

SCARCITY OF THE HOUSING STOCK OF THE INTER-WAR ROMANIAN VILLAGE

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Abstract

In Romania, the archaic village was and it is ontological evoked, if not for its exclusive existence form then certainly for its admiring and preferred form. A fundamental reality that was verified in time and space has been forgotten: “many peasants, a lot of scarcity”. Committing such a mistake, Romanians ended up glorifying and venerating the bareness that the providence requites. The Romanians did not have the possibility, and consequently neither the vocation of modernizing the social structures. In 1901, the United Kingdom had only 9% of labor force in agriculture, while in Romania it is still deplored the depopulation of the villages after the Second World War, in a primitive structure with 80% peasants. At the beginning of the XVIth century, Thomas Morus said about the United Kingdom that it is the country “where the sheep eats people”. It was the time when the depopulation of the English village has occurred, with the specific shocks of any modernization, but which has transformed the United Kingdom in the first world industrialized power. The reality is that the most important modernization of the housing stock of the Romanian village took place during the communist period. Today, more than 70% of the living fund in the Romanian villages was allocated during the period of 1948-1989. However, it is not the case of the villages inhabited by Swabians and Saxons, some of the villages inhabited by Hungarians and some of the villages inhabited by Romanians, which are located in Marginimea Sibiului, from Tara Fagarasului and North Bucovina.

Key words: Romanian village, housing stock, communist period, post-revolutionary period

In Romania, the archaic village was and it is ontological evoked, if not for its exclusive existence form then certainly for its admiring and preferred form. A fundamental reality that was verified in time and space has been forgotten: “many peasants, a lot of scarcity” (Merce, 2011, p.32). Committing such a mistake, Romanians ended up glorifying and venerating the bareness that the providence requites: “It (the village) has been preserved untouched in the autonomy of scarce and its mythology over decades when it could become the safe base of an authentic Romanian history” (Blaga, 1937).

The nostalgic projection of the Romanian village, which is in fact a primitive and scarce village, has produced a propagandistic and opportunist behavior with serious consequences on the modernization strategies adopted in Romania, inclusively among intellectuals. The Romanians did not have the possibility, and consequently neither the vocation of modernizing the social structures. In 1901, the United Kingdom had only 9% of labor force in agriculture, while in Romania it is still deplored the depopulation of the villages

after the Second World War, in a primitive structure with 80% peasants: “the abasement of not valuing the faith and the ancestors’ traditions during the communist period that led the self-isolation of the Romanian peasants and its transformation to an industrial worker” (PFP Daniel, 2011). At the beginning of the XVIth century, Thomas Morus said about the United Kingdom that it is the country “where the sheep eats people” (Ricardo, 2007). It was the time when the depopulation of the English village has occurred, with the specific shocks of any modernization, but which has transformed the United Kingdom in the first world industrialized power.

MATERIAL AND METHOD

The scientific reality can be revealed only through a process of evaluating the concrete realities of the Romanian village along the history. Its indubitable ally is represented by numbers, which allow an objective scientific procedure to be followed. In this sense, the sources of information

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are generous; the Agrarian Register of any town hall owns accurate information about the owners of the establishments and about the year of allocating them for use. Data about the housing stock were collected on a sample of 12 villages located in several geographic areas throughout the country, in total 3243 households.

The index method is the main method of investigation and data analysis. The evolution of the housing stock of the Romanian village was researched on three distinct periods of time: the inter-war period (1919-1947), the communist period (1948-1989) and the post-revolutionary period (starting the year of 1990).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The statistical analysis of the data for the above mentioned periods of time, prove in an unquestionable manner that some statements about the degradation of the Romanian village during the communist period are overemphasized and have a propagandistic character. It is true that the Romanian village is still missing the basic living facilities that assure a civilized level of living;

however this handicap has deep historic roots. At the beginning of the communist regime, the peasants' ownerships from the Romanian villages did not have even a backyard lavatory.

Field researches conducted on the sample of 12 villages from different areas of the country, representing 3243 establishments, based on the Agrarian Register from the town halls, lead to results that confirm the modernization of the housing stock of the Romanian villages during the communist period (Table 1).

The reality is that the most important modernization of the housing stock of the Romanian village took place during the communist period. Today, more than 70% of the living fund in the Romanian villages was allocated during the period of 1948-1989. However, it is not the case of the villages inhabited by Swabians and Saxons, some of the villages inhabited by Hungarians and some of the villages inhabited by Romanians, which are located in Marginimea Sibiului, from Tara Fagarasului and North Bucovina.

Table 1

Evolution and structure of the housing stock of the Romanian village

No.	Village	Period of allocating the establishment							
		No. of establishments				Percentage (%)			
		Before 1947 ^a	1948-1989 ^b	After 1990 ^c	Total	Before 1947	1948-1989	After 1990	Total
1.	Ghigișeni (Bihor)	16	255	44	315	5.08	80.95	13.97	100.00
2.	Valea de Jos (Bihor)	5	133	20	158	3.16	84.18	12.66	100.00
3.	Sârbești (Bihor)	12	111	1	124	9.68	89.52	0.81	100.00
4.	Lunca (Bihor)	17	295	32	344	4.94	85.76	9.30	100.00
5.	Cămărașu (Cluj)	37	340	118	495	7.47	68.69	23.84	100.00
6.	Cătina (Cluj)	40	229	12	281	14.23	81.49	4.27	100.00
7.	Sâmboleni (Cluj)	25	186	46	257	9.73	72.37	17.90	100.00
8.	Mastacani (Iași)	11	91	16	118	9.32	77.12	13.56	100.00
9.	Hilița (Iași)	52	63	35	150	34.67	42.00	23.33	100.00
10.	Pustoaia (Botoșani)	30	162	65	257	11.67	63.04	25.29	100.00
11.	Bilca (Suceava)	112	164	55	331	33.84	49.55	16.62	100.00
12.	Cuza Vodă (Galați)	64	282	67	413	15.50	68.28	16.22	100.00
TOTAL		421	2284	511	3243	12.98	70.43	15.76	100.00

Source: Agrarian Register provided by the town halls

^a Inter-war period, ^b Communist period, ^c Post-revolutionary period

The numbers are convincing. In general, for the whole selected sample of villages, from different geographic regions of the country, it can be noticed the fact that the housing stock is only about 13% during the inter-war period. The housing stock has been improved in the communist period, under functional aspect as well, owning 70%, and about 16% after the revolution.

The differences among the areas demonstrate that the Moldavia region has registered a higher percentage of the housing stock

starting the inter-war period and continuing with the communist period when many constructions were done, and after the revolution when the number of housing constructions increased significantly. The economic boom from the communist period was less significant in the Moldavia region, region that is economically less developed, with less employees comparing with other regions, which have determined a less spectacular rhythm of the housing stock. After the revolution, Moldavia is the region with the

strongest phenomena of migration of people to West Europe and as a result, a part of the revenues was invested in new housing constructions. However, on long term, from a social point of view, such a solution leads to a loss, if not destructive, as regard to the education and development of new generations in the autochthonous economy, for the demographic future of the country.

CONCLUSIONS

The analysis of the situation of the Romanian village has still strong propagandistic connotations, especially, based on the unilateral analysis of the communist period.

The war within the country has caused serious damages to the Romanian village as well. However, the village overcame the communist period and flourished economically, the damage being confirmed in the post-revolutionary period, through the attitude of the pleiad of naive, propagandistic and opportunistic people that act in the leading organism.

It is necessary to have the lucidity and the courage to talk about the future of the country in tight concordance with the century-old characteristics of the economic and social history, to end the Romanian-Romanian war, to preserve the few economic achievements of Romania during several historical periods. Glorifying some of the historical periods and blaming other in integrum, both attitudes were lacking the realism and have prepared the terrain of mistakes during the transition period.

During the transition period, the economic development and the social harmonization strategies of the country got trapped in some axioms and slogans full of false perceptions about

the inter-war Romania and about the economic history of the country and of the world in general. The propagandistic actions about the future of the Romanian village during the communist period, fact confirmed by the data provided in this study represent a typical example, however not the only one, of manipulation with consequences that nowadays are more and more evident.

The striking contrast between the slogans regarding the destruction of the Romanian village during the communist period and the concrete realities from the field, prove that the globalization manipulates. The spiritual status, particularly of intellectuals, is affected by censoring the consensus, in the sense that no one dares to provide an objective analysis of the development of the Romanian economy during the communist period. Moreover, it is not popular if a speech does not start with a diatribe about communism, even if the subject is not related to such an analysis.

It is the time to look confident into the mirror, even if it is not a pleasant view, and to understand that an economy, a country may not be built of tales, myths and with insincere slogans. The reality of the database provided in this study, eloquently proves the situation of the Romanian village and the evolution of the housing stock during the last years of the 90's. Implicitly, it leads also to the harmfulness created by the slogans, which have induced the false perception of destroying the Romanian village during the communist period.

A series of images provided by the Ethnographical Museum of Transylvania from Cluj-Napoca (MET), Romania expressing the difficult situation of the Romanian village is brought in the attention of the reader with the aim to reveal the truth of the history (Figure 1-6).



Șură ungurească, Stana, Cluj, 1926

Figure 1. Hungarian shed, Cluj, 1926
Source: MET



Uliță, iarna, Meria, Hunedoara, 1928

Figure 2. Alleyway in winter, Meria, Hunedoara, 1926,
Source: MET



Figure 3. Alleyway, Poienița Voinii, Hunedoara, 1927,
Denis Galloway
Source: MET



Figure 5. House with birch tree, Lunca Cernii de Jos,
Hunedoara, 1928, Denis Galloway
Source: MET



Figure 4. Peasant's courtyard, Poienița Voinii,
Hunedoara, 1926 (?), Denis Galloway
Source: MET



Satul pe timp de iarnă, Lunca Cernii, Hunedoara, 1931

Figure 6. Village in winter, Lunca Cernii, Hunedoara,
1931
Source: MET

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