

Introduction

– the atmosphere of the Nature Park and the harmony of the potentials of the landscape near the border in the Hegyköz region –

At the time of the political change of the 1990s, this region with its many small villages was typical of the Hungarian rural landscape of the time. The situation was worse in Füzér, but also in Pusztafalu, Füzérkajata, Vilyvitány, Felsőregmec, Vágáshuta, Kishuta and Nagy-huta, because these are so-called impasse villages, i.e. they are rather isolated due to their location next to the border and in a basin.

The current employment problems of the region are caused by the disintegration of the system of sectoral divisions and cooperatives, the lack of innovative product development that would have been necessary for the future of the potential products (perlite, kaolinite, wood, porcelain, fruit) of the Hegyköz region, the loss of market share of the Hollóházi Porcelain Factory – as the biggest employer of Hegyköz – despite its product development efforts, the setback of the traditional cropland management and the pasturage. Although some restructuring took place as regards small enterprises, tourism developments, agriculture and forestry, product processing and gastronomy in the villages, but the unemployment, the ageing society and the rural exodus are the processes that mostly shape the life of the local communities.

Local governments have made significant improvements regarding infrastructural and institutional development (water, gas, canalization, inland water, schooling – community centres – development of social institutions), communal work programs are in gear almost continuously and they establish several partnership-based co operations within the Hegyköz region (improvement of the quality of drinking water, handicraft programs, building a cycle lane in Hegyköz, etc.), but a lack of perspective has been characteristic of the region. Such a perspective should:

- suit the characteristics of the region regarding the landscape and land management;
- comply with the idea and criteria of sustainability;
- make the landscape attractive for both visitors and local residents;
- enable existing, traditional cooperation on geographical basis again;
- establish “sustainable landscape” development strategies that suit the natural factors of the region and the local ideologies;
- aim at improving rural employment and the ability to make profit, establishing workplaces, improving the quality of life and reducing rural exodus;
- and should do all this with the aid of an extensive local social dialogue and cooperation.



Due to my family connections I am originally from Füzér and in addition to my job at the local government I have worked in forestry and as an entrepreneur, therefore I would like to draw up the following short- and long term goals:

- This beautiful natural landscape and the local communities have paramount importance for local residents and they, as local patriots find their conservation crucial.
- They do not see their future in establishing industry or high-tech parks, but in implementing the sustainable use of the land, which includes:
 - close to nature forestry and related wildlife management;
 - regional agriculture:
 - local processing industry, development of local products and handicraft,
 - rural gastronomy, recreation (relaxation),
 - protection of cultural heritage – both material and intellectual –, preserving tradition, protection of monuments, village renewal
 - and the establishment of and support for the background of ecotourism that harmonizes with environmental objectives.

The Nature Park is – in my opinion – a comprehensive regional development unit, which embodies among others the possibilities and the spirit of the region as well as the future vision of its small communities.

In the Great Milic mountain group, which dominates the southern and western half of the Szalánci Hills, we would like to carry out developments in cooperation with our Slovakian partners in compliance with the ethos of the Nature Park as we share this region. Therefore it is easier to solve potential problems jointly and as regards the possibilities we can achieve better results on a cross-regional level.

I believe that the first positive results and successes of our joint initiative related to the settlements in Hegyköz, in the region north to the Vitányi Hill and along the Hernád River are beneficial for the acceptance of the idea and ethos of the Nature Park. All this complies with the regional politics of the European Union, which aims at re-establishing and supporting previously interrupted relations between settlements near the border and within the small regions.

The Nature Park, which is located in the five settlements on the side of Great Milic, Füzér, Füzérkumlós, Hollóháza, Kéked, Pusztafalu, establishes certain integration in the spirit of the defined aims. The social capital of the region, which has been recognized in the course of previous cooperation, allows us to hope that this local initiative is going to grow and be successful in the future.

Jenő Horváth
mayor of the village Füzér

