ABSTRACT

Changing informal rural neighbourhood help into formal employment

Traditionally in rural areas where services have been scarce people have relied on neighbourhood help in various tasks, like chopping wood, wintertime snow clearing from the yards of the elderly etc. This informal (care) work has been done under grey field of exchange economy. However, it has had an important part in the social structure of the rural villages and significant role in keeping the villages inhabited. The question of informal help in rural areas becomes ever more pressing as the publicly organised services are withdrawing from the villages and the village population is ageing. The new schemes to turn this informal care work into formal employment and privately owned entreprises may have unpredicted effects on the social structure of the villages.

In rural villages the informal care work has had an important social functions as it creates a socially acceptable and easy way of arranging social meetings and contacts. In this article it is shown, how people living in villages dislike the idea to have to pay for this work and also they point to trust and security issues of the villages in this matter. The privatized help work does not function anymore as social structure inside villages and it does not have the same social meaning. When the public sector aims in promotion of privatized services it should also consider the effects of these actions in relation to the society where it operates.