

**RURAL AND PERIURBAN ENVIRONMENT- FEATURES,
TRENDS AND IMPORTANT ACTORS**

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***Abstract:** The paper has the primary purpose of underlining the specific features, trends, and important actors for the rural area. In this regard, we want to underline the fact that the development of rural communities is an actual and essential subject and described as a process in which the community is actively involved in order to mobilize all initiatives, as well as those who play the decisive roles: the community, the state, and the civil society. To pursue the primary purpose of the paper, the authors have followed a multicriteria analysis. The main findings of the periurban areas pointed out in the conclusion section are the idea of the rural area's authenticity and actors that play essential roles in supporting future development.*

Key words: rural environment, periurban environment, features, trend, actors

INTRODUCTION

The rural environment is expressively detached from the urban environment. The rhythm of life and work processes is subordinate to natural laws that print cyclicity and seasonality with different work intensities. The seasonality and cyclicity of the work processes print a specific way of life with more divergences than the convergence with the urban way of life.

In its evolution, the rural area has shown two contradictory tendencies. On the one hand, the rural area was dominated by conservative tendencies regarding the economic, ecological, and social environment.

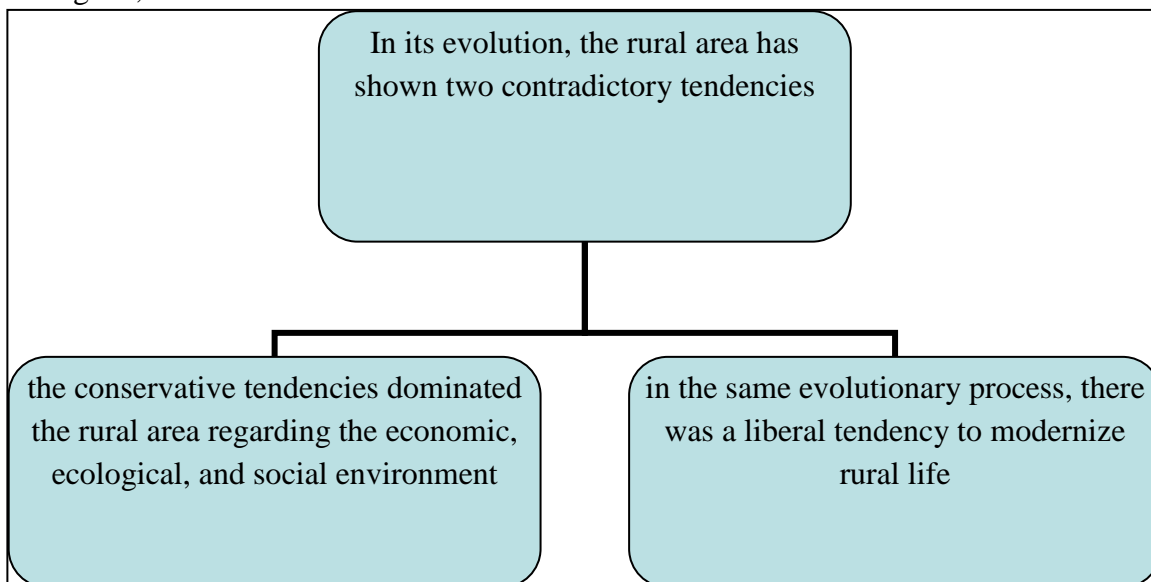


Figure 1. Trends manifested by the rural area

On the other hand, there was a liberal tendency to modernize rural life in the same evolutionary process. The decision-makers must create the framework in which the balance between preserving the rural area's traditional values and modernization can be ensured. Next, the Romanian rural area will surely follow the path of structural and functional

changes [2,14] due to the emergence and development of non-agricultural activities, among which the services will have the highest share. [7]

The central issue of Bernard Kayser's synthesis is one of rural rebirth. In fact, it is the analysis of a phenomenon of demographic growth in the rural area of changing the meaning of migration, from migration with rural-urban sense to migration with urban-rural sense. The phenomenon was reported at the 1982 French census and was also called urbanization or counter-urbanization. According to Kayser [13] and other authors [3,8,11], the rural revival is explained through the following determinants: municipal policy, receptivity, land use, use of neighbors, agricultural development, tourist sites, secondary residences, available homes, and endless options.

The paper aims to synthesize the rural area-specific features, clarify the periurban rural area, and play essential roles in supporting future development.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The paper has the primary purpose of underlining the specific features, trends, and important rural area actors. In this regard, to pursue the main purpose of the paper, the authors have followed several stages regarding:

- First of all, the authors pursue the stage of data collection, using different references from specific literature;
- Then the data were subjected to a fair analysis and interpretation;
- Furthermore, last but not least, it comes to the stage of data interpretation.

The main conclusions were expressed in the paper in such a way as to strengthen the object proposed for research. To pursue the main purpose of the paper, the authors have followed a multicriteria analysis.

RESEARCH RESULTS

Otiman P.I. made a synthesis of the rural area, capturing a range of features specific to the European rural area. The main features of the European rural area captured are shown below: [9]

From the economic structure, in the rural area, the agricultural activities generally occupy the most extensive areas, agriculture representing the "backbone of the rural." Agriculture usually occupies the most extensive rural area because, in some areas (mountains), forestry and forestry activities (wood processing, crafts activities, forest resource processing industries) are predominant both territorially and occupationally. Also, in the mountainous, coastal, and delta areas, the predominant agritourism, recreational, fishing, and hunting activities can be predominant.

- Most of the professions practiced in the rural area are practical, manual professions, some of which require professional polyqualification. The population employed in services, in administrative, social activities are lower, as share. A large part of the population that works entirely in the non-productive sector also has a productive activity, usually in agriculture. It is an essential feature of the rural population to work concurrently in the agricultural and non-agricultural sectors.

- In a rural area, private, family property is predominant, compared to urban-industrial areas. The division of private property in a rural area, the development of the sense of ownership had several positive consequences on the rural inhabitants entrepreneurial spirit.

From the point of view of population density and human settlements, the rural area is much airier, more humanized. The rural area has a closer social life; its participation in community issues is more emphasized.

- The natural landscape of the countryside is an invaluable heritage of humanity. The calm, the peace, the climate, the fresh air, the soothing landscape of social calm cannot be quantified to measure the rural habitat.

- The social and cultural life, the characteristic of the rural, is an unequalled heritage of humanity, an element that, together with economy and ecology, gives the proper dimension and value to the rural area.

Another specialist, Graeme Hugo pointed out some of the widely accepted traditional characteristics established between rural and urban areas:[6]

Table 1.

Traditional features established in a rural and urban area

Size	Rural area
Economic	The primary sector and its activities
Occupational structure	Agriculture and other related activities
The level of education and training	Lower than the national average
Access to information	Low
Access to services	Low
Demographic	High fertility and mortality
Political	Conservatism and resistance to change predominate
Ethnic	Vary
Migration level	Low in the sense of coming out of the countryside

Source: Graeme Hugo, Anthony Champion, Alfredo Lattes, New Conceptualisation of Settlement for Demography: Beyond The Rural/Urban Dichotomy, Paper prepared for Session 42 IUSSP Conference, Bahia, Brazil, 2001

A report of the European Commission entitled "European Cooperation for Territorial Development" trying to describe the changes and trends that occur in the European rural area, based on the main economic activities, made a classification of the rural areas according to these activities.[15]

The periurban rural area comprises the area bordering the big cities and industrial centers, with the radius of variable length between 10 and 50 km, depending on the industrial pole's economic and administrative power.

The periurban rural areas are usually the liveliest but also with the most vigorous urban footprint. In these areas, both urbanization and ruralization phenomena are manifested in parallel, which gives them a rural-urban hybrid character. For the town and the technical equipment, these areas are more evolved due to the educational influence (regarding the urban way of life) and the population's higher incomes. In contrast, from an architectural and cultural perspective, the periurban rural areas are strong and, most of the time, negatively influenced and even polluted by the urban. The authentic rural is increasingly absent. The population of these localities is always heterogeneous. Most of the periurban rural localities are mainly dependent on (residential) habitat for the population working in the cities. Most of the inhabitants of these areas commute daily, in the morning to workplaces, school, market, and afternoon the commute is made in the opposite direction to the village, to houses. In developed countries, as well as in our country, in these perimeters, the telecommunication and transport networks are developed (highways, ring roads, roads, train lines, trams, subways).

In periurban rural areas, the population movement is much more robust, determining the localities' heterogeneous character. In many localities, "new neighborhoods" have appeared in which the inhabitants come from all corners of the country or the world in countries of great economic attraction (Germany, Switzerland, France).

From an economic point of view, periurban areas are firmly and variously developed. The economy is mixed: agricultural, industrial, and service, in the favorable areas (mountain, coast, lakes, and points of tourist attraction) to rural tourism and agritourism economy is prevalent. Agriculture has a structure suitable for approaching the

big markets, having, as a rule, vegetable, fruit, animal breeding character, (dairy cows). In agricultural farms, intensive agriculture is practiced in most cases. Due to population density and the attraction of periurban areas, farms have small to medium-sized areas. On many farms, it works part-time, commuting employees working on family farms as well. Many rural households are hobby-farm or subsistence farms.

The industry's development in rural areas imposed itself in the 1970s the conception of rural-urban development of agricultural areas.

In the densely populated countries or some dense areas, there have been signs of urbanization of the villages, which have become vast dormitories for the cities that are not suitable for the exodus or uncontrolled migration. In addition to multiple social signs, conflicts of interest have arisen between the local population and the newcomers. The growth of the population in these new "rural" neighborhoods pushed the investors towards the implantation of large investments, leading to the phenomenon of industrial gigantism and, consequently, to the use of these localities. Few localities in Germany, Austria, Holland fully felt this process in 1970-1980.

The new concept of rural development of periurban areas has at its center the idea of rural authenticity by implanting small and medium-sized private companies located downstream and upstream of agriculture to discourage commuting and stabilize long as possible local population. Simultaneously, local authorities in peri-urban areas began to have ecological, social, and cultural and financial-economic interests at the center of their concerns. This policy implicitly leads to the villagers' struggle against urbanization and distortion of their rural character.[1,12]

Thus the concept of rural development of periurban areas has at its center the idea of rural authenticity through the implantation of small and medium-sized private enterprises located downstream and upstream of agriculture to discourage commuting and to stabilize, as long as it is possible, the local population. Simultaneously, local authorities in periurban areas began to have ecological, social, and cultural and financial-economic interests at the center of their concerns. This policy implicitly leads to the villagers' struggle against urbanization and distortion of their rural character. Some of the future proposals for improving local development are mentioned in table 2.

Table 2.

Directions, goals, and measures for suburban rural area development

Direction	Objectives	Measures
Modernization of technical infrastructure	Connecting to regional and national transport network	Rehabilitation of communal and village roads
Maintaining a healthy environment	Ensuring a healthy environment	Increasing the level of knowledge of the population on environmental protection
		Conservation of the natural resources of the biosphere for future generations
	Attracting investors attracting tourists	Rehabilitation of historical sites, heritage conservation

Source: own proposals

In order to emphasize as accurately as possible what the concept of rural development means in real life, it is necessary to present the actors, as well as those who play the decisive roles in this complex activity:

- *The community* is the most important actor in rural development, representing, in fact, the basis from which it starts in this process, as well as the primary beneficiary of the development. To best highlight what the community means for rural development, we will begin with its basic "cell," represented by the man (as an individual and social being). The practice proves that any individual, regardless of the level of training, can answer the question "what do you mean by rural development?" in the sense of those listed, but in

other words, which have the same meaning. We can be convinced that most people know what they want and feel when there is progress in their lives when they feel better or worse.

The rural community leader is an actor who must be present on the stage of rural development. He must embody the feelings and aspirations of community members and strive for their ideals. It must be understood that the elected community plays a decisive role in its development process and that voters put their hope in it in order to solve the problems that are always postponed for "new times" or for new mandates.

As a guarantor of stability and social order, the state is the second important rural development actor. In our opinion, the first structure that has to deal with designing a viable mechanism for rural development is the parliament. The parliamentary activity must seriously address the issue of rural development. In this sense, it is necessary to ensure a healthy social climate and an economic environment conducive to long-term sustainable development. This economic environment can be ensured by stable laws, starting from the current realities in the field.

The second important structure that must act on rural development is the government, which implements the legislative framework elaborated by the parliament. However, the role of the government, as an executive, is much more complex. Government policy in the field of sustainable development can have effects of progress, regress, or stagnation. The government has all the economic-financial levers that guide and stabilize the rural economy, as well as the legislative initiative, which can complement and harmonize this framework.

Civil society, seen as a separate "power," can play an important role in developing and implementing programs that will lead to sustainable development in a booming economy. In a democratic state, civil society is an active partner in the elaboration and transposition into the practice of rural development programs.

The role of civil society in rural development can be found in the influence of each of the four pillars listed: government, parliament, elected community, individual and/or community, playing a feed-back role in each activity, in order to focus attention on programs and actions, in order to increase the progress and welfare of the economy and the rural environment.

CONCLUSIONS

The development of rural communities can be described as a process in which the community is actively involved in mobilizing all initiatives to capitalize on its resources for the community's social and economic benefit. Such development of rural communities involves close links and cooperation with political power and civil society. Represented by non-governmental associations, with public institutions or development agencies that can help rural communities, with institutions, agencies, and organizations that manage structural funds or unique for rural assistance and development, local or regional development councils, ability to promote local development projects.[4]

The local initiative has an essential role in the development of the rural community, through which a partnership is created to identify and solve community problems and promote them in the form of projects in order to find solutions that lead to the community's involvement in a continuous process of development on viable, sustainable principles. At the same time, this also assumes the risk of solving the identified problems. The ways and methods of solving them, adopted by those who take this risk, must correspond to the community's needs, create beneficial effects for its development, and aim for sustainable development. [5,10]

The legislation must ensure the creation of an institutional framework that will support the rural economy, the individual's protection, and the producer. The parliament must also ensure its continuity to ensure stability to the rural economic environment, because rural development is a long-term linear process, materialized in programs and strategies covering 10 to 20 years.

Civil society can organize itself in multiple organizational forms: associations, foundations, federations; to act to develop the rural area through appropriate initiatives and programs; to manifest through different forms of struggle and protest over governmental policies, which slip towards the regressor stagnation of the economic and social life in the rural area.

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