

EDITORIAL

"... it is necessary to leave the philosophy of renovated village greens and pavements. Keeping people in rural areas should be the key principle. And this cannot be done in any other way than by employment promotion. We haven't shown yet what we could have shown. ...I'm convinced that if 100 % of investment in the following programme period supported job creation, it wouldn't be a mistake." (Eduard Kavala, the Chairman of the Association for Rural Renewal of the Czech Republic; Zpravodaj venkova 11/2012: 14)

This volume is one of the results of the project Non-agricultural and non-tourism economic industries in rural peripheries of the Visegrad countries funded by the International Visegrad Fund (No. 21410332). It is partly a reaction to Mr Kavala's call for more employment-oriented measures and policies for rural areas which, in our opinion, are missing in the planning, political and even academic discourse of rural development, not only in Visegrad countries but in other developed countries of the global North as well. Instead, existing rural development policies very often focus on agriculture whose importance for rural areas, in terms of employment and income of rural inhabitants has been constantly decreasing. Apart from agriculture, tourism is also very often presented as "salvation" for rural areas in such policies, although its economic contribution for rural areas is spatially limited only to a few areas with a very attractive environment or very strong regional marketing which has enabled their intensive commodification.

Four project partners from the following institutions:

- Jan Evangelista Purkyně University in Ústí nad Labem – Faculty of Science (Department of Geography) and Faculty of Social and Economic Studies,
- Hungarian Academy of Sciences – Research Centre for Astronomy and Earth Sciences,
- Pavol Jozef Šafárik University in Košice – Department of Geography,
- Polish Academy of Sciences – Institute of Geography and Spatial Organization,

have joined together to conduct research focusing on rural economies, rural and regional policies and entrepreneurship in their countries. It was precisely their intensive discussion and fruitful cooperation which gave rise to this volume.

The aim of this volume is to support another view of rural economies than one focused mainly on agriculture. This issue emphasizes the fact that the economic importance of economic activities other than agricultural (e.g. in manufacturing, services) in rural areas is much larger than that of agriculture. Therefore, when speaking about rural economic growth, the authors are convinced that attention should be shifted more towards these non-agricultural economic activities rather than to agriculture as was usual in the last decades. From this point of view, research into these "other" economic activities and its support within rural development tools is very much needed. To summarize it, this volume should help to erode the prevailing every day, political and even academic discourse of rural economies as equal to agriculture.

In the article by **Hruška, Siviček** and **Czapiewski** the rationale for writing this volume is demonstrated in the context of changing rural space and stagnating rural economic research. On the base of literature analysis the changing role of economic sectors on rural areas are presented. In the article by **Novotný, Hruška, Egedy** and **Mazur** the conceptualization of rural is discussed. There are many approaches for the definition of rural. Each definition or approach to rural is suitable for different situations or research purposes. Therefore descriptive definitions of rural are introduced and implemented on the example of Visegrad countries, as for such large-scale research quantitative approaches are needed. The definition of rural as locality is very useful to make us aware of barriers and opportunities for doing business in rural areas. Post-modern approaches have introduced the definition of rural as social construction which is very important for explaining the economic revival of rural areas related to the process of counterurbanization and resulting influx of qualified people. From this point of view, rural idyll as one of the dominating discourses of rural is one of the drivers of this spatial process. The article by **Novotný, Mazur** and **Egedy** provides theoretical discussion focusing on the term periphery. Various approaches for the definition of periphery are introduced, derived from different attitudes and perceptions of what is called periphery/peripheral. Finally, delimitation of peripheries of Visegrad countries is presented based on statistical criteria of the distance to the closest city.

When speaking about rural economies in Visegrad countries, general information about the economic climate in these countries is necessary. This is presented in article by **Cerić**, which is based on the results of Global Entrepreneurship Monitor, the world's largest study of entrepreneurship, for the year 2013. This article investigates entrepreneurial attitudes and perceptions, as well entrepreneurial aspirations and entrepreneurial activities of nascent, early stage and new businesses in Visegrad countries. In the article by **Hruška** and **Czapiewski** an example of both the western developed and Visegrad countries change of rural economies and their current situation is analysed. A minimal contribution of agriculture in developed countries is stressed, whereas rural employment in manufacturing and services is growing. This article also looks for reasons of such economic restructuring and expansion of business activities into rural areas. Finally, perspectives of rural entrepreneurship in the era of a knowledge society and the development of ICT are re-evaluated.

Aforementioned article provides the necessary background for the article by **Kovács, Csachová, Ferenc, Hruška** and **Konopski**. It discusses the relevance of rural/regional development policies for present rural or peripheral areas of Visegrad countries. Growing regional disparities as a result of post-socialist economic restructuring and the EU were key drivers for the establishment of regional development policies from the mid-1990s. The EU or more precisely the Common Agriculture Policy of the EU has also significantly influenced rural development policies, whose measures, when speaking about rural economies, are very strongly focused on agriculture or tourism.

However, in the last article by **Egedy, Cerić, Konopski, Kučerová, Kulla, Nestorová-Dická** and **Svobodová** it was shown, that there is not only agricultural and tourist enterprises operating in peripheral rural areas of Visegrad countries. Such enterprises, as was indicated in the paragraph above, are neglected in rural development policies, despite their substantial contribution to local economies and employment. Nine enterprises, all with different histories and operating in different economic branches are presented in

this article – some of them are successors of socialist enterprises, some are newly established businesses in the conditions of the free market economy. A Hungarian social enterprise and a Polish social cooperative also demonstrate new trends in job creation in peripheral rural areas and are presented in this article.

Moreover, this volume, based on the knowledge and experience of all the co-authors from Visegrad countries, should provide the reader within the last article by **Hruška, Czapiewski** and **Kovács**, with a set of planning tools to promote entrepreneurship and economic growth in rural areas. In order to make these recommendations more accessible to rural representatives from Visegrad countries, these measures are presented in Czech, Hungarian, Polish and Slovak languages, as well as in English.

The structure and logic of this volume is not based on the "cause – effect" pattern among all its articles in this volume. Instead, all individual articles rather lead to and support the final article containing policy recommendations.

It is hoped that this volume will help policy makers, students, scholars and the general public to start thinking differently about rural areas and their economic development. Hopefully it will facilitate the introduction of more efficient job-generating rural policies which would not rely solely on agriculture or tourism.

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