

Analyzing Local Rural Systems Assignment

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1. Introduction:

We interviewed two potters of the village Klikov, Martin Hadrava and Martin Hanuš. Originally they are both from Prag. They are doing workshops in Klikov and also producing ceramics which they sell in the shop of Marta Pozníčková and on big ceramic markets outside of the village four times a year.

Pottery is a very old tradition in Klikov. In former time lots of potters lived in Klikov and in the area around the village. Until today Klikov is known of its potter traditions. But Marta Pozníčková, Martin Hadrava and Martin Hanuš are the only potters left in the village. We wanted to know, how the local structures are influenced by their actions. Through their workshops they attract tourists, who will come to the region. We wanted to find out, what impact this tourism has on the village and the surrounding region and how Martin Hadrava and Martin Hanuš perceive their actions in association with the developing of the village.

Also we wanted to investigate in sustainability issues concerning the pottery and the potters' sensibility for this topic. Therefore we asked them about the biosphere reserve of Třeboňsko and their opinion living in a biosphere reserve. Also we investigated in their material flows concerning recourses for production like clay or wood for firing the kiln. Also we were interested in money flows. Do they take the money they earn in Klikov to Prag and spend it there? Or is the money kept in the local system?

In our case sustainability aspects of the pottery in the context of the local level were the economic and the cultural aspects. Through the pottery the village experiences some economic benefits due to local money flows and tourists being attracted by the practice of old traditions. This aspect and the circumstance of being in a biosphere reserve contribute to a softer and probably more sustainable kind of tourism. And this in turn enables the village to keep up its local structure without being endangered by rural depopulation.

2. Method:

Our team consists of five people. We have quite different backgrounds. Therefore we have also diverse approaches and understanding the situation from different points of view. We look at the case of our potters from various perspectives. Such as anthropological, economical, social and ecological as well. Since we all had different experiences with doing interviews and researches we all participated equally. All of us posed questions to Martin Hadrava and Martin Hanuš. We made a

structure according to which we were trying to get as much information in a about two hours as possible. One of us took notes so that it does not affect the flow of the overall interview. The interview setting was very comfortable in the house of Martin, one of the potters. They were ready to talk, ready for us and gave us some tea to drink which made the moment quite special. Since the house is near a little lake and woods it was quite magical. Martin Hanuš is also of different character wearing clothes and having dreadlocks made him look alternative. So were his opinions and philosophy. So the atmosphere was very laid back. There were no big challenges since they were opened and we were quite well prepared. The only thing that would be good is to talk to the third potter Martha who could have different opinion about the functioning.

3. The Informants:

Martin Hadrava is a professional potter and went to ceramic school in Prag and took part in many Workshops. He started with own workshops in Prague, where he had a small oven. But due to this he could not produce much and also the oven could not be heated up really high. He often thought about having a bigger oven that could stand high temperature because this would enable a greater variety of pottery. The first time he came to Klikov to do a pottery workshop. There he met Marta Pozníčková and became a friend of her. He also wanted to do workshops in the village so with the help of his parents he bought a place on the outskirts of the village with a kiln and a small house in 2008. There he started to do workshops during the summer. In winter he did workshops in Prag because it is too cold to stay at the place in Klikov due to the bad isolation of the house. Since a few years he has a house in another village near Klikov, where he and his wife live. Yet he is in Klikov most of the time.

Martin Hanuš got to know Martin Hadrava through his sister, who knew Martin Hadrava and Marta Pozníčková. Martin Hanuš did not go to any ceramic school but he did some workshops where he learned to potter. He also became a friend of Martin Hadrava and Marta Pozníčková and started holding workshops together with Martin Hadrava. He also used to stay in Prag during the winter. Since three years he organising a ceramics exhibition together with a Japanese guy and also staying in Klikov during the winter.

Martin Hadrava, Martin Hanuš and Marta Pozníčková have a kind of cooperation. They are producing flowerpots together and from the earnings of the selling of these flowerpots they finance Marta's shop in the centre of the village and Martin's place on the outskirts of the village. Besides this they all have their own business with production and workshops. They do not earn much, but they don't feel bad about that because they live a very simple Life.

4. Findings:

4.1. The Sustainability of an Alternative Pottery:

We are structuring our findings along the most popular sustainability model, the sustainability triangle, with its three columns: economical, ecological and social issues. We are aware of the highly criticized standing of this model in the sustainability studies, but since talking about participants of a local economic system, it is a suitable concept for us in analysing their role and impact in and on Klikov. After defining the boundaries of the system (analytical and practical ones), we try to give an idea of the stocks and flows in the local pottery network, regarding it as a system.

4.2. Boundaries of the Local System

Concerning the complex interrelations of a local rural system like the village Klikov, we assert that system boundaries in an industrialized and globalized society are strongly blurred and not congruent with the boundaries of the research territory. So the analytical demarcation has to follow pragmatical considerations. First, we see that Martin Hadrava and Martin Hanuš are positioned in the frontier area of the local system in Klikov. They are a part of the community of the village and on the other hand they distance themselves from the local social life. They are in a special position in the community. They are “people who came to stay”, following Georg Simmel’s “stranger” concept (1950). However there are some links for flows into the local rural system of Klikov, running through the pottery business of Martin Hadrava and his friend. They sell their pottery in Klikov in Marta’s shop, she plays a link role for them in this system. She is a kind of key person to the local community for the men from the capital. Martin is also offering ceramics at pottery markets in different cities of the Czech Republic. They are selling their products in Prague as well, and giving classes in pottery production, that turn in interested parties who come to Klikov and spend their time and money in workshops, which has also a touristic impact on the region. So there is also a kind of personnel flow through the region, they account for. But in this case Hadrava and Hanuš set their own boundaries. They say they want to have a special kind of tourists, who value their efforts and not mass tourism, which would bring more capital. So in our understanding there could be more involvement of the local economic system in the globalized market, but the pottery men are absolutely not focusing on that, although they could. In our opinion they would have a realistic chance to get some subsidies for keeping a cultural heritage alive or for building up a special kind of soft tourism in the region, but after dealing with the administrative barriers once,

they don't want to get subsidies from the government or from the Europe Union anymore. Even though this money could support their financial situation to boost their income. There is also a flow of information through the internet. Martin uses the internet for promoting his workshops and the local pottery tradition (URL 1, URL 2) but not for selling his products. They could intense their effort also in this case, but they are not really interested in doing so.

The potters get a lot of required resources from within the local system (wood, water, a part of the clay) but there are also material flows across the system borders. Beside the clay from their own territory, they have to import about the half of the material from another village, so they have to trade with the resources. On one hand the reason for that is the low quality of their own material and on the other hand the biosphere reserve they are living in has some natural boundaries for them as well. As a result, we see the practical system boundaries mostly not set from the outside but constructed by the pottery men themselves. The system would offer so much more possibilities which they just not use but repectivley set their own borders.

4.3. Ceramics Transitions:

Following the idea of sociometabolic regimes (Sieferle 1997, Fischer-Kowalski 1997) and the need for a transition from the actual fossil energy based industrial society into a solar based sustainable society, one of the most important steps is to reduce the material and energy intensity of a modern society's economic activities (Haberl 2011). A shift of emphasis from production to services is necessary to reduce the material and energy usage. The pottery business in Klilkov illustrates this change in shifting from pottery production to workshops for pottery handcraft. In this kind they also promote the often requested dematerialisation of economy and a value shift from a growth based commodity fetishism to esteeming imaterial abstract values. The potters sell more a different lifestyle and a philosophical way of thinking, than a service in the classical meaning. They sell the idea of a happy and simple life and can be seen as the "cultural creatives" (Ray 2000) in Klikovs local system. Even though they are not well integrated in the local community, they act as kinds of role models for a different way of living and earning money in it. This lifestyle can be called "sustainable" because of their low need of material and energy resources, the idea of making business in services by teaching a traditional handcraft as a cultural heritage of the village and by transfairing money from richer urban areas to the marginal borderland of the Czech Republic throught the workshop participants. Even though there are also money flows out of the local system through them, especially to Prague, the winter residence of Martin. At least a part of the money

brought into the village through these “workshop tourists”, remains in the local economy through paying local taxes, buying food and visiting the local pubs and restaurants. As it is mentioned in the last preceding passage Martins way of living is beyond the classical economical growth paradigm. They would be able to grow their business and sales, but they do not want to. They know, that there is a need to earn money to survive, but in their philosophy there is no need to grow and to earn more and more money. They are celebrating their simple way of life close to nature.

4.4. Stocks and Flows of a Pottery:

The physical stocks which influence the whole system are the land, the buildings of the pottery, the tools and the people. Following Piere Bourdieu’s concept of the different “forms of capital” (2008) the knowledge of the two men can be seen as their “cultural capital”. It plays a particular role in the pottery system. It is the key stock in the transition from production to services. There are several flows which come through Martin and Martin into the system, we called those variables “cultural flows” (knowledge), “economic flows” (money) and “physical flows” (material). The cultural flow, our first variable, which has the most impact on this metabolic subsystem is so important because, it gives Martin Hadrava and Maritn Hanuš the base for their work. As we know, there has always been pottery in this place like centuries ago and Martin Hadrava also brought craft knowledge from somewhere else to the village. So there is a cultural capital input from them and an output on the other side which is, that the knowledge of the local pottery craft won’t get lost. So the tradition helps them to survive and they help the tradition to stay alive. Another output would be the reputation and the philosophy of Martin Hanuš which could be attractive for tourism. The visitors which participate in the workshops could generate a feedback loop for the system, they are coming back and bring other people with them or tell other people from experiences they made.

Concerning the economic flows Martin brought quite a lot of money to the village to buy the land they are working on. The output of our second variables are the money they bring to other places for buying stuff, the money they spend in Prague through the winter season, and remittances to the Martins family in another village.

The third party we call physical flows, material (clay, wood, water) and energy, which result in the ceramic products, but also in waste and emissions, are pretty low, because the potters are heating up their ceramics oven only once a year.

4.5. The Symbiosis of a Handcraft and a Biosphere Reserve

Hence Martin Hadrava and Martin Hanuš' work has an important impact on the village Klikov and the surrounding region, even though the cultural immaterial flows are much more important than the physical and economical ones. There is potential for an emerging interdependency between the people keeping the local pottery tradition alive and the local biosphere reserve. Both attract well paid and well educated tourist from urban areas. Which means, that there is a chance for the craftsmen to attract people who are entering the region not only for bathing and cycling, but for experiencing the beauty of nature and the fascinating culture and history of the area, and there is an extra profit for the people coming to Klikov for participating in the pottery workshops in getting in contact with nature in the reserve.

5. Reflection:

The interview with people living in the local rural area and being a part of the local rural system was a relevant way to get an idea about sustainability of local rural systems, not only considering the village Klikov but also with a wider respect of local rural systems all together.

An important point when thinking of sustainability of local rural system is to think about people living and taking part to this system. People taking part to the local rural system affect all the aspects of sustainability of the system, environmental, social and economical. New inhabitants keep the system going not only by their own actions and efforts but also possibly attracting visitors to the area, as in our case. These visitors, mostly tourists bring money to the area and so keep supporting the economical sustainability of the local rural system.

An important point when considering sustainability of a local rural area is the sustainability of old and long lived traditions, as in our case the pottery tradition. Keeping up these old traditions is important both for the sustainability of cultural heritage of the rural area and for the economical aspect of sustainability of the area. But as our case showed people living in the local rural areas tend to forget the importance of these traditions. And the importance of these traditions is usually seen only when the traditions has already been forgotten.

The sustainability of local rural areas is not only important for the community living there, but also for the people living in urban areas. As our case showed a lot of people living in urban areas visit rural areas in their vacations. The visit to rural areas plays an important role as a place for relaxing and taking a break from hectic city life. By visiting to the local rural area, tourists don't just take care of their own wellbeing but they also play an important role as supporters of the sustainability, mostly economical, of the local rural system.

The last thing we learned from our case was the fact that surrounding areas also have an effect on local rural systems, as in our case the biosphere reserve area. This area attracts visitors to the rural area and these visitors bring money flows to the local rural system. As also in our case, usually people living in the local rural area tends to underestimate the importance of biosphere reserve to the local rural system.

All in all, our interview showed that the sustainability of a local rural area is a multi dimensional case that should be analyzed by looking all the different aspects of sustainability. From our case we learned the importance on economical aspects, old traditions and surrounding areas for the sustainability of the local rural system. As our case showed the sustainability of the local depends mostly on people both those living in the rural area and those visiting there.

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