

CONCEPTUAL APPROACHES REGARDING THE ROMANIAN RURAL AREA

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Abstract

This paper aims at defining the concept of "rural space" in Romania, as well as the way it is defined by the European Union regulations. This has been done by consulting works with a special role on the knowledge of rural space, both locally and at European level. At the current level, among the most important issues debated at European level, it concerns the protection of nature and the preservation and protection of cultural values and heritage. At the same time, the acute problems faced by the "Romanian village" tend to worsen, and among the main causes are the migration of rural population to large urban centers or to other more developed countries, due to unsatisfactory living conditions.

Key words: rural development, conceptual approaches, rural space

INTRODUCTION

Even though the second National Rural Development Program will be completed in 2020, the situation of the Romanian rural area does not seem to be much changed, so the main problems still persist. Characterized by an aging of population, as well as an exodus of young people to urban centers or to European Union countries, they all seem to have no solution. [5]

Young people who should have been the main "engine" of rural space are increasingly choosing to move away from rural areas because of the problems they face such as lack of jobs, low living standards, poor infrastructure lack of utilities, dispensaries, schools all of them are just some of the problems encountered in the Romanian rural area. [4] [9]

At the same time, societal changes, where more and more people choose to procreate at older ages, only after they have stabilized financially and professionally, make the number of family members lower, affecting so the number of the population, where more often than not, the number of annual deaths exceeds that of newborns, thus the population descended. [13]

Also, the traditional family as a whole has undergone certain changes over the ages, so the age at which people get married has grown and the number of marriages has fallen, this affecting demographically rural space.

Functions of rural space [1] [2]

The multitude of economic, social or cultural activities carried out can be grouped into three functions:

(i)Economic function - which aims to obtain agricultural products and other goods made on the branch of agriculture, forestry, crafts, etc. with the objective of ensuring satisfactory living conditions for people in rural areas.

Bold I. affirms that the economic function is a complex function, involving multiple activities, so that rural space is no longer seen as an agricultural area but a diversified one with different implications, from the use of agricultural workforce to maintaining youth through non-agricultural activities, generating additional income for the rural population. [3]

The ecological function - through the industrialization of some rural areas, through the mining activities, the industrialization of animal husbandry has resulted in the phenomenon of "pollution of rural space", degrading the agricultural and forestry

landscape and the reduction of flora and fauna.

The European Charter has set out a number of issues that the countries of the European Union have to take into account, such as:

- rational and sustainable exploitation of natural resources and preserving biodiversity,
- protecting the landscape,
- protecting the beauty and peculiarities of rural space,
- registration of places where old or breed farm animals are present, traditional rural landscapes, traditional farming techniques.

(iii)The social-cultural function - a function that is related to the relations within the communities and the inter-communitarian ones in the rural area, having a social character. Due to the small size of localities, specific relations are established between its members, based on mutual knowledge or social hierarchy. It is noted that some traditions found in rural areas have disappeared as a result of "modernization", yet still a rich cultural heritage.

The European Charter provides for this, acting in the following directions:

- inventorying, capitalizing and promoting historical and cultural heritage;
- designing and developing traditions and forms of cultural expression;
- strengthening the regional cultural identity of rural populations;
- promoting of rural and local gastronomic heritage.

Due to the diversification of the economic structure, the villages became in time mixed type settlements, classified as:

Scattered (scattered) villages are the simplest, usually isolated settlements, where people have a perfect adaptation to the natural environment.

Households are dispersed on the slopes, and the connection between them is through paths and paths. Basic occupations include animal husbandry and extensive cultivation of alpine pastures and pastures [11] [17].

Spent villages are considered to be a type of transition from excessive scattering to the gathered one, and may have a linear (peculiar to peak), areolar (encountered in most areas of the country) or alveolar type.

Gathered villages represent a gathering of households, especially in the plain areas, characterized by areas with intensive agricultural economies and "born" either by the desire to save the agricultural space or by the popular actions of some regions.

The villages with the structure are distinguished in several subtitles, such as: compact, conglomerate or actual villages.

The Romanian rural settlements are very diverse, their typology being influenced in time by the existing historical conditions.

At European level rural regions are classified according to:[15]

(a)NUTS typology (Nomenclature of Territorial Units of Statistics)

The region term used at the level of the European Union is defined according to its administrative policy and administrative formalities, so in Germany or Austria these are called Länder, Autonomous Communities in Spain, Regions or Communities in Belgium, Regions and Departments in France, county councils in Sweden or the UK, Autonomous provinces in Italy or provinces in Belgium, Denmark Italy, the Netherlands.

NUTS collects information, being classified on 5 levels, from highest to lowest, and the differences between levels 1-3 are based on demographic thresholds: [15]

-NUTS level 0 defines the Member States of the European Union;

-NUTS level 1 comprises 77 regions such as regions in countries such as Belgium or Germany.

-NUTS level 2 covers regions such as provinces in Belgium, peripherals in Greece, Länder in Austria.

-NUTS level 3 comprises more than 100 classified regions, for example, as offices in Belgium.

-NUTS level 5 includes municipalities or communes.

Table 1. Demographic Thresholds for NUTS Establishment

Level	Minimum (persons)	Maximum (persons)
NUTS 1	3,000,000	7,000,000
NUTS 2	800,000	3,000,000
NUTS 3	150,000	800,000

Source: Regulation (EC) No 1059/2003 establishing a common classification of territorial units for statistics (NUTS)

(b)OECD typology

The OECD, known as the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development, has developed a defining rural area, following the conditions and trends in rural areas. Thus OECD defines rural areas in and communities with a population that has a density of less than 150 inhabitants/km². [15]

(c)Geographical classification [15]

Another typology of rural space is geographically geared and follows:

- Coastal areas and islands;
- Mountain areas;
- Periurban area;
- Low density area;
- The rest of rural areas.

We can observe that the first subheadings refer to geographic aspects, while the others refer to the content of these areas.

(d)Qualitative classification of rural space [15]

An important method of classifying rural areas, which according to the European Union admits 3 problematic standards:

- Areas that suffer from the pressures of modern life;
- Areas affected by rural decline;
- Very remote, low population areas.

Also, depending on their degree of integration into the national economy, rural areas can be classified as integrated, intermediate or remote areas.

At the level of the European Union, a series of priorities have been developed for the 2014-2020 programming period [15]:

- Priority 1 - Transfer of knowledge and innovation (agriculture, rural areas)
- Priority 2 - Farm viability and competitiveness promoting innovative and sustainable technologies
- Priority 3 - Organizing the food chain by promoting its organization, also targeting the processing and marketing of agricultural products.
- Priority 4 - Consolidating ecosystems by restoring, preserving ecosystems in the field of agriculture and forestry.
- Priority 5 - Efficiency of resources by promoting them in order to rely on a low-carbon economy.

-Priority 6 - Balanced territorial development through the promotion of social inclusion and the economic development of rural areas.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

In the present paper, a series of European books, European regulations and relevant works concerning the European and Romanian rural areas were analyzed and consulted, identifying the notions of rural space, rural development, specific features and structures of rural space, taking into account the functions of rural space.

At present, the indicators on the evolution of the rural population and especially the South-Muntenia region have been analyzed using the data retained on the website of the National Institute of Statistics.

In order to estimate the evolution of the population by 2047 (30 years), the vensim modelling program was used.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Rural space is a very complex concept, complexity that has generated a multitude of views on definition, scope and its components. After Dona I. "rural space can be defined according to the notions that characterize it, it encompassing everything that is not urban."

In the literature, there are many definitions and descriptions of rural space, however, in Council of Europe Recommendation No.1296/1996, as far as the European Charter is concerned, rural areas are defined as "the inner or coastal zone containing the villages and small towns, where most of the land is used for: [14]

- agriculture, forestry, aquaculture and fishing;
- the economic and cultural activities of the inhabitants of these areas (crafts, industry, services, etc);
- the arrangement of non-urban areas for leisure and recreation (or nature reserves);
- other uses (except residential). "

According to Bold *et al* (2003), the rural "comprises all activities that take place outside the urban area and comprises three essential components: administrative

communities made up of relatively few members and having mutual relations; the pronounced dispersal of population and collective services; the special economic role of agriculture and forestry"[3].

Of course, many definitions can be given and multiple descriptions of rural areas can be made. The notion of rural space has been extremely debated, each author having his own contribution. Perhaps the most simplified definition is where rural space is considered "all that is not urban", creating a confusion between the notion of rural and agricultural.

At the level of 2018, out of the total of 19.53 million inhabitants, representing the resident population of Romania, 10.50 million (53.8%) are found in the urban area, while just over 9 million inhabitants found in rural areas (46.2%). Noteworthy that the rural population registered a downward trend, so that if in 2012 they reached more than 9.24 million inhabitants, in 2018 this was 9.02 million inhabitants, so a decrease of about 2.3 %.

According to Bold *et al* (2003) [3], the specific characteristics of the rural area are:

- Agricultural activities account for the largest share of economic activity;
- Primary production sectors have the highest share in terms of occupational structure.
- The form of private property is the predominant;
- One of the main characteristics of rural areas is the low population density and the fact that the settlements are airy;
- The rural area is incomparably more beautiful due to the natural structure, determined by the flora and fauna found;
- Life in rural areas is determined by the experience of life, traditions and customs, but also by local culture;
- Non-agricultural activities usually complement agricultural activities.

Thus, it is appreciated that there can be no sign of equality between the rural and the

rustic, because also in the rural area the laws of the progress that impose an evolution in the life of the people from the rural space act.

Dona I. highlights another characteristic of rural space in that "the environment is much less polluted than in the urban environment" [6] [7].

Periurban rural area is defined as the area surrounding major cities and industrial centers. They usually have a major urban influence. These areas are diversified and heavily developed, involving a mixed activity (agricultural, industrial, rural tourism). With the advantage of outlets, agriculture has a vegetable, fruit, or animal breeding, and intensive farming is practiced.

Intermediate rural space is defined by Bold as "agricultural space or agrarian area of the rural area", here being the cereal, fodder areas, but also vineyards and fruit holdings [6] [7]. The peripheral rural area refers to the socially disadvantaged area of the agrarian and forestry system. Agricultural lands do not have the same natural and technological potential. They are also influenced by the distance or accessibility of agricultural land to supply centers.

After Bold *et al* (2003), "the structuring of rural space in periurban, intermediate and marginal is not strictly defined. Within each category of space, there are fewer or more extensive areas (islands) of the other categories. The delimitation between spaces is, as a rule, gradual, in the confluence areas, common elements are found" [3].

The evolution of the resident population in Romania registered a downward trend, so that if in 2012 it stood at 20.09 million inhabitants, in 2018 reached the threshold of 19.5 million inhabitants, down by 2.8% compared to the reference year 2.). It should be noted that in the year 2018 the share of the rural population in the total population was 46.2%, while the city owns no less than 53.8% (Table 2).

Table 2. Evolution of the population in Romania according to the residence environment in 2012-2018

Specification	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2018/2012	% from total 2018
	Thousands of people							%	
Total	20,096	20,020	19,953	19,876	19,761	19,644	19,531	-2.8	100.0
Urban	10,854	10,791	10,753	10,703	10,636	10,531	10,503	-3.2	53.8
Rural	9,242	9,230	9,200	9,172	9,124	9,113	9,027	-2.3	46.2

Source: processed INS data, Accessed 25.04.2019.

And in the case of the population found in the urban area, there is a descending trend, thus registering a decrease of 2.3% of the

population, with a population of 9.02 million (Table 2).

Table 3. Evolution of the rural population in the South-Muntenia region in 2012-2018

Specification	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2018/2012	% from total 2018
	Thousands of people							%	
The South Muntenia region	1,889	1,881	1,866	1,852	1,834	1,823	1,795	-5.0	100.0
Arges	330	328	327	325	322	320	317	-4.1	17.6
Calarasi	195	194	193	191	189	187	184	-5.7	10.2
Dambovita	368	367	366	364	362	360	356	-3.2	19.8
Giurgiu	199	201	197	196	195	196	191	-4.1	10.6
Ialomita	153	152	151	150	148	147	144	-6.0	8.0
Prahova	388	386	384	381	378	376	373	-3.9	20.8
Teleorman	256	253	249	245	240	237	231	-9.8	12.8

Source: processed INS data, Accessed 25.04.2019 [12].

Although at the level of the South-Muntenia region, the population in rural areas decreased by 5% in 2018 compared to 2012, among the

most important sectors are Teleorman (9.8%), Ialomita (6%) or Călărași (5.7%). (Table 3.).

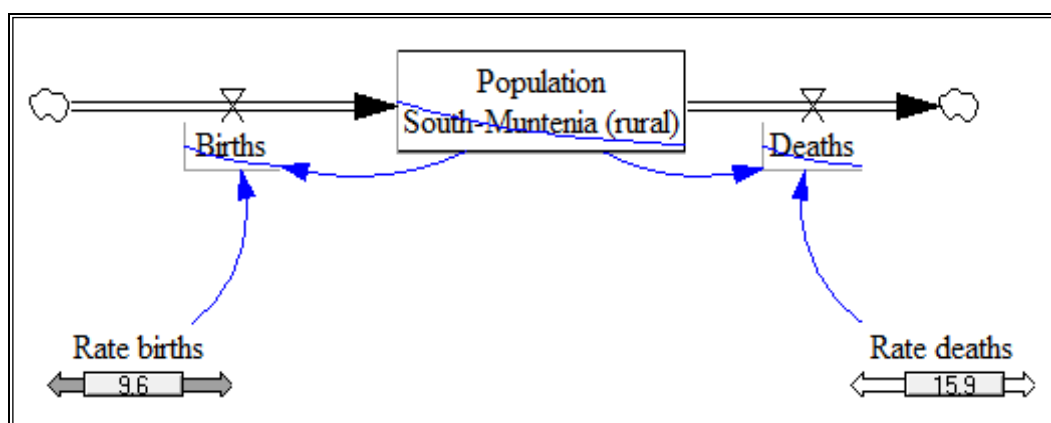


Fig.1. Scheme on factors influencing population development in the South-Muntenia region
 Source: processed data INS, accessed 25.05.2019.

The birth rate and mortality rates are factors influencing the evolution of the population, so that they could estimate the evolution of the

population in the South-Muntenia region. (Fig. 1.).

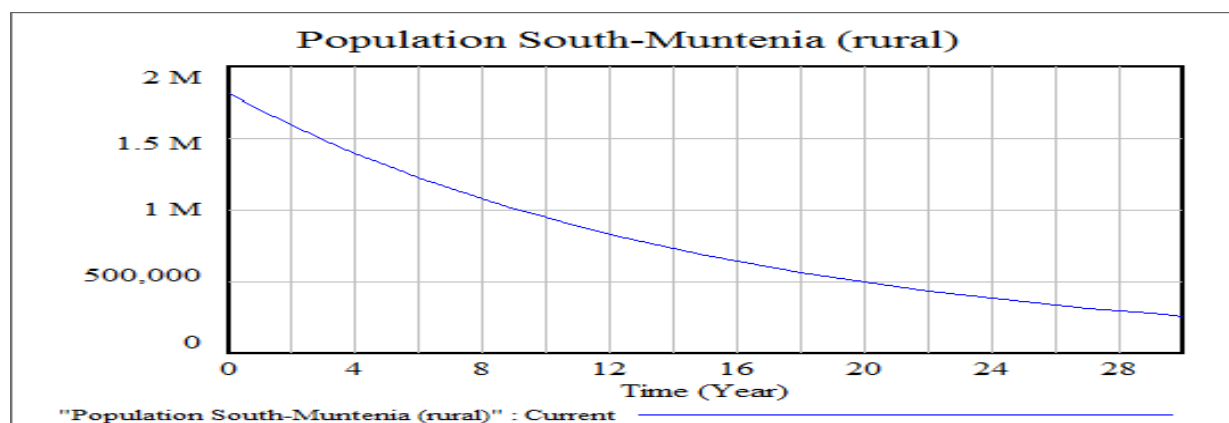


Fig. 2. Graphic representation of the population of the South-Muntenia region for a period of 30 years
 Source: processed data INS, accessed 25.05.2019.

Taking into account that the birth rate was 9.6 and the mortality rate was 15.9 in 2017, according to NIS data, it was possible to estimate an evolution of the rural population in the South Muntenia region on a period of 30 years, so that if in 2017 the number of inhabitants was 1.82 million inhabitants, while for the year 2047 a population of about 250 thousand inhabitants is predicted, if the factors that are influencing the population remain unchanged (Fig. 2.).

CONCLUSIONS

In all the analyzed papers, the great importance of the rural space for preserving the cultural heritage for future generations is presented. Also, the most complete definition is given by the European Charter, which specifies the scope of the rural area, but also the activities included in this region.

At present, the economic function plays perhaps the most important role in the survival of young people in rural areas. This is due to the lack of jobs, but also to non-agricultural activities meant to diversify the economic activity of the locality. Economic diversification has been encouraged through the sub-measures of the National Rural Development Program (6.2 Support for the establishment of non-agricultural activities in rural areas and 6.4 Investment in the creation and development of non-agricultural activities), which allowed the establishment of craft workshops, private (private) cabinets, veterinary practices, hairdressers, beauty salons, etc.

However, rural space has not benefited from sufficient development to maintain or attract young people in these regions, except for a few localities such as Semlac in Arad County. A negative example, like many other localities found in the plain area, is also the case of Grindu, where the population has declined and economic activities are insufficient to attract young people. Also, economic activity is concentrated around several agricultural holdings (associations) that work on leased land from the elderly or those who migrated to urban centers [8] [10].

The economic and social problems encountered in the localities such as Grindu in Ialomita County are extended to the plains, characterized by the villages that have been gathered, where agriculture is preponderant, but due to the technological evolution, the work of the earth can not be achieved without the specific machinery which only have high performance holdings.

Rural space is the legacy of the ancestors, but also the link between the younger generation and the elderly. The presence of all the elements that can convince young people to remain in rural areas also contributes to maintaining close relationships between the two generations, allowing their parents to stay with their children to help and advise them.

The preservation of traditions is closely linked to the existence of rural space. The modern man, trapped in the daily trap, tends to forget the traditions and customs of the place where he originates. The rural area has precisely this purpose, to remind you, at any point of your life that is coordinated with life, the principles of life as well as the traditions and customs that shape their life experience.

The inhabitants of the countryside best preserve the native intelligence of a nationality. Only in the rural area can you find the authenticity that brings you closer to the origins, so that you keep this link with what it was, but also to build the future on solid ground, keeping in direct contact with the inheritance offered by the rural space [16].

At the level of the European Union, rural space is the starting point when developing development strategies. Irrespective of nationality, the importance of rural space is highlighting and can provide not only a picture of what it was, the heritage left by ancestors, but it can also be the place where the young generation can thrive [18].

Population at the national and urban and rural levels has fallen sharply due to a number of factors such as migration (to other European Union countries looking for better living conditions) and the reduced birth rate relative to grade aging population.

The rural area of the South-Muntenia development area is characterized by a

predominantly agricultural activity, which is the main occupation of the people from the villages. Also, this extremely valuable agricultural area is exploited by the large farmers operating on the territory of Romania. Of all the counties that make up the South-Muntenia region, potential tourism is encountered at the level of Prahova and Argeş counties, where the rural population registered a decrease below the region's average. This is explained by the fact that in these counties people living in rural areas have a natural tourist potential that helps them to carry out other activities, which are not related to agriculture or related to this area, such as agro-touristic guesthouses.

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