sup>1</sup>**

Community resilience, like local economic development, can be understood as a process of social survival initiated by local communities to eliminate the negative socio-economic impact they perceive as common problems at the local level during crises. When the priority is given to the local economy, there is a close link between communities, production and consumption patterns, and their culture and the environment in which they live. New patterns of production and consumption create the conditions for educating and raising people's awareness of food and the environment, deepening producers' knowledge and preserving different cultural identities. However, there is a lack of knowledge about the ways of building livelihoods and community resilience and how the local food systems can be developed.

*The research aims* to identify the main elements of the local food system and the links between them by analysing the regularities of local food system development and community resilience approaches.

**Research methodology:** The literature review conducted in three parallel directions: strengthening community resilience; the co-creation process and stakeholder involvement; development of the local food system. The research is based on the positive research paradigm, integrated and holistic systems approach to resilience. The methods of research used: analysis of scientific literature, documents, good practice examples, systematization, parallel method, etc. This paper reports on the results of the participatory process, developed around 10 workshops, involving key players of the management of the rural area in the regional level in Lithuania.

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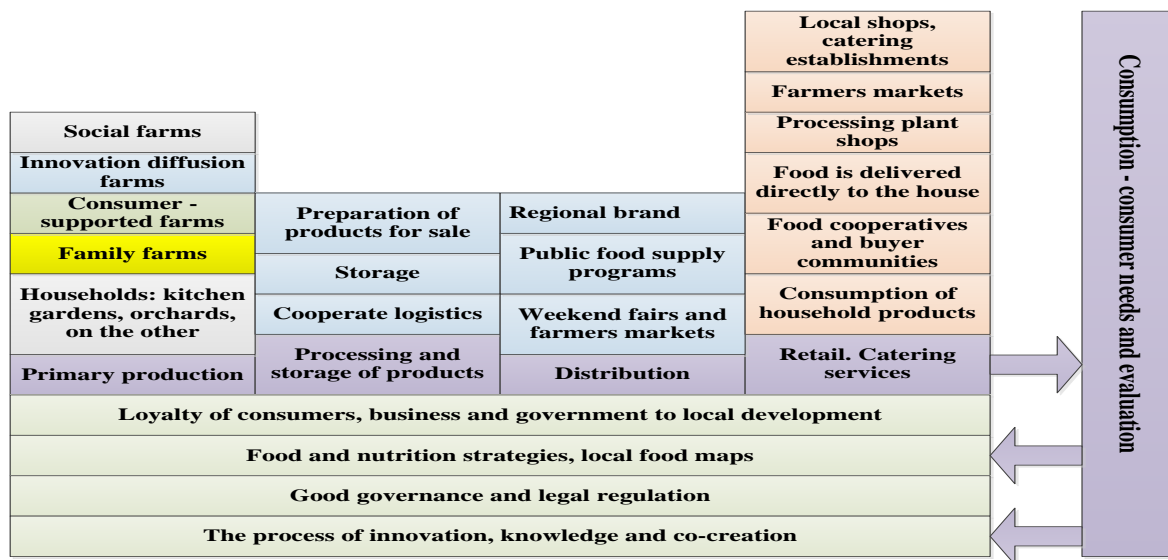


Fig. 1. Scheme of the local food system at the municipal level

**Research results:** For two last decades rural development stakeholders try to combine agricultural and other economic activities, to form a long-term-oriented and more comprehensive approach. The principles of good governance aim to combine *economic, social, environmental, cultural resources* in each decision element that are often considered to be strictly separated. Local food systems are alternative food systems that are a system-level planning initiative organized by cities, counties, regions and states. The local food system, which can function at the municipal level, is characterized by a variety of organizational forms (Fig. 1).

Resilience has been conceptualised in various ways, but more progressive ideas linked to adaptive management and the creation of new capacities to deal with unforeseen changes. The development of community resilience has been strongly influenced by systemic thinking, which helps to link activities to human society and the environment. Resilience is recognized as essential to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals and the Paris Climate Agreement.

Cooperation between farmers, farmers and consumers, increased market transparency through co-creation (Fig. 2) and effective policies, and a development-friendly legal environment can strengthen the position of farmers in the food system.

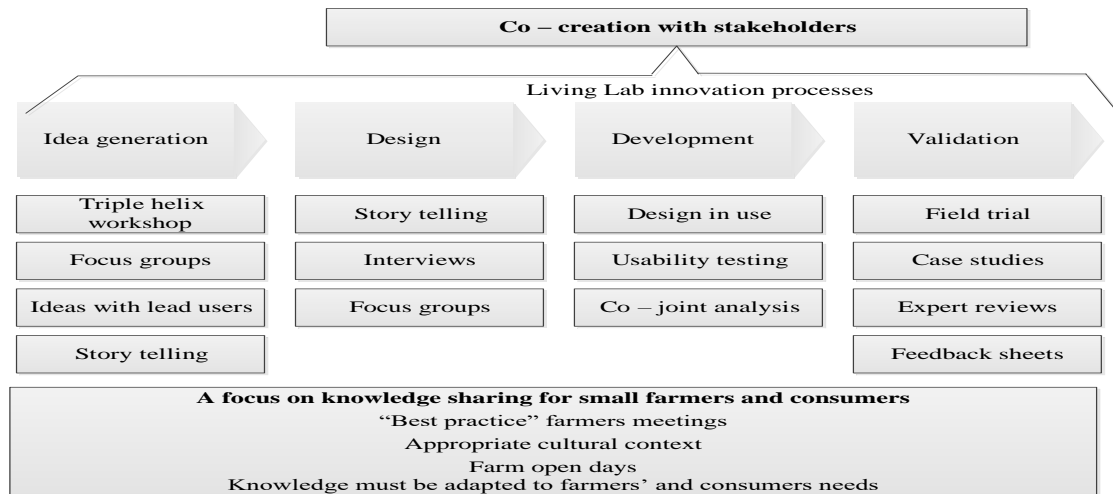


Fig. 2. The co-creation process based on evidence, training and innovation: the case of the local food system

The co-creation focus is essential to enabling knowledge sharing as a means of supporting the development of innovation on small farms. The co-creation process helps to ensure a decisive adaptive approach to resilience (based on evidence, training and innovation) food production, processing and presentation, addressing equity and inclusion issues, recognizing trade-offs and ensuring that actions to increase resilience in one sector, community or social group do not have a negative impact elsewhere.

**Conclusion and discussion:** The resilience of the local community would increase if the community regained the ability to "control their food", giving priority to locally grown food. Various programs, food and catering strategies would provide opportunities to bring schools, hospitals, public and private sector organizations and local farms together.

The local food system is an ecosystem for the development of short food supply chains. Strengthening resilience requires a long-term vision and a "sustainable solutions" approach. The co-creation process plays an important role in the local food system. The latter is needed to develop a collective understanding of healthy food, the role of farmers, entrepreneurs, artisans and consumers in creating jobs for members of their community. The role of community members consists of purchasing local food and services, reinvesting their financial resources in the area, the economy of the same community.

## **SEARCHING FOR SUCCESS FACTORS OF AGRITOURISM: THE CASE OF THE COUNTY OF KLEVE (GERMANY)**

**Mirjam Bosmann<sup>1\*</sup>, Gert-Jan Hospers<sup>2</sup>, Dirk Reise<sup>3</sup>**

**Abstract:** In line with growing tourism demand, the tourist sector has expanded and diversified its offers. In rural destinations agritourism has gained popularity as urban residents appreciate the natural resources, biodiversity and historic sites of the countryside. With changing travel behavior tourists are also more interested in shorter stays in close proximity to their home. Moreover, external influences like political crises and pandemics influence mobility and travel behavior which makes agritourism an attractive alternative.

By its narrow definition agritourism is provided by small and medium sized farms which are ideally still in operation. These farms provide accommodation and demonstrate visitors some aspects of rural life. Generally speaking, agritourists appreciate the slower paced rural environment, its authenticity and are interested in guided tours to working farms, local agricultural production and local heritage. The perception of visitors is embedded in the geographic location, its hospitality, the quality of room and board on farms, the availability of typical local food and beverages, historic sites and rural entertainment parks.

For farmers agritourism is a means to diversify their income base. Some European regions (e.g. Bavaria and South Tyrol) have a flourishing agritourism landscape. However, the majority of rural regions is not well-known for its agritourism business. In this paper we look at such a region: the German county of Kleve (Lower Rhine Area). The case study tries to identify and analyze factors which could contribute to the increase of agritourism in an attractive, albeit rather unknown touristic region. For this purpose, the first author of this paper interviewed regional opinion leaders, farmers and industry experts about the perceived success factors of agritourism. The expertise of interviewees included direct

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sales, educational offers, hospitality and supplementary entertainment possibilities. The in-depth interviews were supplemented by observations on a regional Food- and Christmas-Market.

The case study on the county of Kleve suggests that local entrepreneurs, other stakeholders and regional networks play a significant role in shaping successful agritourism development. As such, the results of this study may be useful for comparable rural regions aiming to improve their image and their economy through the support of agritourism.

**Keywords:** agritourism, case study, rural regions, Germany, success factors

## **SOCIAL CAPITAL AND COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT IN LOCAL DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITIES**

**Tibor Farkas<sup>1</sup>, Dóra Kolta<sup>2</sup>**

In our paper, the experience of summer research camps will be summarized. The organization of village research camps at Szent István University began in the early 1990s. On the one hand, the camps provide the opportunity for students and trainers to gain direct experience in researching local societies and economies and, on the other hand, the villages surveyed receive a systematic, science-based mirror of their situation, social problems and opportunities. An important feature of the one-week camps is that students, trainers, or even high school students with different interests, participate in close cooperation with those living in the village. The results of the research are always published in a volume which local people receive. The villages have been studied primarily in terms of development. One of the most important research questions was (and remains) how local society is fit to engage in rural or local development and what social problems hinder the development. In the study of local society, we also rely heavily on earlier research on social capital, anomie, quality of life and value research.

The work in the village research camps was preceded by several research questions. Examples of such issues included: What is more important in the development of villages: local society or inherited socio-economic conditions? (Or to what extent does the latter determine the current functioning of the local society?) What role do local co-operation play in the success of villages? What is the role and relationship of NGOs, entrepreneurs, municipalities and "local heroes" in development? (There is an assumption that habits and social responsibility of local entrepreneurs, heads of institutions, and "local heroes" greatly influence the success of a village.) Can strong community participation and social capital compensate for the inherited disadvantage and contribute to development? How do local

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conflicts affect development opportunities? In the course of our studies, we also accept the Gusti's Law of Parallelism that there is no single phenomenon in the life of society, no single manifestation of life, which is isolated, independent, and self-explanatory (Gusti, 1976).

In the study, local society and the development possibility of the surveyed villages were analysed. The village camp research included every time questionnaire survey, interview, making and analysis of photographs, and analysis of local and official statistical data. With the help of the development stories, we try to draw general conclusions about the functioning of endogenous resources and social capital, too.

When we think about the development of a settlement, we often think of infrastructure deficiencies, the low level of services or bad demographic conditions. Few people think that they have to also examine the trust, the co-operation and connections of the local society. In our opinion, this is important because if the cohesion of the local society is weak, there are potential or real conflicts. We suggest that the very first task within the local community is to restore trust, respect for each other, and then to restore and build actual civil activity. When the community will be able to engage in dialogue inside and outside, obtaining the necessary resources will only be a minor problem.

There is a connection between the state of the local society and the inherited socio-economic conditions, but without strong local society and social capital, the community is not able to use its resources. It was demonstrated, in the development of villages the role and relationship of NGOs, entrepreneurs, municipalities (local governments) and "local heroes" are of great importance. As strong community participation and social capital could compensate for the inherited disadvantage and contribute to development, the local conflicts, tensions, party interests could undermine the best development possibilities. We concluded that without a strong local society the local development initiatives could fail.

**Keywords:** Local development, rural development, social capital

## **RURAL ENTREPRENEURSHIP IN THE DIGITAL ERA**

**Marek Feurich<sup>1</sup>**

The role of entrepreneurship in the economic development of regions located in the rural areas has received increasing attention in the literature in the current period as the development of new digital technologies opens the door to new business activities in rural areas. There is a shift where rural entrepreneurship does not have to necessarily mean entrepreneurship in agriculture, tourism and other standard rural entrepreneurial activities. Moreover, the tourism industry in rural areas is quite seasonal. At the same time, given the declining importance of agriculture in many European countries, it is increasingly important to emphasize the importance of developing new institutional frameworks which promote the emergence of new forms of rural business that support rural economic development and resilience.

Access to high-speed internet in rural areas is enabling the development of a creative sector including advertising, architecture, arts, design, film, photography, software, gaming and electronic publishing, music and many others which may increase the capital of rural areas and thus promote its resilience. The creative economy is commonly understood in the urban context of cities and their cultural quarters and hubs. Although the 'creative' in the creative economy may rather refer to the knowledge economy, innovation and intellectual property across all economic sectors regardless of its location. On the other hand, rural areas have problems retaining and sustaining creative talent in the absence of effective policies and adequate infrastructure. Not to mention that these already vulnerable professions can be in rural areas even more threatened. The focus on the development of new institutional frameworks which secure the development of rural areas thus gain even more importance.

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This paper contributes to the recent debates by mapping the shift in the entrepreneurship in rural areas of Czech Republic and through the analysis of the development of institutional approach to support rural development and its resilience.

**Acknowledgements:** This work was funded by the Czech Science Foundation (GACR) under Grant 20-17810S *“Rural resilience in the context of trends in urban-rural digital divide”*.

## EVALUATING THE DIFFERENCES OF PROGRAMME DESIGNS FOR LEADER: VARYING RULES AND RESULTS OF IMPLEMENTATION

Lynn-Livia Fynn<sup>1</sup>, Kim Pollermann<sup>2</sup>

**Introduction:** In the last three decades, there has been a growing attentiveness for place-based policies. One part of Rural Development Programmes is LEADER in the sense of a **Community-Led Local Development (CLLD)**: a bottom-up-oriented, participatory approach driven by cooperation between local actors in rural areas. Since the introduction of LEADER in 1991, it has been implemented in different ways in various programming periods.

The **implementation** is done by a Local Action Group (LAG) and LAG management in the respective LEADER regions. In these LAGs, stakeholders of different institutions and sector origins come together in a kind of public-private partnership and make decisions about financial support for projects. LEADER implementations occur in a multilevel system, whereby the programme authorities in the federal states can set basic rules (which must fulfil general EU requirements from the EU) to define the room of manoeuvre for the LAGs and aim to create added value. Thus, these basic rules should safeguard LEADER principles and make a successful contribution to rural development.

Against this background, our research question is: “In which way do varying rules lead to different results?” Our research approach is based on evaluation insights and enables **policy recommendations** for the design of suitable framework conditions for LEADER/CLLD implementations.

**Material & Methods:** The research presented is part of the **evaluation of LEADER in four German federal states** with 115 LAGs in the 2014-2020 period. Basic sources are

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the analysis of funding documents and funding data. Besides, the following empirical steps have been conducted:

Four **surveys** using written questionnaires (mainly executed as online surveys):

- LAG member survey: members of the LAGs' decision-making bodies (2017/2018, requested person N=3308, answering person n=1999, response rate: 60 %).
- LAG Management survey: one manager per LAG (2018, N=115, n=114, response rate 99 %) with a combination/variety of general questions about the situation in the region and open questions to grasp more detailed assessments about specific problems.
- Survey of beneficiaries: questions regarding the LEADER projects (for the implementation of local development strategies, measure 19.2), (2018, N=1267, n=1079, response rate: 85 %), the respondents were asked for estimations about project development, funding procedures and the results of their project.
- Two standardised annual requests of activities and organisational structures in the regions with data for the year 2016 and 2019.

**First results & Interpretations:** The effective coordination of LEADER-funded regional development requires adequate **staff capacity of LAG managements**. In the absence of binding regulations from the EU (except for an upper limit for funding), varying regulations on the four federal states act as the principal factors determining the staff capacity. Binding targets proved most effective while „softer“ approaches (target recommendations) and the lack of quantifiable indications in comparison often led to less appointed staff. Further analyses show that the existence of a well-equipped LAG-management contributes to more innovative projects which is why a set target of 1.5 full-time employees is recommended.

In the past, the implementation of LEADER projects has been hampered by the requirement of beneficiaries to **co-finance projects**, where the required „national co-funding“ (in context of EU-funding) was often not provided by the federal states. Thus, the availability of additional public funding budgets is crucial, especially for private beneficiaries. Two main approaches are observed: (1) co-funding provided by federal states (for private projects or all projects) and (2) subsidisation by matching the amounts in regional co-funding budgets (often provided by the municipalities). Possible impacts of the two approaches can be observed in the percentage of private projects being implemented and the number of regional budgets created at the start of the funding period. While it is recommended that a clear framework and (co-)funding is provided by the federal

states, it must be acknowledged that other factors (e.g. annually of federal-state funding or financial situation of municipalities) might also have considerable influence on the availability of adequate funds.

Another crucial steering option is the **delimitation of the LAG territory**. There is a set EU rule that LAG territory must comprise between 10.000 and 150.000 inhabitants, with the four examined federal states setting the margin between 40.000/50.000 and 150.000 inhabitants. Not much insight is gained by looking for correlations between „satisfaction of LAG members with delimitation“ (in sense of suitability of the area to foster rural development) and „number of inhabitants“, although smaller regions are rated slightly better on average. Thus, the policy recommendation is to keep a wide range to leave room for decisions by the regions themselves.

Our analysis of different fields of funding regulations shows that both binding targets and "softer" rules, which allow for regional adjustments, can be suitable approaches in programme design. Further, a sound examination of the outcomes of different programme options can provide insights for future policy design for CLLD.

## **ATTRACTIVENESS FOR DIRECT INVESTMENTS AND DEVELOPMENT OF MOUNTAIN AREAS. THE CASE OF THE TOURIST SECTOR IN THE AOSTA VALLEY**

Laura Guzzi<sup>1</sup>, Dario Musolino<sup>2</sup>

One of the main current economic concerns of regions and territories is to be attractive. In fact, in the age of globalization, the growing integration, the increasingly intense international relationships and flows of capital and people, make attractiveness for firms, investments, students, tourists, “creative class”, and for another type of people and exogenous ‘assets’, an extremely relevant issue (Capello and Dentinho, 2012; Fratesi and Senn, 2009; Freeman, 2006; UNCTAD, 2018).

In particular, the importance of flows of foreign direct investments (FDIs) increased a lot at the global scale. From 1990 onward average yearly growth rates of inward FDI flows and stocks were respectively 22% and 49% (UNCTAD, 2018). These kinds of investments became then very important for regional and local development, and they intuitively have a potential even for the development of rural and mountain areas.

As underlined by several scholars in the field of rural development (Bock, 2016; Bosworth and Atterton, 2012; Dax, 2020; Lowe et al, 1995; Ward, 2005; Ward and McNicholas 1998), although the exogenous development model failed in the past and then cannot be taken as the main basis of a new path of development, even a purely endogenous approach tuned out not to be the appropriate theoretical framework to cope with the constraints and the disadvantages existing in peripheral areas, like mountain areas (Dax, 2020). Mountain areas need to be connected, to have relationships, linkages, etc. with outer regions/areas, outer actors, entrepreneurs, etc. as instead neo-endogenous approaches claims (Bosworth and Atterton, 2012; Bock, 2016; Dax, 2020). In this respect, even the opportunities coming from outside like foreign direct investments have to be taken into consideration as a potential driver of development.

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In this paper, therefore, we focus on the case of one of the most popular Italian Alpine region, the Aosta valley (the region with the highest mountains in Europe, like Mont Blanc), to investigate if there are FDIs and if they can have positive effects on the local socio-economic development. We focus in particular on the tourist sector. We use a mixed approach (Greene et al, 1989; Akimowicz et al, 2018): the quantitative data on FDIs, to sketch the basic characteristics of this phenomenon in the Aosta valley, and then, based on a qualitative approach, we analyse the outcomes of a set of exploratory case studies and of the consultation with privileged observers.

Our analyses at the end show that the cases of FDIs in the Aosta Valley tourist sector taken into examination have positive economic and employment effects. They improve the attractiveness of the Aosta Valley for foreign visitors, and they strengthen the competitiveness of the sector (for example, reducing the seasonality).

Interestingly, the productive fabric and the local community shows no "ostracism" at the entrance of foreign investors. Instead, benefits and spillovers on the local environment are evident, for example, in terms of employment and relationships with the local economic structure that is the local supply chains. These investments do produce neither "cathedral in the desert", nor displacement effects on the local economy.

It is also interesting that investors were attracted by the high altitude of some places in Aosta valley (Cervinia), as this should be a guarantee that the investment will not be disadvantaged by the climate change, as it is happening in the case of ski resorts located at a lower altitude (Rixen et al, 2011).

Therefore, according to the outcomes of our work, attracting foreign investments results to be an important strategy to strengthen the tourism sector in rural mountain regions like the Aosta valley. However, regional public institutions still appear short-sighted concerning these new opportunities offered by globalization. A concrete improvement can only be achieved with a decisive political turn in favour of investment attraction.

**Keywords:** FDIs, mountain areas, rural development, attractiveness, peripherality, accessibility, location factors, Alpine Areas, Aosta valley.

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## **DOES DIGITISATION CONTRIBUTE TO THE DEVELOPMENT OF RURAL TOURISM?**

**Jana Kouřilová<sup>1</sup>**

Rural tourism is one of the activities helping rural development and contributing to rural resilience. At present, when digitisation is gaining in importance, it is possible to support business development in tourism by using modern technologies. Based on secondary research, this paper discusses the issues of rural tourism development in the age of digitisation and related opportunities. This paper aims to define starting points for setting up an empirical survey of rural tourism; respondents will be both entrepreneurs and representatives of the public sector. The secondary research has revealed issues that can be divided into three thematic areas: 1) business environment, 2) visitors and their requirements, and 3) digitisation and related opportunities.

Firstly, tourism can contribute to the development of SMEs, and above all micro-sized (family) businesses in rural areas, but also to social enterprise development. Mutual relations between entrepreneurs (competition vs. cooperation) and the ability to respond to changes play an important role in rural tourism development. The role of public administration and its ability to involve all local actors cannot be overlooked. This secondary research shows that the survey should focus on the business environment, including opportunities for social entrepreneurship, links between business and public sector, and interrelationships among all actors within rural destinations.

Secondly, according to experts, modern stays (venues) with such activities as “water activities”, “outdoor activities”, “discovering nature and heritage” and “gastronomy” have a real economic potential concerning tourist expectations. The most traditional form of rural tourism is a “do nothing” stay combined with a friendly atmosphere often based on “personal ties” between hosts and clients. This secondary research shows that a survey should specify visitor characteristics. What are their requirements for stays? What

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activities do they carry out during their stays? How much time do they wish to spend (shorter/ longer stays)? How much are they willing to pay for stays?

Thirdly, digitisation can contribute to rural tourism development in several ways; the most common being an offer of services through Online reservation systems. Facilities using these systems are evaluated concerning the quality of services; the evaluation can have both positive and negative impacts on the decision processes of tourists. Also, travel blogs and social networks can play similar roles. Various applications, e.g. geocaching, that are aimed at agriculture and rural life, can bring new possibilities for rural tourism development. An important aspect is the possibility of using IT when tourists plan trips and find the information directly in the destination, but this facility is influenced by Internet availability. Contrary to this, digital-free tourism is developing with the aim of visitor mental rest, i.e. disconnection from modern technologies. This form can be an interesting opportunity for rural areas. From the above, the survey should focus on the importance of digitisation and social networks for rural tourism development. Whether and, by which path do, service providers use IT and social networks in their business. What is the tourist experience in this regard? How is a rural destination promoted? What role do municipalities, individual entrepreneurs, residents, or tourists play in this?

As emerged from the secondary research, there are three thematic areas, but with certain overlaps among them (the visitor and visitor requirements for the availability or otherwise of Internet Services, financial issues related to both business development and visitor characteristics, etc). These overlaps will need to be kept in mind when designing concrete questions and making a following assessment of the survey.

**Keywords:** Rural tourism development; digitisation; resilience; rural destination

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## **CHALLENGES FOR ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS IN DIFFERENT TYPES OF RURAL AREAS**

Silvie R. Kučerová<sup>1\*</sup>, Petr Meyer<sup>2</sup>, Kristýna Rybová<sup>3</sup>, Jan Šmíd<sup>4</sup>, Dominik Dvořák<sup>5</sup>, Zdeněk Svoboda<sup>6</sup>, Ladislav Zilcher<sup>7</sup>

The dominance of urban elementary school as a norm regarding the character of education or provision of service while overlooking the specific circumstances of rural schools has been openly pointed out in reaction to critical approaches in social sciences in developed countries since the 1970s (Cuervo 2016). The efforts to emphasize the unique culture of the rural schools and their common characteristics in comparison to urban schools have produced a new problem, however, as rural schools may be described as a seemingly uniform segment despite the many existing differences among them (Dvořák, Starý, Urbánek 2015).

As well as “the rural space” is not a uniform entity (Woods 2011), elementary schools contained in that space also face various challenges. Since many geographic typologies have used physical, social or institutional indicators to describe and document regional territorial differentiation from a variety of perspectives (in Czechia e.g., Perlín, Kučerová, Kučera 2010; Bernard 2011), in our study we specified categories of the external environment of a provision of schooling. The main aim was to investigate geographical relations between various types of rural areas and various types of schooling environment in municipalities on the example of Czechia. The research was conducted to answer two principal questions: Are there any types of elementary schools representative for individual types of rural areas? What are these challenges for schools in different types of rural areas?

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From the methodological view, our study is predominantly quantitative. First, own regional differentiation of Czechia will be presented, consistent with many similar previous geographic typologies. There were several barriers to work directly with existing typologies: Topical data were not available, the level of higher territorial units was used for the analysis or we are not allowed to operate with the same datasets because of their authorship. Our typology uses data from the most recent population census in 2011, which represents the broadest and even the only available dataset applicable to this study for the whole population of Czechia on the municipal level. We used selected indicators to statistically suggest differences across space concerning socio-demographic characteristics, economic status, educational attainment and access, and general attractiveness of places for the population, and in the process construct a set of five distinct spatial categories.

In the next step, we proceeded with the differentiation of municipalities based on characteristics of the elementary schools that are operated on the municipalities' territory. The input indicators were square kilometres of the territory about one school, school capacity utilization and many schools in the municipality. Eight different schooling environment categories were identified. The statistical classification of data followed using crosstabulation to find typical intersections of spatial categories of municipalities and schools types.

Concluding this phase of research, for each identified territorial type of school we defined their threats and opportunities in the context of the development of the wider rural area. The knowledge rose from our previous field research or references by other researchers.

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## **THE CORONAVIRUS PANDEMIC AS A NEW CHALLENGE IN AGRICULTURE IN THE OPINION OF POLISH FARMERS**

**Jolanta Kluba<sup>1</sup>, Barbara Szczepańska<sup>2\*</sup>, Aneta Uss-Lik<sup>3</sup>**

The main aim of the article is to reconstruct the social situation of Polish farms during the COVID-19 pandemic based on farmers' opinions. The coronavirus pandemic has affected all sectors of economic, and social life. Agricultural farms in Poland are entangled in a network of social, economic, political and logistical relations that determined their functioning. The main issue of Polish agriculture is the size of farms – the average size is 10 hectares and also the profitability of farms for many years has been mainly determined by the flow of funds flowing either from the EU or from the possibility of taking loans. How do farms deal with finding some availability of funding effect by broken supply chains? Which farms with which production profiles are at risk of being closed (disappearing) from Polish agriculture? The agricultural industry is connected by supply chains and depends on economic relations. Farmers are food producers, wherein the current situation of falling raw material prices are explained by the crisis caused by the supply chain disruption, on the other hand, they are also consumers of goods that produce them and which prices on the local market are rising. Based on the result of the research, the opinions of farm owners about the condition of their farms will be reconstructed. The coronavirus pandemic has contributed to changes in many markets, affecting the situation of Polish agriculture which is mainly commodity-based on product exports. The main recipient of products from Poland are Germany, The Czech Republic, Great Britain, etc, however more and more export also goes to markets such as China, the Middle East, and ASEAN (Asian countries) and the collapse of these markets changed the image of Polish agriculture. Completed research and present results are thus a starting point for describing the situation of Polish farms in a pandemic crisis. The research was carried out on a random sample of hard

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users of agricultural portals using the CAWI method based on the Real-Time Sampling (RTS) model. Representativeness due to the area of the farm size class was obtained by using an analytical balance taking into account 4 area categories.

## **INFLUENCE OF NEW PARADIGM OF RURAL SPACE DEVELOPMENT IN BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA**

**Rahman Nurković<sup>1</sup>**

The new rural development paradigm of Bosnia and Herzegovina was developed in response to the inefficiency of the old development model. The expansion of the European Union to the countries of Southeast Europe has indicated large regional differences, especially in rural regions. The agricultural sector and farmers were at the forefront as carriers of agricultural activity. The goal was to increase food production to the maximum and strengthen the competitiveness of production. The old paradigm was contrary to the principles of free trade, due to the use of refunds, which protected European Union producers from their competition. Under pressure from developed countries in the European Union, Bosnia and Herzegovina have decided to adopt a new development model.

It followed examples of good practice from European Union countries. Development initiatives in Bosnia and Herzegovina originate in the local environment. The ideas are networked which includes the policies of different economic sectors at the multi-institutional level. The modern rural area of Bosnia and Herzegovina is characterized by a deep crisis of economic, social and demographic development, which is reflected in the increasingly pronounced atrophy of the population and is especially intense in the areas of local communities. The extent and depth of crisis characteristics of development processes are evidenced by the fact that, according to the existing development index, as many as 58.2% of local governments (administrative cities and municipalities) are below the threshold of 75% of the average development of Bosnia and Herzegovina, of which 10.5% below the threshold of 50% state development. Depending on the geographical position (especially the distance from more developed local communities, as a focus of spatial development) and the direction and intensity of development processes - the problems and development prospects of individual local governments differ significantly. These differences are directly manifested in the diversity of spatial structure, for example,

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the mosaic landscape of rural areas, and they are supported by the recent typology of rural and urban settlements in Bosnia and Herzegovina (R. Nurković, 2012).

Awareness and recognition of rural values, environmental, cultural and social, is a major motivating factor in local communities when setting up development projects. The main interest of our research was how these new approaches affected changes in BiH agriculture, which was studied through changes in land use. The paper uses various research methods, from critical evaluation and compilation of previous research results, through research interviews, to the spatial and temporal analysis of rural development indicators of local communities in Bosnia and Herzegovina in the modern period. The interview method covered three leading actors in rural development of local communities in the recent past and today. The basic source of data used was the *Annual Reports on the Status of Cooperative Entrepreneurship for 2015* (the Government Statistics Agency Sarajevo 2017), whose analytical data were considered in the space-time context. At the same time, we identified changes in land use and assessed the impact of the new development paradigm on the development of agriculture and rural areas in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

The mentioned socio-economic development is primarily maintained in the change of spatial distribution and occupation structure of the population, but also in the change of agrarian structures and rural areas, for example, the transformation of the forms and functions of settlements. Numerous rural areas in Bosnia and Herzegovina have been affected by depopulation, declining birth rates and population ageing. Bosnia and Herzegovina are one of the most rural countries in Europe and more than sixty percent of its population lives in rural areas. Rural areas of Bosnia and Herzegovina have always been neglected in research and planning and were seen as a source of population pressure on cities. Rural potentials in Bosnia and Herzegovina stand out as a basic precondition for efficient planning and use, from political and economic factors of development concerning the physical characteristics of the land.

The rural area of Bosnia and Herzegovina is affected by economic impoverishment, insufficient communal and social infrastructure. Fragmented and irrationally fragmented estates are unprofitable and do not provide an opportunity for the development of commercial agriculture. And those properties that are quantity-oriented and have the necessary prerequisites, face stiff competition in the market. Revitalization of villages in terms of sustainable and holistic development, it is necessary to preserve rural areas as primary production areas of food and other goods, areas of specific anthropogenic

landscape with emphasized natural, traditional, cultural and historical elements, oases of greenery and ecological balance, and finally, as areas of peace and rest from the dynamic and stressful urban living. Tourism in rural areas is one of the factors that may play an important role in rural renewal and sustainable development. Today, modernization has proven to be an extremely powerful but also uncertain force. It has a great impact on the environment and the social structure of society, *Bright (2000: 145)*. Modernization is also reflected in bringing food production closer to consumers through the organization of village fairs, where it is possible to see, in addition to finished products, the very way in which these products were obtained.

**Keywords:** rural area, land use, Common Agricultural Policy, sustainable development, food supply, revitalization of rural area



## **ACTIVITIES AND CHALLENGES OF TOURISM INFORMATION CENTRES DURING COVID-19 PANDEMIC**

**Līga Paula<sup>1\*</sup>, Dace Kaufmane<sup>2</sup>**

Within a tourism system, tourism information centres are significant collaboration partners and one of the key elements of the tourism industry linking providers of tourism products and travellers. Among many functions, the main task of the tourism information centres is to collect information about tourism resources and offer in a particular region. Communication with visitors and other actors of the industry such as private businesses and services includes the development of both traditional and smart solutions for maps and booklets, information on sites to visit, tourism routes and events, recommendations for accommodation and catering services. This is especially important in the countryside where professional and experienced staff can provide the latest information and local insights based on strong links with a local community. The paper aims to reveal operational challenges faced by the tourism information centres which were caused by Covid-19 pandemic.

In Latvia, the state of emergency was announced at the end of March and lasted three months. This coincided with the start of the tourist season, therefore influenced the tourism sector, hospitality and catering businesses dramatically. First of all, it was not possible to ensure the continuous economic activity of tourism businesses, the fulfilment of contracts with customers and partners was endangered, in most cases, employers were not able to fulfil obligations to their employees, hotels and guest houses, majority of catering services and museums were either closed or reduced opening hours for a certain period. Regarding the tourism information centres, they could not contact travellers directly, and new conditions forced them to think about brand new forms of communication and activities. As the state borders were closed, several events and reservations were cancelled due to epidemic restrictions in both public and private places. People were asked “to stay at

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home”, do not gather in groups and keep the physical (called also social) distance; however, family members or people from the same household were allowed and even motivated to spend time outdoors according to the strict epidemic regulations. Governmental authorities and mass media promoted local and domestic tourism while reminding to choose less popular and less known or even remote places of the country to avoid crowding. Thus, visiting the countryside and small towns as well as nature tourism including walking trails, visits to the Baltic sea beaches, walks in the forest and various outdoor activities became popular. Tourism information centres experienced a challenge to organize distance communication and activities by using novel technological solutions. Interviews with the staff members reveal a number of their activities, for example:

- posting attractive information about interesting places and objects on social media (e.g. Facebook), so as not to lose the interest of travellers,
- working with local tourism businesses to provide moral support and advice not to lose hope,
- creating a Google interactive map for travellers to see which places and sites are open and available (updates provided once a day),
- booklet preparation and planning for the post-crisis period,
- consultative cooperation with actors from the tourism sector and other tourism information centres,
- preparation of business surveys and standards for business renewal,
- site inspection and photo reports (often posted on the web),
- development of an audio guide in several languages (posted on the webpage of the tourism information centre).

The authors of the research conclude that local tourism became popular among the population of Latvia in summer 2020, immediately after the end of the state of emergency, when it was possible to travel both on short holidays and during long vacations. Although the tourism sector was negatively affected by the Covid-19 pandemic and tourism businesses especially from the private sector were virtually inactive, the tourism information centres were more active than usual at that time. Their activities in rural areas are mainly related to the moral support of entrepreneurs, promotion of possible places of interest in the Internet and the creation of new offers.

## **RURAL RESILIENCE CONCEPTION IN THE DIGITAL AGE – METHODOLOGICAL ISSUES OF MEASUREMENT AND EVALUATION**

**Martin Pělucha<sup>1\*</sup>, Jana Kouřilová<sup>2</sup>, Marek Feurich<sup>3</sup>**

In the first two decades of the new millennium, rural areas in EU countries were confronted with many challenges related to the lingering structural changes in the rural economy (i.e. declining importance of agriculture) as well as new exogenous factors, which are highly contradictory in their content. Exogenous factors include, firstly, climate change, which affects the functioning of the rural landscape, and secondly, new technological trends, in particular, the development and use of digital technologies and the potential of the digital economy. The latter exogenous factor became the subject of basic research of the project supported by the Grant Agency of the Czech Republic (see below), within which empirical research will be carried out in selected rural areas.

This paper presents a basic typology of methodological approaches that have been used to date in various empirical research cases to validate partial aspects of rural resilience, with special emphasis on the digital preparedness of rural stakeholders and rural areas for these challenges. The paper also outlines new research directions that should be discussed by the wider academic community and policymakers concerning the formation of basic and applied research, as well as the basis for comprehensive rural development policy in EU countries.

The in-depth literature review shows that the Digital Age can no longer be assessed using a binary measurement system, i.e. a dependency on Internet access or a lack thereof, but it is necessary to focus on the level or extent of usage of various options that are offered by the Digital Economy. Territorial differences are still very highly important in this respect, especially when comparing the situation between urban and peripheral rural areas. Therefore, previous research papers have focused only on partial issues of the concept of rural resilience and Digital Technologies. Those papers mostly focused on common statistical comparisons concerning the degree of use of Digital Technologies by different

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types of respondents or (more often) the degree of coverage of the territory by high-speed Internet. However, the Digital Economy offers a much wider range of opportunities for the development, not only of the territory but also of different types of groups of respondents.

The synthesis of knowledge is usually one of the most difficult parts of scientific research projects because it is not just an aggregation of information and data, but a comprehensive evaluation of particular findings concerning the goal of such research. Therefore, at the end of the paper, the problematic areas influencing the evaluation and synthesis of knowledge of research focused on the Digital Age and the concept of rural resilience, are defined.

**Keywords:** Rural resilience; Digital age; Evaluation; Rural areas

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## **RURAL EXPERIMENTAL SPACES FOR SMART AND SUSTAINABLE FUTURE. THE MANAGEMENT OF THE WATER-ENERGY-FOOD NEXUS IN EUROPEAN ECOVILLAGES AIMING AT (PARTIAL) SELF-SUFFICIENCY IN BASIC RESOURCES**

**Robert Skrzypczynski<sup>1</sup>**

Innovation is often understood as a process that takes place mostly in urban areas; however, this is not only the case, as innovations emerge in rural areas as well (Shearmur, 2017; Esparcia, 2014). In this presentation, I want to bring attention to European ecovillages – ecologically-oriented rural communities – viewed as experimental spaces that are rich in socio-technical innovations but tend to be overlooked in the current research on rural development in Europe.

Many scholars emphasize the significance of ecovillages as places of experimentation with alternative lifestyles that can guide the transition to a sustainable society (Kirby, 2017; Daly, 2017). This is so because ecovillages follow the logic of 'localization' and try to reduce the energy and material throughput of their community while ensuring a high level of subjective well-being (Daly, 2017). Moreover, since ecovillages try to secure by themselves significant portions of water, energy and food consumed by the community, they are an excellent example to study the possibilities and limits of integrated management of resource within the Water-Energy-Food Nexus framework. The approach to resource management exhibited by ecovillages is gaining more and more interest in the context of development strategies for future decades that will be characterized by increasingly challenging effects of climate change, possible resource scarcity and growing global population (Cosme, Santos and O'Neill, 2017). However, so far ecovillages have been studied mostly within the framework of humanities (Wagner 2012), and there has been little systematic research providing empirical data on their metabolic profiles. Therefore, there is still a lot to be learnt from ecovillages about the opportunities and

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difficulties in reducing the energy and material consumption of societies while providing solid fundamentals for personal and communal well-being.

To paint a general picture of the current state of European ecovillages, in this presentation, I will provide basic data on 60 European ecovillages that were gathered in early 2020 with the use of an on-line questionnaire. These data will include basic characteristics such as location, population, area etc., and general information on the approaches to the management of water, energy and food in the analysed communities. The questionnaire was sent to all 392 ecologically-oriented communities in Europe that had been pre-identified as ecovillages based on databases publicly available from the Global Ecovillage Network, GEN Europe, Baltic Ecovillage Network, Fellowship for Intentional Community, Ecobasa and national networks of ecovillages in European countries. Therefore, this database of European ecovillages seems to be the most complete and up-to-date source of knowledge on their basic characteristics today. Apart from presenting basic data on European ecovillages, I will also suggest further research problems and discuss possible methodologies that would be well suited to study various aspects of ecovillages understood as social-ecological systems – with particular emphasis given to the Water-Energy-Food Nexus approach.

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## **IMPROVING ACCESS TO FARMLAND FOR NEW GENERATIONS AND (FUTURE) ORGANIC FARMERS: AN EVALUATION OF THREE GRASSROOTS INITIATIVES FROM POLAND**

**Robert Skrzypczyński<sup>1</sup>, Krzysztof Janc<sup>2</sup>, Sylwia Dołzbłasz<sup>3\*</sup>, Andrzej Raczyk<sup>4</sup>**

Nowadays knowledge becomes the driving force in regional and local development (Cooke, Leydesdorff 2006). The increased significance of management knowledge offers an opportunity to introduce new, more effective ways of conducting the economic activity and managing rural communities. In this context, the influx of rural newcomers and changes in the structure of economic activity poses an opportunity to improve development possibilities. Currently, one of the leading ways of looking at the development of individual areas and their transformation is smart development. Smart rural development refers to activities that should enable rural residents to use technology and social resources to take effective actions for socio-economic development, taking into account local conditions and specificity. Thus, we should consider this approach as one of the responses to rural decline connected with the shift of society from the era of agriculture, through the industrial era, towards a knowledge economy (Li et al. 2019).

Although farming is not usually perceived as an element of the knowledge economy, knowledge plays a key role in land cultivation – particularly in more knowledge-intensive types of farming. Besides access to farmland in the strict sense, access to knowledge, skills, assessment tools, advisory services or professional networks related to farming is especially important for rural newcomers and new entrants into farming, whose success depends in a large part on these factors. As a result, any public policy aimed at providing opportunities for rural development and generational renewal in rural areas should consider these aspects in tackling the problem of access to farmland. And what can guide

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the process of developing such policies, is to thoroughly understand the characteristics of successful grassroots initiatives that have been active in this area.

Therefore, this presentation aims to demonstrate and evaluate the characteristics of three Polish grassroots initiatives—*AgroPerma Lab*, *Permakultura.Edu.PL* and *Ecological Folk High School in Grzybow*—in the context of their role in improving access to farmland in Poland. These three case studies have been realized in cooperation with actors engaged in them and based on a methodology devised within the Horizon2020 *Ruralization* project. We argue that the experiences gained in these case studies shed light on how grassroots initiatives – particularly in Eastern European countries – can successfully assist new entrants into (organic) farming by providing access to knowledge, skills development, organizational support, network creation and other vital elements that facilitate access to farmland. Even though these practices do not directly offer access to farmland *per se*, the analysis of the case studies shows that the activities associated with other, less tangible aspects of access to land are not less important in improving the prospects of new entrants into farming and organic farmers. Therefore, the conclusions of this presentation will be particularly relevant for these regions, where there is little or no institutional support for access to farmland for new entrants or (yet to be) organic farmers.

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## **IMPACT OF THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC ON RURAL TOURISM IN CZECHIA. PRELIMINARY CONSIDERATIONS**

**Antonín Vaishar<sup>1</sup>, Milada Štátná<sup>2</sup>**

Tourism service providers, transport companies and state budgets add up the damage caused by the COVID-19 pandemic and subsequent quarantine measures to tourism. According to Gössling et al. (2020), the first projections assume the decrease of international arrivals by 20-30%. Most analyzes to date relate to the global impacts of COVID-19 on international tourism (see e.g. Prideaux et al., 2020). Based on a web-based questionnaire distributed among tourism providers to young people (under 30) from 73 countries around the World, Richards and Morrill (2020) found that 80% of them admitted the deterioration of their business results due to COVID-19. On average, they expect a 26% decline. They identified economic uncertainty and travel restrictions as the main causes.

According to the Czech Statistical Office, in the first quarter of 2020, 3.1 million tourists were accommodated in collective accommodation establishments in Czechia, half of them from abroad. This represents a decrease of 22% compared to 2019. More than a third of the tourists went to Prague. However, in reality, in March, when the quarantine measures were already in place, the number of tourists fell by two thirds.

However, on a detailed look, we can observe that the damage was mainly suffered by providers in localities and regions that benefit from international tourism. In the Czech Republic, these are mainly Prague, the most important spas (especially Karlovy Vary) and the most famous UNESCO World Heritage sites (such as Český Krumlov). On the other hand, rural tourism sites focused mainly on domestic tourism recorded only modest losses. On the contrary, in several cases, the occupancy of accommodation establishments in domestic rural tourism destinations seems to be increasing. In some regions, tourist interest in these destinations exceeds the reality of 2019. According to analyzes carried out by the CzechTourism Agency, 79% of Czechs plan this summer holiday in the Czech

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Republic, while 89% of state citizens expect a shorter trip. They intend to spend EUR 230 per holiday and EUR 90 per trip per person. This represents a potential of € 2.75 billion for domestic tourism.

The preliminary analysis was performed in five rural micro-regions of the South Moravian Region (NUTS 3) with different degrees of tourism development, with different locations concerning the regional centre and with different types of tourist attractions. Selected micro-regions include the Lednice-Valtice area (UNESCO World Heritage locality), the Blue Mountains (based on wine culture), the region of Vranov nad Dyjí with a combination of natural and historical heritage), the Dolní Kounice area (almost undiscovered micro-region near Brno) and Hornácko on the Slovak border (with attractions especially for ecotourism).

Unemployment forecasts also assumed strong growth, including in the tourism sector. This assumption had its logic. Many self-employed people (who are not protected by the Labor Code) with lower qualifications (who are indispensable on the labour market) work in tourism. This assumption probably applies globally, but in the rural regions selected for analysis, unemployment rose slightly and then stabilized (for the time being). Even in the micro-region with the lowest level of education, unemployment fell during the pandemic. This phenomenon can be partly explained by the seasonality of work in agriculture and tourism, wherein the least developed regions, unemployment always decreases towards the summer. However, there may also be an increased interest of tourists in domestic destinations and also an effort to replace foreign workers who fled to their homelands before the epidemic.

The question, of course, is how permanent the Czechs' inclination towards domestic tourism is. After the restoration of the normal situation, most Czech tourists will probably return to destinations that the Czechia does not have (sea, high mountains), as well as to explore foreign countries. However, it cannot be ruled out that some trends towards increasing the share of rural tourism may become more permanent. This view can be supported by the following arguments: A decline in household income is expected in connection with the epidemic (unemployment, decline in profits of private entrepreneurs, only 60% of income at the time of illness or quarantine). These households are unlikely to give up on vacation but may be looking for a cheaper home option. Many Czechs who have not previously considered a domestic holiday can "discover" attractive domestic destinations, to which they can return even after the epidemic subsides. People may also realize the much higher security of domestic rural destinations not only in terms of crime or terrorism but also in terms of significantly lower chance of infection (which is more likely in large cities and resorts), better access to medical care and the like. Rural tourism

providers can also realize their potential and focus on improving infrastructure, organization and information preparation. Higgins-Desbiolles (2020) believes that COVID-19 represents an opportunity to change the paradigm of tourism towards sustainability and local interests.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://cordis.europa.eu/project/id/870644>

## **AN INTERACTIVE MAP OF EXTINCT SETTLEMENTS AND A MODERN CHRONICLE OF THE VILLAGE – HISTORY AND THE PRESENT, APPLICABLE IN RELATION TO DEVELOPMENT OF RURAL AREAS**

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Lešková<sup>4</sup>, Antonín Vaishar<sup>5</sup>**

Settlements disappearing after 1945 became a phenomenon particularly in the northwest part of the Czech border areas. A smaller, but not the inconsiderable number of such disappeared settlements are also located in Moravia and Silesia (historic parts of the Czech Republic). Our research focuses on these locations. The philosophy of our research is to promote the formation of local identity and revive local history.

The goal of our research is to create practical outputs, which can be used to develop specific locations:

- 1) a map portal of disappeared settlements – an interactive map of disappeared settlements, providing historic information and image material and a description of the new function of the settlement,
- 2) a modern chronicle of the village for selected locations (a short audio-visual document about the history and new appearance of selected settlements). Chronicles conceived in this manner reconstruct the historic image of the landscape and the settlement, using oral history and archive photograph research methods, and compare it to the new appearance of the settlement.
- 3) an exhibition devoted to the topic of disappeared settlements in Moravia and Silesia - the history and present, including visualization and 3D models of selected disappeared settlements.

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Approximately 70 disappeared settlements have been localised and described to date in Moravia and Silesia; the mapped settlements primarily include villages, which disappeared between 1945 and 1989 and have disappeared physically (all buildings within the territory of this settlement were either demolished, fallen into disrepair or become uninhabitable).

As stated previously – disappeared settlements, in general, are documented and recorded in the map particularly in Bohemia (a greater number of settlements disappeared here during the monitored period, up to ten times the number of settlements disappeared here compared to the number estimated in Moravia and Silesia).

Settlements disappeared in Moravia and Silesia for the following reasons:

- 1.) The primary reason is the **displacement of residents of German nationality and subsequently failure** to repopulate the area. This particularly applies to the districts of Šumperk, Bruntál and Jeseník (33 villages and hamlets and 16 local districts have been localised in the Jeseník Region to date). A significant implicational reason for settlements disappearing in Silesia and the northern parts of Moravia is also the environmental conditions (particularly the significantly colder climate, the higher altitude and the ruggedness of the terrain, the poor fertility of the soil), which complicated re-population of areas after 1945. In the case of settlements that were not re-populated, buildings were often removed within the terms of government-organised demolitions (the army carried out only a smaller number of demolitions) and often not even sacral buildings have been preserved here.
- 2.) In the remainder of Moravia, the quantitative and spatially most important reason for a settlement to disappear is the establishment of a **military training area (Libavá, vojenský újezd)** - 18 villages.
- 3.) settlements also vanished in Moravia due to **flooding as a result of the construction of reservoirs** (4 villages and hamlets),
- 4.) **construction of the Dukovany nuclear power plant** (2 villages and 1 hamlet with a chapel standing in each of them)
- 5.) from the aspect of quantity, a unique reason for the forced disappearance of a settlement is that a state border was nearby and the related formation of the **border zone** (1 village and 1 hamlet in the south of Moravia) and mining activities in the area of **north Moravia** (however, this area has not been fully mapped in the project as yet).

Work with surviving witnesses, with whom interviews are directed, is an important element of the research. Selected interviews with surviving witnesses are recorded and

subsequently combined with image material (video-recordings, modern photographs, historic photographs of the area), graphic materials (2D maps of development of the landscape structure and 3D models of settlements in the context of the surrounding landscape, reconstructed based on historic sources, including period chronicles and testimonies by surviving witnesses).

**Keywords:** *extinct settlements, Moravia and Silesia, local identity*

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## **RESILIENCE OF THE BOHEMIAN AND MORAVIAN COUNTRYSIDE IN THE CONTEXT OF TRENDS IN THE URBAN-RURAL DIGITAL DIVIDE: CRITICAL REFLECTION FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF STRATEGIC DOCUMENTS**

**René Wokoun<sup>1</sup>**

The issue of the resilience of rural areas is a traditional research topic. However, in the last ten to twenty years, this question has emerged due to the relatively rapid development of digitalisation of society in a new concept, i.e. as rural resilience in the context of trends in the digital divide between urban and rural areas. In this paper, there is a focus on the issue of the resilience of the Czech and Moravian countryside, in the context of trends in the digital divide between urban and rural areas, which are noted in the strategic documents of the Czech government and the broader context of European Union documents. At the outset, it is noteworthy that with the help of the development and availability of modern technologies, Information and Communications Technology (ICT) has become an integral part of society and, therefore, we speak of today's society in terms of knowledge. The emphasis on knowledge is the essence of the competitiveness of municipalities, cities and regions, states and the entire European Union. Globally, sustainable development is at the heart of the competitiveness of regions, including rural regions, and this is currently not possible without the use of Digital Technologies. In this context, it is noteworthy that the importance of ICT is demonstrated in the EU's headline targets, known as the "20-20-20 Targets", which are reflected in all EU strategy papers. In line with these objectives, the strategic document entitled *A Green Knowledge Society: An ICT Policy Agenda to 2015 for Europe's future knowledge society* was prepared in 2009 (see Forge, 2009), which emphasizes the role of ICT in the development of the Knowledge Economy. ICT is in line with human thinking, and knowledge is the principle of any development, and this is also true of rural regions. In that, regions with Advanced Information Technologies are more developed than regions with a lower degree of involvement of these technologies. Disparities arise between regions precisely due to

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different developments in the Knowledge Society and the application of ICT technologies. Another key document of the EU is the Europe 2020 strategy, with the full title of “*Strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth*”. This strategy focuses on three main priorities, which are further divided into seven flagship initiatives. Related to Europe 2020 strategy paper is a substantial part: “*Digital Society:...*”, in which Europe also lags concerning High-Speed Internet, which affects Europe’s ability to innovate (especially in rural areas), and the same problem applies to Internet dissemination and the distribution of goods. An important document is the so-called “Digital Agenda for Europe” of 2010, which is the European Commission’s strategic document for the period of 2010-2020. The Digital Agenda focuses on the role and use of ICT and the removal of various electronic barriers in Europe. In the Czech Republic, many strategic documents are prepared for each programming period following EU requirements. It is essential for our topic that the Ministry for Regional Development should draw up a Strategy for Regional Development of the Czech Republic. The currently valid Strategy of Regional Development of the Czech Republic for the period of 2014–2020 is a basic document of regional policy in the Czech Republic. A document is a tool for the implementation of regional policy and coordination of the impact of other public policies on regional development. This strategy links sectoral aspects (themes and priorities) with territorial aspects. It strengthens the role of implementation mechanisms and monitoring, which makes it possible to streamline the coordination of national regional policies and the actual implementation of economic, social and territorial cohesion policy in the form of financial support for development activities in regions, including rural regions. In essence, it prefers a place-based approach with a foundation of identifying and satisfying local needs. Of the many objectives, the support of ICT is reflected, in particular, in the objective of “*Improving access to information and communication technologies, their use and quality*”. The intersection of this goal with the priorities of the strategy can be found in the priority regarding “*Utilization of the potential of developing territories*” and also in the priority of “*Development of key infrastructure of supranational importance*”. There is also a strong link between the use of ICT and the priority of “*Improving the institutional framework for regional development*”, especially in the area of the increasing availability of public services for citizens (eGovernance). However, this link is not included in the scheme of the Czech Regional Development Strategy. In national operational programmes, such as the “*Integrated Regional Operational Program*”, which is managed by the Ministry of Regional Development, the issue of rural resilience appears rather sporadically. Although the programme aims to strengthen regional competitiveness and quality of life in the regions, it is a relatively broad programme in terms of various supported themes and has little focus on reducing the trend of widening the digital divide between urban and rural areas. Already in 2013, the



Association of Regions of the Czech Republic submitted a long-term “*Strategy for the Development of Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) of the Regions of the Czech Republic in 2013–2020*”. In the second priority of “Infrastructure”, this strategy focuses, among other things, on High-Speed Internet and the development of networks at the regional and municipal levels, which is primarily declaratory, but the inclusion of this issue in the strategy should be appreciated. All relevant Czech and EU strategic documents focus on High-Speed Internet and network development and pay only limited attention to rural regions. It is interesting to note that the key EU documents show the priority of ICT as an important means of fulfilling the objectives of the priority axes, including the rural regions. However, the development of digitisation is, for understandable reasons, related to critical mass (of the population), which is significant in urban regions. On the contrary, in the countryside, we are truly witnessing a rather pronounced “lagging far behind” effect which is, paradoxically, reflected only to a limited extent in strategic documents.

**Keywords:** Rural resilience, digital divide, countryside, strategic documents

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## PERSONAL CHARACTERISTICS OF REPRESENTATIVES OF POLISH RURAL PUBLIC INSTITUTIONS IMPLEMENTING LOCAL SOCIAL INNOVATIONS

Katarzyna Karolina Zajda<sup>1</sup>

**Introduction:** Few analyses on the implementation of social innovations have been carried out in the context of rural areas (Noack & Federwisch, 2019). Besides, in both Polish- and English-language literature, there is little analysis of the relationship between the characteristics of the leaders of public institutions and the implementation of social innovation by these institutions. This kind of research is important because, in small, rural *gminas* (the smallest units of territorial division in Poland), the characteristics of public leaders have an impact on the actions taken by public institutions.

The purpose of the presentation is to identify the personal characteristics that distinguish the leaders of public institutions from Polish *gminas* (*gmina* offices and *gmina* social welfare centres) that implemented local social innovations. We define these innovations as alternative local practices for minimising local social problems in the form of specific social services and products). Three characteristics were analysed: 1) the openness of representatives of public institutions to experience, 2) their level of public confidence and 3) their social activity, understood as involvement in the activity of NGOs and participation in other non-formal social activities.

**Study methodology:** The research was conducted in 2018 using an online survey of representatives of public institutions involved in solving local social problems, located in rural *gmina*. One respondent from each rural *gmina* was selected to complete the survey (the mayor of the *gmina* or the person delegated by the mayor (e.g. the head of a social welfare centre). The research included a sample of 330 randomly selected rural *gminas*. This study was funded by the National Science Centre [Poland] (Research Project Reference No.: 015/19/D/HS6/00690, DEC-2015/19/D/HS6/00690, Contract No. UMO-2015/19/D/HS6/ 00690). Of the respondents, 76.5% were women, and 20.6% were men. The age range was 23–72, with the greatest proportion of respondents aged 40–49.

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Representatives of public institutions were asked to fill in a part of the NEO-FFI Personality Inventory, a scale that measures openness to experience, the tendency to positively value life experiences, tolerance of novelty and cognitive curiosity. The inventory consists of 12 items to which subjects respond on a 5-step scale (from I strongly disagree to strongly agree) (Zawadzki et al., 1998). The questionnaire also included questions about respondents' social confidence and social activity. Besides, the respondents were asked: "To solve the social problems affecting the inhabitants of the *gmina*, has the institution carried out any activities which can be described as unusual, non-standard, or outlier practices?" Due to the lack of normality of the distribution and the qualitative nature of the variables in the analysis, the Mann–Whitney test was used.

**Results:** A high level of social trust characterised 57% of the respondents. Thirty percent of the respondents were characterised by high and very high social activity. Almost half of the total respondents had a high level of openness to experience. This characteristic (out of the three analysed) was the only one that differentiated representatives of institutions who had experience in implementing bottom-up social innovations from those who did not.

*Table 1. Diversity of characteristics of respondents representing institutions that have implemented and that have not implemented bottom-up social innovations*

|                       | Non-standard activity |           |               |           | The importance<br>of differences |          |
|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------|---------------|-----------|----------------------------------|----------|
|                       | No                    |           | yes           |           |                                  |          |
|                       | <i>n</i> = 273        |           | <i>n</i> = 57 |           |                                  |          |
|                       | <i>M</i>              | <i>SD</i> | <i>M</i>      | <i>SD</i> | <i>U</i>                         | <i>p</i> |
| Social trust          | 4,72                  | 1,70      | 4,96          | 1,72      | 7195,50                          | 0,36     |
| Social activity       | 0,91                  | 0,82      | 1,05          | 0,79      | 7035,00                          | 0,23     |
| Openess to experience | 27,75                 | 5,85      | 30,04         | 6,14      | 6086,00                          | 0,01     |

*n* – abundance, *M* – medium, *SD* – standard deviation, *U* – statistic of the U Mann–Whitney test, *p* – significance

Source: own elaboration

**Conclusion:** Based on the study, it can be concluded that the openness of leaders of public institutions to experience promotes the implementation of local social innovation by the institutions they represent. Perhaps other variables, such as their trust and social activity, increase the likelihood of diffusion of the services and products created. However, this hypothesis should be verified in further studies which, in practical terms, could answer the question of how to support leaders of public institutions to increase the likelihood that local social innovations will be implemented and diffused.

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## **DISTINGUISHING FEATURES OF RURAL PUBLIC INSTITUTIONS IMPLEMENTING LOCAL SOCIAL INNOVATIONS: REPORTS FROM POLAND**

**Katarzyna Karolina Zajda<sup>1</sup>**

This presentation will address the implementation of local social innovations (LSIs) by public institutions (PIs) in the context of rural gminas in Poland. The analysis aims to identify the characteristics that distinguish PIs with experience in implementing LSIs from those without such a background. LSIs have been defined as alternative practices pertaining to the practices of a rural gmina that are aimed at solving the social problems affecting their inhabitants. It is assumed here that, LSIs can be expected to provide an answer to the very specific social problems of the inhabitants of a given rural gmina. These problems may include, for example, unemployment, poverty, domestic violence, discrimination on grounds of age, gender, social background, or disability.

The present research was conducted with the use of an Internet survey with a sample of 330 randomly-selected rural gminas (each rural gmina was a sampling unit). The survey was addressed to gmina offices. It consisted of questions based on which the following were built: 1. The index of cooperation of a PI with NGOs from the gmina area (IWNGOs); 2. The index of a PI's relationships with NGOs from outside the gmina (ISRNGOs); 3. The index of inhabitants' involvement in activities aimed at solving the social problems affecting the inhabitants themselves (IWM). The survey included the following question concerning the implementation of LSIs by a PI: "To solve social problems affecting the residents of the gmina, did the institution

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carry out any activities that could be described as unusual, non-standard, or different from the practices commonly applied in the area of this gmina for solving social problems?” The following related questions were also included: (1) “In carrying out these activities, did the institution cooperate (formally or informally) with a local organization?” and (2) “In carrying out these activities, did the institution exchange information and/or cooperate (formally or informally) with any organization from outside the gmina?”. Bearing in mind how Polish legislation has defined, *inter alia*, possible forms of cooperation between the public sector and NGOs could take three forms: A. Creation of joint teams of an advisory and initiating character; B. Joint provision of social services in projects established exclusively by a PI; C. Joint creation, co-construction, and co-production of social services within the framework of the implemented projects. Maintaining relations was a broader category than cooperation, i.e., it also included the exchange of information between entities.

The quantitative survey was administered to 330 representatives of rural gminas (including village heads, secretaries, and heads of gmina social welfare centres). Of the respondents, 76.5% were women, and 20.6% were men, with all between the ages of 23–72 ( $M = 47.19$ ;  $SD = 9.87$ ). The most frequent age range was 40–49 ( $N = 124$ ; 37.6%).

The Shapiro–Wilk test showed that the distribution of the tested variables was not consistent with the normal distribution. The relationships between the variables were verified using the non-parametric Mann–Whitney U test.

High and very high levels of cooperation with new types of NGOs were only characteristic of 13.4% of PIs. A total of 88.5% of all examined institutions did not build relations with NGOs from outside the gmina at all. The research has shown that as many as 30% of rural gminas did not undertake any actions beyond informing the inhabitants about how the social problems affecting them would be solved.

The key variable that distinguishes the PIs implementing LSIs from those that do not have such experience is the involvement of inhabitants in solving the social problems that affect them (see table 1.).

Table 1. Relationship between local social innovation implementation by a public institution and the built indexes

|   | Implementation of non-standard activities |           |                      |           | Significance of differences |          |
|---|---|-----------|----------------------|-----------|-----------------------------|----------|
|   | No<br><i>n</i> = 273                      |           | Yes<br><i>n</i> = 57 |           | <i>U</i>                    | <i>p</i> |
|   | <i>M</i>                                  | <i>SD</i> | <i>M</i>             | <i>SD</i> |                             |          |
| Cooperation of public institutions with NGOs (IWNGOs)                     | 1.83                                      | 2.62      | 2.26                 | 2.64      | 6927.00                     | 0.16     |
| Involving inhabitants in activities aimed at solving their problems (IWM) | 2.07                                      | 1.30      | 3.04                 | 1.13      | 4459.50                     | 0.001    |
| Relationships with NGOs from outside the gmina (ISRNGOs)                  | 0.59                                      | 1.46      | 0.95                 | 1.82      | 7010.50                     | 0.11     |

*n* - number, *M* - mean, *SD* - standard deviation, *U* - Mann–Whitney *U* test statistics, *p* - significance

Source: Own elaboration

It seems that as many as 30% of Polish rural gminas have a smaller chance of implementing LSIs because they do not include the residents in the process of solving the social problems affecting them.

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