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Local actors facing environmental issues: lessons from a bottom-up approach

Marie-Claude Maurel

In the new member states (NMS), the process of European integration is a vehicle for disseminating the ideas of sustainable development. A new political paradigm, sustainable development endeavours to reconcile economic growth, the concern for a just development of society, and the preservation of the natural environment. This currently serves as a programmatic frame of reference for the political debate and public initiatives. Among the public policies that have drawn their inspiration from the principles of sustainable development, we have chosen to concentrate on the example of the implementation of “local sustainable development” in the LEADER programme (acronym for *Liaisons entre Actions de Développement de l'Economie Rurale*, Liaisons between Rural Economy Development Initiatives). The introduction of this model of rural development, based on the initiatives of local actors, is a form of public policy that is totally new in the countries of Central Europe that were formerly part of the communist system. It is of interest in that it enables an analysis to be made of how the development plans for local communities connect with concerns about the protection of nature. Is the paradigm of “sustainability” shared by local actors? Does the implementation of the local development approach signify a genuine new awareness on the part of local actors, or is the environmental theme seen solely as an opportunity (the “open sesame” to eligibility for European funding)? How do they take on board environmental issues? Do they manage to integrate them into local development strategies and projects? In order to answer these questions, we will, in the first part of this paper, refer to the conceptual framework of the implementation of new public policies, before going on,

in the second part, to analyse on the basis of case studies the way in which local actors have slipped into the new forms of public initiative that have been proposed to them.

The normative framework of public policies

A change of paradigm: the principle of sustainability

In view of the open nature of the definitions of sustainable development, we have chosen to recall the formulation adopted by the Brundtland Report (1987): “Sustainable development is a development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.” “This definition refers to three characteristics of the concept: taking the longer term into account when making decisions in the present, linking environmental and social elements, and the need to act before problems appear, by freeing oneself from a sector-based logic so as to rearticulate or redefine the different dimensions that combine to bring about development, on various levels.” (Lévy Lussault, 2003)

In the present study, our reflections will be focused in particular on the development/environment relationship, as it is taken into account by public policies, on the one hand, and as it is understood and perceived by actors on different levels, on the other. We shall put forward the hypothesis that the concept of “local sustainable development” is the appropriate framework for promoting the connection between two sets of issues, the ability of societies to reproduce themselves and the preservation of natural systems. The search for compatibility between these aims should be carried out by integrating the principles for action, the procedures, and the regulations formulated by public policies, and by harmonising the practices that they authorise. The

question that needs to be answered is whether the normative framework of public policies does in fact allow the conflicting aims to be reconciled and compromises to be found.

The implementation of the principle of sustainability in local development

From the environmental point of view, rural areas are key locations for implementing sustainable development.¹ With the imperative of sustainability, these areas have acquired a new economic significance in the current period of post-industrial development. A re-orientation has taken place from an emphasis on agricultural development based on the modernisation of structures and the intensification/specialisation of production to a vision of integrated and sustainable rural development.² This tendency can be clearly seen in the search for diversification of economic activities, including organic (bio-) agriculture, the transformation of local products, green tourism, and new forms of managing the natural resources of rural areas. These forms of development attach crucial importance to the concept of the natural heritage (understood as a complex of renewable and non-renewable resources), and are based on respect for ecological functioning. We can see here a renewal in the way of thinking about local development and of promoting it. Sustainable local development, based on

¹ The quality of the environment depends on a whole series of public initiatives relating to the protection of the water and the soil, the conservation of species and of the natural and cultural heritage, the agricultural use of the land, the instruments of agricultural policy, etc.

² "Rural development policy must be multi-disciplinary in concept and multi-sectoral in application, with a clear territorial dimension" [Cork Declaration, Commission of the European Communities 1996].

endogenous initiatives and local resources, relies on well-established principles and a method of trying it out which can together be summed up as follows: a territorial approach rather than a sector-based principle; optimum use of local resources so as to maximise the benefits from activities and retain the profits locally; and development that targets the needs, capacities and expectations of the local population. In addition, this approach takes on the dimension of a political project, with this type of development having to depend on democratic procedures and the establishment of local governance.

In which way and through which channels is the model of sustainable local development disseminated in the rural areas of the Czech Republic? Are the conditions for integrating environmental requirements and expectations of economic and social development fulfilled? To help answer this question, we shall look at the characteristics of two areas of public policy, the protection of natural areas and the development of rural areas.

The management of protected areas

In the period immediately following the 1989 change of regime, the policy of nature conservation became a priority issue for those in power. The damage to the environment bequeathed by the communist system made necessary the adoption of a new institutional and legal framework allowing the Czech state to watch over nature conservation and a properly informed use of natural resources. The Ministry of the Environment, created in 1991, is the principal institution responsible for managing the environment and directing public policy from this point of view.

The Law on Nature and Landscape Protection (law no. 114/1992) establishes the main legislative provisions for

an appropriate management of nature and landscapes, together with environmentally appropriate forms of using them for the economy, tourism, and recreation. This law lays down the concepts of a «system of ecological stability», of a significant landscape element (which could be natural, cultural, or historical), and of the protection of the aesthetic and natural values of landscapes. The law defines the different categories of protected areas (national parks, protected landscape areas, specially protected zones with a small surface area, and bio-corridors). (See Table 1).

	area (km ²)
Czech Republic area	78 867
Protected areas in the CR	10 483
Natura 2000 network (proposed)	10 463
Designated special protection areas	6 936
Sites of community interest	7 244

Table 1. Protected areas in the Czech Republic (2005)

It also lists the plant and animal species that are specially protected. Planned globally for top-down application by means of a network of institutions coming under the authority of the state (including the Agency for Nature and Landscape Protection) and based on the principle of territorial decentralisation, the policy of nature conservation provides for the participation of citizens (through civic associations) and initiatives by the local municipal authorities, which are explicitly mentioned on the list of authorities that are called on to conserve nature. Their powers, like those of the district authorities (which were abolished in 2003) are defined.

The process of accession to the EU has played a dynamic role in the revision of the legislative framework. The most recent amendment of the Law (law no. 218/2004) transposes the EU directives “Birds” and “Habitats”. The new law provides for improvements in planning and

conception processes in line with European legislation (Natura 2000, plans for hydrographic basins, plans for the ownership and use of the land, etc.). The Czech Republic has adopted various programmes for nature conservation and landscape protection, notably the renewal of rural areas, partly financed by EU funding. During the pre-accession period, clear progress was made in improving the institutional and legal framework and setting up new political instruments. Specific objectives such as the creation of a network of protected areas and the strengthening of the management capabilities of the protection system were achieved. Nevertheless, the integration of concerns relating to nature and biodiversity into sector-based policies (such as the use of the land and the development of regions, agriculture, and forests) still needs to be pursued. This last remark is aimed at an extension of the objectives of nature protection to include elements that are not environmental and more broadly social.³

Rural development policies

Let us recall that the change in the economic system that took effect in 1990 put an end to the policy of intensive modernisation of agriculture which had profoundly altered the age-old relationship between this sector of activity and nature.⁴ The process of decollectivisation and the restitution of ownership rights to the land helped bring about agricultural development practices, without

³ This corresponds to a change in the environmental ethic which consists in an attempt to integrate human beings and nature according to the principles of “ecocentric” approaches (Larrère and Larrère, 1997).

⁴ The environmental damage caused by collectivist agriculture has been extensively described elsewhere (Maurel 2007).

however allowing an environmentally rational agriculture to become widespread. The political debate focused on economic issues and those relating to the privatisation of the land (restitution law), at the expense of a political vision of rural development. During the course of the 1990s, the idea of local development at the micro-regional level began to be discussed. This led to the programme of rural renewal, administered by the Ministry for Regional Development, granting local authorities subsidies to implement rural development projects and help renovate buildings in villages so as to improve the quality of life and promote tourism. The period of preparation for accession stimulated a global reflection on the future of rural areas. The SAPARD programme (2000-2004), a pre-accession instrument for supporting agriculture and rural development and financed by the EU, was intended to facilitate the regrouping and modernisation of farms, improve rural infrastructure, diversify economic activity and protect the environment. After accession in 2004, and the implementation of national development strategies, the Operational Programme "Rural Development and Multifunctional Agriculture" (2004-2006) concentrated on supporting investment into agriculture and the transformation of agricultural products. This programme, administered by the Ministry of Agriculture, paid less attention to non-agricultural issues in rural development. The only measure relating to it consisted of a pilot version of the LEADER programme. This measure represented an attempt at a new approach to rural development and local governance in the Czech Republic (Maurel, 2008). The Ministry of Agriculture issued an annual invitation to tender known as LEADER CZ, financed out of its own funds, and functioning on the principles and method of LEADER, but with a lesser degree of funding. Its objective was to support the economic and social development of rural areas so as to improve local governance, the environment, and, in a general way, living conditions. Intended for micro-regions with populations from ten to a hundred thousand, the programme LEADER CZ aimed at

training local communities in preparing development strategies. During the period 2004-2006, within the framework of these two programmes, 75 local action groups (LAGs)⁵ were selected in the Czech Republic.

Disconnection or convergence of environmental policies and rural development?

The policies of nature protection and rural development, of which we have briefly outlined the salient features, apply to the same kinds of areas, which gives rise to the question of the points of connection between these two forms of public programme. We have noted that their implementation falls under two different ministries, which experience difficulties in communicating and concerting their strategies. The example of the agro-environmental measures aimed at natural areas of great value and the analysis of the instruments that have been put in place by each of the two administrations reveal a relative lack of compatibility between the forms taken by the application of measures, and a visible lack of harmonisation of the objectives pursued (Prazan, 2005).

This lack of connection between the European-inspired policies in the fields of nature protection, on the one hand, and rural development, on the other, leads us to ask how their coordination might operate on the local level. The «top-down» management of protected areas raises the question of the acceptance of the systems of protection by local communities (Depraz, 2005). The powers to act

⁵ The LEADER approach is based on the principle of partnership, which implies the participation of local actors, both public and private, in the creation of a development strategy and its application. In practice, the partnership takes the form of a Local Action Group (LAG) with the role of a collective actor.

granted to rural communities in the field of development make it all the more critical that the question of acceptance should be resolved. In what way are environmental issues integrated into the «bottom-up» mode of management of the rural areas? The involvement of the protected areas in an overall regional approach, especially in a local development strategy, could represent a very significant experiment from the point of view of the principle of sustainability. However, this proposal is liable to come up against a series of restrictions or divergences of interpretation and, in short, to give rise to tensions. The coming together of the various categories of actors involved around the paradigm of sustainability is, in practice, neither spontaneous nor obvious. An understanding of the idea of local development depends on the views of the institutions involved in the process (nature protection agencies, local authorities, associations, farmers, businesspeople, and so on). In practice, institutional resistance and friction between different actors can be observed, which can result in confrontational relationships, for example, between the management of the protected areas and the people living there. There may be debates over the development of tourism in the protected areas or their place in the economic and social system of the relevant regions. Integrated projects may therefore prove difficult to implement.

On the ground, the situation is strongly influenced by the legacy of the past and the inertia that has been inherited, which condition to some extent the ideas the actors have about development and nature management.

New ways of developing resources by local actors

The context for the introduction of the LEADER approach

The use of the LEADER method presupposes the existence of institutions that are able to support this approach. Let us briefly re-examine the context in which the introduction of LEADER took place. The extent of the transformations that were carried out in the 1990s in itself provided a set of favourable factors that should be emphasised, including the democratisation of the political system, and the establishment of a market economy accompanied by sustained growth and depending on a base of dynamic enterprises. The most important fact was the consolidation of a local democracy and the emergence of a civil society, though still in a fragile form. The Czech Republic has re-established local autonomy at the local community level, and a new division of powers has been established between the different levels of regional administration. Parallel to this process of political decentralisation, the role of the institutional actors (regional authorities, associations, inter-communal cooperation, etc.) that are capable of taking charge of planning development initiatives has been strengthened, and new partnerships have been established between public and private actors. At the instigation of the state, the local authorities have set about developing new forms of cooperation, notably at the micro-regional level, in order to combine the limited human and financial resources and thus to overcome the handicaps of territorial fragmentation (Maurel, 2004, 2007). In spite of the efforts made to bring about a new institutional configuration on the local level, other factors may act as a brake. They are related to the legacy of a collectivist system that has left a lasting mark on rural life through the continued existence of social structures (interest networks) and bureaucratic practices linked with the centralist tradition. While the LEADER approach offers local actors the opportunity to mobilise their capacity for

action and to make use of new resources, in reality the impact of the process depends a great deal on the practical details of the way the local communities are involved. Depending on the region and the groups of actors involved in developing them, the latter can intervene in different ways. We intend to examine this on the basis of an analysis of the strategies of economic construction of the resources by the actors. Due to their location, close to protected areas, the case studies chosen below allow us to examine the way in which local actors take the environmental dimension into account in preparing development conceptions. Under the new system (the LEADER programme), the tasks of identification and development of natural, landscape and heritage resources fall to local actors. Is the exercise of this responsibility accompanied by a heightened awareness of respect for the environment?

Development strategies: the choice of a template for interpreting them

Let us now try to propose a template for looking at local development, working from the basic concepts of the economy of proximity.⁶ Development is a social process. It is made up of different actors, a process of mobilisation of actors with a view to drawing up a strategy of adaptation to outside constraints, on the basis of a collective identification with a culture and a territory.

The territory becomes a privileged factor in development in that it includes natural, cultural and social factors,

⁶ See the works of Bernard Pecqueur, whose analysis of local development makes use of the concept of proximity (geographical and institutional) to explain the coordination of local actors.

historically rooted in the social reality of a locality, and not easily transferable to other areas. The territory appears as a collective construction, both produced by and a condition for the production of specific resources. It is «a dynamic process for the coordination of actors which has its place in the emergence of new regulations» (B. Pecqueur). This model of territorial development is based on a system of local actors, presupposes a constructed territory (as opposed to a given or institutional one), and relies on the principle of specification. Put in different terms, the mechanism of defining a territory depends on the principle of specification of assets, in other words the search for resources that are specific to the territory and enable it to stand out from neighbouring areas. In competition between places (which is imposed by the globalised economy), the supply of services to businesses is crucial. This may be based on allocations resulting from a long process of accumulation of know-how or from the production of local authority goods financed by the local authority.

	Generic	Specific
Resources	Non market value Exogenous 1	Non market value Endogenous 4
Assets	Market value Exogenous 2	Market value Endogenous 3

Table 2. The specification Process: a virtuous circle?

(Source: derived from Pecqueur B., 1989.

Le développement local, Paris. Syros)

The table above allows us to distinguish four cases resulting from the intersection of resources and assets with their qualifiers, either generic or specific.

By a resource we mean a factor that is not exploited and has no market value. It is, so to speak, a potential that can be developed. Resources become assets once they become marketable, whether they are goods or services that come on the market.

The qualifier “generic” applies to a resource or an asset whose presence is independent of the social or business dynamic of the locality. It is a feature that is exogenous, transferable, independent of what we might call the *genius loci*. The characteristic “specific” is the result of the strategies of actors; it is endogenous in origin and does not lend itself to being transferred. If we now combine these terms, we can consider a generic resource to be a potential that has not been exploited, while a generic asset is a resource that has been activated on a market. If we go on to clarify the process of specification, a specific asset is one that has been created by actors and promoted by the market. (This might be an investment in training or the acquiring of know-how). Finally, a specific resource is an advantage of the cultural type which is not directly promoted on the market (know-how acquired through an accumulation of experience, a collective cognitive learning process, or a particular historical background). In reality, it is rare to find an asset or a resource that is purely generic or purely specific. The mechanism of specification can be likened to a virtuous circle which requires certain conditions to be met. A sustainable specific character of a territory can only come into being through the creation of specific resources, in other words ones that are not transferable and remain the acquisition of the territory where they can be said to have been invented. The key feature for territorial development strategies is to discover what constitutes their identifiable potential. It is thus the transition from a generic resource to a specific asset which corresponds to a development strategy.

The Ostrožsko-Horňácko LAG: development of a heritage

A local action group was established in 2008 covering the two micro-regions of Ostrožsko and Horňácko, the organisation of which goes back to the beginning of the 2000s. Straddling two administrative regions, the whole area consists of five local authorities belonging to the region (*kraj*) of Zlín and eleven that come under the region of Southern Moravia.

The new areas for public initiatives (the micro-regions and the LAG) have freed themselves from the administrative boundaries established in the 1960s in order to fit in better with both common historical features (the folklore traditions of “Slovacko”) and the way natural landscapes complement forms of development (the hills dominating the Morava river valley and the White Carpathian mountains). The two micro-regions have an interesting natural and cultural potential with complementary resources. The Horňácko micro-region extends over the protected landscape area of the White Carpathians, characterised by an extensive development based on cattle-rearing and forestry and low density levels, while the Ostrožsko micro-region, more densely populated and more intensely developed, possesses a greater capacity for investment due to its know-how and higher revenue levels. From the environmental point of view, there is quite a contrast between the two micro-regions: management of the risk of flooding of the Morava and the negative consequences of intensive industrial agriculture, for the local authorities in Ostrožsko; and conservation of the meadows and forests with their rare species of flora (such as meadow orchids) for the local authorities in Horňácko which belong to the protected landscape area of the

White Carpathians, established in 1980.⁷ Two faces of nature characterised by different landscape and cultural heritages are thus juxtaposed. The coordinators of the LAG are aware of the interest this heritage holds for the creation of a strategy that mobilises this group of resources to develop them into the support for a diversified rural development, thanks to green tourism, local products, and popular traditions (such as folklore dances and costumes). The strategy created in this way is entitled “Return to popular roots, services, and arts and crafts”. The document setting it out has been drawn up by the coordinators of the LAG with the help of a consultancy agency. It is based on a detailed and virtually exhaustive assessment of the strengths and weaknesses for potential, and on an analysis of the opportunities and threats, following an approach which is now a classic one (SWOT). Starting from there, three priorities have been identified:

Priority 1. Support for tourism

Strategic aim: Making use of natural and cultural resources.

Specific aims: Sustainable rural tourism, support for the growth of local enterprises so as to create jobs for local people. Developing the amount of accommodation available in the private sector and restaurants. Developing a chain of shops for hiring equipment: bicycles, boats.

⁷ The Bílé Karpaty PLA (protected landscape area) was designated by a Ministry of Culture order (No. 17644/1980) on November 3rd 1980. It has an area of 715 km² and covers the Hodonín, Uherské Hradiště and Zlín regions. It is administered by the Administration of Bílé Karpaty, which is a regional branch of the Nature Conservation Authority.

Priority 2. Quality of life and development of the countryside

Strategic aim: Halting the exodus of young people from the country to the towns.

Specific aims: Renewing communication networks and adapting public spaces to make them suitable for children, for culture, and for education, in the framework of various circles of interest and seminars, encouraging further education. Renovating buildings and developing the cultural heritage. Involving the local population in the process of improving the quality of life. Renovating damaged buildings, providing jobs, renovating cultural monuments and facilities, modernising libraries, etc.

Priority 3. Support for the small producers of the region

Strategic goal: Strengthening the traditional production of regional products

Specific goals: Increasing the competitiveness of food products: wine, fruit, smoked meats, bakery products. Improving marketing. Purchasing new equipment for transformation into finished products, developing services for small producers so as to reduce unemployment.

If we take the three points listed above, nowhere is there any mention of the environment, except in relation to the expression “cultural heritage”. On the basis of an analysis of the strategy, we can put forward the hypothesis that the mechanism of specification of the assets and resources has been put in motion but is still unfinished. The region of Ostrožsko-Hornácko lends itself to the development of original possibilities for tourism if landscape elements (vineyards and wine cellars, meadows and forests) and heritage features (the folklore of Slovakia) are combined in such a way as to create a specific resource. Without formulating it so explicitly, the actors are aware of the

potential benefits. One may indeed ask whether the arrangement of cycle tracks through the vineyards, the creation of arts and crafts (such as producing local costumes), and the organisation of folklore festivals will be sufficient to form an economic basis ensuring a real comparative advantage to the LAG. (See Table 3).

	Generic	Specific
Resources	Non market value Exogenous 1 Moravian hills, Morava valley, Bílé Karpaty	Non market value Endogenous 4 Cycle paths, wine roads, folklore and landscape values
Assets	Market value Exogenous 2 Wine growing, green tourism	Market value Endogenous 3 Touristic and recreative tender

Table 3. Ostrožsko-Hornácko LAG: the attempt to develop natural and cultural resources

The Úhlava eco-region: from the development of nature to heritage integration

The local authorities that make up the micro-region of Úhlava,⁸ formed in 1999 around the small town of Nýrsko,

⁸ Following on from the abolition of the administrative unit of the district (*okres*), the mayors of the villages or townships of Nýrsko, Stražov, Dešenice, Chudenín and Hamry joined together in 1999 to form the micro-region of Úhlava. This grouping of local village authorities was originally created in order to manage the water supply

are situated on the foothills of the Bohemian Forest (Šumava) massif, in the region of Plzeň in Southern Bohemia. These rural districts have seen their position change in a radical way since the disappearance of the Iron Curtain and the opening up of the border with neighbouring Bavaria. The system of actors has been reconstituted. The state has changed its role and manner of intervening in this border region. Control by the army and the state farming system, which closely restricted access to the region, has been replaced by the supervision exercised by the administration of the National Park, created in 1991, over the protected natural areas of the Šumava massif. The area covered by the micro-region partly overlaps with the territory of the National Park and the protected landscape area that surrounds it (the peripheral zone). The local authorities are in conflict with the Park over the manner in which the forests (which have been returned to the ownership of the local authorities under the restitution law) are to be conserved, and over the lack of financial compensation for not exploiting the forests. Nevertheless, the presence of this medium altitude forested massif has become the essential resource for the development of tourism, which attracts a clientele that is mostly Czech (for green tourism, winter sports, etc.). The arrival of foreign investment (mainly in industry) has been facilitated by the cross-border exchanges and cooperation that have been established in the Šumava-Böhmerwald Euroregion and within the framework of the Künisches Gebirge or Královský Hvozd cross-border micro-region (Bauer, 2008). On the Czech side, the local political leaders have gradually become aware of the opportunities for development connected with their location on the border and their closeness to the Šumava National Park. In their grouping of local authorities they have found a

network coming from the River Úhlava, which depends on a reservoir that was constructed on the river in 1969.

way of developing their common area, emphasising the quality of its natural scenery and the low-key exploitation of the forest resources over the past half-century, regarding the extension of the forested areas as a guarantee of an “authentic” landscape. The Úhlava micro-region, which brings together six local communities (*obce*), has provided the framework for new investment into tourism: establishing a network of information centres, opening cycle tracks, creating an “Ecoregion” label awarded to agrotourism restaurants and accommodation. This label is a marketing concept devoid of any real ecological content. In the year 2000 a preliminary development strategy was prepared, using the SWOT method, by consultants from a regional development agency. European funding has made it possible to finance a signposting system in the small town, the website of the micro-region, and the equipment for the tourist information centre.

A few years later, in 2005, a LAG was formed with a view to being eligible for the “LEADER CZ” (2004-2006) programme, and funding was obtained for implementing various projects (a grant of three million crowns in 2006). Starting in 2007, the LAG drew up a new development strategy in order to benefit from the LEADER (2007-2013) programme. The application, submitted to the Ministry in the autumn of 2007, was not included in the wave of projects selected in the spring of 2008 and had to be re-submitted in the autumn.

However, the development of the natural and cultural potential of this micro-region has made progress on another front, that of the Královský Hvozd cross-border association. Within the framework of this organisation for German-Czech cooperation, the principle of a local development based on the redevelopment of the «traditional» elements of the natural and architectural landscape has been implemented. The new strategy of the cross-border association of local communities has led the

mayors to look into the presence in their villages of old buildings that have been allowed to fall derelict. The actors concerned have then enhanced their knowledge of the sites by consulting numerous pictorial documents (such as photographs, village plans, postcards, etc.) found in the district archives and documents relating the history of settlement by the Germans before their expulsion from this region in 1945. The village of Hamry, integrated into the Královský Hvozd in 2001, illustrates the new dynamic process bringing together villages across the border, of which the leitmotiv is to revive the rural tradition of the region from before the changes resulting from the expulsion of the Germans. In 2007, more than eight inns have been opened as part of the local government policy of renovating the heritage of old buildings. Investment in the tourist sector – the only really lucrative one in this protected area – is to a large extent financed with the help of funds received by the Královský Hvozd association. The number of projects is increasing: cycle tracks, cross-country skiing trails, the opening of new border crossing points in order to encourage visits and tourism, and the publication of publicity brochures and tourist maps, which re-situates villages and local communities at the heart of a cross-border regional entity. Particular attention has likewise been given to environmental renewal and the renovation of religious buildings (churches, chapels, cemeteries, and ways of the cross), with the double objective of attracting tourists and the people who lived in the region before the expulsions. The question of the local development of this cross-border region cannot be understood outside of its historical context. It is this which motivates the approach of heritage integration of the area. The following table summarises the different stages. (See table 4.) In the case of the Úhlava micro-region, the mechanism of specification takes on an original dimension because it is a product of the rediscovery of the past and a rewriting of the memory of the places in the region by the Czech and German social groups, whose relationship to the region is appreciably different.

	Generic	Specific
Resources	Non market value Exogenous 1 Šumava Mountain	Non market value Endogenous 4 cross country skyng, landscapes and cultural monuments
Assets	Market value Exogenous 2 Mountain tourism (winter and summer)	Market value Endogenous 3 Touristic tender (pensions, hotels)

Table 4. Ekoregion Úhlava: an attempt to develop cultural landscape values

The preceding analysis of local development strategies enables us to come up with an initial set of comments. The development strategies are stimulated by local societies which invest a part of their history in the region. Social concepts play an important role in the orientation of projects. The past, in the form of the festive traditions of a deep-rooted rural society, in the case of Ostrožsko-Horňácko in Moravia, and in the form of remembered references to the past, apparently shared, in the case of Královský Hvozd in Bohemia, is a factor with a crucial role to play in the mechanism of specification. It operates through the filter of heritage integration. The natural and cultural values of the environment are only taken into account in a marginal way when constructing a sustainable local development. Although the environmental element is an integral part of the construction of strategies, we cannot conclude that its presence testifies to a strong awareness of its requirements by local societies.

Conclusion

This preliminary study has highlighted some of the limits hindering the process of integration of the policies of nature protection and of rural development. The recognition of protected areas is a prerogative of the state, carried out by national authorities such as the National Park or the Nature Conservation Agency. The demarcation of the area they cover, the enactment of conservation regulations, and their application on the ground, all come under the remit of the central power and a topdown policy. Although provision is made for the participation of the local populations, this occurs after the decision-making process has taken place. While the people living in the regions are involved in the management of the protected natural areas, it is never they who initiate the protection systems. Not only that, but they perceive these systems more as constraints that must be respected than as opportunities to be grasped in constructing local development strategies. The nature protection policies are thus experienced as being something external to local initiative. In practice, protected areas such as the Natura 2000 sites are regarded by local leaders as areas that are exempt from the decision-making powers of the local society. The at best lukewarm feeling of social acceptance that results from this is expressed in varying ways, depending on the interest group. On the level of the local actors, a harmonisation of the two policies of nature protection and rural development is far from being achieved.

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