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## URBAN PRESSURE – A RECENT PHENOMENON. THE VALLEY OF ARTS

### Abstract

This paper looks at the 'Valley of Arts' festival and its outcome, the phenomenon of urban pressure. I explain how we can interpret the festival in the framework of the cultural economy and theories of tourism. My main target is to analyse how rural economy, culture and society were changed by urban consumer demands, how rural people adapt to the increase of new values and demands, what strategies they can use, and the conflicts that have arisen.

This analysis is based on interviews and newspaper articles written between 1995 and 2002, used as a database to identify the phenomenon of urban pressure and addressing the main features of its process. The selection of the 'Valley of Arts' festival proved to be adequate. It is one of the best examples of urban actors' appearance in rural areas.

Keywords: urban demands, art festival, urban-rural relationships, rural idyll, tourism, rural culture, urban and rural actors.

### WHAT IS THE 'VALLEY OF ARTS'?

There are six villages in the Káli-Basin in the Valley of Eger stream, close to Lake Balaton, which had been unknown until the first festival was organised there. Nowadays, most Hungarian people know the names of these villages: Kápolcs, Vigántpetend, Taliándörögd, Monostorapáti, Öcs, Pula, and they mean the 'Valley of Arts' to most people. The smallest village, Vigántpetend has only 221 inhabitants and the largest, Monostorapáti – 1115.

The small villages have the typical problems of post-communism: the inhabitants are ageing, unemployment is increasing because of the closure of mines and agricultural cooperatives, the youth are moving out of these villages since there are no employment prospects. So this area is losing its population. The infrastruc-

ture is insufficient and local governments do not have enough money for development. Nevertheless, they have some unexploited possibilities: these villages are well situated and the natural surroundings beautiful but they remained backward territory during the socialist era, so the old buildings have not been renovated, therefore their original beauty has not been destroyed. These values are beneficial for the cultural economy and for cultural tourism.

In the mid-1980's some artists explored the natural beauties of the Káli basin. They bought houses and settled there as second homeowners. That was how István Márta, composer and theatre director, became a second homeowner there. He established an arts festival which he has been organising ever since.

The first programme was a concert organised by István Márta in 1988, at the Catholic Church of Kapolcs. After a few years the festival started growing spontaneously without any advertising or media-promotion. Year after year the festival grew out of Kapolcs because of the numerous visitors, artists and programmes, so the neighbourhood of Kapolcs was happy to join the festival: the first was Vigántpetend in 1993 and the last was Öcs in 2001. The festival became known as the 'Valley of Arts'. Numbers show the exponential growth of the festival: the 10<sup>th</sup> festival had 60,000 visitors. There were 180,000 visitors and 3,000 artists in 2002. 2003 saw over 200,000 visitors. So the festival became an 'all-arts' festival involving fine arts, performances, classical music concerts, folk dances and folk-art. All these performances and exhibitions focus on heritage. The organisers combine elite and authentic culture and in this way involve all art forms with the exception of pulp and valueless art.

The 'Valley of Arts' is a non-profit making enterprise. It is organised by a civil foundation, *The Cultural and Environmentalist Association of Kapolcs*. This foundation was established and is headed by István Márta. Festival expenses are paid by the Hungarian Government and private sponsors. The amount was 100 million forints (i.e. about 4 million euros) in 2003. The development of villages and the rural development project are both part of the budget. Income from the tickets goes to local government (last year costs were so high, that local government did not get any money from ticket sales.)

## THEORIES OF TOURISM AND THE 'VALLEY OF ARTS'

How can we interpret the phenomenon of the 'Valley of Arts'? First, I focus on the theoretical framework of tourism. The definition of 'festival tourism' is not suitable for the 'Valley of Arts' festival, because usually when a festival is organised little importance is placed on environment, nature, monuments and local people; the same programmes get organised elsewhere too and local people do not usually attend the festival. But this is not the case of the 'Valley of Arts'. Local and

environmental factors play an important role. This festival represents authentic trades and heritage. Local people take part in organising the festival programmes. In fact, elements of rural and festival tourism are combined in the 'Valley of Arts'. Visitors rent rooms in local houses and local food is served.

However, the definition 'cultural tourism', which analyses tourism as a cultural phenomenon, gives the 'Valley of Arts festival' a relevant interpretation. Hermann Bausinger's theory defines tourism as a 'no-border' emotion and cultural phenomenon (Fejős, 1998). Moreover, the 'Valley of Arts' festival can be analysed according to the theory of "institutional uncommonness" and strangeness, an activity whose target is to find and feel authenticity (Havasréti, 2000).

The aim of this paper is to use the post-modern idea in order to understand and explain the phenomenon of the 'Valley of Arts'. In industrialised, developed countries, the way people act as consumers has recently changed. The theory suggests that traditional boundaries (high/low culture, up/down market leisure activities) are becoming blurred and breaking down.

Post-modern tourism was created as an alternative to mass tourism, i.e. traditional tourism, so its main points are special quality services and a special form of journey, connected to archaeology, anthropology and ethnography. This theory is useful when analysing the 'Valley of Arts' where factors such as heritage, traditional food, traditional trades, and rural scenes are very important and represent a special lifestyle. So the 'Valley of Arts' integrates the main aspects of cultural tourism (journey, leisure and experience) while focusing on elite culture and heritage. The journey is often the focal point of theories defining tourism. These theories emphasise the cyclic character of moving (tourists set out from home and then return) and the existentialist experience of the journey (the journey is a secularised form of being transferred from the profane to the sacred). In the case of the 'Valley of Arts' visitors have to travel a long way to their destination. The geographical features of the festival are not only important because of the changing places when travelling but the places also have a symbolic meaning. The festival villages are homogenous and 'untouched' and these characteristics are underlined as being just the opposite of the estrangement of big cities. Staying in these villages is a magical experience with the sense of separation for urban people, who emphasise the distance from everyday and profane life.

Having time is a precondition of modern tourism. Leisure and travelling have symbolic and physical aspects. Travelling has become the entertainment of the masses, which was once the privilege of the elite. The programmes of the 'Valley of Arts' let visitors join the festival's life for a day, an evening or a night, but taking part in the programmes for the whole duration of the festival gives the illusion of every moment having a special activity. Here the night is not for relaxing and the morning is not for starting work and everyday life. The crowd, on-going programmes, staying up late give a sense of irrationality. Not only irrationality

but the experience of community is also emphasised. This experience means the meeting and connection with their own sub-culture during the festival and connections with local rural communities and culture.

It is worth separating two dimensions of tourism experience for analysing the 'Valley of Arts'. We can interpret the festival as an exotic experience. The other dimension emphasises authenticity which represents not only the sense of extravagance and strangeness but also means that visitors remain within their own boundaries. The construction of authenticity of the 'Valley of Arts' is most emphasised by originality, "autochthony", and "protochronism". These are the most important aspects of the image of the festival and are underlined by the organisers as giving the event an identity. For most visitors, traditionalism and real rural life are represented by the 'Valley of Arts'.

The starting point for analysing the authenticity of the festival could be an analysis of the written media to get to know the organisers' and intellectuals' opinion about the festival. For them authenticity means heritage and traditional rural life, the main features of the festival. A newspaper made the following comment: *Renovation of old peasant houses and revival of an old smithy represent the authenticity in the Valley (Magyar Nemzet, 1999.)* Moreover, we can find a particular post-modern type of heritage and tradition: the combination of folklore and folk art where regionalism and locality are not important, only the form of tradition from other parts of Hungary. For example, a newspaper mentioned the revival of furniture decoration as a profession from Kalotaszeg in Transylvania, created by Kovács Pali Ferenc (*Magyar Nemzet, 2000*).

Tradition represented in the festival does not mean the revival of the local identity of the 'Valley'; this is a new concept of identity with many different types of peasant culture and folklore. A new image and identity are created in the 'Valley' for consumers (visitors and tourists) and this is very important in the rural development agendas of the region.

Finally, we can find the next (third) meaning of tradition in the festival. This is the protection of traditional values against the globalised and over civilised goods and services. The following comment was made in a newspaper: We can meet and see real tradition in the Valley of Arts. *We can really relax here where there is no internet, no discussion about clone and gene technologies, and no mechanical, inhuman life. (Magyar Nemzet, 2000).*

## CULTURE ECONOMY AND THE 'VALLEY OF ARTS'

It is important to analyse the phenomenon of 'Valley of Arts' by the theoretical models of rural sociology. In Hungary in the 1990's, after the change of political system the structure of the rural economy and society were dramatically trans-

formed. This kind of restructuring in West European countries took place earlier. In the post-productive period of agriculture the employment system of rural settlements changed, because the importance of agriculture in the rural economy decreased. In Hungary the level of agricultural production was reduced by 60 per cent in 1996 compared to the 1988 level, and the number of agricultural employees dropped to 30 per cent of the number in the previous year (Csite-Kovách, 2002.) The consequences of uneven restructuring are growing unemployment and poverty in rural areas.

These changes created problems not only in Hungary but also in the EU countries where restructuring was continuous and organic. The development of backward rural regions is a serious problem. In EU countries a new rural development practice was established as the after-effect of the period of post-productive agriculture. This new practice is very important in the Rural Development System of the EU and in the everyday strategies of rural communities. New practices and development strategies are characterised by the revival of local tradition, local culture and natural features.

This process was analysed by Christopher Ray's theoretical model published in *Sociologia Ruralis* 1998/1. Ray's paper *Culture, Intellectual Property and Territorial Rural Development* explores the usage of local cultural identity in European rural development, particularly its shift towards local territorial activity. It proposes the term 'culture economy' and a four-layer typology. In order to contribute to a theorisation of such development activity – whether policy driven or emerging from the 'bottom-up' – local cultures are characterised as forms of intellectual property that may allow local rural economies to impose some level of control over social and economic development.

According to Ray, the idea of cultural economy comes from three sources: the changing nature of post-industrialist and consumer capitalism; the trajectory of Rural Development Policy in the EU; and the growth of regionalism as a European and global phenomenon. From these three sources, after the preliminary conceptualisation of cultural economy, Ray created four operational modes.<sup>1</sup> These modes represent the range of strategic emphases that may be employed by territorial initiatives in the pursuit of rural development.

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<sup>1</sup> Mode I is called the "commoditisation" of local/regional culture (including historical and environmental components). This refers to the creation and valorisation of resources that have a place identity and can be marketed directly or used in the marketing of the territory. The advent of ethno-cultural tourism in which culture and history are sold is a prime example of this; other examples include regional agri-food products, regional cuisines and crafts.

Mode II occurs as the construction and projection of a new territorial identity given to the outside. The emphasis here is on the incorporation of cultural resources into territorial identity in order to promote the territory. This relates to new territorial development initiatives in which, either using an existing organisation (local authorities, development agencies) or through a new co-operative structure, a territorial initiative seeks to establish and promote its identity.

Cultural economy can be a manifestation of local and extra local sources, with the latter including the actions of the EU and global bodies and the influence of social movements. The key concept in Ray's theory is local knowledge.

Bessièrè (1998) talks about a similar phenomenon when he analyses the transformation and redefinition of local identity in rural France from the perspective of heritage and local rural tourism (more precisely food and gastronomy). His paper considers the meaning of food from the theoretical perspective. Current interest in traditional food and cuisine is part of a general desire for authentic experience. At regional level, the dynamics of building heritage consists in actualising, adapting and re-interpreting elements from the past, thus combining conservation and innovation. According to Bessièrè local development can be seen as a process of territorial and heritage construction.

The 'Valley of Arts' festival fits into Ray's cultural economy model, Mode II. The emphasis here is on local sources. The base of the festival are local cultural values: traditional buildings, monuments, churches, traditional trades. They capitalise on landscape and rural characteristics, and they take local civil society and public institutions into the organisation. But local goods and services are not marketed directly as simple rural tourism. They have created a new territorial identity based on local resources and promoted by the festival. The festival is a new product of the territory and gives a new identity to the villages taking part in the organisation. Rural development was always emphasised as being one of the main targets of the festival.

How are all the above mentioned ideas materialised? What kind of development is encouraged by the festival? These are the most important questions when analysing the 'Valley of Arts'. I will take them into consideration. Now I suggest analysing the main dimension of rural-urban relationship: the relation between

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In Mode III, the emphasis is still on territorial strategies but now the new territorial initiative is engaged in selling itself internally: to the communities, businesses, groups and official bodies of the local area. The rhetoric of such programmes and initiatives talks of raising the self-confidence of local people and organisations, building confidence in their own capacities to bring about development, and valorising local resources. This territorial 'selling itself to itself' can face substantial inertia in areas where the rhetoric talks of local subjugation to centuries of indoctrination that has devalued the local culture, casting it as a 'barrier to development'. The territory has been reconstructed as a coherent entity; the argument is that it can function as a catalyst for local co-operative action and to generate a sense of cultural-territorial loyalty in people and enterprises.

Mode IV emphasizes the normative capacity of the cultural economy and can operate within each of the other three modes. Mode IV suggests that a local economy, as it turns back to the indigenous culture of the territory, may choose to pursue 'alternative' development paths: alternatives which, for example, stress local self-reliance in the use of physical resources, a land stewardship ethic, or the cherishing of 'close community'. The local culture thus becomes more than an instrument to fuel trade in the global economy, and instead is rediscovered as the source of local wisdom and ethics.

urban demands and rural goods and services, and the relations between urban and rural audiences.

## THE PHENOMENON OF URBAN PRESSURE

The relationship between urban demands and rural goods and services can be emphasised as an urban pressure phenomenon. One of the main aspects of the analysis is urban pressure presented by urban groups as tourists. What rural goods and services are provided and which characteristics of rurality have become supplies urged by urban demands?

As was mentioned above the main organiser, István Márta, is an artist from Budapest and most of the others also come from Budapest. They are second homeowners in the region of the 'Valley of Arts'. Urban dominance in the organisation of the programmes is present in the newspaper articles I have analysed and in my interviews. Sometimes local actors (mayors, teachers, priests) take part in the organisation, but most of the organisers are urban.

The visitors are young, 96% of them being under 30. Most of them live in urban settlements (80%). 61% live in big cities and 30% in Budapest. There are many visitors from small towns too (21.3%) but only some people (13.5%) arrive from villages (Antalóczy-Füstös, 2002).

The educational level of the visitors is rather high. 25 per cent of them have already graduated and many are university students. Very few have a low level of education.

In the light of the above mentioned facts this is a festival organised by urban intellectuals and elites for urban intellectuals and the rural middle-class. They create their own rural idyll. This phenomenon illustrates a special type of rural development: urban developers lead the process of rural development which is determined by urban values and interests. In this process, local people have peripheral roles. Moreover, this is an illustration a special type of tourism: urban actors provide rural goods and services for urban consumers in the rural environment.

## SUPPLY AND DEMANDS

One of the most important urban demands is rural idyll, also emphasised as a supply, as was illustrated by an article: *artists and intellectuals came under the influence of evacuation from the city when they chose the region of the Káli-Basin and became second homeowners; this region is characterised by beautiful hills and quiet villages* (Népszabadság, 2000).

When analysing the elements of rural image in the 'Valley of Arts', we find many types of rural idyll representing typical intellectual ideas about rurality requiring departure from the city. We can find many rural idyll elements created by the organisers, which are a result of their strategy to serve urban demands. The main characteristics of rural idyll are intimacy, warmth, friendship, homely atmosphere, genuine values and roots. This is what people dream of. They consider rural space as a place to find compensation for their lost identity and a representation of 'the good old days'. These characteristics are highly emphasised in the rural image of the urban middle-class and became a 'Valley of Arts' speciality for visitors. Urban cultural programmes in a rural environment – this is the 'Valley of Arts'.

Other important elements of rural idyll are tranquillity, slowness, timelessness and meditation. These elements are also underlined as urban demands. Timelessness is one of the main services of rural places and is a new type of urban demand for rural goods and services; it is regarded as one of the means of recreation. This recreation is not only by relaxation but could be achieved by sincere chats and discussions. Nevertheless, the number of visitors increases yearly. How can these demands be met?

The next important dimension of supply-demand analysis is the image and idea of lack of sophistication and proximity to nature. Rural means nature and agriculture for urban people. They search nature in rural places. So the organisers have to make programmes which take place in the natural environment and seem spontaneous. Firstly, closeness to nature simply means the environment, landscape. On the other hand, the sense of spontaneity is very important as an image of ease. Spontaneity is connected to the image of the talented bohemian artist for many intellectual visitors.

In addition, we can find the traditional image of rurality as rural goods and services too. Village people are friendlier, more genuine, hospitable and sociable than town people. This image is emphasised through intellectual discourses in newspaper articles. Local people have always been considered as being absolutely positive, nice, friendly and sociable. A sentimental description is often implied. The friendly, familiar atmosphere of rurality is an important element of the image of the festival.

All the elements of the rural idyll and rural image focus on different values to urban characteristics. Intimacy and familiar atmosphere are in contrast to city crowds and impersonality. The rural image is absolutely idealised; nowadays city people think that the countryside is the mother of all their traditions, with the origins of all that honours the national character in their tastes and habits. The image of country people, deprived for so long, has completely changed and has gradually gained the value of nostalgia as rural dwellers have left the countryside



for urban centres. In this way, peasant life has become the sanctuary of people's origin, their forgotten roots, and the source of authenticity.

Heritage and folklore have been the main elements of national identity in Hungary since the 1830's. This was the base of the neo-folklorist movement in the 1970's and nowadays is emphasised in many national images and movements. Heritage, folklore and folk art are dominant in the 'Valley of Arts'.

Finally, the 'Valley of Arts' has a special feeling which comes from not only elements of rural idyll, folklore and heritage but also the elements of art and elite culture. The 'Valley of Arts' is a combination of authenticity and elite culture. The image of the festival is presented as an alternative cultural activity to public culture.

### NEW RURAL – URBAN RELATIONSHIP

The appearance of city people caused a new situation for the local people. I want to stress the migration to rural areas. In the villages of the 'Valley of Arts' artists and intellectuals appear as second homeowners and form a new social group. The different needs and customs of the locals and the newcomers may cause conflict. The aim of the newcomers is the protection of tradition and nature while the local people want to develop and seek modernisation. The installation of gas pipes caused conflict in one of the villages. Local people were in favour of this project because the local government wanted to make their lives more comfortable and modern. Nevertheless, the town newcomers protested against the gas-pipe project because they thought it would damage village tradition. Gas was installed but that story is a good example of the clash of interests and the different values of rural and urban inhabitants.

Another dimension of that relationship is the organisation of the festival. The festival is a cultural enterprise from the organisers' point of view but it also means the possibility of development for local people. Rural development had a point for the organisers from the start of the festival, but for them it was mainly a cultural occasion. Rural inhabitants found temporary jobs or could supplement their incomes by letting rooms, cleaning etc.

Catering would be the best activity for local people but there are many catering entrepreneurs from outside and the National Public Health Office (NPHO) banned catering in their houses. *The hard rules of NPHO and of the APEH (National Tax Office) meant that 80% of catering is handled by outsiders* (Népszabadság, 1998).

The festival is an economic activity which may cause conflict between rural and urban dwellers. Who should get the profit? Town people mainly take advantage of the event. On the other hand, profit causes the main conflict between inhabitants/organisers and visitors: local people and organisers are profit orient-

tated, visitors say the festival is expensive and commercialism does not suit the image of the 'Valley of Arts.'

Talking about conflicts and relations, we have to consider the development of these villages. More and more visitors come to the festival every year and that requires development of the villages. On the one hand, the local people want to offer more and more to the visitors every year, on the other hand accommodation, catering and transport of thousands of visitors cause problems. A solution to these problems must urgently be found in order to keep the visitors.

The local people are proud of the festival's national reputation and that is urging them to make their villages nice, clean and to protect their values. They experienced that rural areas can be developed and as we saw, the urban artists and intellectuals take part in civil society (e.g. *The Cultural Association of Kapolcs*) on development.

The main income of the villages is from ticket sales. This was spent on infrastructural developments. But it is important that the villages spend from their own budget too, because they cannot earn enough money from the festival which always has financial difficulties.

## CONCLUSION

The 'Valley of Arts' is a rural event, organised and mediated by urban intellectuals. All the development was started and carried out by them according to their wishes. A new regional identity and new regional image were born there, which can be used in the marketing of the festival. This image forms the new commercialisation of the region and the main feature of the festival: the idyll of the villages – beautiful landscapes where simple but nice people live peaceful lives.

Urban intellectuals' emotions and their feelings against cities appear and the rural environment seems to be the best place for a holiday, good food and recreation. The 'Valley of Arts' offers this to its visitors. The 'Valley of Arts' is known as an island of peace and loveliness where authentic and elite culture come together and where the demands of urban intellectuals are satisfied.

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