

Social Sustainability Analysis in Szigetköz: A Study of Four Case Locations

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This paper is based on research that examined civil and community life in 34 settlements of Szigetköz in 2021 and 2022. A total of 337 NGOs and countless informal groups operate in the region. The examination is based on questionnaire research (43 fillings), interviews (25 pieces), observations (9 times) and document analysis, and one of the results is four case studies about four settlements (Dunasziget, Kimle, Mecsér and Győrladamér). The goal of this paper is to summarize the knowledge related to social sustainability and analyze its operation in these settlements. The principal finding of the research is that the four settlements coped with the challenges posed by their geographical location, economic situation and infrastructural capabilities in four ways. These roads show creative solutions using local resources, which are the key to the social sustainability of settlements.

1. Introduction

Sustainability began to be addressed worldwide almost 30 years ago (Mensah, 2019). The concept quickly and widely spread, mainly used in connection with urban development and planning, but social sustainability is still the most controversial. In the field of sustainability, most researchers do not only mention sustainability itself, but rather sustainable development. The concept of sustainable development appears mainly in terms of three factors: environmental, economic and social sustainability, placing the concept of sustainability in a holistic approach. Although most researchers agree on that social sustainability is a central theme of urban planning processes and a widely used concept, there is no agreement on its definition (McGuinn et al., 2020).

Mensah (2019) considers social sustainability to be one of the pillars of sustainable development, and basically unfolds two approaches: social sustainability is identified as the proper functioning of the social institutional system, which plays a role in reducing poverty and creating social equality, and as individuals and communities being able to recognize their own needs and to create the conditions that make their environment livable. According to de Fine Licht and Folland (2019), the definition of social sustainability is so difficult because some authors define the concept in a value-laden and complex way, while others only see it as a technical concept. Dempsey et al. (2011) add that social sustainability is a dynamic concept that changes over time and place. McGuinn et al. (2020) discover two systems for the aspects of social sustainability. One of the systems contains the social goals of sustainable development, and procedural aspects determining the achievement of development goals. The other examines the issue at the macro (satisfaction of basic needs) and micro (community, governance and services) level. The present study uses the second (micro) approach, and agrees with Woodcraft's (2011) definition. 'Social sustainability is a process for creating sustainable, successful places that promote wellbeing, by understanding what people need from the places in which they live and work. Social sustainability combines the design of the physical realm with the design of the social world – infrastructure to support social and cultural life, social amenities, systems for citizen engagement and space for people and places to evolve.' (Woodcraft, 2011)

According to Dempsey et al. (2011), the social dimension of sustainable development includes physical and non-physical factors. Non-physical factors include: education and training, social justice: inter- and intra-generational, participation and local democracy, health, quality of life and well-being, social inclusion (and eradication of social exclusion), social capital, community, safety, mixed tenure, fair distribution of income, social order, social cohesion, community cohesion (i.e. cohesion between and among different groups), social

networks, social interaction, sense of community and belonging, employment, residential stability (vs. turnover), active community organizations and cultural traditions. The physical factors are the following: urbanity, attractive public realm, decent housing, local environmental quality and amenity, accessibility (e.g., to local services and facilities/employment/green space), sustainable urban design, neighborhood, walkable neighborhood: pedestrian friendly.

This paper's aim is not to define social sustainability or socially sustainable development, nor to seek a new interpretation. The goal is to summarize the concepts of social sustainability and social sustainable development in a value-driven and complex approach, based on literature, and to present some of the elements that make up social sustainability through the example of the four settlements (Dunasziget, Kimle, Meccsér and Györladamér) and its practical interpretation. The basis of interpretation is the list of Dempsey et al. (2011). Among the non-physical factors, the study covers education, well-being, community, community cohesion, a sense of community and belonging, employment, active community organizations and cultural traditions.

The literature mostly interprets social sustainability in a macro-level approach and/or for cities, while this study thinks at the micro-level, and its subjects are small settlements with a population between 600 and 2,200 people. By focusing on small locations, the research provides a new framework for examining social sustainability. The last researches in Szigetköz, focused on community and well-being (Szörényiné, 2000), and community organizations (Nárai, 2004), carried out 20 years ago. In the past two decades, social changes took place in the region, which greatly influenced social sustainability.

2. Methods

Between July 2021 and January 2022, a multi-stage study took place in the 34 settlements interpreted as Szigetköz. The research was carried out with the support of the Institute of Advanced Studies in Kőszeg.

As first step, based on the 'helyicivil.hu' database, the Opten database and the websites of the settlements - with the exception of the NGOs of Győr and Mosonmagyaróvár - a list of NGO stakeholders was drawn up. The list includes 337 civil/non-profit organizations projected for the 34 settlements. The creation of the list caused difficulties, because the used databases often contained contradictory and/or different data, and the mayors of the settlements and local residents reported on active informal groups (mainly in terms of cultural activities) that are not institutionalized, so have no registration. This list of NGOs was the basis of the prepared NGO questionnaire, which was sent out online. It was the second step of the research. The questionnaire contained questions regarding the basic data, goals, activities, and relations with the local community of the NGOs, and their contribution to the social sustainability of the region. 43 fillings were completed, mostly from civil organizations operating in smaller settlements. As a third step 25 in-depth interviews were also completed based on the list, as well as through personal acquaintances. The interview questions focused on the future development and sustainability opportunities of civil organizations and settlements. At the same time, the websites and social media pages of the organizations, and the news about them published in daily newspapers were analyzed. During the research, document analysis about the region's NGOs and observation were also carried out several times, during appearances at events and workshops of active civil/non-profit organizations (9 times). Based on the above research methods, a case study of four settlements in the demarcated area was also completed. The selected settlements are located in the lower, upper and middle parts of Szigetköz (Dunasziget, Kimle, Meccsér and Györladamér).

3. Results

3.1 Dunasziget –The settlement that 'invested in people'

Dunasziget is a village with 1870 inhabitants, located in Győr-Moson-Sopron County, in the northern part of Szigetköz, in Mosonmagyaróvár district, 15 km from Mosonmagyaróvár. It lies along the Danube; most of its area is covered by the river's branches (Némethné, 2021). The settlement is located in a wonderful natural environment, but from an economic point of view, it does not have a very advantageous geographical location and features. The village is developed from the farm world, which is less able to mobilize economic resources to create and survive its values, rather the cooperation and unity of the local community has value-creating power. There are 344 companies in Dunasziget, but 263 organizations registered as individual enterprises, without employees, so micro and small businesses dominate in the settlement. Primary agricultural producers and small tourism entrepreneurs are still in the majority in the village. They are mainly engaged in horticulture and crop cultivation, some of them in animal husbandry. When it comes to getting a job, the goal is Mosonmagyaróvár or Dunakiliti, but the Austrian and Slovak labor markets also appear, mainly people come to help the construction industry.

There are three foundations and 9 associations in the settlement, plus 4 more associations listed on the website of the settlement. It is typical that civil organizations aim to preserve traditions, beautify, protect and develop the

village. According to the mayor, one of the most important processes in the development of the village is the maintenance of community life, the observation of 'tipping points' and needs, and respect for the past and the future built from the past. They do not try to impose solutions alien to the landscape and culture on the population of the settlement but create programs based on their own past. These processes led to social/economic innovations such as the Dunasziget Vegetable Community (they produce for the members; they accompany the vegetables almost to the plate) or the Szigeti Éléstár market (a program initiated by the local government to support local producers and products and to boost community life). Part of preserving tradition is the Mórvető Festival, which recalls bricklaying, which used to be a profession in the settlement.

In the case of Dunasziget, the key factors of social sustainability (and development) are: handing over the school and then kindergarten to civil/ecclesiastical maintenance in order to preserve the institutions, real estate development with the involvement of investors, support of civil organizations and key persons in the village, infrastructural developments (improving the condition of roads, which also helps to increase the main source of income of the settlement (income from tourism) and to connect the local community), keeping external and internal relations in balance and settlement marketing. Dunasziget stepped away from the traditional path of development, it was not afraid to make up for the lack of financial resources with community resources, social capital, and new forms of cooperation. This approach, using local community resources, and intervention based on local needs, embodies the approach to social sustainability.

3.2 Kimle – The intersection of civil activity and economic power

Kimle is a village with 2,205 inhabitants, located in Győr-Moson-Sopron County, in the middle of Szigetköz, next to the ancient road connecting Győr and Mosonmagyaróvár, at the junction of Szigetköz and Hanság.

Kimle stands out among the settlements of Middle Szigetköz. The villages, located here, remain below the average of Szigetköz's settlements both in terms of population, number of economic organizations, and civil activity. However, an economic and civil force is concentrated in Kimle, which is clearly reflected in the development of the settlement. The OPTEN database gives 339 results for companies, but there is a predominance of micro and small businesses (like in Dunasziget). In Kimle, people mainly worked and work now in the service sector and in industrial production. One company is engaged in breeding baby chicks, and 2 agricultural companies (a producer cooperative and a private entrepreneur) are engaged in crop cultivation. The settlement has a pub, a grocery store, a campsite and a restaurant. Many of the entrepreneurs work in the construction industry, but there is also a car mechanic and a company that employs more than 100 people and deals in braiding cable protectors. An industrial park was established on the site of the old producer cooperative, mainly Austrian and multinational companies are present here. The settlement benefits from the business tax, while the community benefits from the cooperation of entrepreneurs. Another source of revenue for the Kimle municipality comes from real estate developments, but this is difficult because the settlement is located in a nature reserve. The municipality conducts a lively tendering activity as well, one of the important goals of which is to create community spaces according to the interests and age groups of the people living in the settlement and to develop the village.

There are 3 registered foundations and 6 associations in the OPTEN database. In addition, 6 other associations are listed on the website of the settlement. During the interviews, several informal groups were mentioned, which are not institutionalized, but operate as an important part of community life in the settlement. This mode of operation is characteristic of Kimle. The key players in community life stated that they see disadvantages rather than advantages in the form of associations, since 'institutionalization' also entails constraints and administration, which would take the joy out of the activities of the communities currently operating as informal groups. Such an informal group is the Kimle Garden Friends Circle, which boasts 70 members who meet every two weeks.

Kimle's story is also the story of nationalities (Hungarian, German and Croatian). Based on nationalities, the village has three choirs and three dance groups. Each group is a traditional, non-institutionalized form. The public school previously maintained by the school district was taken over by the German National Self-Government two years ago. Currently, 170 people attend the school, of which 30 are of Croatian nationality, and they receive national education according to their culture and language.

As a consequence of the activities of the ethnic self-government and the active community life in the settlement, approx. 40 events will take place every year. Water is also decisive from the point of view of the community, and their active NGO is the Kimle Dragon Boat Association, which serves the interests of the village with its sports activities as well as tourism-related activities. One of the strongest civil organizations in the settlement is the Szigetköz – Mosoni-sík Leader Association. Its goal is the development of local governments, civil organizations and entrepreneurs in the region, finding local opportunities and solving problems in five themes: village and rural development, renewal; preservation of rural heritage, micro-enterprise development, tourism and LEADER title. The partnership of the association consists of 39 civil organizations, 33 main entrepreneurs,

and 38 municipalities. The purpose of the association is to connect the developments in a network-like way and to ensure that they are built on each other.

The headquarters of the Szigetköz Nature Park Association is also located in Kimle. It brings together 12 natural persons, one limited liability company, 5 civil organizations and 16 municipalities from the Szigetköz area. Together with the Szigetköz – Mosoni-sík Leader Association, the Szigetköz Nature Park Association represents a concentration of forces in Kimle, which is unique in the Szigetköz civil organization – self-government – entrepreneurial sphere.

In Kimle, the starting points of social sustainability are very close to Dunasziget's: the operation of the school, which is based on the traditions of the village (ethnic school), operating with modern means of generating resources (foundation resources, resources of the ethnic self-government, the help of local entrepreneurs), and returning the invested resources to the operation of the community, real estate development with the involvement of investors, concentration of economic resources in the settlement, exploiting the benefits of the settlement's geographical location (close to the Austrian and Slovak borders), its nationality (attracting Austrian and German companies) and its economic history (less agricultural, more industrial activity), concentration of civil resources operation of "public - private partnership", vibrant tendering activity based on natural and regional features, involving local community needs and resources. Kimle is a special settlement of Middle Szigetköz, where civil and economic resources are united. Kimle is lucky, because it brings together several people who are passionate about the settlement and the region, the Szigetköz, where it is located. This is the main key to success: those committed people - entrepreneurs, mayors, local government representatives, NGO leaders - who are able and willing to do something for the settlement and the region, are committed to the cause of Szigetköz.

3.3 Mecsér – A small 'jewel box'

Mecsér is a village with 653 inhabitants. The settlement is located in Győr-Moson-Sopron County, in the central part of Szigetköz, in Mosonmagyaróvár district, halfway between Győr and Mosonmagyaróvár. The geographic location of the village and the condition of the roads make it almost impossible for commuting workers to use public transport. There are fewer and fewer agricultural enterprises, and the local people prefer employment that involves travelling (Balogh et al., 2020). The OPTEN database gives 120 results for companies in Mecsér. Among the enterprises, 1 foundation (Ladikos Public Benefit Foundation) and 4 associations are registered. There is one more association on the settlement's website, and the helyicivil.hu database records 1 foundation and 1 association.

The decreasing population resulted in a decreasing number of students in grade school (Thullner and Tuba, 2014). 'Based on consideration of rational (economic and organizational) factors, the Mecsér representative body decided that as of September 1, 2011, their member school will join the Lébény General Cultural Center. The municipality takes care of the kindergarten, which is complete' (Balogh et al., 2020).

The Ladikos Festival has the greatest impact on Mecsér's community life. The festival started in 2004 on a local civil initiative, where ensembles and groups interpreting the outstanding folk dance and folk music culture of the Hungarians of the Carpathian Basin are hosted. The cultural programs are complemented by a gastronomic program, so the festival can attract around 2,000 people every year. In the life of Mecsér, the festival has an outstanding community-forming power, according to the organizers, since every year more and more local residents are involved in the preparations and execution. The settlement survey conducted in 2020 does not show such a positive picture of the community life of the village. Although the Village Hall has been renovated, the building is rarely open, so the community does not use it as a community space. There are no events that appeal to parents with small children. At the same time, it is a positive sign and initiative that the Circle of Friends of Gardeners was formed, and a joint mowing was organized in the village in the summer of 2020 (Balogh et al., 2020).

The municipality of Mecsér is trying to help with the deteriorating demographic indicators and the lack of resources by selling construction plots designed for young people, but integrating the new residents into the village life is not easy. The deep-rooted locals stick to the old, well-established things, while the new residents express other needs (e.g., baby-mummy club) regarding the communal life of the settlement (Balogh et al., 2020).

Looking at the characteristics of Mecsér, the image of an emerging settlement with resources, but not yet based on the local community and civil potential, unfolds. The factors pointing to sustainability, based on which the survival of the settlement becomes more certain: making the school in Mecsér stable and again with eight grades, for which the mobilization of church and/or civil resources is essential, real estate development with the involvement of investors, support of civil organizations - provision and provision of community spaces for the organizations' programs and operations, putting the key people in the settlement (pastor, school director, amateur theatre company leader, doctors etc.) in the "situation" - valuing their activities, creating synergies between the activities, infrastructural developments – improving the condition of roads, creating facilities and

services. In the life of Mecser, the Ladikos Festival fulfils the task of settlement marketing, promoting both the settlement and the surrounding area, Szigetköz. It would be important to add colour to this program from the point of view of different generations. Mecser has every chance to write a success story by taking advantage of the above factors (similar to Dunasziget).

3.4 Györladamér – 'The urban village'

Györladamér is a village with 1,799 inhabitants, located in Győr-Moson-Sopron County, in the Lower-Szigetköz, northwest of Győr, along the Mosoni-Danube, in the Győr sub-region.

The OPTEN database results 269 companies in Györladamér. There is no registered foundation in the village, but the settlement's website indicates a For Györladamér Foundation, which, based on the description, appears to be a public foundation of the settlement. There are four registered associations in the settlement, and the helycivil.hu database mentions four more associations.

According to a local resident, 'Györladamér is no longer village-like.' The image of the settlement has changed. With one or two exceptions, the lands of the elderly lie fallow, or have been sold as house sites to satisfy the land needs of those moving in. Some fit elderly person cultivates "competition gardens", but small backyard gardens and animal husbandry are not very common nowadays. The services are comprehensive, everything from a nursery to a retirement club can be found in the village.

The Ladaméri Farm Association was registered as an association in 2010 to pursue community development and cultural and nature conservation activities. Their goal is to 'wake up the sleeping streets of Györladamér', to introduce the values of Szigetköz, their narrower and wider surroundings, to the long-rooted and especially the local residents who are moving in. According to them, Szigetköz needs community-based interventions that value local characteristics. In the case of Györladamér, social innovation and the display of elements of social sustainability can primarily be linked to the Ladaméri Farm Association. The space for the community's operation, the programs that increase well-being and psychological satisfaction, placed in the authentic environment, can be experienced primarily in the association's programs. The non-institutionalized groups also show the activity of the local community (retirement club, local group of the Red Cross). The attempt to domesticate American football seems to be an important step, which is also an action in response to a need from below. Györladamér, as an agglomeration settlement of Győr, almost integrated into the big city, its village character is becoming less and less recognizable. The mass of settlers reshapes the population again and again, both from a demographic and relational point of view. The integration of the settlers into community life constantly presents challenges to the village's key players. The current challenge of Györladamér's community is to shape its own community and its identity over and over again, so that it becomes a unit capable of action.

4. Discussion

Miszlivetz and Márkus (2013) described that local development managed by the community will play a prominent role in the implementation of the EU development policy. According to Vercseg (2020), community intervention has three starting points: the world of ideas, civil society and professional historical approach, which are very similar to social sustainability factors.

The goal of the research is to determine the non-physical factors of social sustainability, covering education, well-being, community, community cohesion, a sense of community and belonging, employment, active community organizations and cultural traditions in the case of four locations. Although all four settlements examined in detail have unique characteristics, unique values, and unique needs, they have common factors which ensure social sustainability and development.

One of these factors is education. Eight-grade schools operate in three settlements, with civil and church maintenance. While a full range of educational services is natural in a city, maintaining a school in a smaller settlement also means maintaining the traditions of the community and being the cohesion power (basis) of the location. Another factor is employment. A large number of individual entrepreneurs can be observed in each settlement. Their activities are adapted to the traditions and geographical features of the location. The third common factor is active community organizations. Szigetköz is characterized by a large number of civil organizations and informal groups. Their aim is to preserve traditions, beautify, protect and develop the locations. They maintain the community life with programs; observe 'tipping points' and needs of the members of the community, and keep traditions of the settlement. According to the research in Szigetköz, these are the basic factors of social sustainability and development of small locations.

5. Conclusions

According to a concise recap of the main results, the research presented four small settlements located in the Szigetköz. These locations have 6527 inhabitants, 1072 companies, 40 NGOs and several informal groups.

Based on these resources, settlements run 8-grade schools, maintain services from cradle to grave, provide jobs for residents and maintain their traditions. Although research results are difficult to quantify, the four settlements showed that social sustainability is a dynamic concept, in which elements are common, but its manifestation depends on place and time. This research focused on four small settlements in Szigetköz from the 34 locations of the region. In future study, it could be interesting to examine all settlements in detail, and/or other regions' locations as well, and prove the countless manifestations of social sustainability factors.

Acknowledgments

The research was carried out with the support of the Institute of Advanced Studies in Kőszeg.

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