ANDRAS DONAT KOVACS: EMERGENCE OF THE NEW ENVIRONMENTAL PARADIGM IN THE RURAL AREAS OF V4 COUNTRIES

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As a consequence of the human activities, the face of our Earth has radically changed by today. Due to the unfavourable impacts resulting from the extensive intensification of production and consumption, the environmental systems of our planet – and together with them the social communities as well – got into danger. Though, most countries of the world regard the protection of the environment as one of its tasks but the real aspects of sustainability are either neglected by most of the states or not fully taken into consideration. This is mainly caused by the fact that the economic aspects still predominate in the development concepts and national policies. Today, when man would be able to provide a solution for numerous problems, the solution of global and local environmental conflicts are still hindered by short-term economic interests. Thus, the stopping of the negative processes existing in the environmental systems requires a change in view. This change must take place on all social levels (international, national, regional, local) since the handling of conflicts depends on whether the smaller and bigger communities (settlement, regional, national, EU, UN) are able to protect and maintain the geographic spaces in harmony and cooperation with each other. So we need a new environmental paradigm! In our view, the new environmental paradigm is an environment-centred worldview, which plays a decisive role in sustainability (reflected in attitudes, actions, laws, development programs et.). This is very important in our country and in our neighbouring countries as well as in the V4 countries and within the new structure of the countryside. These countries have taken a number of strategies, actions and programs for environmental issues, and the attitude of their societies has changed significantly in the past decades. But maybe not enough? The main purpose of my research is to explore the latest ideas and practices aimed at resolving social-environmental conflicts. The locations of the investigations are Hungarian, Czech, Slovak and Polish rural areas. The research would cover three years, and during the first period I'd like examine and compare the environmental processes in some selected sampling areas. The main questions are: What are the real actions and aspirations of the former socialist countries that create harmony between nature and society? The new paradigm is relevant in that countries? What

kind of territorial differentiation has occurred over the last 25 years due to environmental awareness in these countries? How could these countries cooperate on environmental issues? So the main goal is to explore and demonstrate the environmental-conscious ideas and practices in the rural areas of the V4 countries. I would like to share my most recent experiences in the topic at the upcoming conference.

KEYWORDS: new environmental paradigm, rural areas, V4 Countries