Estonian village movement and civil law partnerships

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The paper addresses the significance of the Estonian village movement for the development of Estonian rural communities. The paper focuses on the role of civil law partnerships in village movement and analyses their sustainability.

Halhead (2006) has described the concept of the village movement as that it belongs to the rural communities. Village movement embodies the spirit and values of villages and is driven by a passion to preserve rural life and traditions. Most importantly, it is a ‘bottom–up’ movement, owned by the rural people. The Estonian village movement, established in early 1990s, is characterised by the fact that it encompasses both organised forms of civil initiative (non-profit associations and foundations) as well as non-registered citizens’ associations – civil law partnerships.

Civil law partnerships are taken under a closer study because of various reasons. Firstly, civil law partnerships play a special role in the Estonian village movement as preservers and carriers of the values of rural life. Civil law partnerships are preservers and advocates of local cultural heritage and creators and preservers of the us-feeling of village dwellers (Kodukant, 2003, 2008). Secondly, civil law partnerships form a hotbed and “school” for organised civil initiative. Thirdly, the future trends of civil law partnerships depend to a very large extent on the national policy regarding rural development and providing support to rural communities. The co-operation of the institutions of the public sector and organisations of the third sector regarding facilitation of village movement plays a relevant role here.

The aim of the paper is to raise awareness by providing information on the significance of civil law partnerships in the village movement and development of civic initiative in Estonia rather than to attempt a detailed and comprehensive analysis of Estonian civil law partnerships. In the paper the following questions are addressed:

- The importance of Estonian village movement in the development of Estonian rural communities?
- What are the roles of civil law partnerships in the Estonian village movement and how have the roles changed during recent years?
- How do relations between local authorities and citizens’ associations influence the development of civil law partnerships and village movement?
- What are the resources and capacities of civil law partnerships?
- What are the ways for increasing the sustainability of civil law partnerships, especially under the conditions of economic slowdown in Estonia?
- What are the development scenarios of the civil law partnerships?

In the broader context, the questions to be studied belong to the area of social capital and government-non-profit relations.

This paper draws on multi-dimensional methodological approach: survey, in-depth interviews and analysis of secondary sources. The analysis of the roles of informal partnerships in the facilitation of rural life and the sustainability dimensions is based on the survey of Estonian Village Movement Kodukant in 2006 and on the in-depth interviews with the representatives of Village Movement Kodukant in 2009. Arguments regarding the influence of relationship
between local authorities and citizen’s associations are based on the document analysis (including regional and local development plans and the documents of Kodukant and the Rural Parliament of Estonian Villages) and on the in-depth interviews with the stakeholders in rural community development in 2009.

References


http://www.kodukant.ee/index.php?id=103841