



Patterns of Rural Settlements

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The Miceşti Model

Miceşti is a village which belongs to the commune of Tureni (Cluj county). It is situated at approximately equal distances from two big towns Cluj-Napoca (340,000 inhabitants, county residence) and Turda (61,500 inhabitants). It is at 8 km from E 60, a road of European importance. In the spring of 1962 the whole village became a collective farm. Since then commuting started, first, the unskilled workers' commuting to building sites. They were daily transported by trucks on a very bad road. In 1970 the road was paved, which increased commuting. For example, the commuters were 31 in 1965 and 87 in 1972, most of them becoming skilled workers on the building sites and in the factories in Cluj-Napoca and Turda. Every day four buses linked the village to Cluj-Napoca and six to Turda. This eased the villagers' direct access to urban services (the market, medical services). In the meantime the number of families and individuals leaving the village for good increased significantly. From 1965 to 1985, 51 families (almost 200 persons) left the village. In the same period of time (1965-1985), no graduate of the local middle school (eight grade middle school) remained in the village. Parents urged their children to settle down in the city where their new social and professional status (as workers) offered them better earnings and a home. The national policy of the former Communist Party was to considerably increase the number of the workers as they were considered the vanguard social class. Besides their privileged political status, the youth escaped from the hard work in agriculture and enjoyed superior standards of hygiene. As a consequence of these two synchronical phenomena - family and youth migrations - the population of the village has decreased rapidly. From 1571 inhabitants in 1956 (1229 in 1966), the population reached 428 at present (November 1998). The demographic decline is

significant in relation to evolution of the number of students. If the total population decreased 3.5 times in the span 1956-1998, the number of students decreased 12 times in the same span of time (character, the evolution of the population).

In 1982, as a consequence of non-profitable transportation, the number of bus lines to the two towns decreased, and, then, these lines were cancelled (nowadays there is only one bus to Turda). As a mentality phenomenon, it is significant that one of the presidents of the local collective farms strongly opposed the modernization of the road and the inauguration of new bus lines on account of the loss of workers for agriculture.

The status of commuter and farmer ensured a certain prosperity at the expense of enormous physical efforts. Commuting meant getting up at 3-4 a.m. After returning home in the afternoon (4-5 p.m.) almost all the commuters continued working, farming (mowing, digging, harvesting, etc.) till late at night. In the summer the commuter farmer slept about 4-5 hours per night. Farming on Sundays had become a rule.

The village has a total surface of 1675 ha, out of which 955 ha (57%) tilled land. At present in the village there are 212 families out of which only 84 (39.6%) have the minimum tools to till the land. One should add that 41 households (19.3%) are made up of only one person (widows in their 60ies). In the village there are 22 tractors, 4 trucks and 61 carts driven by horses.

After December 1989, the old land properties were reconstituted according to the inhabitants' memories.

The property documents were not given till today, though the law was promulgated in 1991 (Law 18/1991). The land is divided into very small properties. The 212 families own 497 strips of land (11.4 strips per family). The average property has a surface of 2.54 ha and a strip has an average surface of 0.22 ha. The land is mostly given on a lease to those who have tractors or carts. Another way to use the land is to pay cash for the main agricultural operations (ploughing, sowing, harvesting). The crops are maintained by the owners, the so-called week-end farmers (usually the farmers' children settled in the city a long time ago, or their friends. When farming is in full swing, the landscape is dominated by the week end farmers' cars. The alternative wheat-maize crops are back in common use. Chemical fertilizers are applied empirically and in small quantities, because of their high cost. Manure is used only by those who own transportation facilities. The crops are strongly influenced by local circumstances (the weather, momentary financial resources, material incentives). Consequently, the yield of wheat was between 1,000 and 5,500/ha from 1992 till 1997. For example, on a strip of 0.25ha, the farmer who tilled the land well and applied the adequate chemicals got a maximum yield of 5,000 ha, whereas his neighbour got a yield of 1,000-1,200kg/ha on the same surface, without tilling the land adequately and without maintaining the crop properly.

The villagers own 258 cattle, 156 buffaloes, 488 pigs, 709 sheep and 2473 poultry. The pigs are usually sacrificed to celebrate Christmas Eve. A family usually raises 2 pigs, one is sacrificed for the food of the family, and the other one is on sale. For Christmas the families which are better off present a pig to their offsprings settled in the city. Every family owns a little vegetable garden around the house for the necessities of the family. The only product frequently commercialized is the milk, which is, collected daily by a local business and transported to the city. The farmer is paid 1,500 lei (0.15 US \$). There are 96 families where selling milk is constantly a financial resource. Though in the town market the price of the milk is 2-3 times higher, the expensive transportation, the difficulties and the fatigue of such a voyage prevent the farmers from turning into account their milk in the town. In the village there are about 9 better off families which have the necessary agricultural equipment (tractors, ploughs). The pride and the competition among these farmers prevent them from cooperating. Though there is a tractor for every 27.5 ha, mechanized work is combined with the work with the animals. About 40% of the land are not tilled on a yearly basis. Farmers have come to

the system in between the Two World Wars, namely they till the land only every other year.

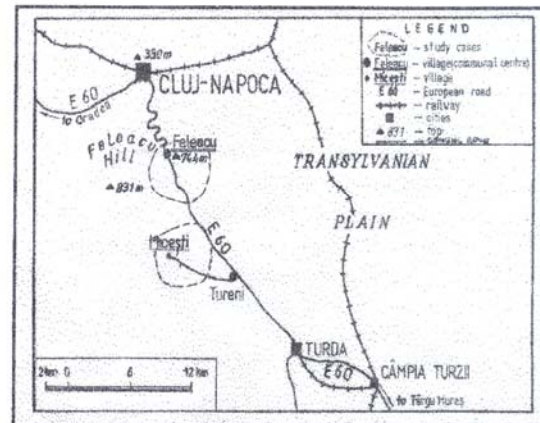


Figure 1. Localization of the patterns.

The Feleacu Model

The village of Feleacu is at 7 km from Cluj-Napoca, the hill with the same name being crossed by the E 60 road of European importance. As a consequence of its privileged position and its direct links with the important town near by, the village has declined less. This is also because Feleacu is a commune and it polarizes two more villages.

The present-day population is of 1849 inhabitants, out of which 292 are primary or middle class students. Though the demographic growths (+1.5%), the demographic decline has been continuous as a consequence of the final and systematic migrations. The young population (under 20) is 20.7% of the whole population and the elderly (over 60) are 27.4%.

The land property of the village considerably dwindled after the collectivization of agriculture, most of the land being taken over by the Cluj State Farm and turned into an apple orchard. Consequently, nowadays the villagers own 420 ha of bad quality land for agriculture, (14.7% of the whole land), which comes to 0.64 land for agriculture per family. As a consequence, the village shortly became a "dormitory" type place, commutation being mainly encouraged by the development of urban services. Most of the commuters work in the tertiary sector, especially as unskilled staff (porters, charwomen, assistant cooks). Those with higher education and most of the workers settled in the city for good, as they're offered the possibility to rent a state property flat with priority (in fact, building a house in the town was extremely rare under the communist regime, and it was labeled as a bourgeois practice and

mentality). Out of the 658 families living in the village at present, 489 (74.3%) are commuters' families. The economic changes after 1989 did not influence the tertiary sector so much as compared to the industry, whereas the maintenance of the great number of commuters (601 in 1985, 499 in 1997). There are a lot of cars - 399 -, which means a car for every 1.65 families. The agricultural revenues cover less than 25% of the population's needs. The city people's summer residences are few (10-12). This is because the land from nearby the Faget Forest (3 km from Cluj-Napoca), which mostly belongs to the villagers, was turned into strips of land where tens of villas were built by the city people, without the necessary authorizations. This phenomenon was encouraged by the big money made by some people as a consequence of the repeated participation in the "Caritas" pyramid scheme, which existed in Cluj-Napoca from 1992 till 1994 when it collapsed. The Feleacu Hill, a reference point for Cluj-Napoca is even today a major obstacle to easy urban-rural links. The steep slopes, the frequent curves, the frost and the snow often cause road accidents and greatly increase the fuel consumption.

Conclusions

Under similar social and political circumstances, the two villages have had a different evolution, according to their position towards the urban centre and their different communication potential. Conspicuous ruralism begins at 15-20 km from the big town, which is the case of the village of Micești. The civilization of the tractor exists alongside with that of the plough drawn by animals and with the new week end agriculture which became common after 1989.