

SOCIO-ECONOMICAL CHARACTERISTICS FOR THE RURAL ROMANIAN SPACE BETWEEN IDENTITY AND GLOBALISATION

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Abstract

The transition from over centralised economy to market economy generated a wholesome of economical and social problems for the Romanian agriculture and rural development. Is for this reason that, it came natural that the preoccupations for identifying solutions and means of solving them mobilized more and more specialists in the field.

After a short description of the relationship between rural development and globalization, follows the issue regarding rural identity structure and the approach to rural identity and globalization.

Key words: rural space, rural identity, globalisation

INTRODUCTION

Romania's agriculture and rural development are in a continuous crisis situation, under the conditions where the economy cannot sustain this segment.

Disparities between the rural and the town areas represent specific social problems of the Romanian territory. As a consequence of accentuated de-population, we presently witness a series of demographic phenomena with negative impact on the social and economical development of the rural community: population aging, work force aging, high mortality and low birth rate.

MATERIAL AND METHOD

Actual research concerning change and development in the rural area follow three major tendencies:

1) Comprehensive quantitative research, aiming to classify the rural area in areas of social and economical development, geographical areas, social and cultural areas and elaborate development macro-economical and macro-social strategies.

2) Qualitative research, detailed social and anthropological research, based mainly on monographing a single rural community and oriented towards highlighting customs and morals of traditional life.

3) Complementary research focused on highlighting and describing specific social and economical structures existing in some rural communities, with the purpose to elaborate local development strategies. This trend is to be followed for the present study.

If for the first type of research the methodology eluded the problem of identity, for the last two trends it takes a central role.

The attempts and the methods of social, economic and cultural rehabilitation of the Romanian rural space, used as a real and viable, social alternative, managed to bring to the attention of the specialists and the media, new agrarian politics, rural development programs, organizing and administrative intercessions and cultural and social revaluing.

The issue of rural development in Romania has a large and thorough approach to scientific and academic world, being found in numerous studies and papers published at home and abroad (Wolf A., 2007; Mihai V., 2008).

Work is very topical theme in the context of Romania, EU Member State, has given and granted a priority on increasing the competitiveness of agriculture (Merce E., 2009), environmental improvements in the country side and quality of life and rural development.(Zahiu L., 2006).

Research has allowed the separation of trends and advancing the theoretical and scientific conclusions to acces and efficient use of European funds for rural development and successfully carry out other types of human interventions in the areas: credit, organization of courses training of farmers, internships and exchanges, etc. (MADR, 2008).

The rural space is comprised of an interior area or a coastline, containing villages and small towns, where the majority of land is used for: a) agriculture, forestry, aquaculture and fishing; b) cultural and economic activities of the inhabitants of these ares; c) other usage (Otiman P.I., 2000).

At European level, the rural space represents 85% of the territory's surface, with a significant gap in comparison to the urban in ensuring life quality. The European view sees the village has the following functions: economic, ecologic social and cultural, meant to ensure and broaden local associative life (Otiman P.I., 2000).

For Romania, where the village is not only a primal sector or agricultural, but also a craft sector, a touristic space, thus a third sector, an ecologic space al a context for ethno-cultural revaluing, this plural identity is common. This plurality represents the means to understanding globalisation, not as an economic and social and cultural homogenization, but more as diversity sustaining standards of living comparable at European level. There are major differences between the distribution models of the

population in the rural territories of the counties. Population density is mainly influenced by the landforms.

Density is very low in communities from the Carpatian perimeter, as well as Dobrogea area- under 50 or even 30 [inhabitants/km²]. For the Danube Delta, there are under 8 [inhabitants/km²], being an area with a weak network of communes. (Barbu, N., 2009).

The weakest populated counties are Caras-Severin - 20,7 [inhabitants/km²] -a mountain county having serious problems with depopulation as a direct result of a low birth rate- and Tulcea - 17,4 [inhabitants/km²] - due to special geographic conditions, given the Danube Delta's presence on approximately a third of the county's territory.

Consequently, the density criteria is not relevant enough for highlighting the difficulties a territory is facing

The concept of identity became a major theme in the social sciences between the '70 and the '80. Research focus on identity draws its sources, on the one side, in the cognitive perspective from the social psychology, and on the other side in the academic interest in the so-called "me generation" of the '80, characterized by a growth of the divorce rate, economic specula and creation of the "yuppies" generation. (Key Deaux, 1992).

In sociology, the identity theme is present especially through race and ethnicity, but also through a definition of self in everyday life. From this perspective the conflicts between "I" and "Me" and their solution are interesting. In defining the self, psychology highlights "personality" and sociology "the phenomenon of socialisation" (Brinkerthoff, D.B., White, L.K., 1988).

The social identity (Tajfel and Turner, 1979) defines social identity as the awareness of belonging to a social group (Apud Pascaru M., 2003) strengthened by the emotional signification and the value of being a group member (Abrams D., 1992).

If a specific context favours the highlight of personal identity, comparing (as process of categorizing and differentiation) takes place at an inter-individual level. For social identity highlight (Michael A., Hogg, D. Abrams D., 2001), comparison is done between groups, and the persons involved act as members of the group.

Collective identity is defined as "a collective's capacity to self recognize it self as a group; attribute of the cohesion principle; resource for a life in a society and for collective action." Creating a collective identity implies a differentiation movement between groups that leads to collective autonomy manifestation. (Segrestin D., 1996). From this process of differentiation comes the local identity diversity.

If, for the ethnic or professional identity of a community, the essential identification landmarks are obvious, these being the language, namely the occupation, rural identity cannot be highlighted by reporting to a single landmark as this constitutes an identity, that first requires the definition of components.

Analysis of the three main documents (Program Phare 1996, 1997, 1998) dealing with economic and social change emerged in Romania as well as the literature regarding identity and rural space; justify dealing the rural identity complex by its components:

- occupational identity
- cultural identity
- local identity (social).

Delimitations between rural space and the other special forms allowed a synthetic formulation of some specific characteristics:

From the point of view of the economical structure, for the rural space agriculture owns the highest share of the rural territory. This does not exclude the existence of other activities, on the contrary, forestry and forest industry in the mountain and hill areas have an essential role in the rural space economy, as well as tourism and recreational agro tourism, public services etc. However, rural space economy remains mostly agricultural. (Mocanu C., 2010).

The superior agricultural share in the rural space economy becomes more and more debatable, as to the trend of „implementation” in the rural space economy of specifically urban elements (processing industry of agricultural products; infrastructure development, extension of cultural activities etc.) determines the decrease in agricultural share from the point of view of the place it takes in the total of occupied population, in the gross income and the added value etc.

From an occupational point of view, the rural space is mainly a production space where activities from the primary sectors own a high share of its economy.

Alongside agriculture, other activities like product processing, forestry with forest exploitation, wood industry, household industry, crafts industry complete rural space economy. Productive spaces concerning agricultural and forestry activity, to which we add the development of industries connected to agriculture, start to emerge and bring their contribution in this field

An important characteristic of the rural space resides in the low density of the population and the size of human „well aired” houses. Human communities from the rural space have certain specific

characteristics. Inhabitants know each other from all points of view and their hierarchy takes into consideration the social and family behaviour.

From a landscape point of view, the rural space is incomparable more beautiful and more appreciated by more inhabitants, through its natural structure, its flora and fauna. The air is cleaner, the silence etc govern the majority of rural settlements.

In his papers *The sociology of transition. Values and social types in Romania*, sociologist Dumitru Sandu establishes the fact that the social typologies „and implicitly identity” through which the rural community answers social change depends highly on the specific problems that every community deals with. (Dumitru S., 1996).

Shaping local identity by referring to local problems and intra and extra communitarian relations is justified also by Dominic Abrams’s demarche. In a research, from 1989, on the attitude of a British rural community’s inhabitants towards the imminent built of a railway connection with the English Channel, he established that the best predictor of identification with the community is extension of social contacts, the measure in which the respondents’ important social relations were maintained within the neighbourhood, community and the extra communitarian medium.

It was also established that dissatisfaction and active protest towards the stated situation is associated with communitarian identification more than with a social contract. This suggests that while social identification is an important component of social protest, self-identification is based on social relations and common definition of reality. (Abrams D., 1992).

The general hypothesis of the study is: the integrating processes in its whole, with the changes that take place in the plan of values in Romanian society leads to differentiations (towards tradition or modernity) in assuming and building the identity model in the rural and urban mediums. The working hypotheses are specified in the report together with data presentation.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The grant’s research followed a vast problem concerning the village, for example: determining the specificity of cultural and ethnic identity and the identity mechanisms dominant in a rural community; identification of value orientation in the rural space, values comprised to tradition and social and cultural modernity; observing the means through which people refer themselves to a community they belong to (the way they perceive it, the way they internalize the idea of community etc.). We will continue by presenting the results for these themes.

Based on the analysed identity components we can differentiate two hypothesis of rural identity, the “endogenous”, relatively stable, rooted in space localization, structure of population and culture and the exogenous, submitted mostly to negotiation, dependent of the social context, the intra and extra communitarian net, economic development.

In order to establish a hierarchy of importance for these components it is necessary to shape rural identity by referring the major problems the community is facing.

Identity has a mediating role between the economic and social reality and the rural development. The sociological approach of this theme implies focusing on the socially determined contents of the rural identity and avoids treating the latter as an aggregate of the individual identities of the community members.

Nowadays identity presents itself as a very actual concept in the sociological, anthropological political and psychological analysis. The theme is re-powered by the scientific foreground of the '60 together with Erik Erikson's works (On identity crisis - Erikson, Erik. 1968) and Erving Goffman (On the sintagme regarded as spoiled identity - Erving Goffman, 1963).

To the same idea, the theory of social and cultural change is edifying to the role of identity in the globalising process. As an example of construction new behavioural morals we give the changes between the European and the American societies.

When the Europeans brought horse to the Indians, they took them over easily and used them accordingly due to the values promoted by huntsmen tribes. But when the Europeans acclimatized the cows also, the Indians used them as pets, training animals or hunting fun, by killing them all. (Horton P.B., 1980). Social and economic changes in the rural medium also imply changes and revaluing regarding values, attitudes, norms and behaviours that base the community's identity.

Shaping the rural identity and determining the role of rural identity in the process of globalization involves evaluating both the endogenous and exogenous components by identifying manifested social problems in the local and global context and analysing definition, more or less consensual, of these, by the members of the community.

CONCLUSIONS

As a conclusion, European Carta of the rural space comprises a new philosophy of the rural space, where it is stated: “The European rural space is a precious landscape space, the result of a long history and whose salvation is a concern of the society. The rural space can fulfil de supplying,

recreation and balance function that is more and more desired in society, just that it remains an attractive and original environment equipped with: a good infrastructure, viable agriculture and forestry, favourable local conditions for non-agricultural economical activities, an intact environment and a neat scenery”.

The new philosophy of rural space must be based both on the concept of solid durable local development as well as an agricultural, or forestry based on:

- a). accordance between economy and the environment
- b). inclusion in the development system of a longer time horizon
- c). humanizing the environment by keeping a clean environment and the environment created by man should be closer to the natural.

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