

## MULTI – LEVEL GOVERNANCE TOWARDS REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT IN POSTCOMMUNIST COUNTRIES

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### **Abstract**

The study represents an attempt to analyze process of multi-level governance (MLG) in two post-communist countries: Czech Republic and Slovakia. MLG process has been something unknown in Central Europe countries to the end of the year 1989, influenced by communists' ideology of centralization every aspect of social and political life. Interview participants in figure of 30 stakeholders were engaged in workshops as parts of the process and they discussed initial scenario versions and criteria choice which were offered to them for analyzing. There were developed 5 alternative scenarios of tourism development. Scenarios of systematic tourism development based on the rules of sustainable community development and common decision making within the regions took the most positive community evaluation. Empirical implementation of MLG, discussions and agreements of those interested in regional development in order shows potential and took great interest and acceptance among community participants in the both regions.

**Keywords:** multi – level governance; environment; scenarios, management.

### **1. INTRODUCTION**

Multi-level Governance (MLG) can be seen as a response to the state-centric, intergovernmentalist theory of the EU which dominated studies throughout the so-called period of 'eurosclerosis' from the late 1960s. MLG challenges the view of the state as being the singularly most important and necessarily dominant actor within the EU policy making process. Thus, to a large extent, MLG essentially challenges our understanding of the changing nature and role of the state. At the heart of the MLG framework is the claim that in an increasing number of policy areas no single actor has complete competence. Marks (1998) state that 'the point of departure for the multi-level governance approach is

the existence of overlapping competencies among multiple levels of government'. Decision making competencies are therefore viewed as being shared amongst a variety of actors located at different territorial levels, rather than monopolised by national governments (Hooghe 2001). In particular, MLG emphasises the mobilisation of sub-national authorities and their increasing significance within the EU policy making process (Marks 1993), (Hooghe 1996). Furthermore, MLG stresses the involvement of private actors, as well as public authorities (often in public-private networks), within governance mechanisms. This is not to say that states are no longer authoritative actors, rather that states no longer monopolise the European policy process. As (Marks 1998) continue, 'member state executives, while powerful, are only one set among a variety of actors in the European policy' (Marks 1998).

The importance of different political actors varies in accordance with the features of the particular policy problem and the resources each actor possesses. Bache (2004) view the distinction between 'high' and 'low' political issues, political processes at the implementation and post-decisional stage, and unintended consequences arising from MLG, as being of particular significance in determining the nature of institutional control (Bache 2004).

At the outset, democracy, or rule by the people, was a poorly defined political principle; ambivalent and deeply ideological. While the classical liberal vision of democracy has much to recommend it, liberal democracy can nevertheless be problematic when societies do not evolve or behave normally. Mouffe (1993) argues that the Fundamentals weakness of modern "rationalist, universalist and individualist" democracy in the post-socialist era is that it remains deliberately blind to the "dimension of conflict" and to the "role of antagonism in social life" (Mouffe 1993). For Mouffe, modern democracy ignores the fundamental element of hostility among human beings in modern social arrangements.

The Held (1987) suggests though, that there are other factors at work, notably relations between public and private sectors, the roles of citizens and the importance of political community, the influence of gender and notions of public authority and political power. The role of people is no longer to make decisions but to produce a government, which they want.

Democracy, in this interpretation, involves more than parties do, it also includes sectional interests and public opinion (Schumpeter 1947). Participation in this broadened system has been centrally appeal for government that is more open and to greater "transparency" (in the neologism of government) in recent years. The consequence of this change in democratic process is that "the meaning of democracy itself has become blurred and needs to be redefined" (Mouffe 1993).

The concept of multi-level governance has become extraordinarily fashionable in recent years. The literature derives from mainstream political science, or perhaps more accurately from "within the broad

discipline of Political Studies” (Bache 2004), and particularly from British and U.S. studies of the influence of the European Union. However, if it is the case that the concept of multi-level governance provides “a unique opportunity to foster and develop a deeper understanding of the complementarity of a range of theoretical and empirical models and tools drawn from a number of interrelated disciplines and subdisciplines” (Bache 2004), this has in many ways been, thus far at least, something of a ‘missed opportunity.’ The notion of ‘complementarity’ in the above quote plays down the innovative, invigorating and challenging perspectives which can be brought to the study of multi-level governance by political sociology Nash (2000), political economy Gilpin (2001), political anthropology Vincent (2002), and political geography Jones (2004). The way in which the literature remains dominated by a peculiar ‘realist modernism’ untouched by the ‘cultural turn’ in much of the social sciences in the last decade is a surprising, and a disappointing, limitation of the mainstream political science approach.

Multi-level governance (MLG) has become a key pillar of the social architecture of many jurisdictions. The concept was originally introduced to portray the complex structure and policy development of European regionalisation and subsequently the European Union. MLG refers to the design and delivery of public policies by an expanded set of public and community actors belonging to different decision levels that are connected via cooperative relationships and collaborative actions (Bache 2004).

## 2. REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT – CZECH AND SLOVAK PLANNING

The Czech Republic and Slovakia are good examples of changes in planning regional development. From the communist era of planning to current growing capitalism with its tension between democratic control and economic freedom.

The democratic multi-level governance and market forces impact were eliminated and subsequently restricted in Slovakia for almost 50 years. State policy was focused on reaching social homogeneity, i.e. balanced living standards of population. That resulted in a regional landscape development and the development of Slovakian residential network as a whole and some residential areas specifically. The residential network was steadily developed due to industry implementation into the areas and establishing administrative centres, regional and district towns, in the framework of territorial and administrative division in 1960. The towns were developed in all basic functions considering especially their space and sociodemographic structures. Some Czech and Slovak authors point at this fact (Lukniš 1985), (Hampl 1987), (Musil 1992), (Bašovský 1995), (Sýkora 2001), (Slavík 1997).

The development of Slovakian and other European settlements has changed a lot after 1989. Geographic and urban literature before 1989 aimed at presenting towns as socialist or communist

cores. Authors of this literature ignored different historical development of regions and states in Central and Eastern Europe, omitted specific use of politics, and centrally planned economy in culturally different state areas. Current effort to model postcommunist towns also brings many problems. Some common characteristics can be found in postcommunist towns such as non-regulated real estate market, strong foreign capital, and weak purchasing power of most inhabitants. Intensity and trends of the characteristics, however, differ in the regions and states. So, the only relevant knowledge of postcommunist town development can be obtained by monitoring the towns where each town should be seen as a unique entity. This approach results from different conditions of intrastate development after 1989 and different ways in which the towns joined multiregional and global structures (Meier 2000).

Slovakia and the Czech Republic have become typical semi-periphery countries after 1989 when they opened to globalisation. Observing the countries from the perspective of their attractiveness for direct foreign investment, a wide range of regional differences can be noticed. Key factors, which affect these regional differences, are good transport services, technical and information infrastructure, qualified workforce and short distance from former Western European and the capital. Globalisation can be seen as one of the reasons, which contribute to dividing the country into rich and poor regions. Semi-peripheries and peripheries, and mainly small countries such as Slovakia, accept economical, political, ideological, cultural and technical impulses of the core and at the same time, they try to keep their own originality and independence.

Globalisation is of great importance for small countries, as they must join this process to maximise its advantages and minimise risks and disadvantages. The risk is greater for small countries than for larger ones, which can get more globalisation benefits due to stronger economies and possible activity diversification. "Globalisation divides countries of the world, regions of the countries as well as people and creates asymmetry in economic sphere." (Kopačka 2004). Stiglitz (2006) says economic theory does not assert that everyone benefits from globalisation but that net profit will be positive. While reviewing the impact of globalisation on regional development of the Czech Republic and Slovakia, an interesting position should be mentioned. Both countries try to get "two floors higher" in quite a short period. They were peripheries before 1989 (in globalisation terminology), next 15 years they were semi-peripheries and after joining the EU on 1 May 2005, they have tried to integrate among the core countries.

"Everybody who studies localities in various parts of the world must be aware of the fact that current events in any town quarter can be affected by factors the origin of which can be found in localities far away from the studied one. "Giddens (1990), Massey (1993), Brouckner (2015) says that we must observe localities in global perspective. "Instead of observing the locality as an area demarcated with

the boundaries we should accept it as a part of wide network of social relations and experience no matter if we deal with a street, region or the whole continent. Such approach enables us to see the locality connected with its surroundings and integrated global and local elements” (Massey 1993).

### 2.1. Choice of regions

Our choice of Central European regions in the Czech Republic and Slovakia for our case study followed several criteria (see Table 1): environmental, demographic, land use, economic, cultural and religious.

TABLE 1 – CRITERIA – CHOICE OF REGIONS

Criteria	characteristics
I.environmental	Regions with protected areas and national parks, some parts are listed in UNESCO heritage
II. demographic	Population regression, high unemployment rate, temporary and permanent emigration
III. land use	Higher number of unused areas and buildings – brownfields, slump in traditional industries
IV. economic	Quite high unemployment, slump in traditional industries
V.cultural and religious	Loss of traditions, loss of identity of some localities, loss of <i>génia loci</i>

Source: Authors.

Both countries represent areas, which, after communist system collapse and in current social democracy, have been trying to redefine their positions and find their new roles in European political scene. Social democracy has not formed its integrated political perspective yet and is so far connected with socialism. In the world of no alternatives to capitalism, it has been in a very unsure position. The localities chosen reflect the situation in both the Czech Republic and Slovakia and other postcommunist countries.

Czech and Slovak Republics formed one state until 1993 so they had common policy of regional and economical developments. Both countries belonged to Eastern bloc. That affected featureless and non-democratic development. After splitting and establishing two independent republics, the Czech Republic transformed faster than Slovakia so political and regional development differed. The facts mentioned above were one of the bases for the choice of localities, which developed within one country last century.

The choice of the regions corresponds to the criteria of rural development in Slovakia and the Czech Republic, i.e. the research is focused on the regions, which are not suitable for conventional agricultural use. (The analytic part of the Plan of rural and agricultural development)

There are two areas chosen, the district of Žarnovica in Central Slovakia, a part of Banská Bystrica region and the district of Jindřichův Hradec in the South-East of Bohemia which borders with Austria in the South.

## **2.2. Respondents of the chosen regions**

Local authorities represented by mayors or their deputies together with microregion and community representatives have been involved in the project (15 – local authorities. Local entrepreneurs engaged in the regions and tourists visiting the regions have been asked too. It means we have appealed to all significant regional actors in order to get as balanced results as possible.

## **3. OBJECTIVES AND METHODS**

Traditional hierarchical approach to decision-making process under state dominance has become outdated and ineffective in democratic systems regarding both global and regional levels. To answer all questions effectively, multi-level connection of political system should be realised, i.e. from international through national to local authorities and non-state actors who have right in democratic systems to participate in redistribution and use of natural resources. Our case study is aimed at identification of existence or non-existence of cooperation among the actors in chosen regions and starting up a reform process leading to setting scenarios (ways) of regional development.

To the effect of completing all objectives, we used a theoretical concept: a survey model of institutional relations (Ostrom 2004) and factors, which affect stability of these relations (Anderies 2004).

The first model deals with external and internal impacts on processes and behaviour of social life (economic, social, environmental etc.) of chosen community and the other helps identify possible problems of participant relations. Project solution is shown in Figure 1, which depicts four main processes and steps with the techniques used.

### **3.1. Individual steps and their realization**

- (1) Preparational phase focused on identification of actors who participate in decision-making and planning processes in the region, studying available materials and forming questions for personal interviews.
- (2) Criteria identification. It mostly deals with finding characteristics, which are complex, both socio-economical and ecological which affect region stability. It means that these characteristics, which we call criteria, represent significant activities, features and processes in the region.
- (3) Scenarios. The next pillar of our research was formulating of scenarios, ways of regional development in future.
- (4) Multi-criteria evaluation. Then we evaluated the criteria and scenarios.
- (5) Participative approach. All steps realised concerned all participant subjects.

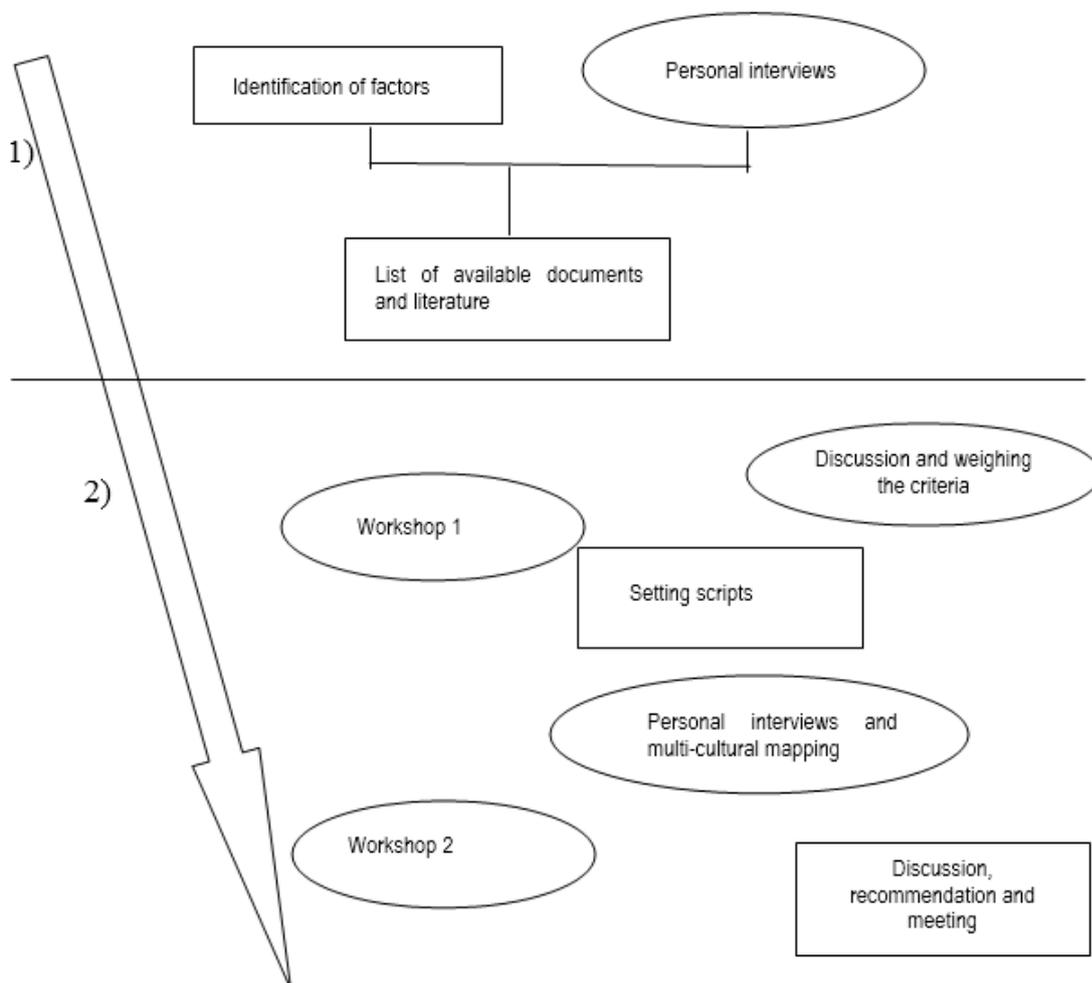


FIGURE 1 - THE PROCESS  
 Source: Adapted on Mcdowall, Eames 2006

Criteria and base identification for scenarios was realised as personal interviews in May and August. Almost 30 subjects, which represent the region, such as local authorities, microregion and interest groups, tourism managers, civil servants and visitors, were engaged. The interviews were aimed at identifying opinions and needs of a wide range of tourism actors. Interview and further document outputs were used for choosing criteria and forming scenarios of tourism development. As a result of this information we set two main themes: a state role in region development (tourism, nature protection, rural development) and the level of cooperation among the actors as the two problems seemed basically different at the initial stage of the scenarios. Figure 2 shows the facts mentioned above.

Interview participants were engaged in workshops as parts of the process and they discussed initial scenario versions and criteria choice which were offered to them for analysing. These criteria resulted from the discussion on tourism development and nature protection. Considering the criteria, the priorities of interest groups were projected into the scenarios. The criteria were first used for considering

stability of scenario development in chosen regions. The participants were asked to discuss the problems repeatedly using multi-criteria mapping methods. The process is shown in Figure 3. Key participants were again engaged in it, i.e. 10 representatives of interest groups and 8 experts.

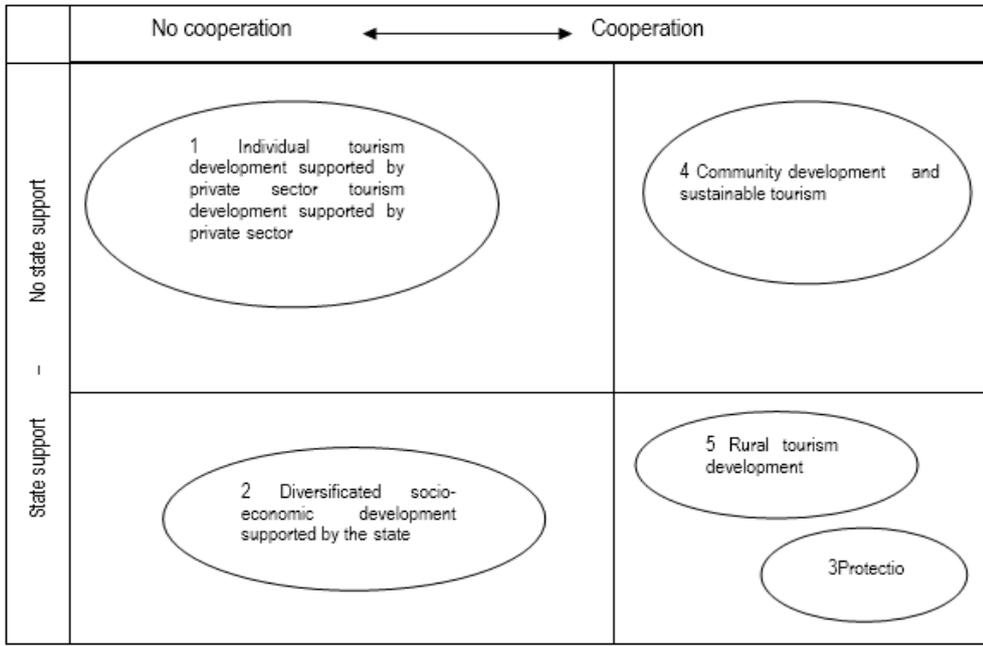


FIGURE 2 - INITIAL DIFFERENT VISIONS (SCRIPTS)

Source: Authors

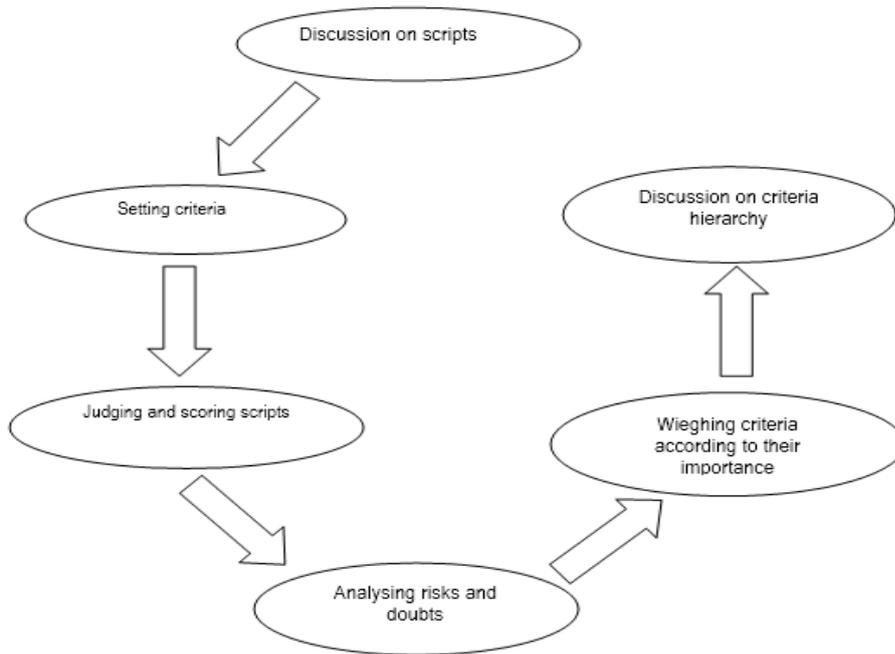


FIGURE 3 - MULTI-CRITERIA MAPPING

Source: Authors

Final workshop in August 2014 presented the outputs of the whole process and its importance for the community. Then was opened the discussion focused on current and future development and, subsequently, on development trajectory, forming the development plans and their application.

### **Outputs**

There are 5 alternative scenarios (listed as preferred) of tourism development in districts of Žarnovica (Slovak Republic) and Jindřichův Hradec (Czech Republic), expressing the following alternatives:

- 1) Individual tourism development supported by private capital
- 2) Diversificated socio-economic development supported by state
- 3) Protection and increase in protected areas of the regions
- 4) Community development and sustainable tourism
- 5) Rural tourism development

The scenarios originated from unique connection of scientific methods and participation of all people interested and working in the region. Scenarios (visions) present key problems of the region, especially: the role of state, public trust in local authorities and partners, its impact on cooperation and approach to information and its collective realisation, decision-making and competences in nature protection and tourism.

Next part analyses criteria, visions, evaluation and risks detected by the stability analysis.

### **Criteria**

Identification and the choice of criteria were done in several steps. We started with guided interviews. Therefore, the attendants of the workshop, on 20 February 2016 in Žarnovica district and 27 February 2016 in Jindřichův Hradec district, got a series of criteria, which they completed and lined up according to their importance. This process, in professional terminology called considering, consists in dividing 100 points among all the criteria. It led to setting 35 criteria in four thematic groups.

The research team merged similar criteria and made a new choice of criteria with at least 10 points. It resulted into the set of 12 criteria in four thematic groups: environmental criteria, which concerned quality of the environment, economic efficiency, equality-impartiality, transparency-legitimacy and others. In the next step of interviews and multi-criteria mapping attendants judged the subject matter, i.e. correct description of the criteria, their presence in the choice (repeated considering) and in one of

the five groups. Natural landscape character was appointed as the most important criterion for future regional development.

### **Scenarios**

Application of the steps described above resulted into 5 scenarios. Brief characteristics with some comments of the interested people follows.

#### **Scenario 1: Individual tourism development supported by private capital:**

It expects higher demand for first-class and all-inclusive services in tourism concentrated in a small area. It means there is no need of public or private transport after reaching the holiday resort. To guarantee such services and tourist satisfaction, the development is fully focused on the exploitation of natural resources and landscape factors for building new tourist facilities and services in the chosen regions. This scenario is based on fast development of big companies engaged in tourism and opportunities for international investment. This situation puts stress on coordination of tourism activities in the regions and elevates pressure for the surrounding countryside.

#### **Scenario 2: Diversified socio-economic development supported by the state:**

Employment will be the driving force. To improve economic situation and decrease unemployment of local community, diversified socio-economic development is the key item of this scenario. Nature preservation is seen as significant but not priority.

The development of the region and neighbouring villages results from local initiatives. It is focused on different economic and social activities, especially light industry and services such as assembly halls for information technologies, offices for various firms, and different kinds of tourism such as sport and educational activities and rural tourism. This scenario reckons with wider range of actors as it increases job opportunities and enables more actors to enter the economic sphere. Rising demand for transport infrastructure leads to better quality of roads. It means better economic level of the region but higher impact on the countryside.

#### **Scenario 3 Nature preservation and increase in protected areas**

Non-governmental organisations push on the government to concentrate more on nature protection. So, this scenario is centred on nature protection in the region where tourism is welcome if it follows the principles of sustainable development. It must be, however, restricted in some parts. This scenario is focused on tourists who see tourism as a way to nature.

**Scenario 4: Community development and sustainable tourism:**

Tourism development is based on initiatives of local population, local associations and clubs. Besides economic activities, tourism is also a way of solving social and environmental problems. Tourist activities are based on coordinated cooperation of local interest groups that organise region tourism but do not limit the number of tourists. A local voluntary association was founded to help this cooperation and put stress on sustainable tourism. This scenario concentrates on development of tourist activities in chosen regions. It concentrates on tourists looking for quality but no luxury or high standard of services. The workshop participants set up this scenario.

**Scenario 5: Rural tourism development in larger area:**

In this scenario, local development starts from supportive programmes of the European Union that concern rural development and multi-functional farming of the whole region. Therefore, the Žarnovica and Jindřichův Hradec districts become parts of regional rural development programme. Tourism services are based on traditional activities and ways of production and sustainable exploitation of cultural heritage such as local architecture, traditions and customs. Various associations, clubs and individuals offer the services in the region. Growing demand for transport infrastructure of the region leads to higher quality of roads. Thanks to development of rural activities in the region, all unused farmland is revitalised.

**Scenarios evaluation**

To evaluate the scenarios (interviews, multi-criteria mapping) participants were asked to allot two kinds of points, optimistic and pessimistic. The reason of it consisted in expressing factors that could affect and overshadow the scenarios and then prevent allotting one kind of points. This multi-criteria mapping should find out all risks and doubts of the scenarios. The risk and doubt analyses through allotting optimistic and pessimistic points can help decide which scenarios are most risky and if there is a way of its decrease or elimination. Three main factors can affect these risks and doubts in multi-criteria mapping:

- uncertainty relates to lack of information available about the scenario or criterion,
- variability relates to dependance on context, i.e. on behaviour of actors in real situations,
- ambiguity relates to different perception of the scenarios
- various actors,

First four scenarios were evaluated while two participants because of its marginal importance only evaluated the fifth, a voluntary scenario. The evaluation consisted in connecting the scenarios with activities and people of current life in the region or connecting the scenarios with events and their promoters. For example, scenario 1 was viewed as a current state, scenarios 3 and 4 as an activity of microregion and village associations (Table 2). Some effort to rationalise personal attitude to some scenarios was noticed. This kind of strategic behaviour could distort the reality; on the other side, it is natural when dealing with individual and group interests.

TABLE 2 - SCRIPT EVALUATION

	<i>Script title</i>	<i>Point evaluation (max. 5 points-min. 1point)</i>
1.	Individual tourism development supported by private capital	<b>1b</b> Inappropriate ways of further development of the region, distrust to foreign or non-regional actors
2.	Diversificated socio-economic development supported by state	<b>0b</b> Risks in distrust to the state, first of all to its financial and institutional support
3.	Protection and increase in protected areas of the regions	<b>4b</b> Systematic regional development based on rules of sustainable development within the community
4.	Community development and sustainable tourism	<b>5b</b> Viewed as the least sensitive to political changes in regions or the state and containing high potential of human factor development and regional identity which are necessary for effective cooperation
5.	Rural tourism development in larger area	<b>0b</b> Evaluated marginally by low number of actors

Source: Authors.

Because of the evaluation, we can allot points to the scenarios as seen in the following table. The scenario evaluation was identical in both regions of the Czech and Slovak Republics.

#### 4. DISSCUSION AND CONCLUSIONS

Having joined the European Union partnership and permanent effort to develop towns and villages have become an “agenda “of public authorities and non-profit organisations. Both the concepts are closely connected in European framework: the principle of partnership belongs to keystones of EU regional policy, which is aimed at development of disadvantaged regions and increase of their mutual solidarity. Partnership - cooperation are often used but not always well-understood terms.

Partnership is a cooperation, which includes various activities ranged from setting common objectives to common implementation of activities based on cooperation agreement. One of partnership attributes is the fact that socio-economic capital accumulated in partnership is always higher than individual profit

(Biederman 2004). Partnership should be an open structure enabling further members to join. All members interested in the matter should be involved. We call them stakeholders. Stakeholders should be representatives of state administration, local authorities, entrepreneurs, non-governmental organisations and other bodies or individuals who are not members of any association. Such a wide range of partners was justified while making the scenarios. We could also detect some cooperation and forming mutual social network. Local development cannot work without external intervention but it cannot be established and realised without local intention and initiative that is defined in local concept as social space (Jehle 1998). We identify with Putnam (2000), Coleman (1990) and Giddens (1990) who regard social capital as a community of interest localities, which enables activity coordination at collective level.

All partnership stages presented by Nelson (2000): can be viewed in chosen regions as it is done in methodology:

- looking for common solution
- structure setting, partnership agreement
- definition of common aims, activities and resources (draft action plan)
- organisation development
- team realisation of prepared tasks
- definition of impacts and monitoring results

Stakeholders in chosen regions went through the stages mentioned above so we can confirm their importance and necessity in regional development together with engaging all partners of the regions.

Methodological concept of this case study is based on social theory Coleman (1990) which explains social system behaviour with three components: the impact of system features on actors' orientation in the region, actors' behaviour inside the system and combination or interaction of their behaviour affecting the system. This advanced theory results from the existence of actors and things, resources and events the actors are interested in or check them (Coleman 1990).

Actors' activities in regional development that do not consider cultural and social relations often failed. To prepare successful development projects and policy we must be able to identify the causes of regional inequalities and social problems (economic, socio-economic, socio-cultural and environmental). At the same time, people engaged in the projects should identify with them. The model of integrated endogenic regional development (Jehle 1998) corresponds with these requirements. The core of this

approach consists in the exploitation of local development potential of villages and regions that are connected with visions of local residents and partly correspond to local behaviour. In this way, the existence of local system is guaranteed, and people manage social events. The exploitation of social and cultural development potentials is emphasised so that more people could participate in the development. It means they can word, push through and defend their local interests together with contemporary cultural and social capital increase.

The evaluation of scenarios has brought similar results in both districts, Žarnovica and Jindřichův Hradec. Scenarios 1 and 2 were not considered adequate ways of further regional development (identical responds). Most respondents agreed on scenarios 3 and 4 which represent the priorities of regional development in the Czech and Slovak Republics.

The positives of scenarios 3 and 4 consist in systematic tourism development based on the rules of sustainable community development and common decision making within the regions. These scenarios are also quite resistant to political state and regional changes and dispose of high potential of regional human factor and identity which are needed for effective partnership in EU regional competition. The scenarios form the base for higher trust level, better cooperation, partnerships and stability of regional structures (rules, programmes, common projects and commitments), for instance ability of absorption of EU structural funds which seem to be the most available external financial resources in middle- and long-term horizons. The disadvantage of scenario 3 and 4 can be uncertainty of financial resources or weak state support. In the context of negative experience from previous period, we think it is an opportunity to set up own (community) mechanism of rural development support which is more resistant to external impacts (political changes). Moreover, four-year political cycles, which slow down effective development of regional projects with long-term investment and its return, could be eliminated.

The risks must be considered in time and space. Political changes (government priorities, big investors' reliability etc) can affect the risks as the trust to investors, state can rise, and fall under the influence of internal and external causes.

Moreover, scenario 1 showed distrust to foreign and non-regional actors, which is quite a frequent view nowadays. Most respondents considered it the worst scenario because of non-systematicness, unsafe common decision-making and possible bad influences the environment.

Scenario 2 contained the highest risk in distrust to the state, most of all in financial and institutional support (compensations, development programmes and subsidies). The risk of scenario 5 is in wide range and fragmentation of subjects and activities that can threaten the identity of region with the protected area.

To guarantee regional development conditions, an integrated development plan could be set up, with priorities of regional exploitation. It should be prepared on the base of discussions and agreements of those interested in regional development in order to be successful in implementation and acceptance in the regions. This way will establish a base for partnership and reliability principles in the regions that are necessary for cooperation development.

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