

Czech University of Life Sciences Prague
Faculty of Economics and Management
Department of Economics



Statements of Diploma thesis
**Diversification of Economic Activities in Rural
Space**

Aneta Fritscheová

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Summary

The main objective of this thesis is to conduct research and find out if there is a possibility to diversify the economic activity, simultaneously with respect to the requirements of sustainable development within the rural areas. It aims to answer the question: "what type of work could people do in rural areas besides the agriculture sector?". Firstly, the characteristic problems with regards to this topic are presented. Secondly, the distinction between urban, peri-urban and rural area is given, as well as several definitions of various types of development. A narrower focus concerned the alternative approaches such as the idea of sustainable development, the concept of degrowth and localization that hold the view of supporting local community development cohesion and, local trade and solidarity, nature preservation and organic production and furthermore. Thirdly, it is deeply explained how the new jobs are created or diversified and what are the specific factors that influence its course and progress. Finally, many scientists advocate that the alternative approaches might have a high potential regarding the aim to become locally self-sufficient and independent. One possibility how to get closer to this accomplishment is in alternative living represented by several alternative settlements and ecovillages. We assumed that such settlement could provide sufficient and diversified amount of job opportunities. Therefore, in the main part of the research we examined which sustainable dimension is the most important while planning and constructing such a settlement.

Keywords: Rural area, Conventional development, Rural sustainable development, Degrowth, Migration, Job creation and diversification, Alternative settlements, Ecovillage.

Aim and methodology

The main objective of this thesis is to conduct research and find out if there is a possibility to diversify the economic activity, simultaneously with respect to the requirements of sustainable development within the rural areas. It aims to answer the question: "what type of work could people do in rural areas besides the agriculture sector". This thesis further elaborates on nowadays trends of urbanization and so related increase in the tertiary and quaternary sector of employment, lack

of attractiveness and the issue of aging workers in agriculture, population increase and the associated increasing need for food. A narrower focus concerned the alternative approaches such as the idea of sustainable development, the concept of degrowth and localization that hold the view of supporting local community development cohesion and, local trade and solidarity, nature preservation and organic production and furthermore. Finally, many scientists advocate that the alternative approaches might have a high potential regarding the aim to become locally self-sufficient and independent. One possibility how to get closer to this accomplishment is in alternative living represented by several alternative settlements and ecovillages. We assumed that such settlement could provide sufficient and diversified amount of job opportunities. Therefore, in the main part of the research, we examined which sustainable dimension is the most important while planning and constructing such a settlement.

This thesis is mainly based on the study of scientific articles and academic studies including Bachelor and Diploma thesis. Statistical data concerning the settlement structure and urbanization trend in each country, the population density and employment, availability of natural resources and possibilities of associated economic activities, etc. were retrieved from the statistical institutions of each country. Another source of information represents qualitative research which was conducted in two mutually independent territories with comparable size and population, the Czech Republic as whole and Auvergne-Rhône-Alpes region in France (with one settlement at the border with Provence-Alpes-Côte d'Azur region).

In the first part, both territories were studied, four sites in each territory were visited and observed with one person interviewed and at the end, the results were compared and discussed. These eight cases were chosen for their similar aims. That is change towards more sustainable living focusing on the environmental preservation and eco-reversibility, the healthy lifestyle and the community re-development. The diversification of attitudes for an action is considerable. It has to be mentioned, that the study includes alternative settlements of a similar size, of up to 500 inhabitants or participants but the type of settlements differs. E.g. ecovillages, alternative villages, eco-sites and cities in transition where a small group initiates similar projects. In each case the concrete location was observed in detail, before or after the semi-conducted interview was carried out. Each interview lasted between 2 and 4 hours and I was every time introduced to other inhabitants or

members. The interview incorporated two types of questions. The second part of the research was devoted to the development of modeling process indicating the changes in each phase, from the “normal life” period, through planning, construction and moving-in phase, to the “new normal life” period in each of the studied alternative settlement. Finally, this thesis endeavors to provide with a recommendation of the best practices used in these settlements in order to support and comply the goals of rural sustainable development. Considering the evident differences in the area's availability and necessity, as well as governmental support and local initiatives.

Conclusions

This thesis is dealing with the issue of economic activity diversification in the rural area. Or in other words, it is trying to respond question: “What could people do in the rural area, besides working in agriculture.” There are some possibilities mostly depending on the external factors such as location, remoteness, weather condition and availability of natural resources, etc. However, this paper aimed to go beyond these factors and take the complexity of problems and barriers into account. Inspired by many alternative approaches such as sustainable development, degrowth and localization, we focused our research on alternative settlements. There is today a wide network of such settlements, communities and groups that are locally based and aim to increase diversity since they know that diversity in the economy, social classes, biodiversity, employment, etc. is very important for healthy and sustainable development which is in the rural areas even more required. They also try to achieve independence and self-sufficiency, and in order to do so, one would think, they naturally need a diversity of professions. There are some references in the literature that such alternative settlements exist. Settlements, that had succeeded to reach a high level of self-sufficiency and independence. We can refer to the Ithaca ecovillage (Kirby, 2003), the ecovillages included in the Italian Ecovillage Network (Losardo, 2016) and Canadian Craik community (Markey et al., 2010). All settlements I visited are not capable of providing sufficient amount of job opportunities for now. Nevertheless, some of them have the potential to create a certain number of jobs related to education, culture and tourism, healthcare and maybe more. Overall, there is wide range of possibilities what the rural people could do but it is not always applicable for all of them due to many factors. Already mentioned, external factors (landscape, natural and weather conditions, soil quality) and internal factors such as education, a field of studies, access to

information, interaction, cooperation, etc. Together, the internal and external factors create an invincible barrier.

Our research showed that the alternative settlements in France are much farther in terms of the evolution, compared to the settlements in the Czech Republic. In the modeling process, 5 fundamental phases were identified and we found out that the czech settlements reached in maximum the third phase of construction.

The research also confirmed the literature view about the importance of the social and economic dimensions (comprising the component of employment sufficiency and diversity) that must be, together with the environmental dimension, in balance. It is the view of sustainable development theory that is traditionally represented by a triangle with each vertex representing one dimension. However, our results also indicate other effects and influences, changing the original design of the sustainable development. Our model (see Figure 1) would look as follows:

1. The environmental dimension is on the top of the triangle, representing the principal achievement that the alternative settlements want to reach.
2. The personal dimension would lead directly to the goal, evincing the highest influence, since it encourages the single person of a group, community, society, etc. to achieve the principal goal.
3. The social and economic dimensions lead directly, each from the opposite side, to the preceding stage, as it is the engine enabling the operation and circulation. While the social dimension moderately influences the individual, the economic dimension impacts the individual

with the lowest influence.

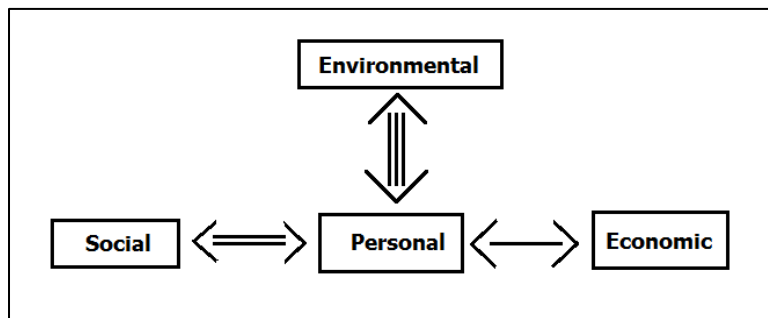


Figure 1 Model of the interrelated influences between four sustainable dimensions

We further observed that in cases where the community relations are strong during the final phase, there is greater potential for higher efficacy, more complex implementation of the planned practices and technologies and greater overall sustainability of the remaining dimensions. Factors

such as often repeated migration have significant influence on community steadiness. In the case of Éourres, this factor weakened the importance placed on social sustainability and we could see certain impacts on the other dimensions as well. Other factors include lack of specialized services, the different approaches to education and overall access to higher education, the importance of employment sufficiency and diversification, and the impossibility of reducing transportation. These factors further lead to a decline in individual vision and motivation, and also personal and environmental sustainability as a result. Finally, we could infer that if the sustainability dimensions reach significant strength, and are balanced, then the potential for further evolution, diversification and improvement of the settlement in the future is significant as well. Among the threats, we mainly highlight the limitation by low population. It was even mentioned in few interviews that there is a need for population increase in order to preserve viability, economic efficiency and functionality, aiming to potentially increase employment opportunities.

Hameau des Buis could be a representative example for the evolving settlements such as Montbrison-Forez and those in the Czech Republic. As they are still evolving and Hameau des Buis shows a good balance between all dimensions which was proved to be beneficial for the overall development. Consequently, it would lead potentially to a higher diversification of employment. This settlement, as the only one, could be considered as an ecovillage, although they have not reached total independence and self-sufficiency yet. The evolution of Czech settlements seems very similar and all of them are trying to reach the status of the ecovillage, however, it can change during the next evolution phases. For now, the emphasis is put on the transparency and openness to the public, maybe because it is still a very new concept in the country and the need for education is significant. Therefore, they reasonably and meaningfully work on the development of external (public) and to some extent, internal education systems which are very important. It is related to the necessity of raising the public awareness that is indispensable at the beginning of every kind of new concept or project. It must start with demonstrations, events helping to raise awareness and explaining why it is needed, further education, etc. This applies twice for the old rural generation.

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