RURAL SPACE – FUNCTIONALITIES AND DEVELOPMENT STRATEGIES

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Abstract: The rural space integrates the primary and residential forms, strengthened by secondary and tertiary structures, in a strong relation with the productive potential of the environment. A very strong tendency of diversification and specialization was registered in the last year. Consequently new research branches emerged focusing on the dimensions and complexity of the economic activities, the evolution of the rural habitat, the changes emerging in the structure and functions of the rural space. The sub-branches of rural geography – land use, agricultural geography, geography of the rural habitat, rural tourism and the geography of the rural industrial activities – emphasize the zonal areas which require to be reassessed according to production capacities in relation to the factors of geographic favourability.

Keywords: rural territorial complex, rural habitat, rural landscape, agricultural landscape.

The interdisciplinarity, common characteristic of current sciences promotes in the geography domain a competitive thoroughness, expression of diversity of research methodology but also of territorial identity. This explains the objectivity of the geography subdivisions which have as a common denominator the quantitative and qualitative appreciation of geographic phenomena and their territorial integration. The geographic information, the natural and anthropic quality transfer refers to the forms of a continuous dynamics expressed in rural space balances and unbalances, in the surrounding stress. This is why the surrounding offer must be strictly supervised, in the sense of correct evaluation and management as a leading premise of durable development.

Among the geographic branches, the rural geography has registered remarkable progress, nationally as well as internationally, taking into consideration its practical valences, its designation to evolutively and dynamically accentuate the human/productive functions and their changes in the geographic scenery.

The rural, in present conception represents the integrate area of primary and residential shapes, amplified and having secondary and tertiary structures, closely correlated to the productive potential of surrounding factors

The rural geography equally analyses the physical-geographical complex, the rural communities with all the sociologic implications, the geo-productive functions (agriculture,

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1 Ion Velcea – The concept of agrarian geoeconomy, synthesis of the rural space potential, Rev. Terra, 3-4/1988
industry, forest economy, transports, tourism, etc.), their integration in the urban settlements. It uses own scientific research techniques in order to shape the synthesis on the complex and integrated rural space.

1. SUB-BRANCHES OF RURAL GEOGRAPHY

During the last years, in the system of geographic sciences there has been registered a profound tendency of diversification and specialization favored generally by the interdisciplinary character of the science, by the progress of natural sciences and of the technical ones, by the modernization of the methods and scientific research techniques. Taking into consideration the dimensions and complexity of diverse surrounding capacities, of human development, of rural habitat evolution and of economic activities, of rural regions economic base diversification, the rural geography also enlists as a science with evident thorough and specialization sub-branches. In our opinion, as to this end the following sub-branches of rural geography can be outlined: Geography of Land-use; Agrarian/agriculture Geography; Rural Tourism/Agrotourism; Geography of Rural Habitat; Rural Industry Geography (small and medium enterprises, local manufactures).

Max Derrau in his paper „Précis de géographie humaine” (Ed. Colin, Paris, 1979) distinguishes the sub-branches of rural geography and the classification of agrarian organizational forms, according to the economic organizational principles, to the agrarian productions, and in general, to the agrarian activities inserted to the natural components, in two sub-branches: agricultural geography and agrarian geography.

a.) Land-use geography analyses and cartographically circumscribes all types of land use in an evolutorial way, based on land observance, on old topographical maps and on historical documents. Significant are the appreciations on the extension or regression of plough lands and respectively of specialized cultures, of natural meadows, of forestry, aquatic and special fond.

b.) Agricultural Geography and Agrarian Geography. The geography economists distinguish more and more the agricultural geography concept from the agrarian geography one. The first concept credits the idea that the object of agricultural geography is the technical -agricultural conditions in correlation with the results of agricultural activities. It studies the quantitative aspects of allotment, volume and production commercialization (D. Faucher, 1962). The agrarian geography refers to the territorial arrangements depending on the physical-geographic and human conditions on territorial profile.

In close connection to these sub-branches of rural geography, according to the scientific opinion concerning the agricultural usage of land, many terms are used, as follows: agrarian landscape, rural landscape, agro-geographic region, agro-ecosystem, and others. The term agrarian landscape can be conceptualized in a semantic and theoretic-scientific sense. The first sense denominates the whole human behavior in connection with the field (ager) in the widest sense of the word and the last one defines the fundamental typologies of the agrarian usage of territory that derive from the favorability of soils and from the development level of production forces and of agricultural techniques. Some

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specialists assimilate the agrarian landscape with non-urbanized area landscapes. However we consider that the term is too large and fades away the real content of agrarian landscapes, with various and differentiated images connected to the surrounding and technical-economical factors action.

In fact, the agrarian landscape represents a rural landscape component, differentiated from its structure, firstly by its productive elements. These generate specific agrarian forms of space organization, dimensions, correlated with the territory agriculture potential with cultivated or grass parcels and technical-residential arrangements that are specific to agrarian exploitations. The result of a long evolution in natural, social and technical-economical conditions, varying in time and space, the agrarian landscape has different forms agreeably to the degree of civilization in which it appeared and developed. This has determined the specialists to distinguish between the notion of Agrarian History and that of Agriculture History (Eugen Mewes, 1973). The base for the agrarian landscape is constituted by „the cultivated land” or the lay land – according to an ancient Romanian saying which has to occupy an important space of the rural territory in order to be framed in the notion of agrarian landscape. As Andre Meynier says (in his paper „Les paysages agraires”, Paris, Armand Colin, 1970) the agrarian landscape is permanently or temporally the one that modifies mostly the natural landscape, more than other economic activities (human settlements or communication ways).

The rural landscape, unlike the agrarian one integrates the attributes of the latter one, inclusively the habitat structures, the touristic arrangements, the historic objectives and the equipments that ensure the connection between the habitat and the productive forms, from which we can mention the marketplaces (the communication ways, the forest fond, the secondary manufacturing land resources that were implanted in rural zones, etc).

The agro-geographical region constitutes a concept that was stated by geographers for the grouping of the territorial forms of organization, improvement and equipment of the agrarian-productive space. In the taxonomy of rural landscape, synthesis of all usage and equipment ways of non-urban terrains, the agro-geographical region is not identifying itself with the rural landscape – a concept that is far more comprising, being a component of the latter as well individualized specific form of improvement, developing and specialization of rural economy.

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3 In the paper “Our Terra”, vol. III, Bucharest, 1973, eng. Eugen Mewes argues: “The agriculture history is the science that studies the evolution, in time and space, of the agriculture and forestry, of the agriculture institutions, relations and ideologies, as well as of the rural life from the political, socio-cultural, techno-scientific and economical point of view. The agricultural history is that part of the agrarian history that studies only the process of agricultural production” (p. 39). The complexity of the agro-productive phenomenon is viewed by the specialists in the history of sciences as “the history of the agrarian cultural landscape, of the farms and villages, of the agrarian population, of the rural economy and trade”. 
3. The Geography of the Rural Habitat
- the ensemble of the natural and socio-economic conditions, the qualitative and dynamic managerial activities that function as an integrated system
- chrono-spatial evolutions, morphological structures (gathered, scattered, dispersed settlements), rural communities administratively territorialized (2,850 communes, 45% rural population), 1% of the about 43,000 villages are concentrated in the field and low hills regions, the village, which is a bearer of spiritual and material values; the rural landscape symbolizes the human settlements, the boundary of the commune and the rural population.

4. Rural Tourism (Agro-Tourism)
- areas with touristic vocation of landscape, entertaining, culinary and cognitive value, comfort and leisure organization degree, professional recovery;
- variety of biodiversity (flora and fauna of rare species);
- protected zones and areas (9.3 million hectares in 2008, that is 39% of the surface of the country). 27 national and natural parks, 3 reservations of the biosphere (The Danube Delta, Retete and Rodna).

5. The Geography of the Rural Industry
- units of the extractive and processing industry, the craftmanship industry; small and middle industry; consequences on the territorial mobility of the rural population; the pressure of the industrial technique over the bio-productive eco-systems.

1. Land Use
- Analyzes the structure, the separation and the evolution of the categories of land use. The rural area holds 90% of the total number of types of land use. There prevails: agricultural land (14.7 mil. hectares, 61.7% of the total area of the country), forests (6.7 mil. hectares, 28% of the total area of the country), waters, swamps (850 thousand hectares, 3.5%), other types of use.

2. Agricultural Geography / Agrarian Geography
- determines the technical – agricultural conditions, productivity, trading of the yield.

The agrarian geography refers to territorial arrangements, agrarian structures and dynamic factors, anthropic interventions and physiognomy of the agrarian landscape, and so on.

The agrarian landscape: forms of organization, dimensions, agrarian potential (openfield, bocage, pays d’enclos, plantations).

Systems of crops and animal breeding: direct use of the vegetal mass through grazing, partially exploited cultivated field – fallow ground, evaluated agricultural systems, crop rotations, mechanization, etc., agro-business – great efficiency specialized plantations.

Fig. 1. Sub-branches of the Rural Geography
(Source: Ion Velcea, 2002)
The agro-geographic region can comprise a part of the rural landscape elements that give extension into a certain agro-productive habitat specialization and of correlations between these, which can not be found with the same content and manifestation in other rural landscape. Thus, in the rural landscape of Dobrogea Plateau the northern part differentiates clearly from the southern part by its geo-ecological diversity, by means of the complexity of its agro-productive elements and by means of various habitat adaptation ways with the local medium conditions. It can be assimilated to the concept of agro-geographical region, distinct as a form of agricultural manifestation and specialization to Southern Dobrogea, an agro-geographical region with other content.

Leaning upon the concepts of agrarian geography and agricultural geography and taking into consideration the complexity of the current cultivated space organization according to the results of the scientific research in the agro-technical, genetic domain and that of the maximum efficiency usage of labor resources, a concept much more comprising has been contoured. This one comprises all depending factors of the agricultural geography and of the agrarian geography. In this complex vision Ion Velcea has formulated the concept of agrarian geo-economy, having the scientific capacity of synthesizing the integrality of geo-economical and demo-economical phenomena which give the synthesis of the rural space.

The rural geo-economy has in view the relations and the connections of the environment factors with the specialization and diversity of agricultural production and of the industrial-agrarian one, on territorial profile, taking into consideration also the social energy implementations - mechanization, chemistry, genetic engineering and that of working force qualification. It offers scientific concepts and scientific materials with practical implications in the intensifying capacity of agro-productive factors as well as in the location of biologic material that is in full accordance with the natural peculiarities of agricultural terrains to which it confers a superior quality. „Diversity in unity, this seems to be the essential feature of the rural world”.

c) The rural tourism / the agrotourism. The growing competition with the urban irresponsibly reduces the limits of the rural, affecting the individuality of the latter. It has mobilized and renewed the attention of specialists in tourism in order to determine the tourist vocation regions and to improve the touristic infrastructure (the viable households for tourism, the accommodation and public food bases, the communication ways, etc). The geographers are directly implying themselves in the touristic activities by analyzing and mapping the landscape elements, the relief with touristic offer (glacial, karstic, and volcanic), and all the natural and anthropical components that are implied in the touristic resources. With this end in view there shall be drawn special maps comprising a series of characteristic indicators, as follows: the declivity, the relief accidents, the risk zones, as for example: the release of detritus, of avalanches, the localization and the characteristics of water sources as well as the details concerning the climatic elements evaluation with temperature differentiations to the limitary zones, the duration and destruction of the nival casement, long term rains or torrential rains, affected areas of marsh, etc.

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5 Velcea, I., (1988), The geocology and geoeconomy of agrarian lands, Annals of the University, Geography Series.
As a sub-branch of rural geography the specialists analyze the diversity of rural background, the modifications intervening in the structure of occupied population, mostly in touristic activities, the home and international touristic flow, the quality of the ambient background belonging to the touristic vocation areas limits.

The agrotourism is exercised on low scale because the comfort conditions required services are limited. „The inn – farms and the equestrian farms that ask for a continuous activity are the most solicitant ones” in France (Marc Chesnel)⁶.

d) The geography of rural habitat. Between the sub-branches of rural geography the rural habitat geography has constituted, from old times, the major preoccupation of geographers for the analysis and determination of respectively components, of the structure and functionality, of the chrono-spatial evolution and of modernization ways. „As a permanent element, sedentary and of continuity, the Romanian Village has always had a complex characteristic physiognomy defined by the presence of a well intuit precinct where the homesteads and the outbuildings were concentrated, as well as by means of the place outside the house, the object of work and the space of developing the basic productive activities of the population”⁷.

According to Paul Fenelon’s opinion (1970) the rural habitat represents the assembly of physical, economic and human conditions that numbers the population houses and the adherent buildings. The author distinguishes between the rural habitat and the agricultural habitat, the latter one being dominated by the necessities of agricultural activities, while the rural habitat comprises also a number of managerial activities (traders, school teachers, handicraftsmen in domestic industry, and others). As to the current conception, the rural habitat represents a basic socio-economical component. It assumes a complex geographic analysis, as follows:
- the morpho-structure (concentrated, dissociated, dispersed), the texture, the size, the urbanistic degree of renewal and the functionalities (residential, productive, of traffic, and others) of a rural permanent settlement;
- the characteristics and the territorial dissemination of some simple seasonal settlements (the sheepfold, the sheep pen) and of complex settlements (dwelling, room, hut, stable, manor);
- quantitative characteristics (human potential, densities, structures, territorial mobility) and qualitative-dynamic characteristics (working forces resources, qualification degree, professionalization degree) of the rural communities;

e) Rural industry geography. Nationally and globally there are a great number of extractive and manufacturing industry units, of small and middle manual industry units that function in rural settings. By means of the Rural Developing Program, the European Council supports the constitution of small and middle enterprises for revitalizing the rural settlements, for keeping the working force into a productive activity and in order to diminish the territorial mobility of the rural population.

The geographers and sociologists involve themselves in this sub-branch of geography in order to determine the structure and functionality of rural industry, in order to analyze the land industry structure and functionality, its working force, the territorial

mobility, the modifications that intervene in the structure and the dynamics of active population, in the rural landscape physiognomy due to the industrial activities.

It is true that the sector boundaries have not been surpassed yet and an integral conception, unanimously defined over the individuality of the rural as a unitary territorial reality of the geographic space has not been crystallized. Even in the titles expressly formulated like „Studies of rural geography” or from a sociological point of view „what becomes the rural” we must observe that the researches advantage either the village, as in the first case, or only „the social reality - as landscape and socio-habitational content”, in conclusion again the village, in the second case, which is studied from the perspective of its references to the city, or the agriculture, the folklore, etc. We can not find out anything apart from these realities which are competent and well scientifically contoured, even if some people declare themselves as advocates of field conservation without revealing its valences in the rural space.

2. FUNDAMENTAL ELEMENTS OF THE RURAL SPACE

The sectorial research, on components, beginning with sociology and geography have enriched our knowledge on rural phenomena but being marked by methodological limits they do not cover the entire rural space. R. Calmés and his collaborators observe, for example, that in France, the sociological papers besides other limits „do not offer but a weak place for non-agriculture” and „the rural economy favors the agricultural economy”, as regrettable a fact as the rural space completely covers a greater diversity of functions. The observation remains valuable in the case of geography papers that handle different data and heterogeneous methods leaving uncovered the integral parts of the territorial whole. In order to cover the whole rural space, the concept of „consummation” has been proposed according to which all the components (means) of the rural compete to „the process of collective working force reproduction”. It is a way to conceptualize the rural individuality with components centered on the process of reproduction of the rural demographic fond. In other words, it turns again back to a single dimension of the rural – the collective reproduction of the working force – certainly, essential around which all the others are polarizing, but it must not be forgotten that it is not the only centripetal force and it does not take place out of the space, even humanized. The collective reproduction process is common to all the villages and we can not see the ways in which the diversities and limits of the rural, of the rural typologies can be established in this concept while the space is ignored. The concept is though a step to the multi-criteria definition of the rural space towards the restrictive definition that introduces into the rural any commune with less than 2000 inhabitants.

The given example demonstrates the current necessity of seeing in the rural more than the village, something more diverse than the agricultural economy, the non-agricultural activities and the tertiary structures (productive or business structures) would like to tell us. In this sectioning and plotting the organizers of space, the specialists in arrangements and ameliorations shall not be able to find a scientific action point integrally conceptualized and the intimate resorts concerning the rural.
THE GENETIC FACTORS OF THE EVOLUTION AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT OF TOURISM

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I. Natural Factors:
- geographical position, fundamental element within the specificity of the economic activities;
- natural scenery, landscape, entertaining, curative and cognitive value;
- favourable natural components;
- protected natural areas and biosphere reserves with international protection status.

II. Demographic Stock:
- human potential: labour, evolution of labour market and politics of occupancy on activity sectors; territorial mobility;
- skills and evolutions of the social groups (craftsmen trades);
- tourist rural settlements with watering and climatic, ethnographical and folklore, fishing, shepherd's functions.

III. Economic Basis:
- agricultural, forestry, piscicultural, hunting resources;
- industries from the rural environment, craftsman products.

IV. Structural Factors:
- youth emigration;
- depopulation of villages, private property restoration (1991, 1997, 2000);
- exaggerated parceling of agricultural lands, especially the arable ones;
- alterations within the structure of the crops.

V. Dynastic Factors:
- town economic decline due to disindustrialization;
- professional reconversion of the rural population from agricultural activities to tertiary ones.

VI. Vulnerability:
- human settlements affected by natural calamities: floods, land slides (overcharging of the slopes with households), devastating tempests, crumbling of salt mines;
- fragility of the mountain area regarding organisation and arrangement of the territory with touristic aims;
- anthropic interventions: deforestations, genetic alteration of the crops, excavation of the useful strata, constitution of the sources of public and private financing;
- generalization of the sewage network into a centralized system and of the drinking water in the rural environment;
- viability of the road infrastructure;
- programmes of rural development and the statute of the suburbs within the limits of towns;
- preservation and protection of the natural lakes, of the biosphere reservations, of the natural and national parks, of the rare phyto-fauna elements.
The concept of rural geography that has been established on the principles and the methodology of fundamental geography, as a science of the entire planet (V. Mihailescu, 1968, The Theoretical Geography, Romanian Academy Publishing House, Bucharest) conceptualizes the rural space as part and product of this whole, in which synchronically coexist physical phenomena and social structures phenomena (the habitat and its population) and the economic structures (the primary and nonagricultural economy), relational structures, etc., that intimately connected one to the other and adapted perfectly or not to the nature of this geocological support by means of reciprocal relations. As against to its components the rural defines itself as a territorial whole, locally or regionally towards which each dimension either habitational or economic, or correlational do not singularize but is a part, as a product and factor of the whole rural territorial, giving to the geographic investigation profoundly correlated finalities, from which it can be easier drawn out the openings of the geosystem, the main direction of movement of all its inner components, the flows on which the entire modality of coexistence between man and nature is established. Thus, the rural geography co-associates the frame (the nature) and the socio-productive manifestations following the law of parallelism,” upon which the frames and the manifestations can not reduce one another as they interact or structurally develop all at the same time” (Traian Herseni).

The rural, from the point of view of the conceptualized rural geography covers in conclusion a space with a diversity of physical phenomena, economical facts and structures with variable functions and relations, having greater dimensions as the component studies have sensed at first sight. In this acceptance, the property of the rural is the integrality that is the correlated sum of its real elements, not seen in their own proprieties but in their contribution to the whole rural propriety, by means of intimate relational channels and of connections of manifold components. The rural, as geographical reality is a territorial entirety, conditioned by components seen by the Rural Geography as variables (integrated by the territorial whole) that functions as an integrated system. Its fundamental habitat elements, its economical structures and services are regarded by the Rural Geography in reciprocal interaction relations that are developed on a natural conditioning fond and form an organized whole, more or less functional. Other scientific disciplines have to study each proprieties component in itself, proprieties which the rural geography is assimilating as a relation and interaction structured potential in determining the rural individuality. Also in this case, the idea expressed by Vintila Mihailescu, that of „divisions of geography are not divisions of the object but of the organized research on phases and elaborating ways, on branches and departments”. The inhabiting and humanizing of the Romanian geographic space have followed the same way of inland identity and lead to the same results with local original peculiarities which were inherent to the geo-ecologic frame and to the fond vitality or to the demographic vitality, vigorously and steady in its communitarian efforts. All over the country the rural inhabiting of the Geto-Dacic and Daco-Roman land shows itself as synthesis of both ancient socio-historic, everlasting and of great complexity processes and phenomena. Their corollary has defined and is continuing to define a rural network processing constituted and perfectly adapted to the diversity of ecogeographic and historically-social local factors. Its originality derives naturally from the synchronic-

generalized necessity of living and of the ethno-cultural fond, dominantly native, Traco-Geto-Dacian, Dacian-Roman and Romanian crystallized on a territorial unit that is constituted by rich lowlands, appealing hills and protective mountains. These unitary components by geological evolution and morphogenesis, by hydrological convergences and pedo-hydro-geographic cumulates a natural potential that is improved by a real human vocation, synchronized in different applications and with fully social consequences.

Few people of the world could benefit of such unity between man and nature and in such a big proportion of the inhabited land favorability contribution in affirming the **Self Identity** that synthesizes and subordinates to this ideal the historical and the geographic arguments which have closely and fully co-operated in the developed our bimillenary past. The Carpathians crown has been the permanent support, the genetic source of most great natural individualities, of geographic manifestations and dynamiting support, of social life facts from the Danube to the Black Sea. It began to function with social vocation from the appearance of man and of rural archaic communities until the constitution, in the interior and marginal of the great present urban-rural agglomerations with such differentiated participations in the field of contemporary human world values.

According to this point of view the Rural Geography is a geography branch, a peculiar discipline that determines and defines the rural as the most comprising human affirmation area in the geographic space. Although its extension, through its transforming possibilities in values of unlimited natural resources usage as well as by means of the space offer for residential improvement, the rural cannot be individualized but by a synthetic analysis, method by which the Rural Geography operates all its components integration phases in the social-economic whole. The more rural combination variables is more complex the most compelling is the ascertainment that the human action has been more anchored in these formal stable living realities, the human potential has favored more usage values and the progress is manifesting more significantly.

The Rural Geography does not conceptualize the rural as a passive whole or as previously called in a certain concept **the consummation space**, that is of continuation, of consequences. On the contrary, it is a continuously space of interventions and actions between man and nature, between components and the whole having as a resultant, respectively integrated global consequence the achievement of fundamental structures of socio-spheres, undissociable to the territorial whole, especially as against the socio-economic whole that is specific to the rural space.

This does not mean that the Rural Geography considers the profile territorial whole as a space of interferences and connections in which the components disappear, lose their identity as it is well known that there are no functions outside some structures. For example, the village is not studied as a unit (object of human geography) but we can not forget that by means of its functions, the village is significantly marking the land views; it is enlisting with considerably supply in vivifying other structures. In fact everything that is connected to the land and its capitalization has come back to its managers, the peasants. Must we also underline the fact that the village is in itself the matrix of demographic positive change of the city and on other sides, it is a money provisioner for agro-alimentary products and of raw materials? Underlying its functions and contribution to the dynamics and consolidation of the whole rural, the Rural Geography does not diminish its stature quality in the territorial complex of the village. This optics remains consequent also in viewing the other components like the economic dimension, the production factor that result from the village
references to nature and other surrounding elements. Even the simple farms of rural homesteads, the usual housing for man and animal, with small production attributes are closely correlated on one side, with the physical factors and on the other hand, and mostly, with the extensive usage types of rural territory which is predominantly forest-pastoral.

3. THE RURAL TERRITORIAL COMPLEX

We have anticipated some definitions concerning the interferences between the Rural Geography and the non-geographic sciences that refer to the rural. The fact that Rural Geography is a synthesis science of the Complex Rural Territorial, seen as a whole, leaves to the historians the study in itself of the social group (of the social function), to the economists – interested in the analysis of economical structures, and so on. We must observe that almost none, if not almost all researchers do not begin from nature to man, as geography does, but from man and group (sociology), from economists (economy) etc. studies the real categories in themselves, ignoring the fact that the surrounding influence is a postulate, which is at the basis of each science that discloses the active adaptation of man and does not confirm a passive assertion of man to the external surrounding (G. Valsan, Works, page 5). The scientific contribution is rich and remarkable in the knowledge of rural phenomena. These adjacent profile sciences which Geography meets and collaborates on a common field, taking over and using its results, chosen with apprehension and discernment help Geography to organically integrate and correlate the rural complex components, based on essential data and on the social and economic sciences established by these disciplines. And, not remaining on a "strange terrain" the geographer follows the principle of „the proper laws of the studied element.... these relation with the territorial whole to which it belongs as factor and product, representing the geographic research specific” (V. Mihăilescu, Works).

The place of Rural Geography, as a science of the whole rural complex, among the geographic sciences has not been approached methodologically until now. The syntheses on the rural space which this discipline tries to outline are especially useful and are searched with interest by the integrate establishment engineering. The condition is that Rural Geography should demonstrate a good and compelling orienation on this sensible and unstable terrain and to offer, on theoretical basis and on proper applicative options a solid starting point.

It has been indisputably demonstrated that the beginning of modern geography has begun with a series of geographical branches “that deserve to be consolidated as peculiar geographic sciences, besides the fundamental geography” (V. Mihăilescu, Works). It is the normal development way of geography as a science, with specialization research branches that do not dissociate the object but recruit it. In order to remain in geography, as a science, these branches have as postulate „ the preliminary assimilation of the principles of theoretical geography that refer to the object and method and to the knowing of the integral complex in which the chosen element is incorporated as object of their special research” (Ibid).

In the light of these principles the Rural Geography constitutes, as object and method a peculiar geographical branch, specialized and established to scientific knowledge and not to its constituent, but to the entire rural geographic space. From the position of geography as science, it makes a scientific synthesis of a social existence model and of a
way of space organizing that presents itself in landscapes as a territorial individuality in itself, stimulated by nature laws and regularities, in the order of substratum, by the economic laws and regularities, by the level of superstructure and of general functions in the process of the entire territorial entirety. The Rural Geography does not singularize its demarche neither in the support of determination factors, nor in man created cover as product and factor of the entire rural territorial, as sciences do when dividing in components and branches. It consecrates the study of an entire local rural, regional and planetary, consequently regarded not from a certain angle, but from all those which by means of functions and connections configure the whole in its integral manifestation.

We consider that it is clear enough that the Rural Geography does not overlap the domains, forms and processes studied in the rural territories by the other geographical branches. These follow a geographic analysis of a component, as for example the village or the economy, which the rural settlement geography and respectively, the geography of rural economy reads as part and not as a whole, although the geographic method asks for their adjustment to the entire territorial. This is not the same as the research of the whole, as complex rural system on which the Rural Geography integrally pronounces itself. Nevertheless it uses the data and the branches conclusions for motivating the image of the whole, of the rural landscape as a qualitative resultant of the co-operation of some hierarchic factors that are conditioned and interconditioned at the level of geographic synthesis. If it can not exceed the phases by means of components and branches, if it does not follow their integrating functions in the entire rural, then it locates as a geographic branch discipline and can not reach the specific sense of synthesis, phase at which it reaches only by „progressive spatial integration of the regional and local complexes” (V. Mihailescu, Works) part of which are also the rural complexes, with a corresponding taxonomy. It is neither simple nor easy to presents into an integrated synthesis the convergence points and the dynamics directions of inhabited spaces, of productive spaces, the other forming the base of their becoming. This is the research object of Rural Geography - integrated synthesis on the entire rural territorial – which differentiates it from the branch Rural Geography, having as subject „a certain part of the whole”, dissociated only on methodological necessities, as the whole can not be but unitary, to which the geographic research relates as product and factor, each analyzed phase.

4. GEOGRAPHIC PARTICULARITIES OF THE ROMANIAN VILLAGE

In Romania there are 13,000 villages, grouped in 2861 communes (2012) from which 62% are concentrated in the 4 historical extra-Carpathian provinces (Moldova, Dobrogra, Muntenia and Oltenia). They offer the prevalent note of the geographic landscape, concentrating 90% from the total surface of the country taking into consideration the extension of residential areas (village precincts) and of the productive ones (agricultural, forestry aquatic, special land). Numerically, the rural settlements register 45% from the total number of Romania’s inhabitants (2008), as a result of the population mobility and mostly as a result of definitive displacement intensification in urban industrial centers.

The rural permanent settlements are to be found in all relief unities of the country, but registering a greater concentration in the plain and low hills regions (over ¾ from the total number of villages). Altimetrically they develop from 3-5m in the Danube Delta (Vulturu, Cardon, a.s.o.) up to 1600m, in the Apuseni Mountains (Pietroasa, aprox. 160m).
Most of them, respectively 78% from the total localities (Geography of Romania, vol. II, 1984) are situated up to the altitude of 400m (from which ¼ between 200 and 400m), where the geo-ecologic offer is very favorable for agriculture and the geographic position and localization have stimulated the complex development of economic activities, of economic connections. Thus, only in the Romanian Depression there are concentrated 14% of the total number of villages and aprox. one third of the country’s rural population. Aprox. 20% from the total rural localities are placed at altitudes between 400 and 800m, corresponding to hills and high plains having rich land, mining and energetic resources and a greater agricultural complexity (vine-orchard and especially, zootechnic). At altitudes of over 800m, in the mountainous space accessible to permanent homestead, the rural localities represent aprox. 2% from the total settlements and are predominantly shaped for animal breeding based on natural pasture and hay.

The structure of rural settlements, that is the degree of denseness the homestead in the village precinct are differentiated according to the relief unities, to the degree of relief fragmentation and as to the nature of economic activities. According to these there have been determined three great types of settlements: villages with spread structure (dispersed or spread), characteristic for mountain regions where the agrarian space (predominantly the natural pasture and hay) are inserted in the village precinct; here the homestead alternate with temporary settlements (dwellings and rooms) spread all over the local territory; villages with spread structure (dissociated), specific to hill regions, determined by the existence of land resources, especially of vine-orchard cultures which give the dispersed and extensive character of homesteads; villages with collected/added structure, that exist in the plain and low hills regions, that have a predominantly corny-zootechnic profile and with an important human potential. Apart from these there are the villages out of the limits of Sibiu Depression, partially Barsei Depression and those of Banatului Plain, where the homestead appear compact having numerous premises for animal breeding and forage bestowing. In the Getic Plateau etc. there appear linear type villages („road villages”) spread along the communication ways and the valley lane. To be observed that the structure of some rural settlements from the hill region has evolved towards the collected/added type as the economic function has amplified.

In the Danube Delta there are either villages with collected/added homesteads, as those from the loess field of Chilia (Chilia Veche/Old Chilia), either villages with a spread structure and a mono-linear texture, determined by the orientation of fluvial grounds (Vulturu Gorgova, Crisan) or of the fluvial-maritime type (Sf.Gheorghe, C.A.Rosetti, Letea, etc). The number of inhabitants in the Danube Delta has been of 14000 in the year 2003, as to 20000 inhabitants registered in 1980.

The Romanian villages – having common features from the point of view of life mode, of production organization and of geographic landscape – present some regional differences as to the development historical-social conditions, as to the potencies of geographic medium, as to the capitalization degree of natural resources. Thus, the rural settlements of the central and western part of Romania, like some of the sub-Carpathian regions, who have entered earlier on the handicraft groove and that of complex land capitalization do not rise difficult problems in the systematization and modernization process. These settlements having great population agglomerations have a compact structure, a civic centre and a well built street grating; most of them have also industrial enterprises of national and local importance. For example, in Brasov County there are
numerous rural settlements that have enterprises, as: Bod (sugar enterprise), Prejmar, Lunca Calnicului, Halchiu, etc. (textile enterprises), Homorod (wood manufacturing), Cristian (furniture enterprise), etc.

In the extra-Carpathian regions where the plain and low hills relief is predominant the rural settlements have a collected/added structure and a geometrical texture. The agrarian and the agrarian-industrial function are predominant as against the potential of land, mining and energetic resources, as against the economic-social degree of rural settlements. The modification of economic base, by means of oil exploitation increase, of agriculture and communication ways modernization shall allow the reshaping of localities evolving to urban forms.

The rural settlements from the upper regions, with spread homesteads or spread along the mountain slopes, isolated from the access roads, insufficient edilitary fitted etc. have to be equipped from a technical-edilitary and social-economically point of view for developing a civilized life. The Romanian village shall continue, in the new socio-economic structures to represent a historic-social and social-economic category with a certain specific that derives from the characteristic occupational system, extensively non-crowded and creative-meditative. The village (without constituting an appendix of the city for placing the sweeping, the industrial scrap) shall be in a full coexistence with the city as to the value changes, this deriving from the industrial and agro-alimentary work specific which complete and influence each other. The towns shall continue to have a dynamiting role in economic and social life for the neighboring places.

In present conditions of great interest there is also the problem of protecting and maintaining the quality of rural environment, with all its originalities and richness of landscape. The process of organizing the geographic space that shall release into a new conception shall lead not only to contouring of some compact, collected structures with geometric textures but also to the preserving of landscape elements, of art monuments and of other nature, with touristic attributes, not affecting the traditional specific of the Romanian village, bearer of spiritual and material values.

REFERENCES


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