

RURAL AREA - TYPOLOGY AND TRENDS

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Abstract: In Europe, rural area has been studied for a long time, with a general trend of regionalization. In its evolution, the rural area showed several contradictory tendencies, the structural and functional changes having to support the development of non-agricultural activities. In this paper the main objective is to prioritize the typology of the rural area, taking into account several aspects.

Key words: rural area, typology, trends, regionalization

INTRODUCTION

In Europe, rural area has been studied long time, ethnographically or geographically. Over time, several research paradigms have emerged:

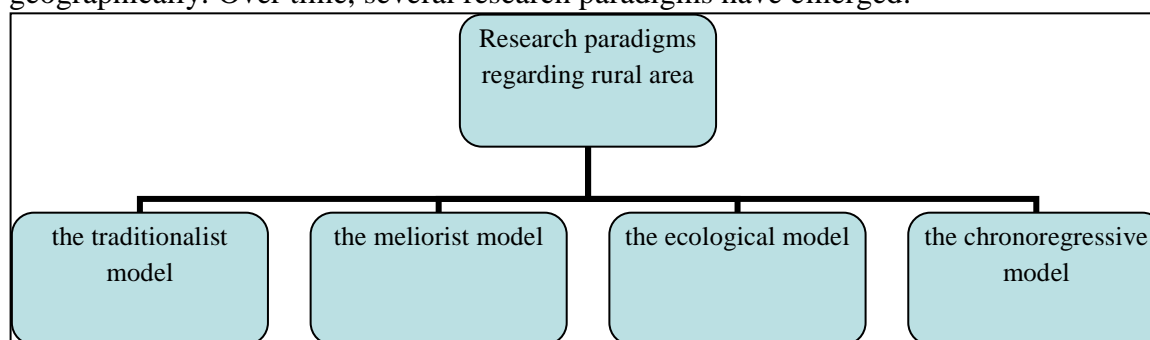


Figure 1. Research paradigms regarding rural area

Source: own processing

1. the traditionalist model, which considers the rural environment, respectively the village, as the true keeper of the spirituality, specificity and originality of a culture, of a society, the researches of this kind seeking to reveal the traditional rural values, behaviors and symbols;

2. the meliorist model, which considers the rural environment as the genetic form of a society, but insufficiently evolved and which must be brought to the level of urban structures. Research in this area generally measures the gap between urban and rural areas, in terms of income, education, comfort and productivity;

3. the ecological model, which reveals the specificity, particularities and advantages of the contemporary rural way of life;

4. the chronoregressive model, used, in general, in the monographs of rural settlements.

In its evolution, rural area showed two contradictory tendencies. [2,5] On the one hand, the rural area was dominated by conservative tendencies regarding the economic, ecological and social environment. On the other hand, in the same evolutionary process, the liberal tendency to modernize rural life manifested itself. The decision-makers must create the framework in which the balance between the conservation tendency of the traditional values of the rural area and the one of its modernization can be ensured. Furthermore, rural area will certainly follow the path of structural and functional changes

due to the emergence and development of non-agricultural activities, among which services will have the largest share. [13,3,5,6]

Between the authentic rural space and the urban, industrial space, there are a series of characteristics that give the first individuality and authenticity, among which the following can be signaled: [8,9,10,11,12]

- the economic structure of the rural space, formed by a diversity of agricultural farms, commercial units, services and small and medium enterprises with agro-industrial character, with agrarian preponderance; In some areas, such as mountain and perimeter, forestry and forestry-related activities, forestry, woodworking, handicrafts, domestic activities, other natural resource processing industries, are predominant activities both territorially and occupationally. Also, in some areas such as mountains, seaside and delta, other income-generating activities can be developed, such as tourism and agritourism, leisure, fishing and sport hunting.

- from an occupational point of view, the rural space is predominantly a production space in which the activities of the primary sectors have a rather high share from an economic point of view; the sectors of agri-food production, forestry and forestry, wood industrialization, mining, agriculture-related industry, household industry and crafts have a significant share in the general activity in rural areas. Most of the professions practiced in rural areas are practical, manual professions, some of which require professional qualification. In addition, due to the nature of the activity, the phenomenon of mutual aid, of cooperation between the villagers is much more present compared to the urban space.

- the predominance of private, family property, compared to urban-industrial areas. Also, in rural areas, the public and private property of the state is much more restricted, being reduced, as a rule, to national reservations and parks, lands adjacent to roads and transport networks, some parks with special destination.

- the countryside is an invaluable landscape, floral and faunal heritage, with multiple qualities beneficial to health and recreation.

- the rural way of life, the traditions and the customs, form the popular, local or regional culture - a patrimony with unique value. The long-accumulated treasure is also a feature of great attraction for country life.

- observance of the principles of continuity and complementarity of agri-food activities, non-agricultural activities, especially those of industry and services, are based on complementarity with agriculture.

- state intervention, through which, starting from private initiatives in developed countries, the state has encouraged, through regional and rural policies, the development of those agricultural activities located downstream and upstream of agriculture, as well as those that process local raw materials. Small and medium-sized enterprises have been established in the rural area, which have employed the labor force from the respective rural areas. Thus, the segment of rural population engaged in non-agricultural activities has the opportunity to work full-time, in industry or services, and part-time, in agriculture.

The principle of integration of agri-food activities has been one of the pillars of rural policies of developed countries. According to this principle, the transport of the finished product is easier and more economical than that of the raw material, which has led to the expansion of investments.

With a strong emphasis on the development of private initiative and the associative spirit of the rural population, public support measures have focused on the development of activities located upstream and downstream of agriculture, as well as on the processing of local raw materials and creation and development of small and medium-sized enterprises that have employed labor force in the respective rural areas, thus reducing unemployment. Thus, the segment of the rural population engaged in non-agricultural activities has the

opportunity to work full time in these activities and part time in agriculture. In addition, special emphasis is placed on the idea of expanding investments in rural localities, which is based on the principle of increased economic efficiency of the development of the production of finished materials locally.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The authors of this paper have as main purpose to review the main typologies specific to the rural area, starting from several criteria: NUTS typology, OCDE typology, EUROSTAT typology, and also typology of rural areas by specific of activities, the typology that take in consideration the quality and geographical location. So to achieve the purpose proposed the authors used several types of information categories, synthetize the main conclusion and achieve the draft of the paper.

RESEARCH RESULTS

In the last 20 years, there has been a general current of regionalization in Europe. The term "region" used to describe political or administrative entities encompasses a wide range of concepts.

PER URBAN RURAL AREA

The peri-urban rural area includes a 50-100 km wide strip around large cities or human settlements. From an ethno-cultural point of view, the peri-urban rural space underwent a mixed influence, both of the urban and of the rural space, the result being a hybrid.

From an economic point of view, the peri-urban rural space has specific features that derive from the very geographical position it has. The economy of this area is derived from the needs of agri-food products of the urban population. In general, the peri-urban rural area is focused on the production of fresh consumable agri-food goods. Thus, in the peri-urban rural area, fresh vegetables and fruits are produced, animal products also consumed fresh. These include: fresh vegetables, even truffles, fresh fruits such as cherries, sour cherries, strawberries, livestock products, such as fresh milk, especially cottage cheese but also fresh sheep, cream, fresh homemade eggs, etc. .

The possibility of producing and capitalizing on the free market of plant and animal products creates great advantages for the rural population in the rural area. In these markets the price of the offered products is negotiated between the urban consumer and the rural producer, in this way the peasant market being considered to be an authentic one.

In the peri-urban rural area, smaller peasant farms are usually organized, but which are exploited in an increased intensity. Here superintensive crops are practiced, through a chemicalization not so much increased in quantity, but especially distributed in phases, so that the effect of fertilizers is increased accordingly. The supply period of vegetable products, especially fresh vegetables, is extended as a result of the practice of agricultural systems based on the postponement of sowing periods, a variant that leads to a postponement and nationalization in time of the harvesting periods of the products. In this way the duration of consumption of a fresh product is extended 3-4 times or even more.

In the peri-urban rural area, a large part of the retirees of the activities in the urban area live. At retirement age, they retire to small households and are taken to the peri-urban area, where they practice pleasure farming. Thus was born what in the agrarian-economic language is called hobby-farms. These are small farms, which even if they offer almost the entire volume of goods obtained to the market, also fall into the category of subsistence. This characteristic is given by the fact that only a small part of the obtained income covers the needs of the pensioner's family, most of the financial needs being provided from pensions or other sources. [2.3]

INTERMEDIARY RURAL AREA

The intermediate rural area has the widest extension. It covers the vast majority of agricultural areas. Within the intermediate rural area the main economic concern of the people is the agricultural production. In the plain areas of the intermediate rural space are located the large basins of agricultural production of cereals and technical plants, while in the hilly areas are located the large fruit and vineyards. Also here, as a result of the large share of natural meadows, the breeding and exploitation of animals, especially the cattle and sheep branch, acquires a special extension. The birds and the pig branch are located in the lowland areas, given that the fodder resources for these species are obtained from the cultivation of cereals, especially corn and fodder barley.

In terms of agricultural production, the intermediate rural area has the greatest tasks. Most of the primary agricultural products needed by the agri-food processing industries needed for the country's consumption must be produced here. Within this rural production area the old agricultural production systems have been or should have been replaced with new, high yield and productivity systems. The intermediate agricultural space offers the most favorable conditions for the development of commercial farms instead of subsistence ones. It is the place to define the concept of subsistence farms and commercial farms.

These small, even very small farms do not provide even the full volume of agricultural products needed by the farmer's family, or in other words the entire production is consumed within the farmer's family, without any part being destined for the market. In other words, these farms do not produce goods, that is, they do not produce for the market. Agricultural farms that produce only for domestic consumption and not for the agri-food market are called subsistence farms.

In contrast to subsistence farms are commercial farms. Due to their size, they produce a volume of agricultural products that exceed the domestic consumption of the farmer's family. The difference from the own consumption needs is destined for the agri-food products market, meaning it becomes a commodity production.

After the application of Law 18/1991, except for the Commercial Companies coming from the former IAS, about 90-95% of the existing private-family farms in Romania had a subsistence character, only the difference having a commercial character. Further, agricultural holdings being included in a natural development process have evolved into the characteristics of commercial farms. It is estimated that currently 52% of the agricultural area used is included in farms or farms with an area of more than 10 ha, and 25-30% of the area used would be included in commercial farms. It is an expected evolutionary process, basically normal.

The advantage of small commercial farms no longer needs to be demonstrated. However, we specify that the commercial farm through its size and less pronounced parcelling allows the application of advanced agricultural systems and modern production technologies. The commercial volume will ensure the entire volume of agricultural products necessary for the market of agricultural products and the processing and producing industries of agri-food goods necessary for the company's consumption. This must be the evolution of agrarian structures in Romania, and the target commercial farm towards which the structure of agricultural holdings in our country must aim in the future.

RURAL AREA FROM PERIPHERY

The peripheral agricultural area has a lower agricultural importance. Peripheral agrarian space, or marginal as it is also called, bears this name not so much because of the position it occupies geographically, but especially because of the low marginal productivity that characterizes it. Because of this, the peripheral rural area has a completely

disadvantaged character. The peripheral rural area is characterized by low unit yields, due to low soil fertility in this area.

Being located in peripheral positions and geographically, the peripheral rural area has much smaller commercial facilities than the other two categories of rural space. The size of the peripheral rural space in Romania is estimated at about 3.0-3.2 million ha. It is characterized by lands located on slopes, sometimes very large, subject to erosion, with the thickness of the soil layer on a small and thick slope at the bottom of the hill.

Even climatic factors in these areas are less favorable to agricultural production. Without appropriate anthropogenic interventions (earthmoving, combating soil erosion through appropriate agricultural systems, restoring the reserve of organic matter in the soil by applying organic or green fertilizers, restoring the reserve of nutrients in easily assimilable forms by applying chemical fertilizers, etc.). the fertility of these lands remains low, which determines unit yields below the threshold of profitability of agricultural production.

As the agri-food needs of the society increase, the intermediate rural space is no longer able to provide this need alone, due to which a certain part falls to the marginal or peripheral rural space. However, as this space has been shown without the appropriate anthropic measures, it remains a generator of poverty for those who will try or continue to exploit it agriculturally.

There are other typologies of classification:

1. NUTS TYPOLOGY

This nomenclature was developed by the European Statistical Office (Eurostat) in order to create a coherent structure of territorial distribution throughout the European Union. It has been in use since 1988 and uses five categories of territorial units. [1,14,15]

For Romania, the delimitation by NUTS regions is the following:

- NUTS level I: macro-regions, not currently used.
- NUTS II level: 8 development regions, with an average population of 2.8 million inhabitants.
- NUTS III level: 42 counties, which reflect the territorial administrative structure of Romania.
- NUTS IV level: not used, because no associations of territorial units have been identified.
- NUTS V level: 265 municipalities and cities, 2,686 communes, with 13,092 villages, which reflect the territorial administrative structure of Romania.

Table 1.

European Union regionalization by NUTS type

	NUTS1 units	NUTS2 units	NUTS3 units	NUTS4 units	NUTS5 units
Belgium	3	11	43	-	589
Czech Republic	1	8	14	77	6249
Denmark	1	1	15	-	271
Germany	16	41	439	539	13176
Estonia	1	1	5	15	241
Greece	4	13	51	1034	6130
Spain	7	19	52	-	8108
France	9	26	100	-	36678
Ireland	1	2	8	34	3440
Italy	5	21	103	-	8100
Cyprus	1	1	1	6	614
Latvia	1	1	6	33	536
Lithuania	1	1	10	60	515
Luxembourg	1	1	1	13	118
Hungary	3	7	20	168	3145
Malta	1	1	2	6	68
Netherlands	4	12	40	-	489
Austria	3	9	35	-	2381
Poland	6	16	45	379	2478
Portugal	3	7	30	308	4257
Slovenia	1	1	12	58	193
Slovakia	1	4	8	79	2928
Finland	2	5	20	82	446
Sweden	1	8	21	-	290
UK	12	37	133	443	10679
EU15	72	213	1091	2453	95152
EU25	89	254	1214	3334	112119
Romania		8	42		265 municipalities 2686 communes 13092 villages

Source: Eurostat, www.eurostat.ro

2. OCDE TYPOLOGY

The economic indicator used to express the density is the number of inhabitants / Kmp and expresses the distribution of the population on the territory afferent to the locality at a given moment. This indicator allows the perception of the way the territory is populated, indicating the areas of population concentration and the areas with a rare, dispersed population. Population density is an indicator often used in the European Union to define the boundary between urban and rural areas.

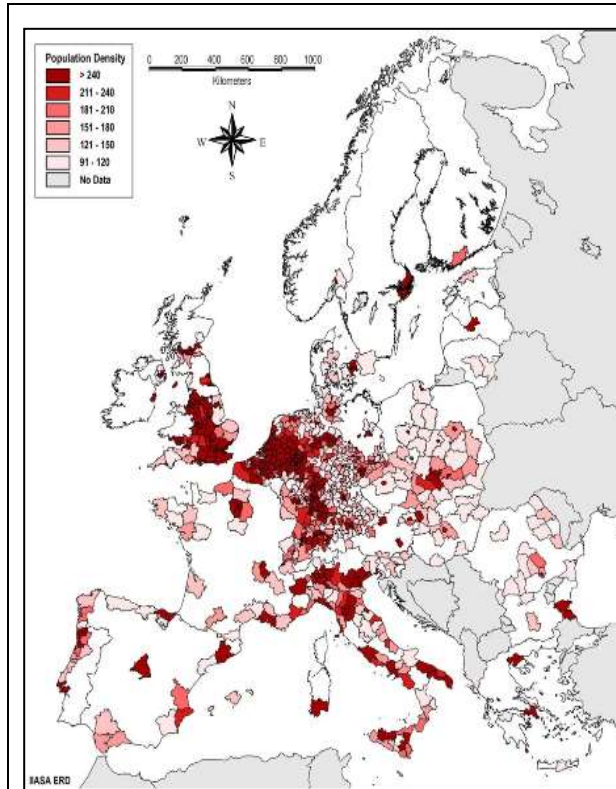


Figure 2. Areas with the highest density in Europe

Source: Regio database from Eurostat[16]

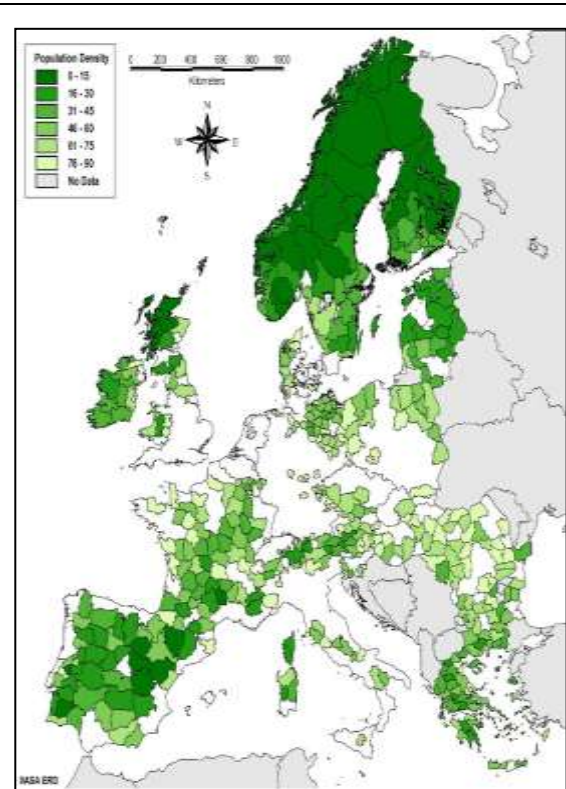


Figure 3. Areas with the lowest density in Europe

Source: Regio database from Eurostat[16]

The characteristics of the Romanian rural space would be the following:

- agriculture, as an economic activity, predominates in most of the Romanian rural area. Exceptions to this rule are the mountainous areas in which forestry has developed, to which is added a currently still small area in which the activities specific to ecotourism are more and more evident: agrotourism, rural tourism, forest tourism, religious, ethnic tourism, cultural etc.;
- In the rural area, the primary production sectors predominate. Services are still underrepresented. The most common professions in rural areas are those that require polycertification. Usually people employed in sectors other than agriculture, however, participate in agricultural activities in their own household;
- the predominant form of ownership is private. The most common form of exploitation is the private-family peasant farm. The public or the private state property has a weak representation, only the lands occupied by the communication networks or those with special destinations;
- the private-family farms of peasant type have small dimensions, their average oscillating in Arad county around 2.7-2.8 ha. They are endowed with the necessary work technique, they do not have the financial resources necessary to practice some advanced technologies. Through the unitary yields achieved, the current private-family peasant farms fall into the category of subsistence ones, ie they produce for their own consumption and not for the market;
- the number of animals on peasant farms is also very low. The farm has 1-3 cattle, 2-3 pigs, several birds and sheep. Livestock partially satisfy their own consumption, and some livestock products are offered to the market;
- administratively, the rural localities occupy small areas, and the population density is low;

- the rural space is characterized by the superior quality of the environment. Polluting activities were present until 1989, being mainly generated by the violation of environmental protection rules promoted by large combined breeding and exploitation of animals, as well as the sometimes abusive use of high doses of chemical fertilizers, especially nitrogen;
- the rural space as a result of the nuances of conservatism promoted better preserves the customs, traditions and popular culture. All this gives the true dimension of the rural space. It characterizes life in rural areas and gives dimension to the phrase "country life";
- the relative isolation of the rural environment imposes the continuity of the agri-food production processes, starting with the production of vegetal and animal raw materials and ending with the finished agri-food products destined directly and directly for consumption.

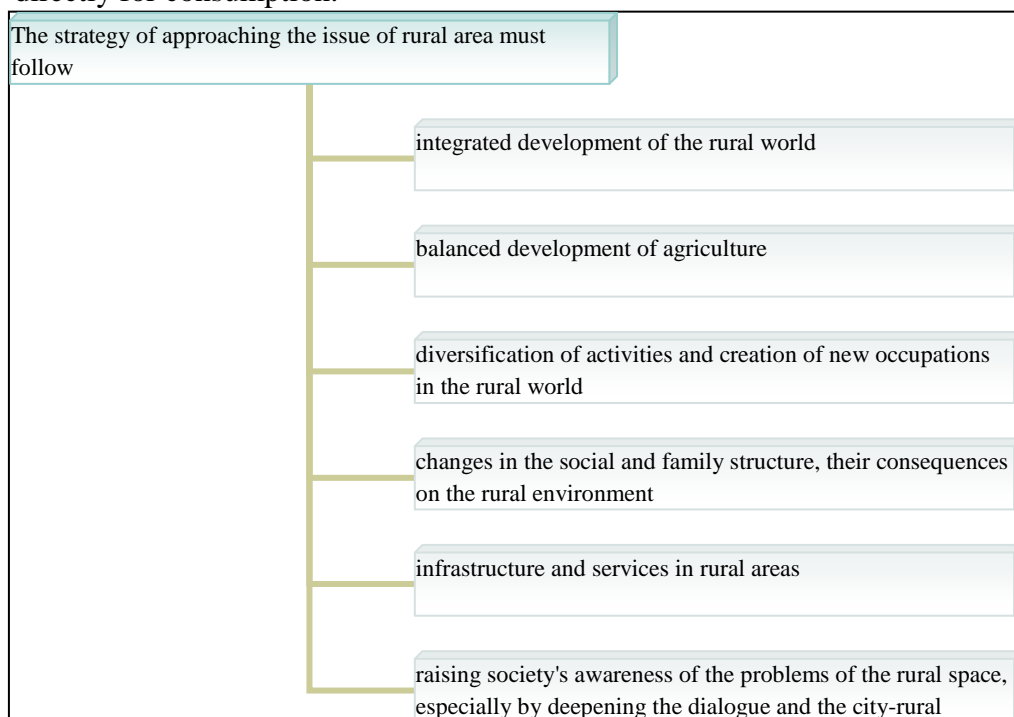


Figure 4. The strategy of approaching the issue of rural area

Source: own processing

The Union must face the challenge of constantly adapting to the changes generated by a number of factors, both internal (deepening integration, in parallel with enlargement, aging and population decline, the need to adapt the Union's institutions, efficiency, transparency and legitimacy of decision-making at Community level). Communication with its own citizens) as well as external (global crisis of natural resources and raw materials, competition coming from other poles of power, but not only, terrorist threat, environmental threats such as climate change, disasters natural disasters, pandemics, etc.).

CONCLUSIONS

In the last ten years the Council of Europe has initiated a special, increasingly intensive activity on rural issues. It consisted in organizing numerous international debating and publicity meetings. During this time a rich, specific literature of wide interest appeared. The future of the rural world has become a growing concern. Thus, the strategy of approaching the issue of rural area was established, based on the following elements:

- integrated development of the rural world;

- balanced development of agriculture;
- diversification of activities and creation of new occupations in the rural world;
- infrastructure and services in rural areas;
- changes in the social and family structure, their consequences on the rural environment;
- raising society's awareness of the problems of the rural space, especially by deepening the dialogue and the city-rural relationship.

Was then proceeded to an active program aimed at revitalizing the rural area, through which the governments of the countries are called to act for:

- elaboration of policies and programs of the development of the rural space, in close collaboration with the targeted population and with the local organizations;
- regular organization of national and local conferences with the adoption of programs and responsibilities for the rural area, exchanges of experience, calendars of activities, etc.
- intensifying the cooperation on rural issues, between the Council of Europe, the Commonwealth of European States and the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development.

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