

# LOCAL DEVELOPMENT – MULTIPLE VIEWS

## MÍSTNÍ ROZVOJ – RŮZNÉ POHLEDY

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**Abstract.** Local development can be assessed by monitoring changes and their impacts on local community. Primarily positive changes bringing profit are considered as development. However, this profit does not have to be economical. It should rather be the increase in life quality of the inhabitants. Several studies show that if the impulse for a change comes from within the community, this change tends to bring positive impacts and development of the locality. Exogenous development more often leads to no only positive impacts.

In this report, we review the theoretic description of local development and its manifestations and seek ways how to measure this development. We present a simple indicator of total municipality development and show the limits of its use. In the second part, we summarize findings from our research focused on subjective notions of development and its evaluation.

It becomes clear that in the minds of local actors (predominantly mayors of rural municipalities) as well as other rural inhabitants development means above all material and palpable values such as construction of technical infrastructure. Only small part of respondents perceives development as social process, connected with relations between inhabitants and their common aims.

**Key words:** rural area, indicator of development, local development, endogenous development

### Introduction

To begin with, it is necessary to state basic concepts. Local development is a very important part of general development. Every locality, whether municipality or another area, develops in time, it changes structure, features, character. These changes can have many forms. The term development is understood usually as positive changes that bring growth, benefit or higher quality of life. This determination has, however, its difficulty – not all effects have to be positive for all actors. In many situations good change for one group of people means bad change for another. It is necessary to analyse and eliminate all possible negative results of changes in the process of planning developmental strategies.

The term “development” is used very often but its exact definition is difficult to find in expert literature. The term is usually completed with an adjective of the area – regional, rural, local. This paper does not deal with economic or urban development.

In the concepts of regional development, two approaches can be distinguished – exogenous and endogenous. In the first case, the change comes out from outside, in the second from the inside. Combination of both approaches is involved in the Integrated endogenous regional development

strategy (IERD) that covers up economic, social, political, cultural, ecological and other part of development. Similarly we can talk about rural or local development, that blend together. *Regional development has territorial principle and it is based on local conditions.* (Jehle, 1998)

Objective content of regional or rural development can be found in programming documents (Strategy of Regional Development, Program of Rural Development, etc.) but particular shape of the development is created by the inhabitants of each individual locality. It means that they use mainly endogenous approach to local development. Jehle said: *Endogenous development means that the local population can decide about its own development.* (Jehle, 1998) It is the reason why this type of development is difficult to monitor.

### **Data and Methodology**

At first it was important to determine the concept “local”. Usually it is considered as spatial terminate. In Czech as well as in English language many ambiguous synonyms exist (local, territorial, municipal, etc.). For example, the name of the Ministry of Local Development is necessary to translate to the Czech language in a different way, because the term “local” has more meanings. In some cases it is possible to interchange the terms local and regional (more in Coffey, Polèse, 1984), but more often the space of locality is considered smaller unit than a region. A locality can also imply a micro-region when demonstration an even smaller area. In Czech conditions is the term local the expression for the area of municipality. The settlement structure of the Czech Republic is very scattered, which is quite unique in Europe. There are many independent municipalities with lower average number of inhabitants than 2 thousand (almost 90 % of all Czech municipalities). (Maříková 2007) When we discuss local development in this paper, we have in mind the development of municipalities mostly in rural area (more in Summers, 1986). Consequently, there is an interconnection between rural and local development.

The next important issue is how to monitor or measure development, and which indicator to use. Geography considers number of inhabitants and location of municipality within a region as key factors of rural development, sociology rather emphasises human factor – social capital. In the view of statistical monitoring the measure of local development is little bit complicated. On the level of locality (municipality), most available data has been collected in the frame of Population and Housing Census in periodic decade intervals. The only annually registered indicators are number of inhabitants and their movement. This demographic data indicate if new inhabitants come to the village and how many children were born in the year. Increase of inhabitants could be interpreted as a successful development of municipality and vice versa. However, it is a very rough indicator and

the interpretation has its limitations. As well as the definitions of development have their dilemma – it is possible, for example, to consider the build-up of developer project in a suburban village as a successful development of locality? Is it the positive way how to improve quality of life of local inhabitants?

If we perceive development as a complex process of improvement of quality of life in all aspects, it is very difficult to find simple criteria. Which indicator is able to involve all components of total development, from social to financial or ecological? The proposal of solution is outlined in the conclusion of this paper.

After finding the way of measuring development it is necessary to answer the question: what does “local development” mean. We need to monitor its symptoms on local level, but for this purpose the statistical data are not suitable, sociological data are needed.

Therefore, we used data from previous research projects of the Sociological Laboratory as well as other sources. Although most of them were not focused exactly on problems of local development, they can indicate at least a frame of perception of development in various consequences. Individual packets of data (the source of primary data will be described in next text) differ not only in sample of respondents and period of process (2003-2010) but also shape of question. Predominantly we analysed differences in answers to open and closed questions. Not always the researchers have similar view on development of the region as the respondents and the formulation of questionnaire can limit extend of expression.

## Results

First sets of data show possibilities of development as expressed by mayors of villages in 2003. In correspondence questionnaire survey chosen representatives of rural municipalities (i.e. till 2 000 inhabitants) was answered questions on development in their municipality. (Majerová, 2003) The following table summarizes the answers of 1311 respondents to the half-opened question: “What are the main possibilities of development of your village?” with following priorities (each could mark 3 out of 9 options).

**Table 1. Development activities**

<b>Order</b>	<b>Development activities</b>	<b>Rate of positive answers in %</b>
1.	Housing	75,67
2.	Entrepreneurship	45,31
3.	Agriculture	36,61
4.	Recreation	36,00
5.	Tourism	33,03
6.	Environment protection	24,79

7.	Travelling	20,06
8.	Other	3,97
9.	Local product	1,37

Source: *Research Characteristic of village, realisation Sociological laboratory + STEM, 2003, used technique - questionnaire survey (half-opened question), 1311 respondents - mayors of villages*

For completion and view of “the other side” we can compare with a similar question [6] that was given to inhabitants of the same villages: “What should be done for village development in the future?” with 8 possibilities to answer. In this case set of dichotomous (yes or no) question was used. Following table shows the rates of positive answers.

**Table 2. Development in future**

Order	Development in future	Rate of positive answers in %
1.	Landscape protection, ecology	88,62
2.	Support of entrepreneurship	87,82
3.	Building of new housing	82,25
4.	Improvement of infrastructure (water-supply, sewage, gas pipe, etc.)	74,24
5.	Transport ability	74,24
6.	Support of agriculture	69,09
7.	Tourism, recreation, agro-tourism	67,38
8.	Other	10,16

Source: *Research Characteristic of village, realisation Sociological laboratory + STEM, 2003, used technique - questionnaire survey face-to face (block of dichotomy questions), 1634 respondents - rural inhabitants*

A survey carried out two years later in rural area, could help to show changes of opinion in time. Previous question was little bit modified. (Majerová, 2007) Block of 12 suggestions followed the question: “What, in your opinion, could help to develop your village in the future?”. The respondents- inhabitants could express their opinion in four steps scale (certainly yes - rather yes - rather no - certainly no) and possibility their own expression. Results can be seen in the table 3.

**Table 3. Development of village in future**

Order	Development of village in future	Certainly yes	Rather yes	Total rate of positive answers in %
1.	Improvement of traffic	981	765	86,56
2.	Support of entrepreneurship	869	864	85,92
3.	Building of new housing	868	761	80,76

4.	Improvement of public facilities i.e. school, post office, shops, etc.	743	861	79,52
5.	Support of local traditions, habits and culture	630	963	78,98
6.	Landscape protection, ecology	611	978	78,78
7.	Tourism, recreation, agro-tourism	695	872	77,69
8.	Foreign investment	708	849	77,19
9.	Support of agriculture	623	838	72,43
10.	Improvement of infrastructure (water-supply, sewage, gas pipe, etc.)	582	808	68,91
11.	Cross-border, regional and inter-municipal cooperation	368	870	61,38
12.	Fusion with another village	118	282	19,83
13.	Other	89	53	7,04

Source: *Research Life strategy of rural inhabitants, realisation Sociological laboratory + STEM, 2005, used technique - questionnaire survey face-to face, 2017 respondents - rural inhabitants*

Broader approach to this topic was used by M. Sobotka in his PhD. Thesis (Sobotka, 2009). He addressed mayors of chosen region (Pardubice region) to fill in his questionnaire with the question: “Which problems are priorities in planning of development of your village?” He offered 24 possible parts of development that respondents evaluated on the scale from 1 to 10 (from not important to very important). From 115 filed questionnaires he gained following results: “...*the most important activities supporting local development in villages of all size categories were identified by the respondents as maintenance of public space, reconstruction of traffic communications, pavements, security, building and modernisation of infrastructure, support of local culture activities and in larger villages also care for historical heritage.*” (Sobotka, 2009)

In the survey of the Faculty of Science of the Charles University, two differently formulated questions were used for indication of rural development. They asked the local authorities of municipalities with up to 3 thousand inhabitants what they consider the most important condition for successful village and the most important indicator of the successful. If we take success as a synonym to development we can include the result of this survey to analysis. The respondent had to choose one of offered possibilities (condition, indicator). Two fifths of respondents chose the willingness of inhabitants to meet and cooperate on solving problems as the most important condition of success. 20 % obviously consider themselves as the condition for success as they chose “able mayor in the town hall”. Others voted their ability to “acquire funds for projects. On the fourth place is also financial factor, even if indirectly – “enough young people willing to live in rural area” (municipalities acquire subsidies according to number of inhabitants). On the other hand

mostly developed infrastructure (32 %) is regarded as the indicator of successful municipality. Second are good relation of inhabitants to village (24 %) and a mayor that is able to acquire enough financial sources for village (17 %). The criterion mentioned above – increase of number of inhabitants – was used in this study also. It was regarded as an indicator of successful village by 11 % of mayors - respondents. (Chromý, Marada, Jančák, Havlíček, 2010)

The subject of rural development was also analyzed in the survey counselling for rural development with the use of several techniques. Two focus groups were carried out with the representatives of public life in rural localities. They answered the question: “What is the first thing that comes to your mind when you hear the expression “development of your village”? Their ideas are possible to summarize as following: a) Spontaneously, the respondents connected development of their village primarily with the improvement of infrastructure, broader offer of jobs, protection of environment, renovation of old houses, better services, maintenance and modernisation of schools, renovation and building of sport places and resorts for recreation; b) All of them connected rural development with creation of new jobs, keeping young people in rural areas, maintenance of agriculture and nice environment.

*Source: Research Advisory for rural development, realisation Sociological laboratory for Ministry of Agriculture, 2006, used technique - focus group, 20 respondents - rural actors*

At the end we would like to present preliminary results from research called Monitoring of Rural Development, which is still being conducted. This project is financed from the project called Multidisciplinary evaluation of impacts of special territorial protection for hydrological important areas (Multioborové hodnocení vlivů územní ochrany vodohospodářsky významných lokalit ČR). Possible influence of area protection on local development is studied in chosen groups of villages. Semi-standardised interviews with opened questions are carried out with representatives of local municipalities (mostly with mayors). Interviewer records the answers into prepared questionnaire form and at the same time the interview is recorded for further analysis. Possible alternatives of answers are prepared in the questionnaire form for easier further coding. The final version was tested on small sample of respondents from representatives of rural municipalities.

In the first part of the interview, respondents are asked about important developmental activities in their village in last 10 years. The results showed that the possible answers in the questionnaire form were proposed correctly. Most of the items are used, only in some cases the researcher has to add a few of them.

The developing activities are possible to divide into three parts: public facilities (reconstruction or building sport places, municipal buildings, facility for cultural and social life),

public places (local road networks, playground for children, street lights and green areas) and infrastructure (water, sewage and gas pipes, cable networks, etc.). To support tourism cycling lanes were more often build, orientation signs for tourists were improved and historical buildings reconstructed. Voluntary activities of inhabitants involved all of offered possibilities (renewal of old traditions, fundraisings, voluntary work and other independent activities).

On the other hand, when the respondents were asked the open question: “Could you describe the most important developing activities in last 10 years”, without any offered possibility of answer and followed up the first idea of respondent (the subject that respondent takes into mind as the most important). The most often the answers focused on improvement of technical infrastructure (water, sewage and gas pipe, sewage plant – new or renovation). Second group of developing activities (which was not in prepared form) were territorial plans and proposals for future projects. They were mentioned by one third of mayors. They also considered technical infrastructure for new housing projects as very important for development of their village and more than one fourth remembered a play ground or other sport places. Only 15 % of representatives considered some initiatives of inhabitant as developing activity.

*Source: Research: Multidisciplinary evaluation of impacts of special territorial protection for hydrological important areas, used technique – semi-standardised questionnaire, 39 respondents – mayors or their representatives of rural municipality*

## **Conclusions**

The objective of this paper was to outline problematic of local development from the point of view of local actors. It focused mostly on rural areas because the conditions in urban area are different. Seven different surveys that were carried out from 2003 till 2010 were used as a source of the data. With regard of the fact, that the surveys were not primarily focused on problems of local development and did not use the same formulation of questions, the comparison is not easy. Some questions were focussed on developing activities in the past, other on future development; they were focussed on priority or signs of success. Common characteristic all of them is limitation on one locality – municipality. Together the data can be used to describe some indicators that can measure the level of rural development.

1. We expected that in the opinion of actors of local development (mostly mayors) and other rural inhabitants the highest appreciation will be mostly given to material and visible objects, for example technical infrastructure. This hypothesis was confirmed. Our results show that local development (municipal) is most often connected with building of technical infrastructure, support of housing, entrepreneurship and improvement of public facilities.

Only small part of respondents perceived rural development as social process that is depended on people and their social aims. Only in one of example – the research from the Science Faculty Charles University was social factor on the first place of the priority list.

Based on this knowledge, we could propose some criteria for analysis of local development. If local development is expressed by the indicators that are so important for mayors (technical infrastructure, public facilities, housing and entrepreneurship) it would be quite easy to measure it by merely taking technical data on public facilities. However, these facilities have been monitored already and this data are not enough to testify the level of development. The public facilities or existence of pipes are signs of quality of life which is directly proportional to size of municipality, which is difficult to influence.

2. The development of housing is a better indicator but it can be replaced by monitoring of number of inhabitants. Still, it is not an indicator, which could be judged unambiguously as positive or negative. The indicator of number of entrepreneurs is similar. It is not clear that all of them bring benefit to their village.

How should development be monitored? One of possible the ways is to create system of “soft-indicators” based on consequences and impacts of development, for example on quality of life of inhabitants in locality. These indicators could involve not only material facilities in the village but also the perception of inhabitants, not only the number of entrepreneurs but also their benefit for village. These indicators would reflect social climate in the village that could be in ideal case real indicator of positive local development. One of definitions of local development states: “*Shared aims for all inhabitants have to exist for local development to be a really a positive change for the local inhabitants,.*” (Bernard, 2010)

To find these indicators could be very difficult and even to more difficult to introduce them to praxis. However, even today, using existing indicators, we can find and define a group of rural municipalities that develop and the development is really complex.

3. These villages can be found in lists of villages applying for the competition Village of the Year that is organized every year by Ministry of Agriculture, Ministry for Regional Development, Association for Rural Renewal and Union of Towns and Municipalities of the Czech Republic. The aim of this competition is to appreciate good activities of villages, their representatives and inhabitants, whose effort is not only to improve their housing but also to keep local traditions and participate in social life in the village. Many criterions are evaluate: conceptual documents, social life, activities of inhabitants, entrepreneurships, of municipal facilities and promotion of the village, level of technical infrastructure, energy



safety, maintenance of public places, care for landscape, etc. The villages show with the application for this competition the positive way of development and their representatives motivate inhabitants to further activities. We can only wish to have more examples of successful villages like the winner of this competition.

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