

*LOCAL DEVELOPMENT AND INNOVATION IN RURAL AREAS AND SMALL TOWNS IN
EUROPE*

Chydenius Institute, Kokkola, Finland
November 26, 2005

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Local Governance, Culture and Social Capital in the Lithuanian Countryside

Introduction

The long-term absence of private agricultural and other property ownership, the destruction of typical countryside infrastructure objects and social institutions have inevitably meant that the majority of Lithuania's villagers have lost their self-expression, self-sufficiency and initiative. Country folks' traditional lifestyle has been changing continually. Many villagers were incapable of acclimatising to the conditions of the market economy and self-reliance.

Changes in country folks' lifestyle and their economic activities are necessary. The new European Union's rural development policy encourages further activation of rural development processes through local partnership and self-governance. Rural communities get into the centre of these processes [6, 12]. However, not many people in these rural communities are able to foresee rational development trends: mass rural communities for diversification of economic activities, an increase in employment, an improvement of cultural, social situation, and in general the renovation of the countryside. Capacity building and social reproduction are now primary objectives for the Lithuanian countryside.

The intention of this paper is to identify external and internal obstacles and incentives of cultural rural development in Lithuania that are instrumental in drafting a model for new rural development. The goals are to explore forms of social capital required for local development and to survey the rural cultural conditions for possible development programmes in Lithuania.

Forms of Social Capital for Local Cultural Development in Lithuania

Due to the impact of the former Soviet system and current globalisation processes the survival of ethnic culture - the foundation of Lithuanian identity has always been threatened.

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Therefore in 1999, through the exertion of active and dedicated intellectual people a law “For the State Protection of Ethnic Culture” was passed in Lithuania. According to this law ethnic culture is described as created by the whole nation (ethnos), carried from generation to generation and as a constantly renewable unit of cultural values. Ethnic culture includes two parts: cultural heritage and living tradition and their interface results in steady creative process. Living tradition goes together with national self-awareness.

Therefore, when we speak about ethnic culture we should bear in mind the totality of the past, the present and the future [4, 19]. In Lithuania, there are two institutions, which are responsible for ethnic culture throughout Lithuanian territory: The Council for the Protection of Ethnic Culture and the Lithuanian Association of Ethnic Culture. The Council for the Protection of Ethnic Culture is a public advisory body - an institution of experts of ethnic culture that are appointed from public, educational and scientific institutions, NGOs and creative associations. Originally this comprised a group of experts liable to the Ministry of Culture. Nevertheless, an independent and authoritative council was needed and the members of Lithuanian Association of Ethnic Culture, as well as the ethno cultural experts group, who prepared the law “For the State Protection of Ethnic Culture”, included articles about the Council for the Protection of Ethnic Culture. It was established in 2000 by Constituent Assembly (Seimas) of the Republic of Lithuania. The purpose of the establishment of this Council was to help Seimas and the Government to uphold ethnic culture and formulate a development strategy, combining different branches – culture, education, agriculture, environmental protection and others, in collaboration with civil and governmental institutions. This model was commended by UNESCO. The main tasks of the Council are to solve strategic issues of ethnic culture development and policy; to oversee, optimise and coordinate actions of other institutions, which implement public protection of ethnic culture; to draw conclusions and make suggestions to state institutions with regard to ethnic culture. In other words, the Council is the expert of Seimas and the Government for dealing with problems related to ethnic culture’s national protection and politics. The Lithuanian Association of Ethnic Culture is a non-governmental organisation, which discusses and makes proposals to the government on ethnocultural issues, organizes scientific and cultural events (conferences, seminars, festivals), is responsible for the accumulation and distribution of folklore records, supports regional ethnocultural organisations and activities. Together with the Council for the Protection of Ethnic Culture, it also indirectly performs a function of monitoring conditions of ethnocultural expression. The association brings together interested scientists, politicians, cultural workers, artists, craftspersons as well as business people and represents their position and needs. The Lithuanian Association of Ethnic Culture was established in 1988, together with the Liberation Movement. In the menace of residual Soviet order, one of the first goals of the Association was to establish archives – to accumulate and save ethnocultural wealth for future generations.

These two institutions together with other interested groups and cultural actors now work for the promotion of ethnic culture at schools, in the media, and on the internet. They also try to correct and create advantageous law conditions as well as seek adequate funding necessary for the preservation and dissemination of ethnic culture. Ethnocultural events are organised by them – calendar festivals, according to old traditions (for example, the Rasa festival (Saint John’s night), All Soul’s day), old and modern folklore concerts, traditional dance clubs, ethnocultural camps with lectures and practical training, that seek to invite people to get in touch with and continue experiencing the advantages of this way of living.

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On 11 June 2003, the Government approved of the National Programme of Ethnic Culture Development, prepared by the Council for the Protection of Ethnic Culture. It was designed to evaluate the condition of Lithuanian ethnic culture and to enhance its development. Its goals are: to set the priorities of the investigation, protection and dissemination of ethnic culture; to create financial and juridical conditions to activate its development; and to increase its role in the creation of civil society and in the common practices of the culture. There are many institutions that deal with ethnocultural activities, which work separately, without proper coordination. This programme aims to: coordinate ethnocultural activities in educational, scientific and cultural institutions; form proper conditions and to renovate material facilities for saving ethnocultural heritage in museums and folklore archives; capacitate the scientific institutions to explore expression and processes of ethnic culture; shape a net of institutions, which accumulate, structure and preserve ethnocultural heritage, and to create a united system of information.

There are many old villages in the rural areas of Lithuania, which are in poor condition and are vanishing rapidly as a result of the local population's low income and migration to the cities. Therefore the Council for the Protection of Ethnic Culture prepared a special "Long-term Programme for the Survival of Lithuanian Ethnographic Villages 2003-2006" (planned ahead to extend for the next sponsorship period) for the preservation of villages with rich material and spiritual heritage [9]. The main purpose of this programme is to create favourable conditions for the versatile economic and social development of ethnographic villages by using the existent ethnocultural heritage and local traditions, to increase rural enterprise as well as the life quality and to satisfy the needs of local communities. The tasks of this programme include preservation of natural, historical, mythological and archeological features; development of handicraft, tourism and recreation based on local traditions; dissemination of information about ethnographic villages -- their values and traditions; and infrastructure preservation and perfection in ethnographic villages. These tasks plan to use administrative, scientific, juridical and financial measures [4].

In Lithuania, like in other Central and Eastern European Countries, rurality is an especially significant factor [8]. The rural population in Lithuania is 33% (67 percent of the total population live in urban areas). Rural areas make up 97% of Lithuanian territory and they are far more disadvantaged when compared to the EU-15 rural areas. In Lithuania, 53.4 percent or 3.49 million hectares of land is used for agricultural activity while arable land accounts for 2.93 million hectares. In 2003, the number of persons employed in agriculture, hunting, forestry and fishery was 17.9% -- much higher than the EU average (data from the Department of Statistics, Government of the Republic of Lithuania). Consequently, agriculture is a weighty sector in the national economy, despite its decrease. This has been influenced by the fact that agricultural development was not fairly separated from rural development. This is reflected in the main goals of the Lithuanian Strategy of Agriculture and Rural Development of 2000. This attention to rural development has increased due to the depreciated role of the agricultural producer and the changes in the rural development policy of EU [8, 15].

Under these conditions, countryside culture and social capital in Lithuania is slowly starting to develop through implementation of the LEADER+ programme and partnership method. According to this programme, rural communities learn to be self-sufficient and readjust to new conditions according to the bottom-up principle, where social and economic partners as well as associations, business and local government representatives try to solve

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rural problems together. Local governments and communities are educated to undertake more rights and duties in taking care of the countryside.

After entering the EU, specific conditions emerged for the LEADER+ programme in Lithuania. The new partnership method had to be acquired in a short period, as LEADER I and LEADER II were not implemented in Lithuania. It is not easy for rural people to accept the principles of LEADER+ without preliminary steps, as it requires new ways of thinking and unusual methods of working. Besides, as the experiences of other countries have shown, there is a risk of using LEADER as an instrument for power of rural elites or to serve sectional interests. Perez in the Spanish case of LEADER commented, that “only when LEADER II drew to a close, local actors recalled the theoretical underpinnings of the programme, such as community participation, social dynamisation and co-operation” [13]. Rural people are not quick to change their traditional mindset and, naturally, want to be sure about further perspectives. Under current conditions, country folk are best encouraged by tangible results whereas attainment of skills takes a rather long time and requires patience. Yet, as mentioned by Ray, “the essence of endogenous/participative development lies not in tangible, immediate outputs but, rather, in the intangible processes set in motion. The ideas associated with this – such as ‘personal growth’, ‘solidarity’, ‘co-operation’, ‘cultural identity’, ‘local confidence’ – are ambiguous and yet central to a humanistic definition of ‘development’” [16]. The examples encourage prolonging the experiment, even if the results are not clearly apparent.

The activity and attainment of rural communities in various regions are very different. Some communities are suppositional leaders while some of them seem to be in a fog. In this way, initial results of the LEADER+ programme will presumably resemble differences of existing social capital’s potential in the regions and also spotlight the weakest of them. Shucksmith, describing the experience of LAGs (Local Action Groups) in the UK concluded, that “through the imposition of very short time scales, LEADER has disadvantaged those lacking individual social and cultural capital, and it will be important to allow more time for future initiatives if inclusion is to be a goal” [18]. Not all of the initiatives will succeed to achieve tangible results in their first attempt, but the learning process is fundamental in this period. Therein the other challenge lies in the local communities’ confidence in the programme. It is important that local communities continue their work and do not get disillusioned. Economic issues for rural communities are primary today and in such circumstances it is audacious to introduce this ‘modern’ form of intervention “virtually without money” according to which “solutions to intractable problems of lagging rural areas are to be devised with relatively little commitment of public money and looking to the private and voluntary sectors for matching contributions” [16]. The ultimate risk here is to arouse the expectations of rural people and then not to give the means to implement these goals. Another concern that is related to applying LEADER to disadvantaged rural areas is that the proposed themes for the rural development strategies are of cultural, recreational, and environmental nature. Even if they are multibeneficial in the long-run, it can be disconcerting and complicated if the basic needs (healthcare, infrastructure facilities, safety) are not satisfied.

An experimental period of LEADER+ started in Lithuania in 2004 with emphasis on ability-training and self-sufficiency. At the end of 2004, there were 670 rural communities and 33 LAGs in Lithuania. A larger number of rural communities have been officially registered since 2003 and are now in the start-up stage. This means that during this period they are planning their strategy, doing their analysis of demands and opportunities, as well as

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taking an interest in support possibilities. Following the training courses for members of LAGs in different regions of Lithuania, the LAGs within local communities will prepare pilot rural development strategies. Seven pilot strategies will be selected and pilot projects complementary to the main LEADER+ themes will be implemented in the near future.

Buller, in his paper about recreating rural territories in France remarks on the conflict between two dynamics: the need to find a suitable territorial focus for social organization and partnership (LEADER) and the need to maintain a suitable mode of State regulation. Leader is only one of an increasing number of regionally co-ordinated territorially-based zonal policy instruments within France [2]. In Lithuania, LEADER is a new form of territorial-based policy instrument besides The Law of Regional Development and the National Cohesive Development Strategy, which did not give much of the expected effects severally. The Long-term Programme for the Survival of Lithuanian Ethnographic Villages is also one of the programmes designed for the targeted rural territories.

Education is one of the most important indicators describing society's culture and its development level. In the 3rd quarter of 2003, there were 57,000 people in rural areas who had a higher education (in other words, every twentieth villager holds a university diploma); 117,000 people had a technical secondary education (every twelfth); and every eighth had a secondary education. In the above-mentioned period of time there were 262,800 people in rural residential areas who had an occupation, or, in other words, every fifth villager had a speciality of any level. The number of rural residents with a university education is three times lower when compared to the urban population. The number of general education schools in rural areas is decreasing. In 2000-2003, there were 50 nursery-schools, 544 general schools, 181 secondary schools, 2 gymnasiums and one youth school in rural areas. In the countryside, most schools are primary and general. Secondary schools make up 13% of all schools in the countryside and 43% in the cities. Naturally, small schools dominate in the countryside: there are 102 pupils at a rural school whereas in the cities the number is as high as 624. Rural children have less possibility to get a secondary school education. During the last two years, rural schools have decreased by 7% [17].

Profiling (intensified teaching of the chosen direction of subjects – humanitarian, real, artistic, etc.) and centralization of the Lithuanian education system resulted in a decrease of rural schools. This was carried out to distribute funding for education more rationally. It was evident that teaching children in small rural schools costs twice or threefold more than in bigger centralized schools. Another reason for this reform is better conditions for schools' profiling, when more pupils appear in the persistent schools. The quality of teaching is improved for the pupil from former rural schools, forasmuch they get the best regions' teachers. The adverse effect of this reform in terms of rural development is that local culture centres are disappearing, as schools were the main ones in the villages (especially the smaller villages). The Ministry of Education is trying to solve this problem by shaping conditions to transport rural children to schools in these regions. Lots of rural schools are already changed by the yellow school buses.

Some supporters of rural schools are trying to preserve rural schools by noting their special 'social' role in the countryside. They state that when cultural institutions disappear in villages, the school becomes the main cultural hearth of the rural community; an institution that brings together the community. When local schools are shut down, the rural situation gets worse. The countryside feels more doomed, less rural children attend schools and it can cost more in the future than prevention by sustaining rural schools. The countryside becomes a metaphor, which describes a lag. The situation can only change if rural schools have their

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say. Extending the functions of rural schools and generating social innovation projects can be very helpful [14, 17].

Mapping out Strategies for Development of Rural Culture

What possibilities do rural schools have in view of countryside exclusion? In a study on Lithuanian rural exclusion, Poviliūnas anticipates that the situation can develop in two ways:

1) Reconciliation to social rural exclusion and adjoiment to the central education system. Rural schools are inclined to fancy themselves to be an exclusive part of the rural community, to such a degree, that rural educators are liable to adjoin their schools to the central education system. When a rural school identifies itself with the centralized education system, it works for the sake of this system foremost, not for the local community. This way of their identity construction helps rural schools to avoid political exclusion. Political exclusion describes political and juridical reasons of social exclusion or, in other words, it is political nature of social exclusion [15].

2) Partnership with rural community and reduction of social exclusion.

Reconciliation to social countryside's exclusion can be generalized like this:

- a rural school fancies itself to be not so much a socially disjunct community part, but an institution of the centralized education system. What the school is like foremost depends on educators' perception of their functions, not on the location of the school (town or countryside). In Lithuania, the majority of rural schoolteachers in current conditions tend to think that they are workers of the centralized education system, not politically removed villagers. Furthermore, since the countryside is politically disjunct, the work they carry out is one of the most complicated ones. On the other hand, many educators, who live in the countryside or often in the adjacent towns and commute to the villages, perceive that a rural school is one of the most important institutions, which guarantees social care or paternalistic wardship. That is to say, an educator, who works in the countryside, necessarily submits to the strategy, which fortifies political disjuncture of the countryside;

- schoolteacher, who works in the countryside (not a countryside teacher!), when describing countryside and considering rural school's problems, uses discarding the countryside rhetoric (as tools for social reality construction). For example, in the schoolteachers' requisitions for competition, aspiring for larger integration of the rural school and local community, they wrote that "The quality of rural peoples' life has been incessantly getting worse for several years. Moral and humanist values dwindle, indifference, alienation and a feeling of insecurity deepen." A fragment from another schoolteachers' request states "Dozy villages are dying away culturally; rural people naturally wean from concerts, cultural events, national festivals. /.../". But at the same time they cultivate paternalistic wardship, saying that "School in the countryside today is the proper centre of the local community's social, cultural and moral education and human communication. The cohesive school's collective actively takes part in different republican and local projects..."[14]. This is a contraposition between "fallen" countryside and potential rescuer – the rural school is conditioned by the conflict of the rural school's context: political exclusion of the countryside and practices of social care (paternalistic wardship), retracting the participation, which fortifies social exclusion;

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- a rural school becomes a sieve that sifts those who will further their career from the “losers” who will stay on living in a socially disjunct rural community. Rural schools perform a certain function of selection and screening: high schools and life in the cities are intended for the talented and life in the countryside is left for the weaker ones. In this way, a rural school fulfils a function, disadvantageous in itself – it prepares “high quality production” for the cities yet leaves “second-class” for itself. A survey on rural schools in Lithuania in 2001 showed an interesting tendency. Urban pupils, who have difficulties in urban schools take up study at rural schools. This only confirms that a rural school becomes a “sieve” with such a shape of wholes, that only those who do not want to crumble away stay there [20]. This circumstance is important to bear in mind, applying the advanced multiplex methods and measures of rural development to the countryside (LEADER+, agro environmental measures, etc.), where the main embodying actors should be rural people.

Against the odds, there are many examples of productive collaboration between rural communities and rural schools. The Open Lithuanian Fund, Baltic-American Partnership programmes, United Nations Development programmes, School Improving Centre, Civil Initiatives Centre and many other programmes implemented by different organizations show that more and more rural schools are taking part in rural community development, sometimes as leaders or as the partners of a community. When rural schools focus on partnership with rural communities, they are taking the initiative. This entails looking for ways to change the existing situation in the village, being an institution of the centralized education system as well as being an important force in rural community development. In this instance, rural schools strive to soften social, cultural and economic problems confronting the rural child or the rural community. In cases of partnership with rural communities, rural schools are able to help rural children get a good education and change attitudes of community members towards the importance of education in the community by involving parents in the community.

The features of one or another school unfold through communication with rural communities. Rural schools, which tend to collaborate with rural communities, enter into equivalent relationships with them [14].

Society still often misapprehends, thinking that the EU requires a modification of the education and training system to suit the market economy model. But the EU gives members full freedom to shape and to create an education system and to decide on the content of education. Therefore it would be appreciated if the underlying principles, such as humanism, democracy and nationality, in regulations of the education system are unbroken and fortified, if ethnic culture is integrated into all levels of education and training institutions, restricting injurious market relationship penetration in this field [4].

Seeking to vouch the rendering and nurturance of ethnic culture in the formal and informal education system, the Ministry of Education and Science and its institutions have undertaken these steps:

- 1) to integrate ethnic culture into all types and levels of educational institutions and their education programmes;
- 2) to create conditions to install a course of ethnic culture in general education schools;
- 3) to promote versatile activity of ethnic culture in additional education activities;
- 4) to teach distinct ethnic languages in educational institutions, to vouch the cognition of ethnographic regions and local traditions;

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5) to legitimate present and if necessary establish new specialized ethnocultural educational institutions;

6) to secure training and qualification improvement of ethnocultural pedagogues;

7) to promote publishing materials for ethnocultural education;

8) to integrate ethnic culture into the training programmes of different specialists, working in the field of ethnic culture development (cultural workers, pedagogues, artists, architects, designers, textile workers, craftsmen, food industry workers, agricultural specialists, environmentalists and so on) [19].

The Ministry of Education and Science together with the municipalities afford ground for recruiting subjects of ethnic culture (folk specialists, musicians, singers and others) for the purpose of ethnocultural education and study. The Ministry of National Defence together with the Ministry of Education and Science have introduced ethnic culture into education and training programmes of soldiery.

Nevertheless, not much has been put into practice yet. The schools that had initiative schoolteachers, progressed and managed to inculcate ethnic culture into the curriculum as well as to encourage the students. For example, the community primary school "Genys" in Vilnius asked the Ministry of Education and Science for permission to teach ethnic culture as a separate subject and got the authorization to do this [4]. Other schools are integrating ethnic culture into the curriculum as parts of other subjects. This proves that the character of the school very much depends on the schools' community – parents, teachers and pupils and the "bottom-up" principle appears to be helpful. The Ministry organises and supports national events and encourages the celebration of national festivals at schools, but these efforts are rather fragmentary.

In 2002, the Council for the Protection of Ethnic Culture evaluated ethnocultural training in the education system. Findings of the sociological research: "Expression and Spread of Ethnic Culture in the Middle Chain of Education" showed that conditions in the education system are not favourable for ethnic culture. The research revealed that young people's attitudes towards ethnic culture have changed intensely during the last decade. Ten years ago, the majority of students were more interested in studying different forms of ethnic culture (revived by the Liberation Movement) than in recent years. Further education reforms showed that the possibility of strengthening respect for old traditions, national culture and the native country through schools, classes and out-of-school activities was not possible. The Council for the Protection of Ethnic Culture concluded that the current system of education is not helping to implement the Law for the State Protection of Ethnic Culture: "to educate persons to have a mature national self-awareness by integrating ethnic culture to the system of education" [4, 21]. However, the present EU as well as national rural policy trends are becoming advantageous, at least for the dissemination of local (and ethnic) culture in the countryside.

Cultural activity is very different in the countryside. It not only depends on different human resources, but also on financing, the attitude of municipalities' cultural departments, the quantity of supported projects, and the activity of recreation centres. Unemployment and lack of economic resources contribute to the disadvantages. Both in bigger and smaller villages, cultural life is stifled, people's initiative is poor because cities are extremely appealing and, on the other hand, cities are not interested in the welfare of villages. Youth in the countryside is most often disinterested in local cultural activity.

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Nevertheless, there are still some exceptional villages with viable folk art that actively take part in folk art educational projects and folklore practice. Such villages are often in the list of ethnographic villages. Presently, there are 48 traditional villages, 56 homesteads and 171 ethnoarchitectural buildings preserved as cultural heritage in Lithuania [5]. Ethnographic villages are populated localities, which have retained traditional elements that are typical for the respective regions as ethnocultural features of historically settled villages. Ethnographic villages are especially conspicuous by virtue of their originality and vivid array of ethnocultural features— ethnic architecture, archaeological, mythological, natural monuments, values and living tradition (community life, farming traditions, crafts, trade, folk art, folklore and folk knowledge). Ethnographic villages differ according to economic, social, cultural life conditions and development possibilities and therefore a special model of preservation and adjustment is required in other Lithuanian villages.

Experts at the Council for the Protection of Ethnic Culture together with students of the Lithuanian University of Agriculture in 2002 conducted ethnographic research (through fieldwork, inquiry and observation) and determined the worst problems of ethnographic villages and their development:

1. The demographic situation of ethnographic villages is critical (population decreases, aging population). Their social condition is negative (pessimistic approach to the future, unemployment, youth migration to the cities, poor health and social work services, and weak administration).

The speedy migration of country people to towns is a menace for the viability of villages. Many rural people are pensioners. Young people move to the cities or go abroad. The number of partially habitable villages is increasing because old people die or are brought to the cities for care. Some people live in the countryside only during the summer. On the other hand, young families and artists move to villages because of its natural environment, fresh air, and healthy food. Some, who lose their jobs in the cities, also return to the villages. Communities of young people also live in big villages (e.g., Marcinkonys, Švendubrė). In smaller villages, the percentage of asocial and disadvantaged young people is larger. Many people, who live in ethnographic villages, do not believe in the future (“we were once young, now we are decaying”). Conflicts emerge between traditions of the old generation and modern values of young people because of poverty, drunken men and “lazy” youth. The values of modern living are not verified by time and bring to the countryside instability, concern, tension and aggression.

2. There are no investments in the economy of ethnographic villages (the state pays too little attention and does not provide a solution to a rural population’s economic and social problems. Development of crafts, recreation and tourism in ethnographic villages is also indispensable, which are highlighted in the Law for the Protection of Ethnic Culture). Adequate funding is necessary to implement these programmes.
3. Ethnocultural heritage, the tradition of living a traditional culture and the old household traditions are vanishing. The structure of ethnographic villages is changing quickly (which is not complementary to the traditional character).

From an ethnoarchitectural point of view, the number of valuable rural homesteads and separate buildings is gradually decreasing, but not equally in different regions. Quite a few ethnographic buildings are renovated; some of them are demolished. Some of them need to be repaired quickly. A strong negative tendency with regard to renovation has been observed – buildings that are modernized are losing their traditional form. Švendubrė is a

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village that has suffered the most from modernization. Žiogeliai is a village that has well-preserved ethnoarchitecture and close relations in the community. Marcinkonys is distinguishable by its conventionalism of renovated and new buildings and this can be even said about the rural tourism homesteads. Most rich owners used to prefer modern building materials and lacked knowledge in the field of ethnographic architecture. In some cases (for example, in Žiogeliai) building traditions were preserved by poor people because natural materials were cheaper than modern.

4. Incomes of the rural population are very low; small farms with low investment capacity dominate in ethnographic villages.

The enterprise of rural population is insufficient because of their conservative way of living and poor training in business enterprise as well as their lack of education and information. People in ethnographic villages are not sufficiently informed about contemporary possibilities. Many of them do not have enough management experience to take on a new business. The economic level in ethnographic villages is very different and depends on many factors – population, age, distance to centres, landscape, and individuals. The worst situation is in the ethnographic region of Aukštaitija (Higher Lithuania), where productive lands dominate. Beautiful landscapes particularly encourage economic life, rural tourism and attract tourists. However, struggling economies are essentially determined by the indigence of rural people (and their relatives in the cities) and their small financial investing potential. Local people often lack organizational abilities and courage to take risks needed to develop rural tourism. Predominately, subsistence farms dominate in ethnographic villages. Farming businesses are very infrequent. Many people manage by picking berries, mushrooms and fishing. Despite the fact, that unemployment is high in villages; local pensioners support their children in the cities with food. Purchase of land is rare; cultivation costs are too high -- tractor hire, fertilizers, transportation, marketing - production input exceed the profit. Trades people and folk artists are confronted with a small market and poor sale conditions.

5. The infrastructure of ethnographic villages is not very attractive and developed. This is required for the improvement of life conditions as well as for the development of recreation and tourism. Communication/connection with places that are central is poor. Cooperation, material supply, technical and other services are also not developed. There is less possibility to get a good education or medical, transport and other services.

Tourism and recreational infrastructures are not well developed yet, considering the huge local recreational potential. There is a problem of transport service between villages and central places. For example, in Dzūkija, a National park, the shuttle was shut down since the number of passengers, mostly pensioners decreased and the sale of tickets did not cover transport expenses for the transport owners. In addition, there are not enough maps and information about the ethnographic villages in Dzūkija. But on the other hand, there is a danger that buildings close to the roads and sites can bring harm to the natural landscape, as projectors tend to shift aesthetics of the civilized world there.

In remote villages, health services are inadequate. Health clinics can only be found in the bigger villages. If serious treatment is needed, people must go to the towns (public transport is not available in every village). There is also a lack of casework and municipalities are not able to take care of all old, sick, poverty-stricken and asocial people in remote villages.

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During the survey, younger people said they would prefer to live in the countryside, if there was a fast, cheap and easy connection with centres, a more comfortable life, and that children could easily reach school and get a higher quality education.

6. Communal life in ethnographic villages is weakening because juridical rural communities are built up slowly.

This situation hopefully will improve in the coming years, due to capacity building through LEADER+ and the Programme for the Survival of Lithuanian Ethnographic Villages described in this paper, animating social life there.

7. In spite of the great need for handicraft and services in ethnographic villages and that tradition carriers are still alive, the transmission of knowledge and traditions is in a critical condition because of the awry effect of modernisation.

Ethnographic villages lack modern systems and methods to transmit traditions effectively. One of the most popular kinds of folk art – weaving has dwindled because of the weavers' age. There still are people who could transfer this knowledge and experience to younger people and teach them different traditional trades and folk art. For this purpose, a system for transferring knowledge and skills must be created.

8. There is no prestigious image of the ethnographic village; this should be created. The local population has an immature understanding that they live in an environment with big cultural values.

The younger generation in ethnographic villages receives a low level of aesthetic education (music, art, architecture) and opportunities to attend artistic festivals are rather limited. Modernity is understood as consumerism with western comforts, which is contrary to countryside life – backward province.

9. Pessimism of the rural population is conditioned by the lack of up-to-date knowledge about marketing, management possibilities and rules, as well as political culture [4, 9].

The Soviet system had defamiliarised rural people from taking personal initiative and responsibility. The new kinds of business for older people are still not obtainable neither in conversance, nor in a psychological sense (pensioners make up 23% of the rural population in Lithuania, the number of employable people who are old is also large).

Following the evaluation of ethnographic villages' conditions, The Council for the Protection of Ethnic Culture prepared a "Long-term Programme for the Survival of Lithuanian Ethnographic Villages 2003-2006" (planned ahead to extend for the next sponsorship period). When preparing this programme attention was paid to the fact, that when state reforms started, ethnographic villages were not integrated sufficiently in the social and economic life of the country and therefore they suffer the most cultural, social and economic decline. Most of them could vanish without state support.

This programme's objective is to: save cultural elements of ethnographic villages; revive traditional crafts; to develop ethnocultural tourism in the countryside; and raise the productive capacity of rural areas [9]. These goals will be reached by investors' support in the renovation of ethnographic villages and homesteads and in their adjustment for the purposes of tourism and recreation. In addition, by compensating the natural (traditional) building materials' expenses required for renovation and by compensating expenses related to the maintenance of valuable buildings and guided tours for the tourists [3].

The intention of this programme is to regard ethnographic villages as the hearths of ethnic culture and household traditions in four Lithuanian regions (Aukštaitija (Upper Lithuania), Žemaitija (Lower Lithuania), Suvalkija and Dzūkija). Regional/local peculiarities

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and regional identities are being saved, nurtured and readjusted for recreation and tourism. The dissemination of information about ethnographic villages, local activities and handicrafts, tourism and recreation is being encouraged. Hopefully, the values of ethnographic villages will become accessible to both to the nation and to the world. The renovation and maintenance of ethnoarchitectural buildings using traditional building materials and methods create conditions for the workplaces and development of business and services in the countryside [9]. Certainly, implementation of the Programme for the Survival of Ethnographic Villages requires large funding, which is rarely available in a short period. Therefore, it is anticipated that the infrastructure and renovation of ethnographic villages will develop not only through this single programme but also through the combination of different available programmes (for example, local communities' rural development strategies), intended to solve primary matters.

Rural Conditions for Development Programmes

Other sociological research in different villages in Lithuania in 2002 showed that regional/local cultural institutions do not have enough skills and are not able to plan and to evaluate their work. The framework of different cultural institutions' activities consists of an annual cycle of festivals and matter-of-course events. A yearlong calendar cycle of festivals is a combination of national, Christian and agrarian festivals.

The work of rural cultural organizers is limited by:

- a) the calendar cycle of festivals, where national and church festivals entwine with agrarian festivals (for example, Harvest-home, Christmas, and Independence Day). A similar cycle of festivals dictated the pulse of cultural activities in Soviet times, but the national festivals were different and there were no Christian festivals. The number of other added events into this cycle depends on the activity of the director of the cultural establishment. In some villages, the directors of cultural establishments do not add any additional events, in others such cultural events make up half of the annual festival. These other cultural events often are connected with the activities of libraries and schools.
- b) A limited amount of used forms of the events (amateurish concerts, literary montages, literary musical afternoons, sports, art festivals, etc.). Activities planned by rural cultural organizers are limited by the search of titles and formats of the events. Variations of these forms and titles of the festivals perhaps are the only planned proceeding, encouraged by the calendar cycle of festivals. The cycle is often dressed up with tawdry titles, reflecting both the taste of cultural organizers and the users.
- c) some of the festivals have their regular forms of celebration or commemoration. Some forms for particular events are the same every year and are not attractive and rewarding to the cultural user.

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The names of many different events are considered to be a manifestation of bad taste and kitsch from the point of 'high', aesthetic culture. Poviliūnas, in his study of rural exclusion elaborates, that they are symptomatic and reflect the opposition of high, professional and so called 'folk', amateurish culture. This relation between the 'high', professional, elite and 'low' folk, amateurish culture is one more dimension of rural social disjuncture. Besides, the 'low' culture is created by the 'high' culture prototype and it is the most remote part from the united feeding culture system centre. It is a periphery of one body which despite this status is organised by the same principles of feeding culture. From the point of view of such feeding culture, peoples' creation of everyday life gets outside of cultural field and it is not considered as cultural action [14].

The number of main cultural institutions in the countryside is declining. The fund for books has decreased in rural libraries. Cultural centres are closing because of a lack of funds. Activities of cultural centres are likely to be revived by rural communities [17]. One person in the village cannot cope with unemployment, social disjuncture and poor infrastructure conditions. The local government does not always know what the best is for rural people. There are many examples both in Lithuania and other countries, where local communities were successful tools to solve economic, cultural education, organization of leisure time and other issues. Furthermore, Kovach notes that participant actors possess a potential, interpretative capacity, enabling them to adapt the system to their interests, traditions, and geographical, economic, social and political conditions [8].

Considering the conditions for development programmes, demographic changes are important as well. The migration of people from the countryside to the cities in search of better jobs, education, cultural life and conveniences changes the nature of local culture because many people are no longer local rural people. The migration of people abroad from rural areas for a better life also reflects brain drain and the frustration caused by unemployment of those who cannot manage to adjust to new conditions brought about by globalization, directly influencing countryside culture. After entering the EU, Lithuania has also witnessed the introduction of foreign capital - foreign companies, land owners which strive to produce in more beneficial conditions (cheaper labour and land, lower dues, etc.). What kind of new countryside culture concept can we create considering the discontinuous connections with the native land? Who are the new actors in the countryside?

Conditions for the countryside culture are not easy today. A large part of Lithuanian society does not appreciate its old culture, because of certain historical conditions (inheritance of Soviet occupation) and its impact on national self-awareness. Important principles, such as the nation's dignity and tolerance were violated. Lack of mass media objectivity (i.e., only bad events are reported about the countryside) often draws attention away from good expressions of ethnic culture. Publishing good news about the countryside more often than the bad news would convey a more positive image of the countryside and would be a promising example for other villages. Many Lithuanians, especially young people are not interested in ethnic culture because they have not had the opportunity to be familiar with it. Therefore, the point of departure is to give an ethnocultural foundation to the young generations. First of all, this can be done through the family, school and community. Therewith, governmental attention, financing and appropriate cultural and education policies are needed.

Conclusions

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Applying advanced multiplex EU methods and measures of rural development to the countryside (LEADER+, agroenvironmental measures, etc.), where the main actors are rural people, it is important to highlight rural conditions for social capital development.

Rural schools perform a certain function that is related to selection and screening: high schools and life in the cities are intended for the talented and life in the countryside is destined to the unqualified. In this way, a rural school fulfils a function, disadvantageous in itself – it prepares “high quality production” for the cities and leaves “second-class” for itself. A rural school becomes a “sieve” such that only those who want to fail stay there.

However, if rural schools enter partnerships with rural communities, they are taking the initiative to look for ways to change the existing situation in the village. The objective is to be an institution of the centralized education system and to remain an important force of rural community development. In this instance, rural schools strive to alleviate social, cultural and economic problems, faced by the rural child or the rural community. In the case of partnership with rural communities, schools are able to help rural children to get a good education. Hopefully, there will be a change of attitude towards the importance of education in the community by involving parents in the community.

The relation between ‘high’, professional, elite urban culture and ‘low’ folk, amateurish countryside culture is one more dimension of rural social exclusion. ‘Low’ culture is created by the ‘high’ culture prototype and it is the most remote part of the united feeding culture system centre.

The strengthening of civil society, foregrounded by Kovach seems to be essential but also controversial in conditions of intense competition, great social differentiation and poverty in rural areas. Nevertheless, avoiding new hierarchies and enabling local participation and decision-making are momentous steps towards the revival of the Lithuanian countryside.

In Lithuania, LEADER is a new form of territorial-based policy instrument besides The Law of Regional Development and the National Cohesive Development Strategy, which did not give much of the expected effects severally.

One of the programmes, also designed for the targeted rural territories is the Long-term Programme for the Survival of Lithuanian Ethnographic Villages. Implementation of this programme requires large funding, that is not available in a short period. Therefore, infrastructure and renovation of ethnographic villages is anticipated to develop through the combination of different available programmes (for example, local communities’ rural development strategies), intended to solve the primary matters. Thus, harmonizing bottom-up and top-down actions could be especially advantageous presently in Lithuania.

Today it is important to uphold the countryside as the natural hearth of ethnic culture, both for urban and rural people. Ethnic culture is an inexhaustible and renewable resource, credibly tried by time. Up-to-date countryside culture is a living succession of tradition. In order not to break this, it is important to realize a sense of tradition and to live by it today, adjusting the content to the modern form. Realization of old knowledge can help to create new constructive chains for the future. It is a possibility to be open to the world having something valuable to share and not to fear globalisation threats to national identity. Accordingly, the answer is in coherence, which can be expressed by the words of George Santayana:

“A man’s feet should touch his ground, but his eyes should see the whole world.”

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