

Territorial Governance, Cultural Diversity
and Sustainable Development in The Rural Area.
Research on the Micro-Region Livezile-Rimetea, Alba County, Romania

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1. Concepts

Our starting point is the best known definition of sustainable development, the one provided by the World Commission for Environment and Development (WCED), in the report „Our Common Future” published in 1987: *„Sustainable development is development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.”*. (“Our Common Future”, 1987).

Sustainable development, according to Girardot, rest son three principles, validated by numerous moral and political instances at the global level: 1) the participation of all stakeholders in the development process, especially of citizens; 2) a global approach to all situations, characterised by an appropriate balance between economic, social and environmental and 3) all stakeholders' partnership. (Girardot, 2005).

We intend to pay special attention in our paper to the principle of participation. According to Somesh Kumar, for example, participation plays a central role in the theory and practice of development: „Governments, financing agencies, donors, civil society actors including the ONGs and multifunctional agents such as the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund came to the conclusion that development can not be sustainable and long-lasting if only the people participation is part of the development process.” (Kumar, 2007, p. 23).

In view of the above, our fundamental research hypothesis ist hat participation is determined by the cultural values of the community, especially those which define ethnic identification and religious affiliation. (Pascaru, Buțiu, 2007).

2. Research area and sample

Our paper is based on a series of research carried out in the micro-region Livezile-Rimetea, county of Alba, Romania.

The research sample we formed at the level of the micro-region Livezile-Rimetea consisted of 366 inhabitants, out of which 57.7% Romanians, 40.4% Hungarians and 1.9% Roma, which actually reflected the multicultural structure of the microregion. At sample level, if we consider religious identification, 56% were Orthodox and 44% non-Orthodox (Catholic, reformed, Unitarian, neo-protestants). More than half of the respondents (51.1%) had maximum 10th grade education, 17.5% vocational school, 28.8% high school, 4% college.

3. Results

Our research objectives, among others, were: the identification of problems the community under scrutiny had, and especially the factors and to what extent solutions to these problems may be found.

Considering the factors that might be involved in solving local problems, respondents declared themselves totally or partially in agreement with the exclusive involvement of foreign investors (83.6%). 86% of the respondents declared themselves totally or partially in agreement with the exclusive intervention of the state. As far as the City Hall is concerned, as sole potential agent of local problems resolution, 81.37% declared themselves in total agreement, whereas 17.2% stated their total disagreement. 72% of the respondents (total or partial agreement) considered that the local governors are the only ones capable of solving the community problems.

The belief in the inhabitants' chance of becoming sole agents of local problems resolution was expressed by of the respondents. The idea of partnership between all stakeholders previously mentioned was upheld by 87.6% of the respondents.

Positive representations of a community project's chances of success, could also represent, in our opinion, support for local development on the basis of projects. 79.3% of our respondents considered that a project could be successfully carried out whereas 12.8% believed that it could not be successful.

A community project could be successful, mainly because: 1) people could contribute money/goods (76.2%), companies could contribute money/goods (70.2%); 2) because other projects have been finalised (68.6%); 3) because of the local governors' competence 3) because there is interest from the part of the governors (67.8%); 4) because people are hard-working (63.4%).

A community project would fail because of lack of financial resources (2.5%), because of governors' incompetence (2.2%) or because of the citizens' indifference and laziness.

During the restitution interviews (Bergier, 2000) we asked the interlocutors if they agreed with the majority opinion according to which a project would be carried out successfully, asking them to further give arguments for their reply.

Another topic of our research was represented by the relationships between authorities and citizens.

55.2% of the respondents declared that they were dissatisfied with the quality of some public works in the village. Half of them (27.6% of the whole sample) declared that they informed the local authorities. Only in 7.7% of the cases the problem was resolved.

As far as information on City Hall and Local Council decisions is concerned, respondents declared the following: they get informed several times a month or more often: 1) 49.2% from discussions with friends, relatives and neighbours; 2) 29.8% from discussions with local councillors or the mayor; 3) 20.8% from the City Hall (Local Council) information billboards; 4) 23% from verbal announcements of the City Hall (Local Council); 5) 21% from posters, flyers of the City Hall (Local Council); 5) 11.2% from direct participation in the City Hall (Local Council) meetings. 56.6% of the respondents declared that they do not participate at all in these meetings; whereas 29% take part several times a year or even more rarely.

For each of the above mentioned variables, our paper will take into consideration the way in which opinions and behaviours under scrutiny reflect the cultural diversity of the microregion.

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