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ÚSTAV ZEMĚDĚLSKÝCH A POTRAVINÁŘSKÝCH INFORMACÍ

# ZEMĚDĚLSKÁ EKONOMIKA

## Agricultural Economics

ČESKÁ AKADEMIE ZEMĚDĚLSKÝCH VĚD

7

ROČNÍK 41 (LXVIII)  
PRAHA  
ČERVENEC 1995  
CS ISSN 0139-570X

Mezinárodní vědecký časopis vydávaný z pověření České akademie zemědělských věd a s podporou Ministerstva zemědělství České republiky

An international journal published by the Czech Academy of Agricultural Sciences and with the promotion of the Ministry of Agriculture of the Czech Republic

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**Periodicita:** Časopis vychází měsíčně (12x ročně), ročník 41 vychází v roce 1995.

**Přijímání rukopisů:** Rukopisy ve dvou vyhotoveních je třeba zaslat na adresu redakce: Mgr. Alena Rottová, vedoucí redaktorka, Ústav zemědělských a potravinářských informací, Slezská 7, 120 56 Praha 2, tel.: 02/25 75 41–9, fax: 02/25 70 90, e-mail: braun@uzpi.agrec.cz. Den doručení rukopisu do redakce je publikován jako datum přijetí k publikaci.

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**Periodicity:** The journal is published monthly (12 issues per year), Volume 41 appearing in 1995.

**Acceptance of manuscripts:** Two copies of manuscript should be addressed to: Mgr. Alena Rottová, editor-in-chief, Institute of Agricultural and Food Information, Slezská 7, 120 56 Praha 2, tel.: 02/25 75 41–9, fax: 02/25 70 90, e-mail: braun@uzpi.agrec.cz. The day the manuscript reaches the editor for the first time is given upon publication as the date of reception.

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*Agricultural Economics is a monthly journal. Three issues a year are devoted to articles addressing sociological, socio-economic, demographic and social anthropological themes.*

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**The photo published in this issue are by Jindřich Šreit, who discovered the village for photography.**

He was first encouraged to the pictures by his father. In 1964, it was professor Jan Bukovjan, who stimulated his interest in photography. As a student, Šreit took part in a few exhibitions, and in 1967 he had his first one-man show. Since 1972 he has systematically devoted himself to documenting country life, focusing on the Gypsy community. In the years 1974–1977 he took correspondence courses at the Institute of Art Photography: his graduation piece was a set of backstage theatre photographs. He then returned permanently to documenting the life at Sovinec and surrounding villages. The first interruption to this came in 1991, when he spent several weeks in Reims, having been invited to document the Red Cross settlement there. And in 1992 he accepted another invitation to go to France to capture the life of the town of Saint Quentin and its thirteen villages.

(A. D u f e k: The villages is global world)

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# CHANGES IN SOCIAL STRUCTURE OF AGRICULTURAL ENTERPRISES

## ZMĚNY V SOCIÁLNÍ STRUKTUŘE ZEMĚDĚLSKÝCH PODNIKŮ

V. Majerová

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**ABSTRACT:** Population of the world grows permanently. More than one half of the population lives in rural areas. More than one third of them are fed by agriculture. While the rural population of the world is increasing, in Europe it is decreasing and this is true as well for Western as for Eastern parts of Europe. The essential European problems are – surplus of food in Europe and migration from rural areas. The ongoing process of transition and restructuring is related to decreasing proportion of persons economically active in agriculture. This of course associated to increase in unemployment, which could create a long-term and serious social problem. The development of the size of farms differs from country to country. The economist use the term "threshold of growth for farms with a certain acreage". The "size divide" is the critical value under which the number of enterprises diminishes and over which this number grows. On the base of empirical research of EU is this critical value 50 ha. The effects of transition on social structure of Czech agricultural enterprises are not yet clear. The prestige of agricultural professions is not high. Yet, the value attached to nature and rural environment is increasing. That is why also the type of private farm which offers the self-realization, independence, the sense belonging to the nature, renewal of family co-operation and other values may be brought again and again back to life.

rural population, workers in agriculture, agrarian structures, social structure of agricultural enterprises, transition of Czech agriculture

**ABSTRAKT:** Počet obyvatel na světě stále roste. Více než polovina obyvatelstva žije ve venkovských oblastech a z nich více než třetina se živí zemědělstvím. Evropská situace se od světové značně liší, především relativně mírným nárůstem počtu obyvatel, čtvrtinovým podílem rurální populace a 16 % podílem obyvatelstva ekonomicky aktivního v zemědělství. Pro Evropu je však charakteristická změna vnitřní struktury venkovských oblastí způsobovaná migrací do měst a rapidním poklesem ekonomicky aktivních pracovníků v zemědělství. Mezi hlavní problémy patří přebytek potravin v Evropě, nezaměstnanost v zemědělských oblastech a potenciální rozvoj či alespoň udržitelnost venkovských oblastí bez zemědělců a zemědělství. Rozšíření Evropy o středo- a východoevropské země tento stav ještě vyostřuje. Ekonomický pohled je zaměřen na analýzu vývoje agrárních struktur, rentabilitu odvětví zemědělství, protekcionistickou a subvenční politiku státu a další statisticky sledovatelné ukazatele. Ekonomové hovoří o „prahu růstu jednotek s určitou plošnou výměrou“. Pro formulování sociálních otázek je zatím k dispozici méně ukazatelů, proto jsou pokládány v obecnější podobě a závěry sociologických šetření vyznívají obezřetněji. Je sledován vývoj sociální struktury zemědělských pracovníků i venkovského obyvatelstva, zejména z hlediska pohlaví, věku, kvalifikace a profese. Z dosavadního vývoje sociální struktury jsou usuzovány možné další vývojové tendence. Ovšem zároveň je zřejmé, že změny, které se v současnosti na venkově a v zemědělství odehrávají jsou tak zásadní, hluboké, ovlivňované množstvím známých i neznámých faktorů, že jejich důsledky lze předpokládat jen ve velmi zjednodušené podobě. Zde se ukazuje naléhavá potřeba širšího využívání sociologických metod a technik, zejména jejich kvalitativní verze, které mohou zachytit jemnější známky sociálního dění a upřesnit pohled na sociální realitu.

venkovské obyvatelstvo, pracovníci v zemědělství, agrární struktury, sociální struktura zemědělských podniků, transformace zemědělství v ČR

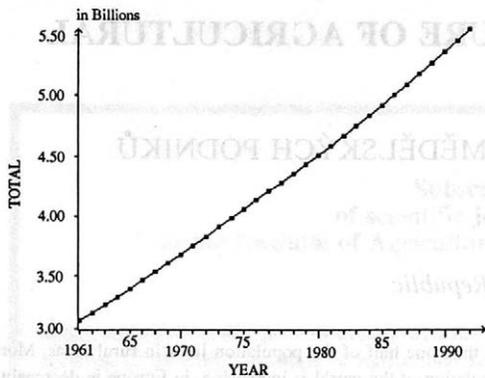
Population of the world grows permanently. In the period 1961–1993 this increase was 78% (approximately from 3 to 5,5 billions) – Fig. 1.

More than one half of the population (56%) lives in rural areas. More than one third of them are fed by agriculture. The share of the rural population as well as the share of the economically active population in agriculture is growing in the world.

There are two principal questions in the global society:

1. How to feed the population of the world?
2. How to reach the peaceful coexistence?

Europe is significantly different. First, the increase of population is relatively not too substantive (17,5% since 1961). Furthermore, rural population represents only one quarter of general population in Europe and



1. World population: total

only 16% of those economically active is working in agriculture (Fig. 2a, b).

While the rural population of the world is increasing, in Europe it is decreasing and this is true as well for Western as for Eastern parts of Europe (since 1961 this decrease is approximately 20%). However, the proportion of those of economically active in agriculture

is radically decreasing. In Western Europe the differences is 67%, in Eastern Europe 57% during the period of the last 30 years (Fig. 2c, d).

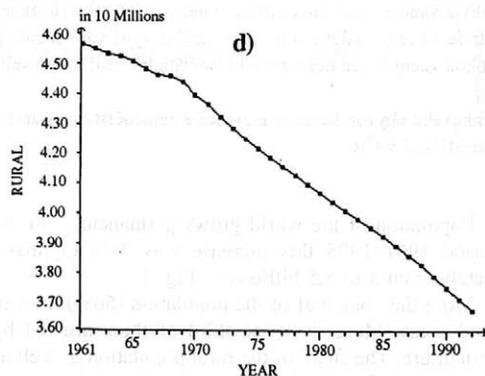
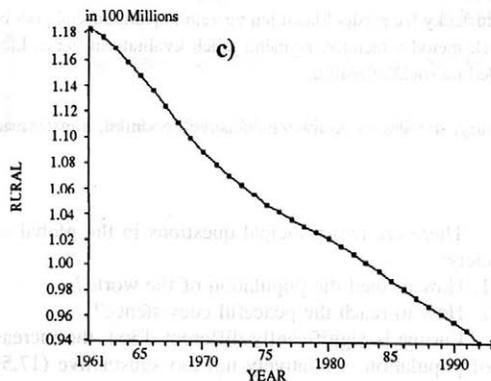
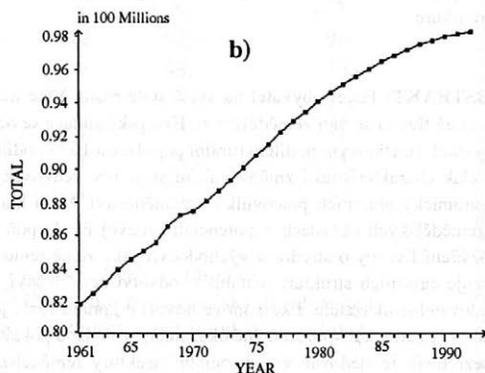
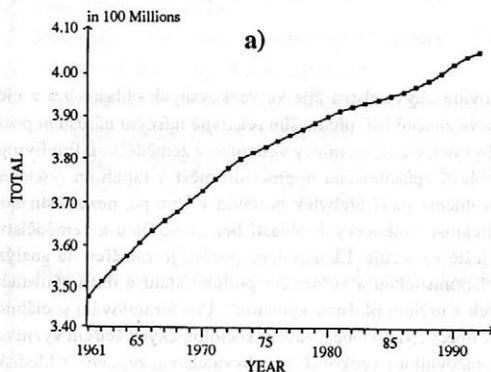
Briefly summarized: the increase is basically sustainable. However, the inner structure has changed, the migration from rural to urban areas continues and the character of settlement structure is changing. Nevertheless, the share of economically active persons in agriculture decreases rapidly (Fig. 3).

In Czechoslovakia and now in the Czech Republic the longitudinal development is different. The decrease of rural population in last the 30 years is stronger (approximately 53%). Anyway, the decrease of proportion of those who are economically active in agriculture corresponds to European trends (Fig. 4).

The essential West-European problems were until recently different from the global ones:

1. What to do with the surplus of food in Europe?
2. What to do with the rural population which agriculture is no more able to support?
3. What to do with the rural areas without agriculture and without farmers?

Sooner than it was possible to find answers to these questions, the Central and Eastern Europe was exposed



2. Total population: Western Europe (a), Eastern Europe (b) and rural population: Western Europe (c), Eastern Europe (d)

to political changes. There are two Europes alongside, each with a different political, economical and social past.

The ongoing process of transition and restructuring is related to decreasing proportion of persons economically active in agriculture. This is of course associated to increase in unemployment which could create a long-term and serious social problem.

The economists are now focusing on research of comparability of agrarian structures, on the role of family farms, rentability of agriculture, protectionalistic policies, problems of state subventions and other measurable indicators in developed and developing countries.

Social problems are not yet so precisely formulated. The mode of future social phenomena is only partially possible to estimate on the base of present transition processes. Anyhow, it is risky to generalize on the base of past experience or of the experience of other countries.

It is difficult to verbalize the social problems. Here we have only a few suitable indicators. Therefore we are able to present these problems in a more general

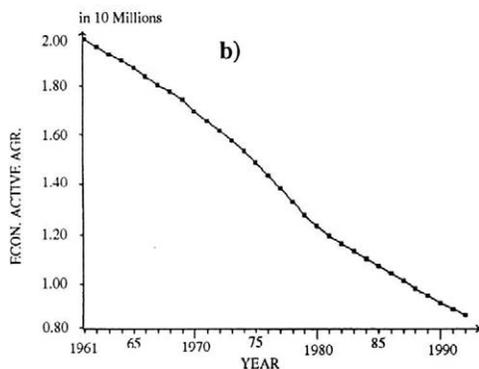
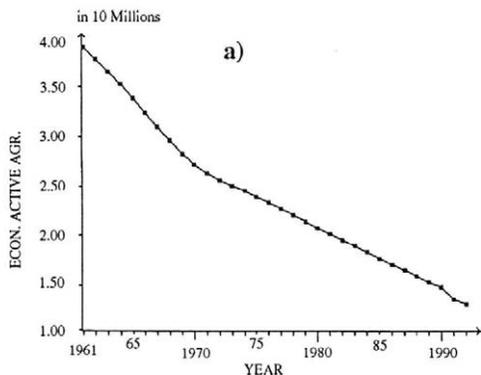
form. The search for social patterns is more complex here. Social behavior has different dimension and in its development it follows different laws and regularities. Therefore, in conclusion of sociological studies we have to be more hesitant.

In terms of the proportion of farmers among economically active persons, Czech Republic is coming slowly to the situation in EU countries (Tab. I). However, we are still closer to Hungary and Bulgaria than to Germany, Austria or France.

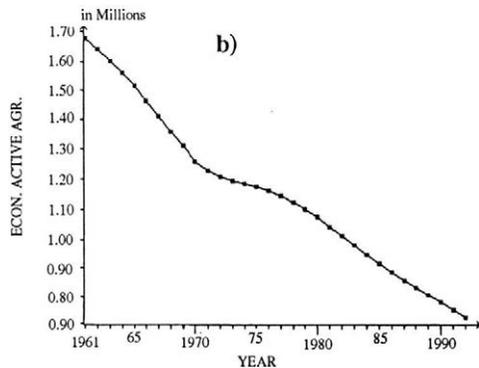
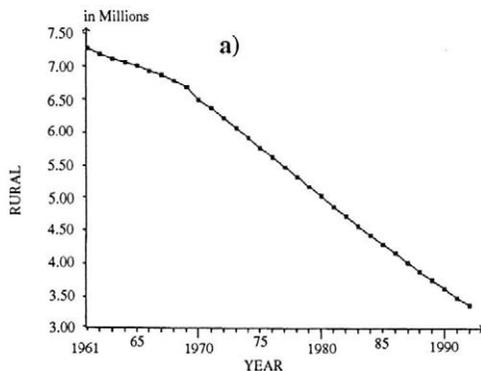
In regard to USA and the world, it is necessary to stress the gap between developed and developing economical system.

For West-European agriculture, and also for other developed countries of OECD, the basic form of agricultural enterprise is a family farm. On those farms, there usually works the owner and the other members of his family. Only exceptionally the seasonal workers are hired.

The development of the farms size differs from country to country. The economists use the term "threshold of grow for farms with a certain acreage". The "size divide" is the critical value under which the num-



3. Population economically active in agriculture: Western Europe (a) and Eastern Europe (b)



4. The former Czechoslovakia: rural population (a) and population economically active in agriculture (b)

I. Proportion of farmers from the total of economically active persons and relation of farmers to the total population in selected groups of countries (1992)

	Economically active in agriculture [%]	Population per 1 econ. act. in agriculture
Czechoslovakia (former)	4.64	21.55
Austria	2.51	39.79
Germany	2.15	46.59
Poland	9.92	10.08
Hungary	5.24	19.09
France	2.15	46.44
Greece	9.07	11.02
Bulgaria	5.60	17.85
USA	1.09	91.34
EEC	2.77	36.12
World	20.39	4.91

Source: FAO SOFA93

ber of enterprises diminishes and over which this number grows. On the base of empirical research of EU this critical value is 50 ha (Tab. II).

The longitudinal development of the farms in our country oscillated in the broad amplitude.

Before the World War II., Czechoslovakia did belong to industrially developed countries. This was particularly true about the Czech part of the country. However, the proportion of people working in agriculture was also high. Typical for the country were small and medium size family farms. About 90% of these farms were 20 ha or less.

The collectivization of agriculture commences to the end of 1940s and beginning of 1950s and goes on up to November 1989. During this period, practically all private farms are transformed into two types of collective enterprises (co-operatives and state farms). The size of farms is gradually increasing. This tendency is most visible in 1970s (Tab. III).

III. Increasing of UAC average size

Year	Average size of UAC [ha]
1950	359
1960	420
1970	625
1975	1 325
1980	2 476
1982	2 507
1990	2 504

Source: Karlík J. (1991)

For large-scale agricultural enterprises in this period of time, there was typical the concentration and specialization of the production and depending of cooperative relations. For workers of agricultural co-ops and state

II. Changes in the farms size in EU

Size structure of enterprises by area of agricultural land [ha]	Increase (+), decrease (-) of enterprises from 1987-1989/90 [%]
> 1	+0.9
1-2	-4.3
2-5	-9.0
5-10	-10.6
10-20	-9.4
20-30	-7.9
30-50	-3.0
50-100	+0.7
< 100	+5.4
Total	-5.5

Source: Kraus J., Divila E., Sokol Z. (1994)

farms, these changes brought increasing demands on professional knowledge and qualification. For management these changes required also an adaptation on new more complex types of co-operation, demands on administration and organization of work.

The structure of management was under the influence of the nomenklatura and under the influence of objective demands of social situation. Thus, the management was under irrational and rational (sometimes market directed) pressure.

Job security of manual workers was high. However, the social structure of the labour force was not optimal from the following view points:

- average age was higher here than in the general labour force
- qualification was low or absent
- professional structure was not satisfactory.

The structure of management and organization of the enterprise itself was too complex and included also non-functional elements. In the late eighties, dysfunctionality of some elements emerged spontaneously in many survey studies dealing with agriculture.

In this time the large-scale conception of economical development of agriculture reached its maximum. A reverse process started. Based on empirical experience of my own research, I can state that the most prominent dysfunctional elements were related to interrupted logical dependence between

- quality of work and reward and
- efficiency of work and working prospective of workers.

The relatively easy overturn of political and economical power in November 1989 was surprisingly easy even in rural areas and in agriculture. It is possible that the mentioned dysfunctional structures contributed to the acceptance of those changes within the traditional part of social system.

Transformation of agriculture which commenced since 1989 is still in progress. In the period 1989 to 1993, the number of full-time workers in the Czech Republic in the primary agricultural production decreased from 533 057 to 260 066. Their proportion among all the economically active persons decreased from 9,8% to 4,8%.

In the year 1994, there was 15% of state enterprises and 85% of private enterprises (18% of family farms, the rest were other private enterprises).

The size of private enterprises (private farms and other) is higher than the average size of those in EU countries. The average acreage of transformed enterprises is following: private co-ops (i. e. former co-operative farms) 1 357 ha, former state farms 599 ha and private farms about 15 ha of agricultural land.

The differences between the Czech Republic and "European Twelve" countries and some selected West-European countries are small (Tab. IV and V).

IV. Agricultural labour force by gender: crossnational comparison (1991)

	EC-12	Germany	France	Greece	Czech Republic
Number in thousand	8 493	1 026	1 332	807	377
Men, %	64.7	57.1	64.5	59.4	59.4
Women, %	35.5	42.9	35.5	40.6	40.6

V. Agricultural labour force by age groups: crossnational comparison (1991) in %

Age	EC-12	Germany	France	Greece	Czech Republic
15-25	10.5	9.5	6.5	9.0	8.2
26-35	16.8	18.1	19.3	11.6	24.6
36-65	65.6	64.8	70.9	70.9	62.8 <sup>1</sup>
66+	6.9	7.7	3.3	8.6	4.4 <sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>age 36-60, <sup>2</sup>age 61+

Source: The Agricultural Situation in the Community, 1993 Report. Brussels 1993

It is not easy to decide whether it is desirable to change the proportion of females in agriculture. The work in agriculture has a lot of negative elements for females. On the other hand, there are some positive elements, relatively advantageous time structure of the work and proximity of the work place to home.

The age structure of labour force seems to be improving during the process of transition. In comparison with other European countries, the age structure of the labour force is satisfactory.

The effects of transformation on social structure of agricultural enterprises are not clear yet.

On the labour market, the supply is higher than the demand. The prospective of farmers who lost their job

is not too good. Their adaptability for other job and their qualification is low. Their past narrow specialization, dependency on existing dwellings and plots are elements which decrease the probability of finding a new job.

The transition of agriculture and rural areas is related to a broad scale of social problems. The rate of unemployment in the Czech Republic is relatively low in comparison with other countries. On the end of 1994 it was 3,5% (e. g. 3,7% in Germany, 4,4% in Norway, 7,2% in Sweden, 14% in Belgium, 16,8% in Spain, 19,2% in Finland).

However, the regional differences in unemployment in the Czech Republic are significant. The unemployment is high especially in agricultural districts. In some less developed regions, it is possible that the whole social groups maybe endangered by poverty. In the situation when the task of creation of social security is shifted from the state to private persons, this problem is very sensitive.

In the same period, a new relation to the ownership, its use, maintenance, reproduction and bequest is reborn after many years. The same processes produce new inequality. This inequality is perceived positively as well as negatively. Perception of social justice is in the state of development.

Reconstruction of private entrepreneurship as a part of production mode and life style in rural areas opens again the problem of optimal farm size. This is not only an economical but also a social category. From the point of view of economy the private family farm may be perceived as an anachronism. However, the same farm offers the values of self-realization, independence, the sense of belonging to the nature, renewal of family co-operation and other similar values.

This farm need not to survive. Nevertheless, the wave of development may bring it again and again back to life.

The prestige of agricultural professions is not high. Yet, the value attached to nature and rural environment is increasing.

To sum up the unanswered questions I would like to quote the Polish sociologist Zygmund Bauman: "Men perceive presence as a cluster of possibilities. However, the clear signals which of the possibilities has the highest chance to become to be reality, are missing. Thus, we search for some substitutes as e. g. statistics, to overcome our insecurity.

Greatest thinkers of our era following this trail were unable to predict two great revolutions of 20. century: communist revolution and anti-communist revolution.

All trials to give a firm form to that what is in a motion seems to be only a function of our arrogance. The task to understand is not related to gaining of the self-assurance. It is in the creation of unrest, in presentation of multiplicity of possibilities.

Let us try to avoid the arrogance. The arrogance facing the reality is always blind and impotent."

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Arrived on 5th July 1995

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# RURAL COMMUNITY FOR THE SAKE OF POSITIVE GLOBAL CHANGE?

## JE ZDE RURÁLNÍ KOMUNITA KVŮLI POSITIVNÍM GLOBÁLNÍM ZMĚNÁM?

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**ABSTRACT:** On the basis of the generalized empirical investigations of the rural community we consider the so-called ecological awareness of the rural community to be the new source for global environmental changes. From the point of view of the information flows in ecosystems it stands in the beginning of the chain of ecological changes and the level of this consciousness can have global consequences and it can cause global changes. Rural Sociology is standing in front of the task to look for the new sense and new role of the rural community in its ecological functions. Generally, cooperation is the basis and we can say the paradigm of the rural culture. This feature of the rural culture has global importance. It is basically the question of a complementary knowledge of cooperation which is completed with awareness of the competition, unlimited competition of all the people with all ones and on which is under any circumstances built our industrial civilization. In this way, a number of methodological problems of the rural sociology are opened. It seems to be a paradox situation: the new candidate driving forces of global environmental change demand deep investigation, qualitative interpretation case studies – in fact local focus. But we suppose the way to the ecological awareness of the rural community leads just in this direction. Just understanding of the role of a farmer in the system of nature and landscape, cooperation and responsibility are the old bases of the rural culture which today get new global relations.

rural community, rural sociology, global changes, new paradigm, ecological consciousness

**ABSTRAKT:** Rurální sociologie stojí před úkolem objasnit nový smysl a novou roli rurální komunity. Ta spočívá, kromě tradičního pohledu, právě v jejích ekologických funkcích. Základem rurální kultury je obecně spolupráce a odpovědnost. Tento znak má dnes globální význam. Jedná se o komplementární znak, který doplňuje vědomí soutěže – znak, na kterém je vystavena industriální civilizace, včetně „soutěže“ s přírodou. Na základě zobecněných empirických průzkumů rurální komunity je možné a nutné uvažovat o rurální komunitě z hlediska globálních změn. Významnou roli – nový zdroj pro pozitivní globální změny – zde hraje ekologické vědomí rurální komunity. Je analyzována struktura a funkce ekologického vědomí rurální komunity a diskutovány metodologické možnosti „globálního“ paradigmatu rurální sociologie.

rurální komunita, rurální sociologie, globální změny, ekologické vědomí, nová paradigma

### INTRODUCTION

Research on global environmental change and research in rural sociology seem to be on the opposite poles of the spectrum. The focus of the global environmental change research is on the biogeochemical cycles in the biosphere. Rural sociology research concentrates on the local rural community, local rural culture and tradition. But we are convinced that the rural community bears not only features of local importance but is also the bearer of a new global ecological awareness. We consider the local ecological consciousness to be the new candidate to become driving force of global environmental changes. From the point of view of the information flows, local communities stand in the beginning of the global chain of the eco-

logical changes. It is clear that the place of local consciousness in the hierarchy of global changes is very important as the local communities becomes the source of global change.

The idea of growth of the global consciousness is not new. Let us mention at least two representatives of the noosphere conception (the sphere of reason – according to the sphere of biological life – biosphere) V. I. Vernadsky (V e r n a d s k i j 1988); T. de Chardin (de Chardin 1965) and other works. (Sticker 1990)

But Rural Sociology seems not to have addressed these new facts of the global ecological crisis and the future oriented ideas about the noosphere. However, we feel Rural Sociology must look for its location in this new context. The rural community does not bear

only historical elements but, and we are convinced about it, it also bears elements for the future especially in its relation to nature and the environment as the whole. We suppose that one of the new paradigms of rural development leads just through the new sources of global environmental change – through the ecological awareness of the rural community. Our reflections come not only from the theory but from several long years of empirical investigation of the rural community.

#### IN NEED OF AN ENLARGED DEFINITION OF GLOBAL CHANGE

Global environmental change may be divided into two types of processes: those that take place throughout a global system, including modifications of the climate system; and those, that take place across the globe, such as loss of agricultural land through diversification, loss of biodiversity, and increases in acid deposition. (Jacobson, Price 1990).

Considerable progress has been made especially over the past two decades in understanding the functioning of the Earth's physical, chemical and biological systems.

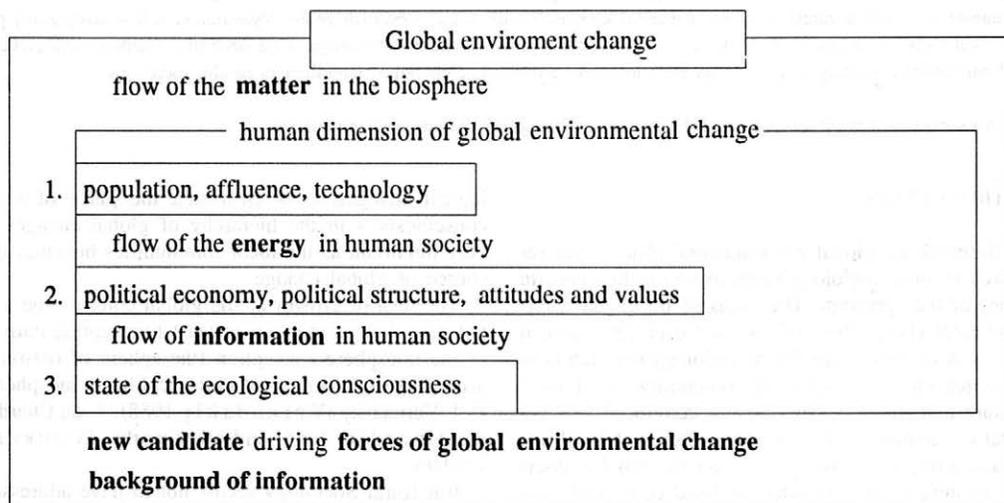
But what is still missing is a better understanding of the social processes connected with the global environmental changes. We can mark them as the human dimension of global environmental changes. Some of them have been statistically analyzed: a function of population, affluence and technology. To these three sets of human driving forces, three others have been added: political economy, which includes the system

of exchange, ownership and control; political structure, involving the institutions and organization of governance; and attitudes and values of individuals and groups (Turner II, Moss, Skole 1993).

The human driving forces in the last three categories have received much less attention than the first three categories. But due attention should be given to the last category: Human attitudes and human values. We consider them to be an integral part of the driving forces of global environmental changes. The human attitudes and human values are nearest to the idea of consciousness. We can say they are the first step on the path to creative consciousness.

Political economy, political structure and attitudes and values which create the human dimension of global environmental change can be interpreted from the point of view of information flows. What leads us to that conclusion? An attempt at ecological point of view. The above mentioned physical types of global processes – through the global system and across the globe – are connected with immense matter dislocations. Social processes such as the growth of population, affluence and technology are connected with huge amount of energy, with the global energetic change. Political economy, political structure and attitudes and values are connected to a great extent with the flow of information (see Fig. 1).

From the point of view of information flows, consciousness creates a general basis from which the information grows. It goes through and affects the organizational structure of the society (Political economy, political structure and attitudes and values). Further on, the information goes through the biological and technological reproduction of the society (popula-



1. Structure of the global environmental change

tion, affluence and technology). In the end it results in global environmental changes. In this way the conscience accepts (creates) various "forms" in the flow of information from the basic potential form of consciousness through the organizational structure of society, through the material, biological and technological reproduction of the society to the impact of the global environment.

In our research, we have seen the "ecological consciousness" of the rural community. But on the basis of the field research of private farmers we must add that this detachment is only artificial, pragmatic. The consciousness of the rural community pursued by us is in reality never separated in the shape of some independent forms of consciousness e.g. economic or ecological. The whole of the consciousness is really a higher integral structure than the simple sum of its individual parts. To speak of this is the sign of the crisis of our industrial civilization. We often automatically measure all the social groups through this optics. In the case of the rural community, this a priori separated point of view leads to a total misunderstanding of its sense and function in these days.

However, generally and ecologically speaking the organizational, technological and biochemical structures of the environment create the feedback, ( the global „response“ of the environment) to the concrete (ecological) consciousness which created the information flow. We suppose the ecological consciousness to be the source of the information flows – the integral category connecting the human dimension of global environmental change. Changes in the ecological consciousness are always the impulse leading to global ecological changes. The boundaries between the material world and processes in the biosphere and the

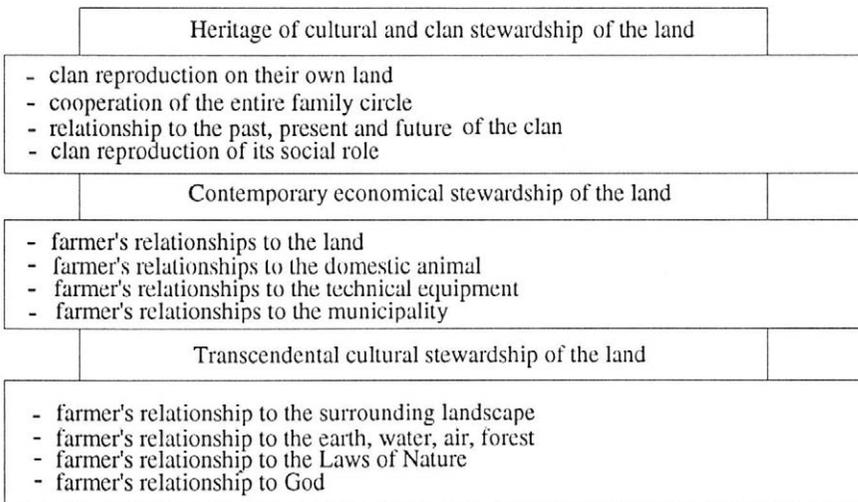
immaterial world and processes in the consciousness are connected to information flows more closely than we are often willing to accept. The ecological consciousness of the rural community in this framework take on a very significant role. We call this category of the ecological consciousness the New candidate for being the driving force of global environmental changes.

The need to enlarge the definition of global change rests on the fact that global environmental changes contain not only changes of the bio-ecological processes but also changes of the human dimensions, the changes of anthro-ecological processes. We consider consciousness to be the new candidate to drive global environmental changes. We suppose great changes of the ecological consciousness will result in great changes of the environment. From the ecological point of view, it is the question of processes connected through the information flow. We can say that in the first case it is the cause of global environmental changes and in the second case it is the consequence of global environmental changes. In this way, the information flows in the ecosystems connect the world of things with the world of thoughts into the one unit creating the global ecological system including human being and its environment (see Fig. 1).

We need to analyze two questions for our reflections:

- a) how are we going to understand the ecological consciousness
- b) in what sense can the ecological consciousness of a rural community be considered as the new candidate for global change.

In term of the first question, we suppose consciousness generally cannot be identified with knowledge,



2. The structure of features of ecological consciousness of private farmers

with the sum of pieces of information. Consciousness is an organization of the system of knowledge. It has a definite structure and hierarchy, which enables us to give all knowledge (of course not only the scientific and rational ones) their value in the context. Consciousness enables us to arrange the sense of things in the context of our experience, of our life. It is clear this "programming software" of consciousness is in motion, it has its evolution and also its limits. The nearest expression of consciousness are values and attitudes. We can consider them as concrete steps expressing self-consciousness.

Thus, we can roughly define ecological consciousness for our purposes as values and attitudes which are the expression of the value of nature and natural relations in the context of other knowledge.

In terms of our second question, the ecological consciousness of a rural community has also rather a complex structure (see Fig. 2). It is not possible to find here a simple relation between ecological consciousness of a rural community and global environmental change. But we want to remind that historically the rural community is the creator of the landscape, especially in Europe.

Differences in landscape resulted from both differences in land use and variations in land cover. The simple proportion between the size of the plot and the potential importance for the global changes does not apply. E.g. in our country the small and middle family farmers (from 1 to 50, several to 100 ha) are responsible for almost 20% of the agricultural land (Yearbook of Czech Statistics, 1990–1994).

One of the basic problems is the relation between the local, concrete contents of the rural consciousness and its transcendental form which surpasses this concrete form. The consciousness of the rural community, its values and attitudes as well as its practical activity does not end at the boundary of the plots. Rather it extends to the awareness of the landscape, of land and landscape stewardship, of the relationships to the Laws of Nature, to the Order, to God. In our research of Czech private farmers who endured forced collectivization, we have found this transcendental consciousness that the farmers say enabled their survival. These experienced farmers in their everyday work fulfilled these values. They had the feeling they "could not behave otherwise" as they have said in the interview (see Fig. 2).

The reason we consider the ecological consciousness of the rural community to be capable of being a new driving force behind global environmental improvement lies in the transcendental features of the community consciousness.

## DISCUSSION

We have to question the extent to which we can generally speak about the above mentioned consciousness in other rural community as well as in the con-

temporary world. We suppose on the basis of the work on the project "Land, Culture & Crisis" (Land Culture & Crisis, 1994) that these transcendental features of consciousness are present in the European rural culture. In general, Rural European culture demonstrates a strong non-economic motivation for farming, and an inseparable aesthetic evaluation of both landscape and work. On the basis of the literature we can summarize very similar features in other countries as well especially in Latin America, Philippines, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka (Altieri 1991, Declaration of the IMEA, 1990).

We can consider these ecological-transcendental elements of the consciousness of the rural community as a sort of global network which is prepared to adopt positive ecological decisions connected beyond their own farming. But it has to go beyond acceptance. An important feature of the rural community is the actual possibility the farmer can realize these decisions. And in this respect there is a great difference based on social groups. This difference results from the model of the rural culture "to be inside" of the ecosystem and from the model of the urban community "to be outside" the ecosystem as an independent observer (see Fig. 2).

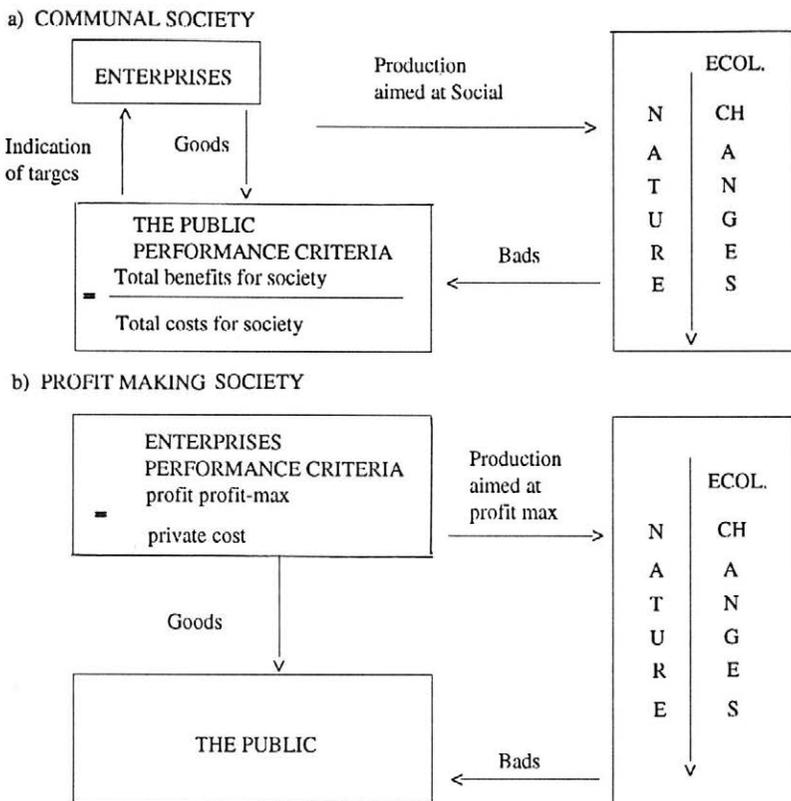
Of course the formulation of the global ecological consciousness in the form of hypotheses, recommendations, strategies, statements and policies is not a task of the rural community. The growth of this type of global consciousness, Charden's "laws of complexity/consciousness" is the task of science. But of course we must always ask which social group is culturally very near to these ideas, because they are those who can realise these ideas.

## CONCLUSION: NEW PARADIGM IN THE RURAL DEVELOPMENT

Formulating a new paradigm in rural development is connected with the new understanding of rural community. The greater "sense" of the rural community in contemporary industrial civilization seems to be historically disregarded. We suppose it is caused by the prevailing consciousness of the present industrial civilization which is using, almost without exception, the "economical software" based on competition under all circumstances, at any price and with any person. In this framework the rural community can not compete. Its economic role in the European and American economy can only be a marginal one.

The main flow of information of this competitive society is the flow of economic information generated on neoclassical principles. This flow of information simply characterized as the cost benefit analysis pushes the ecological consideration somewhere on the edge. It returns to the society as feedback in terms of negative ecological impacts – global changes.

The effect of the ecological consciousness generally (in all its forms) is limited by the sideboards of the



### 3. Two types of societies and ecological changes

Source: Ono (1989)

neoclassicist economy of free trade. Substantially there are only two practical mechanisms to make the market and ecological consciousness compatible:

- extension of the market function to the regions which were not "subject of its interest" i.e. assign a value to the environmental assets, to enable them to become a part of the economical information flows;
- creation of a special environment in the form of customs barriers, granting politics etc. which would protect the given spheres (for several branches of the people's activity) against direct impacts of the market.

But both these procedures are captured by the economic paradigm of the industrial society which is, whether requested or not, still the creator of the rules in the frame of which greater or smaller expression of on ecological conscience is made possible.

In this way the Rural Sociology can lead the task of looking for this new "sense" and new role of the rural community in its ecological functions. The basis of this paradigm of rural culture is cooperation. The sense of this cooperation starts on the level of the

individual farming as a definite form of cooperation with the soil, with nature. It continues through the cooperation of the wider family, "cooperation" with animals etc. And it stops with the knowledge of cooperation with the order of nature, cooperation with the transcendental order.

On this basis, we are convinced the rural community has global importance. It is substantially the question of complementary knowledge of cooperation which has been dominated by the knowledge of competition on which our industrial civilization is built. Each of the above mentioned paradigms has a number of preconditions in seeing the world. The paradigm of competition is turning to the analytical conception, structuralism, specialization, technique, modernist science of the first half of 20th century, to Newton's conception of the constant time and space (Vijayaraghavan 1994).

The paradigm of cooperation is turning to the synthetic conception of the world, to holism, to respecting of the biological relations, to the post-modern conception of science. It is not by chance this paradigm is

very near to the present notions of the radical environmentalists about the character of the new "ecological society". It is substantially the question of the rural independent economy of the municipal type (Eckersley 1992).

Unlike the individualistic model of the liberal autonomy, it is a society functioning on the principle of voluntary cooperation and responsibility to the local community. This society can move toward a more ideal state – the negative externalities i.e. secondary, unintended impacts of the economical activity on the life neighbourhood would decrease. It results from the unity between society and individual interests. When there is no difference between personal and social costs, then all the influences of economic activity enter into the economic models of calculating the costs (see Fig. 3).

To do studies in this posited framework creates a number of the methodological problems in Rural Sociological Research. We would like to affirm the necessity of qualitative research to understand the features of consciousness; Real dialogue, which cannot be replaced by the anonymous questionnaire investigation is a necessity. It seems to be a paradox situation: the new candidate, for global environmental change requires intensive, qualitative interpretation, in local case studies. But we suppose this is the best way to gain understanding about ecological consciousness in the rural community. However, the paradox is resolved by seeing the relationship between the global environment and the flow of information.

Of course many requests call for a profound change in the methods of Rural Sociology. These voices are inspired by methods of remount sensing and methods of the geographic information system (GIS) which are applied very well in the case of watching the biophysical global changes (A framework ... 1990). We suppose the question of their analogy in Rural Sociology is the question of level of investigation: quantitative versus qualitative, physical phenomena on the biosphere versus investigation of the immaterial changes in the consciousness. But in each case the methods of watching global changes presents a great challenge for Rural Sociology. This challenge we think can be met by a better understanding the global importance of the rural community and rural culture.

Looking for the new paradigm in the rural development does not lead to competition between the economic parameters of rural culture and the economic parameters of industrial civilization. Rather rural culture rests of different bases and the economic prosperity is a self-evident necessary condition but not the only one. On the contrary, the place where the indu-

strial civilization cannot compete with the rural culture is in understanding the task of the farmer in the order of nature, the sense for the whole of nature and landscape, cooperation and responsibility. These are the old bases of the rural culture which are growing into the new global relations.

But it is the basic question of our civilization whether we ascribe any importance, any value to this way of thinking. The facts of the global ecological crisis and appearing new ideas of the sustainable development in the economy convince us that the convergence of these scientific and natural scientific ways of thinking and cultural values takes place. Maybe it is not too late yet.

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Arrived on 25th May 1995

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# PRIVATIZATION IN AGRICULTURE AND RURAL REGENERATION

## PRIVATIZACE V ZEMĚDĚLSTVÍ A OBNOVA VENKOVA

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**ABSTRACT:** The conception of sustainable development includes the new paradigm how to perceive rural world in its divergence and convergence with the urban world. The Central and Eastern European countries show another dimension of this issue – the intervention of collectivistic model of organizing the society into rural development. The process of collectivization in Bohemia accelerated the industrialization, while it rather slowed down the urbanization in the countryside. A village became similar to a town through the industrialization of economy and democratization of culture. However, omnipresent centralization made the countryside almost entirely dependent on towns. Today the question emerged – does politically proclaimed and economically implemented liberalization provide the countryside the chance for regeneration? Contemporary transformation of the countryside indicates the prevalence of the differential processes – one part of rural settlements is under the jeopardy of extinction, another part will merge into the process of homogenization (globalization), although the later means losing the rurality. Therefore, the question concerning the possibility to save rural community in modern viable form should be posed. Contemporary political and economic climate in the Czech Republic, however, does not favour this third alternative.

countryside, farming, privatization, social relations

**ABSTRAKT:** V konceptu trvale udržitelného žití je obsaženo nové paradigma sledování rurálního světa v divergenci i v konvergenci se světem urbánním. V teritoriu Střední a Východní Evropy je přítomna další dimenze – intervence kolektivistického modelu organizace společnosti do vývoje rurálního světa. Kolektivizační proces v České republice akceleroval industrializaci, zatímco urbanizaci na venkově spíše brzdil. Venkov se městu přiblížil prostřednictvím industrializace ekonomiky a demokratizace kultury, všeobšáhla centralizace jej však učinila na městu téměř úplně závislým. Dnes je aktuální otázka – dává politicky proklamovaná a ekonomicky prosazovaná liberalizace venkovu šanci k jeho renesanci? V dnešní etapě transformace venkova převládají diferenciační procesy. Část venkovských sídel je ohrožena zánikem, část se zapojuje do homogenizačního (globalizačního) procesu za cenu pozbytí rurality a je otázkou, zda budou zachovány rurální komunity v moderní životaschopné podobě. Soudobé politické a ekonomické klima v České republice je pro tuto třetí alternativu nepřiznivé.

venkov, zemědělství, privatizace, sociální vztahy

### INTRODUCTION

Considerations of and hypotheses concerning the possibilities of regeneration in the countryside that exist within urban society of XXth century constitute the primary theme of contemporary rural sociology. Rural sociologists in European countries with a rich tradition of peasant culture within their national cultures consider this theme as a part of the basic sociological question concerning contemporary civilization. H. Lefebvre, for instance, wrote in 1949 that "if the sentence that 'farming communities can be revitalized in the sense necessitated by the conditions of modern life', is true, than there is nothing more interesting than this renaissance itself ..." (in Kayser 1990). There are many other items of evidence indicative of the ef-

fort to save and to renew "the rurality" in a viable form within modern world, and to find the new sense of "rurality". The summarizing work of B. Kayser, "La renaissance rurale", highlighted the hypothesis that the tendency to leave the countryside is becoming weaker and weaker. Moreover, this tendency benefits rural areas (because of rediscovered attractiveness), although it is also accompanied by the re-composition of rural community. The processes of diversification and differentiation of European farmers, their stratification, and evolution of non-agricultural activities in the countryside should be the prime focus of detailed studies. These processes have their repercussions in the restructuring of social groups in the countryside, in everyday rural life, and in rural culture.

Previous paradigms of urban-rural dichotomy (or continuum) are not sufficient to investigate "the rurality" of today. A new definition of "the rurality" as a framework for the analysis of the development of rural community necessitates both distinguishing between the urban and the rural (in demographically-geographical, and socially-cultural aspects), and, at the same time, joining rural and urban together (their core is in modern communication). Modern communication promotes the development of closed rural communities into types of open society, yet saves the particular specificity of the rural community<sup>1</sup>.

Social change in Central and Eastern Europe influences both urban and rural areas. However, research engaged in the study of this change focuses the problem that the new paradigm of understanding rural society in its divergence and convergence with urban society (a topic very complicate in itself) includes an additional dimension in former socialist countries. This dimension is focused on the question of how the collectivistic model of organization of society intervened (and intervenes still today) in rural society.

Our starting point is that the Czech type of collectivization accelerated industrialization and, at the same time, rather slowed down urbanization. Collectivization and collectivism (as a process, together with its repercussions in the system of organization of society) brought urban and rural areas together. This was the intended result, and it was achieved with the help of the industrialization of the rural economy and the democratization of culture. On the other hand, unintended consequences (connected mostly with centralization of political, economic and cultural life) did not turn the countryside into a relatively strong counter partner of towns and cities in the "social competition of the modern period". In fact, the countryside became absolutely dependent on towns and cities. These circumstances prompt the basic sociological question of rural society in the Czech Republic – does politically proclaimed and economically enforced liberalization offer possibilities for the regeneration of the countryside?

The analysis of this question requires a long-term and concentrated work of the sociologists, political

scientists, economists, urbanologists, ethnologists, historians, and others. Our goal is more modest – to point out some problems of the political and economic context of social change in the Czech countryside. These problems are considered like the acts that have their place in the process of the privatization and restructuring of agriculture, and rather do not correspond with the above mentioned ideas about the necessity to regenerate rural areas as the social space (i.e. the place for living emphasizing more and more environmental and social functions in the detriment of the agricultural function)<sup>2</sup>.

This paper addressed first the basic question of rural sociology in the period of transition of the Czech society (the question includes also the new model of farming). The goal of the paper was then indicated. This goal can be concretized in the following questions:

- What main tendencies in the development of the agriculture does the overall political and economic climate established in Bohemia support?
- What are the main problems in the sphere of social relations that are emerging in agriculture in the relation with the privatization of farming assets, and restructuring of farming forms?
- Do we look to the past, do we think about the future, or even do we not take time into account when considering the construction of a scenario of social change in the Czech agriculture?

These questions suggest the necessity of respecting historical approach when studying this theme. It is necessary to attempt defining the contemporary social situation and the position of agriculture within it, and to add the results of observation of social relations in farming as concrete examples of the generally described situation in the form of case studies. This can be the base for future thinking over the development with emphasizing the mentioned problems.

## METHODOLOGICAL APPROACH

The topic of the paper is a small segment of my work on the project "Agrarian Changes in the Context of Renewal and Development of the Countryside". This project is implemented with the help of Central Euro-

1 The definitions of the term "rural" mostly start with the relation to urban, they do not include only the agriculture, but more and more they include new functions – non-agricultural activities in economy, necessity of ecological stability, recreation and rest. However, a generally accepted understanding of the term "rurality" does not exist. What rural sociologists agree on is that the countryside is the particular sector of society. It is the set of places including such constitutional elements of socialist dynamics that allow us to analyze rural society in original way.

2 A sociologist considers these problems within the field framed by two extreme prospects. The first one – more realistic (but from the point of view of human being it can be labelled as pessimistic) is characterized by further degradation and real threat for socio-cultural identity of the countryside. This variant focuses on continuing productivistic orientation based on globalization and centralization of agriculture, marginalization of agrarian population, and disappearance of local rural culture. The leading idea of this approach is the profit. The alternative prospect we can label as optimistic. This variant presupposes the renaissance of socio-cultural identity of the countryside, village and farmers. This is rather an idealistic variant. Nevertheless, this variant is indicated by various movements that are not influenced by the ruling value of profit. A change of value orientation is necessary condition for the dissemination of these ideas. Because of the strong embedment of the first mentioned prospect, the second one cannot be considered as far-reaching program. The resulting vector of these two contrary tendencies in existing social field will be the development of the Czech countryside emerging from the clash between the optimistic and the pessimistic variants.

pean University in 1992–1994 (number of contract: 853/91). The aim of the project is to generate hypotheses concerning various futures for the Czech countryside. These ideas are based on an analysis of mechanisms of rural development and contemporary change in several local cases, and are compared with the overall social context.

The approach of the project is empirical because theoretical works dealing with the social change in contemporary Central and Eastern Europe are not available. The theoretical background is, therefore, the application of some sociological ideas within this territory. The core of these ideas is the development from traditional to modern society. Methods and techniques used within the project are mostly qualitative, and are divided into two basic groups according to the object of research. The first is made up of the works of experts, consultations with experts, and the documentary study of contemporary agrarian change (legislation, mass media, materials of decision-makers, etc.). They are used for the study of the overall historical

and contemporary context of agrarian change. The second level is the projection of the overall situation (established on the basis of adopted political and economic decisions) into the local environment. The monographic studies of rural communities that were chosen on the base of economic, geographic, and demographic consideration constitute the second group. The selected communities represent particular types from the large variety of Czech and Moravian villages. Because of the project duration and limited personal capacities, the sampling of villages is not representative in terms of their number and possible types according to pre-selected criteria (see table I). The monographic study used in the communities combines observation, interviews and the study of local documents (all materials and data processed are available at the Unit of Humanities, Dept. of Rural Sociology, Czech Agricultural University Prague).

The relations between general context and its projection in the local environment includes the relation between general (global) and particular (local). Con-

#### I. Characterization of villages

Criterion	LŠTĚŇÍ	STUDNICE	DEŠENICE	HORNÍ PĚNA	OVČÁRY	CHODOV	BLATNICE
Size of village	smallest	small	small	small	middle	middle	large
Demographical development	very unfavorable	unfavorable	very unfavorable	stagnating	stagnating	favorable	favorable
Position in the residential structure	periphery	semiperiphery	semiperiphery borderland	nearby regional centre borderland	nearby regional centre	semiperiphery borderland	semiperiphery new borderland
Infrastructure	low	low	good	good	middle	middle	good
Characterization	agricultur.-industrial	industr.-agricultural	agricultur.-industrial	mixed agricultural	industr.-agricultural	mixed industrial	mixed industrial
Tradition of family farming	greater renewal	survived	smaller renewal	smaller renewal	survived	smaller renewal	greater renewal
Collective farm under socialism	Coop farm	State farm	State farm	Coop farm	Coop farm	Coop farm	Coop farm

Explanations: In case of statistical survey, available data are used as the basic criteria. If the data are adjusted there follows the list of adjustment explanations:

##### size of village:

- smallest = 1 – 999 inhabitants
- small = 200 – 499 inhabitants
- middle = 500–999 inhabitants
- great = 1 000+ inhabitants

##### demographic development:

- very unfavorable = development 1991/1930:  $\leq 50\%$ , retirement age  $\geq$  children age
- unfavorable = development 1991/1930:  $\leq 75\%$  and  $\geq 50\%$ , retirement age  $\geq$  children age
- stagnating = development 1991/1930:  $\leq 100\%$  and  $\geq 75\%$ , retirement age  $\geq$  children age
- favorable = development 1991/1930:  $\leq 100\%$  and  $\geq 90\%$ , retirement age  $\leq$  children age

##### position in the residential structure:

- periphery = large distance from urban settlements, bad communication, village not on main communication
- semi-periphery = middle or large distance from urban settlements, good communication, situated on main or not main communication
- nearby regional centre = small distance from urban settlements, good communication, position on main communication
- new borderland = after split of Czecho-slovakia

##### infrastructure:

- low = not completed basic civic and technical
- middle = completed basic civic or technical
- good = entire basic or better than civic or technical

##### characterization:

- agriculturally-industrial = share of econ. active in agriculture = 50%, industry = 30%
- mixed agricultural = share of econ. active in agriculture = 40%, industry = 30%
- mixed industrial = share of econ. active in agriculture = 30%, industry = 30–40%
- industrially-agricultural = share of econ. active in agriculture = 20%, industry = 40–50%

sideration of the general and the particular also require considerations of the relations between prescription and description of change, between proclaimed theory and its practical impacts.

I consider this methodological approach to be adequate for research in its initial phase – in the phase of detection. This is the reason why higher level of standardization of research techniques was not used<sup>3</sup>. The report on the project, and this paper as well, are rather the essays based primarily on observing the changes in selected local communities, and on the exchange of my own experience with the experience of those who are engaged in the same problems.

## THE HISTORICAL HERITAGE OF THE CZECH COUNTRYSIDE

Structural and socio-cultural development analysis suggests that the Czech countryside had undergone significant modernization during the period before the outbreak of World War II. The density of settlements and economic development of Bohemia fostered a process of industrialization. Modernization was characterized by relatively high lateral and professional mobility within the rural population (it helped to reduce farming over employment), the growth of cultural potential of rural population, and a great variety of associations in the economic, social and political, and cultural spheres. These were the ways in which the village overcame its isolation. The traditional value orientation of peasant culture was slowly changed. The social change can be characterized as follows: *the Czech village, under the influence of modernization, transformed itself from a relatively sovereign (as concerned the production and consumption of goods, and cultural goods and services) and homogeneous "microcosm", existing within heterogeneous "macrocosm" of national society, into more heterogeneous "microcosm" within homogenizing "macrocosm" of national society.*

In the second half of the 20th century, this phase of natural modernization, urbanization and industrialization was confronted with a changed organization of society. Individualistic orientation was replaced by socialistic and collectivistic orientation. It was typified by centralistic and planned command administration in almost all areas of life, disrespecting the rules of market economy, refusing private ownership, and the political enforcement of social welfare.

The first phase of change in agriculture – collectivization (the 1950s) – disturbed significantly the peasants' way of life. The identity of countryside with the fundament in peasant culture was disturbed. The main social impacts of this change are:

- farmers were detached from land, resulting in a changed spacial awareness because they lost the feelings of ownership to the land
- the universal farmer's work (incl. decision-making) was changed into the specialized (qualified or not) professions of workers in agriculture
- the original sense of farming cooperative movement was abolished
- the farming family of French-English type was changed into a heterogeneous mixed family
- increased lateral and professional mobility (emigration from the countryside and agriculture) was accompanied by a decrease of the farming population to an almost critical level.

The above mentioned trend of social change in agriculture also continued in its second phase – the amalgamation of farms into concentrated large-scale farming (the 1970s). The typical features of this phase were:

- many small rural settlements (up to 100 inhabitants) lost all agricultural production (except the auxiliary household farming), and they also lost a lot of jobs
- the inefficiency of investments in agriculture, and environmentally hostile farming increased
- generational change within the agrarian population accomplished the transformation of work in agriculture from universal to fragmented and specialized labour
- relative equality of social status of workers in agriculture and industrial workers improved the chances for social mobility and social prestige of agrarian population, its social and economic position was unusually reinforced
- increased attractiveness of employment in agriculture and relative favorable conditions of life in the countryside (as the result of development in agriculture) permitted agricultural overemployment to emerge again.

Comparing the result of social change in agriculture influenced by the collectivization of society with Kayser's definition of "rural world", it must be added that the Czech countryside preserved characteristics of rurality in geographical and demographic aspects. As for the socio-cultural part of Kayser's characterization, only very weak residual elements continued to exist. Generally speaking: *the fundamental characteristics of peasant culture, that was disturbed under the collectivization, could not resist the penetration of modernization in the sense of the tendency of globalization. The homogenization of rural community into national society (and global society) was fostered by the ideology of collectivization. This ideology concentrated in the terms: unity, equality, uniformity, etc. It suppressed regional activities, initiatives, or movements that might both originate in local identity and foster it at the same*

<sup>3</sup> The research in every village consisted of the interviews with key persons (about 10–12 interviews) and the questionnaire survey of agrarian population in village. The survey questioned the issues of agrarian change. Number of responds of the survey: Lšičín: 15, Studnice: 28, Dešenice: 46, Horní Pěna: 41, Ovčáry: 38, Chodov: 29, Blatnice: 80. The number of respondents moves between 50–85% out of agricultural population in village

time. Moreover, the heterogeneous "microcosm" of rural community was influenced by the offer of attractive elements of urban culture – consumption, free time, leisure<sup>4</sup>.

#### CONTEMPORARY POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC ENVIRONMENT – THE DEFINITION OF THE GENERAL SITUATION

The privatization of agriculture and restructuring of farming model is framed within political and economic environment that has been developing in the Czech Republic since 1990. Originally seven political parties emerged which were oriented toward agriculture and the countryside. After the 1992 elections the only one of them – Agrarian Party – survived on the Czech political scene. This party became an important part of the Liberal and Social Union (LSU). However, the establishment and operation of any party strongly defending the interests of agrarian population as a social group cannot be assumed due to very modified structure of countryside and absolutely different ownership relations compared to the pre-war period; furthermore farming population is polarized.

The program of LSU addresses, of course, the issues of agrarian policy in wider scope. Also the Czechoslovak Party of Social Democrats (CSSD), and the Communist Party of Bohemia and Moravia (KSCM) dealt in their programs with the questions of agrarian policy. The above mentioned parties form the opposition in today's Czech Parliament. The Civic Democratic Party (ODS) and the Christian Democratic Union – Czechoslovak People's Party (KDU-CSL) are the parties whose programs address the issue of agrarian policy in wider extent among today's governing coalition. The attitudes concerning the amendments of the basic legal frame of privatization in agriculture indicate that options on these very broad and political fragile issues are continually being defined with more precision.

The spectrum of political parties' views concerning the solution of agrarian question is very broad. The neo-liberalistic approach of ODS attributes to farming almost negligible specificity, and rather considers farming as one of the sectors of industry. This view, prevailing within today's Czech political scene, is softened by KDU-CSL (partner in coalition). This party favours, under the influence of Christian solidarity, the social market economy, private ownership, and minimal state interventions. KDU-CSL (its chairman is also the minister of agriculture) enforces the sustainable agriculture through emphasizing the regional and social aspects in agrarian policy. Left parties also incline

to social market economy (or eco-social market economy) with various modifications and equal rights of all forms of farming. They request state protection for farming. The agrarian policy in 1991–1993 was shaped within the clashes of different conceptions. Nowadays, the ministers responsible for economic affairs are considering whether to specify the approaches to farming with regard to its peculiarities, or only to modify generally accepted instruments in national economy for the case of farming.

Four particular and lasting aspects of farming (the risks due to biological nature of farming; atomized structure of farming subjects; the production of exclusive goods; strong relations to natural resources, landscape, and the countryside – the parts of national heritage) are not reflected in the instruments for the implementation of agrarian policy. That is why there is a widespread view among the farming population (whatever type of farm they operate) that there is no agrarian policy in Czechia at all.

General social conditions (results of the Czech economy, particular decline of social prestige of farming, and the abolition of former preferences the farming used to enjoy), very strong political influences on legislation, and macroeconomic conditions (especially the price relations in agrarian market, and the development of fiscal relations between the agriculture and the state) are the basic parameters of environment that lead the Czech agriculture mostly to productionism (Doucha 1993).

In 1989–1993 the share of agriculture on GDP declined, but it is still high (up to 5% in Czechia compared to maximum 3.5% in developed countries). Employment in agriculture declined from 9.4% to 6.4% out of all working population. This percentage is close to the percentage of agrarian population in developed countries. A very unfavourable indicator is the fall of investments in 1989–1993 – about 70%. This fact is influenced by insufficiently guaranteed conditions for reproduction of fixed capital. The fall is very high compared to the expected decline of agrarian sector, and is not favourable because of the agricultural restructuring. The growth of labour productivity (about 11%) and the decline of investments in market production (57%) cannot be evaluated unambiguously as positive because of above mentioned problems.

Farming is not attractive for foreign investors (both for the purchasing the shares and for foreign credits), and it is also one of very few branches of national economy where the size of domestic credits is decreasing.

If further instruments are not adopted, and if domestic and foreign markets are not expanded, contem-

<sup>4</sup> Investigating the continuity/discontinuity of the Czech rural development, it is very difficult to distinguish urban influences from collectivistic ones. Basically we can assume they were more similar than different in their tendency of globalization. It is possible to present the most discernible manifestations of both influences, and two different types (at least) of their one-way impacts on the Czech rural society – the similarity with slowing down and with accelerating particular social change. This paper will not deal with these similarities.

porary agrarian policy will have to think in the terms of releasing human and capital resources from farming (with set aside land), ceasing farming in less favourable agricultural areas.

The reactions of all those engaged in farming reflect the attitudes towards today's general circumstances. This reactions play an important role in the transformation of farming. Today's situation is characterized by low level and low efficiency state administration. No wonder that the rural population and particularly its agrarian component is slower to adapt, and many active workers in agriculture with greater cultural capital prefer to leave agriculture, and eventually even migrate out of the countryside, because of unfavorable environment. The representatives of former management in newly transformed farms are deeply anchored in social networks. This gives them a great advantage over emerging private farmers. New private farmers try to cope with this disadvantage through high levels of enthusiasm and much effort establishing their farms; very often without commensurate remuneration. Advisory and information services (which are very necessary for orientation in an unclear and unstable environment) are inadequate and expensive. Also many suppliers and consumers in state (for a while) and private spheres are exhibit a low degree of entrepreneurial culture, and they prefer rather short-term profits.

The analysis of the general social environment and the reactions of farmers inform the experts' statements that, although agrarian policy is being improved through the elaboration of its mechanisms and institutional guarantees of its instruments, the acceleration of its basic intentions is not successful. The contemporary orientation of farming is likely to continue with possibly greater economic disadvantages for farmers.

#### THE PRIVATIZATION OF AGRICULTURE – THE CORE OF THE CHANGE OF SOCIAL RELATIONS

The historical heritage of greatly disturbed socio-cultural aspects of "rurality", the severe political and

economic environment the agriculture has to operate in now, and a social environment typified by unstable order of social action and its control – these are the basic factors entering into the game concerning the change of social relations in agriculture. This change started with the privatization.

Undoubtedly, the property-legal transformation of agriculture is taking place. Transformation of this kind was established as the first of the goals of short-term agrarian policy. Ownership rights to land and other farming assets were re-established through the restitution, transformation of agricultural cooperatives, and privatization of state farms. Despite many difficulties emerging from the preference of restitution over other ways of re-acquiring farming assets, the business structure of farming changed in very short time (see table II and III).

The hypothesis that the rectification of ownership relations, which also includes the feeling of ownership of the land, will significantly influence the result of farming is only partially corroborated so far. Because of the unfavourable economic environment, agricultural production operates at a high loss (–1 581 crowns per 1 ha of land). Analytical data, however, suggest that the loss in dying state agricultural sector is ten times higher than in other forms of farming. Farming at a loss is true in almost every form of farming and in every part of Czechia (regardless to climatic conditions).

Farming in Czechia is carried out on rented land. Two thirds of land farmed by natural persons is rented compared to 1/3 owned. The share of rented land increases with the size of farm. The amount of rented land within the group of farms over 100 ha is 85%. An even higher share of rented land is the case among the farms of legal entities – out of all cooperative land 96.7 is rented, agricultural-trading companies farm 97.1% rented land.

The actual transformation of agriculture from the point of view of changes of social relations began in 1993.

#### II. The development of business structure of "natural persons" and "legal entities" in agriculture (January 1, 1994)

Business form	1989			1991			1993		
	number	average area in ha	% of land in Bohemia	number	average area in ha	% of land in Bohemia	number	average area in ha	% of land in Bohemia
"Physical" person	3 205	4	0.4	14 000	10	3.3	52 003	15	18.2
Agricultural cooperatives	1 024	2 561	61.4	1 187	2 191	61.1	1 334	1 587	49.4
Business companies	–	–	–	25	266	0.1	1 270	616	17.1
State farms	174	6 261	25.3	308	3 558	25.7	303	2 168	15.3
Others			12.9			9.8			
Totally	4 403		100.0	15 520		100.0	54 910		100.0

\*Farm of "natural persons" – farms owned by individuals, not by a company, according to Business Law

\*\*Farms of "legal entities" – cooperatives, joint stock companies and limited liability companies, according to Business Law

Sources: Statistická ročenka o půdním fondu 1990, 1991, 1992, 1993. Český úřad geodetický a kartografický

ČSÚ – Statistický registr organizací k 31. 12. 1993

Informace o velikostní struktuře SHR, transformovaných zemědělských družstev a privatizovaných státních statků k 31. 12. 1993. MZe ČR Základní principy zemědělské politiky vlády ČR do roku 1995 a na další období

III. The size of operation of farm owned by "natural persons" in agriculture (December 31, 1993)

Size of operation [ha]	Number		Number ha of farming land
	abs	%	
up to 1	27 858	53.6	14 973
1-10	14 831	28.5	83 083
10-30	5 105	9.8	95 198
30-50	1 929	3.7	77 569
50-100	1 222	2.4	88 845
100-250	641	1.2	119 461
250-500	195	0.4	65 601
500-1 000	141	0.3	97 168
more than 1 000	81	0.1	138 082
Totally	52 003	100.0	779 980

Source: Informace o velikostní struktuře SHR, transformovaných zemědělských družstev a privatizovaných státních statků k 31. 12. 1993. MZe ČR.

The legal confirmation of private ownership abolished the collectivistic paradigm of equality and legitimized social inequality. However, the question emerges as to what is the basis for reassuming inequality, what principles of social justice are used to form another social order. The characteristic feature of the Czech transformation is its preference for restitution and re-privatization. This means social restoration through the rectification of property injustices. This is the first principle agricultural transformation is based on; and it is connected with the second. The latter addresses the problem how to distribute collective property to all who contributed to farming assets accumulated during the last 40 years by labour or property. The critical points of the transformation of social relations are connected with the implementation of these principles. They are as follows: the evaluation of property and labour respectively in the division of accumulated collective assets in cooperative (according to law – 80% for property; 20% for labour); the existence of the institution called "the cooperative of owners" and the separation of land and other means of production from their ownership in newly established forms of farming.

The first two of the above mentioned phenomena – the evaluation of property and labour in the division of accumulated assets in former socialist agricultural cooperatives, and their transformation into the cooperatives of owners represent a united process from the point of view of the transformation of social relations. The background to this process was the political act significantly a preference of ownership over labour (and subsequently over use, and active participation). This issue concerned the majority of workers in agriculture (because the cooperative form of farming presented more than 2/3 of all forms of farming), and

many other people – land owners claiming their fields back (before the transformation their number was estimated to be about 4 times higher than the the number of agrarian population).

I would like to remind the reader once again of the lateral and professional mobility which was typical for the Czech countryside even before the World War II. This mobility was accelerated by the collectivization. The consequence of this fact on the division of cooperative assets under the transformation into cooperative of owners was that the external owners (i.e. the owners of land who do not work in cooperative and mostly live outside the area of cooperative operation) acquired the greatest part of redistributed capital assets in cooperatives. High numbers of working cooperative members, who did not give any property into the cooperatives in the past, were practically excluded from the distribution of collective assets<sup>5</sup>. If external owners are not cooperative members, one can observe a great discrepancy between land ownership and land use. But even if they are cooperative members, the problems is not solved. Analyzing the structure of new cooperative members in relation with cooperative farming, it is possible to suppose that the greater the number of external owners among the cooperative membership, the less developed the strategy of cooperative is, the less consistent the decision-making, and the greater the conflict of interests between non-working owners and working employed non-owners. This is a result of the employees' orientation to wages and non-working owners to profits. The employees consider control by the owners to be unjustified. The employees have lost the chance to participate in decision-making process, they have lost their former social advantages, and they are afraid of losing their employment. Therefore they feel themselves as to be losers because of a kind of "collective guilt".

Among the attributes of cooperative farming, we can always find a relatively high level of solidarity, mutual trust and the ability to collaborate. There are no known cases in the history of cooperative movement where external owners exercise an active role of cooperative members. The theories of ownership and the firm (in Stryjan 1993) suggest that a cooperative of owners dominated by external owners will not implement the functions leading to the prosperity of firm. This is probably the reason why the cooperative of owners should be considered as a temporary form with a rather negative influence on the rectification of social relations in farming. The institution called the cooperative of owners rehabilitates only the ownership, not the cooperative membership that became deformed in the past. Even today we can observe tendencies to change these cooperatives into the enterprises of joint-stock

<sup>5</sup> While the rights of owners are discussed all the time, the political debates lack the ideas about the rights and the future of this second group. Working members of former cooperative farms who did not contribute by any property became, for a while, the employees without decision-making rights in the cooperatives of owners. They mostly experience this situation as the punishment in the frame of a kind of guilt.

company type. The motive for this transformation is the property instability in cooperatives of owners. This instability is connected with the number of external owners among the cooperative members (and therefore with the separation of land ownership from work on the land). Our hypothesis is that during the next 2–5 years there will be a second phase of cooperative transformation. The result of this transformation could be a significant decrease in the number of cooperative farms within the structure of agricultural businesses. The opposite process – establishing cooperatives based on confirmed principles of labour contribution – remains an open question. Such a tendency is not visible at present, and can be only hypothetically assumed in the future.

The result of the overwhelming preference given to restitution is the fact that from 60% to 100% of land is rented for farming (the amount of rented land depends on the form of farm). This pattern of farming is becoming more and more common all over the world but in the Czech Republic the level of land rented for farming is so high that it signals a particular risk. The short-term and the profit-led relations to the land, that result in ecological devastation of land in the name of economical exploitation, can prevail in both groups engaged in renting land – those who rent the land and those who lease the land (more than would be the case if the land owner and land user were the same person). Therefore, every attempt to harmonize land ownership and land use is to be welcome. The above mentioned problem has two faces. The privatization of state farms mostly created farms whose managers would like to farm but they cannot get to own the land. On the other hand, the cooperative transformation mostly formed such farms (cooperatives of owners) where majority of owners do not want to farm, but have the right to decide about the farming.

## CONTEMPORARY TENDENCIES

The post-socialist period (i.e., the period of transition from socialist collectivization) is characterized by processes of privatization and restructuring. In this period Bohemia is moving again towards heterogeneity of the rural “microcosm”, and probably also towards the heterogeneity of rural society. This society will probably diverge in its pattern of heterogeneity from national (global) society, because of prevailing differential processes of integration in this period. Most probably a differentiation among rural settlements will take place. A dividing line will be drawn between those villages, which are under the threat of extinction, and those villages (depending on circumstances) which will be integrated into the process of globalization and homogenization. The last mentioned settlements are more likely to lose their rurality. The last question posed at the beginning of the paper is whether there is a chance for rural areas to survive in modern viable form.

The contemporary political and economic climate in the Czech Republic is less favorable for the second alternative. The impacts of this climate increase the income disparity between workers in agriculture and other social groups, stimulate the discernible social decline of farming population, and increase the group of villages with insufficient internal sources for self-revitalization. Ideas of how to compensate for these impacts take place only among a part of intelligentsia and within professional organizations connected with farming and the countryside. However, these ideas are not implemented in the practical policy. Environmental aspects are taken into account more under the pressure of international agreements and contemporary economic measures than because they are anchored within a policy formulated for the countryside.

The restitution of farming assets as a rectifying act formed the new basis for the structuring of rural society according to clearly defined ownership rights. But the rectification of ownership rights contributed only to a small extent in the formation of an entrepreneurial stratum in the countryside. The renewal of ownership rights to land was not reflected in the renewal of ownership feeling. The renewal of ownership rights in the legal sense manifests itself through the sale of the property, and the devaluation of farming assets. The preference of restitution slows down the restructuring of farming businesses in agriculture.

The legal manner of rectification (restitution, and the evaluation of property over labour in the division of cooperative assets) creates a sense of injustice concerning the almost two-generation shift and large migration of population. This feeling is at the centre of the emerging structure of rural society. Large groups of external owners who are the product of this manner of restitution can raise two types of fear. The first is the possibility of great discrepancy emerging between the interests of external owners and the interests of other actors in farming (see the interests of internal cooperative owners and non-owners working in cooperative). The second type of fear concerns the problem of profit use. Profit generated in the locality might be used by external owners in another place. This is the discrepancy between the interests of external owners and the interest of the local community.

The institution of “the cooperative of owners”, chosen as the acceptable form of agricultural cooperative transformation, rehabilitated only ownership, not cooperative membership. This institution does not resume the fundamental sense of cooperative movement – the solidarity and mutual support of farmers in relation to their external milieu, to the market. Newly established businesses that emerged from the privatization of state farms face barriers of the time-consuming process of restitution and obtaining approval for the projects of privatization, capital weakness, and the influence of former management. Established family farmers also suffer from insufficient capital (economic and mostly also cultural) and bureaucratic obstacles

make their establishment more difficult. Family farms especially experience difficulties in terms of orientation and adaptation to the market.

The answer to the third question posed at the beginning of the paper is not straightforward or simple: The preference of restitution indicates a regard to the past.

However, the establishment of the cooperative of owners denies the regard to the past because this institution does not include confirmed principles of the farming cooperative system.

Sustainable living in the countryside which takes into account the specificity of farming and cares about the fate of rural population is not respected. This suggests that time is not taken into account at all.

We cannot say that there is no willingness to consider the future of farming and the countryside. However, these thoughts include always historical resentments either from the pre-collectivistic or the socialistic-collectivistic era. This burden limits the considerations of the future framed by new paradigms.

The conclusions drawn above indicate the contradictory tendencies of the transitional period. The paper has shown the problems of the transformation process in agriculture considered as an important sector of rural areas. It should be said that cases of newly emerged farms and business promising the possibility of development have been recorded. Among these, there could be found both family farms (especially those with their own cultural capital and with diversified activities), and agricultural businesses (provided that their new bosses are able to form good relations with their employees, and the relations are based on social and professional competencies and on achievement orienta-

tion). It is necessary, from the point of view of the countryside, to establish these new subjects as positive actors in the life of local society from economic, ecological, social and cultural points of view.

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Arrived on 25th May 1995

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It is necessary from the point of view of the country to establish new subjects as positive scenes in the life of local society from economic

and cultural more difficult family than which is necessary to be in order to obtain the necessary conditions for the development of the country.

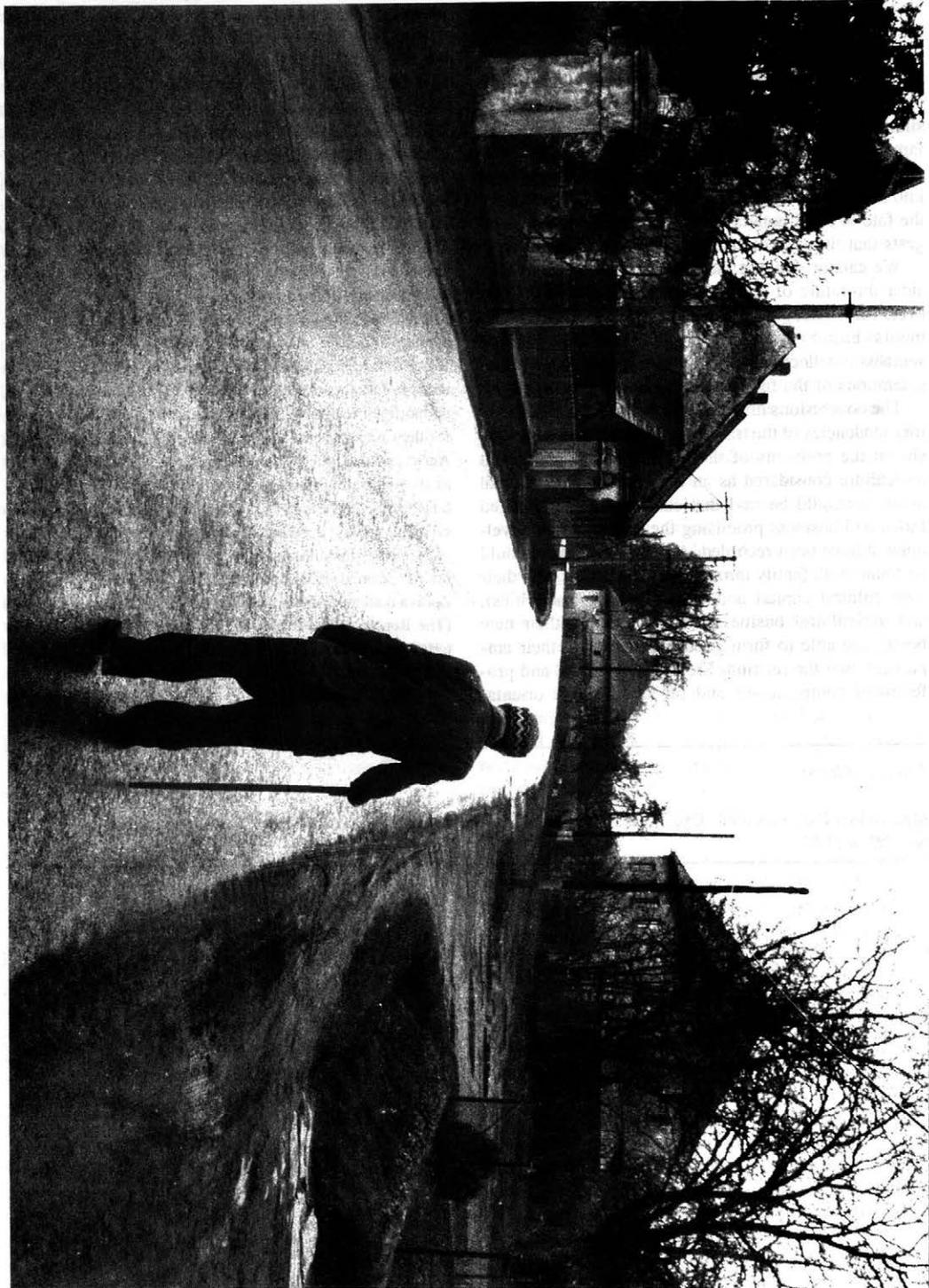


Photo © Jindřich Šreit

# THE DEVELOPMENT POSSIBILITIES OF CZECH VILLAGES

## VÝVOJOVÉ MOŽNOSTI ČESKÝCH VESNIC

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**ABSTRACT:** The question of how to overcome the paradigms of the socialist-collectivist system penetrates all Czech society. This paper will deal with some development processes in the Czech countryside, especially in the period of stagnation of socialist system (the 1980s). In this context, the paper will address the processes indicating tendencies towards homogenization and heterogenization in the Czech countryside. This historical excursion will serve as a background for considering the development possibilities under current circumstances. The aim of paper is to show: how the historical heritage (including surviving stereotypes in the way people think) influences contemporary development in Czech villages; how far old development trends really were changed with the change of social milieu; and how far old tendencies are still at work. This latter section will also address the question of tendencies towards homogenization and heterogenization in the Czech countryside of today.

village, development, possibilities of development

**ABSTRAKT:** Otázka překonání paradigmat socialisticko-kolektivistického systému prostupuje všechny úrovně naší společnosti. Článek pojednává o některých vývojových procesech na českém venkově zvláště v období stagnace socialistického systému (80. léta). V tomto rámci se článek zabývá procesy spojenými s homogenizačními a heterogenizačními tendencemi. Tento historický vstup slouží jako předpoklad pro uvažování o možnostech vývoje v dnešních podmínkách. Cílem článku je ukázat, jak dědictví historie (včetně přetrvávajících stereotypů v myšlení) ovlivňuje současný vývoj českých vesnic. Dále jde o to ukázat, jak dalece se se změnou sociálního prostředí změnila minulá vývojová tendence a nakolik tyto tendence stále působí. Tato část se také opět zabývá homogenizačními a heterogenizačními tendencemi na českém venkově v dnešních podmínkách.

vesnice, vývoj, možnosti vývoje

The fifth anniversary of the beginning of system changes in the former Czechoslovakia has opened the way for discussions about these changes. Some questions that emerged to be answered by politicians, journalists or ordinary people as a result of last five years development are also in the focus of sociologists because the questions are unique. One of the basic questions in their work addresses the issue of how to overcome the paradigms of socialistically-collectivistic system and what new paradigms should replace them in the economic and legal sphere, and also in the sphere of building up the civic society that is considered to be the most lengthy part of the transformation (M u s i l

1992)<sup>1</sup>. Such an approach in reviewing the last 5 years does not include only the economic success but there are also continuing as well as emerging problems. Looking at both positive and negative consequences of the social change enables less ideological views on the contemporary and future development.

The question of new paradigms forming a new social order that is based on the plurality of subjects entering the market, political and civic spheres concerns also the Czech countryside. This paper will address some of the development processes in the countryside during the period of the stagnation of the socialist system (the 1980s)<sup>2</sup> and will analyze the homogenizational and he-

1 The question of how to overcome an inherited communist system of values is the most difficult problem within this process. A group of Czech sociologists has neatly expressed the content of the value system:

1. Society should not be very differentiated and people's living standard should be as equal as possible;
2. One must work, regardless of whether one's work is meaningful and productive;
3. State institutions know best and satisfy best people's needs and therefore people need not care too much for themselves;
4. The living standard need not be high, provided it is safe.

More detailed see – Sociální změna očima české veřejnosti (Social Change in the Eyes of the Czech Public) (M a r e š, M u s i l, R a b u š i c 1992).

terogenizational tendencies of those years (these are the tendencies connected with the global and local, with centralization and decentralization). This historical excursion will provide the background for considering the possibilities of development under contemporary conditions. The intention is to show how the historical heritage (including surviving stereotypes in human thinking) influences contemporary development of the selected Czech villages. These villages are particular types of rural settlements. The paper also attempts to show how far the development tendencies established in the past have either changed or stayed the same within the newly forming social environment. The paper includes considerations about the homogenizational and heterogenizational tendencies in the Czech countryside under today's conditions – these conditions are, for instance, an emerging market economy, the transformation of agriculture, and a plurality of subjects in economic, political and social life.

#### THE METHODOLOGICAL APPROACH

The necessary empirical data for this paper are the result of the qualitative phase of the research project entitled "Rural employment and rural regeneration in post-socialist Central Europe (The Czech lands, Hungary, Poland and Slovakia)". The project is coordinated by Dr. N. Swain from Centre for Central and Eastern European Studies (CCEES), University of Liverpool and is financed by European Union under COST program, the number ERBCIPACT923022.

The qualitative phase of the research was carried out in 9 selected villages in the Czech republic in autumn 1993/spring 1994. The core of this phase consisted mostly of interviews with key representatives of local life (old persons; former and today's representatives of local councils, political parties, associations and organizations, local farming units and non-farming enterprises, today's small entrepreneurs both in and outside agriculture; and other persons significant or interesting from the point of view of the socio-cultural life of the village), the study of documents (statistical documents, local documents – chronicles, periodical, brochures, and books) and limited observations of local life. The reason for the qualitative study was to obtain more detailed and deeper information about economic, social, cultural and political life of the surveyed villages. The study covers the period from the 1930s up to present days (and even with some views concerning future development).

Three regions (districts) were selected for the study and in each region three villages were chosen. The districts and villages were selected by the Research

Institute of Agrar Economics in Prague according to the research project criteria. The following districts were selected:

**Domažlice** – *agricultural peripheral region* – peripheral region with underdeveloped industrial infrastructure in the past, and subsequently with a higher proportion of agriculture in the region's economy;

**Kutná Hora** – *core region* – region situated near large city agglomerations;

**Vsetín** – *as industrial periphery* – region industrialized in the past (mostly heavy industry) but now suffering from the conversion of this industry; it brings the region into unfavourable position and region becomes a kind of periphery.

Three villages were selected within each district according to their presupposed (hypothetical) development strategies. The strategies are labeled:

*laissez-faire* – the development of these villages does not require government interference; they are the villages that have enough of their own potential to develop and do not need any outside interference in their affairs;

*pro-agricultural* – the development of these villages could be based on interventions into agriculture; they are the villages where the farming could be assumed to play a significant role in future development;

*pro-development* – the development of these villages could be based more generally on job-creation, mostly outside of agriculture; they are the villages where the future is assumed to be connected with non-agricultural activities.

The elaboration of these strategies and ascribing particular strategies to these villages were based on the hypotheses about future possible development. These assumptions could be compared with our actual findings.

#### I. List of villages according to their hypothetical development strategies

Region	<i>Laissez-faire</i>	<i>Pro-development</i>	<i>Pro-agricultural</i>
Domažlice	<b>Kl.</b>	<b>Ch.</b>	<b>Lš.</b>
Kutná Hora	<b>Ho.</b>	<b>Vr.</b>	<b>Rt.</b>
Vsetín	<b>Ka.</b>	<b>Ra.</b>	<b>Ke.</b>

All research materials are available in the Unit of Humanities, Department of Rural Sociology, Czech University of Agriculture Prague; Research Institute of Agrar Economics; and in CCEES Liverpool.

<sup>2</sup> More detailed about this period – see Hudečková, H.: *Agrární změna v kontextu obnovy a rozvoje venkova* (Agrarian Change in the Context of Renewal and Development of Rural Areas). Research Report for Central European University Prague (Hudečková 1994).

## SITUATION UNDER THE SOCIALISM (GENERAL CHARACTERIZATION OF DEVELOPMENT TENDENCIES)

The significant characterization of the former social system was its orientation toward uniformity. This orientation resulted in the tendency to homogenize the society, to minimize the differences among its members. It increased the ability to govern its members. Everything and everyone was subordinated to an omnipotent state. The state was the source of homogenization and liquidated undesirable differences. Everyone was in the hands of the state, the state determined human lives (Zeman 1991). The tendency towards difference was hidden under the shell of uniformity (homogenizational shell) and manifested itself not as equivalently strong or discernible. "Being arrested" in homogeneity makes it difficult to investigate the heterogeneity. Basically, two kinds of heterogenization can be pointed out – hidden<sup>3</sup> and allowed<sup>4</sup>. Centralization of many spheres of social life enabled externally discernible manifestations of homogenization. Nevertheless, as the paper shows, the manifestations were external. In addition, the relationship between centralization and homogenization was mutually supportive and supplementary. However, these effects should not be overestimated. The idea that the homogenization was entire and the centralization omnipresent is an exaggeration. Both forms of differentiation (hidden or allowed) and partial decentralization existed in various spheres of society.

Society organized in socialist-collectivistic way minimized individual freedom and deformed solidarity to such an extent that now we can observe how this deformation results in emerging aggressive individualism. Collectivism was preferred everywhere – from the economic sphere<sup>5</sup> to the sphere of associations and interest groups<sup>6</sup> – as a way to establish unity, similarity. However, this way did not eliminate all differences neither in the social structures nor in the sphere of opinions and attitudes.

The average (sometime achieved under the slogan "the equality in poverty") became the standard of homogenization. These tendencies of homogenization were not built on achievement. Rather they were built on the orientation expressed in the words: "Not to work too much, but to have a good standard of living". Attempts to change this trend, for instance through the introduction of various socialist competitions as a substitute for the market, were not successful because they were false substitutions. Their goal was not to support the economic

stimuli known in a market economy, but rather to demonstrate loyalty and "a mature socialist moral". Whatever higher effort was "remunerated" morally rather than materially (money) because of the absence of the market. Also this way of social regulation demonstrates the orientation toward the homogenization of people. However, the contrary heterogenizational tendency (hidden in homogenizational shell) still existed. In fact, the political activism was better rewarded than real increases in economic output. Low wage differentials prevailed within the sectors of the economy while between sectors differences in wage levels were striking. The state showed preference for areas of the economy that were politically important or essential for the national economy. Agriculture also enjoyed political priority. Thus, after the period of collectivization during which farm labour incomes were low, wages in agriculture started to rise in the 1960s and, especially during the 1970s and 1980s, they continued to augment at an increasing pace (Hudečková, Lošák 1993).

Using an imaginary microscope, we can observe the demonstration of heterogenization and anti-centralist phenomena (intended or unintended) on the vast background of centralization and homogenization. Such a picture is the consequence of this particular way of organizing the society. This way could be labeled as the socialist collectivism.

## THE COUNTRYSIDE – ITS HOMOGENIZATION AND HETEROGENIZATION UNDER SOCIALISM

A simplified approach to understanding the impacts of centralization, homogenization and collectivization on rural society would assume that all or a majority of rural settlements will show similar characteristics in infrastructure, working possibilities, housing, farming units, social and cultural life, problems the settlements face, conditions the settlements are exposed to from the state, etc. However, both natural factors (geographic, demographic conditions) and factors created by people (policy, culture in wider sense) influenced the differences among the villages. Moreover, under socialism, sometimes policy dominated over all other factors. For instance, many of the differences among the villages are ascribed to differing positions of the villages in the network of settlements (residential network). Their position is the result of a legal act during the local administration transformation in the beginning of

3 For instance, privileged party bosses attempted to disseminate the illusion of their unity with ordinary people. The public became more familiar with the extent of party bosses' privileges after 1989.

4 The example of this difference is the process under the slogan 'to equalize the countryside with urban areas' (this slogan shows a kind of homogenization). The paper will show below that these, in fact homogenizational, efforts generated the diversity that derived from many factors.

5 The economic sectors both in agriculture and outside agriculture were characterized by an almost absolute collective (state) ownership.

6 Local associations and organizations were organized on the national principle and were subordinated to socialist national uniformity (Lošák 1994).

the 1970s. Our findings suggest that administrative decision-making frequently played a central role in incorporating the villages into the network of settlements regardless of any other factors (natural, historical, etc.). Thus, political voluntarism as a phenomenon accompanying centralism often dominated in overall development of villages. Moreover, rational features of the residential network transformation were not fully used, while restrictive elements were used in abundant way.

For instance, one of our surviving villages (H.) is situated on the main road and railroad to the regional centre and Prague. However, except for building family houses, the village did not develop any economic and civic infrastructure. It was not an independent village, and until 1991 did not have a local council. H. was a part of a larger village that was located, however, outside the main roads. Thanks to the status this larger village developed, while village H did not. At the same time, H. served as a kind of satellite near regional centre. This satellite position, however, did not bring any benefit for H., because of the administrative decision that confirmed subordination of H. under another larger settlement that had unfavourable geographical conditions. This legal act (i.e. policy-making) deprived H. of the chance for development.

The results of restructuring the residential network implemented by administrative means significantly differentiated the conditions of rural life. A large number of small villages (especially those with population of less than 500) lost their viability since they could not offer modern housing, working opportunities and guaranties of other basic needs (Hudečková, Lošák 1992). On the other hand, other villages (mostly the largest ones) used the preferences, resulting from their position within the residential network, to develop. These preferences were the result of administrative decision-making. We can construct a model consisting of three groups of villages or, in other words, of three types of developing alternatives existing under the external shell of homogeneity which proclaimed equal conditions for all. Inside these groups, the difference disappears and the similarity among rural settlements within particular groups begins to prevail.

We can label these groups of villages for our purposes as particular "ideal-types". There are their general characterizations:

- **developing** – slow growth or keeping the same level of population, development of infrastructure, moderate growth of jobs, extended possibilities for cultural and social life (not always used), preferred in the residential network;
- **stagnating** – slow but continual decrease in the population, keeping on the same level or slowly built infrastructure, limited number of jobs, changing possibilities for cultural and social life (with differences in their use during the period), partially preferred villages within the residential network)

- **declining** – obvious and continual decrease in the population, infrastructure deteriorated, number of jobs decreased, possibilities for cultural and social life are limited (but often interesting cultural or social phenomena are found), these villages were not preferred in the residential network).

## II. List of villages according to their type

District	<i>Developing</i> <i>1st type</i>	<i>Stagnating</i> <i>2nd type</i>	<i>Declining</i> <i>3rd type</i>
Domažlice	Kl.	Ch.	Iš.
Kutná Hora	Vr.	Rt.	Ho.
Vsetín	Ka., Ra.	Ke.	

People in each group of villages have developed different views and attitudes concerning the previous history. These views and attitudes are very important for considering options of future development.

People in the developing villages mostly consider the former period as one characterized by non-conflict. The social climate in the village is characterized as relatively coherent (it is expressed in sentences: "People worked together here. The Communists worked for the village and not for their own pocket."). Our interlocutors did not mention any significant problems. Therefore the evaluation of the past does not include any significant differences among the views of the village population. They are the villages where the majority of inhabitants were not losers at the end of the 1980s.

The stagnating villages show greater differences in views concerning past development. The heritage of the changes after 1948, especially the experience of injuries and injustice in the village during collectivization, plays a significant role. Although we can find more different views and attitudes concerning former development, there does not exist a strong negativistic evaluation of the village history among the majority of local inhabitants. Some elements of preserved neighbourhood cohesion are pointed out (often we were told: "In a time of necessity to do something, we were able to do it. People who mostly participated in voluntary works for the village to show their loyalty are not active now. Currently there exists only a small group of those who, regardless of their political views, worked for the village in the past and work also now."). The villages of this type indicated more differentiated views and attitudes of the population. The division line is drawn between part of the winners and part of the losers.

The most negative evaluation of the former system exists, of course, in the declining villages. The large group of local long-term inhabitants strongly criticized former local politicians ("They worked only for their own pocket. They have no qualification, but they used the membership in the Communist Party for their own

benefit; they were 'great Communists', and pursued the local power."). This type of criticism is extended into the criticism of local council work, especially when the municipality (local council) was not located in the village, but was in a larger village – a so called 'central village' for which surrounding villages were a kind of satellites. ("During all the time they did not help, support our village. They did not contribute any money, they did not give any money to our village. The village where the local council was located has all the necessary infrastructure, and social facilities, while our village has only a ramshackle pub.") It is evident that a majority of the population in these villages were the losers under the former system.

Our observation suggests that there were greater differences in the experience of losers and the loss of identity between the 2nd and the 3rd types than between the 1st and the 2nd types of villages.

Interestingly within the surveyed villages we did not find any significant criticism of collective farm in the past. That is, we do not take into account the criticism connected with the pollution of the village by agriculture (a criticism that existed also before the war). The collective farms were not criticized for their low participation in village development or even for slowing down this development. What is criticized is the behavior of the immigrants from different parts of Bohemia (in some regions they are called in local slang 'alluvium'), because they disturbed the local community. However, this fact is not bound with the collective farm that employed them. Those incoming to the community were criticized, while the farm – the reason of their immigration – was not criticized.

Collective farms in the 1970s–1980s were considered as very important institution with a multifunctional role in the village. The presence of the collective farm (or even the existence of a very small unit of a collective farm) was the hope for the future existence of the village because the villages lost under the collectivization and centralization many of their social institutions with differentiated functions (collective farms overtook the majority of these functions). This fact is probably the reason today's rural population's criticism of collective farming is not as strong as we would expect with regard to historical experience, especially from the historical period when the collective farms were established.

The external homogenization of the Czech countryside into a national society was shaped under the generally well-known process of urbanization and the specific socialist process – collectivization. These processes were fostered by centralization under the slogan 'to equalize the countryside with the urban areas'. However, at the same time, we can observe internal differentiation of the Czech countryside into various types of villages. Particular areas and particular rural settlements (so-called central villages) were preferred. Other areas and settlements, on the other hand, were not preferred (intended or unintended). These settle-

ments became depopulated and probably this is why they were almost out of the interests of centralization and control. Homogenization and uniformity were concentrated into larger villages. Probably, these circumstances, together with the desire "to survive", can explain why we can find relatively more important role of interesting local socio-cultural phenomena or interesting persons within the life of these small or non-supported villages. On the other hand, such phenomena or persons in developing villages (villages with both natural and ascribed factors bringing them advantages) play a relatively lower role in the local life with regard to the possibilities of the villages. Moreover, in our research we recorded a certain "artificiality" (museum is not real life) in preserving these socio-cultural phenomena in developing villages. Probably the "naturalness" in non-supported villages is connected with the experience of the forthcoming end. If it is true, we can say as a hypothesis that the increase of the control and centralization through the homogenization and preference of particular type of rural settlements enabled to form and save "small islands of positive deviation" (from the point of view of saving rurality and the local culture) in the areas which were not strongly influenced by these processes. These areas saved more rurality and diversity of culture in wider sense of word. Under all these mentioned conditions, the Czech countryside enters the 1990s.

#### THE SITUATION TODAY – CHANCES FOR THE FUTURE AND THE HERITAGE OF THE PAST

One of the fundamental changes since 1989 was the legal adoption of plurality of actors in the economic, socio-cultural and political sphere. All subjects (including also villages) existing in a pluralistic society should have equal chances for their future existence and development guaranteed by the law. Does this legal equality mean real equality of chances with regard to the heritage of the former system and the influences of the newly shaping system?

The existing plurality of subjects granted by law is the first precondition for heterogenization to break through the homogenizational shell and for decentralization to re-emerge as natural contra-pole of centralization. Legal guarantees of equal chances within the new system ought to eliminate voluntaristic preference and support given only to favoured subjects. Future development tendencies should be based more on natural factors and existing circumstances, than on factors that are ideologically fostered through voluntaristic policy-making. The state intervention should have place in cases, when it is obvious that natural development (or even ideological schemes presented as such natural development) brings one of the principles (centralization/decentralization) or one of the tendencies (homogenization/ heterogenization) to such dominance that threaten a real plurality and the legal

equality of chances. Such a situation is, in fact, a threat for the society as a whole<sup>7</sup>.

Let's examine today's situation in villages that are included in our research with regard to their future chances. We will attempt to think over their current position, how former tendencies are demonstrated now, and the risks generated by the contemporary milieu. The basis for this kind of consideration will be the description of common and different features, intentions, approaches and orientations of the local population. We shall start from the ideas we recorded in the villages about the possibilities of future development followed by the analysis of the realization of these ideas.

The fundamental finding as for the future development is that the representatives of local life do not think farming will be the core, impetus of future development (i.e. the future development of the village is not connected with a dominant orientation on agriculture and with the support of agricultural activities as well). No one we interviewed saw the future in the frame of a development based on agriculture. Local representatives emphasize the necessity of large-scale farming in the village (the opinions as to the form of farming differ, and they have not been crystallized yet – either cooperative, family farm, or private farming operations) because they regard farming as a natural activity in the village (an obvious point of view of the countryside at the end of XXth century, and in the society with a collectivistic tradition). Thoughts over the possibilities and position of farming in contemporary society in general, and the ambiguous agrarian policy in Bohemia in particular, influence the reasons why the role of rural regenerator is not given to farming ("Nobody can become rich from farming", is the statement of both private farmers, former collective farm workers and non-agricultural rural population. "Who starts with the farming, cannot expect a profit". "Those who start with farming now will face problems because everything is ambiguous – from the restitution of property to the prices of products."). Of course, there are not any doubts that agriculture will occupy an important position in the rural economy, but this position is not considered crucial for the future development of the villages in our research.

Fundamental for future development is the development of services and crafts (small-scale enterprising). Local representatives point to the situation before the war when the villages were almost sovereign entities in this respect. However, the scope of required services

and small-enterprises is different for the different village types. People in declining and partly in stagnating villages would be satisfied with a renewal of the pre-collectivistic situation ("There were 2 pubs, 3 grocery shops, tailor, dressmaker, joiner, smith, carpenter and others."). People in developing villages desire the services and small enterprises, like those located in towns or cities to which the local population currently has to commute in order to satisfy their needs (for instance, for a pharmacy).

Villages with industrial enterprises (mostly developing villages) foresee their future mostly in connection with these industrial enterprises. This strategy is the more evident, the more these industrial enterprises are crucial for the incomes of the local population. For instance, in Ka. people are not able to imagine the future of the village if privatization of the glass works (that has existed for more than 100 years) will close down or reduce jobs (there are particular indicators that especially foreign owners would limit the production in order to eliminate the competition with their original enterprises). Only this gloomy result would press the local council to elaborate detailed development strategy.

The structure of the emerging entrepreneurial activities (mostly part-time ones) in stagnating and especially in declining villages does not satisfy the demands of the local population. Although the enterprising is often concentrated in the sphere of shopping, this form often includes the activities of dealers of big companies which are not, of course, beneficial for the villages. These villages lack the small enterprises (crafts) for 'everyday needs' ("We do not need 3 private drivers with lorries, but we need a plumber."). They are the types of services that are not fully covered by new small entrepreneurs. However, there emerges another problem, will an improved structure of services (in declining and stagnating villages) bring benefit to their owners? The majority of the economically active population in these villages commute to work in towns or cities. They can decide where to use the services. Local pensioners are not expected to consume a great part of services. In this case, it may be unreasonable to expand the small enterprises and services. Developing villages are rather confronted with other problem than is the question how to improve the structure of the services. The problem of developing villages is how to improve the quality of services to be comparable with urban standards.

<sup>7</sup> Such problems emerged in environmental issues today. American Vice-president Al Gore (Gore 1992) writes about the necessity to accept a kind of global Marshall plan (original intention of this plan was to join several relatively rich and relatively poor countries to re-organize together part of the world and to change the way of life in this part), and about the unwillingness of some American statesmen (G. Bush) to lead the world toward efficient ecological strategy, because they are afraid of whatever form of intervention. The source of their unwillingness is, according to Al Gore, the apprehension, that it will be necessary to pursue actively the changes that are not in accordance with preferred policy of non-regulated economy (laissez-faire). Also the development of the countryside suggests that neither entire state-voluntaristic policy-making (that can lead to the decay of village with even some development potential, as indicated in last chapter) nor fostering laissez-faire strategy (as this chapter will show), are possible. Further survival of the countryside as a sovereign entity will not be able without state support, as well as deliberate agricultural and regional policy because of the overall weakness of rural areas.

The expansion of services and small enterprises as independent activities (private business) is connected with the question of new jobs. New small enterprises and services are not set up by those who are unemployed. The employment of non-family members within small enterprises was found in the developing and partly in the stagnating villages. However, no one we interviewed thought that the newly emerging jobs in small enterprises and services would eventually substitute for the closed-down jobs in local industrial enterprises and former collective farms. The local councils do not feel they could influence the creation of new jobs in any way other than through the support of small entrepreneurs. Local councils feel they are not able to consider the next development of the situation.

Other particular development chances of the countryside are related to a healthy environment. This environment could attract people from higher urban income strata to the countryside. This fact could particularly benefit villages in the core areas. On the other hand, this process worries the local population who fear their village will be used for 'black money laundering' through the purchase of local real estates. Also with regard to the healthy environment, there are not any ideas about ecological farming ("It is impossible to wait 5 years in market economy, until the fields are ready for organic farming. It brings great economic loss.").

Now, let's concentrate on the results of development policies in research villages. It reveals the peculiarities among the villages in considering their future. In a more detailed elaboration with the first signals of policy realization we can see the development activities of local councils in developing villages. Kl. uses its favourable location near German (Bavarian) border and is ready to build up a so-called economic zone for entrepreneurs with the help of German banks. This village also orients its activities at providing social services (nursing homes for the elderly). Ra. participates in the construction of medical infusion enterprise. Building the firm will greatly improve the local infrastructure. The local councils in Vr. and in Ka. are not engaged in economic development of their villages because these villages are characterized by highly developed local industry. Local councils commit the economic policy-making to the industrial enterprises. The development activities of both villages are concentrated rather in public social services. The development policy within all the mentioned villages is generally supported by the local population.

The possibilities concerning future development in stagnating villages are concentrated only in ideas. Even so, there is much debate about what strategy would be the best. One group accepts the ideas and would like to realize them, and another one does not believe that the concrete program will bring any development or refuses to be active in its realization. In Ch., the opinions differentiate over the issue concerning the possibility of using foreign capital for economic development. In

Ra., there are the doubts about the possibilities of village development in general, though there exists concrete project – to provide the wood from community forests as the credit for those private entrepreneurs who resume the tradition of wood processing. Ke. has its development plan but suffers from unfavourable geographical position of being a village outside the main communicational network (roads, railroads). Any good plan cannot neglect this impediment. The local council is aware of this fact. There exists the idea to convince entrepreneurs about the lower costs of labour if the firm is located in Ke. ("If the costs for commutation to work is 600 crowns monthly, it is possible to have the wage about 400 crowns lower than now, and your employee will even save 200 crowns, because he does not need to commute to work, and can work in the village."). However, entrepreneurs have not used this chance, nor are local people willing to change their jobs they consider highly salaried.

Declining villages are particular cases. Lš. is not an independent village and has not created any special, concrete development policy. The municipality (in another village) will help with building infrastructure only in one village subordinated to the municipality every year. Lš. has to wait until the time of municipality help. People here feel helpless. Those who were active in local cultural life (in the past their activities slowed down the decline of a village, at least) become older without any hope of being substituted by a younger generation. Ho. manifested itself significantly through an act of independence from a large village, and in building water-supply system. These activities were approved by the overwhelming majority of the local population. Nevertheless, there is a question about whether the village should not become an ordinary satellite of the near regional centre. Although the community incomes from taxes are high in Ho., they are not used to finance the local social facilities simply because there are not such facilities, nor are they used for supporting the creation of new jobs in local small enterprises. The money is used only to finance the building of technical infrastructure. Such development could reduce current local enthusiasm because it is one-way development that does not support any other activities except building the infrastructure. The other activities could be 'a shelter in case of an emergency' (i.e. economic decline of region).

Generally speaking, the support of development activities by local councils is always limited, although the effort of the local councils is undeniable. The limits are mostly the results of the weakness of local councils that is given by the law. Discrepancies in political views among the local population only occasionally generate greater difficulties. Moreover, national policy plays a minimal role within local communities. It was confirmed by the local elections of 1994 that resulted in an overwhelming victory of independent candidates, and the forming of right-left coalitions. The informal social networks in which the local representatives are

anchored, play an important role. Also the support, the local representatives have in the villages, is another important factor for future development. On the other hand, the decision-making processes were not significantly de-centralized (i.e. state administration did not transfer a great part of its agenda into local councils). The only means (except for the elaboration of development programs) a local council can use to promote future development are the supplies (offers) of community property (lands, buildings, forests), active and flexible approach to local issues, the ability to convince local population about the benefit of proposed intentions for them and the village. Villages that recognized these possibilities and were able to realize them have a more elaborated development policy. Villages, where the local council did not emphasize or was not able to conduct the communication with the public, face the opposition of local population, and the question of village development is delayed.

## CONCLUSIONS

Probably some changes between particular types of villages will exist. Most likely, stagnating villages will show particular bifurcation. Some of them will use the chance to develop (providing they comply with the conditions outlined previously), and others will decline. Therefore, probably, a stronger differentiation of villages will take place. This trend represents the process of heterogenization, and the gap between developing and declining villages will be deeper. The heritage of the past plays a significant role within this process of bifurcation, and the rectifying forces of contemporary change are almost negligible.

The developing villages will be the leaders among rural settlements in future. However, there emerges the question if this type of village will remain a rural one, or if it will change toward a kind of "rurbanity" (a kind of the rural and the urban mixture). As for the future development, we recorded less problems within these villages. Nevertheless, one thing should be pointed out. The reliance of local councils only on the local industry development can be a time bomb and there does not exist any way to protect the villages against the possible bomb explosion. If such explosion would occur, some of these developing villages could suffer from more severe decline because they have not any elaborated programs of future development in their hands. These villages miss the variety of development programs because the villages are oriented only towards a local industry.

The declining villages will, most likely, also decline in future. The exceptions like Ho. will remain the exceptions. Moreover, Ho.'s transition toward the developing village is questionable, because it may be a one-way development (the function 'to accommodate' people who commute to work necessitates only working infrastructure as sewage works, gas fittings, etc.).

The new division of villages takes place. The factors participating in this new division are both natural ones (geographical and demographical, objective historical influence that form the starting point into new conditions) and internal climate (coherence of local population, the capabilities of local council, local personalities, the spirit of enterprising). It is evident that this climate is generally better in villages that were not losers in the past. The villages that belonged to the losers has to compensate this handicap by creative ideas that inspire and encourage the local population (the idea of independent village; immediate solution of lasting problem; the idea to use village for tourism, travel activities; the attempts of the local council to revive some traditions, etc.).

Currently, with regard to the above mentioned considerations, our village/development list looks this way:

District	<i>developing</i>	<i>stagnating</i>	<i>declining</i>
Domažlice	Kl.	← Ch.	Lš.
Kutná Hora	Vr. → (Ho.)	← Ra. →	
Vsetín	Ra. Ka. →	Ke.	

Explanation:

(Ho.) = one-way development

→← indications of possible future development according to observed indicators

This can be compared with the list based on the characterizations for the selection of villages (see the list of villages according to ascribed development strategies):

District	<i>Laissez-faire</i>	<i>Pro-development</i>	<i>Pro-agricultural</i>
Domažlice	Kl.	Ch.	Lš.
Kutná Hora	Ho.	Vr.	Ra.
Vsetín	Ka.	Ra.	Ke.

The new conditions have started to change the division of villages. The comparison of lists shows that villages labeled as pro-agricultural occupy the second and the third types of villages (types according to their development – stagnating and declining). Villages labeled as laissez-faire are listed among developing villages for a while. It suggests that tendencies established in the past continue and will continue with heterogenizational impacts. It indicates also that sole farming cannot be considered as the main rural regenerator in future. Farming is considered rather as a factor of subsistence ("If my factory is closed down, I will start to farm, I will produce the foods and therefore I will not die because of hunger.") and farming is therefore a

kind of "odd strategy" compared to "pro-development" and "laissez-faire" strategy.

The centralization gives up more slowly in reality than it is proclaimed. The appearance of heterogenization is evident. The strength of homogenization in future (in the sense of globalization) is difficult to specify for a while because the new trends are only being set up.

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Arrived on 25th May 1995

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# AGRARIAN UNEMPLOYMENT AND CHANGES IN RURAL SLOVAK

## AGRÁRNA NEZAMESTNANOSŤ A ZMENY NA SLOVENSKOM VIDIEKU

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**ABSTRACT:** The decline of agricultural employment in Slovakia had been launched already in the 50-ies in relation to the extensive and fast industrialization and urbanization of the country. Rural settlements were losing their agrarian nature and the proportion of population involved in the farming was strongly reducing. As a result of this development, people employed in agriculture have represented a majority of population only in the smallest villages sized less than 500 inhabitants. In 1989, another period of a speeded up decrease of agricultural employment began. This process has greatly diverged in individual regions of Slovakia. At the same time, agrarian unemployment has started to rise. The number of unemployed, who had lost their jobs in agriculture, reached 26,500 at the end of 1994, representing 8.2 per cent of the total number of the jobless in the national economy. As a rule, regional labour markets have not been able to absorb such a volume of labour supply and a significant portion of those discharged from agriculture has landed in the category of the long-term unemployed. An increasing share of rural population is developing their capacity for food self-supply. In several less developed districts, particularly in small villages, the demographic situation is worsening (aging of the population, the increasing share of elderly widowed women etc.). At the same time, the educational level and also the purchasing power of population are declining. All these phenomena hardly can generate incentives for new entrepreneurship. Social disparities, especially in peripheral regions, are becoming manifest. The occurring symptoms of the poverty are mostly linked with demographic and ethnic status characteristics, first of all young families rich in children, elderly and the Romani population being distressed.

rural, unemployment, agriculture, self- sufficiency, poverty, social disparity

**ABSTRAKT:** Práca sa zaoberá analýzou agrárnej zamestnanosti vo väzbe na socio-ekonomické zmeny slovenského vidieka. Proces znižovania zamestnanosti v agrárnom sektore začal už koncom 50. rokov, v súvislosti s rýchlou industrializáciou a urbanizáciou Slovenska. Vidiecke sídla postupne strácali svoj rurálny charakter a podiel obyvateľstva sa výrazne znižoval. V súčasnej dobe prevláda „poľnohospodárske obyvateľstvo“ len v najmenších vidieckych sídlach do 500 obyvateľov. Po roku 1989 začína druhá etapa prudkého poklesu pracovníkov v agrárnom sektore. Tento proces relatívne rýchleho znižovania agrárnej zamestnanosti je výrazne regionálne diferencovaný. Paralelne s týmto procesom znižovania zamestnanosti v poľnohospodárstve sa zvyšovala tzv. agrárna nezamestnanosť. Koncom roka 1994 tvorili bývalí pracovníci z poľnohospodárskej prvovýroby cca 26 500 osôb, t.j. 8,2 % z celkového počtu nezamestnaných, z agrokomplexu (t.j. poľnohospodárska prvovýroba a potravinársky priemysel) 35 000 osôb a vrátane lesníctva až 43 500 osôb. Regionálne pracovné trhy nedokážu saturovať časť uvoľnenej pracovnej sily z poľnohospodárstva a značná časť týchto uchádzačov o zamestnanie sa dostáva do skupiny dlhodobo nezamestnaných. Súčasný vidiek (najmä malé vidiecke sídla) je charakteristický výrazným trendom obyvateľov k samozásobiteľskému chovaniu, demografickou depresiou, regresnou vekovou štruktúrou s prevahou odvodových žien, nižšou vzdelanosťou štruktúrou obyvateľstva, nízkou priestorovou mobilitou, slabou kúpnu silou, ktorá nestimuluje rozvoj súkromného podnikania. Začínajú sa objavovať sociálne nerovnosti, najmä v určitých periférnych oblastiach. Na vidieku sa začínajú objavovať určité symptómy chudoby sociálnych skupín, spojené napr. s demografickým statusom (viacdetné mladé rodiny, gerontologická chudoba), s etnickým statusom (rómska populácia) a začína sa objavovať nová chudoba spojená s dlhodobou nezamestnanosťou určitých sociálnych skupín na vidieku s vysokou závislosťou na sociálnych príjmoch. Vzrastajúci proces sociálnej diferenciácie slovenského vidieka bude tieto kontúry ešte viac zvyrazňovať.

vidiek, agrárna nezamestnanosť, urbanizácia, samozásobiteľské chovanie, socio-ekonomické zmeny, chudoba, sociálna diferenciácia

## HISTORICAL SETTING

During the 30s the Slovak Republic was a classic agrarian country. In 1936 about 1 065 000 people were employed in the agricultural sector. In 1949, at the beginning of collectivization, there were 917 000 people working in this sector with a slight prevalence of women (52 percent). Originally-rural Slovakia was industrialized and urbanized with shocking suddenness after 1945. This quick industrialization and urbanization intensified the development of Slovak society, and the process of drawing a significant number of employees from the primary sector began. Gradually, also the process of concentration of urbanizing activities began, focusing on sites and localities determined in advance. It led to a so-called centralized system of settlement. Country residences lost their original rural and agrarian features, and they were transformed into industrial-servicing centres. In the second half of the 50s, a process characterized as rural exodus started. This accelerated urbanization resulted in the ruralization of towns. E.g. Bratislava grew by 44.5 percent between 1970–1990.

The development trend explicitly tends from the primary to the tertiary sector; in the developed economies even to the quaternary. There are two identifiable stages of change in the social structure of the Slovak Republic. The first stage was connected with strong industrialization, typical for the 50's and the first half of 60's. In this period, the strengthening of the secondary sector was in detriment to the primary sector. In the 70's and 80's, the agricultural sector, significantly supported by the state, was stabilized. In regions with insufficiently built economic infrastructure, the agricultural sector employed part of the population able to work who had no other job possibility, that is, agriculture substituted for the social functions of the state and significantly co-created the social employment. After 1989 the transformation of the agrarian sector started and is characterized by a further severe decrease in employment.

## RURAL EMPLOYMENT ON THE MOVE

Employment in the agrarian sector decreased by approximately 169 000 people in the last five years (1990–1994), that is, more than half (52.1 percent). At present the typical feature for agriculture is a certain erosion of large-scale farming, which is accompanied with the segmentation and diversification of farming structures. It is going through a gradual transformation, and certain features of future farming entities are gradually being formed, even if they are not very apparent so far.

But the development of agrarian employment in recent years is not only a one-way decreasing process. On the other side, there are some types and variants of private farmers and family farms (or small enterprises

up to 24 employees) in agriculture usually renting land and acting as first-stage producers. This process is highly differentiated, and its further development within the whole transformation of the agrarian sector is hardly predictable.

Parallel with the decrease of agrarian employment, there is a new phenomenon: agrarian unemployment occurs in the labour market. Regional labour markets could not absorb the accumulated supply of labour, which became redundant in agriculture. By the end of 1994 the number of former workers in agricultural primary production was about 26 500 people, that is, 8.2 percent of the total number of job applicants (except school-leavers and applicants who could not be attributed to any sector). There were 35 000 job applicants formerly employed in the entire food-sector – that means, agricultural primary production and the food industry – and the total number including forestry workers reached 43 500 people. This sector supplies the social network with a significant number of such job applicants who stay for a longer period. In rural areas, the fall in agrarian employment is resulting in the formation of the problematic groups of people which are hardly able to reintegrate into the labour market. Prolonged low wages in the agricultural sector threaten that this sector will produce a group of so-called "poor retired" with low pensions.

## RURAL UNEMPLOYMENT IN PROGRESS

As a first step, non-agricultural jobs (so-called sideline jobs), jobs of older pre-retired and retired workers, undisciplined and socially inconformable workers were cancelled. Regarding these accumulated personal and social handicaps, multiplied also by lower qualifications, flexibility and low average salaries in agriculture, some of these workers get into the social net quite voluntarily, sometimes even without the obvious motivation to reintegrate into the labour market. They tend to transfer their interest into certain additional and self-supplying activities, which are not always generally acceptable to society. The labour market does not react to the large part of dismissed agricultural employees.

As our analyses have shown, the highest rate of agrarian unemployment is now cumulating in problematic regions with high overall unemployment. That means that agriculture makes the social-economical decline of these regions deeper by dismissing employees. The transformation from mainly agrarian into prevalently industrial and urbanized society is logically accompanied by a high level of unemployment. At present, there is a high share of former agricultural employees which have only slight chances to be reintegrated into the labour market. That is why we assume that a certain part of a rural population will reach their economically active age getting social welfare support because of their incapability of requalifying for a dif-

ferent job. They will enter the group of the long term unemployed according to the rule that the longer they are unemployed the less chance they have to find a job. But so far the services absorption ability and the tertiary sector as a whole do not provide them the real possibility of re-integrating into the labour market. This social group is neither flexible enough to accept the conditions of a constantly changing job market nor able to resist what Toffler calls stress of future uncertainty (fear of constant change).

At present, the highest agrarian unemployment is concentrated in regions with a formerly disproportionately high agrarian over-employment and undeveloped social and technical infrastructure. These are mainly the regions of Southern and Eastern Slovakia: Komárno, Galanta, Levice, Veľký Krtíš, Rožňava, Michalovce, Bardejov, Svidník, Vranov, etc. With regard to agriculturally-prevailing extensive factors concerning the development of worker productivity, we assume that with the development of new technologies and innovation this kind of unemployment will increase. First-stage agricultural unemployment is concentrated mainly in the less productive regions, and gradually as the result of efficiency growth and labour productivity it will penetrate also into the productive regions. Here the process of agricultural employment decrease was delayed, but that is why it will have a longer effect. Regionally differentiated agrarian unemployment, as the new phenomenon in the labour market, will not cease; for a certain period it will exist as a constitutional part of the overall unemployment.

## THE SOCIAL RESPONSE

Based on our analyses we have determined that there is a generally significant tendency of country people to be self-sufficient in supplying themselves. They begin to apply the "emergency version" of fulfilling the basic subsistence needs by widening self-supply and natural consumption. This tendency will probably become a social phenomenon with various forms and stages. It is typical mainly for "post-economically active people" in the regions of attenuation. They are forced into such an activity to maintain a certain living standard. In the agriculturally productive areas, the revitalization of the formerly common "farming factory workers" group or some variants will come in. At the same time, some commodities will be subject to contracted (taxed) or latent (mainly non-taxed) sales. Except for the positive economic aspects, this return to a family-like economy will also result in significant social change, that is into rehabilitation and revitalization of multigeneration rural families with a feeling of their social necessity and recognition of the older generation.

The male rural population, mostly well-qualified, are beginning to migrate for work – mostly to the Czech Republic, Austria and Germany. Some regions

of East Slovakia face the problem of women's migration for work, mostly to the U.S.A. During their short cyclical stays – about 6–12 months – they work in community care services. While in the past mainly men were leaving for America, and women undertook their tasks, recently their social positions have reversed and social statuses have changed.

Generally, the food self-supply of people in the countryside has increased significantly over the past several years. In several cases this small scale production has had to face some health, hygienic and ecological barriers. The degradation of village environments, such as the pollution of ground water by sanitation systems, uncontrollable outflow of dungwater into drainage areas, creeks and rivers, increased contents of nitrates in water and plants, unhealthy nourishment focused mainly on animal fats and pork consumption, and so on, reflects that animal production is not suitable for self-contained houses. In a simplified way we can say that paradoxically the striking tendency to self-sufficiency in the rural population leads gradually to voluntary intoxication (or malnourishment) by their own production. Even though the occurrence of these social phenomena is not yet global or widespread, there are obvious identifiable regional enclaves, and the subconscious fear of shortage will make this tendency stronger. Social and psychological stereotypes will paradoxically result in the increased consumption of animal and plant products. Anxiety as a result of poverty will be reflected in a higher consumption of homemade food and increased consumption of alcoholic beverages. This population is obviously involved in the fixed and traditional way of life of a particular locality, and it is difficult to escape in the given social environment and climate. Different social behavioristic models in this milieu are exceptional, they raise distrust and make integration into local social relations and structures difficult.

A problematic social group of people with low education background or none at all, low discipline, and bad social adaptability is coming into existence. This group is either not interested in integration into the labour process, or they lose their jobs or leave after a long period. They are an army of life-time and permanently problematic citizens dependent on social allowances and very often socially deviant phenomena are typical for them. Besides the Gypsy population, also formerly non-problematic persons begin to fall into this social underclass.

At present, regions are starting to be differentially structured according to both overall and agricultural unemployment. The discrepancy between the size of the economically-active population and the number of jobs is generally being intensified. The rural social consciousness accepted social security as the social standard and this social paternalism was accepted also in the new conditions to a wider extent.

Today's countryside (mainly the smaller rural settlements) is characterized also by demographical de-

pression, regressive age structure with a prevalence of widows with their high needs for specific services (predominantly health services), lower level of education, insufficient mobility, poor social and technical infrastructure and low purchasing power that is not stimulating the development of the private sector. Furthermore, there are no standard services demanded. In the last several years, the income disparity between farmers and other socio-professional groups has been continually increasing. Part of the farming population is endangered by the loss of means of subsistence and this is the reason for their social fall. Social inequality appears, based on the economic weakness of the countryside in comparison with industrial regions or towns. The social degradation of the rural population and feelings of social decline connected the decreased occurrence of social-pathological phenomena as well as certain signs of social marginalization begin to appear. Regional differentiation of social inequalities unambiguously turns up mainly in the internal and external local peripheries.

#### RISE OF RURAL POVERTY?

In the conclusion of this contribution would like to try to answer the question of the existence and identification of rural poverty, which is not only regarded as a matter of income. Is this a kind of old poverty or are there any new features? Obviously there are these types of rural poverty:

- poverty of some social groups connected with demographical status (young families with many children, single parents, poverty of senior citizens);
- ethnic poverty typical mainly for the Gipsy population specifically dependent on social welfare;
- new poverty of a type connected with the high rate of unemployment of some rural social groups and great dependence on social welfare. With high pro-

bability, these stigmatized people socially sink into lifetime poverty, that will only reproduce itself in so-called hereditary poverty. This kind begins to be localized in certain regions.

Even though we realize the category of poverty and the impossibility of complex and exact solutions to the problem<sup>1</sup>, it is necessary to say that increasing differentiation will make it more apparent and it will be politically exploited in a specific way.

Finally – there are some rural social groups fulfilling the criteria of poverty (even though there are groups with low income but with considerable property), but particularly both the open and latent fear of poverty is obvious. The present development and crystallization of regional unemployment with great impact on the rural population and rural regional peripheries are multiplying these phobias.

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Arrived on 23th May 1995

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<sup>1</sup> According to a study of the Institute for Public Opinion Research of the Statistical Office of the Slovak Republic from the beginning of 1995, the state of material difficulty, that is, the poverty, affects 23 per cent of the Slovak population.

# PRESENT SOCIO-ECONOMICS PROBLEMS IN SLOVAK COUNTRYSIDE

## SÚČASNÉ SOCIOEKONOMICKÉ PROBLÉMY SLOVENSKEHO VIDIEKA

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**ABSTRACT:** The aim of this paper is to highlight the socio-economic problems which have been going on in the countryside since 1989. It is based on research carried out in the international research project entitled "Rural Employment and Rural Regeneration in Post-Socialist Central Europe". In the research, both qualitative and quantitative methods were used. Results of a case study (from one selected village) and the field research (1 041 respondents) are analyzed. In the village under study positive changes have been found in the development of small business. Organizational changes in agricultural co-operative have been analyzed. A number of private farmers is currently working the land, some of them farming even more than 50 hectares of farmland. Significant changes occurred in the local agricultural co-operative shortly after its transformation. The managers of the co-operative founded several limited-liability companies. In 1995 the meeting of co-operative members elected a new chairman. New attempts are being made to promote declining of co-operative production. The new chairman sees the establishment of limited-liability companies as a negative rather than positive feature. Current management strategy is aimed at winning good credits through the promotion fund for agriculture, elimination of irrecoverable claims and building of the production-distribution-sale cycle. The field research, which had a broader scope, (having been conducted in selected villages of up to 5 000 inhabitants throughout the whole Slovakia) showed the steady growth of business sector in the countryside. Private farmers continued to be a minority. With better credit conditions there exists potential for interest in business. Counselling is one of the areas felt to be necessary to develop further in the countryside.

enterprise, agriculture, change, private farmer

**ABSTRAKT:** Príspevok sa zamiera na socioekonomické problémy, ktoré prebiehajú na vidieku od roku 1989. Prezentujú sa výsledky, ktoré boli získané na základe medzinárodného výskumu „Rural Employment and Rural Regeneration in Post-Socialist Central Europe“. Výsledky boli získané na základe kvalitatívnych a kvantitatívnych metód. Analyzujú sa výsledky z prípadovej štúdie (za jednu vybranú obec) a výsledky z terénneho výskumu (1 041 respondentov). V skúmanej výskumnej obci, ktorá bola spracovaná ako prípadová štúdia, boli zistené pozitívne zmeny v rozvoji drobného podnikania. V poľnohospodárskej výrobe sa analyzovali organizačné zmeny v rámci poľnohospodárskeho družstva. V obci podnikajú tiež viacerí súkromní roľníci, z toho niektorí aj na výmerách nad 50 ha. Významné zmeny nastali v poľnohospodárskom družstve krátko po transformácii družstva. Manažermi družstva boli založené viaceré S.R.O. V roku 1995 dochádza v družstve k ďalším zmenám. Bola usporiadaná členská schôdza, na ktorej bol zvolený nový predseda družstva. Prejavujú sa nové snahy tohto managementu zveľadiť upadajúcu výrobu samotného družstva. Nový predseda družstva hodnotí vznik S.R.O. viac negatívne ako pozitívne. Stratégia managementu je zameraná na získanie výhodných úverov cez podporný fond poľnohospodárstva, odbúranie pohľadávok, vybudovanie cyklu: výroba–distribúcia–predaj. Terénny výskum, ktorý mal širší záber (uskutočnil sa v rámci celého Slovenska vo vybraných obciach do 5 000 obyvateľov), ukázal, že na vidieku postupne rastie podnikateľská sféra. Súkromne hospodáriaci roľníci boli naďalej v menšine. Pri vytvorení lepších úverových podmienok existujú potenciálni záujemcovia o podnikanie. Poradenstvo patrí medzi tie oblasti, ktoré v rámci vidieka je potrebné rozvíjať.

podnikanie, poľnohospodárstvo, zmena, súkromný roľník

### INTRODUCTION

The economic and social reforms following 1989 had a profound effect upon the development of the countryside as well. One of the signs of the restored democracy was the effort to strengthen local democracy in the municipalities. After the 1990 local government elections, municipal councils were formed.

However, municipalities have to a large extent remained financially dependent on the state budget, which is connected with the state tax policies. Over the past decades, comparatively strong ties had been established between rural municipalities and agricultural enterprises. Since agriculture was forced to decrease its employees numbers and some industrial plants had been in the similar position, a problem arose of where

to locate the displaced redundant labor force of the countryside. Other post-communist countries face similar problems.

The objectives of the project of "Rural Employment and Rural Regeneration in Post-Socialist Central Europe" focus on the analysis and design of proposals to address the accumulated problems. The present study presents and analyses the data collected in the field research in the Slovak countryside.

## METHOD

The study was conducted in two stages. In the first stage, data had been collected for case studies using qualitative methods. The second stage included field research in the rural municipalities of up to 5 000 inhabitants on a research sample of 1 041 respondents. In the first part of our study, emphasis will be laid on the results of one case study, while in the second part, results will be interpreted which were gained through standardized questionnaires.

## QUALITATIVE RESEARCH

The case study (CS) was conducted in the core region of a nearby highly developed industrial region. The village under study had a very interesting history. The first record of its existence dates back to 1291. Agricultural production, crafts and handicrafts have had a longstanding tradition there. The idea of co-operative farming was alive in the village as early as in the 19th century. Count Zichy had ordered to build a public grain silo for storing grain surpluses. Informal co-operation had already existed in the village, for example, rich landlords purchased a steam thresher which could be used by others, too. Despite the well-rooted co-operative ideas, the establishment of socialist type of co-operative had created considerable resistance on the part of the farmers.

In 1974 two small neighboring villages were attached to the CS. After 1990 they had an opportunity to be separated again from the village's administration (an opportunity exercised by scores of other Slovak villages). These two small villages, however, voted to stay attached to the CS. The development of CS was strongly influenced by the mayor who was elected twice, in the local elections of 1990 and 1994. His re-election reflected the citizens' satisfaction with his mayorship.

The co-operation of the CS co-operative farm and the village was excellent. The coop often contributed to the overall improvement of public welfare. The course of social and economic processes in the village following 1989 is of special interest. The marked development of enterprise in the village has created a group of wealthy businessmen. The processes in agriculture and cultural activities are also remarkable.

After 1989, similarly to other regions in Slovakia, some CS enterprises closed down, others dismissed their workers. A local textile company could serve as a good example. It used to employ around 200 women and was exporting its production to non-solvent Eastern markets. The almost brand-new building of the textile factory accommodated a new company which was making sugar products and sweets, thus providing jobs for 340 women. The company was very successful and was represented at the international fair in Paris, where it received awards for quality. Consequently, it won new contracts. The local authority created 25 new jobs after 1990. A new bakery was built for 5 million Sk in the village and is in the municipal authority's ownership. The CS's council also owns a grocery shop. Further, it established and runs a catering facility for 100 customers, fifty of which are retired local citizens who can get meals at half the price (the regular price per lunch is 30 Sk, the retired pay only 15 Sk). The shop also provides a social type of assistance to the elderly. They get a 3 percent monthly discount (in kind) for goods purchased there. Another social assistance for the elderly is a 50 percent tax relief on real estate. The village reconstructed the local cemetery and several flats. The number of registered private businessmen (physical entities) in CS was 161 in 1993, and that of private firms 10, respectively. Private sector specializes in services, wood processing, metal-working, building construction, textiles (exported to Germany). The local poultry farming has been stuck temporarily struggling with sales. Current unemployed recruit mostly from former commuters to distant job-providing places, their number being 210.

### Agriculture in CS after 1990

The main agricultural producer in CS until 1990 was the co-operative farm. This co-operative was a prototype farm, which tried to apply new technologies and machinery. At that time, the co-operative cultivated about 2 500 ha, 1 800 livestock and 12 000 pigs for fattening. In total, they managed to get a profit of about 23 million Kcs per year. During the transformation, this co-operative was one of the first dissolved and internally privatized. The former managers of plant and animal production units setup their own limited companies and rented the buildings and land from the co-operative at low prices. In addition, they got credits in form of seeds and animals by the co-operative. They started private farming. In total, they have setup five different limited companies which looked as follows:

- plant production, 923 ha, repair workshop
- plant production, 800 ha
- animal production, 4 000 pigs
- animal production, capacity 10 000 pigs, closed down at present
- animal production, 500 pigs

The dairy farm in CS remained under the management of the co-operative. Besides all this, a fruit growing co-operative was founded out of the former co-operative. An orchard comprising 15 000 apple trees, a storehouse and storing technology has been established there. It follows that the most important farm producers in CS are at present the former co-operative managers. All of them are experts, very well-versed in agricultural technology and the use agriculture machinery and buildings. But this has only been possible because the co-operative farm provided them with credits and farm inputs (e.g. seeds, fertilizers, pesticides) at the beginning.

In the following paragraphs, an enterprise with full personal liability, three limited companies and two private farms will be described briefly.

*Case I* is interesting in the fact that the chief manager is a woman, an university graduate, who had been employed in the co-operative as an agronomist for very long time. In 1994, she farmed 923 hectare area. She also provides repair services for agricultural machinery. The contract with the co-operative included a condition to employ 26 repair-men from the workshop. Up to 1994, she managed to earn a profit. In 1995, she will farm only 800 hectares and is requested to employ the same number of employees, which she does not consider economical; she could manage with less labour. She is fully liable with her personal assets for any debts of the company.

Due to the high prices of fertilizers and plant protection products, she orders soil analyses and cultivates the soil according the soil testing results. She cannot afford to reduce investments into the soil or skip plant protection. She grows crops successfully and her greatest problems are the purchaser relations due to late payments. Financial services of banks are slow and inflexible in her opinion.

In *Case II*, the plant production is in the hands of the former agronomist who employs 14 workers cultivating 800 ha. The prevailing part of machine park is rented. However, he already invested into machinery for almost 3 million Sk. The problem of farm machinery is considered as serious by all agro-businessmen. Machines have to be purchased in hard currency and are very expensive. State subsidies for machinery were very low in recent years. His farm business is profitable and he has put most of his own capital into this business. The most decisive factor for improving the economic state, according to his opinion, is the responsibility of each individual.

Interesting was also the opinion of this agro-businessman that the production based on renting and farming large areas and organized as a private company will have a perspective. Today, agricultural buildings stand in every village and it would be a nonsense to build up again a farmyard for each house, as in the old times. It is necessary to use efficiently what has been already constructed. E.g., the production of pigs has been closed down, despite the fact that a very modern, high

capacity piggery (10 000 pigs) is available. In this very case the principle of responsibility was not taken seriously by workers and management.

*Case III* is the animal production specialized in pig breeding. The manager is an university graduate with 15 years experience in pig rearing in the co-operative farm. He is looking after 350 sows. In addition he is fattening 1 500 pigs per year. His basic inventory he has rented from the co-operative. At first he had to pay for rented machinery; now he attempts to buy it gradually, because the prices of machines are increasing continually. When evaluating his business, he sees the key problem in selling his production. Financial discipline in trade relations is chaotic and pricing policy unpredictable. Since these problems will not be solved on a short-term basis, and till the non-payers can be held liable for their debts, it is hardly possible to do real business. Some slaughterhouses owe him high sums of money and it is difficult for him to find a reliable buyer. In the past this centre of animal production farmed with a loss (3.5 million Sk), now it is prosperous.

*Case IV*: There are successful private farmers also in the village. Three of them have formed their own limited company but did not rent any farm inputs from the co-operative. They had been former co-operative members. They took their farmland from the co-operative farm (they owned 36 hectares) and leased some other fields. In total, they now farm 52 hectares, breed 30 sows, and fatten 450 pigs, annually. Their farm buildings were obtained from the property shares. They purchased machines to be independent. At present they buy some service activities from the co-operative, like the ploughing of the fields.

In the past (i.e. during the socialist period) this animal production centre has not been profitable, today, with less labour, it is making profits. They expressed interesting opinions; they think that a new type of co-operatives is needed in the future focusing on the private farmers.

During 1995, all these four companies described above are undergoing fundamental changes. Besides the reasons already stated in the interviews, the co-operative tries to defend and regain its economic position. The board of directors has been exchanged by the general assembly. The new management is eager to get the outstanding payments for (a) the agricultural inputs given to these companies by the co-operative, e.g. animals, fertilizer, etc., and (b) the annual rents for leased buildings, equipment, and the rented land. As a first consequence, the private entrepreneur who had rented 923 ha had to return 800 ha to the co-operative at 1 May 1995.

In addition, the new management sees good economic prospects for the co-operative. They are planning to expand and improve dairy farming whereby they are lucky that they are paid regularly by the milk processing company. In addition, they want to revive pig production which has been totally given up by the

former management and transferred to the newly set-up limited companies. Since they still have to receive the outstanding payments from the slaughter house company for previous years and they know that its payment moral from is still not good, they plan to run their own modest slaughter house and to market the pork on their own at special shops in Bratislava. They are optimistic that they keep a steady cash flow.

*Case V:* There is also the case of farm family which lost their land after 1948, and regained it in 1991. In the past they also owned forests and a distillery in CS. The original owner received back his 300 hectares of agricultural land as his restitution claim. In this case, it is the return to the family tradition. Now, he (i.e. son of the original owner) is a successful farmer although he has been a construction engineer and used to live in the city. He began farming in 1991, at a time when the government generously subsidized agricultural machinery. His advantage is the possession of all machinery needed. All members of this family were university graduates (two construction engineers, a lawyer).

*Case VI:* This interview was carried out with a farmer, who farms 47 hectares of farmland, of it 20 hectares in his possession. The rest of his acreage is rented. Besides crop production he is fattening 25 bulls. The family would like to farm more land, but the annual land rents are high, i.e. 1 800 Sk/ha. They cannot buy additional land because they lack the necessary capital. The informal price of 1 hectare of land in CS comes up to about 100 000 Sk. The land market is still not functioning due to a low purchasing power of inhabitants. His wife and one son are also involved in the farming business as helping family members. The other son is employed as truck driver which ensures a steady cash income for the family. They bought some machines, but did not gain a profit yet. They plan to build a new stable for the bulls during the next year.

Another category is a group of farmers who own and farm small fields (in total up to a maximum of 2 ha per family). In general, these farmers are pluriactive, but have not been analyzed in detail, so far.

When comparing with other case studies which were done in periphery or industrial declining regions we can see a broader spectrum of business activities in CS. The population in other declining regions is in a more difficult situation; they have been more severely affected by rising unemployment due to the decline of the industrial enterprises which dominated the economy in many rural areas. Their adaptation to these changed conditions is slower. The private sector has been developing at a slower pace in these regions.

In CS the trend of setting-up new business activities is evident. The agricultural production here is highly diversified. The structure of the agricultural population includes all categories of farming, from a small farmer to a large-scale producer. The agricultural entrepreneurs farm large areas, 800–900 hectares. Large-scale producers are specialists with adequate qualifications, in general these are the former co-operative managers.

The attitude to work has already been changed among the employees of private firms, as well as workers of the co-operatives in plant and animal production. People hold their jobs in higher esteem. Private employees earn more and are well-motivated to better performance. The over-staffed administration characteristic for the former co-operative ceased to exist. Farm administration and accounting among the family farms as well as the limited companies is usually done by a family member educated in economics. Comparing big and small farms, it is evident that small companies can also prosper. The intentions of agricultural entrepreneurs is to invest capital into farm business. Almost all entities purchased machines, new or used, to be independent in their farm activities. But nevertheless, machinery investments seem to be a crucial problem for all agricultural entrepreneurs due to lack of capital and high interest rates on credits. It can be concluded that unemployment rates in CS declined due to the new job opportunities offered by the private sector. The people of the municipality CS are remarkable for their strong efforts to overcome unfavourable conditions by active seeking ways of survival.

## QUANTITATIVE RESEARCH

The second part of the project was conducted using quantitative methods while focusing on the problems related to the transformation processes, which took place in the countryside. The major areas of study aimed at finding and identifying new trends in the countryside. Following 1989, changes in employment occurred and affected the Slovak countryside population. Smaller villages had not been equipped with adequate infrastructure during the previous socialist regime. There were not small entrepreneurs and self-employed people holding licences for certain skills. Our research has been to a large extent concerned with the issues connected with the revival and further development of small and medium-size businesses. A question remains, whether there is a significant shift in employment towards private enterprise or whether there is only a passive increase in numbers of the unemployed. Here legislation is a significant factor that can both stimulate or hinder the development of the area. Beside legislation, other factors play a role in this process having material character, as well as certain social phenomena, such as the awareness and mentality of the population. Until 1989, official unemployment in Slovakia was an unknown phenomenon. By the end of 1994 it soared to 14%. The distribution of employed population in the sample under study reveals that most numerous social group was the group of unemployed – 18 percent, which exceeds the Slovak average unemployment rate. Unemployment is mostly related to potential opportunities to get a job. Our respondents' evaluation of possibilities to find a job was negative rather than positive. More than half of them maintained

that in case they would lose their job they would find themselves in the social net. Only one-fifth assumed they would have a chance of finding a job equivalent to their present one in place of their residence. The potential unemployed showed high acceptance of training or commuting to work.

Transformation changes in the society have brought about many positive but also negative phenomena. We were interested to learn how our respondents perceived their own life prospects. In spite of the current complex conditions existing in the countryside, relatively more satisfied respondents prevailed. The rate of very dissatisfied respondents was 9.6%, while that of very satisfied was 5.9%. As for family status, greater satisfaction was found in married than single respondents. Commuters also showed greater dissatisfaction. In some villages, commuting to work is connected with problems of transport, which in our opinion is an important factor affecting satisfaction. The financial situation of the respondents also affects their view of life. In our study, 61% respondents stated that their economic circumstances had deteriorated (comparing present situation with that of 10 years ago), whereas 13% respondents stated improvement of their financial situation. The social status within the village was generally perceived better 10 years ago than it is perceived at present.

Working the land is a significant component part of countryside households. More than half of the respondents in our sample work land, out of which 80% are working their own farmland. After 1989, the process of transformation of co-operatives was commenced. Some owners of land reclaimed their original land, which they had put in the co-operatives, with the intention to use it. Our results show that 27% respondents acquired their land through withdrawal from the co-operative or restitution. Needless to say, in vast majority of cases these were small land plots of about two hectares. The group of respondents who leased their land was comparatively small. One-fifth of our respondents rent their land. The land market does not function properly yet in Slovakia. Only 1.2% respondents purchased their land in the sample under study. In the southern districts of Slovakia, high fertility soils prevail and their price is for the majority of private farmers beyond reach. The owned land of our respondents mostly oscillated in the area of up to 5 hectares, which is a significant finding. Predominantly, the agricultural production was focused on making families self-sufficient (90%). Product sale problems were stated by 6.2% respondents. This accounts for insufficiently developed services specializing in marketing services for small producers. Small business represents a certain hope in the solution of the unemployment problems of the countryside. Quantitative results give evidence of frequent obstacles to private enterprise which are the lack of capital as well as the envy of the re-remaining citizens of the village. Unwillingness to take risks and opt for insecure future was frequent. Entrepreneurship had been regarded as a ne-

gative activity in the socialist regime. This opinion is difficult to change quickly in the minds of people. For this reason, positive evaluation of businessmen in the eyes of our respondents was to a certain extent surprising.

In Slovakia, on December 31, 1994 there were 263 733 small businessmen, which accounts for 10% of economically active population.

The total number of registered private farmers was 20 000, which is a relatively small number. The research attempted to illuminate the conditions under which they started their businesses. We were interested in the social composition of new entrepreneurs, and the conditions our respondents had when they started. In our sample entrepreneurs were represented by 8.9%, of which 3% were private farmers. The largest proportion of entrepreneurs recruited from skilled agricultural workers and former agricultural managers. The area of business was very diverse ranging from trade to services and other kinds of production. Agricultural production was least represented. In our research, the question of profit redistribution was considered very important. It was found that the great majority used profit to satisfy the needs of their family and only a small percentage of respondents had invested their profits in extending their area of business or the expansion of the existing business. Family business turned out interesting findings. The results suggest that the majority of entrepreneurs do not have partners (22%), but the businesses where relatives collaborate are also frequent. One-third of respondents intends to expand their business and increase their staff, which was considered a positive finding. On the other hand, only few respondents considered reducing the number of their employees.

Counselling is seen as an important aspect in starting business, especially in countries where business experience is lacking and where it has not been passed on from one generation to the other. There are considerable gaps in counselling in Slovakia. Counselling provided by banks and other institutions in their first business attempts was acknowledged only rarely by the respondents. Assistance in business came mostly from non-formal resources, such as friends or former colleagues from previous employment.

## CONCLUSIONS

Transformation of the Slovak economy marked the development of the Slovak countryside as well. Unemployment increased considerably as a result of structural changes in both agricultural and non-agricultural enterprises. Possibilities to find new jobs are significantly restricted, which applies mostly to smaller settlements, where business activities emerge at a slower rate. The private sector grows slowly, and under current conditions, when banks lack resources for long-term credits, a more significant displacement of labour

into private sector is unlikely. In order to boost an enterprise in the countryside, it would be necessary to expand possibilities to get short-term credits and, more significantly, long-term credits as well. There is a proportion of potential entrepreneurs that would leave the public sector for private sector provided they had adequate financial resources. Business counselling should be more spread to embrace the countryside as well.

The results of the field research suggest that more than half of the countryside inhabitants work land, out of which 80% farm their own farmland. Most respondents produce mainly to become self-sufficient.

Family farms constitute a minority in the agricultural production. Similarly to other areas of business activities, major problems perceived by private farmers are lack of financial resources and some of them lack sufficient economic expertise necessary in economic activities.

There are changes occurring in agricultural co-operatives. Independent business companies are formed within co-operatives with former heads of economic units becoming new managers. Economy remains concentrated. As a rule, labour force is to a certain extent reduced. Efforts to reduce production costs as much as possible to gain profits is visible. Greatest opportunities in the regional development were seen by the majority of sample respondents in new services related to tourism. Villages located in areas attractive for tourists should orient on the provision of tourist services provided some promotion measures are taken. However, agro-tourism does not promise a solution to "troubled" regions which often are located in areas un-

inviting for tourists. In these cases, other solutions have to be sought.

The Slovak countryside does show changes in the way people think, with some individuals, more active than others, exploring the routes for new possibilities in agriculture.

#### Acknowledgements

The present work is a part of the international research project entitled "Rural Employment and Rural Regeneration in Post-Socialist Central Europe". It has been financially supported by the the European Union, conducted by the Research Institute of Agricultural and Food Economics (RIAFE) in Bratislava, Slovakia and co-ordinated by the University of Liverpool. The author wishes to thank Dr. Gejza Blaas, deputy director of RIAFE, for his advice in the design of the questionnaires and his valuable contribution to the present study.

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On arrived 26th May 1995

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# COUNTRYSIDE AS VIEWED BY STUDENTS:

## A SOCIOLOGICAL SURVEY

### VENKOV POHLEDEM STUDENTŮ: SOCIOLOGICKÁ SONDA

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**ABSTRACT:** The article deals with positive and/or negative associations of young people with the term "country" as revealed in a sample of management and economy students in their fifth year at the Faculty of Economics of the Mendel University of Agriculture and Forestry, Brno. Of these students 115 (92.7%) were questioned and responded in the present survey.

The responses were categorized using qualitative methods. At the evaluation, strength of respondents' personal links to the country appeared as the basic criterion of categorization. The respondents stated their personal country links spontaneously, using these as the principal argument for rationalization of their gratifying associations. In this way (i.e., using neither previously known data nor predefined categories), the following categories of respondents were revealed (gratifying links stated): (1) present home, brought up in the country, 40%, (2) school holidays, grandparents, 30%, (3) cottage and/or garden, 12%, and (4) recreation, repose, beautiful natural surroundings, healthy environments, 18%.

In all these four groups of respondents, the valued qualities of the country were rural countryside, general feeling comfortable, quiet, environment which is healthier than in city, outspokenness of people, industriousness of people, and non-anonymosity of social relations. The country was valued the most by those who both had been brought up and lived in the country at the moment of the survey – they called the country their home with all that makes home home, including the family and close friends.

In groups 1 and 2, much valued were one's own happy childhood and youth in the country and their remembrances. Respondents in all four groups described some positive qualities of the country as the rural contraries of the bustle of the overcrowded city. Descriptions of the beauties of nature were often very lyrical, which may surprise, considering the young age and educational background of the respondents. The respondents also often mentioned characteristics of countrymen, their working habits, and the way of life in rural areas, considering these qualities in their ambivalence as both gratifying and unpleasant. The least frequent were unpleasant associations with "country" in the group of the respondents living in the country. Only this respondent group, on the other hand, felt some haughtiness and disdain of people from city towards countrymen.

All four groups of respondents disliked a high degree of social control – excessive interest in other people's private affairs, and lack of privacy. Other negative qualities for these young people were a limited amount of culture, sports and educational activities as well as hard work, and shortage of jobs.

Of the respondents, those not living in the country were more critical than the country inhabitants. The former respondents were critical of, e.g., low standard of culture, loneliness and isolation, limited communication with the outer world, pointless drudgery, and primitive way of life. They doubted that they could live in the country, although they admitted that the country has numerous positive qualities. On the whole, these respondents concluded that the country was a good place to live in as a child or to stay in as a holiday-maker, rather than place to live in as an adult inhabitant. This attitude was conspicuously different from that of the respondents living in the country, who showed no intention of moving away.

The results of the present survey are not representative of students' attitudes in general. It is believed, however, that these results might become an inspiration into a more extensive survey, since, in some respects, they have contradicted the general assumption that the attitudes of young people are widely homogeneous, critical, and pragmatic.

sociological survey, qualitative methods, countryside, students and their attitudes, relationships of students to rural milieu, Mendel University of Agriculture and Forestry, Brno

**ABSTRAKT:** Článek informuje o výsledcích sondy do názorů studentů posledního ročníku Mendelovy zemědělské a lesnické univerzity v Brně. Studenti oboru manažer-ekonom vyjádřili své pozitivní i negativní asociace s pojmem venkov. Byly zjištěny rozdíly v obsahu jejich výpovědí v závislosti na těsnosti jejich osobní vazby k venkovu.

sociologická sonda, kvalitativní metody, venkov, studenti a jejich postoje, vztah studentů k venkovu, Mendelova zemědělská a lesnická univerzita v Brně

## INTRODUCTION

The article presents information on the attitudes to the countryside and agriculture, as expressed by students in their fifth year at the Faculty of Economics of the Mendel University of Agriculture and Forestry, Brno. Close before graduation in April 1995, the students were questioned on their views regarding the prospects of agriculture in the Czech Republic in next 10 years and on their views on the rural-urban interrelationships. The students' positive and/or negative associations with the term "country" are detailed below.

## METHODS

A total of 115 students, being 92.5% of the students registered in their fifth year of study for degree in Management and Economy from the above University, were given and filled in a questionnaire containing four open-ended questions. The responses to two of these questions are analyzed in the present article. The students had previous contacts with the questioner, the present author, who taught them Sociology of Management and Psychology of Work, which was the first and only course in a sociological discipline for these students. It should be noted that these students did not hear lectures of an optional course in Rural Sociology and Sociology of Agriculture; thus the results are not biased by that the respondents would know "right" responses by which to "please" the questioner.

The evaluation of the content of responses attempted a typological categorization, a qualitative approach rather than a quantitative analysis of predefined categories. It was only at the evaluation that the four respondent categories were revealed.

The objective of the survey was to understand attitudes of these young people of about 24 years of age and of the same educational background, more specifically, to find out whether or not their declared inclination to work and live in city – combined with disinclination to work in agriculture-related institutions, correlate with negative attitudes to working and living in the country. Being based on this rather specific sample, the results cannot be representative of students' attitudes in general.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Question 1 was: "Do you or do you not associate 'country' with anything gratifying such as people, places, things, events, happy experiences and remembrance, etc. Specify the gratifying association/s, if any".

The responses to this question grouped in four categories and correlated with the responses to question 2, which was reversed: "Do you or do you not associate 'country' with anything unpleasant such as people,

places, things, events, annoying experiences, remembrance making you feel uncomfortable, etc. Specify the unpleasant association/s, if any".

Of the four groups of respondents, three stated gratifying associations that they first rationalized by stating strong country links before they detailed the associations. The rationale, in principle, was: "My associations are gratifying because my personal links to the country are strong (e.g., my home is there; I used to stay with my grandparents over school holidays; our cottage and/or garden is in the country)". None of the respondents explained non-existence of his/her gratifying associations by the fact that his/her links to the country were strong and that he/she knew the country well.

The fourth respondent group was that of those who had no personal, direct links similar to those just mentioned. The evaluation of the responses to question 2 also revealed some correlation with the grouping in these four categories, e.g., the negative associations of those living in the country were different from the negative associations of those who only had a cottage in the country, or from negative associations of those who only stayed in the country to for recreation.

The proportions of the respondents stating positive associations with "country" were as follows:

- (1) 40%: present home, brought up in the country,
- (2) 30%: school holidays, grandparents,
- (3) 12%: cottage and/or garden, and
- (4) 18%: recreation, repose, beautiful natural surroundings, healthy environments.

### Positive associations with "country"

As mentioned above, most of the respondents were those living in the country. The most frequent positive attributes of the country in their understanding were home and place of one's childhood where the family and friends live.

Another large group of the respondents were those for whom the main positive and gratifying experiences were holiday stays in the grandparents' house in a village.

For some respondents the pleasant fact was that they (or rather their parents) had a cottage and/or garden in the country.

Only one group of the respondents did not state such direct personal links, associating "country" with recreation, welcome repose, beautiful natural surroundings, and healthy environment.

Only in the latter group a respondent, on one hand, associated "country" with "natural surroundings, quiet, no bustle", but, on the other hand, also stated "but I would not like to live in the country". His next statement, however, again was: "if 'country' also includes mountains, I would love to spend there years".

In the former three respondent groups with strong to medium personal links to the country, the positive

associations were, in principle, identical: being close to the woods and fields; quiet; environment which is healthier than in city; frank people; industriousness of people; non-anonymosity of social relations; general feeling comfortable. Those who had been brought up and lived in the country emphasized the human factor: family, friends, and experiences.

Similar to the grandparent-linked group, childhood and youth in rural community was an important factor also for those who had lived in the country the whole life ("my happy childhood", "remembrance of my childhood and youth", "country, my whole childhood and youth").

Frequent were the following descriptions of gratifying associations with "country": "my home" (several variations); "my home and my family"; "the best life I can imagine"; "three associations: home, freedom, and content"; "although now I live in city, all I feel as pleasant associates with 'country'; I have been brought up in the country, and will be glad to come back often".

The respondents frequently described positive qualities of the country as the contraries of city. This may be surprising, considering the young age of the respondents; being much accustomed to the non-urban milieu might be an explanation.

Examples: "I relax from the overcrowded Brno", "quiet surroundings without noise and car smog", "a comparative quiet vs. bustle of city", "I flee home from Brno, into the quiet", "quiet as against bustle of city", "more quiet than in city", "one is closer to Nature than in a large city", "healthier environment than in city", "quiet without the city bustle and car emissions"...

The emphasis very frequently was on the natural surroundings and out-of-door activities such as plays of children, sports and games, hiking, working in the garden, and maintenance of one's cottage. The rural milieu was often described with a strong emotional accent, sometimes connected, in some of the respondents with personal links to the country, with remembrance of childhood. Also basically "idyllic" was the description of natural surroundings by those respondents who had never lived in the country. Note that the respondents, who had studied management and economy, generally declared that their intention was not to work in agriculture nor in agriculture-related sectors, while, at the same time, they declared that their intention was to work in sectors which are typically city-based such as banks, financial institutions of any type, commerce, and management or marketing in large international companies. In spite of this, their associations of "country" with natural surroundings were very frequent. The following statements are typical examples:

"Working in the garden is my favourite hobby". "Woods, bilberries and mushrooms". "I associate the country with freedom, clean environment, green, and grass". "Cottage, out-of-doors, swimming, and picking

mushrooms". "To be in the open air and to breed horses". "Meadows in flower..." "Meadows abounding in flowers, and a lot of domestic animals one may pet". "Out-of-doors, sports, beauties of nature, clean air, clear water..." "...this word (country) for me stands for quiet, freedom, fresh air, silence, campfires, stars, meadows, folklore (I am a dancer in a folklore group)..." "my happy childhood, ease of mind, freedom, security, and my favourite places to come back..." "fields and woods around, a nearby wood one can flee into if one wants to be alone for a while..." "beautiful countryside, water, sun, rambling, sleeping rough, campfires, childhood, youth, romantics, and friends and loves..." "unpolluted countryside, quiet, corn fields, and woods..." "countryside, sheep, pigs, sun, and woods..." "it feels great just a few steps outside the door in our large garden..." "remembrance of my childhood, when I could play with pet animals in woods and meadows..." "getting over fences to have a taste of neighbours' fruits, climbing trees, a shaggy dog playing in a backyard overgrown with plants, ducklings, kittens, and Vysočina Mts. under snow..." "holidays with my cousins every year, staying in bed until late, smell of manure, buzzing of bees, gaggles in meadows, laughter, sun, milkmaids riding bicycles on their way from cowshed, ... simply childhood".

Some respondents (both some of those living in the country and others) included among the positive qualities of the country the specific character of countrymen. Valued were industriousness, outspokenness and friendliness as well as closeness of social contacts. In question 2, however, some of the same respondents were critical of such traits when in excess (e.g., excessive interest in other people's private affairs).

Examples: "The countrymen are different from and often better than people in city... more industrious, get any piece of work over, since anyone living in the country knows that having a small private plot and keeping domestic animals entails much work". "They are friendly and industrious, and rejoice in ordinary life". "The tempo of country life is slower and the people are less anonymous..." "You know all people in a village". "...nice, good and industrious people", "annual country fairs with the whole family at table", "...people mostly know each other well", "more goodwill in people", (a student from abroad) "the place where I first learned about life of the Czech Republic people".

Respondents appreciated personally also those qualities which were generally criticized in question 2, viz., hard work and the different life style ("contrast between comfortable life and hard work"): "hard work of another kind than in city", "a lot of manual work", "great relaxation from city, and learning new life style (going shopping, sometimes going to the cinema, a cosy pub, and working on the land)". "Quiet, neither stress, nor bustle, nor exhalations".

## Unpleasant associations with "country"

Of those living in the country 30% had no unpleasant associations nor unpleasant conceptions. ("I do not imagine anything unpleasant".)

Slightly less frequently (26%) responded these students that they associate "country" with some depreciation by city people ("disparagement of those who do not come from the country") or with taking countrymen for backwoodsmen or blockheads. This comparatively frequent impression was probably based on personal experience of the respondents and their sensitivity in this respect. This finding may correct the idea that the perception of country-city differences may be no longer relevant.

The age characteristic of the respondents (approximately 24 years of age) explains that they (30%) viewed the country as a place offering insufficient opportunities for taking part in cultural or sports activities. "All facilities (cinema, language school, fitness centre) are concentrated in city".

A frequent complaint (26%) in the group of respondents living in the country was that of excessive social control: people care too much about other people's affairs, meddle in other people's affairs, know each other inside out (a frequent statement), and what ensues from this curiosity is calumny and envies.

Examples: "Sometimes people know too much, everybody is in the public eye". "Unpleasant about village is that people know each other too much".

Almost one-fifth of the respondents mentioned hard work: "a lot of work", "little money", "hard work, especially in the agriculture", "manual work, unimaginable for a lot of people in cities, unless they have experienced it".

Additional negative associations with "country" were some generally known facts, such as shortage of jobs, poor transportation to medical care and to facilities in general, poor shopping facilities, but also prejudices and limited outlook of some countrymen. "Even in the country people become less willing to take part in joint activities".

Also the group of the respondents linked with the country through their grandparents stated similar negative associations with "country", viz., hard work and often no weekend rest nor holiday (20%), and culture in short supply (26%), while social control in excess (26%).

Examples: "People watch each other with prejudice, envy and intrigue". "In a village, there are not many people; they know each other well, which, sometimes, might be a problem. I would miss the anonymity of city, and would dislike the lower standard of culture – if I chose to live there (in the country)". "Everybody knows everybody, people know all your affairs even before you know".

These respondents mentioned a low standard of culture in connection with insularism, backwardness, limited outlook, shortage of information, and "old-

world views" of countrymen. They also expressed critical attitudes towards the country way of life, which was described as "primitive": "People in the country have a limited outlook; their way of life is 'work – meals – pub – TV'". "My association is a smoky pub bursting at the seams, with the fathers of families spending there their leisure".

The percentage of those respondents who were dissatisfied with the insufficient opportunities of culture self-realization and with excessive social control, was relatively high in both those who lived in the country and those with grandparent links. Different, however, were their proportions as regards "no unpleasant associations": 12% in the grandparent-linked group vs. 30% in the group of those living in the country. Similarly less represented in the grandparent-linked group were complaints of poor transportation and poor shopping facilities (16% vs. 24% of those living in the country), and only 6% of the grandparent-linked respondents recalled job shortage. On the other hand, this respondent group mentioned a lower standard of amenities compared to city life.

The survey revealed distance from and critical attitude towards countrymen in the grandparent-linked group, either straightforward ("countrymen are somewhat less intelligent, although not all"), or not quite so blunt ("their education and standard are rather poor").

No such statements, nor complaints of isolation, nor complaints of the country way of life, were registered in the group of respondents living in the country. This difference, undoubtedly, resulted from whether or not the respondents identified themselves with the country and considered themselves the part of it. It should be noted that in question 1 the "critical" respondents stated numerous positive, gratifying associations which linked them with the country. In opposition to those living in the country, the latter respondents did not express the impression that "city" disdains the country.

The respondents with the cottage/garden links to the country presented a wide range of statements concerning unpleasant associations. Repeatedly there were stated shortage of jobs and unemployment, while singly there were mentioned poor public transportation to local metropolises, poor infrastructure, low standard of living, excessive care about other people's affairs, calumny, working in the garden, poor education and limited outlook, limited opportunities of amusement, and inclination of countrymen to alcohol consumption. Single respondents found manure evil-smelling, a courtyard full of domestic animals disagreeable, and geese grazing at large "dangerous". One respondent, who had moved into the country six months prior to the survey "in order to be outdoors and in a quiet", stated "no negative associations with 'country'".

In contradiction to the respondents living in the country, who felt haughtiness and disdain on side of people from city, we learn that "countrymen are always slighting people from city, and fancying themselves". This statement may not surprise, considering that cot-

tage owners and hobby gardeners frequently have to learn painfully basic manual crafts which are considered a general education by a countryman.

A respondent who longed to breed horses and to live permanently in the country when she was a child, responded: "Now after I got used to amenities of city life (all is near at hand: shops, cinemas, cafés, amusement grounds, swimming-pools, etc.) I feel a bit uneasy about that I would miss this in the country. Living in the country as a child – yes, but as an adult – questionable, mainly because of work".

*The respondent group without a particular personal link to the country:* Among the negative association with "country", these respondents stated most often (43%) excessive social control, viz., intimacy and non-anonymosity of social relations, curiosity of people, envy and calumny, and also that "all people meddle with other people's affairs, and privacy is impossible". The next most frequent negative associations (of 28% of these respondents) were hard manual work (especially in agriculture), "primitive way of life", and low standard of living. A statement to this effect was: "Narrow-minded countrymen grind away pointlessly from morning till night, and then they complain". "A rather hard living" was connected with hard work.

These respondents repeatedly mentioned loneliness and isolation with insufficient communication with the outer world. A part of these respondents dealt with the fictitious question if they would want to live in the country. The answer was that not so at the moment, maybe later on "when they get tired of city bustle in an advanced age", stating at the same time, however, that they found nothing wrong with the country.

One-fifth of these respondents missed amusement, sports and culture self-realization. A respondent stated that the country was "a place of boredom in villages". An admirer of beauties of nature (in response to question 1), characterised the country as a place of relaxa-

tion, but unfit for permanent inhabitation: "The word 'country' lacks a basic dynamic and unpredictable events. It is as if in the country time stood still, which is good if one wants to relax, but otherwise the country is not the right place". It is interesting to note that this statement corresponds well with the above mentioned assertion (in the cottage/garden-linked group) of country being a good place for children, but a questionable place for adults.

Such statements asserting boredom and lack of dynamic were absent in the groups of respondents living in the country or those grandparent-linked. Also absent in these two groups were declared intentions to move away from the country; quite to the contrary, these respondents often declared their intention to stay, which contradicts the supposition of general exodus of well-educated young people from the rural areas. As known from discussions with these students, rather than about staying in the country, they were concerned about commuting to work in city and the costs involved. Apparently, the usual dependence upon domicile, attended by desire to work near by, has not changed much.

The results of the present survey suggest differences in the attitudes of the respondents to the country, depending on the strength of their personal links to the rural milieu. The results of the survey corroborate neither the proposition of general critical attitudes of young people, nor the proposition of their general exodus from the rural areas. Natural surroundings, freedom, and aesthetic merits of the countryside were valued surprisingly high. The present results, although not conclusive outside the present sample, may be a good starting point of a more detailed study of the problems.

Arrived on 28th May 1995

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# INFORMATION

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## THE SOIL FERTILITY – THE BASE OF ECONOMIC-ECOLOGICAL AND SOCIAL STABILITY

### PŮDNÍ ÚRODNOST – ZÁKLAD EKONOMICKO-EKOLOGICKÉ A SOCIÁLNÍ STABILITY

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**ABSTRACT:** Soil, the living part of the biosphere, used to be taken as a production mean only. This point of view was one of the reasons that caused the worldwide crisis of agriculture. Nowadays, soil is understood as a living part of the biosphere, an important limited natural resource. With an aim of securing a long term sustainable level of natural fertility of soil, and thus a long term reproduction ability of this natural resource as well, there was made an experiment. This experiment attempts to unite economy and ecology into one subject – ecological economy. The most important moment is the attitude of the policy, psychology and sociology, though. This effort leads through the individualization of the human personality. It does not end up in alienation but in an intentional connection with the “unit”. This state of “belonging to the unit” is a basic social moment which should be supported by the society as well. The consciousness of an individual with the “unit” helps in creating of a living village community, a local cultural community in a region.

soil as a natural resource, degradation of the soil fertility, ecological economy, social consciousness of an agrarian, rural community

**ABSTRAKT:** Půda, tato živoucí složka biosféry, byla chápána a využívána pouze jako výrobní prostředek. Tento aspekt postoje k půdě se stal jednou z příčin krize světového zemědělství. Nynější pohled na půdu je zakotven v jejím pochopení jako živoucí složky biosféry a tudíž důležitého přírodního vyčerpateľného zdroje. S cílem zabezpečení trvale udržitelné míry přirozené úrodnosti půdy a tím i dlouhodobé reprodukovatelnosti tohoto přírodního zdroje, byl učiněn pokus o průnik ekonomiky a ekologie s jejich spojením v ekologickou ekonomii. Rozhodujícím momentem je však postoj politiky, psychologie a sociologie, který vede cestou individualizace lidské osobnosti, ale nekončí v odcizení, nýbrž ve vědomém spojení s „celkem“. Tento stav „sounáležitosti s celkem“ je základním sociálním momentem, který by měl být rovněž podporován ze strany společnosti.

půda jako přírodní zdroj, degradace půdní úrodnosti, ekologická ekonomie, sociální uvědomění zemědělce, venkovská komunita

## INTRODUCTION

Soil – the basic living part of the biosphere, was understood and used only as a basic production environment in the former socialistic society. For a certain time, soil was used mainly for production even in developed countries with a productionist model of agriculture, concerning surplus structures of food. This was a contrary aspect to the self-preservative forms of agriculture in the third world countries. This limited point of view on the function of soil coheres with one reason of the world agriculture regularity of contemporary crisis.

## SOIL FROM THE ECONOMIC-ECOLOGICAL POINT OF VIEW

Nowadays, soil is more understood as a natural resource with an important quantity of non-production functions. Unfortunately, this natural resource might be and in a certain moment is a limited source as any other ones. It is alarming that existence of this natural resource coheres directly with the existence of the human society and with its social structures in some regions of our planet.

Increasing the degradation of the soil fertility causing the lack of food might lead into destroying the

entire ecological, natural and consequently also national-economic systems. There is a possibility of drastic examples of extinction of the soil system itself and inception between extincted civilizations and inception of the Gobi desert and the Sahara desert.

Decreasing of the soil fertility coheres with the ways of its control. Demaging of the biological structures of the soil coheres with the hardening caused by using heavy mechanization, and with pollution of soil by extraneous elements.

The greatest pollutions in our republic have been caused by multi-production technologies, using of cheap heavy-metal fertilizers of lower quality, but as well by the air pollution (acid rains). This lowest standard of purity of the environment in Europe coheres with a strong development of industry (and thus industrial emissions) in Bohemia and Silesia, that has lasted from the second half of the last century. Extraneous elements in soil, mainly heavy metals, influence the activity of soil organisms and microorganisms and decrease soil fertility, even with the dependence on lower pH and cation exchanging capacity. One of the main indicators proving destruction of activities of the soil microorganisms by heavy metals is cumulating of organic remainders in the soil (and their consequent washing out) caused by connections of fulvoacids and some metals on stabil chelates. This fact coheres with ten times higher decrease of the soil erosion. The level of resistance, tolerance or sensitivity of the soil microorganisms to decreasing of the concentration of extraneous elements in soil decides about the course of the soil biological courses which are important for increasing and preservation of the soil fertility.

Nowadays, one third of soil is still endangered by erosion. Negative influence of the hardened soil on the water regime is expressive. The rain water cannot soak in, it runs on the surface and takes away the smallest soil elements. The soil base remains dry. The water regime of soil is impaired by hardened base (caused by using of heavy machines and the large-territory outwatering of the fields – one million hectares during the last 40 years), and by decrease of the underwater level, probably beneath the level where the roots of the natural vegetation can reach. Moreover, the roots of agricultural plants cannot reach into the hardened soil and the yields depend on periodic rains. The global warming of the atmosphere, decrease of the ozone layer and other problems of the started climatic changes unfortunately exclude ideal division of the rains.

These described changes reflect on the soil fertility and they can be expressed in different points of view on the process of the matter and energy recycling through the biosphere and its part – soil. According to Novák (1987), the largest (quantity) and the most difficult changes of elements and energy in our ecosystem courses in soil (with 89,00 kg of organic mat-

ters on 1 hectare a year – the result would probably be some  $1.5 \cdot 10^4$  kJ, not concerning direct heat-profits of the sunshine and losses during evaporation). Here we come to the quantitative description of energetic courses in measuring units, which are joules (J), that can be used in expressing both natural and economic regularities. It enables us to considerate ecological aspects by using certain energetic attitudes in the economy.

The main resources of primitive agriculture were solar energy, water, air – CO<sub>2</sub>, loose soil fertilizers, human labour (energy), or the energy of animals. In the productionistic agriculture, we can talk about high incomes (investments) of surplus energies (chemistry, mechanization).

The energetic appendix, on which the intensification of agriculture was based, can remove certain marginal limits of productivity. Still, there is a dangerous fact, that the recycling of the matter and energy (without appropriate feedback reactions) might lead into extremes, when sudden short-time receipt of much energy causes the disturbance – the change of the state in an ecosystem (KVĚT 1985). This change can be a reverse reaction (destruction) of a certain biological system, according to the theory of catastrophes (Arnold 1983).

Soil, being empowered for a certain time periodically by increasing receipts of energy (high rations of industrial fertilizers, etc.) behaves as a drug-addicted organism – with the decrease of receipts there is a loss of productivity. This can be proved by decrease of yields (crops – average in 1985 4.7 t per hectare, 1992 4.1 t per hectare, sugar-beet from 39.6 down to 31.2 t/ha). To preserve the natural soil fertility and to stop its degradation, it will not be enough to use natural farm fertilizers only.

As for the economy-ecological point of view, it would be suitable to consider the optimum division of plant production according to the soil fertility and according to the classification of the energy flows in the ecosystem.

Obtaining the quantity of real energy ( $P_s$ ) against the normative production ( $P_n$ ), which relates to the certain given natural locality, described i.e. by a geological-petrographic substratum and the altitude (Doktorová, Krninská 1992), enables us to assign the effectiveness index with a trend of long-term sustainable level of development  $I_e$  for assigning the optimum energetic flow through the soil on the basis of production normatives of the biomass, expressed in joules (J).

$$I_e = \frac{P_s}{P_n}$$

Long-term reproduction ability of a natural resource (which ensures the long-term sustainable level of the natural fertility of the soil) is creating by coming  $I_e$  up to 1.

This example shows that the strategy of the fastest profit possible can sooner or later cause an economic collapse, right with the accordance to limitation of the natural resources. Today we know that not only oceans have their limits and we should realize that there are "limits of growth" and today as well "crossed limits", about which we are informed not only by prof. Dennis Meadows (Meadows 1992).

The problem of the sustainable development and life will not depend on economic and technical problems. Possible ways out, roughly described above, could be realized on economic and technical bases with the help of modern computers, new technologies, etc.

#### SOCIAL ASPECTS OF ECONOMIC-ECOLOGY

The crisis of agriculture (as a biosystem) will be apparently presented when the deciding point – man – stops to respect natural regularities and will follow his own anthropocentrism, which is reflected in science or religious rationalization of the idea of the human superiority to other forms of life, and the nature having only inutility value (Metzner 1992). The first global technical civilization has reached the limits of its own abilities and the first global ecology crisis (the fact that we still do not want to accept) coheres according to Metzner with the consequences of the European style of thinking of the industrial age and capital cumulation with a model of a short-time profit in Euro-American culture, in which individualism has reached the very bottom – the perfect alienation.

Man, oriented onto scientific-technical ways only, hits the barriers. Those cannot be overcome only by improving the lasting methods. According to Svoboda and Mihulová (1993) we stand in front of a task of deeper penetrating into the bases of phenomenon (the new paradigm) and at the same time understanding the human mission on this planet. This task leads through the individualization of all of us, but in the moment of the intentional realization, fulfilling and accepting the unique individuality of every human being; there is as well the consciousness of belonging into the wholeness of the planet, which is ruled by the Earth and universal regularities, and with the consciousness of belonging into the society of individuals acting accordingly to the acting of the others in certain historical time, culture, and space. This important social aspect is the primary moment connecting microcosmos and macrocosmos – right in the center there is man standing with his influence on the way of order (decreasing of entropy) or disorder (causing crises and catastrophes).

Then, we understand the problem of a subject – agrarian in a countryside (Lapka 1991) in the social sphere as a problem of identification (reaching from consciousness of the own soil to the natural cycles and to the village community).

In this case, we could also talk about the connection with the way of the soil management. With the change of the law conditions from the state position, the organic agriculture concerned 24% private farmers in the Jindřichův Hradec County, which is due to its relatively clean ecologic environment suitable for production of ecologic food. These days, there are 9,5% of private farmers involved in the alternative agriculture (Moudrá 1995).

Librová (1994) feels the sensitive and positive relation to the nature as a spontaneous result of sheer intuition, which is accidentally reflected in everyday life of "the colorful" – in the limits of so called "free-will modesty". But if the feeling of "belonging to the unit" literally becomes a socially shared norm of behavior, then the positive relation to the nature is not a spontaneous accidental result, but a result regular. This one then helps returning back to the "UNIT" – the village community, local cultural society in a region, etc.

#### CONCLUSION

In the first part of the article, we saw one of many primary attempts to create ecologic-economical elements – uniting of different points of view on the soil management, when soil is just a production part, and ecological, when soil is mainly a natural resource. In this moment, we stop to make any difference between the existence of economy as just "human management", and ecology as "natural management" in the sense of two isolated systems. The new uniting principle is the social consciousness of man, in which the inspiration elements of the trade mechanism with a possibility of an evolution development should be limited by natural and universal regularities.

In the case of the functional optimality of the soil fertility as an integration of social, economic and natural reproduction, the uniting principle is the social attitude of a human – agrarian.

His consciousness of the need of identification with the soil management as identification with natural regularities reaches back to old Celtic nations, which are also historically the uniting element of Europe (Moscatti 1992). But according to the dates marked on village building gables we can estimate that agriculture went through its biggest boom at the beginning of our century and we cannot ignore how much it was probably related with the relation of T.G. Masaryk to this area (Šíma 1992).

If an individually working farmer puts together his broken tradition of the feeling for the soil by understanding his role in the "UNIT", then as well the whole society should support the existence of the agrarian from all above mentioned aspects – economical, ecological and social, as it more or less happens in some of the developed European countries.

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Arrived on 28th May 1995

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# THE WAYS TO SOLVE THE UNEMPLOYMENT IN THE COUNTRY

## CESTY ŘEŠENÍ NEZAMĚSTNANOSTI NA VENKOVĚ

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**ABSTRACT:** The contribution discusses the first results of the research aspiring to find the most appropriate ways of solving the migration from country village. The main causes of this phenomenon which has overstepped the acceptable bounds in many areas are the shortage of jobs in the country and the insufficient social provisions. The removal of these causes is the basic step to the population stability in the country. This contribution is concentrated on the solution of unemployment in the chosen country region where two principal approaches are considered, namely the creation of the new jobs in the locality or neighbourhood, and the creation of jobs in major settlements together with the construction of a functional transport system. Either of both variants may be justified in view of local conditions. The social and economic evaluation of both variants means the concrete contribution for deciding about implementation of one of them.

country, unemployment, agriculture, migration, traffic system

**ABSTRAKT:** Příspěvek pojednává o prvních výsledcích výzkumu, jehož cílem je nalézt nejvhodnější způsoby řešení omezení migrace z venkovských obcí. Hlavními příčinami tohoto jevu, který v mnoha oblastech překročil únosnou mez, se jeví nedostatek pracovních míst na venkově a nedostatečná sociální vybavenost. Odstranění těchto příčin je bezesporu základním krokem vedoucím ke stabilitě obyvatelstva na venkově. Při řešení nezaměstnanosti ve vybraném venkovském mikroregionu jsou zvažovány dva základní přístupy, a to vytvoření nových pracovních míst v místě či blízkém okolí a za druhé, koncentrace pracovních míst do větších sídel spolu s vytvořením funkčního dopravního systému. Každá z obou variant může mít své opodstatnění vzhledem k místním podmínkám a předpokladům. Sociální a ekonomické zhodnocení obou variant je konkrétním přínosem při rozhodování o realizaci jedné z nich.

venkov, nezaměstnanost, zemědělství, migrace, dopravní systém

A new phenomenon – unemployment – appears in the Czech Republic after the year 1989. It concerns a process which is typical of all states with market economy. It depends, however, upon the magnitude of the unemployment rate. In this regard the Czech Republic is deep under the average of the members states of the European Union (towards 30 April 1995 = 2,9%). It would seem from this view that unemployment is no problem for the Czech Republic. With regard to the linking negative expressions such as social suspension, increased criminality, alcoholism, fall of families, or apathy, it is necessary to have this process in view and to manage it.

The passage to market economy is joined – apart from other things – with the suppressed programmes for many branches of national economy and the restructuring of agriculture. Both mentioned processes are projected in labour market considerably because they are joined to the extensive dismissal of labour. They have considerable regional dimensions. Finding another suitable working activities instead of sup-

pressed activities is often not very successful. It is difficult in the country especially. The bulk of the country population does not work in the place of residence, but it commutes as a result of the shortage of jobs in the country. Agriculture represents the strongest economic branch in the country. The number of workers in agriculture decreased considerably since the year 1989 (from 533 000 persons to 246 000 persons in the year 1994<sup>1</sup>). This process continues all the time.

The country must absorb, however, the dismissed workers not only from agriculture, but also from another branches, including those commuting into towns. The formation of new jobs means not only the decrease of the unemployment rate, but also the limitation of migration from country villages. But the limitation of migration may occur also as an opposite consequence. With regard to the interim nonexistence of the flat market and the decrease of the number of jobs in towns, the country population will not gain any chance to get work, and if new jobs will not be formed in the country, a certain part of country population will fall into the

<sup>1</sup> Registration numbers of workers in natural persons (permanently active and labourers) – agricultural primary production.

social relief network. For that reason the solution of unemployment in the country appears as a priority task.

For that purpose a subsidy was granted in the last year and this contribution gives the summary of first results from the investigation. The task is solved in a country microregion formed by 8 villages with total number of 2 552 inhabitants. The country microregion was chosen against these facts: the rather high unemployment rate, the concentration on agriculture, the very frequent commutation for work outside of villages, the reduced traffic system.

The below table illustrates the situation in the investigated microregion (Tab. I).

#### I. Basic characteristic

Number of inhabitants		Number of active persons in economics	
Total	Women	Total	From that in agricultural basic production
2 552	1 333	1 280	285

Number of unemployed		
Unemployment rate (%)	Total	Women
2.4-9.1	66	45

Number of commuting persons	
967	

Age structure (absolute numbers)						
0-14 years	Productive age		Postproductive age			Average age
	Men	Women	Men	Women	%	
500	771	648	217	416	28.4	39.7

The further mentioned results of the investigation are absolutely concrete and testify the state in the investigated.

I respect, however, the request of the chairmen from investigated villages in other to mention no names of villages and enterprises to the finish and evaluation of this investigation.

It is possible to say as a supplement that it concerns the area amounting to 3 474 ha and 2 552 inhabitants. In its surroundings there is one town only (but no district town) distant from individual villages of this microregion in the range from 6 to 14 km. The arable land represents 2 345 ha from the 3 474 ha mentioned. The moderate climate conditions predestine this microregion for intensive agricultural primary production. Agriculture is the most important branch in this microregion. Nowadays it employs 285 persons, i. e. 22,3% of all persons active in economics.

In the investigated microregion, there are proposed two basic approaches to the solution of the unemployment problem – namely the possibility to form new jobs in locality or neighbourhood in dependence on such local conditions as the level of technical background, the qualifying and profession levels of the

population, the possibilities for sales and things like that, and then the concentrations of jobs in large settlements together with the formation of a functional traffic system. Both variants will call for certain financial means. For that reason, the financial claims of both alternatives were determined as well (the formation of new job, the extension of traffic lines and things like that).

In the investigated microregion there is only a minor part of inhabitants pursuing a business enterprise as the main working activity. It concerns mostly the entrepreneurial activity of physical bodies which is performed by these individuals directly or in the cooperation with their family members. The entrepreneurs in the field of business, services, and trades are represented by the largest proportion, which makes 88,3% from the total number of the entrepreneurial subjects among physical bodies.

In this microregion, there are 28 private farmers, but from them only 5 entrepreneurial subjects are occupied with intensive agricultural production on the area of 355 ha. The remaining registered private farmers carry on nontraditional agricultural production. All these entrepreneurial subjects were formed within the framework of the transformation process of an original farmers' cooperative. A part of the country population occupies with the agricultural activity for the purpose of self-supplying. The development of services and trade means a certain reserve for entrepreneurial activity – especially in villages with the recreation function.

In the mentioned villages there is active a series of entrepreneurial subjects belonging to legal bodies. The most important subject is the Trade Farmers' Cooperative (TFC) employing 248 persons. The farmers' cooperative carries on traditional vegetable and animal production. In the primary agricultural activity it considers no expansion of job number, but it speculates on the possible finalization of agricultural products with the formation of the chain: agricultural production – food processing – trade.

The TFC, besides of the primary agricultural activity, provides further a wide range of activities with non-agricultural character and in practical way provides for a great part of demand which may be satisfied in the conditions of the microregion (the exploitation and sawing up firewood, the production of pallets, the road transport, the repair of machines for agriculture, the building works, and things like that). The TFC leased a part of its spaces to local firms and starting entrepreneurs, and this fact contributed to the formation of 23 new jobs (+ 15 jobs which ought to be realized in this year).

The most of workers from the mentioned microregion commutes. This commutation leads especially to the nearby town where almost 400 inhabitants commute to. The restriction of traffic communications aggravated the working possibilities of many workers considerably because it excluded them nearly off the second shift, and in some cases off the first shift.

The commutation out of village is extremely high; it concerns more than 90% population at 3 villages. It is

lower (50%) only at a single village which is the seat of an agricultural enterprise. The fact that numerous persons not only commute but also move to the place of commutation shows the long-lasting resettlement of 5 microregion villages. It influences the ageing of the population in the microregion as a result of the younger people leaving. The average age of inhabitants is by 3 years higher here than the district average. The proportion of inhabitants in postproductive age is by 10% higher, in some villages, however, even by 20%.

## CONCLUSIONS

The common element of all villages in the microregion is the fact that a great part of its population was employed in farmers' cooperatives. Within the framework of the development after the year 1989, the considerable cut in the number of workers occurred, and still further reduction is awaited. If it is taken into consideration that the considerable number of people, also with lower qualification, made its working mark in agriculture and we compare the present unemployment from the standpoint of the profession structure, it is obvious that a considerable number of the present unemployed has its origin probably in agriculture.

The further marked common element for all microregion villages is the concentration of the predominant commuting bulk of the population that is active in economics of the nearby town.

The entrepreneurial subjects employing the bulk of the population from the mentioned microregion are stabilized predominantly and no considerable fall of labor threatens here. Some subjects, on the contrary, take into consideration the activity increase and the need of new labour. Mostly it is the matter of jobs with higher qualification.

The difference between the qualification level requested for new jobs and the real qualification level of the unemployed will lead to the necessity of their requalification.

The insufficient qualification level of many inhabitants is the reason of their unemployment even though vacant jobs exist in the locality.

The inhabitants prefer the salaried employment to self-employed entrepreneurial activities.

It seems to be sensible to concentrate the important entrepreneurial activities, which would be able to influence the level of employment in the microregion in the substantial manner, in the villages with rather favourable traffic and personal conditions. But it seems that these villages by themselves will not be able to offer such a support to entrepreneurs so as the possibility of entrepreneurial activity in the microregion becomes more interesting than the concentration in nearby towns.

The villages are willing to support new entrepreneurs for example by the favourable leasing of non-housing spaces, the sale of pieces of land, and the interest-free loans. In villages there are many unused buildings owned by a farmers' cooperative or restituted persons.

The paper contains concrete calculations of financial claims for the formation of new jobs, and financial claims for the possible adaptation of the traffic system (the renewal of a route, the modification of a route, the introduction of a new route and things like that). Even though these numbers are known, it is impossible to enforce one of the mentioned variants unambiguously. The lowest claims for financial means need not represent the best way. Deciding about the convenience of variants it is necessary to see not only the economic effect, but also the social one, which is often far more complicated. As we don't look only for a short-time solution but for a way of further development of villages, it is necessary to accept the solution within the framework of respective villages individually.

In concrete terms, at 2 villages in the microregion the most convenient way to the decreased unemployment and enforced stabilization of the population is the renewal of liquidated routes and the improvement of technical facilities of the village, which would make it possible to develop the entrepreneurial activities on the local level.

In further 3 villages, there are the good conditions of recreation. The renewal of traffic routes and support of retail entrepreneurial activities concentrated especially on services and trade would contribute to the decrease of unemployment in mentioned villages and to the increase of this locality attractiveness.

The remaining 3 villages represent production centres within the framework of the microregion and will hold this function also in future. In each of them, there is a series of prosperous entrepreneurial subjects that consider the expansion of entrepreneurial projects. If the drawbacks of technical facilities in villages will be sorted out (especially telecommunications and sewage plants), it is possible to await also the formation of new jobs at newly establishing entrepreneurial subjects. The traffic system of these villages is satisfactory.

In conclusion it is possible to say that the situation in the decisive enterprises, from the standpoint of the commutation of the population from the microregion, forms no condition that the jobs of these persons would be threatened in the future time. A problem, however, may arise in the case of the traffic system restriction in individual villages of the microregion.

Arrived on 9th June 1995

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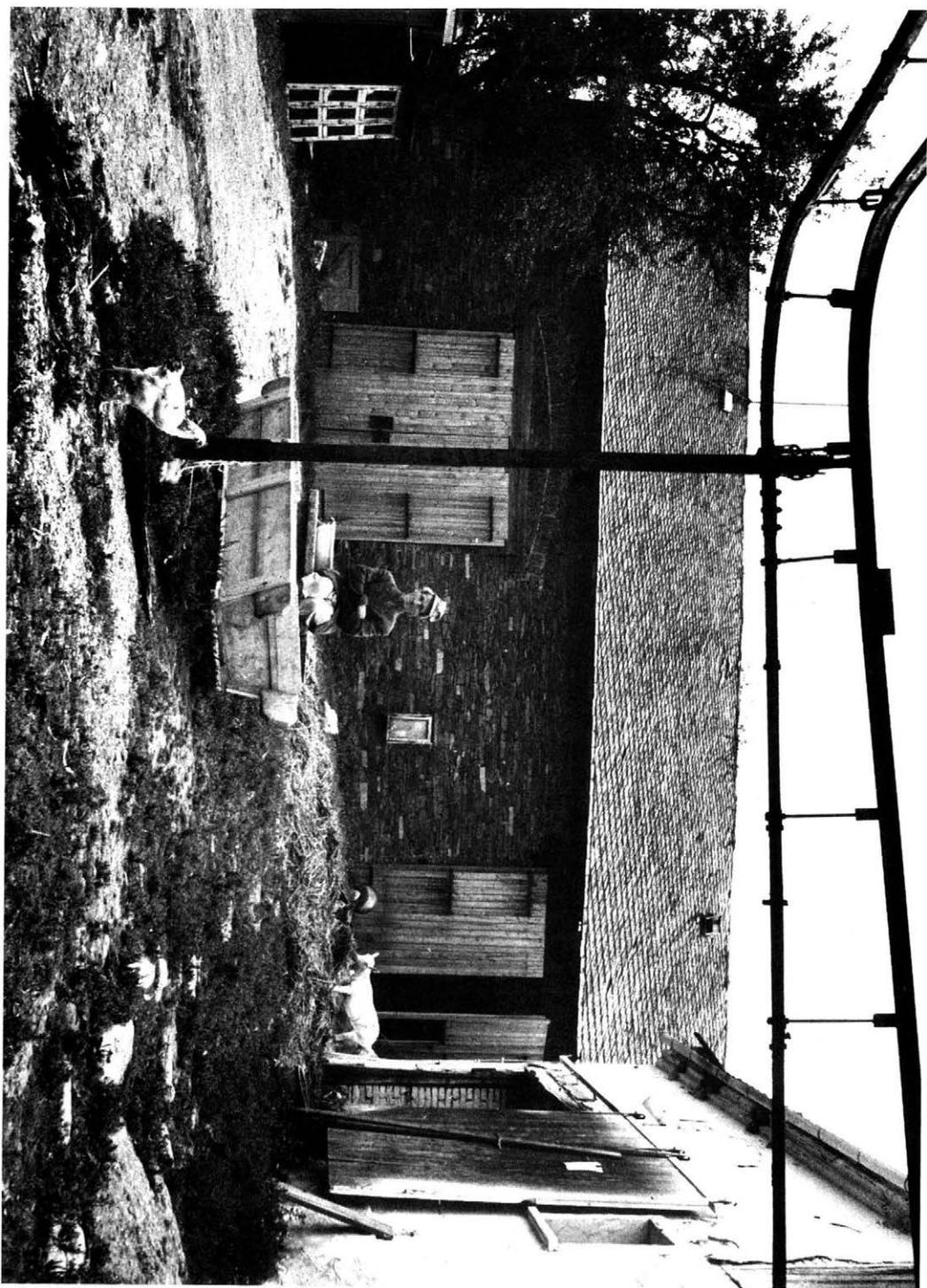


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