

ENVIRONMENTAL AMENITIES AS RESOURCES OF THE RURAL  
DEVELOPMENT

THESES

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## THE ANTECEDENTS AND AIMS

I am examining those fields of the rural resources and natural and experimental aspects that can be basic examples of public goods and externalities in the bibliography of the economics expressing the nice landscape the rich of the nature and some of its representative habitats.

The up-to-date initiatives of the environmental and agri-policy, mostly the agri-environmental programmes, made these amenities one of the sources of income. At the same time it became a very important part of the rural development. It caused a kind of modification in the rural development paradigm, that modifies the environmental consciousness of people living in towns and also in the countryside. It contrasts the scientists with the work on pricing of the environmental goods and amenities. Moreover it means lots of challenges for scientists and also the politicians who can make decisions.

During my scientific work and making publications I reached the problems of the evaluation environmental goods and amenities on two different ways. In one hand I examined sociological aspects of the economical occurrences. Mostly I was interested in those goods and amenities that are admitted by every people being useful, but did not turn into the market. They were kept in evidence as environmental goods and amenities. My research into this field got closer and closer to amenities of the natural endowments.

Five years ago I was charged with making a presentation on the economical aspects of the environment at the Szent István University. It made me happy because I hoped to get closer to the evaluation of the natural amenities. Since then I became convinced that the classical means of economics, in their present state, are not suitable for the pricing procedure. At the same time I became to be curious to know how to manage the the natural and environmental amenities without equipments from the market. The rules of the natural – and environmental norms attracted my attention.

Now the signal of “the tragedy of the commons” is a determined part of the thinking it is possible to discover several forms for managing and owning that contradict the priority of the efficient personal owning.

The other direction getting closer to the values of the environmental amenities was the rural development, but bumped into the virtual wall of the disciplines and virtual politics. During my research it cleared up to me that a kind of standard of living in the countryside is also interested in the urbanised citizens. The welfare of the population in the cities also requires it. Let me express it in another way: Preservation of the countryside and making it being “live-able” is a global interest. It also came out that the traditional “development” of the agriculture contradicts this interest. The productional agriculture is getting in touch with its limits, so narrowing down the rural development and improving the traditional agricultural methods destroy the most important elements of the life.

Researching the rural resources I often met the problem that the natural and regional amenities appeared as a special value in the activities of tourism. It was the same situation with the buyers of week-end houses, second homes and permanent homes. Their valuable amenities indicated to buy them getting displaced from the jam-packed cities. (dezurbanisation)

However these amenities are basical parts of the tourism, the results “go “ not to the direct suppliers but to the connected suppliers, for example hosts, catering- and entertaining suppliers. Not only the injustice of this situation urged me to find the possibilities for taking these amenities parts of the rural developmental resources, but the consciousness that these rural values need preservers and maintainers. Without having required income there is no person to work on it.

At the same time the politics, the regional and environmental development – belonging to the county – and also the lobby working behind were fighting for their priority in the field of having these resources. The integrated and multidisciplinary rural development proved to be just a soft argument against the hard argument of the economy and profitability.

I met the same lines of force during my study tours in different countries of Europe and Northern part of America, also at conferences and in my readings. Not more than the risked amount, the settlement of the arguments and the cultural level of the discussion were different. By my experiences I made sure that these questions reveal the basical problems of the globalized world, in the towns, in the country and in centre and the periphery.

It follows from these foregoings that I chose to detail the appreciational, promotional and efficiency problems of the natural and environmental amenities in my thesis. These resources have not been ranked among the economical resources till now. My research was aimed to determine the possibilities of the evaluation in the field of environmental goods and amenities. In the other hand how to make them being parts of the resources in the rural development.

## **MATTERS AND METHODS**

First of all I examined the Hungarian and the international bibliography to work out new connections between them. I worked in different fields of sociology, rural sociology, economic and rural development, and agri-environmental publications. My theoretical results were controlled by the different equipments of the environmental politics. I had some interviews with expert from the environment, nature reserve and rural development and also with economists expert from the agriculture about the pricing, market and the problems of the modern agriculture. I had a lot of help by my colleagues who work in the ethnography. Thanks for them I could make a study of the bibliography and could made me acquainted with the management of the environmental values by learning special institutions that can stay alive in some modern ones.

By these things my thesis cannot be titled as an economic, ethnographyc or environmental work. I borrowed some paradigms from different fields of the social science. These equipments were basical parts of the discipline, but got a new aspect in the paradigm of the rural development and rural sociology. In the other hand they can demonstrate the necessity of these renovation, too.



## **THE MAIN STATEMENTS AND RESULTS OF MY THESES**

The rural development comes true in the political measures, the practice and the conceptual frame. All these components are basic in the paradigm. Any of them can only be examined together with the others. Because of it I touch in my researcher work all of them shortly, although my analysis is theoretical.

I would like to involve into a suitable frame the new and most important elements of the politics in the countryside and the questions of the improving practice.

### **The changing paradigm of the rural development**

In my opinion the rural development means a practical thing for example the possibility of living of people in the countryside, their circumstances, the quality of their life and to preserve and make being richer the natural circumstances. At the same time it is a political theory and activity, too. The rural development has to have legitimacy not only for getting a good chance whatever for people living in the rural territories and prevents the flood to the towns for those people whose life becomes impossible. The country serves with inestimable values the towns by its natural surrounding, natural and semi-natural ecosystems, biodiversity, staying alive the plants and also the animals.

The environmental programs at the crossing point of the agri- and environmental politics use the nature, preserving the natural and environmental values directly as a source of income, after all take them just a part of the ecological helper functions.

In my theses I make efforts to summarize and answer to the questions how to solve the problems – theoretically and practically – of these externalities and public goods.

### **Globalization and economy in the countryside**

Globalization, being mostly political till nowadays, means a global trading competition-connection, and a kind of standardisation for the transformed values to a simple commodity. The influence of the globalization to the productional agriculture can be caught in the act in the industrial agriculture. The most important elements of the industrial agriculture:

- complex technologies and the growing role of the “technological treadmill”,
- growing of the capital that substitutes for the work,
- increasing energy-using,
- increasing intervention of the state,
- tendencies to the competition, specialization and overproduction, and
- the mutual dependence between the farms and the “agri-business”, where the agri-business controls the inputs, the machinery, the selling, the processing and the transportation.

The industrial agriculture, that wants to comply with the requirements of the global food-market, mostly after the degradation of the support systems, concentrates to the best agricultural lands. In these areas they met the legal-standardization-system and integrates into the industry that processes the inputs of the agriculture and receives the outputs, too.

The industrial agriculture and the global food-industry demonstrate a big risk nowadays for the consumers. The danger and the risk realized that caused additional standardization to fit to the international quality control. In the other hand it restored to life and made stronger and stronger the contrast of the globalization: tendencies and efforts of localisation. The expansion of the small and environment-friendly processing methods and the popularity of the short food-chains, the demand for special and local products all can be different kinds of answers to the globalization.

Based on my researcher work in the developed countries one of the the most important consequence of the globalization is the connection between the anti-globalization movement and the locality-related efforts. It puts the problem of the agriculture in different new light, the role of the agricultural processing, the agri-politics, the multifunctional tendency of the country and the management of the environmental values.

### **The interaction of economy and its environs**

The well-known sociological school – the “functional” school – works on the relations between the systems and their surroundings. A prominent representative of it was – Niclas Luhmann – whose approach can be useful in being able to understand how to communicate the social systems and also with their environment.

The fact that the regulating force of the norms in small communities because of the globalization becomes weaker and the economics cannot make useful equipments for managing the environmental values shows the importance of the “communication”. Luhmann said that the solution of managing the environmental values is the pricing for them.

Based on the views of a Dutch sociologist – van Koppen – I pointed to the contrast the “resource-based” and the “arcadean” environmental surrounding. The first use the values of the environment like an economical resource, but the other line respects the creature in the plants and animal without noticing their economical utilisation.

The limits of the resource-way of looking are the externalities and public goods. The other line is not able to communicate with other systems of the community ( let me tell you that some of its representatives tried to draft the laws of animals and trees).



### **The environmental economics about the environmental resources**

The base of the discussion between the environmental surrounding and the economics was given by the environmental economics. The results can be competent in using these resources in the economics. The starting-point is to make the externalities being internal. It means that the externalities should have prices and expenditures, too. Its condition, by the environmental economics, is the privatization of the public goods and to determine the owner. .

The environmental economy use some equipments that does not belong to the essential part of the classical economics. The institutional economics – at the board of the sociology and the economy- discovered the transactional costs and charted the costs of the operation. The other very important consideration is the ownership. The own – using it as an economical aspect – can cause expenses for its operator. In case you know these expenses you can count that it can be much more expensive to create an effective market than that potential profit which can be arranged by the marketable prices

Although some environmental amenities are as a resource in different environmental programmes, for example the biodiversity in the programmes called “Habitats Directive” and “Nature 2000”, the appearing difficulties indicate theoretical and practical problems during working out their systems. Solving these problems should be done before the pricing procedure. In the special field of landscape amenities and cultural values in different conserving programmes there is one more problem, that it is unable to personificate the owners and operators. And in these situations the owning and operating is collective, too.

### **Assessment of the environmental and cultural heritage’s amenities**

All those amenities that are ranked among it represent a very particular value in the community. In one hand it is visibly parts of the market pricing – for example in the field of buying building sites and buildings or in the economy of the tourism. In the other hand the pricing is not an easy effort. Not only the valuable overall impression and the separate components cause difficulties but the fact that it is impossible to determine their owners or operators. Because of it the management of them should be a special collective form that is a transition from the personal owning to the collective one. All of them are against the starter point of the economics that says about a kind of “ the tragedy of the commons”. Hardin – (the author himself) also modified the thesis and the domestic practice of forestry co-operatives and vine-growing communities seems to prove that the ‘directed public pasture’ can be a better owner of these types of values than private owners.

### **The agri-environmental programmes in Europe**

The agri-environmental programmes work in Europe from 1992. The main aim of them was to support the environmental agriculture and to compensate the lack of

the income for the farmers. The basic line was not only the simple rural development but a complete serving system for the agriculture – for the environment and also for people working in it. It did not want to increase the income of the farmer. In the other hand the Regulation rules No. 2028/92. were extend to different activities that had not have any income before. Keeping of these rules were trust in the conscience of people.

An important feature of agri-environmental programs is that they are only required from the member countries and from members-to-be, but the participation of farmers is not compulsory. The legal programmes can be started by the national authorities within the scope of decentralised managing system. The other important characteristic is that the European Union does not establish a concrete amount to hold up the programmes. The budget of the EU shall complete the national budget in direct proportion to the 75 % of the less favoured regions. It means that the support for the programme depends on the current usage of the programme.

An aim was determined in the 5<sup>th</sup> Environmental Project. By this project till 2000 15% of the cultivated land should work within this programme. This plan was overproduced in 1998 by the member countries. In the 5<sup>th</sup> year of the programme every 7<sup>th</sup> farmer was concerned in the agri-environmental programme and 20 % of the cultivated land was covered with this service. The number of the member-farms was absolutely different in the member countries. The most participants were from the new member countries that can be an important sign for us. In Austria it was 78 %, in Finland it was 77%, in Sweden 64%. This rate is much higher than in the EU member countries where it is only 9-10 % in average. The European Commission made the first report on the agri-environmental programmes in 1998. Till then there have been many different ways to examine the effect of the programmes to the environment and the community.

In Hungary in February of 2002 a new application system (published by the NAKP) was on the go. Because of it we cannot report on the programme in details but we can do it about the system of criteria. This system basically followed the type in the EU, so it was possible that the European average should be also the same in Hungary.

In Hungary there is a complex system including the environmental, the agricultural and the rural developmental aspects. Two criteria of the 10 belong to the spacial development of the region. These two criteria mean the quarter part of the total points in the system. Two other criteria reflects to the environment. In one hand the background of the applicant in this field and in the other hand the sensitivity of the region. (40% of the total points) The method of cultivation and the market connections means 20 % while further 15 % can be gained if the land can be operated as an environmental model farm and the maximum part of its land joins the programme.

## **The integration of the agri-environmental programmes into the rural development**

Most scientists who examine the rural development are interested in the agri-environmental programmes and its reflection to the practice and the politics, too. First of all they research the economical, social and cultural attitudes of the programme, but they admit that it causes a decreased environmental pollution.

Based on the course of action practised so far, the income from programme does not give an extra earnings for people living in the country. It can only moderate the deficit. The partnership connecting the elements of the programme and the participants causes an efficient improvement in the economy. Those partners who use environment-friendly technologies have a great image in their small region, that can increase the interest for healthy and regionally special foods. Also it can attract more tourists to the region, too. There are not typical trends in the working activities. Those technologies that have not got well-equipped machineries – mostly the environment-friendly technologies – need more workers than the methods used in the past. It is not sure that it can be a long-term tendency.

The programme gives more possibilities for people in the field of combination and calculation. It is also true in the activities “out of the farm” and during the separation of the elements of the project. The leak of agri-market segregation and it makes being easier the connection between the working activities in the agricultural and other fields. The traditional knowledge of the farmers and the learnt knowledge can take place together in this system of activities – premodern, modern and post-modern systems.

## **Environmental amenities as resources of the rural development**

In the developed countries the welfare and the overestimation of the natural and environmental amenities appeared in the same period. People started to be interested in the agriculture and generally in the county. In the other hand that time several agri-environmental programmes were worked out, because the economics could not serve more useful equipments for the pricing of the externalities and public goods. So, the practice worked out a kind of condition-system (numbering system) where different amenities get special points and “saving” technologies. Farmers and “land-managers” have a larger freedom to choose the useful method of using the lands. Because of it the natural and environmental amenities became resources of the economy in the country-side. Thanks for these tendencies in the whole agriculture, the environment and rural development was made a new paradigm of the “agri-life.”



## NEW SCIENTIFIC RESULTS

1. Outlining the overall theoretical frame of rural development. In my work I presented that the conversion of environmental and natural amenities into economic resource was due to several factors. Among others these are globalization, the homogenizing and standardizing tendencies of the world scale markets, urbanization, and the “industry like” production of the agriculture. The irreplaceable rural products were weakened so much by these processes that the marketing of certain “rare” goods – converted from amenities - has appeared as an important task.

On the other hand the above mentioned processes (intensive agriculture, urbanisation, global competition, etc.) have a labour force displacing effect in the field of agriculture, so in case of the further ongoing of these processes the continuation of immigration from agriculture and the so called multifunctional countryside would have been foreseen.

Without the “landscape managing”, caring activity of the rural population it is impossible to take care of the natural amenities, which are becoming more and more valuable among the urban population as well; not only for “unloading” the urban area, but also for the cities’ own sake. But on the other hand the new “rural services” must be well paid and a fair income must be provided for those “producing” the environment.

So in my opinion rural development is a special effort aiming to develop the quality of life and level of income of those living in the countryside and also to develop rural amenities (land, labour force and capital). This effort is not only for the rural population, but also for the urban population, or even for the human kind and the future generations.

2. Outlining the methods and limits of environmental and natural amenities management and “evaluation”. Neither the ethical nor the market management can be called “perfect” in present conditions. Direct personal control between the members of a community is required for the operation of the ethical regulators, but this is not typical in our modernized world. The still existing modern forms of the “controlled public property” try to control the appropriate use of the natural amenities by restricting proprietary rights and by – not so much ethical as legal – regulations, and also by fines.

Environmental economics has significantly improved in the field of calculating the prices of environmental amenities. It has evolved measuring and comparing tools, which are more or less effectively able to control the amenities utilised as resources in the economics. The “preferential price calculation” has been evolved in the field of rural development and especially agri-environmental programmes. This system can flexibly adapt to the “stock”

of the local amenities and preferences, but it is not suitable (yet) for establishing international price-standards.

Preferential evaluation is a relative method, it enforces the local respects of those living in a given rural environment and cultural level. The “prices” are determined by the funds established for a specific purpose by the governments. The continuous development, evaluation and comparison of such evaluating systems may lead to a fair price calculation system.

3. Analysis of the new agri-culture. The new rural development paradigm changes the arrangement and farming system of the agriculture. The productionist agriculture, which supplies the competing food markets with mass products, will probably be concentrated on the areas of best arable lands, while on lands with less favourable conditions the ecological and social functions of countryside and agriculture will be dominant. The latter also use the modern forms of farm organisation and management, but it significantly use the pre-modern forms as well. (post-modern production).

The “productionist” systems of food production must also take into consideration the requirements of ecology, more closely the decreasing value of such environmental and natural elements, which were earlier neglected by the producers and economic experts. It can be controlled by the politics through the allocation of proprietary rights.

4. Surveying the new resources originating from the short practise of the new, multisectoral rural development policy. As a result of the diversification of the rural economy, a new constellation of resources appeared in the countryside. The production and local process of country specific products and the direct marketing increase the added value and attract a greater number of consumers, which generates a greater demand for the attached services. Such an attraction can be achieved by the landscape itself, by the traditional and modern elements of the local culture and by the various chains of programs provided by servicing co-operations.

The former paradigm of rural development tried to evaluate economic performance on the individual level of each farm. Certain components of the new resources (e.g. added value) can be individually evaluated, while others can only be analysed and evaluated on family (e.g. diversification of family activities, fraction of working time) or settlement or regional level (e.g. cultural, social capital). The network like activity-co-ordination of the co-operating families and farms meet the requirements of size rentability in a new way and it imports the benefits of complementarity (synergy) into local economy.

The appearance of environmental and natural amenities as a resource of income showed (or is showing) the rural population the economic significance of natural and cultural amenities at hand. As a result of that the locally controlled public property management can reappear, though in a new form.

## CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

In the domestic public thinking – but mostly in foreign public opinion as well – there is a stricter line between nature conservation and the other disciplines dealing with economic activities, than it should be. The starting point of my thesis says that natural environment is not only a physical objectivity but a “social construction” as well. It exists in a form and quantity for the thinking and acting man as much as he and the whole society are aware of it and sense it. Therefore I regard the co-operation of nature- and social sciences as a main priority in the survey of the problems of the environment and the countryside.

The new political measurements covering the rural society and economy pulled the focus of nature- and social sciences closer to each other. There is a more and more urgent call for a fair evaluation of the natural amenities on an interdisciplinary basis. At the same time rural development “overtook” politics and science due to a few successful examples. It handles environmental-, natural- rural- and cultural amenities related to locality in a complex “packet” in which the living of rural population is provided by local social capital and unique country and culture specific products and services while the long term sustainment of these amenities is also provided. Politics – realising the directing values of the initiatives – tries to systematise and generalise, with the help of science, the most valuable and generalizable results.

Regarding *regulators* researches aim to find an effective determination for the proprietary and utilization right of the amenities. Regarding *financial incentives* the fair rewarding and compensation of the “servicing units” and “keepers” of the natural amenities is the main task. But it is important to highlight that neither the regulators nor the incentives can function properly until politics use only one of the disciplines in establishing its own tools.

The success of the measurements postulate the improvement of price calculation. Not only for the “objective” value of the natural amenities. The evaluation of the costs and expected profit of the policies aiming the protection and development of the amenities is of high importance in the process through which the European society should accept and support these policies.

The work on rural amenities can be deepened and continued with:

- 1.) the identification of amenities which can benefit economic development in rural areas (a typology of amenities and their suitability to various types of territories)
- 2.) identification of social, economic and technological factors likely to affect the quality and quantity of such amenities
- 3.) a typology of policy measures to maintain or enhance such amenities, directly or indirectly
- 4.) analysis of the costs of such policies
- 5.) a final synthesis with conclusions and recommendations for amenity policies.

The integration of traditional rural development, agri-environment protection and agricultural development is expected to improve in Hungary. The Hungarian rural development programmes handed to the EU will lug out lands from agriculture – nearly 1 million hectares – but most of these lands were never used for agriculture earlier (before the industrialization, chemical processing and intensification of agriculture). Thus – since their agricultural capacity is much lower than the nature conservation capacity - the agricultural use of these lands cannot be reasoned either from agricultural or nature conservation aspects, moreover it is considered harmful.

One – for us a useful – result of the backwardness of agricultural development is that soil degradation, pollution of surface and underground waters, decrease and damage of natural habitats and generally the decrease of biodiversity appeared in a lesser form in Hungary than that of the countries with developed industry and industrialized agriculture.

Farmers use environment friendly methods in production, processing, storing and marketing, so they meet the ever stricter international agri-environmental requirements, which can be considered as a comparative advantage and market factor. The EU and WTO-conform supported extensive farming provides new chances not only for sustaining natural values and biodiversity but it also promotes the complex development and social security of rural regions through the transformation of production structure (afforestation, turfing, landscape management) and recreational development (village- and agritourism).



## THE MOST INTERESTING PUBLICATIONS TO THE THEME

### Scientific publication, parts of them

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Madarász Imre (2002) "A globalizáció hatása és a helyi erőforrások a vidékfejlesztésben" In: *A Falu*. XVII. évf. 1. (Tavaszi) 25-29. p. /ISSN 0237-4323/

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