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## Villages' Preservation

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### Abstract

The Villages' Preservation is one of the major objectives established at a national level in Romania. Some of the villages, from a total of 13,099, will naturally vanish. The villages with better demographical potential (having more than 200 inhabitants) should be encouraged in order to survive. This may be done in many ways, namely: the urban-rural remigration, the repopulation of the abandoned households with allochthonous population, encouraging the secondary residence building and intellectual removals in the rural areas, merging the agricultural land and so many others, with the contribution of the local government. The state's attempts are no longer enough to support the costs of the rural modernization, taking into account that at a national level the total costs have been estimated at about 7 thousand millions US \$/year, for 10-15 years, the financial effort cannot be supported, considering the contemporary economical circumstances.

The viability and the progress of a settlement depend on a series of factors, among which the number and the quality of the human element are decisive. The settlements which have lost more than half of the demographical stock and have less than 200 inhabitants in less than 30 years are disqualified in the field of viability. Besides this, as the demographical potential diminishes, the quality of the population consequently diminishes as well, through processes such as the aging of the population, the reduction of the informational capacity, of the

intellectuality and finally the diminishing of the economic potential (the subsistence economy being a rule for most of the peasant households). The straightening of the rural, even at a local level, cannot be accomplished without a coherent policy at a national level. The negative factors usually gather, merge and are mutually dependent on each other, generating an upstream-downstream shapshooting "drain", which must be counteracted within a certain temporal limit and using means whose effects should be capable to stop the decline. For instance, the decline of the population has as a result the diminishing of the school population. This has as a direct consequence the reduction of the teaching team (teachers, professors). The incapacity of the rural school to provide the primary-school education at an acceptable level for the very few left pupils determines many families to leave for good the village, the lack of educational means being the main reason. Generally, this kind of families represents the main economical basis of the rural settlement. As they leave, the village shatters from an economical point of view as well. Lacking the possibility to migrate, one accepts the lower level of education as the only chance to teach the young pupils in the countryside. With a low level of education it is rather hard to imagine that there shall exist the category of the rural farmers, capable of notable economical performances in the rural field.

For a certain type of villages there should be accepted the solution of the natural elimination. Inside their perimeter there can be maintained, through individual efforts, a few households as

symbolical references. For this it is absolutely necessary to elaborate a strategy to lead the anthropical systems in order to integrate them among the natural ones. The temporary gain may be only an ecological one. The isolation, the lack of minimal infrastructure, the building stock of low quality, these are but few reasons not to support them through exterior effort.

The means of sustaining the viable ones are much more various, and they have their origin both in releasing the internal catalysts, and in a coherent and equal at a national level policy of occupying and careful management the land.

These are but a few of the internal catalytical factors:

- choosing the mayors and of the counselors considering only their competence, their ability to be good managers of their territory and the capacity to gain the peoples' confidence through respectability and honesty;

- the local support of the existent infrastructures;

- the funding, through interior financial support, of some vital edifices such as "the house of the teachers", "the house of the doctors";

- the modernization of some already existent infrastructures, such as the public roads, and the development of new infrastructures (providing the water supply through centralized systems, for instance);

- actions which coagulate the interest of those who have settled in the city for the native village;

- volunteer support actions provided by foreign communities and associations;

The exterior catalyzing factors would be:

- the promotion and sustaining of a few people to become modern farmers, of medium or superior level;

- the elaboration of a legal environment as far as the merge of the field in the mutual interest is concerned;

- the compulsory elaboration of "The Land Chart" for each rural settlement, in each to be clearly noticeable, now and in a previsible period of time (let's say 5 to 10 years) the precise destination of every piece of land (there should be clearly traced the hearth, the land for future constructions, the arable land, the grazing field, the forest and so on). Otherwise we witness a tragical process of shattering the land, which represents the final support for the production of food at a national level. "The Land Chart" should be the main document for each rural settlement;

- discovering all deserted homes and organizing an auction at a national level and at that of counties so that they would be known and sold by the inheritors;

- preventing the occupation of the periurban spaces through the phenomenon called "agglutination" that has proven to be the most harmful of all in the process of spatial modeling. At an international level, the people who want to have a secondary dwelling should be offered deserted households in the nearby villages, that are much cheaper and have a minimal infrastructure (running water, electricity); these houses can be modernized, and the need to perpetually visit them encourages the modernization of the roads;

- the repopulation of some villages with immigrant population, with equal support given by the state and the villages involved; the conclusion which emerges out of the previous experiences say that the immigrant element generally turns into a catalyzer of energies and local activities. For instance, in the context of the reduction of some industrial activities, and that of mining industry, the state might very cheaply buy the deserted houses and populate them with numerous miner families, following all the legal procedure (registration, title of property and so on). Parallely, the ones who have been made redundant should find work at a local level, in fields of public interest (maintaining the rural roads, planting trees and reclaiming the corroded fields, afforestation and so on). The state should provide 50 % of the wages funds for these people, and the other half to be provided by the rural community;

- the encouraging of the remigration, by sustaining a reasonable communicational infrastructure (rural roads, telephones...) (the ones who have lived 20-25 years in the city, having low wages or have been industrial unemployed could be encouraged to come back in the countryside if they are given the opportunity to easily keep in touch with the urban, which cannot be easily abandoned, at least for its comfort, hygiene and education provided for children);

- the elaboration of a statistical record at a national level for every village, not at the level of the district. The district is an administrative unit that has a certain level of abstractness. The contribution of the parts (the villages) to the whole (the commune) should be minutely made obvious (the surface of the land, the number of households, the number of the animals, the vegetal and animal agricultural production and so on). Thus there exists the spirit of participative impartiality and the economical situation will be

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exactly known. The cumulation of the statistical information only at the level of the commune limits and obstructions in an unacceptable manner the process of taking several decisions as far as the organization of the space is concerned. A formalism and an empirism that are ridicule often replace the place of precise quantification.

At a national and local level there should exist the idea of creating some polifunctional rural settlement. The period in which the rural and the agricultural were synonymous has passed a long time ago.

To be persuade you, we provide you here the example of the greatest "European agricultural power", that is France. In the '60-ies, France was, from an agricultural point of view, in a position similar to ours (a high degree of dispersion of the land properties, very small land owners, a low degree of mechanization, a great number of agriculturers and so on). Though a steady strategy of commasation and preservation of the rural preservation, regardless the political orientation of the governments that led the country, France has succeeded to become, in less than 10 years, a country that has a prosperous agricultural economy.

Having a population of 58,000,000 inhabitants and an agricultural surface of 31,711,250 ha (that is 57.5 % of the total surface of the country), France produces triple quantities of food as compared to the needs of the population. This production is insured by almost 600,000 farmers, each farm having about 48 ha of arable land.

Here, almost 6.2 million owners of farming land, among which almost half dwell in the city, cannot provide food for 22.6 million inhabitants! Considering the agro-ecological conditions in Romania, at a medium level of modernization of the rural economy, the agricultural production should support a population of at least 80 million inhabitants. For this Romania would need 350,000 farmers.

The modern farmer should know basic things in animal and genetical engineering, agropedology, marketing, know how to use a computer, to be able to easily drive the farm tractor, the combine, the truck and to be aware of the laws that refer to his field of activity. If we take into account the number of 350,000 and 400,000 farmers, one immediately asks: what are we to do with the rest of 10 million persons who live in the countryside? (a village would basically need only 27 farmers). This is why the village should gain a functional polyvalence and an adequate infrastructure. Small industry, modern and efficient

trade, agroturism - all these should gain a functional polyvalence and an adequate infrastructure. Small industry, modern and efficient trade, agroturism - all these should be doubled by local tertiary activities. The village we are now dealing with is not a village only for "peasants", but one having a population with various occupations, capable to offer both the fulfilling of the professional ideals and a more decent, civilized way of living.

The devilish insistence to increase the number of towns and the importance of the urban population should be prevented by performing a realistic policy, which supports the development of the rural. In time, many villages, through its own efforts and governmental efficient support will turn into towns, although they will have a smaller number of inhabitants, if we take into account the example provided by some countries that have a highly developed economy. As far as the quality of life is concerned, these villages should be situated above the average level of the great urban agglomerations, should turn into centers very much appreciated by the ones who are no longer attracted by the "city mirage".

In the countryside there should be initiated various actions (economical, cultural, of mutual help) which should induce that global desire of the community to build the perenity of the place.

Erasing the "centrist mentality", according to which the "salvation" should come only through the exclusive support of the state, should always be a priority for the local leaders.

The cultivators banished by the former C.A.P. (the ones who are interested and gifted) should be efficiently recuperated in the process of rural economy of transition.

The agricultural centers of the commune should be able to integrate the work of every cultivator at the level of each village and to provide wages according to their real economical and social performance. The cultivators named for each village (or even two or three) should know well enough their economical profile. They should be used as pertinent elements with precise missions that refer to decision and consulting in the agricultural field (to select the seeds, the animal breeds and so on). The state in a mutual understanding with the rural should support the cultivators settled in the countryside, just the same way as with the doctors and teachers (they should receive land to build their houses on, land for agriculture, preferential credits, bigger wages...). The lack of intellectual models in the countryside perfectly expresses the moral crisis of the population.

The state, no matter who is it governed by, is not the "symbol of abundance". He is formed by the citizens of this country, be them good or bad, and the inherent institutions. The institutional capacity to involve the citizens in the course of their own destiny provides the efficacy of the work, which is the solution for wellbeing. The geographical position, the very much exploited subject, gains a secondary position, and the initial position is acquired by the quality of the decisional political factors and their ability to run the destiny of the nation and the quality of its own citizens.

For a centralized support of the rural development, the state should provide at least 8,500 milliard lei (7 milliard \$) a year for about 10 – 15 years. If we take into account the gross internal produce of about 35 miliards U.S \$/year, that would mean one fifth of the gross income of the nation, which is impossible given the circumstances. A very distinguished European politician and specialist in rural problems (N. Levrat), rhetorically asked once: "which is the ideal commune?" and he answered: "the ideal commune would exist only at the moment you decide to turn it into one". You and a handful of leaders, which are very well trained and have every good intentions, who, through the vote of the citizens, have received the responsibility to administrate the business of the commune. "You" means "me", "you", "him", each of the citizens that belong to the space of democratical participation that is your commune, his commune, my commune. The commune, no matter the political equilibrium or dezechilibrium, is above all the thing all the citizens share, so it is their responsibility". (N. Levrat, quoted by I. Paun Otiman – 1997 – after the volume "Europe verified through the functionality of the local democracy").

A good guide for acquiring knowledge and strategy at the level of the county is The Green Chart – Rural Development in Romania – which had been presented in its final shape in the 3<sup>rd</sup> of December at the Ministry of Agriculture and Alimentation, a work which has been financed through the PHARE Program, initiated by the European Union.

## References

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