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Problems in Regional Development in Bulgarian Part of Dobrudja

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ABSTRACT

This paper analyses the contemporary problems of demographic and socio-economic development of the Dobrudja. In the Bulgarian part there are clearly distinguished differences in the development of urban and rural areas on the one hand, and coastal and inland part on the other. This report analyzes the borders of the region. Thus there are characterized the most important demographic patterns such as: age, unemployment, employment and others, influencing the regional development. Attention is paid to borders with Romania and the possibilities for alternative economic development. Based on the reviewed literature, an overview about the scope of the southern boundary of the Dobrudja has been made. It tends to be a territory, which is very similar to and overlaps with the geographical concept of Ludogorie. The main scientific contribution of this material is the territorial differentiation of the Bulgarian part of Dobrudja, which is made in connection with its different social, economic and demographical development. It indicates the crucial role of the town as an agglomeration centre, as well as the sharp fall in the development of the rural territories. In some of the territories bordered with Romania, the processes of the depopulation are some of the fastest in the country and as a result the demographic situation is highly aggravated. An essential disproportion is also found in the coastal-area development of the region of Dobrudja. Theoretically, this part is recognized as a main power source of the economy of the country and the regions. An essential deviation is found in the municipality of Shabla, which is a serious disadvantage of this region. The research shows a considerable polarization, when it is based on the model of “Centre-periphery”. The report only marks the problems in the regional development of this part. The substantial area examinations and analysis are going to be made.

1. INTRODUCTION

The Bulgarian part of Dobrudja has always been taken as territory in context of the biggest granary in Europe. Very often it is mentioned about its nature, its climate and its fertile soil. The characteristics of society – the people with their problems, the lifestyle and history are still aside of it. But this is the element that “gives” vitality to Dobrudja territory. This report has no purpose to discuss about the southern and western borders of Dobrudja in the Bulgarian territory. It is contestable and its definition has to be the object of another research. The northern and the eastern boundaries are clarified. These are the territories of Coastal Dobrudja - Balchik, Kavarna and Shabla

municipalities as the territories bordering with Romania (land and river borders). This research is concentrated on this territory. It has become tradition in our country in the last years to make light of the periphery territories. Very often these are border zones which used to be “divided stripes“ during the Cold War. There have been no demographic policies regarding the living, education and prosperity of the population. That is why nowadays these periphery zones (incl. Dobrudja) have very severe problems from the social and demographic perspectives. The imperative statement for Dobrudja as the Bulgarian granary, ideologically turns it into agricultural territory with corresponding specialization. From the historical perspective this leads young people who carry the progress and new

technologies to look for another prospect out of these territories. As there it has sea access and as border land with Romania we consider that the different regional problems shall direct the development of the towns and villages in different ways. That is the reason that the main objects of this article are the territory of Coastal Dobrudja and the border land with Romania.

An analysis should reveal the actual regional problems in this part of Bulgaria.

2. PRELIMINARY ANALYSIS

The pointed out territories were object of field researches in 2010 and 2011. According to these, many

villages were visited, mayors, public community figures, local people were met, etc. The analysis of a bigger part of the gathered information is forthcoming.

In this report we included only part of this one. The preliminary analysis includes gathering and analyzing of the main demographic situation in the towns and villages that were decided for visiting. There were used data from National Statistics Institute (NSI) and from Civil Register and Administrative Services (CRAS). This range covered Kavarna and Shabla municipalities. The southern villages from Kavarna were excluded because of the duration of the expedition. Shabla town was not included because the stress was on rural territories.

Table 1. Number of the population in chosen settlements in Coastal Dobrudja.

Towns and villages	2001	to 15.08.2011	Change %
Kamen briag	78	48	-38.5
Tiulenovo	67	37	-44.8
Gorichane	136	78	-42.6
Gorun	122	76	-37.7
Poruchik Chunchevo	43	32	-25.6
Hadji Dimitar	116	71	-38.8
Rakovski	268	249	-7.1
Bulgarevo	1448	1251	-13.6
Shabla	3847	3303	-14.1
Krapetc	280	228	-18.
Tvarditza	10	7	-30.0
Neikovo	94	70	-25.3
Septemvriici	467	512	+9.6
Belgun	400	337	-15.8
Vaklino	194	145	-25.3
Chernomorci	90	63	-30.0
Durankulak	477	350	-26.6
Staeveci	4	1	-75.0
Zahary Stoyanovo	123	78	-36.6
Granichar	173	111	-35.8

Source: CRAS

In Table 1 the initial analysis sharply shows the decreasing of population in all towns and villages which are objects of the field research. Only in Septemvriici village a growth of 10% was registered. Most of the villages recorded decreases from 25 % to 45 % which is significantly problematic. Very interesting is the situation in Staeveci village with only one inhabitant registered and Tvarditza village with seven inhabitants. Some villages have lost a smaller part of their population – in average 15 %. Detailed researches have tried to explain this fact. The ethnic diversity in the researched territory is represented by the compact living population of gagauz in Bulgarevo village (Kavarna municipality). From different sources (Karahasan – Chanar, 2010) we know different versions about the origin of the gagauz. The most distinctive

feature of this community is the combination of their Bulgarian self-awareness, Turkic language and the Orthodox religion. It is very interesting the question – what ethnographic uniqueness they give to Dobrudja nowadays?

In the border land with Romania there has been done a preliminary analysis of the population in the villages of Spasovo, Rogozina, Rositza and Kranovo (table 2).

In most of the geographic maps from the beginning of 20th century we can notice that the west border of Bulgaria was drawn near Kranovo village.

From Table 2 we can see that these border territories are not spare from the processes of depopulation as the entire region. The similarities with Coastal Dobrudja are obvious. Only Rogozina village

registered an increase of population. In case of all the others different rates of depopulation were observed, from more than 40% in case of Iovkovo village to 7% in case of Spasovo village.

Since Iovkovo village has a checkpoint, this process seems very strange. The comparative analysis with Durankulak (with a checkpoint, as well) shows that this is a trend.

Table 2. Number of the population chosen villages along land border between Romania and Bulgaria.

Villages	2001	to 15.09.2011	Change %
Spasovo	1058	984	-7.0
Rogozina	151	165	9.3
Iovkovo	552	319	-42.2
Krasen	385	284	-26.2
Rositza	581	402	-30.8
Kranovo	143	117	-18.2

Source: CRAS

3. FIELD RESEARCHES

In the preliminary grouping of the villages and towns for visiting there was observed a geographic principle. One group of villages with access to the Black Sea was separately visited from the other group of villages inland in the researched territory. On one side the western villages from Krapetz (Tvarditza, Septemvriici, Neikovo, Belgun) and on the other side the villages located parallel to a scenic road (Poruchik Chunchevo, Gorun, Hadji Dimitar, Rakovski villages).

The villages in border territories were visited in 2010 and the main principle was – to be located on the road-bed Durankulak – Spasovo – Iovkovo – Krasen – Rositza - Kranovo.

In the range of Coastal Dobrudga we found villages with an exceptional small number of population. Staevei and Tvarditza villages have one inhabitant and seven inhabitants each. That's why in the description we emphasize directly on them. We state additional facts from observation diaries.

We consider this is significant illustration for the processes of depopulation that reveals the future of the rural territories in Dobrudja.

STAEVEI

The sign board of the village is shown on the main road to Spasovo village and to the other villages on the land border with Romania. The village is situated far from asphalt roads and you can get there only on an earth road. Houses are scattered in different quarters. There are preserved and renovated houses as well as desolated and derelicted ones. We could not see anybody. After 300 meters walking on the earth road we saw a man. He told us he comes from Sofia and would spend his summer vacation in the village. He showed us the way to the church. It was renovated. Behind it we saw a house that was in a good condition – with stone foundation, a huge yard and barn with stone

walls. Later in our conversation with the owner we found out it was built 1901 and only the roof has been repaired. Grandfather Nikolay is 82 years old and together with his wife manages their individual farm. He bears his age well. He told us in the village they have no shop, and they have to go shopping in Durankulak, The distance to there is 3-4 km. He explained us that the inhabitants are two families and one woman living alone. He drives an old car to go shopping. According to his own words he had finished the renovation of the church and now he is called the “live history” of the village. A teacher from Durankulak (who was born in Staevei village) gave us additional information about the history of the village. He told us that there was a school and public community. We found the old school's building. We saw the renovated street lighting system – despite the absence of inhabitants and roads. Staevei village shows the real future for all villages in Bulgaria – depopulated, without infrastructure and with desolated houses.

TVARDITZA VILLAGE

The village belongs to the category of being absent on the map. On the main road from Shabla-Durankulak at the deviation to Krapetz village there is a road to Spasovo village. At 5 kilometers from this deviation we saw the sign board of Tvarditza village. At first sight we couldn't see anything, not even a house or people. The village is situated to the left from the main road and to get there we need to drive on an earth road. We saw 2-3 inhabitable houses. On the front door of a house we saw an obituary – the former inhabitant was deceased. We had the sense that the nature had taken over the village. In the thick bushes we could see one house but there wasn't any path to it. We could count 4-5 houses and after walking on an earth road we reached one desolated, high building – the mill. We thought we are somewhere in the future – when the human race would not inhabit this land.

From the description we can see that these are villages with moribund functions. There are no infrastructures in them, any social centers, public community centers, health centers, stores, schools, etc.

The population usually increases in summer when the people who bought houses there spend their time for 2 or 3 months.

Our surveys show that in Staevci village live 5 or 6 inhabitants and the difference from Table 1 is because of their address registration.

The local teacher Stefan Yanchev from Shabla town gave us the village history – written by him in several pages. We found out that when it was registered in 1948 the local Labour Cooperative Agricultural Farm “...included 24 horses, 11 oxen, 170 sheep etc. The agricultural specialization was cultivation of flax.”

These are the villages that had the most impressive condition and in our opinion they will disappear on the geographical map. In our researches in the coastal villages we couldn't find essential differences in the demographic and social-economic aspect.

Along the entire coastal land stripe northern from Kavarna town, the largest villages are Bulgarevo and Durankulak. They have schools, health centers and public community centers in well condition.

The data in Table 1 show the most significant decrease of population in Durankulak village (- 26.6 % in 10 years time) and for Bulgarevo (-13 % for the same period). Both schools are centers for students from the neighboring villages. Durankulak school is well managed and maintained in a very good condition, it owns an archeological collection and art gallery. The public library is well equipped with computers and internet facilities. The other villages in this region are inhabited by a few people – mainly retired. Kamen Brijag village is a tourist destination but registers negative growth of population.

The group of villages registering a larger rate of depopulation includes Tiulenovo, Kamen Brijag, Ezeretz, Vaklino (with -30 %) whereas only Krapetz shows a smaller rate (table 1). In these villages the road infrastructure is in good condition and maintenance, functional public community centers and small stores (table 2).

A very interesting fact for the public centers is that despite the age of their inhabitants they are very active to participate in whole range of folkloric competitions and fairs.

The villages at the border territories have similar destiny. Our first impression is from Krasen village. The great Bulgarian writer Iordan Iovkov has taught here.

The old school was rebuilt, the church was rehabilitated and it has a museum. We consider that the local administration is the main factor for the prosperity of the village. Krasen is an example for mastering European funds and has prospects for

development of the rural tourism. Several kilometers north Rositza village is located. Even with a bigger number of inhabitants – the situation here is opposite. There is a public community center but the infrastructure is in bad condition. We were disappointed when we found out that the road between Koriten and Kranovo villages ends in its middle. The distance is of only 8 kilometers but to reach Koriten we have to drive on a round road through Dobrich town. Spasovo village is the biggest one in the researched area. There are schools and kindergartens. The village is near to Durankulak and seashore and most of the investments are brought by the English inhabitants who live here. In contrast with Coastal Dobrudja in these border territories there is an Orthodox Church as well as Muslim mosques. In Rogozina and Rositza predominate gypsy inhabitants. We couldn't reach Kranovo because of the absence of road to get there. New researches are planned for the spring of 2012.

4. CONCLUSION

The main analyses and conclusions of the gathered imperative information of the researched area in Coastal Dobrudja are forthcoming. However, at this stage we can make the following conclusions:

1). There is no sharp territorial difference of these settlements on the detached indexes. The positive influence of the Black Sea is minimum and these villages are developing in the way they have to.

2). According to the main demographic indexes the settlements can be divided into three groups:

- villages with significant depopulation (25 % - 45 %) - Tiulenovo, Gorichane, Zakhari Stoyanovo, Granichar, Iovkovo, Krasen, Rositza villages;

- villages with moderate depopulation (7 % - 15 %) - Krapetz, Belgun, Rakovski, Bulgarevo, Spasovo villages;

- villages with positive growth of the population – Rogozina and Septemvriici villages.

3). In the villages and towns where there is school the depopulation is moderate or have positive growth of population.

4). The comparatively good demographic indexes in case of Rakovdki, Belgun and Septemvriici are due to the gypsy population who lives there.

5). The public community centers work with enthusiasm despite the difficulties.

6). In accordance of the fact that the main part of the inhabitants in the researched settlements are at pension age we consider that the processes of depopulation will intensify in the next years with higher rate than the previous 10 years. Staevci and Tvarditza are near extinction. In respect of the limits for the size of the material in this report we only emphasize on more important problems in the regional development

of Dobrudja. The accent is on the rural territories in Coastal Dobrudja and on the part of the settlements bordering with Romania. New field researches are planned.

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