

## THE ROLE OF LOCAL COMMUNITIES IN THE SUCCESS OF VILLAGES

GABRIELLA LUDESCHER<sup>1</sup>

**ABSTRACT** - The infrastructural conditions of villages have important role, but they are not enough in themselves for the success of a certain village. Those local communities that can be described as cooperative, have a stronger ability to enforce interests. Additionally, their local and social dividedness is lower. If a village has a strong community, which can communicate and assert their interests, it can solve the infrastructural problems of the village.

The positive social relations make the village more attractive for the locals and for those individuals who would like to settle down there. On the other hand, social conflicts are poisoning the local relationships and are hindering the formation and the operation of the community life.

**Key words:** local community, success, development, social capital, social space, village

The Hungarian rural development has been studied by a lot of researchers by using many different methods. The studies approach this topic from the central financial subsidies viewpoint or from the programmes and strategies viewpoint. This dissertation would like to break these trends so it does not consider development as exclusively dependent on sources, but it interprets the strategy as local, and considers the local community as a leading factor.

The author believes that the integration of the community and the handling of the economic-social problems are important during development, not only in theory, but in practice as well. A solution has to be found for such problems, a solution that can help the economic development of the village people and can help eliminate social differences.

According to the author, the tool of the rural development is the development of the local community. During the research, the author emphasises the analysis of the soft factors and their role in the development of local communities. This study examines the following soft factors: the social capital, the cooperation, the manner, and the motivation. The importance of the soft factor components has already been discussed by many researchers, but they have mainly studied how these components can help a certain person's life, and have not discussed their support to the local society, community.

In the present study, the author examines those individuals who are dominant in their community, checks their personal and behavioural properties that (may) have an effect on the local society.

The studied social soft factors do not cover all the existing soft factors. The author would like to demonstrate that trust, norm, community forming power, cooperation, same manner, and strong motivation have a really important role in the life of a village, and in its possible success.

These factors help a community to come into being and these communities will be able to weaken the migration from rural areas and to develop the economy.

Taking into consideration all the soft factors, the study finds that in a given village it is not enough to develop institutions, infrastructure and economy, but every effort has to be taken for the development of the community to ensure the success of the village. The investment into the village

---

<sup>1</sup> Research assistant, University of Pécs, Faculty of Sciences, Institute of Geography, Department of Political Geography and Regional Development, Pécs, Hungary.  
E-mail: ludescherg@yahoo.com

communities will return similarly like in other investments, because the educational force of the community and its solidarity can mean a significant economic power.

The author studied three statistically similar villages to bear out her theory.

**Table 1.** Summary of the most important data on the three studied villages

<b>Data</b>	<b>Bükkösd</b>	<b>Himesháza</b>	<b>Szalánta</b>
Number of inhabitants in 2007	1,179 persons	1,144 persons	1,240 persons
Population density	42.8/km <sup>2</sup>	69.6/km <sup>2</sup>	67.4/km <sup>2</sup>
Unemployed	6%	6%	5%
Inactive people with income	36%	40%	34%
Employed	29%	32%	33%
Employed people working locally	42%	62%	73%
Distance from Pécs	20 km	40 km	14 km
Age pyramid	Follows the national tendency	Ageing tendency	Follows the national tendency
The highest qualification owned by the population (degree) in percentage	4%	4%	4%
Biggest minority in the village	Gipsy	German	Croatian
Religion	Roman Catholic	Roman Catholic	Roman Catholic
The parts of the village (they were independent villages earlier)	Bükkösd, Gorica Megyefa	Himesháza	Németi, Szalánta (within the latter: Eszterágpusztá)

(Source: own compilation)

Based on the empirical study of the three villages it is obvious that in spite of similarities (coming from the type of the settlements), the villages can differ from each other in communities, economic organisations and institutions which are creating the local societies, and whose factors can not always be expressed numerically.

The history of the society is different in the three studied villages. The subsistence of the population of Bükkösd was related to the local manor, and from this fact resulted a dependent relationship that grinded the desire of independency.

In case of Himesháza and Szalánta, the situation is different because in these villages the members of the population were farmers (peasants) who ran their farms on their own. The common destiny, the jointly survived afflictions had very big effect on the formation of the local societies.

In the history of Bükkösd's society, we cannot find any exact breaking point in the last hundred years that had an effect on the local society. In the last forty years, a slow and difficultly reversible social change can be observed. The decrease in population and the migration (between 1970 and 2007 the population decreased by 700 persons), the ethnical structure of the population has also changed, which had a negative effect on the local educational institutions and, indirectly, on the society as well.

In the current social life of Himesháza, in its cooperative abilities, in its established norms and manner, a social historical breaking point can be found, which is related to the deportations (from their house or from the country), the settlements, and the displacement to labour camps.

The events of 1945 caused a transformation in the local society, the seemingly weakening processes had a contradictory effect: it strengthened the solidarity, cooperation and trust within the community. The solidarity of the community can also be observed in the society, it is based on a strong autochthonous community base, which can form opinions and is able to integrate the newcomers to the local society.

In case of Szalánta, there is no real social breaking point; the demography of the village has shown a stable development. It is due to the local employment and the common ethnical structure that

## THE ROLE OF LOCAL COMMUNITIES IN THE SUCCESS OF VILLAGES

undergoes transformation from the '70s. The closeness of Pécs has an effect on the village life, but in spite of this fact, the village could maintain its rural character.

With full knowledge of the villages, the study would like to give answer to a question, substantial from the rural development point of view: what is needed for the success of the villages?

Based on the study, the most important factors of the success are the local economy and the local companies.

The interviews with local entrepreneurs and considering Berger's opinion (1998), the author feels that it is worth taking into consideration the cultural and the individual approach of the companies, since the culture of the local society has an effect on companies, and the companies have an effect on the local society with their individual abilities.

During the analysis of the companies, parallel with the social factors, the individual factors are emphasised. These factors are entrepreneur manner, motivation, relation network, relation capital and the future oriented behaviour of the entrepreneurs.

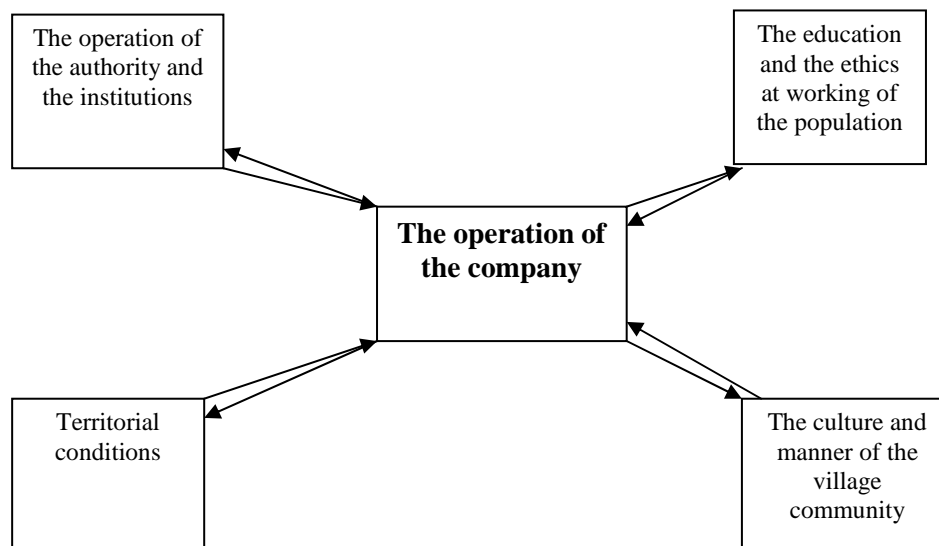
In the analysis - based on the entrepreneur's activity - the author found that entrepreneurs in certain categories (goalrational<sup>2</sup>, value racional, etc) similarly execute their actions, since they founded and operate their companies within similar conditions.

If we extend our study, we will find that the social and life situation which creates a new company, have an important effect on the operation of the company. The social circumstances and the given life situation will define the formation of a given company.

The managing view of a forced entrepreneur basically differ from the entrepreneur who has created his company as a self-realisation. To continue this idea, it is also important for the local society what was the reason for founding the company.

The functioning of companies has determinant role in the rural areas, irrespectively of whether the entrepreneur employs only himself/herself or has more employees.

Based on the author's opinion, it is important to recognize that the entrepreneurs have essential role in the development of villages.



**Figure 1.** *The relationship between the companies and the local society*  
(Source: Own compilation)

<sup>2</sup> "The motivation of the goalrational activity is that which kind of behaviour does the active expect from the subjects of the outer world and from other people, and in what extent can he use these expectations, as conditions, to achieve his rationally chosen and sized up goals" (Weber 1987, 53).

Additionally, the local factors – the operation of the authority institutions, the abilities of the local community, and the territorial conditions in the village - have strong effect on companies (Table 2).

**Table 2.** *The interaction of the companies and the local society*

The authority and the institutions	Employee	The culture and manner of the village community	Territorial conditions	The operation of the company
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• financial and moral support</li> <li>• representation</li> <li>• quick administration</li> <li>• ensuring a communication platform</li> <li>• public safety</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• workforce</li> <li>• adequate education</li> <li>• ethics at work</li> <li>• familiarity with the place</li> <li>• local consumption</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• community relationship</li> <li>• local identity</li> <li>• ideas</li> <li>• social control</li> <li>• solidarity</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• site</li> <li>• infrastructure</li> <li>• design of the village</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• job</li> <li>• local tax</li> <li>• voluntary donation</li> <li>• service</li> <li>• social and environmental responsibility</li> <li>• population retaining force</li> <li>• institutional development force</li> </ul>

(Source: Own compilation)

According to the author, the other factors of the success and development of villages are the local institutions and the work organisations.

The mayor has a determinant role in the life of a village. It is determinant what was his/her intention to be a mayor to run the authority and the village successfully. Villages need a leader who believes and practices democratic principles and is seeking the consensus with the inhabitants. It is important that mayors should not expect the development of the village from outer sources, but they need to be able to do everything for the success of the settlement.

The soft (common interest, objective and subjective properties of the staff) and hard (strategies, structures, systems) components of the local institutions determine the development of the villages. In case of the studied villages, the soft components had stronger effect on their success.

The author believes that the choice of the appropriate specialist to run the institutions of the village has an important role, and it is also important that the employees should belong to the local community. Not only because they feel stronger responsibility for their own village, but also because the village ensures employment for the intellectual class that has retaining and community forming power.

The presence of the institutions and the habit of the employees have population-retaining role in that case, if they own appropriate specialised knowledge, vocation and responsibility for the local society to fulfill their activity.

The local society and the soft component of the community is the third component that determines the success of villages. Such components are social capital (trust, norm, community-formatting power), cooperation, manner and motivation.

In the first step, the author checked whether the three villages own a community according to the Cohen conditions. Antony Cohen (1985) determined four conditions that are required for the creation of a community. These are the following:

## THE ROLE OF LOCAL COMMUNITIES IN THE SUCCESS OF VILLAGES

1. Social space, locality. Territorial or place community can be seen in those cases where people have something in common, and this shared element is understood geographically– “locality”, “origination”.
2. Interests, issues, identities that motivate people to create a group. They are linked together by factors such as religious belief, ethnic origin, which create identity politics.
3. There are interactions between the members of the community.
4. The condition of the community is that the community should identify itself in the process of the collective social actions. The community is the center of the place, the group, and the idea, and its members are linked by the cultural vitality and expectations.

These conditions are partly fulfilled by Bükkösd and Szalánta, which can be explained by the social and territorial dividedness. The communities of Himesháza create a uniform local society. In this situation, we cannot observe any dividedness.

The strength of the community existence is also shown in the social capital of the locals. In the case of the studied villages, it can be observed that where there is weak norm system, and weak trust, there is no chance for the creation and survival of a community. It is important that the individuals of the society should cooperate to achieve common goals. For a divided society, it is difficult to create common goals and it is even more difficult to achieve them. During the creation of the agreement, the similar manner of the individuals of the local society is an important factor, which explains the behavioural uniformity. The manner is same in the case of those individuals who has socialised under the same cultural circumstances.

According to the author, the fourth factor is culture, which can be determinant in the success of a village.

The author would like to emphasise the role of culture in the development of the economy, in the increase in territorial and village differences. It is well known that the properties of culture are transferred by the human factors. It is a commonly accepted fact that some areas inhabited by certain ethnic groups are more or less developed. Good examples are offered by the areas inhabited by the Southern-Transdanubian Germans. The ethnic composition of crisis areas, of crisis villages is characterised by Roma majority. These developments or underdevelopments can be shown by the image of the village and by the economic indicators as well. The three studied villages have different ethnic composition. In Bükkösd, Hungarians and Romas, in Himesháza, Germans and Hungarians, in Szalánta, there are Croatians, Hungarians and Romas. In these villages, no major differences can be observed regarding the numerical data, the villages differ mainly in the properties of the communities.

Based on the results, the author considers it practical to compile a model of the rural local society, which describes the properties of the rural society, and with the help of this model, the villages could be compared.

If we consider the properties of the village society, it is easier to identify the factors ensuring the success of the villages (Table 3).

**Table 3.** *Rural local social model*

<b>Properties of the rural society</b>	<b>Ideal case</b>	<b>Bükkösd</b>	<b>Himesháza</b>	<b>Szalánta</b>
1. <i>Close community relationship</i> according to the Cohen conditions, which creates a homogenous local society.	Several smaller communities, which create a colourful, but uniform society	Several smaller opposite communities The lack of uniformity of the local community	Several smaller communities, which create a uniform society	Parallel communities, but not able to create a uniformity

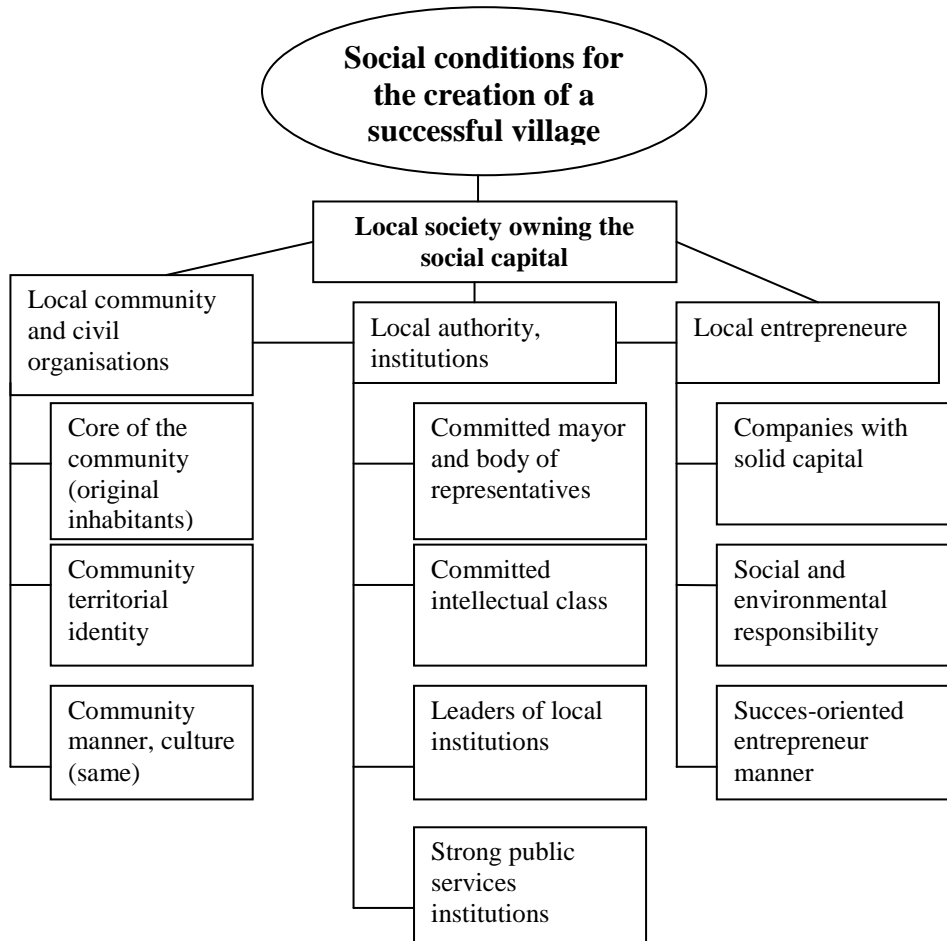
GABRIELLA LUDESCHER

2. <i>Multiple role relations</i> , a person participates in more functions. These enrich the local community relationships.	For example, the local teachers, leaders of the institutions, entrepreneurs, not only doing their jobs, but also participating in the life of the village and doing different tasks	Multiple relationships	Multiple relationships	Multiple relationships (which are just under transformation)
3. <i>Division of labour</i> : everyone doing the own job according to his/her abilities, as the local society knows the local people well	The most appropriate person owning the appropriate qualification gets the given position	Most often, non-local persons having the jobs at the authorities, so there is a bigger emphasis on the qualification than the ability	Local individuals doing their job according to their qualifications and abilities	The most appropriate person doing the given job. It is not required from the part of the local society to be also a local
4. <i>Strong social solidarity</i>	The local society shows solidarity with the local individuals	Weak solidarity	Strong solidarity	Weak solidarity
5. <i>Same manner, culture</i> , even if the ethnic structure is different in the given village	Same way of thinking and same view, which makes the cooperation easier	Same manner, culture, which create conflicts	Same habit, manner and the ethnic interdependency helps the successful operation of the village	More different manner, culture Within different habits, more similar culture and ethnic groups can be observed
6. <i>Norms created and accepted by the local society</i>	Norms known and accepted by everybody	Weak norm system	Everyone knows and accepts the local norms	There are more norms, and no unity of purpose. The migrants knows the new norms less, so it is hard for them to accept these new norms.
7. <i>Strong local identity awareness</i>	The identity awareness has population preservation power	It has no population retaining force, because there is no uniform identity	Uniform identity awareness, which helps the successful operation of the village	There is more identity awareness, which is strong in itself

(Source: Own compilation)

## THE ROLE OF LOCAL COMMUNITIES IN THE SUCCESS OF VILLAGES

Finally, the study tries to compile an overall graph (Figure 2), which informs about the social conditions of the success of villages.



**Figure 2.** *Social conditions for the creation of a successful village*  
(Source: own compilation)

### CONCLUSION

The relations of the local society have an effect on the economic and social operation of the villages. Effects on the economic operation cannot always be quantified because only estimations exist in this topic. The conflicts regarding the cement factory had an effect on the economy of Bükkösd. With the elected representatives, the local absence of interest, the opposition of interest hindered the construction of the cement factory during a public referendum. The population of Himesháza can be described as conflict evasive, which has a positive effect on the local economy. The local entrepreneurs are helping each other and the voluntary co-operative work in agriculture is also operating.

Culture and ethnics have a role in the success of villages. In most cases, not the ethnic background of the village is the most determinant, but the ability of creating a unity and the norms they communicate to the local society. In parallel with culture and ethnics, the author states that the religiousness of the population is important, and is also based on a norm system. During the research, it could be observed that in the villages where the population is religious, the community life is much stronger. Religion can generate community-forming activities as well.

The manner of the leaders of institutions and of the entrepreneurs has a major effect on the success of a village. The mayor has an emphasized role in the development of the village. Parallel with his work, it is advantageous if an opinion forming, exemplary class can come in to being, and the cooperation of the population is also required. Based on the studies, it can be observed that the leaders of the institutions and the entrepreneurs having the same manner can cooperate more easily, which helps the village to be successful. In the cultural and community life, the village has population retaining force, and it becomes attractive for those who want to settle down. For the young class of Himesháza (attending high school, college, or university) the rich cultural supply of the village and the local programmes are also attractive. They like to spend their free time in their mother village and the community life has an important role. In the future, it will create life-long friendships and life partner relationships. Due to this fact, it is frequent that the local and the neighbour young-aged people are getting married. In Bükkösd, the young people usually wish to move to richer villages or towns because of the lack of community life. Szalánta offers programs for the Croatian culture, and it narrows down the possibility for the creation of community groups. Despite this fact, the village does not have to fear of the decreasing in population.

### REFERENCES

- BERGER, BRIGITTE (1998), *A modern vállalkozás kultúrája* [The Culture of Modern Entrepreneurship], Replika 29 (március), pp. 171–184.
- BERGER, PETER; BERGER, BRIGITTE; KELLNER, HANSFRIED (1973), *The Homeless Mind: Modernization and Consciousness*, Random House, New York.
- BÓDI FERENC–BŐHM ANTAL (2000), *Sikeres helyi társadalmak Magyarországon* [A Successful Local Community in Hungary], Agroinform Kiadóház, Budapest.
- BŐHM ANTAL (2002), *Helyi társadalom, önkormányzatok, településfejlesztés* [Local Community, Councils, Development of Settlement], Agroinform Kiadóház, Budapest.
- BŐHM ANTAL (1996), *A helyi társadalom* [The Local Community], Csokonai Vitéz Mihály Tanítóképző Főiskola Társadalomtudományi és közművelődési Tanszéke.
- COHEN, ANTONY P. (1985), *The Symbolic Construction of Community*, Tavistock, London.
- NÉPSZÁMLÁLÁS 2001 (2002), *6. Területi adatok, 6.3 Baranya megye I. és II. kötet* [The 2001 Census: 6. Territorial Data, 6.3 Baranya County], KSH, Budapest.
- NÉPSZÁMLÁLÁS 2001 (2002): *4. Nemzetiségi kötődés. A nemzeti, etnikai kisebbségek adatai Baranya megye* [The 2001 Census: 4. Attachment to Nationality. Data on National Ethnic Minority in Baranya County], KSH, Budapest.
- STATISZTIKAI ÉVKÖNYV (2008), *Települések fontosabb adatai 2007*, [Yearbook of Statistics: Important Data on Settlements], KSH, Budapest.
- WEBER, MAX (1982 [1905]): *A protestáns etika és a kapitalizmus szelleme* [The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism.] Budapest: Gondolat Kiadó.