



The Rural House Between Tradition and Modernity

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Introduction

The premise of this study is the idea the social reality may be seen as a world with two dimensions a rural one and an urbane one, apparently parallel. These two dimensions exist together but in the same time they have a permanent dispute upon the supremacy one has upon another.

In order to clarify the domination of tradition or modernity in the rural space of social reality we carried out a sociological investigation supported by a questionnaire. The investigation proceeded in a village named Tusa belonging to Sâg commune, Sălaj district, from 3 to 12 July 2001.

There aren't many sociological studies upon the farmstead in Romanian sociology. We can mention Tr. Herseni (1936) and we can add recent analysis upon the rural dwelling (Zamfir E. et al, 2000). The already existing studies upon the farmstead are more ethnographical and based on qualitative methodology rather than on quantitative one.

Our study far from neglecting the ethnographical view tries to offer a sociological perspective of the present day farmstead, supported by qualitative and quantitative methodology.

Some Marks

The Tusa village is placed at the springs of Barcău River, at 15 km from Ciucea (Ciucea is traversed by the Cluj-Oradea-Budapesta international highway) and at 40 km from Zalău, the administrative center of Sălaj district.

The village is certified in documents in 1341 for the first time. Tusa has two churches: an old wooden one with shingle roof (historical monument) and a new one made of brick, with tin roof (Neobyzantine style), two commercial places, a kindergarten and a school.

From the territorial point of view the Tusa village is organized in nine narrow streets: the Lăzurele Street, the Costești Street, the Silencești Street, the Siculești Street, the Pepești Street, the Ticulești Street, the Zburdești Street, the Dobrean Street, the Pășești Street.

This territorial distribution certifies the idea those narrow street were founded by "the old men" because each of them is named with a family name.

From the point of view of the growing number of farmsteads in accordance with the censuses in 1910 and 1992 we can observe at the end of the XX-th century the number of the farmsteads is more than doubled (329) as compared to the beginning of that century (147). During the XX-th century tile and brick (a new material) were used as building materials.

According to the 1992 census the data about the agricultural ground were as follows: 10 per cents from the existing 329 farmsteads had got more than 4 hectares, 90 per cents had got 2 hectares or less than 1 hectare. The peasants' main occupation is agriculture and animal - keeping. They cultivate rye, wheat, maize and potatoes (the main crop). They keep cows, sheep, pigs, buffalo – cows and most of all poultry.

Taking into account the qualitative and quantitative agricultural and zootechnical production we can say the economy of the village is an economy of subsistence.

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Tusa has an hilly geography it is placed at the spring of Barcău River beyond of which there is the Șes Mountain. From the point of view of the rural places typology we found Tusa exemplifies the scattered (model of) village.

Methodology, Description and Comprehension

Taking into account that " the present-day society changed its mentality up to the radical attitude towards the tradition" (Fulea et al., 1996) we naturally question the real relation between tradition and modernity in a rural community, in this particular case, Tusa.

In order to clarify the relation between tradition and modernity in the farmsteads of Tusa we applied 100 questionnaires at random. We have to point out the structure of the questionnaire was much more diversified than the data we are going to process in this study. The data referring to the structure of property, the age pyramid, the educational level of the questioned persons were not processed in this study.

We conceived the questionnaire convinced that the central part of rural community is the farmstead and its multiple components. The "ideal" farmstead – using the weberian sense of the word-has the following components: house, stable, animals, agricultural equipment, and non/agricultural land.

Our analysis will take into account only those components we chose in order to identify the relation between tradition and modernity in the rural habitat.

"The rural house is the central unit of the farmstead" (Cernescu, 2000). The way the peasants build their houses is in fact a way of expressing their relation with the community. Thus the interior of their house reflects their own system of values, life style and habits.

Therefore we are going to analyze the interior of the house from the point of view of three indices: the traditional domestic industry, modernity and traditional aesthetics.

The index of traditional domestic industry (table1) shows that the life quality items surpass the traditional domestic activities. The popular costume is no longer worn in the community but only in the house interior. The popular costume is found more often in the clothes trunk rather than at the local manifestations that takes place from time to time in Tusa.

Table 1. Items of traditional domestic industry.

| Cushions with model | Popular costume | Woods stove | Cord loom | Distaff | Baking oven |
|---------------------|-----------------|-------------|-----------|---------|-------------|
| 11% | 8 % | 25 % | 17 % | 12 % | 27 % |

In table 2 we are surprised by the high percentage of the domestic electronic equipment that points out the people living in a space considered a traditional one need a comfortable life. Mobil phones and modern furniture show a changing of the traditional people's mentality and their living in the present with all implications that facts can involve.

Table 2. Items of modernity.

| Modern furniture | Terra-cotta | Refrigerator | Presser | Radio | TV | Recorder | Telephone | Mobile phone |
|------------------|-------------|--------------|---------|-------|------|----------|-----------|--------------|
| 10 % | 13 % | 16 % | 15 % | 17 % | 15 % | 11 % | 1 % | 2 % |

In table 3 we observe the traditional aesthetics is well represented at the domestic level of community.

Table 3. Traditional aesthetics.

| Dishes | Towels | Icons | Crate hutch |
|--------|--------|-------|-------------|
| 30 % | 31 % | 26 % | 13 % |

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Classifying the items, which define the interior of the house, in two major groups – tradition and modernity-we can observe the balance inclines towards tradition (59%) even if the modernity makes its presence evident in Tusa (41%). Regarding the tradition items – aesthetic and domestic industry – we sustain the existential dimensions surpasses the aesthetic one. We consider this to be a natural fact.

The farmstead exterior is characterized by 4 types of indices: traditional agriculture, modern agriculture, traditional symbols and modern symbols.

Table 4. Items of traditional agriculture.

| Wag | Plough | Mowing | Pitchfork |
|------|--------|--------|-----------|
| 21 % | 19 % | 30 % | 30 % |

Table 5. Items of modern agriculture.

| Farm tractor | Auto-mower |
|--------------|------------|
| 97 % | 3 % |

Comparing table 4 to table 5 we conclude the traditional agriculture items are better represented than the modern agricultural items. The index of tradition in the farmstead exterior shows 80 per cent, while the modernity has 20 per cents. In table 6 the traditional symbol is represented by wood and the modern symbol by iron (table 7).

Table 6. Items of traditional symbols.

| Hurdle | Wooden fence | Simple gate of wood | Gate of wood with motives |
|--------|--------------|---------------------|---------------------------|
| 1 % | 57 % | 38 % | 4 % |

Table 7. Items of modern symbols.

| Fence of iron | Fence of concrete | Gate of iron |
|---------------|-------------------|--------------|
| 21 % | 18 % | 61 % |

The last one is prevailing. As conceiving the typology of symbols we say the percentage of traditional symbols is almost twice compared to the percentage of the modern symbols. Table 8 show the house illustrates the modernity (brick, keystone) while the stable illustrates the tradition (earth, wood).

Table 8. Typology of buildings.

| | Brick | Earth | Wood | Keystone |
|--------|-------|-------|------|----------|
| House | 60 % | 23 % | 2 % | 15 % |
| Stable | 48 % | 31 % | 3 % | 18 % |

We add some personal observations gathered during the sociological investigation to the image the interpretation of the questionnaire has already offerEditura Even if the balance inclines towards tradition when describing the house we consider this fact irrelevant because there is only a minimal difference in percentage between modernity and tradition.

Thus, we observed that traditional aesthetic objects (dishes, towels) and modern objects (refrigerator, TV sets, kitsch paintings, modern furniture, running water, etc) exist together.

Therefore in the actual day rural space there is a change of attitude regarding the tradition because it is impossible to maintain the tradition at the cost of giving up the modernity. Even the structural changing of the building materials developed step by step beginning in the 60's. After the 90's we can observe the modern element in the building of the villas.

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In the echantion we studied the relation between tradition and modernity advantages the modernity in the house interior and shows the prevailing of tradition in the house exterior. Thus we afford to say in a few decades the house interior will be modernized while the house exterior will be tributary to tradition because it suffers from the influence of the infrastructure (there is only one asphalted wad in the village) and the traditional agriculture (which uses traditional equipment and thus it isn't economically efficient and remains an agriculture of subsistence).

References

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