

814.529 Analyzing Local Rural Systems, 2013 Summer Semester

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in collaboration with

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Excursion to Suchdol nad Lužnicí – Klikov in the Czech Republic

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FOOTBALL CLUB BLESK KLIKOV

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Introduction

Celebrating its eightieth anniversary in 2012, Klikov's football club "Blesk Klikov" is no more, no less as in its moving past forming one of the cultural hotspots of the village. To catch the atmosphere of Klikov's community life, we as a working group could realized an interview with one of Blesk Klikov's old hands, 65 years old retiree Mr. Jan Bednář, former player and club official.

Mr Bednář grew up in Klikov, after his parents moved to the area, finding better job opportunities in that time, especially in the glass industry. He himself worked as a steam engine repairman in the railway sector. Mr. Bednář joined Blesk Klikov when he turned 17, becoming the longest-serving player since he was an active player until his mid fifties and is now still a member of the club. In his career he was performing several functions within the club, making him an excellent informant to derive conclusions about the importance of the football club for the local rural system of Klikov not least because the club is by far the biggest organizer of public events and leisure time activities in Klikov village.

The goal of the interview was to learn about the locality as a whole (some issues concerning the sustainability of the region, the town and the biosphere) and about Mr. Bednář as a person (personal information and family history in the locality) and to gather some information about the local football club and the role it plays in the social regional life.

Most of the questions were prepared before the interview so that we had a string to hold on to. Some new questions arose in the conversation's course as well. For us the most interesting point was the significance of the football club for the village community: What is the club doing for the people? How many people are involved and how? Looking at gender aspects: Are women also participating or even playing? Do they have a fanclub?

Other questions were related to the players themselves, the history and the organization of the club: When was the club founded and how is/was its performance, its range and its interaction with other teams of the region? Are there enough young people in

the club? Is emigration a problem? - Heading rural exodus. Do people leave the town and if so, why? Are new people actively welcomed in the club? - Issues that lead to the subject of transition and the embedding of the local rural system into the macro system, e.g. the European Union, respectively the global market. Are people who work for the club getting paid and how is the club financed? In contrast dealing with non-monetary values in terms of time: the distribution of work time and leisure time – frequency of training and matches and organization of public events. As a volunteering, time use plays a major role in the analysis of the club as a part of the local system also in terms of biophysical and cultural reproduction.

The Blesk Klikov football club is definitely playing a very important role in the local community and is though closely connected to the social sustainability of the region. Many people of the village are involved in the club life or at least visit the regularly organized events. It can be said that the football club in Klikov village is one of the mediums, if not the most important one, that holds the community together.

Method

Our interdisciplinary research team consists of five members: Susanne, Elisabeth, Jan, and Stefan from University of Klagenfurt and Michaela from University of České Budějovice, distributing expertise in the social, economic and ecological fields.

While Susanne provides a background in cultural and social anthropology studies and Elisabeth in sociology, Jan earned a bachelor degree in socio-economics and is contributing the economic perspective. Whereas Stefan – with a bachelor degree in environmental sciences at the University of Lüneburg, Germany – supports the work with expertise in natural sciences together with Michaela, who has a background in environmental care studies and is now studying landscape ecology at the University of South Bohemia. The other four are now doing the master's program in social ecology at the IFF Vienna.

Due to the relatively short period of time spending together in the Czech Republic the teamwork was very intense but harmonious and productive. The work was done by all

together, developing a concept for the interview with various topics wanted to be talked about and also some more detailed questions. Also the first presentation and this paper were joint-ventures.

The interview was realized at Mr. Bednář's place on a warm and sunny day, sitting outside in the garden. Because it was the first time that he was interviewed by a group of students, local guide Jan (Mr. Těšitel) came along and introduced us and the purpose of our visit but left shortly after this, to not disturb the interview.

A real challenge posed the language barrier since Mr. Bednář was only speaking Czech. Michaela – the only Czech speaking group member – had to act as a translator, which was very helpful. Due to the fact that Michaela naturally couldn't translate simultaneously but only from time to time, supposedly some information or possible interpretation got lost. Also the translation work interrupted both the course of the interview and the concentration of Michaela and Mr. Bednář because the conversation always had to be sort of stopped.

But the atmosphere during the whole interview was pleasant. Mr. Bednář was really friendly and offered wine and other refreshments. After a short warm up time in the beginning we had the feeling that he got quite comfortable talking to us and was highly communicative.

The Informant

Mr. Jan Bednář grew up in Klikov after his grandparents moved to the area because there used to be more working opportunities, especially in the pottery-, glass-, or peat production. Mr. Bednář and his family never moved – he mentioned that he was lucky, that he was not forced to move away into a city because he always had a job. Mr. Bednář himself was professionally educated as a carpenter but then worked as steam engineer for trains in České Velenice.

His children and grandchildren are currently not living in Klikov, due to the fact that no jobs are offered in the market. Mr. Bednář told, that bad job prospects are the main reason why most of the young generation are moving away, but usually coming back to

live in Klikov as they enter retirement, for the reason that they are sentimentally connected to the region (to the nature in particular).

Mr. Bednář himself enjoys a lot the nature in the area and is thankful that it is not damaged and still remains untouched. This is the reason why he values the biosphere reserve in the area. What he criticized about it though, is the structure behind it and that it is basically all about financial motives.

Counting sixty-five years now, Mr. Bednář can look back on a long history of Blesk Klikov – one of the first football clubs in the Czech Republic – since he joined the club when he was just 17 years old. He told, that his parents had to fake his ID so he could participate, since it was only allowed to start at the age of 18. When he stopped playing at the age of 53, he was the oldest active member in the team. His whole career he played as defender.

Even though Mr. Bednář retired short time ago he enhanced that now he has less time for the football club, because his family and his grandchildren require a lot of time. Nevertheless, he is still a club member and participates in the club's social live and events, as well as helping with organizational tasks. As Mr. Bednář explained he ran through all the possible positions in the organizational structure of Blesk Klikov. Participating in the club is family affair since his two younger brothers are also members of Blesk Klikov.

Findings

Living in a Biosphere Reserve

Family is crucial for sustaining for rural and social-ecological system like Klikov, as Bartoš, Kušova, and Těšitel (2009) pointed out the results of their questionnaire survey realized in social systems which are situated within biosphere reserves. To draw a conclusion how the status of a biosphere reserve or a protected area is affecting the life of the residents who live in the area whereas the legal status of a protected area is shaping the framework conditions of the village in several ways, e.g. jobs, facilities, tourism.

As Mr. Bednár mentioned, people are coming back to Klikov when they are older, because they appreciate the nature. But nevertheless labelling nature reserve with embedded rural settlements as a protected area can synthesise pressures and challenges for the local population and the village's development, or locals approach the protection program with scepticism, e.g. in the case of old buildings as Mr. Bednár explained: the building's frontside may not be modified, e.g. new windows for energy efficiency. Only for the building's backside changes are allowed. Means the cultural heritage shall be preserved.

But on the other hand according to Bartoš, Kušova, and Těšitel, results of a questionnaire survey show, that „everyday life of local population does not seem to be much influenced by the fact that they lived in a protected area“ (Bartoš; Kušova; Těšitel 2009), in that respect that family and friends or job prospects are having a higher value and decide whether people emigrate or not. Hence they also might appreciate the circumstance that the „label“ of a protected area advance tourist attractiveness of the territory (Bartoš; Kušova; Těšitel 2009). In addition to it the locals might be able to make some kind of profit from it. With reference to the replacement of the club's culture house through a recreation place for tourists and residents the impact of (eco-) tourism is in evidence. For further detail information, studies on ecosystem services can be compared. The work of Bartoš, Kušova, and Těšitel (2009) shall be mentioned at that point, not least because it is dealing with biosphere reserves in the Czech Republic (cf. Bartoš; Kušova; Těšitel 2009).

The football club can be clasified as an element of a socio-ecological system. Nevertheless it posed a challenge during the research to link the study on the football club to metabolic characteristics in terms of biophysical material and energy flows, as well as colonization. Not least because the club acts as a social and cultural agent. Hence the focus is set on the cultural sphere, less on the natural sphere of social metabolism unlike agricultural systems, e.g. farms, sawmills or potteries (for that compare the other contributions).

The findings will deal with experiences and meanings as we deep into the symbolic world analyzing the football club of Blesk Klikov to name interactions between the human population, respectively their biophysical stocks, and the cultural sphere of causa-

tion. Hence the work in hand is illustrating a brief institutional analysis of the system football club (Haas and Singh 2013; Fischer-Kowalski and Weisz 1999).

Variables of importance for the research are the cultural dimension of sustainability, system boundaries, community and cultural services, time use and division of labour, and the embedding of the local system, respectively local developments in macro trends as well.

As the aim of the interview was to derive conclusions about the importance of the football club for the village and its residents, two main issues concerning the frame of sustainability were detected. It might not be obvious *prima facie* to link activities around the football club of Klikov with the model of sustainability, respectively the social ecology concepts such as social metabolism and transitions. But as the football club can be seen as the essence of the village life the issue of Emigration respectively rural exodus can be detected as facts and circumstances in terms of sustainable development and social ecology. The second major issue is regarding the cultural dimension as the traverse linking the social, ecological and economical layer of sustainable development the football club is considered the agent of cultural reproduction within the local rural system of Klikov.

System boundaries

Although it is made clear that Blesk Klikov is a sub-system of the Klikov community, consulting how to define system boundaries, it is hard to draw them clearly, due to the fact that in the present the majority of the club's players are coming from other villages than Klikov, most of them from Třeboň or villages close to Třeboň, which means that actually the weekly training sessions are held in Třeboň, which is 19 km away from Klikov. Hence the system boundaries are permanently shifting, even more with the fact that the history of the club is eighty years old.

The playing field and the club house (including the museum) are forming material elements of the system, whereas the team, club members and all supporters (including spectators) circulating around the club are shaping the autopoietic elements of the

club. The region and other villages might be seen as the environment with that interactions are taking place. The decentralization of work and leisure within the club due to externalization (e.g. of training sessions, matches etc.) raises the necessity of certain infrastructure. And results as well in a network of linked activities in forms of distribution (quasi offer of e.g. sports, events, and community) and consumption (quasi satisfy needs for fitness and exercise, self realization, distraction, affiliation).

The definition of system boundaries becomes important looking at makro trends, and embedded local developments into the global scale. The local issue of rural exodus can be embedded into macro trends, e.g. globalisation. Beside that, Klikov might be drawn as a perfect example for the aging of rural villages. The young generation is moving into the cities in consequence of better job prospects, the promises of more cultural life and closer linkages to the rest of the world, so to say as a getaway possibility. As Mr. Bednár mentioned, most of the young people are moving to university city České Budějovice, which is approx. 40 km away from Klikov. Due to that, the football club as well is suffering of a lack of young talents.

The cultural dimension of a sustainable development

As one of the main local distributors of community life, the football club plays a major role in the local rural system of Klikov. Not only a hotspot of the town's gossip, the football club might be signifying the substitute of the church's social and cultural services, since the village is not possessing a church.

The clubhouse is representing a locus of cultural meaning, since it is used as a museum as well, containing an exhibition about the club's history. More than that, the club was owning a culture house since it had to be sold and was then in use as a recreation place for tourists and citizens, who have weekend or summer houses in and around Klikov, but do not permanently live in the area. This case shows another development, as upcoming eco-tourism (e.g. hiking and cycling) and so-called Spa and wellness offers have a major impact on the development of the local system. The loss of the culture house means actually a major loss for the village, while it was meeting point and open space

for local initiatives and groups, e.g. rehearsal studio for musicians.

Nevertheless the football club of Blesk Klikov is an important medium in terms of an agent in the symbolic world of the Klikov social system once the club is promoting communal spirit and constitutes a (safe) haven for residents. As the football club lasts to exist and is permanently hosting sportive and cultural events it is catering for stability within the community.

Indeed, the history of the football club is very linked to the history of the village or in other words: the history of the club is a symbol for the history of the village. Cultural life is reproduced to a major part by Blesk Klikov. The football matches are a main event of the area and attract up to hundreds of visitors. Football matches and other cultural events, e.g. carnival are ceremonies and rituals important for the local coherence and produce sentiments of affiliation, superiority, stability. As football is often compared with religious approaches, respectively discussed as a kind of substitute for religion when the classical approach to religion by Émile Durkheim (1912) is consulted saying one of the central functions of religion is the „foundation of community“. Due to Durkheim's hypothesis, the regular participation at collective rituals is strengthen the social cohesion and is stabilising the group. The elementary human need for social inclusion and acceptance can be satisfied by religion. Several works are linking the hypothesis to football (compare Kotowski 2010; Rautenberg 2008; Schäfer/Schäfer 2007). Beside that a sport rivalry between Blesk Klikov and the clubs from Suchdol nad Lužnicí, as Mr. Bednár mentioned, is in a symbolic way vital for the local social coherence, as such a rivalry is creating communal identity.

More than that football can be illustrated as a scene of memento. By remembering the past via communication, a community can collect memories together and form them as a part of a collective mind. By implication, „football can be considered as a phenomenon that is able to create collective memories“ (Rautenberg 2008). During the interview, Mr. Bednár revealed the vibrant club's history by several stories from previous decades (apropos the establishment in the 1930s, the communist era, the Velvet Revolution). Not to mention keeping the past better than the present. Identity follows history.

Time use and the division of labour

Considering the football club as some kind of an economic system and its members and followers as the community around it, it is made possible to point out interlinkages within the social system (cf. Haas/Singh 2013). In terms of social ecology concepts functional time use is designed as a biophysical resource. Hence emerge several types of time use: leisure time, community time, time for fitness. With corresponding feedbacks on the reproductivity of the community. The decentralization of the club – players coming from Třeboň and the training sessions taking place in Třeboň – definitely requires a more of time and is yielding stress to the operation of the social system of Klikov.

In general, engagement in a club – in this case Blesk Klikov – is voluntary and done with a myriad of hours. Further, it can be observed that the division of work, and time use respectively is traditional. To suggest gender aspects, Blesk Klikov has only a men team practicing and playing, while women are commonly organising the cultural events, e.g. the football matches, carnival, May Day.

Reflection

In Klikov village the worldwide trend of urbanization can be observed very well. The region is dying out, schools and cultural activity sites are closed down, companies are moving away, jobs are scarce, public transportation is rare and the town runs out of money and in this case cuts the subsidies for the football club. Young people are forced to move away, because they can't find a job or can't send their children to school easily.

We think that one of the main threats to the sustainability of Klikov village and also most rural systems is the job situation. The jobs in the region can be seen as stocks that are affecting people coming to or moving out of the town. The more jobs there are the more attractive the town will be as a place to live and vice versa. For the area it is quiet important to encourage local economies that generate jobs for inhabitants to work to avoid strong emigration. The upcoming eco tourism gives the chance to bring new life

to the town and also generates working opportunities, but as well, in the case of the closing down of the culture house (as mentioned above) it can have negative effects on the social life in the village.

Considering the social life in rural systems it also seems very important to have some place, where people can come together from time to time. As there is no church in Klikov village, the football club can be seen as an important meeting point. Most of the people interviewed in the course of the excursion were members or at least went to see the games or take part at the organized activities. People meet, friendships are generated and cherished and social ties are strengthened.

Literature

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