

EDIFICATIONS FROM THE LEADER PROGRAM BASED ON THE RESULTS OF A HUNGARIAN MICRO-REGION II. MATERIAL AND METHODS, OWN ANALYSES

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Abstract

15 years ago Hungary joined the European Union. The first full financial period for the nation as a member of the European Community was 2007-2013. As a full member, Hungary gained access to many financial sources granted by the European Unnion. It is necessary to inspect the efficiency of how the sources have been spent on development, focusing on the LEADER program. The best way to do this is by selecting one of the poorer micro-regions and examining it using different methods. Within my research I used inspected different statistics, I looked into the traditional profession of shepherding which has a long history in the region and I interviewed the citizens of the Sárrét microregion. This multidisciplinary research gave more precise results and conclusions for my research. Suggestions made on the on the conclusions can provide a much more accurate help to decision makers in the periods that are ahead of us.

Key words: LEADER program, Hungary, Sárrét, development, shepherding

MATERIAL AND METHOD

During the examination of Topic 1, I was looking for answers to the question of how successful the Hungarian regional policy, especially with regard to Community Initiatives, was between 2007 and 2013 (Glatz, 2008). I made a comparative study of the North Great Plain Region, Hajdú-Bihar County and Sárrét. In the case of the 5 settlements selected in Sárrét, I conducted a structured interview with the inhabitants of the settlements, with which I also examined the feasibility of the implemented developments and their adaptation to local conditions. My aim was to reveal whether the use of development funds invested in the examined period contributed to the catching up of poorer regions or they maintained or increased their economic and social backwardness.

Based on the available data and the HCSO databases, I made a comparative analysis of the Hungarian regions. It is important to examine Hajdú-Bihar county and the North Great Plain region, which is the narrower home of the Sárrét, because the economy of a small region is most influenced by the political, economic and social processes of its surrounding region.

The database used for my research was provided by the Institute for Rural Development, Training and Consulting - VKSZI (later NAKVI,

currently Herman Ottó Institute). The data were collected by EPAP Kft. The database was obtained in a Microsoft Excel file and the statistics, graphs and tables used for the analysis were also done in Microsoft Excel. I have tried to choose and use an analytical method that will allow my research results to be used further by others. Continuing the analysis and further expanding the data may provide another perspective for practical use.

The methodology used in the survey of the settlements of Sárrét was the following: Knowing the historical background of the region, I conducted a structured interview in which I asked 26 questions divided into three topics. This interview is shown in Appendix 1. In the first round, I was curious about the individual and their relationship with the community. In the second round, I asked questions about the developments that were made. Finally, in the third part, I was looking for answers to the extent to which the implemented developments fit into the spirit of the LEADER program and local conditions.

Surveying the experiences and needs of locals provides the most accurate confirmation that the proper development has taken place or that there have been "dead-end" investments that are unjustified and their maintenance may even be a burden for the local community and the community budget (Sain, 2010).

As a second topic, I analysed the specific relationship between agriculture and rural development. I chose a long-standing traditional livestock breeding industry, sheep-breeding, which has a strong influence on the culture, heritage and traditions of the Sárrét region.

Peasant culture and traditions are ubiquitous in the Sárrét region, and are an integral part of the lifestyle of shepherds and sheep-keepers and all other attributes.

The large number of Hungarian sheep farms in the less favoured areas can also be well integrated into the rural development instruments by choosing appropriate development directions (Moseley, 2013). According to Madai (2000), the inclusion of support related to rural development and the sector in the strategy could better help the implementation of differentiated forms of support linked to the level of production and efficiency, as the aid linked to rural development could partially replace the income support (KostovandLingard, 2001). It is also important because, according to the calculations of Jávör and Nábrádi (1999), 25.4% of the ewe stock was in socially and infrastructurally underdeveloped settlements, while 15.3% was in settlements where unemployment is 1.5 times higher than the Hungarian average.

The natural maintenance of pasture farming, grasslands and less fertile areas, which is not an easy task for other types of farming, are the main areas where sheep breeding contributes to the maintenance of environmental

balance (biodiversity and water quality, erosion, control of floods, avalanches and fires, storage of carbonaceous compounds in soil organic matter). At the same time, sheep play a key role in the social cohesion of agricultural areas.

In the third topic, which included the inhabitants' evaluation of the developments based on a structured interview, I wanted to examine how the inhabitants of the different villages experienced the development of their place of residence (Kovács and Koós, 2018).

Do they see the adaptation of the development in the life of their community, do they sense the improvement of the quality of life, or the change in the quality of services? Are there any population groups who have different perceptions of the changes in the life of their village? I was also looking for the impact of economic, social and infrastructural investments on village life (G. Fekete, 2013). I also tried to ensure that the respondents reflect the composition of the population in terms of education, age, and gender.

Own analyses

The examined settlements are Bihardancsháza, Bihartorda, Nagyrábé, Sáp and Sárrétudvari. All five villages, as they are often described in technical terms, are disadvantaged. In addition to the interviews, I examined the composition and proportions of the population living in the settlement according to age, education, religion, ethnicity, marital status and employment. These are all important factors for a better understanding of the responses of the inhabitants of a settlement during the interview. They tell a lot about the satisfaction, the standard of living, the mental health of the local people, and the kind of communities that are present in the settlement and how cohesive they are (Uzzoli and Szilágyi, 2013).

In the light of these factors, I analysed and evaluated the interviews and the investments made.

The five settlements under investigation occupy 18,975 hectares, with a total population of 7159 people. Territorially, Nagyrábé is the largest settlement - albeit second only in terms of population -, which covers 8542 hectares, accounts for almost half (45.02%) of the total area, while only 1.38% of the county. The smallest settlement, both in terms of population and its size expressed in hectares, is Bihardancsháza, which occupies only 831 hectares, represents only 4.38% of the examined region and only 0.13% of Hajdú-Bihar County.

In addition to the number of inhabitants and the size of the settlement, the composition of the population is also important. The composition of age, gender, nationality and education largely determines the innovative character and opportunities of young people and their desire to stay or go.

The future of an aging settlement like Bihardancsháza without a drastic intervention can be easily seen. Young people emigrate in a couple of decades and the rest of the elderly disappear, leaving the village depopulated.

An important part of the survey is the analysis of the population of the settlements in Sárrét by population density, marital status, education, employment, gender distribution, and ethnic and religious affiliation, as this gives a more accurate picture of the community and its mental health status. Mental status is greatly influenced by the fact that a person is single, married, or widowed, since there is also a place to belong for a person in a marriage, while a single or widowed person may be negatively affected by loneliness, which he or she may try to compensate for by trying to become an integral part of a community. Such a community can be a religious congregation or even an ethnic group.

Sárrét projects between 2007-2013

To track developments and improvements over the past decade, I have collected projects for the five settlements in the district of Püspökladány in the Sárrét micro-region, which were important to me because I wanted to know how and to what extent the population perceived the developments, how much they knew about them and did they take part in their implementation? As a matter of course, I was also curious about their attitude towards further improvements.

In the assessed cycle, the five villages received a total of 173 million HUF of LEADER support, of which 154.7 million was used. It follows that, unfortunately, two grants received were not used in the case of Nagyrabé. As a result, investments of approximately 18.3 million EUR were not implemented.

The average of the small region was 19,951 HUF, i.e., it did not reach 20,000 HUF per person. I am convinced that this is very little for a pace of development that has the hope of catching up, especially because economic investment and development was only rarely found.

Altogether, economic development in the examined cycle from LEADER resources was negligible. Consequently, long-term job creation was not significant either. The development of accommodation can also have a spillover effect.

Developments are also important in the life of a village because they can improve infrastructure, social conditions, health and schools. They can contribute to transport, environmental quality, job creation, economic attractiveness and income, which are key elements of the quality of life in rural areas. From the aspect of the running projects, it is very important how much investments reach the population and to what extent they are utilised,

contributing to the population's mental state and vision. They also show how much they love their village and the reasons they have when planning to stay or emigrate. To determine these aspects, I developed a questionnaire, which can be found in the attachment.

In addition to personal data, the questionnaire includes the inhabitants' ambition, their relationship to the settlement and community life, and their knowledge of the development of the settlement.

I divided the interview questions into three groups. The first group contained questions that were meant to map the age of the individual and their relationship with the settlement. It was important for me to assess how long they have lived in their place of residence, what has connected them to the settlement, as well as what abilities, skills and opportunities they have had so far to become involved in community life.

The second group of questions was mapping the involvement of the community in the projects. In addition, I intended to reveal how well they know the developments implemented and, if so, how they see their necessity and usefulness.

The third and final group of questions concerns the LEADER program. It assesses the respondents' awareness of the program and the extent to which its developments have been adapted to its principles and spirit. These questions assess current and future needs, the developments being implemented and the opportunities for involving the population.

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