
PATRÍCIA HONVÁRI: RURAL INNOVATION? THE SUCCESS OF RENEWABLE ENERGY INVESTMENTS IN RURAL AREAS

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Nowadays, more and more focus is put on the renewable energy sources. Taken into account the possible future exhaustion of the fossil energy sources, the actual and near danger of the climate change, the drastic increase of the greenhouse gases in the last 200 years, as well as the growing need for sustainable development and liveable environment, the increasing necessity of the renewable energy sources have become clear. However, if we take a look at the situation in Hungary, the present energy trend raises questions and concerns about competitiveness, energy safety and sustainability. Although, there is a wide acceptance among the literature and researchers that Hungary has huge potentials regarding the renewable energy sources. Not only the national energy-security and energy-policy confirm the need to examine the utilization of renewable energies. In certain rural settlements the signs of rural innovation can already be seen: new functions emerge and the emphasis of the local economy is changing. Therefore, also from the side of rural development, it is highly important to analyse development paths that are able to bring added value to rural areas in the long term – and renewable energy utilization is one of these paths. The paper is based on an empirical research, and tends to contribute to the better understanding of the processes behind rural renewable energy investments. To demonstrate this, the investments of rural local municipalities have been chosen. I will interpret the renewable energy utilization as an innovation process, and determine those factors that can contribute to the success – or, on the other hand obstructing the development process. This way, the paper also gives opportunity to draw conclusions that are valuable not only for Hungary, but for other countries as well.

KEYWORDS: renewable energy, rural development, rural innovation