

HETEROGENEITY OF RURAL AREA IN ROMANIA

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ABSTRACT

In this paper, we will examine the heterogeneity of rural area viewed from three aspects: morphological, structural and functional. In Romania the rural area holds an important place from the point of view of the heterogeneity of the administrative territory (with small and very small, average, big and very big villages), the agricultural potential (by the contribution of agriculture in realizing the Gross Domestic Product, and demographic (share population in rural area). At the moment over 46% of Romanian population live in the 12957 thousand of rural habitation where the great part of manpower is concentrated in agriculture, silviculture, fishing, providing a specific and viable life style of inhabitants and through the policies for modernization, the rural feature will be kept in perspective.

INTRODUCTION

Traditionally, the rural space refers to places located outside the urban areas with natural landscapes and low population (Braga et al., 2015). By definition, the rural adjective comprises everything that relates to the life in the countryside (Alecu and Geamasu, 2014).

The diversity of the European rural space is one of the World's greatest resources. According to the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) urban-rural typology, Europe's rural areas cover 91 % of the territory. Moreover, 56% of EU's population lives in predominantly rural areas/ significantly rural regions (OECD, 2006).

Reincorporating agriculture into the countryside is the main issue that the European agricultural policy and farmers alike now face, in order to retrieve it to the rural economy and environment from which it was missing, starting with the 'productivist' phase of agricultural development. (Marsden, 1999, 2001; Van der Ploeg, 2000, 2004).

Among European countries, Romania is one of the countries where the rural environment is still preponderant from all points of view. In the period after the Second World War the industrialisation process determined a long running trend of population transfer from rural to urban areas. The communist regime maintained a somewhat traditional socio-economic structure, as the government prioritised "top-down" central planning and introduced a new farming system characterised by large co-operatives and state farms. Ceaușescu's systematization plan in the 1980s became a subject of controversy, aiming to create stronger district units based on coordinating "rural towns", by completely eliminating up to 8000 villages. The project was nipped in the bud due to the fall of the regime. (Ioro and Corsale, 2010).

After the fall of the communist regime in 1989, Romanian agriculture suffered a dramatic change by dividing the agriculture areas, without means of production and the appearance of small size agriculture exploitations that were unviable and economically inefficient (Călina and Călina, 2011, 2015a). The representative populations of the rural area with a dynamic and continuous evolution had to resort to alternative forms of activities and survival. The Romanian village, saved from the communist systematization, and the

rural community represent the basis of agriculture and agritourism in Romania (Călina and Călina, 2015b, 2016).

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The paper is based on a thorough study of the elements offered by the rural area in Romania, its original personality and on the experiences of the authors in the field. The work was realised by collecting, processing and analysing a rich database from the year 2005 until present. The data was obtained using the TEMPO-Online platform of the National Institute of Statistics (NIS). Elements regarding the grouping of rural localities, the contribution of Romanian agriculture in the Gross Domestic Product, the used agricultural surface structurally correlated with the number and type of agricultural exploitations and demographical density have been analyzed.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

1. Heterogeneity of administrative territory and rural localities

From an administrative point of view, the Romanian territory is organized in 320 localities (of which 103 municipalities – the most important towns) that form the urban area, and 2861 communes, constituting the rural area. The commune, delimited as basic administrative-territorial unit, comprises the rural population gathered by the community of interests and traditions and comprises one or more villages, depending on the economic, social-cultural, geographical and demographic conditions. The villages where the head office of the public authorities of the commune is located are designated as residence villages.

In Romania, at present, there are 12957 rural localities, where the great part of manpower is concentrated in agriculture, silviculture, fishing, providing a specific and viable life style of inhabitants and through the policies for modernization, the rural feature will be kept in perspective.

For Romania, grouping of rural localities is differentiated, and there is a structure of groups of commune, depending on the number of inhabitants. In *table 1* such structures (at the level of year 2015) are presented, where the ranking of 2861 communes is below 1000 inhabitants to over 10000 inhabitants. The most significant group of communes is the group with 3000-4999 inhabitants comprising 30.3% of the number of communes and 34.4% of the number of inhabitants.

Table 1

Group of communes in Romania depending on the number of inhabitants				
Groups of communes in Romania depending on the number of inhabitants	Number of communes		Number of inhabitants	
	Absolute data	%	Absolute data	%
Total	2861	100.0	9695506	100.0
Under 1000	94	3.3	70025	0.7
1000 – 2999	1412	49.4	2933995	30.2
3000 – 4999	868	30.3	3332756	34.4
5000 – 9999	446	15.6	2866876	29.6
10000 and above	41	1.4	491854	5.1

Source: National Institute of Statistics

2. Heterogeneity of agricultural potential in rural area

The contribution of Romanian agriculture in the Gross Domestic Product of Romania (GDP) has always been high. The registered weight has decreased in the last decade, but the oscillations of agricultural production still induce significant variations of the GDP.

Out of the data presented in *table 2* it is noticeable that, for agriculture, sylviculture and fish farming sector, the weight in the year 2005 as compared to the national total was of 8.9 % and 5.6% in the year 2015, increases being registered, but also decreases as compared to the previous year.

All these oscillations occurred depending on the activity carried out, on the meteorological conditions, but also on the elements of the structural situation of agricultural exploitations in the aggregate of rural sector. It can also become evident that the rural area does not constitute a homogenous assembly (aspect also pointed out by Călina et al, 2009), but it is not an abstract area either.

Table 2

Gross Domestic Product			
Specification	Year	GDP (million lei, RON, current prices)	
Total GDP, of which:	2005	287186.0	
	2006	344650.6	
	2007	416006.8	
	2008	514700.0	
	2009	501139.4	
	2010	523693.3	
	2011	557348.2	
	2012	596681,5	
	2013	637456,0	
	2014	667577,4	
	2015	710267.0	
	Agriculture, Sylviculture and Aquaculture	2005	25665.0
		2006	26845.8
		2007	23966.3
		2008	34081.9
2009		32297.8	
2010		29874.3	
2011		36341.6	
2012		27885,8	
2013		34402,8	
2014		31450,9	
2015	39774.9		

Source: National Institute of Statistics

Regarding the used agricultural surface (in year 2012), but structurally correlated with the number and type of agricultural exploitations, according to the data in *table 3*, the following can be deduced:

- a significantly large number of individual agricultural exploitations is still noticeable, the weight of this type of exploitations being 99.2 % as compared to the total of exploitations in Romania;
- with regard to the used agricultural surface, it can be determined that these individual exploitations use agricultural land, but not at the percentage level held as number of the total.

The used agricultural surface on average for one exploitation, at national level, per total of exploitations averages on 3.4 ha. Heterogeneity is very high, depending on the types of exploitations, thus the average agricultural surface per individual agricultural exploitation is only 1.9 ha, and for those with legal personality, the average is of 188.9 ha,- expressed in relative values, the average agricultural exploitation per an agricultural exploitation using agricultural surface, as compared to the total 100%=3.4 ha at national

level, these levels, which for individual agricultural exploitations are only 55.8 %, for units with legal personality the pace of growth is 5.55 times higher (555.8%).

Table 3

Agricultural exploitations and agricultural land used in Romania

Indicators	Total agricultural exploitations		Individual agricultural exploitations		Agricultural exploitations of legal personality	
	No.(thousand)	%	No.(thousand)	%	No.(thousand)	%
Agricultural exploitation	3859	100	3828	99.2	31	0.8
Agriculture surface:	Thousand ha	%	Thousand ha	%	Thousand ha	%
Total	15694	100	8307	52.9	7387	47.1
Used	13305	100	7449	56,0	5856	44.0
Agriculture surface on average:	ha	%	ha	%	ha	%
on an agricultural exploitation that utilises agriculture surface	3.4	100	1.9	55.8	188.9	5555.8

Source: National Institute of Statistics

It may be inferred that the Romanian agricultural landscape has suffered a fundamental change by pulverization of land ownership, occurrence of millions of small farms, with insufficient dimensions in order to be sustainable, lacking of means of production, decapitalising etc., and all these factors having determined the practice of subsistence agriculture.

3. Demographic heterogeneity

The Romanian population has a more pronounced rurality level, many of these rural communities contributing, to a small extent, to the economic growth, but at the same time keeping their social structure and the traditional way of life. The rural area in Romania holds a surface of 212.700 km² (about 89% of the total surface of the country) and a population, in the year 2016, of 9126396 inhabitants (46% of the total population). Demographically, over 46% of Romanian population live in the 12957 thousand of rural habitation.

In *table 4* the structure of population on averages is expressed, from which results a decrease of the total population existent in the rural area. Thus, if in the year 1960 in Romania 67.9% of the population was living in rural environment, in the year 2016 the level is 46.2%.

Table 4

Structure of population by averages in Romania

Period	Number of inhabitants			% of total:	
	Total	Urban	Rural	Urban	Rural
1 July 1960	18403414	5912011	12491403	32.1	67.9
1 July 1989	23151564	12311803	10839761	53.2	46.8
1 July 2016	19759968	10633572	9126396	53.8	46.2

Source: National Institute of Statistics

It can be concluded that demographical density is strongly differentiated in polarizing points by urban and rural localities. Thus, the rural area may, in certain hypotheses, when it is a close space, for example, have significance per se.

CONCLUSIONS

For Romania, grouping of rural localities is differentiated, and there is a structure of groups of commune, depending on the number of inhabitants. The most significant group of communes is the group with 3000-4999 inhabitants comprising 30.3% of the number of communes and 34.4% of the number of inhabitants. Agricultural landscape has suffered a fundamental change by pulverization of land ownership, occurrence of millions of small farms, with insufficient dimensions in order to be sustainable, lacking of means of production, decapitalising etc., and all these factors having determined the practice of subsistence agriculture. Population has a more pronounced rurality level, many of these rural communities contributing, to a small extent, to the economic growth, but at the same time keeping their social structure and the traditional way of life.

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