

RURAL AREA AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT. DEFINITION AND FEATURES

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Abstract: Rural area is first and foremost the subject of many studies, and then the expression of man's long effort to bring to his service the physico-geographical components of the environment, of the nature. Studying and implicitly defining the countryside was done in stages and from different positions, all being subsumed with the effort of understanding a very complex reality. The success of the notions used is in their apparent clarity: the term "rural" is often understood to mean a physical, economic, social and cultural entity in the "counterpart" with the urban. For Romania, rural area, both in size and structure as well as functionality, is of particular importance. Firstly, the dimension of rural space represents an important factor of social stability.

Key words: rural area, definition, features

INTRODUCTION

Starting from the belief that the issue of rural development will be actual, for a long time and of great complexity, the countryside should be thought from the perspective of the future, not as a solution to the problems of the past: "the rural area should not be seen only as a problem, but also as an opportunity". [3,8,13]

In the EU's concerns, [2,7] rural development occupies a distinct place, extremely important, as an effect of awareness of the threat that threatens cultural identity, natural resources and the viability of rural area. We justify the present point starting from a famous statement that says that the rural must be thought from the beginning, not as a solution to the problems of the future, and that the rural area should not be regarded only as a problem, but as a possibility. Over time, rural development has evolved, with a multitude of forms and concepts now being found. The future of rural regions depends essentially on three factors: [13,14,15]

1. the possibilities of preserving and increasing the number of jobs;
2. the future direction and scale of population migration (young, retired, tourists) between the village and the city;
3. the nature of local, regional and national regulations.

In Europe, the expression "local development" is the most common one, and the emphasis placed on those actors who can contribute to supporting rural development is a special one, the reasons being that:

- gather and combines available human and financial resources;
- associates actors around collective projects to achieve improved economic competitiveness of the rural area;
- strengthen the dialogue and cooperation between different rural actors;
- facilitates, through the interaction of different partners, the process of adaptation and change from the agricultural sector (for example quality products, food chains), integration of environmental concerns, diversification of the rural economy and quality of life.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The authors of the paper were used as methods of work: data collection, processing, analysis, observation and their interpretation.

RESEARCH RESULTS

The clear definition of rural area is a difficult task to achieve, being a generic term covering very different realities. Studying and implicitly defining the countryside has been achieved in stages and from different positions, all being part of the effort to understand a particular reality of complexity. The success of the notions used is in their apparent clarity: the term "rural" is often understood to mean a physical, economic, social and cultural entity in the "counterpart" with the urban area. Of course the criteria for defining the urban or rural character of a community or space reveal different conceptions adopted, which, synthetically, can be summed up to three: economic, sociological and geographic.[4,9]

- Economically, the rural environment is characterized by the predominance of agricultural activities and the processing industry, the rural area having as its essential function agricultural production.

- Sociologically, rural society is characterized by a specific way of life, behavior [11] and a system of values distinct from the urban one.

- Geographically, rural area differ in how they occupy space, how they inhabit, grouped or dispersed.

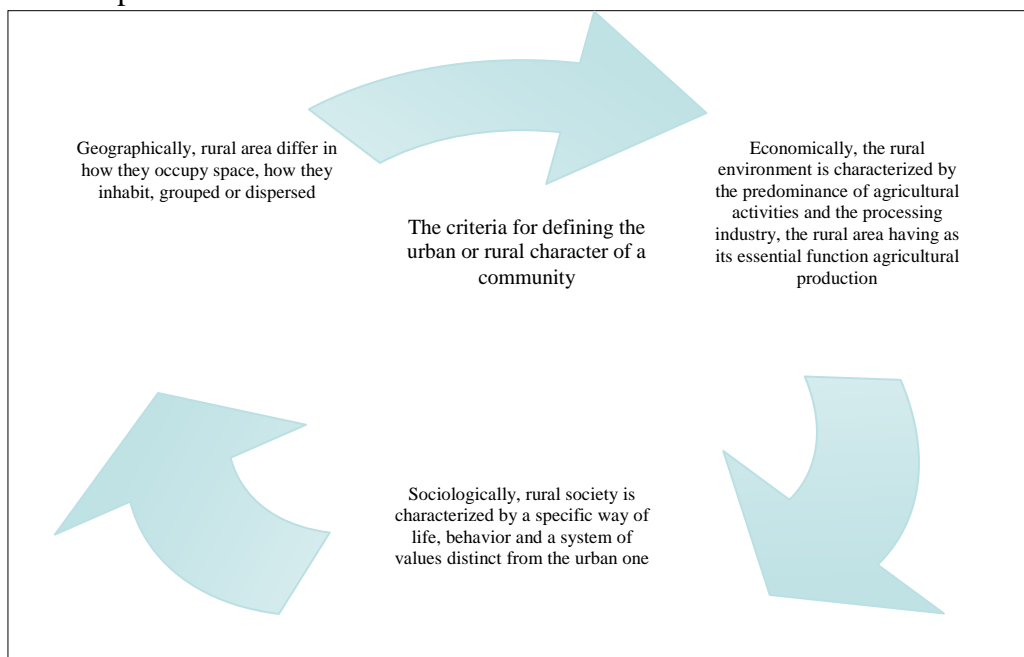


Figure 1. Definition criteria's for rural character of a collectivity

The main features of the European rural area captured by the specialists refer to the defining aspects on multiple levels:

- In terms of *economic structure*, in rural area agricultural activities occupies, usually, the largest areas, agriculture being the "backbone of the rural". Agriculture occupies usually the largest rural territory, because in some areas (mountain, piedmont) forestry together with related forestry activities (forest holdings, woodworking, crafts, forest resource processing industries, etc..) is predominant both territorial and occupational. Also, in mountainous, coastal and delta areas prevailing are agrotourist, recreational fishing and hunting activities. [1]

- The countryside is, *in terms of employment*, especially a manufacturing space in witch primary sector activities have a relatively high proportion of economically point of view. Most part of the professions practiced in rural areas are practical professions, manual, some requiring multi-qualification training. Employment in services, administrative activities, social, etc.. is reduced as proportion. A large part of the

population which work entirely in unproductive sector has also a productive activity, generally in agriculture. It is an important feature of the rural population to work together in the agricultural and non-agricultural sectors.

- In rural area is predominantly private, family, *property*, compared with urban-industrial areas, and public and private property of the state is limited. Division of private property in rural areas, developing a sense of ownership had a number of positive impacts on rural residents' entrepreneurship.

- Rural area in terms of *population density* and *size of human settlements* is more airy, more humanized. Rural area has a social life more closely, citizen participation in community affairs is more pronounced.

- In terms of *landscape*, the rural area, through his natural structure, ventilated scenery, flora and fauna is far more beautiful and healthier for people. Tranquility, peace, climate, fresh air, soothing landscape of social calm cannot be quantified to measure rural habitat. The natural landscape of rural area constitutes an invaluable heritage of humanity.

- Life in the countryside, more than in any other social medium, is placed on a set of rules emanating from centuries-old life, traditions, customs and culture. Rural way of life, traditions and customs, together form local or regional popular culture. Social and cultural life, rural characteristics, is unmatched heritage of humanity, element, along with the economy and ecology, gives the true size and value to rural area.

According to the OECD definition, currently, about one fifth of the EU population lives in rural areas that account for almost half of EU-28 territory. According to the most recent Community statistics, there are currently 12 million farmers in the EU, and agriculture and the agro-food industry - which is very dependent on the agricultural supply sector - account for 6% from the Community's GDP, at the same time generating 46 million jobs. The villages from the European Union are also disadvantaged from the income point of view, comparable to the urban centers.[6] So, according to reports from several European institutions, the incomes of the inhabitants from villages are lower by one third than the townspeople, the services are less developed, and the Internet access is more restricted. Trends that mark rural areas will determine a drastic decrease in both the number of people employed in agriculture and holdings. In terms of income and regional employment, agriculture (and forestry) will no longer form the basis of the rural economy of the United States. [5,12] In average, 5.5% from the employed population will be employed in this sector, and the figure will be more than 20% in very few regions. The long-term trend will be marked by a further decline in the number of farmers at a rate of 2-3% per year. The new activities and sources of income will be realized in and out of holdings. Among other things, the production of renewable raw materials for non-food uses in certain sectors of the market or in the energy sector may represent a new chance for agriculture and forestry and contribute to job creation in rural area. In the coming years, an increasing importance will be given to achieving sustainable rural development, thus meeting the requirements of ecological services. [10]

Modern rural is the result of a complex process with continuity and discontinuity, which began with many decades ago and continues even today. New life patterns take the place of traditional ones and the modernization of villages and rural societies means transforming all the components of this social space. It is a process that takes place in the context of a modernized "rural", found under the influence of "urbanization" and industrial civilization.

By maintaining the modernization process by its features, it has a number of positive implications:Figure 2

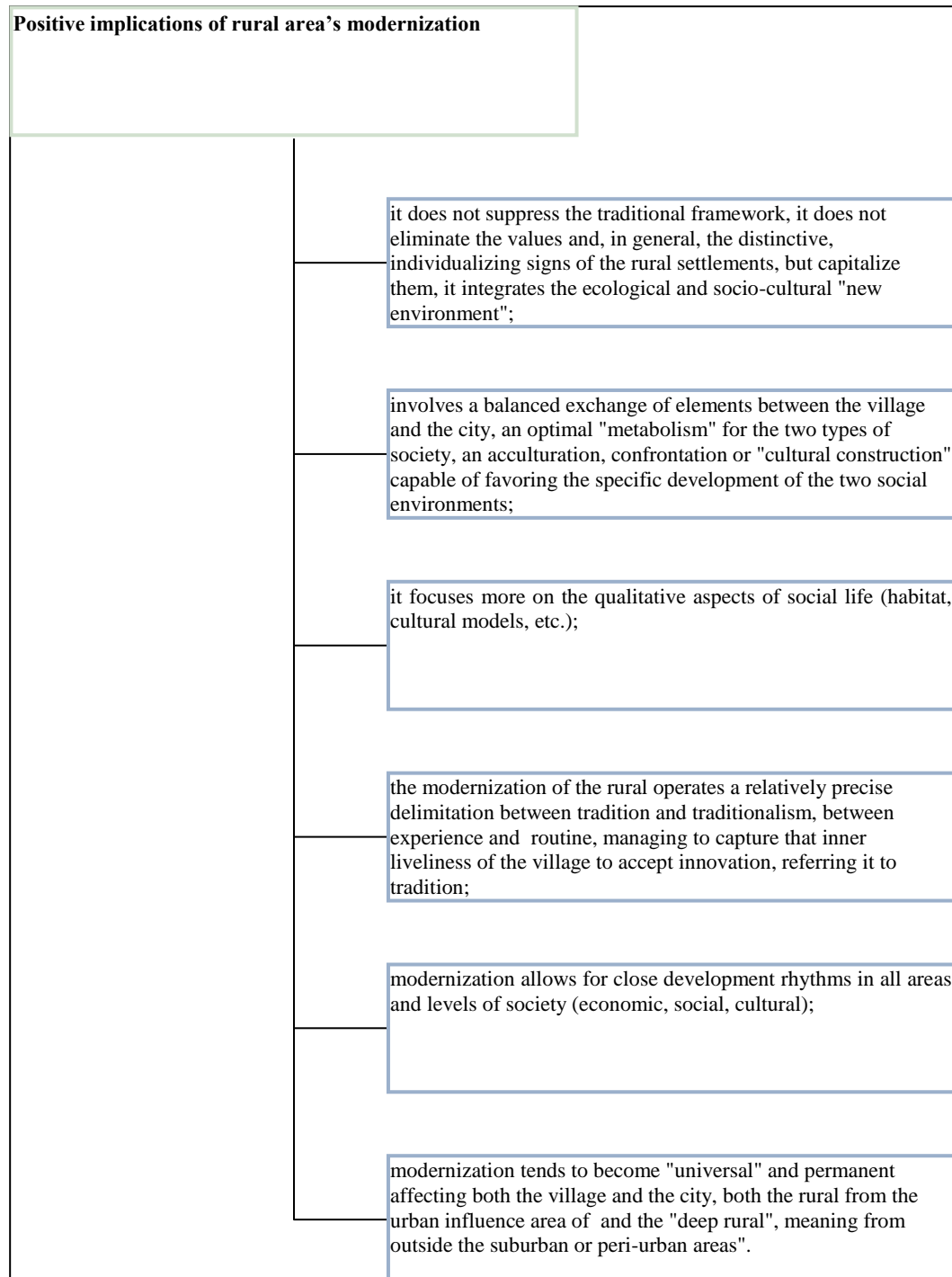


Figure 2. Positive implications of rural area's modernization

Among the specific features of rural development we can mention the following:

- Anthropocentrism. At the heart of rural development is the man, the community of people who live in the country.
- Complexity. Specific development directions: development of agriculture, local infrastructure development, enterprise development, community development, human resource development, environmental protection, cultural traditions, social programs etc.
- The character of micro-region. The set territorial framework offers transparency to rural development programs. The priorities and development strategies are determined by the situation of the given micro-region, by its ecological, economic, human, cultural, etc. sources.

- Activity with multiple participants. The major active participants in micro-region development programs are local governments, civic organizations, businesses and specialists.

- Based on principles. Regional development in the EU is based on the principles set out in the Cork Declaration.

CONCLUSIONS

According to the latest communitarian statistics, currently, in EU there are 12 million farmers, and agriculture and agro-food industry - which is highly dependent by the agricultural sector for supplying – represents 6% from communitarian GDP generating, 46 million jobs. Agriculture and forestry represent 77% from land use in European Union. The environmental performances of agriculture for the preservation and enhancement of natural resources in last years are different. The 12 new Member States add about 55 million hectares of agricultural land to the 130 million hectares from the old 15 EU, an increase with 40%, although the production in Europe of those 27 states will increase only with 10-20% for most products. This data's confirms that the large agricultural production potential of the new Member States is still far from being fully utilized. The trends that mark the rural areas will cause a sharp decrease both of the number of peoples employed in agriculture, but also of the agricultural holdings. In terms of income and regional employment, agriculture (and forestry) will no longer represent the basis of the UE'S rural economy. In average, 5.5% from the employed population will be engaged in this sector, and the figure will be more than 20% in very few regions. The long-term trend will be marked by a further decrease of the number of agricultures, with a rate of 2-3% per year.

For the 2014-2020 period, three main objectives of rural development of rural area have been established at European level:

- Sustainable food production: contribute to food security by increasing the competitiveness of EU agriculture, while providing the means to address the challenges with which are face the sector in terms of market disturbances and functioning of the food chain;

- Sustainable management of natural resources and climate policies: to ensure long-term viability and the potential of EU agriculture by protecting the natural resources on which depend the agricultural production;

- Balanced territorial development: to contribute to the socio-economic development of rural areas while promoting the appropriate conditions for the protection of structural diversity across the EU territory.

In Romania, the objectives of sustainable rural development, comparable to those promoted by the European Union, refer to the following:

- a better management of natural resources and landscape conservation;
- emphasizing environmental protection measures, through the aid granted to less-favored areas and a more coherent rural policy;
- diversification of crops in order to ensure agricultural holdings economic and ecological stability;
- use of cropping systems and natural fertilizers in combination with chemical fertilizers;
- limited development of industrial animal husbandry;
- diversifying sources of income and creating new jobs for farmers and their families, in rural areas;
- implementation of programs to encourage the stabilization of young people in rural areas;
- application of afforestation programs on land unfit for agricultural production, etc.

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