

SUSTAINABLE RURAL DEVELOPMENT IN THE CURRENT CONTEXT

CAIUS LĂZĂRESCU¹, MARIUS BOIȚĂ¹, GHEORGHE PRIBEANU²

¹*"Vasile Goldiș" Western University of Arad, Romania, e-mail: caius.lazarescu@yahoo.com*

²*Banat's University of Agricultural Sciences and Veterinary Medicine
"King Michael I of Romania" from Timisoara, Faculty of Agricultural Management,
Timisoara, Romania*

Abstract: Sustainable development of the rural area is a key issue for management and administration of rural areas. This problem must include a space-time strategy with a concomitant evolution and to be as a system composed of interconnected subsystems. The rural subsystems that are to be interconnected are: the economic, technological, ecological and socio-cultural subsystem. The increase of competition in agriculture, forestry and food sector is crucial for straightening the results and revival of the rural area. Sustainable rural development can only be achieved in development programs and of landscaping of the territory of the rural areas.

Key words: rural area, sustainable development, landscaping, management, territory

INTRODUCTION

The rural area has officially been defined by the recommendation no. 1296/1996 of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe in the following form: "the rural area covers an inland or coastal area that comprises the villages and small towns in which the most part of the land is used for" [1]:

- a) agriculture, forestry, aquaculture and fishing;
- b) economic and cultural activities of the inhabitants of these areas (crafts, industry, services);
- c) arrangements for non-urban areas for leisure and entertainment (or natural reservations);
- d) other uses except residential " [2].

The rural development in a country is very complex actions that must take into account both its size, respectively its surface and the weight of the effective population and particularly the population employed in the production of services, tourism and social-cultural activities. The Agricultural and Rural Development Commission of the Council of Europe found that rural area occupies 85% of the total area and directly or indirectly affects more than half of the European population. This gives great importance to the problems of rural development and landscaping, both nationally and internationally. The problem of rural development and landscaping now shows a high degree of complexity in that it must take into account and balances the requirement of preserving the economic, ecological, social and cultural space and the modernization of rural life. Another point that must be taken into account in the development and landscaping of the rural area consists of the strategy to keep as much as possible the size of rural areas that contravenes the urban expansion strategy through aggressive development of the industry in this area. The EU's policy of modernization and Europeanization in the process of rural development and landscaping is mainly aimed at maintaining and preserving the national character of the space and rural culture.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Development of national economy by developing the service sector offers new opportunities for the development of rural areas. On the other hand, specialized labor resulting from layoffs in agriculture as a consequence of its mechanization and layoffs

from urban industry offers great opportunities for the development of rural economy. The rural area provides better conditions also for the legally inactive population (pensioners), the possibility for carrying out hobby activities such as growing exotic animals or livestock, cultivation of vegetables, flowers etc.

RESEARCH RESULTS

1. The structure of the rural area

"The rural area is not a concrete and heterogeneous space. Heterogeneity can be viewed from two aspects: the first concerns the land - surveying, subsoil, soil and microclimate; and the second aspect relates to demographics - density, polarization from small settlements to major urban areas." [8]

Structural and as defined the rural area can be addressed economic and geographic:

- in terms of economic and economic opportunities, rural area can offer a variety of economic activities from simple to complex with a significant contribution to GDP, the main activities offered by rural areas are [7]:

- agricultural activities: in our country most of the surface is arable;
- forestry activities and their related activities such as logging and wood processing, crafting and processing industries of forest resources in mountain and piedmont areas;
- agro-tourism activities, recreational, hunting and fishing activities in the mountain, coastal and delta area.

Starting from the premise that in rural areas predominate private property where prevail private initiative and from the support of regional policies offered by the state; in rural areas can be developed upstream and downstream agricultural activities, activities of processing local raw materials, service and post-service activities. Development of non-agricultural activities, for part of the rural population, gives it the opportunity to work full-time in these subunits and part-time in agriculture (part-time).

„The infrastructure for the transportation services, telecommunication, electricity, water, gas and waste management are very important for the initiation and development of businesses”[4].

The component surfaces of the land fund have had changes of plus and minus 0.5% as follows: agricultural land decreased by 0.4% and those with waters and ponds decreased by 0.1% and the construction land increases with 0.3% and the other area category recorded increases ranging from 0.2% (table 1, figure 1).

Table 1

With the changes of surfaces the in the land fund

	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
The total area of the land fund	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Agricultural surface	61.7	61.7	61.6	61.4	61.3	61.3
Forests and other forest lands	28.3	28.2	28.3	28.3	28.4	28.3
Constructions	2.9	2.9	3.0	3.1	3.1	3.2
Roads and railways	1.6	1.6	1.6	1.6	1.6	1.6
Waters and ponds	3.6	3.6	3.5	3.5	3.4	3.5
Other areas 2)	1.9	2.0	2.0	2.1	2.1	2.1

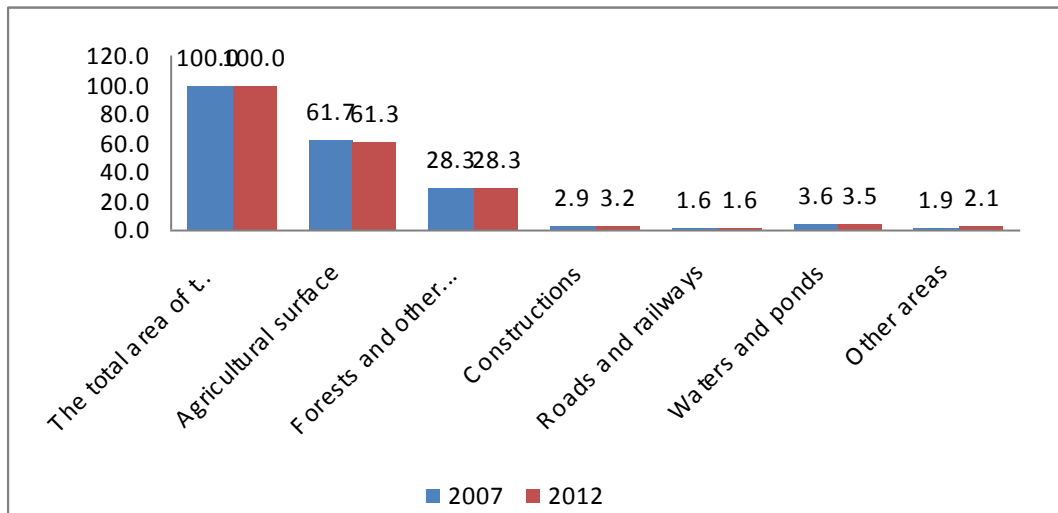


Figure 1 Evolution of the Land Fund in 2007-2012 period

a) In terms of population density and habitat;

- in the rural areas the population density is lower depending on the rural settlements, and the human relations are very good. People know each other, they have permanent relations, and the rural habitat is more humanized. The natural landscape, the tranquility, the clean air positively affects the rural habitat so that urban residents and especially the active population that is tired and stressed out prefer to spend the weekend in the countryside.

In rural areas legally inactive population (pensioners) may carry out useful and pleasant economic or craft activities. The rural area is a great economic potential with the biggest and most diversified surface and almost half of the population. It also offers many possibilities for people to carry personal economic activities or organized into small SME's. In a comparative study of employed population from urban and rural backgrounds, based on the statistical data it shows that the employment rate is higher in rural areas because the rural areas offer more opportunities (table 2, figure 2).

In 2011 the employment rate in Romania on the main activities of the national economy in relation to other states [5] was of 28.6% in agriculture, forestry and fishing, recording the highest occupancy rate, followed by Turkey with 24.2% and Greece with 12.4%; in the rest of the countries the employment rate in this sector being low.

Table 2

The employment rate of the active population on social backgrounds in Romania

	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
Employed population in rural areas	4500	4473	4449	4427	4305	4411
Of which employed in rural areas	4281	4268	4211	4208	4066	4185
The employment rate of rural%	95.1	95.4	94.7	95.1	94.4	94.9
Employed population in urban areas	5494	5471	5475	5538	5563	5553
Of which employed in urban areas	5072	5101	5032	5032	5072	5078
The employment rate of urban%	92.3	93.2	91.9	90.9	91.2	91.4

b) In terms of employment:

- the rural area is known as a predominantly producing space in which dominate the activities of primary sectors, namely: agro-food sectors - agricultural crops, farming, viticulture, fruit-growing, livestock and grasslands, followed by forestry, logging, agriculture related industries, woodworking and home industry.

c) In terms of landscape:

- the rural areas through the natural structure, flora and fauna is greatly appreciated by people both in rural areas and urban ones. Urban residents seek opportunities to have a holiday home or for the free time in the countryside. If they do not have these opportunities, they spend all their holidays in this environment for the peace given by the natural landscape.

d) In terms of physical-geographical space: "The structure of the rural space, seen through the economic and social perspective, is differentiated by B. Kayser in suburban rural space, intermediate and marginal or peripheral" [6]:

1) *suburban rural areas*- is at the limit of urban areas and it covers an area of 10 to 15 Km; in this space "mix" the rural and urban and can be observed both urban and rural phenomena. In these rural areas the authentic rural is "anemic" prevailing the urban. The population in the suburban rural area is heterogeneous and works in urban areas, this area is modernized, has communication routes (roads, highways, tramways and railways) and the countryside is only for residence. The population density is higher and rural households in this area are "hobby-farms", in which the commuter population works part - time.

2) *intermediate rural area* - known as the agrarian space as well because here prevails the agricultural spaces that include grain, forage and livestock, fruit and vine area. In this space are organized large private farms or associations that represent the country's agricultural base. In this space were organized in socialist economies the big farms of the Agricultural Production Cooperatives (CAP) or the State Agricultural Companies (IAS), many were specialized in grain production, vineyards or fruit breeding. In these countries after the fall of the communism the rural organization took the opposite side by breaking into pieces the large surfaces as a consequence of the abolition of the former socialist organizations and land restitution.

In capitalist countries with tradition these spaces were organized, especially after 1960, in specialized farms; for example in America was known the "Corn Belt" in Ohio, Iowa and Minnesota; in France were known the potato, sugar beet and cereals vegetable farms from the Parisian area.

The agricultural space from the intermediate rural area can be capitalized only if it is organized in large farms because only these allow agricultural industrialization and modernization activities.

3) *peripheral rural areas* - this approach should be seen primarily from an economic and social perspective, also been known as the disadvantaged zone.

"In agriculture more than in other economic sectors, the law of disproportionate yields has a concrete action as the effect of a law (natural): the decreasing soil fertility law"[3].

Not all agricultural lands have the same potential; the ones with weak economic potential are located in peripheral areas. The periphery space has some specific features which distinguishes it from the rest: the population density is low, soils have low fertility, are at large or very large distances from urban centers, the landscaping of this space is expensive and unprofitable. Areas where agricultural lands are not attractive to farmers or rural population become peripheral rural areas. These suburban, intermediate and peripherals rural areas don't have a strict delimitation; in their perimeter good agricultural areas may exist.

2. Functions of the rural area

"The many economic, social and cultural activities taking place in rural areas can be summarized into three main functions: economic, ecological and socio-cultural"[9].

For a correct approach of rural development we must start from the rural area functions defined by the European Charter.

The first draft of the European Charter provided three functions of rural areas: *economic function, ecological function and social function*. The definition of these functions was done by the experts of Agriculture and Rural Development Commission of the Council of Europe and submitted to the Parliamentary Assembly in January 1995. The draft charter with these definitions was distributed to the member countries for knowledge and acceptance or amendment. The project was discussed in March 1995 in the III Forum for Agriculture in Verona -Italy. The talks have brought an amendment with another function, namely the *cultural function* which would become the fourth function; the arguments for this function were convincing and the amendment was accepted:

a) The economic function - is the basic function of rural areas whose main support is the agriculture. The European Charter provides for the economic function in addition to agricultural activities and other activities such as the production of recyclable raw materials for the industry and energy production; to ensure the needs of small and medium enterprises, of agricultural, craft, trade and services industry; to provide a basis of recreation and tourism; energy conservation as the basis of agriculture and biotechnology. It comprises several activities, which leads to abandoning the old approach of rural space as "eminently" agricultural, becoming a genuine economic space.

b) The ecological function seeks to preserve biodiversity and rebalance polluted areas. As a result of excessive industrialization, industrialization of animal husbandry, excessive crop chemisation, uncontrolled expansion of tourism and excessive extraction in mining areas.

c) The social- cultural function- the social space in which the community members live differs from the urban space. A first difference is that people in rural areas know each other and relations between them, the "man - identity" as they were referred to by specialists, are special compared to the relations between people in urban areas, "called the man - anonymous", where people don't know each other. The urbanization of the countryside by taking over habits from urban slum led to the degradation of the authenticity of popular culture. Traditional culture specific to each area should be a heritage that is treasured.

CONCLUSIONS

The rural area was and remains the foundation of the national economy by its two components: agriculture and natural resources, which supported industrialization during major economic objectives in urban areas. The object of the process of de-urbanization is not the deindustrialization of the economy but transferring it to rural areas. Rural industrialization should consider how to exploit resources and the reduction to elimination of pollution as a result of their processing. The development of industrial facilities in rural areas must be carried out within the limits of sustainable rural development programs.

Repopulation of rural areas by restoring local population from urban or the urban population coming to and residing in rural areas must respect traditional norms of social cohabitation specific for the area. Both the reorganization of the rural area through economic objectives and its repopulation must keep the structure and functions of the countryside.

The evolution of the national economy by developing the service sector offers new opportunities for development of rural areas. The agricultural space from the intermediate zone can be capitalized only if it is organized in large farms because only these allow agricultural industrialization and modernization activities.

In rural areas legally inactive population (pensioners) may carry out useful and pleasant economic activities in a hobby household or craft activities. The countryside is a great economic potential, having the biggest and diversified surface and almost half of the population.

Starting from the premise that in rural areas predominate private property where prevail private initiative and from the support of regional policies offered by the state, in rural areas can be developed upstream and downstream agriculture activities, of processing local raw materials, service and post-service activities.

REFERENCES

1. **BUCIUMAN, E.**, 1999, Rural Economy, ProTransilvania Printing;
2. **OTIMAN, PĂUN, I.**, 2000, Rural Economy II Edition, Agroprint Printing, Timisoara, p.554;
3. **MADGEARU, V.N.**, 1996, Agrarianism, Capitalism, Imperialism - Contributions to the study of Romanian social evolution, Economistul Printing, Bucharest 1996 / -After Otiman Păun Ioan in Rural Economy II Edition, Agroprint Printing, Timisoara 2000;
4. **MILIN IOANA ANDA, MERCE IULIANA, PET ELENA**, (2009). *The Development and Modernization of the Infrastructure in the Rural Space of the Region V, the Condition of the Durable Development*, Bulletin UASVM Horticulture, 66 (2), page 310;
5. ***-ASR 2011 - cap.23.8;
6. ***-ASR 2013;
7. ***-<http://www.scrigroup.com/geografie/demografie/Structura-spatiului-rural33498.php> [accessed March 28, 2016];
8. ***-<http://documents.tips/documents/spatiul-rural-functiile-spatiului-rural.html> [accessed 29/03/2016];
9. ***- <http://www.scriub.com/geografie/turism/Spatiul-rural-si-dezvoltarea-r921613228.php> [accesat la 28.03.2016].