

Social and territorial identifications of the rural population and its activating potential

Sociálno-priestorové identifikácie vidieckeho obyvateľstva a ich aktivizačný potenciál

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Abstract: This paper has a theoretical and analytical character and it searches for the possibilities to activate the rural population by means of its social and territorial identifications. The objective of the paper is to point at some connections relating to social and territorial identity of the rural population, outlined by classic quantitative marks based upon the population up to 5 000. We base the above on the results of the representative sociological survey allowing us to analyze some of the selected problems of the social and territorial identity of the rural population, in particular its relation to residence, residential stability and autochthony, development prospects of residences, quality of social and civil relation in the rural area.

Key words: social and territorial identity, residential communities, residential development, residential identity, residential stability and autochthony, rural population, attractiveness of the residence, social climate, civil relations, residential emancipation, revitalization of municipal communities

Abstrakt: Príspevok má teoreticko-analytický charakter a hľadá možnosti aktivizácie vidieckeho obyvateľstva prostredníctvom ich sociálno-priestorových identifikácií. Cieľom príspevku je poukázať na niektoré súvislosti sociálno-priestorovej identity vidieckej populácie, ktorá je vymedzená klasickými kvantitatívnymi znakmi podľa počtu obyvateľov do 5 000. Vychádzame pritom z výsledkov reprezentatívneho sociologického výskumu, ktorý umožňuje analyzovať niektoré vybrané problémy sociálno-priestorovej identity vidieckeho obyvateľstva, najmä: vzťah k sídlu, sídelnú stabilitu a autochtónnosť, rozvojové perspektívy sídiel, kvalitu spoločenských a občianskych vzťahov na vidieku.

Kľúčové slová: sociálno-priestorová identita, sídelné spoločenstvá, sídelný rozvoj, sídelná identita, sídelná stabilita a autochtónnosť, vidiecka populácia, atraktivita sídla, sociálna klíma, občianske vzťahy, sídelná emancipácia, revitalizácia obecných spoločenstiev

INTRODUCTION

Recently we have recorded an increased sensitivity to the issues of the residential and regional identity and vitality of residential communities. It is linked to some fundamental changes in the principles of residential management stemming from the reestablishment of municipal administration, due to which the municipalities received competences to administer their municipal issues, to build their sovereignty and to mobilize external and internal potentials. It is a period of *renewing and revitalizing municipal communities*, a return to residential traditions, search-

ing for individuality and specificity of residences, historical continuity with the goal of activating the individual and group activity leading to the prosperity of residences.

Activating endogenous developmental resources of municipalities and their inclusion in the development in the form of cooperation and aggregation we consider a significant factor of the residential and regional development, as well as a positive relation to the municipality and feeling of residential solidarity and involvement in the events of the municipality, which is a strong developmental motivation factor of the mobilization of the rural population.

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CHARACTERISTICS OF THE CURRENT STATUS OF THE RURAL POPULATION

The definition of the rural population is based on the National Plan of Development, which, in general, defines rural residences as residences, which do not have the status of a town, and have a certain character and type of settlement, economic structure based on agriculture and forestry, less developed infrastructure and low density of population. From the statistical point of view, these include regions with the population up to 5 000 inhabitants. The Statistical Bureau of SR registers 2 883 residences, out of which 2 745 (95.2%) are predominantly rural residences and 138 urban residences. The majority of Slovak residences are villages, out of which 1 979 have population up to 1 000 inhabitants, and out of that, 1 210 villages have population up to 500 inhabitants (see the National Plan of Development 2003). *Rural character of the country, or the degree of its rural character*, according to the OECD methodology, is given by the proportion of population living in rural municipalities, and can be divided into three categories:

1. Predominantly rural areas, of clearly rural character, more than 50% of the district population lives in rural villages; in the SR there are 39 districts that fall within this category, representing 48% of the population and 59.5% of the territory of SR.
2. Transition areas with rather rural character; there are 15 with 50% of inhabitants living in rural villages, 31 districts in SR, i.e. 40% of the population.
3. Predominantly urban areas; there is less than 15% of the population living in these areas, in SR 9 districts including Bratislava (5 districts) and Košice (4 districts). In addition to regional cities, the majority of small and middle-size towns (5 000–50 000 inhabitants) are situated in rural areas, i.e. 12% of the population.

The structure and the character of rural population significantly influence also the developmental dispositions of individual regions. Theoretical works dealing with the residential and regional development have defined, in particular, the following trends: polarization and profiling on the local and regional level, big differences between individual parts of Slovakia: a group of 2 big cities has been determined, a group of districts where big central towns are located, newly established small districts with a high number of small villages, geomorphologic features of regions. Socio-demographic situation of rural areas is specific by the situation of small villages with the population up to 500 or 1 000 inhabitants: the number of inhabitants decreases, the quality of social-demographic

structure deteriorates, the number of inhabitants of post-productive age increases, reproduction capacity in the rural areas decreased, the aging of the population continues together with the increase in its accompanying signs, lack of work opportunities in these residences and their neighborhood maintains the level of work migration high (Regional Development of Slovakia ... 2004).

It is indisputable, that the residential and regional development of Slovakia has, in the last couple of years, recorded dynamic changes, not only in rural areas of Slovakia. However, we accept the opinion of S. Buchta that: "We cannot view rural community only as a kind of archaic cultural heritage, but rather as a social territory undergoing transformation, including a considerable plurality of different acts, which combine the expressions of urbanization and rural development. However, the process of differentiation has still been going on, there are some territories endangered by a rural exodus, however, there are others having a potential for their own activation and revitalization" (Buchta 2003:126).

Residential context of the issues relating to the social and territorial identity of rural population

Social and territorial identity of residential communities in Slovakia has, in the last decades, been impaired by the fundamental social, socio-economical and residential processes, that deeply affected the residential integrity of residences and residential communities developing for long historical periods and their social and territorial links. Such processes definitely include the *processes of industrial urbanization*, which significantly impaired the social and territorial integrity of the urban and rural settlements. These changes include, in particular, changes associated with the change of permanent residence, the way of living, changes in the position of residences, social structure and social relations within the residences.

The current status of the residential communities in towns and villages in Slovakia has been significantly influenced also by the *principles of territorial and administrative management of residences*, applied in the residential development in the stage of national committees. This stage can be characterized by the processes of industrialization and the relating processes of urbanization, which, in Slovakia, has been managed in a specific way. The specific character of the residential network in Slovakia had been a reflection of the insufficiently developed agrarian

country, and therefore, industrial urbanization, development of agricultural large-scale production and the relating concentration of essential activities resulted in *radical changes in the territorial distribution of residential communities* and in the residential structure. This process resulted in the development of urban residences with the concentration of industrial production, work opportunities and housing and the consequent migration of inhabitants into urbanized areas. These residential trends of the 20th century can also be observed in other countries; however, we want to point at some specifics of Slovakia, in particular, the time delay of processes and intensity of the applied forms and means.

Consequences of the accelerated industrial urbanization in Slovakia to rural population resulted in increased migration to the cities, significant changes in the social and demographic structure of rural communities, age imbalance, decrease in the birthrate and other socio-demographic indicators. The migration was accompanied by the elements of selection, since it was mainly the young generation with higher qualification leaving the areas. Migration from rural to urban areas also influenced the social mobility; the migrating individuals not only changed their place of their residence, but also their professional and social status; and, regularly changed their affiliation to a certain branch of economy. The high intensity of residential migration of rural population was not balanced by the natural growth of population, which impaired the natural reproduction of the rural population. Migration processes induced by the non-proportional extensive economic development deepened and induced the original imbalance of the social and territorial development.

Societal processes aimed at changing the social and residential structure that developed for several centuries not only impaired the integrity and natural development of residential communities, but they directly or indirectly affected also the lives of families and individuals. Profound changes in the social structure, proprietary and work relations together with liquidation of civil institutions constituted part of the changes in the system of political relations and of creating political and power structure of the communist regime. On the local level, this power was represented by national committees as the lowest level of state administration.

In the effort to find new possibilities to create the prospective territorial residential structures and to increase the urbanization rate of Slovakia in the 70's, the central system of settlement management was developed and in 1976 it was followed by the Project of Slovakia's Urbanization, establishing a

hierarchy in the residential structure. In concord with the Urbanization Project, investment and non-investment funds have been concentrated in urban settlements significant on a district, regional and local level. This concentration of the settlements in a specific stage of societal development resulted in objective conditions accompanied by increasing the quality and availability of civil facilities in centers, increasing the quality and competences of state administration, quality of education, effectiveness of agricultural production in the merged agricultural and manufacturing companies, regulation of housing construction etc. However, the way of implementation of this concept and in particular the length of its execution exceeded the optimal rate.

By administrative reduction of state administration bodies, a number of territorially, socially, economically and culturally sovereign rural settlements remained without local administration. Thus, the administrative function of the residence highly correlated with the development (or lack of development) of the residence, ensuring the progress in terms of satisfying the needs of residential community. Restrictions in the construction of family houses in certain categories of rural settlements (ban on constructions in non-central settlements) including the social and technical infrastructure, insufficient job opportunities, closing of national committees and elementary schools, administrative fusion of villages etc., gradually resulted in the disadvantaged condition in the residences of this category. The permanent decrease in the quality of live indirectly forced residential migration from rural to urban areas.

The intensive residential migration from rural to urban areas exceeded, in our conditions, the *limit of optimal residential development*, and, in general, it resulted in depopulation of rural and overpopulation of urban areas. This development resulted in demographically imbalanced communities in urban as well as desolated rural residences. The changed demographic structure can be characterized by aging population in rural settlements requiring a specific social care; and a specific management is also needed to manage the so called "living estate communities" in large cities (cumulated residential needs).

The *cultural and social aspect* of the process has also had non-negligible consequences, since it disrupted the historical continuity of the development of residences; some residential habits and traditions died out, creating a precondition for the generational discontinuity of the development of settlements; residential specifics and their unique features diminished, which ultimately eliminated also the solidarity (togetherness) and involvement in life of the original settlements,

including also social energy, which diminished in the process of integration into new residences.

Another significant social and territorial process significantly affecting the residential identity and social and territorial self-identification of individuals and residential communities was the violent change of the territorial structure of settlements by the *administrative reduction of municipalities*; the merged villages lost their residential, economic, social and territorial identity. *Forms and methods of integration processes of municipalities* many times did not take local specifics into consideration; what more, they failed to respect the will and opinions of the residential community preferring to maintain residential subjectivity and the historically formed residential unique features and identity. Despite the disagreement of the residential community, the integration processes were accomplished by administrative means without consideration to the real residential situation and local specifics, determining the further development of residences and leaving marks in the minds of the inhabitants and inducing feelings of wrong, injustice and violation of the fundamental residential right.

The integration of settlements culminated in 1989; this period was followed by an opposite process – *disintegration of settlements* as a natural reaction to the administrative reduction, inducing a new *trend of renewing the identity of merged settlements*. The process of integration of settlements in Slovakia has been documented by data on the number of municipalities: in 1950, there were 3 344 municipalities in Slovakia; in 1989 it was only 2 669, representing a decrease by 675 municipalities.

Residential emancipation – process of achieving independence and autonomy of settlements was part of the comprehensive democratization processes of social transformation after 1989. The transformation processes after 1989 included also a reform of public administration; the national committees were closed down and local self administration was reestablished. The renaissance of the residential self administration induced also a *disintegration process of residences* as a natural reaction of residential communities to the forced integration. In 1990, the number of residences in Slovakia increased by 129. There was also a fundamental change in the position of residences regaining their legal, economical and residential sovereignty, allowing for participation in the residential development.

Processes of social transformation after 1989 induced fundamental changes in the social and territorial structure, residential relations and connections, and ultimately affected the life of residential communities. These include in particular the following processes:

establishment of residential self-administration, decentralization of public administration, renewal of economic and legal sovereignty, partial deetatization of public sphere, changes in the individual and municipal proprietary relations, restructuring of economy, increase in regional differentiation etc. We assume that these fundamental social transformation processes have their residential and regional implications also for the social and territorial identity of residential communities.

The current conditions and principles of social and territorial development represent a sufficient general framework for the processes of social and territorial and residential identity of individuals and local communities. The municipalities gradually increase their awareness of their residential integrity and identity and establish mutually beneficial groups – micro-regions, which combine their potentials to achieve the residential and developmental objectives to their mutual benefit.

Referential framework for the issues of social and territorial and residential identity

The issues of residential identity are part of social and territorial identity or identity of territorial units. This concept defines national or state identity, regional identity, local identity or residential identity. Each of these territorial units can act as an independent entity, and differs from others by identification bonds, perceptual contents and other distinguishing features; these forms of social and territorial identity can be characterized by certain dominant signs.

The relationship to a residence or residential identity has formed for a long period of common “settlement” of people in a specific territory. The relations of people, specific groups or communities to their territory, including their mutual relations, were established within this process. The character of these bonds and relations forms a precondition of social and territorial identification for people with their residence, neighborhood, settlement or region. Social and territorial identification of people includes the elements of cultural, ethnic, civilization, group, regional or other forms of human identity.

Residential or local identity has formed predominantly in the traditional, stable local communities characterized by strong bonds to the family, house and land, community, confession and social affinity of the community. Within the historical development of Slovak society, P. Gajdoš defines several types of social bonds, that condition the territorial identities, e.g. “bonds to the land” with a domineering element of

land ownership, ownership of a family house; “bonds to roots” as a specific type of territorial identity, which means “focus not only on the present and future, but also on the past, historical roots and traditions, awareness of the continuity of development and the necessity of being rooted in it” (Gajdoš 2002: 66). These changes, influenced by radical civilization changes, have resulted in a high level of territorial mobility, and modification of contents and forms.

Residential identity reflects the relation of an individual, social groups or residential community to their residence, residential area and residential community, but it also includes elements of symbolic culture linked to adventures, memories, values, attitudes, feelings and experiences of an individual. Identity in general is an essential part of human existence, phenomenon, object or processes. It is an expression of certain “positive discrimination”, i.e. it differentiates the exceptionality, uniqueness and originality of entities. However, a precondition of identity is the perception; this means that it is necessary to know it, understand it, be aware of it, and to have a certain attitude towards it. The point is that identity is bound to its percipient, to social experiences and social memory, but also to the current conditions of living and ideas concerning the future. In this sense, we can say that the *substance of identity is the connection of the past and present for the future*. The identity of a settlement or region can be deduced from the Latin expression “genius loci”/spirit of the place. It is expressed by the unique and unrepeatable quality of the environment and its existential value. Identity of a territorial entity integrates the architectonic, geographic, historical, socio-cultural and social feature of the community of the territorial unit.

Residential identity and relation to the residence. If we talk about residential identity, we think of the *social value of the territory* and the relating idea of a human home. Is home only a place to live, an instrumental facility providing conditions for satisfying the basic physiological functions, or is it also a private and emotional value, which transforms a human residence to a home? The theory of residential development talks about *social contents of a home*, which is created by a social space including residential relations and residential communities: “Home is the relation of a human being to these components of the environment, which have become intimate and close to him, into which he had incorporated himself, which he had appropriated, and in which he finds spatial, social and cultural certainty, security and beauty. Home creates preconditions for taking deeper roots, the residential pride... it is values that do not prevent territorial mobility of a man” (Pašiak 1990: 87).

We understand residential identity as a positive expression of the relation to the residence. The question is which values create residential identity. It is obvious, that a man identifying himself by his place of residence, lives his life in it, is more interested in the events within the residence feels increased responsibility for its development, strengthens and promotes the activities of local administration.

Results of recent surveys show that the relationship to the area is a significant indicator influencing other indicators; statistically the most important one being the relationship to the place of residence. A positive attitude to the residence, awareness of the pride stemming from the affiliation with the residence, increased level of solidarity and involvement in the general community facilitate the progressive tackling of residential problems and contributes to the overall prosperity and development of the residence. For example when assessing the activities of the representatives of local administration, the respondents most valued activities of mayors and counselors linked to the assertion of residential interests, increasing the attractiveness, prosperity and welfare of the residence, and ultimately those, which expressed residential solidarity and pride of their own residence.

SELECTED CHARACTERISTICS OF RURAL POPULATION'S RESIDENTIAL IDENTITY

According to the representative sociological research, we focus on the selected problems of social and territorial identity: by the declared relation to the residence, residence attractiveness, residence stability and autochthony of residents as well as the quality evaluation of civil and human relations we can characterize the social atmosphere in the countryside.

Research sources: the database is the result of the representative sociological research, which was accomplished within a grant research project of the Slovak Academy of Science's Sociological Institute: “Social and territorial identity of the local community as a socio-cultural phenomenon” in 2001 on the sample of 1 265 respondents older than 18 years of age. Research data allow for analyzing the research results according to villages' size structure. The population in the countryside is represented by 2 size categories of villages, namely villages with the population of up to 2 000 that are generally considered to be small villages, and villages with the population of 2 000–5 000. The research results are representative also on this level.

Generally it has been shown, that identity relation to the area has got a strong social or socio-cultural charge. It is related to social relationships and pro-

cesses in a specific area as well as values, which were created by men. Therefore, it hides in itself rational, pragmatic or emotive aspects. According to the analysis of sociological research's results, we can declare some characteristic results, which are connected to social and territorial identity. It is mostly the high rate of Slovak population's resident stability and the ratio of autochthonous inhabitants, branched system of affinities and friendly relations in settlements, family background as a dominant condition for satisfied life in the village as well as the low migration potential. In the same way, the high rate of residential identity is characteristic for the Slovak population (85% of respondents feel like a real inhabitant of his/her settlement), while the affection for the village is more significant at the seats in the country. The residential identity decisive identification relations are the following: 1. Family and friendly relations (my family and friends live here), 2. Place of birth: I was born here, home feeling, close relations, memories, fellow-feeling, 3. Property (apartment, house, gardens). The importance of ethnical identity and social and territorial affection for the country, area and village were ranked on the fourth place in the list of more important criteria. The value of ethnic identity and social and territorial affection for the region, surrounding and village are classified only on the 4th place. Almost 85% of respondents declare his/her positive relation to the residence in the emotional and pragmatic respect, as the home of the family. Nevertheless, inhabitants of Slovakia see the future development of their community in a pessimistic way, only 45% of respondents think that their community will be an attractive place for their children and future generations.

As a dominant feature of the closest site surroundings, where the residence is located, the respondents mention the natural environment and the farming landscape, even in the regional plan. Generally, we can declare, that inhabitants of Slovakia perceive their site surroundings where they live as a rural area created by natural environment and farming landscape populated mostly by the provincial population. (Faltan 2004). Regional differences in the evaluation of social and territorial identity are rather significant, it seems, that this group of problems covers a high rate of regional differentiation of Slovakia.

Residential stability and autochthony of the country population

Generally it is believed that the Slovak society is stable in terms of the residence of its inhabitants. The Slovak society characteristic feature is a strong root-

edness and traditional values. Strong family relationships, concentration of mutually related people in the social surrounding and several forms of vicinities as well as secretiveness of local communities characterize the local communities. In the early 20th century, Slovakia had a vivid agrarian and rural character, but during the 20th century, thanks to the strong industrial urbanization, huge social-economic and political changes have been observed in the society, such were those in the late 20th century, the Slovak society can be characterized as an urban-agrarian society with some elements of a traditional society. One of the traditional society typical feature is a residential stability, low migration potential and a high rate of autochthonous inhabitants. The length of dwelling in a settlement is an important indicator for several residential characteristics, especially related to the residence, rate of residential identity, participation activity, attractiveness of the residence and other characteristics related to social-demographic potential of the population.

The *residential problem of autochthony of inhabitants* observed the ratio of autochthonous inhabitants that are aborigines and incomers. Autochthonous inhabitants are those, who live in their residence since their birth. Their importance for the settlement consists of not only ensuring the demographic continuity, but also of ensuring the generational and socio-cultural continuity. It is impossible to determine the ideal and precise proportion of aborigines and incomers for the progressive and dynamical development of the settlement, as it depends on several residential types and other factors. For the positive development of the settlement, it is also necessary to have incomers, who bring in new habitudes, skills and enrich the local inhabitants' culture. However, autochthonous inhabitants represent a certain guarantee for the settlement's historical and continual development.

In the research collection of the SR, we have registered 59% of autochthonous inhabitants, who have their permanent residence in the village since their birth, and 41% of respondents, who have moved into the village. These data also confirm that the residential net in Slovakia is relatively stable; more than the half of the population lives in their residence since their birth.

The autochthony of rural inhabitants. The fact is that autochthonous inhabitants live in smaller, while incomers in bigger settlements. Therefore, we monitored the *proportion of autochthonic inhabitants and incomers* according to the size of the settlements. The limit of autochthony is a village with population up to 10 000. At this threshold, the autochthony of

the population changes, that is, in categories with the population in excess of 10 000, the number of autochthonous inhabitants decreases and the rate of incomers increases. At the same time, we can affirm the assumption that the rate of autochthonic inhabitants is the highest in rural settlements, that is in small villages with population up to 2 000 (64%), but mostly in villages with population of 2 000-5 000 (69%). According to the correlation analysis, autochthonous inhabitants have an emotional affection for their settlement (village = home), while respondents who remain in the village because of their work are mostly incomers. We can expressly declare that autochthonous inhabitants believe in the settlement's future more effectively than incomers. *The regional dimension of autochthony documents that* inhabitants of Slovakia are not markedly regionally differentiated regarding the ratio of autochthonous inhabitants and incomers. More than half of Slovakia's population in each district is autochthonous, that is they live in their settlement since their birth, which is the highest rate in the country.

According to the *analysis of the sociological research's results regarding the residential stability of inhabitants and following the number of years they have lived in the settlement*, we can declare that inhabitants of Slovakia are residentially stable and

almost a half of the respondents have lived in their settlement for more than 30 years. If we consider the limit of 20 years more than sufficient for being settled in a certain settlement, then 76% of respondents will meet the limit. If we observe the residential stability in the country and towns, this rate will not change significantly, that is, provincial settlements are not better stabilized. The correlation analysis regarding the impact of length of living in a certain settlement on the "real and true citizenship" feeling speaks about linear relation of both indicators, with the intent that the "real" citizenship and residential identity feeling will proportionally increase with the length of staying in the settlement. It means the longer the respondent lives in the settlement, the more he/she feels to be a real inhabitant of the settlement.

Declared relation to the settlement

The inhabitants' relation to the settlement is analyzed in the report as a declared verbalization of the respondent about his/her place of residence. This relation could either be positive or negative. The most positive declaration regarding the relation to the place of residence could be the association with the hometown, when the place of residence ensures social

Table 1. Declared relation to the settlement in Slovakia and in the country

	SR	Population	
		up to 2 000	2 000–5 000
1. "I like this village and living in this village satisfies me" It is about positive relation to the settlement, the respondent personally identifies himself with the village: village = my home	29.6	26.2	30.8
2. "I live here, because I have my family and my residence here" The respondent expresses his relation to the settlement in a rational way through his family and residence: village = family's place of abode	54.6	58.6	57.7
3. "first of all, I live here because of my working conditions" Utilitarian purposes, convenient working conditions: village = current place of abode	3.4	2.4	2.2
4. "I don't have any other possibility" This relation to the village does not have any emotional or rational root, the respondent expresses a rather resigned attitude: village = forced place of abode	4.8	4.7	4.4
5. "I am not satisfied here, if I had a possibility, I would move away" The respondent has got a rather negative attitude to the village, potential migrants, who are waiting for green light: village = temporary place of abode	4.4	5.0	1.6
6. "I'm actively looking for a possibility to move away from here" The group of active migrants: village = momentary place of abode	1.7	1.8	2.2
7. "I don't know"	1.4	1.3	1.1

Source: Social and territorial identification of local community as a social-cultural phenomenon (2001)

and emotional needs. The relation to the settlement is a feature, which contains wide range of emotional and rational expressions regarding the relation to the settlement. We have observed characteristics in several connections for there are more factors that could influence the relation to the place of residence, such as different personal, demographical and social characteristics, especially the length of stay in a locality, socio-economic status, character of relationships, property (house, land, etc.). Respondents identified themselves with 6 types of responses which express their relation to their settlement in a different way. Responses have been classified according to the decreasing intensity of emotional relation. At the same time, we assigned special, mutually different marks. Data in percentage are indicated in the table, small country villages with population up to 2 000 and country villages with population of 2 000–5 000 (in %).

The first two groups of respondents reflect the positively and emotionally established relation to the settlement. For those respondents, the village is their home and a place of abode of their family (84.2%), in small country villages 84.8% and in country villages with the population of 2 000–5 000 it was 88.5%. In the case of country population, we can declare that they connect their residential identity mostly with the family and dwelling and less with working conditions. We cannot find fundamental differences between the classification of settlements (villages and towns). There are no socio-cultural differences between the biggest towns and traditional countryside villages, where the relation is more emotional than in a modern town, where it is supposed to be more liberal.

Following the correlation characteristics regarding the relation to the settlement, the dominant factor was the age of respondents and their way of dwelling. The older the respondent was, the more he/she felt emotionally affected by the settlement. The way of dwelling has also got a significant impact on the positive attitude towards the settlement: respondents who live in their own apartment or house have a more positive attitude to the settlement than those who do not have their own stable residence (active migrants). A strong correlation bond can be observed between the high rate of residential identity and satisfaction of inhabitants with the activity of public administration authorities, participation activities and confidence in the major and deputies as well.

Attractiveness of the settlement for the future generations

The social and territorial identity is a result of individual or associated identifications of a man and it is

connected with the place where the man lives his/her life, establishes social relationships and enters different social processes where he forms his/her relation with the place. The relation to the settlement is closely connected with the attractiveness and the future of the place of abode. We have already mentioned that past, present and future form a coessential part of identity. How the respondents evaluate the development potential of their own settlement? Will the settlement be attractive enough for their children and the next generations? These expressions are rather pessimistic, because only 45% of respondents in SR believe that their settlement will be attractive for their children and posterities. 19% of respondents do not believe in the future of their settlement and 36% is uncertain about the settlement's future.

The correlation analysis of the inhabitants' relation to their settlement and the attractiveness of the settlement indicate that respondents, who believe in the future of their settlement, have the most emotional bond to their residence, that is they identify themselves with the settlement as with their home, videlicet their relation to the residence reflects their trust in the future development of the settlement. The factor regarding the size of settlements or their division into country settlements and towns is not unambiguous, for instance, the most pessimistic inhabitants live in settlements with the population of 5 000–20 000, while the most optimistic inhabitants live in the cities with the population of 50 000–100 000 and in Bratislava and Košice. Respondents who feel like "real and true inhabitants" of their settlement are the most optimistic about their settlement's future development. We have observed the regional dimension of settlements' attractiveness and we can declare that the biggest differences, on a district level, are exactly in the ideas regarding the possibilities of the settlement's development. Optimistic settlement's development perspectives are connected mostly with the dominant position of big cities. The highest rate of pessimism we can observe in districts with a high rate of problematic issues.

Social climate and social relations within the community as well as the component of residential identity

The social and territorial identification of the residential community depends on the issues mentioned below:

– *Relations regarding the residential environment (bearing on the nature, cultural and historical dominants, property relations)*

– *Relations regarding the community of people*, different relationships (family, friends, neighbors, fellows and other communities). The quality of relationships, which are set in social interaction of residential community, we considered to be one of the most significant factors of a residential identity.

The social climate in the settlement consists of a huge complex of social relations, which can underlie the residential identity, residential fellowship and home feeling and they form a significant endogenous development potential of the settlement. Their composition and quality are essential on different levels of territorial research. We have focused on evaluation of these relations at the countryside, especially compared with cities and the whole Slovakia indicators. The results of the representative research enable us to monitor the indicators, which we define as components of the social climate and social relations.

Methodological remark: Respondents evaluated the components of the social climate and human relations, within the representative research of SR, on a 5 grade scale (from very satisfied to very unsatisfied). For the comparative analysis (countryside – city), we transferred this evaluation system into indexical point evaluation system: from 0.00 (lowest value) to 1.00 (highest value).

The social climate expresses the social atmosphere within the settlement. Within the scope of it, we can earmark a wide range of residential social relations. We have focused on social relations' quality evaluation in the settlement: family relationships, religious tolerance, neighborhood, generation relationships, ethnic tolerance (relations between inhabitants with

different nationality), political tolerance (relations between groups of people with different political opinions), relations between Roma and other inhabitants. Table 2 will indicate the index of evaluation of certain human relations in each size category.

The selected indicators of the social atmosphere in the settlements show a different quality of the inhabitants' satisfaction. In Slovakia on average, likewise in each size categories, the family relationships got the highest evaluation from the respondents. At the same time, it is quite interesting that family relationships got the lowest evaluation in the smallest settlements; it is below the Slovak average. The best evaluation was achieved in bigger rural communities and smaller towns. In any case, it is evident, that some of the components of these relations are evaluated more positively than the Slovak average in the countryside and higher than in towns. It is mostly about the higher quality rate of neighborhood relations and intergenerational relations. The most evident positive linear relation the countryside population manifests itself by a higher rate of ethnic and political tolerance as well as relations between the Roma and non-Roma population. We can generalize, that every component of human relations is evaluated higher than the Slovak average at the population in the countryside.

Social relations in the countryside

It is evident, that the population in the countryside differs from the population in towns by a range of social characteristics. The selected indicators of social relations in villages concentrate around the average value; the index for SR is the lowest in the evaluation of civil

Table 2. The evaluation of social climate in each size category

Social climate	Rural communities, population		Town, population				City of Bratislava and Košice	SR
	up to 2 000	2 000 –5 000	5 000 –10 000	10 000 –20 000	20 000 –50 000	50 000 –100 000		
1. Family relationships	0.82	0.86	0.86	0.82	0.84	0.87	0.83	0.84
2. Religious tolerance	0.77	0.74	0.78	0.66	0.74	0.70	0.73	0.75
3. Neighborhood	0.75	0.75	0.74	0.69	0.71	0.71	0.68	0.72
4. Generation relationships	0.70	0.70	0.69	0.63	0.67	0.65	0.65	0.68
5. Ethnic tolerance	0.75	0.70	0.67	0.62	0.64	0.62	0.56	0.68
6. Political tolerance	0.62	0.61	0.60	0.55	0.54	0.53	0.50	0.57
7. Relation between Roma and others	0.55	0.51	0.41	0.43	0.39	0.38	0.35	0.44

Source: Representative sociological research 2001

Table 3. The evaluation of social relations in each category

Social relations	Rural communities, population			Town, population			City of Bratislava and Košice	SR
	up to 2 000	5 000 –10 000	5 000– 10 000	10 000– 20 000	20 000 –50 000	50 000 –100 000		
1. Fellow-citizen's relation to the settlement	0.60	0.57	0.56	0.49	0.49	0.55	0.42	0.54
2. Civil coexistence's quality	0.61	0.59	0.56	0.50	0.49	0.52	0.41	0.54
3. Civil participation	0.56	0.52	0.51	0.45	0.44	0.46	0.42	0.50
4. Trust in civil self- government	0.59	0.54	0.54	0.46	0.46	0.45	0.44	0.51
5. Civil solidarity	0.56	0.50	0.50	0.41	0.37	0.40	0.37	0.46

Source: Representative sociological research 2001

solidarity. The index of civil relations' quality evaluation, according to the size categories of settlements – in all observed components of these relations – is the highest in the countryside settlements, especially in the smallest villages (up to 2 000 inhabitants).

CONCLUSION

The analysis of selected indicators of social and territorial identity enables us to determine some characteristic trends, which are typical for the inhabitants in the countryside. Autochthonous inhabitants are the most typical for the Slovak countryside, especially in settlements with the population of 2 000–5 000. These settlements are residentially the most stable. It is markedly observable in their positive and emotional attitude towards their settlement. The "true citizenship" feeling is directly connected with the residential stability and the length of stay in the settlement. The longer the man lives in a village, the more positive relation he has to it. For rural population, the family and dwelling are the most dominant factors. The residential identity increases with the age and it is positively influenced by living conditions. Residentially identified inhabitants see the future development of their settlement more positively. The favorable social climate is more typical for the population in the countryside that manifests itself in higher rate of evaluation of social relations and quality of human relations.

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