

THE COMMUNITY ORCHARD, A CONCEPT OF PRESENT INTEREST

LIVADA COMUNITARĂ, UN CONCEPT DE MARE ACTUALITATE

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***Abstract.** Beginning in the early 90's, there's a rapid decline in the Romanian fruit growing industry, the decrease in planted areas and fruit production being recorded by national statistics. This situation has been severely influenced by poor agricultural policies, the increasing pressure from the real-estate sector and large imports of cheap fruit from abroad. The community orchard caters to the increasing need for relaxation spaces in close proximity of urban areas. It also allows for a better use of old orchards, that have lost their productivity and it supports the development of new planted areas, thus becoming the right place for outdoor activities, for individuals and groups alike. By utilizing local fruit tree varieties, it also increases the interest for fruit growing among the general population.*

***Rezumat.** Incepand cu anii 90' asistam la un declin rapid al pomiculturii in Romania, reducerea suprafetelor de livezi si a productiei de fructe fiind evidentiate in datele statistice publicate. Politicile agricole neinspirate, presiunea din partea investitiilor imobiliare si edilitare, si nu in ultimul rand importurile masive de fructe ieftine au contribuit din plin la aceasta situatie. Livada comunitara ofera ocazia satisfacerii nevoii din ce in ce mai accentuate de spatii destinate relaxarii in apropierea asezarilor umane. In acelasi timp, ofera posibilitatea valorificarii unor livezi imbatrinite, cu productivitate redusa, infiintarii de noi plantatii pomicole, devenind locul potrivit petrecerii timpului liber, individual sau colectiv, cadrul natural al unor manifestari populare, asigurand un areal al varietatilor locale de fructe, renascand interesul populatiei pentru pomicultura.*

Starting with the '90s, we are the witnesses of a fast decline of the fruit growing in Romania, as we refer to the area allocated to orchards, to the fruit productivity or to the access to the high technology.

A series of social political factors, that is the breaking up of the state farms, the division of properties on the agrarian land, the lack of functional programs for the producers' association, the incoherence in supporting the research and experimentation activity within the context of an extremely tight competition from the part of the importers of fruit at a relatively low price have led to a decrease of interest toward fruit growing plantations.

The unmerciful rushing on the orchards, especially on those located in the suburbs of towns have made up the rest estates' investing activity. The multiplication in a fast rhythm of the one family dwelling places, the

areas designed to commerce, to storing or to industrial activities are current phenomena that occur around large cities and not only and even there, where there used to be large fruit growing farms. These objectives have brought with them works afferent to public unities, such as water feeding railways, sewerage and electricity systems, access railways that have disaffected at their turn large land areas designed to agriculture and to orchards respectively.

On the other hand, the existence of small “household” orchards, with mixed up trees cultivated in a wide variety of technologies, from the bending ones with tall trunks and free round crowns to the small size ones cut in decorative systems, assure the fruit consumption of an important segment of population for their own use.

Iași, a well known fruit growing basin, wasn’t avoided by such phenomena and it’s enough to consider the orchards from Galata, Bucium or Copou to find out the bitter truth.

The concept of communitarian orchard emerged in Great Britain in the ‘80s – ‘90s and has quickly spread out, having favorable effects on the old plantations rehabilitation but mostly at the communitarian level.

These orchards, either they are rigorously managed or they remain in their “wild” state, when the species, they are made of, are in a wide diversity, in agreement with the land configuration, may develop peculiar types that define themselves in a special way to create the scenery. (1)

In the conditions of a post industrial society life, there is an imperious need for areas designed to self relaxation and leisure or spending the free time in the company of some friends or even in that of strangers with various ages and preoccupations, the need for socialization being stronger and stronger.

As we refer to productivity, the communitarian orchard is trying to get together the plantation created according to specific technological rules and the less performing traditional orchard which is closer to compositions with scenario us function.

The alternation of areas planted with trees and bushes with decorative role with areas covered by grass and flowers taken from the spontaneous flora define areas of quietness where you meet again items of homogeneity and harmony with the “natural” landscape. (2)

Everybody should have anytime access to these arrangements.

The administration of these arranged areas should be voluntary performed by the local administration or by groups of initiation that belong to the respective community.

Economic components, the revaluation of certain opportunities from the services category inclusively or even the direct and intermediate opening up of the fruit productivity might occur.

These ones should be solved within a local juridical background.

We have to underline the fact that this concept doesn't have as main purpose the fruit productivity, and it is this fact that allow the development of a wide variety of guidelines, many of them being addressed to the vanguard experiment and the others suggesting romantic, past-ridden approaches.

The preservation and even the way to reinvent certain "wild life" areas is another important component that worth to be mentioned. The use of certain native fruit growing species, having a large ecological plasticity or modest pretensions and being resistant at illnesses, together with bushes from the same category, mixed up with natural meadows might get valences of a gorgeous scenery. (1)

This component which performs the transaction toward the natural landscape is just the one which can and should interfere in case of the revaluation of certain traditional orchards that are on the "edge" and in danger to disappearance.

The maintenance works are very important but the approach should differ from the technology that is applied to well known orchards that have a high productivity. The cleaning up of the dry branches, the cuttings performed for the purpose of the fruit-bearing, the replacement of the ill or dead trees will be made up, having in view the scenario us perspective of the composition. Thus, criteria that belong to spaces, volume, perspective, texture, form, and color may become decisive as we refer to interference.

From functional point of view, this concept might answer at the same time to the most diversified and complex challenges of the life within community, training higher or smaller segments of the local population or relying on the guests from outside in an optimum way.

The communitarian orchard might become the most adequate background for a wide range of events. It is certain that some arrangements to the buildings that have been raised, some urbanite endowments or accessories performed in such a way not to damage the natural environment and to submit to it discretely, are necessary to be performed.

The celebration of certain religious events such as The Flowers Sunday, Saint George or the Baptist's day may gather the whole community.

With a higher participation, even over passing the local interest area, folk or poetry festivals, sporting competitions may be organized.

The school festivals, the classes hold in the open air might stir the interest of groups that include people of different ages on one hand and might be an opportunity for their socialization on the other hand.

Depending on the orchards structuring on species and on the particular period of fruit ripening, feasts related to fruit cropping or degusting the products that reevaluate those fruit might be organized.

Overpassing the statute of hobby, having an important educative formative role for the younger generation and not only, such an environment is the proper place for agriculture.

Camping and picnics have become usual ways of domestic leisure for those who have found in orchards the proper locations.

In association with small seed beds, the orchards might be the proper location for amateur horticulturists and under specialists' guidance, training courses might take place.

Least but not the last, such locations might form the nucleus around which protected areas designed for the bio diversity preservation may be arranged. (3)

Such a complex and challenging concept may be the starting point for the rehabilitation of certain destructive orchards in searching their own identity.

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