LOCAL COMMUNITY TRANSFORMATION AFTER 1989 ON THE EXAMPLE OF OLOMOUC, CZECH REPUBLIC

Pavel Ptáček

Department of Geography, Faculty of Science, Palacký University, Olomouc, Czech Republic

Abstract: This article is dealing with problems of civic culture transformation in post-socialist city of Olomouc, Czech Republic. After introducing of the theoretical concept and methodology are presented results of an empirical research and comparison with the others three towns in the Czech Republic - Český Krumlov, Nové Město nad Metují and Teplice. As the empirical part of my study shows, newly established self-governing institutions embed themselves piecemeal into the local structures and level of identification of citizens with them is relatively high. A very dangerous process that we can observe is a reinforcement of the outsider trend. If we have a look at the regional distribution of social capital and if we compare Olomouc with the other three towns, we can affirm that there are no substantial differences between them. The highest level of social capital we can observe in Nové Město nad Metují, a similar level in Český Krumlov and Olomouc, and a relatively lower in Teplice.

Key words: Czech Republic, Olomouc, Networking, Civic Culture, Political Culture, Regional Development

1. INTRODUCTION

In looking at the last ten years or so, we have been able to observe the changing focus of scientists dealing with the problems of uneven regional development. Still growing interest is especially given to study social and economic processes leading to increase of uneven development at the local level. Theoretical sources for this research are taken from sociology and economy. These streams were developed in 1970s and they are connected with the so-called post-fordist discussion (Amin, 1994). We can distinguish three main theoretical streams in this period - (neo)marxist, neoconservative

and approaches based on the French regulation school. All these approaches try to find reasons for the economic and social crisis of the 1970s and propose new solutions for economic development.

In general, we can stress that Marxist (structuralist) theories can be viewed as oversocialized. They neglect the role of individuals in economic, social and political action. On the other hand, neo-classical economic theory does not take into the account the role of interpersonal relations, imperfect competition and views the whole economy as only a sum of mutually independent, isolated and rational individuals (*homo economicus*).

Theories based on the regulation school and flexible specialisation bring a more balanced approach to understanding economic action. They affirm that economic development is heavily influenced by *regime of accumulation* and by *mode of production*. Regional development theories as a spatial application of regulation theory stress the importance of flexibility and learning for successful regional development (Blažek, 1999). Important theoretical sources for understanding the process of societal learning can be found in institutional economics (Hodgson, 1988) and in the new economic sociology of M. Granovetter (Granovetter 1985,1992). According to institutional economists the economic action of individuals is influenced by *habits* and *routines*, which are dependent on the set of very different causes (biological, psychological, sociological etc.). These *habits* and *routines* are expressed by existing local institutions. Local institutions are not unchangeable over time and it is important to discover the processes that lead to these changes. New economic sociology operates within the *networks* and *embededness*.

The key notions which regional development theory has borrowed from new economic sociology and institutional economics are high quality social, institutional and cultural structures, as well as non-hierarchical system of mutual collaboration.

2. LOCAL CULTURE, SOCIAL AND SYMBOLIC CAPITAL AND THE ROLE OF LOCAL ELITES IN REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT

As a **local culture,** we can understand the spatial expression of institutionalised habits and routines mutually connected within a network of contacts. Local culture then can help us to understand why some regions (firms, individuals and elites in region) are able to use information and knowledge in different ways which lead to differing economic success (Storper, Salais, 1997). Local culture also can very much differ from region to region and so can create unevenly equipped regions by **social capital** (Bourdieu, 1977) or in other words, a well functioning network of contacts and institutions can be called **institutional thickness.** Main bearers of social capital are local elites who can substantially influence the development of the region. Local elites are owners of **symbolic capital** that can be changed into real capital.

Social capital is a specific form of capital. It is not included in people or physically implemented in product, but it is a specific feature of the relations between people. The connection between symbolic and social capital, especially in post-communist societies, is a very interesting phenomenon (Keller, 1995, Uhlíř, 1998).

3. CIVIC CULTURE - EXAMPLES OF RESEARCH

The term civic culture can be used as a different expression for presence of social capital in regions. The practical application of these theoretical concepts is the domain specifically of economic sociologists and, in the last ten years, of economic geographers. A pioneering work was published in 1960-th and its name is *The Civic Culture* (Almond, Verba, 1963). A most inspiring work for me was Putnam s *Making Democracy Work* (Putnam, 1993) which deals with the establishment of new institutions at the level of provincial governments in Italy from 1970 to 1990. Notions like civic culture, social capital, norms of mutuality and networks of civic commitment are main explaining variables of success or failure of regional governments. Political culture plays an important role. Where the relations were characterised by horizontal connections, it usually implied a rise in institutional and economic operations. Historical development plays a very important role (Putnam, 1993, Vajdová, 1996).

Other examples are **learning regions** studies. Most authors declare that *institutional thickness* is a necessary condition for the successful development of a region. On the other hand, they say that development strategies of these successful regions are not transferable. The most important characteristic of learning regions is **the ability learning to learn.**

For me is especially important research of networking and civic culture in post-communist societies. A good example for this research is Schöpflin (1993). He created a typology of post-communist countries according to political culture. A very valuable study is that of Stark and Grabher (1997) which stresses how the symbolic capital of old communist elite can be used and transformed into new economic power. A very similar work about the transformation of old communist networks into new functioning industrial networks in the Lanškroun region, Czech Republic, is perfectly illustrated in Uhlíř (1998).

In the Czech Republic we find an example of this research, the program on the transformation of local communities processed by a team of sociologists from the Sociological Institute of the Czech Academy of Science, Prague (Vajdová, 1996, Vajdová, Kostelecký, 1997). On the basis of the example of three Czech cities and the comparison of one Czech and East-German city, the basic principles and patterns of political culture were described. The authors were inspired by success of Putnam's publication.

4. RESULTS OF EMPIRICAL RESEARCH OF LOCAL COMMUNITY IN OLOMOUC

The main aim of my empirical research was to discover the basic patterns of political and civic culture in Olomouc and compare them to similar research undertaken by the Sociological Institute, Czech Academy of Science in three other Czech towns - Český Krumlov, Nové Město nad Metují and Teplice under the supervision of PhDr. Zdenka Vajdová in 1994, before the local elections. The aim was similar to that of Putnam's study: to map how relatively newly established institutions at the local level, especially local self-government, are able to gain the trust of citizens, and whether there are some regional differences. The working hypothesis was that after 40 years of socialist some differences in local culture would emerge.

My research was focused only on citizens, not on elites. Elites will be the aim of the next research. My research was carried out during one week in the beginning of May 1999, i. e. a few months after local elections. The sample was 500 citizens of the town, i. e. approx. 0,5 % of the total population (respecting spatial and sociodemographic characteristics of the population). The questions are displayed in the following table:

Table 1

Local pol. system	Aspect of attitudes			Participation
	cognitive	evaluating	emotive	
input	knowing about	influence of subjects on decision making	trust to institutions, personalisation	participation in elections
output	problems of the town	contribution of loc. authorities to development, right preferences	openness to change	intervention to decision making
Citizens in system	relevance and competence			
Other variables: Sex Age Level of education Economic activity				

Source: Vajdová, Kostelecký (1997)

4.1. Attitudes to local policy

Concerning *cognitive* aspects, the majority of Olomouc citizens feels as not sufficiently informed. In this sense, Olomouc is closer to Teplice then to other two towns. It can be explained by its larger population size. In Olomouc, it might be the absence of so called small councils in smaller parts of the town. People very often do not

understand the constitution of the local political system, they do not know the competencies of different actors in the local political and economic level.

Two questions addressed the *evaluating* and *cognitive* aspects of attitudes:
1. who involves living in the city
2. what level of trust do they have in public administration institutions

ad 1) Local authorities (city council, mayor, local representatives) and political parties governing the city hall have the largest influence on life in the city. Citizens, churches, mafia, "old communist structures", but Noggins as well have than the smallest influence on citizens. The influence of hidden elites in Olomouc is very small.

ad 2) All institutions and offices have a relatively high degree of trust. In the worst position are state police and finance and labour offices. In this sense, the situation is very similar to the situation in other towns.

4.2. Participation of citizens in local elections

The fact that research in Olomouc was realised after the election of local authorities in November 1998, the actual preferences for political parties were not so important as before elections in 1994 (comparative research in other 3 towns). For us the enlargement of the time horizon is important. As shown in table 2, in Olomouc we can observe relatively stable support of political parties. Nevertheless, there was a very substantial change in the council. The former leading coalition party - Civic Democratic Party (ODS) despite its triumph in the 1998 election did not establish a local council and is now in opposition (similar situation is in České Budějovice).

Table 2 Composition of former and current city council in Olomouc (45 mandates)

1994-1998	ODS 15	ČSSD 7	ODA 5	UKD 5	SZ, nez. 3	KSČM 8	SPR-RSČ 2
1998-2002	ODS 14	ČSSD 11	US 6	KDU 6	KSČM 6	OI/21 - 2	

ODS-Civic Democratic Party (Občanská demokratická strana), ČSSD-Social Democrats (Česká strana sociálně demokratická), ODA-Občanská demokratická aliance (Civic Democratic Aliance), US-Unie svobody (former part of ODS), UKD-Union of Christian Democrats (Unie křesťanských demokratů), KDU-Christian democrats (Křesťanská demokratická unie-Československá strana lidová), KSČM-Communist Party (Komunistická strana Čech a Moravy), SZ- Green Party and Independents (Strana zelených a nezávisli), SPR-RSČ-Republicans (Sdružení pro republiku-Republikánská strana Československa), OI/21- Association (Sdružení) Olomouc 21

Source: Cityhall Olomouc

The next question referred to the contentment with the work of the city hall and could be valuable feedback for the council. Contentment of people with their work in all four is presented in the following table.

Table 3 How the former and current governments of the city contributed to the development of the town (%)?

	Not at all	Partially	Substantially	Definitely yes
Český Krumlov	2	16,5	43,1	38,4
Teplice	12,7	52,9	24,3	10,2
Nové Město nad Metují	8,4	41,2	36,4	14
Olomouc	7,6	38,7	40,3	14,3

Source: Vajdová, Kostelecký (1997), own research

As we can see, feedback between the work of councils and the satisfaction of citizens is relatively strong. The best work of the city hall is in Český Krumlov, on the other hand, relatively not contended are people in Teplice. What could be found interesting is, that the level of contentment in Olomouc, which was measured almost five years later is still relatively high. If we compare it with the situation at the state level, there has been a substantial decline in contentment and trust in such institutions as government, parliament etc. This discrepancy might imply a better level of legitimisation at the local level. This is clearly connected with the fact that 88 % of respondents prefer to elect individuals rather than political parties. For political parties at the local level have preferences more often favourer of ČSSD, KSČM and ODS.

If we have a look at the connection between the sociodemographic characteristics and the attitudes of citizens to different aspects of local culture, it is clear that local culture is substantially influenced by quality of life of citizens. According to these attitudes and sociodemographic characteristic we can distribute citizens into three clusters (Vajdová, Kostelecký, 1997). First is the *liberal* cluster which contains liberal politically oriented people who mostly are higher educated, more entrepreneurial, more content with the current situation, with lower clientelism and a higher degree of trust in other people. Next is the so-called *socialist* cluster. It includes rather left politically oriented people, who expect a higher degree of state paternalism, less contented with current situation with lower trust in other people and expecting a higher level of clientelism. They usually have a lower degree of education and are less entrepreneurial. The last is *traditional* cluster, which includes people with central political orientation, are less contented than these in liberal cluster, express strong paternalism, rather stronger clientelism and weaker trust in other people.

If we have a look at the citizens of Olomouc in comparison with other towns (table 4), the most similar situation is in Nové Město nad Metují. It is expected that a higher share of liberal and traditional clusters mean a higher level of civic culture and the presence of social capital. In this sense the best situation is in Nové Město nad Metují. A similar situation is found in Český Krumlov and Olomouc, and a relatively worst sees one in Teplice. However, it need not necessarily imply better conditions for economic development in one or in other town. We must understand it as an essential condition but not sufficient.

Table 4 Population of towns differentiated according to the pattern of political culture (%)

cluster/share	liberal	Socialist	traditional
Český Krumlov	36	28	36
Teplice	24	35	41
Nové Město nad Metují	45	17	38
Olomouc	40	25	35

Source: Vajdová, Kostelecký (1997), own research

5. CONCLUSION

As the empirical part of my study shows, newly established self-governing institutions embed themselves piecemeal into the local structures and level of identification of citizens with them is relatively high. A very dangerous process that we can observe is a reinforcement of the *outsider* trend. This can lead to resignation and lassitude in citizens or to the rise in preferences for extreme political parties.

If we have a look at the regional distribution of social capital and if we compare Olomouc with the other three towns, we can affirm that there are no substantial differences between them. The highest level of social capital can observed in Nové Město nad Metují, a similar level in Český Krumlov and Olomouc, and a relatively lower in Teplice. Explanatory variables may be high level of nivelisation during the communist period and a relatively small area of the Czech Republic. This contradicts with the study dealing with the sociocultural consequences of electoral behaviour in Slovakia (Krivý, Feglová, Balko, 1996). In Slovakia, we can observe much bigger differences between regions than in the Czech Republic. Is it thanks to much bigger differences in local culture or regional to development? The answers to these interesting new questions are the focus of my next research.

References

Almond, G. A. - Verba, S. (1963): The Civic Culture. Princeton, NJ. Princeton University Press.

Amin, A. - Thrift, N. (eds) (1996): Globalisation, Institutions, and Regional Development in Europe Oxford University Press, 268 p.

Blažek, J. (1999): Teorie regionálního vývoje: je na obzoru nové paradigma či jde jen o pohyb v kruhu? (in press), 19 p.

Bourdieu, P. (1977): Outline of a Theory of Practice. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.

Grabher, G. - Stark, D. (eds) (1997): Restructuring Networks in Post-Socialism: Legacies, Linkages and Localities, Oxford University Press.

Hodgson, G. (1988): Economics and Institutions. Polity Press, Cambridge.

Krivý, V. - Feglová, V. - Balko, D. (1996): Slovensko a jeho regióny, Nadácia Médiá, Bratislava, 403 p.

Putnam, R. D. (1993): Making Democracy Work: Civic Traditions in Modern Italy. Princeton, NJ. Princeton University Press.

Schöpflin, G. (1993): Culture and Identity in Post-communist Europe. In: White, S., Batt, J., Lewis, P.: (eds): Development in East European Politics. MacMilan, London.

Storper, M. - Salais, R. (1997): Worlds of Production: The Action Frameworks of Economy. Cambridge, MA, Harvard University Press.

Uhlíř, D. (1998): Internationalization, and Institutional and Regional Change: Restructuring Post-communist Networks in the Region of Lanškroun, Czech Republic. in: Regional Studies, Vol. 32.7, p. 673-685

Vajdová, Z. (1996): Politická kultura - teoretický koncept a výzkum. in: Sociologický časopis 32, 3, p. 339-351

Vajdová, Z. - Kostelecký, T. (1997): Politická kultura lokálních společenství: případ tří měst. In: Sociologický časopis 33, 4, p. 445-465

Resume

Transformace místní samosprávy po roce 1989 na příkladu města Olomouc, Česká republika

Příspěvek se zabývá problematikou lokální a politické kultury a jejich možnostmi ovlivnit úspěšnou ekonomickou rozvojovou strategii daného regionu či města. Klíčovou roli v tomto procesu sehrávají lokální elity a míra jejich legitimace občany. Tam, kde fungují sítě vzájemné důvěry a informovanosti, jsou lepší předpoklady pro rychlejší přizpůsobování regionu rychlwe se měnícím podmínkám. Cílem studie bylo porovnat úroveň občanské a politické kultury v Olomouci s třemi dalšími městy v České republice, konkrétně s Novým Městem nad Metují, Českým Krumlovem a Teplicemi.

Z uvedené empirické části studie vyplývá, že nově zřízené samosprávné instituce postupně zapouštějí svoje kořeny i na lokální úrovni, a že stupeň identifikace občanů s nimi je poměrně velký. Velkým nebezpečím však zůstává posilování trendu tzv. *outsidera,* jak zdůrazňují i Vajdová, Kostelecký (1997). To může vést buď k úplné rezignaci občanů na veřejné dění (snižující se volební účast) a narůstající apatii, nebo naopak k nárůstu preferencí extremistických stran a hnutí. Důležitým poznatkem mé studie a jejím srovnáním se studií Vajdová, Kostelecký (1997) je i skutečnost, že ač byla srovnávána čtyři města z celého území České republiky, neprojevily se z hlediska forem občanské kultury a politické kultury žádné výraznější rozdíly. Lze tedy spekulovat, jestli je to především kvůli poměrně malé územní rozloze státu, značné nivelizaci občanské kultury v době reálného socialismu, nebo menší sociokulturní diferenciaci, než by odpovídalo velikosti území. Tuto domněnku by podporovala i studie zabývající se sociokulturními souvislostmi volebního chování na Slovensku - Krivý, Feglová, Balko (1996).

Další směry výzkumu by se tedy měly zaměřit jednak na vlastní výzkum lokálních elit, a také na sociokulturní souvislosti občanské kultury.