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*SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT AND FORESTRY RESOURCES
ADMINISTRATION IN THE APUSENI MOUNTAINS AREA*

*DEZVOLTAREA DURABILĂ ȘI GESTIONAREA RESURSELOR
FORESTIERE ÎN REGIUNEA MUNȚILOR APUSENI*

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Summary: Due to irrational cuttings and despite the sustainable development principles, the Romanian forestry environment has suffered a real decline; the factors responsible for the forests status in Romania are identified and the goal is now to ecologically restore the forests. But what can be expected from the territorial community and territorial actors' intelligence and what are the possible links between the communitarian territorial intelligence and the local governance? To bring an answer to all these questions, we proceeded to a set of analyses and investigations in the region of Apuseni Mountains – Romania. The final results are the basis of our research study; they emphasize the need for a global approach, partnerships and citizens' participation to the decisions taking action.

Rezumat: Prin tăieri neraționale, mediul forestier din România se află într-un continuu declin, contrar principiilor dezvoltării durabile; factorii responsabili de soarta pădurilor țării au suficiente motive pentru a acționa energetic în vederea reconstrucției ecologice a pădurilor. Cât se pot baza pe intervenția comunităților teritoriale și pe inteligența teritorială a actorilor locali și care poate fi raportul între inteligența teritorială comunitară și guvernarea locală în acest demers complex? În încercarea de a răspunde la aceste întrebări, în ultimii ani, am realizat o serie de analize și investigații în regiunea Munților Apuseni – România. Rezultatele obținute fac obiectul comunicării noastre; ele scot în evidență necesitatea abordării globale, a constituirii de parteneriate și a participării locuitorilor la luarea deciziilor legate de fondul forestier.

Keywords: forest administration, communitarian territorial intelligence, forest cuttings control, environmental education

Cuvinte cheie: mediu forestier, inteligență teritorială comunitară, controlul tăierilor de pădure, educație ecologică

1. THEORETICAL APPROACH

Why is environment a major concern for sociologists? Isn't it a concern for other scientists or technicians? Isn't the people's impact on nature a physical one, created by the modern industrial production? Our answer to these questions is an affirmative one, as industry and technology have been created depending on various social institutions. Both our actions over environment and their consequences are of social origin. *The global environment safeguarding should be a social and a technological one, as well. Some ecologists sustain the idea that members of rich societies should disapprove the consuming society and return to simpler ones, if a global ecological disaster is taken into account* (Giddens, 2000).

1.1. Forestry resources administration

The main problem in terms of forestry environment, in Romania and all over the world, is the way of determining the right administration of forests that allows the sustainable supplies of goods and services that society might need in the domain of forestry.

On the other hand, forest offers a great quantity of wood to the population, and its value, in terms of creating work places, provides an economic function. Wood production and processing activities play an important role as far as the rural space is concerned, and represent the major income source of the forestry workers; these workers are allowed to proceed to the necessary investments for the forestry resources maintenance and revitalization. *All these issues require a correct program of administrating the forestry resources, the legislative framework (regarding both the wood seller and the producer, the raw material and the finite product, the production cycle and the forestry policy) aiming to protect the forests against the uncontrolled grubbing* (Despres. A., Normandin. D., 1996).

The entire forestry patrimony is now diminishing, the pressures over forests being considerable. 20 countries where 100 million people live do not own the necessary minimum wood supplies whereas half of the world population uses wood as a living resource and as a source of animal food. Every year, 10 to 20 million hectares of forest are destroyed. The rich countries use and waste in different ways, especially rare essences that hardly regenerate. Forestry exploitation destined to rich countries represents more than 20% of the cuttings in the third world (Bari, 2003).

Taking into account all these issues, the Romanian forests health is extremely important for the ecological equilibrium maintenance; on the contrary, actual statistics illustrate the bad conditions of the Romanian forests, generated by different phenomena such as excessive dryness or major floods, local and trans-border pollution phenomena or aggressive biotic and abiotic factors. This fact is a real consequence of some forestry measures inappropriately applied, in the last decades but not only, due to large forests areas given back to their owners, according to Law 18/1992. The private property retrocession of a large part of the Romanian forests, as a result of the modified forests law previously mentioned, created great disadvantages for the forest domain; and reflected a wrong way of administrating them and, of course the lack of strict rules for their cultural maintaining process (Berca, 1998).

1.2. Forest conscience

The forestry history of many countries (especially European and North American countries), as well as the Romanian forestry economy, demonstrates the idea that the status and the future of forests in general, and the environment security do not depend on the laws number and quality, the forest structures or the foresters wishes and number. More than that, there is another significant factor with great positive or negative influence, regarding the forests' preservation and the rational sustainable forestry economy. This specific force is of social and emotional origin and is generated by the way population, public opinion, but especially politicians, the legislative, executive and decisional power do really understand the forest life and importance in the local community and people's destiny and even for each individual in the society.

In many countries and in Romania as well, this issue has been called **forest conscience**, and that means „*the total number of forests and tree status knowledge in the nature and national economy, on the one hand, and the method according to which all this knowledge are disseminated to population or at least to those citizens involved in the right government of their country. It also refers to people's sensitivity and understanding of forests, and consequently, respect and love for tree and forest, all of these analyzing forests' faith in a country at a moment*” (Drăcea, in Giurgiu, 2003).

2. INVESTIGATIONS ON FOREST CONSCIENCE IN THE APUSENI AREA COMMUNITIES

2.1. Investigations objectives and a few methodological aspects

The present **research objectives** refer to the identification of the reasons and the causes that lead to the forest's role in the environment, to the lack of concern when someone tries to reveal the dangers created by the lack of ecological conscience, and implicitly to the lack of forest conscience, when speaking about the Apuseni Mountains population (Horea – Albac and Bistra area).

So, in accordance to the national and regional acknowledgement, we've tried to reveal in our actual research study the hypothesis that in the investigated area the level of forest conscience is very low (regarding a few empirical information and traditional justifications). A great priority is given to financial resources and to the living conditions improvement, without taking into account the moral and ecological aspects.

The present paper **research methodology** is based on the *qualitative component* within which we used the *direct observation* as a first research method aiming at stressing the physical, geographical and infrastructural conditions that might be the causes or the effects of some individual or social behaviors regarding the forestry exploration in the defined area.

Another investigation method was the *interview* (half structured), according to which we followed the exploration of concrete situations referring to exploring and processing the wood. In this respect, we interviewed a few persons dealing with this kind of activities, persons with a great influence for the community – the informal leaders – and neutral persons who have no connection to forests exploration, but who may have an opinion based on specialized knowledge. Therefore we used the *snowball technique*, trying to identify the interesting cases from people knowing people, from those who know the ones providing necessary and complete information on the analyzed situation in our paper (Agabrian, M., 2004).

The *documents analyses* regarding the forests administration concern (some situations and statistics of the forestry resources in the studied micro region – in accordance to the forests departments belonging to Albac and Horea communes) has been taken into consideration also in the present research study.

We analyzed and correlated to our paper's theme and objectives a set of documents on the investigated area's physical and geographical location and to the demographical, social and economical structure of the population in that area, in accordance to the local public administration's documents.

2.2. The research framework

Horea (Alba County): the commune is situated in the North-West part of Alba County, on the shore of Arazii Valley – Arieșul Mare River's tributary, is at a 102 km distance to Alba-Iulia city and at a 26 km distance to Câmpeni town. The commune area is of 60,4 km². Administratively the commune consists of 15 villages. The commune population is of 2371 inhabitants, having as major occupations agriculture (breeding animals especially), the forestry resources' exploitation and processing (Horea's legendary commune is also called "the wood country") and lately, agrotourism (Mățișești village being declared agrotouristic station since 2003). In terms of existent buildings in the commune there are around 808, 90% of which are built of wood and brick. We also mention the fact that recently, the great majority of them have been renovated and there is a tendency for building new households, stressing the idea that migration phenomenon is much diminished in the area.

Albac (Alba County): situated at the Albac River's mouth in the Arieșul Mare River, in the North-West part of Alba County, is at a 100 km distance to Alba-Iulia city (on DN 75 and DJ 108); it consists of 16 villages and hamlets. The commune area is of 52 km². Its neighbors are as follows: in the North–Horea commune, in the West–Scărișoara commune, in the East–Vadul Moților commune, and in the South-East- Câmpeni town. The commune has got 2220 inhabitants and 768 households, most of them renovated quite recently. Its population has as a main occupation agriculture (breeding animals especially) and the forestry resources' exploitation and processing. The place is documentary attested since 1795 (Ghereș, M., Culda, S., 2000).

Bistra (Alba County): is situated in the middle of the Apuseni Mountains, on the high water course of the Aries River in a depression-basin – the Câmpeni Depression – Bistra, at a 527 m elevation. The commune territory has the following neighbors: in the East–Lupșa commune (10 km distance), in the West – Câmpeni town (5 km distance), in the South – Roșia Montană commune (10 km distance), in the North – Valea Ierii commune (33 km distance). Opposing to other important centers, this commune is situated 88 km from Alba-Iulia and 109 km from Cluj-Napoca. The occupational structure shows the following: 1098 farmers; 674 employees; 106 teachers; 1362 pensioners; 387 free-workers; 380 unemployed; others 1239 (Bistra Commune Monograph, 2005).

As far as the forestry areas on the studied communes are concerned, we have to specify that these are communes with great forest areas, with forest species being mainly resinous trees. Studying

the entire area we've noticed a kind of co-inhabiting way of people and forest, the forest areas spreading close to households. The wood exploitation is also significantly represented. The communes with the highest density of installations for wood material processing per area unit (in Horea commune, for example, more than half of households own their family equipment for wood primarily processing – there are 416 family equipments). All these aspects correlated to the area's accessibility for the researcher, are the main reason why we've chosen to study the entire Apuseni Mountains area.

We also add the fact that Albac and Horea forestry resources are administrated by two forest departments: the Forest Department „Valea Arieşului” Câmpeni (a public department) and the Forest Department „Horea – Apuseni” (a private department).

In administrating the public forestry fond the public property forests prevail (the city hall's forests, the school's, the church's), so the entire forest area being larger than the private forest department's; this one possesses the private property forests, but their owners want this department to administrate their areas, so there is a tendency of enlarging the administrated surface (according to Law 38/2006 – all forest owners have to leave their forests under the direct administration of a forest department).

2.3. Research results

As we tried to illustrate, our researches aimed at evaluating the *forest conscience* in the Apuseni Mountains area, Horea – Albac and Bistra, and the major role that each community and person have, especially in the context of a research elaborated in a mountain area. It's obvious that this is a concern of both institutional and common sense level, and it represents the administrating way of one of the most significant resources provided by this area, the forest, and of course, all the social and economical implications concerning the forest exploration and processing in Horea, Albac and Bistra communes.

The data collecting instrument (interview guide) allows the interviewed to make a description at the community level, not at the household level, to express their own perceptions on the forests exploitation in general, without peculiarities or specific specifications such as "good-true-nice". These general descriptions contributed to the very evaluation of the forest conscience, and more, to the good administration of forest resources.

Seven relevant and important interviews have been realized in the Horea – Albac area (four local authorities and three community members), and ten interviews have been done in Bistra commune (three local authorities and seven community

members). Face-to-face discussions were conducted for both informative level (learning selectively data, perceptions of the analyzed situation) and confirmative level (verifying data and information or emphasizing some perceptions in view of valid, general issues).

2.3.1. Community, forestry resources and living level

The conclusions of the first analyses of the inhabitants' perception on the forestry resources show that the environment is not a simple design and doesn't consists in material elements; man is present continuously everywhere. The man's background is shared with others who will interact with the material lifestyle, on the one side, and depending on someone else's presence, marking this way the individual's perceptions, representations and behavior. According to this perspective, population in the investigated area tries to use rationally the forest resources, but not only, bringing into attention their right administration for the general social and economic progress. But man will think firstly of the realization of some financial objectives, without reconsidering the ecological importance of forests, and sometimes without thinking of the forests massive exploitation, aiming the direct economic needs.

The area offers rich resources and well-balanced exploitation potential, but in the last two decades great changes at the social level, occurred (the economic relationships, the values system, the individual behavior, the fundamentals of the rural communitarian life, all of these changed); and those are aspects imposing in a way, the idea of progress and development. But emphasizing the individual's wishes, one can notice from the taken interviews, forgetting about the common interests, the risk of affecting the others, the environment degradation due to individual actions. Population exploit intensively the forest resources, remaining indifferent to the massive forests exploitations, and being dominated by the enrichment desire; this way the forest conscience remains at the minimum level of its existence.

"... I can characterize forest exploitation as awful; I mean that too large a quantity of wood is cut and planting and cleaning are neglected. Everyone cuts for their own good, without thinking of the consequences and only thinking about the money" (C. M, 63).

"... Years ago, during '92 - '98, the law was respected in proportion of fifty percent or less ... now are less and less illegal exploitations and legal exploitations will be less also as we grow close to the date of January 1st 2007. However, generally

speaking, took much forest is cut down; the forest owners often cut down everything they have. Ecologically speaking, it cannot go further as cutting is at the maximum limit. But people would like to cut more. If it were allowed, people would organize a wood cutting and carrying contest” (F. I., 38).

“... People never have enough and the forest grows but not in the rhythm it is cut; there is no conscience about it. People do not think about it and besides, they must act civil in the forest, not in a chaotic manner how they use forest equipment now, crushing young trees...which is a spillage for the future” (M. I., 73).

“... Few people realize what happens through massive deforestation, and maybe if they realized it, they would not even come close to the forest; maybe they would influence each other, but now everyone does what they want; besides, no matter how much wood they take, they will not get rich; gold does not make people better. Few people realize how important the forest is in their daily life; they give it a material and not an environmental importance; they only think about the wood, and not that it is necessary for breathing. They are not aware of its role; otherwise, everyone would take care of every tree around them.” (B. G., 53).

The economic progress of the micro region is remarkable, in the recent decades, the local authorities supporting the individual development, generating the community development. As a progress source, the local public administration (the local administrators with whom they discussed) have maintained the good resources management, valuating the agricultural and tourist potential of the area, the rational forest potential, of course with people's support. The inhabitants agree the mentioned sources, but they also recognize wood exploitation as an enrichment source, as they quote: *“it was better a few years ago, now wood is no more an interesting issue, those who knew, managed, others didn't; now things are going wrong, even if one wants to do something, it's not possible anymore. Some set up their own businesses, building touristic stations, others...” (P. M., 36 ani).*

The inhabitants' idea on wood exploitation already exists, and we noticed analyzing the interviewers' answers that the forests cuttings were massive in the last decades, but they were not monitored and insufficiently punished by the competent local authorities. At present we recognize that the illegal forest cuttings were practiced in the last years, but the forestry regime has been drastically applied. But even now there are a few "escaping gates" (as they are called by inhabitants), in spite of the great

support offered by the local authorities (actions of informing about the forests' rational exploitation, controls and amendments, cooperation and communication with population).

It's known that people do recognize the illegal facts that happened in the past, (a decade ago), which were not identified at that moment by authorities; they also avoid to speak about the present acts, but if they do this, they do it positively (the forestry domain being highly respected now due to the forests law) or suspecting someone of minor illegal acts (persons with different hierarchical status (social and economic) – ascendant or descendent).

2.3.2. Forest-economical and ecological significance

Even less recognized and declaratively minor, the illegal cuttings problem is an actual one. The actual policy tends to reduce this phenomenon, the present forestry legislative frame allowing for the implementation of this policy and making the forests owners more responsible in terms of administrating the possessed forest surfaces. Even if the owners' over evaluating role does exist, the final aims the forest conscience development – forests administration is more efficient and its ecological effect highly emphasized. But human nature tends to satisfy the individual needs firstly, and from this reason, many of the moral and civic norms are surpassed (under the slogan „for the family's benefit”); this may lead many inhabitants to renounce to the civic consciousness in favor of their own families' benefit (improving lifestyle doesn't imply law's violation).

The above statements are stressed by the fact that there is a forest conscience coupled with a traditional one, according to which, people avoid the massive cuttings, as their ancestors used to do, and it's the present generation's duty to act consequently, acting in a similar way for the future generations.

3. CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

The forestry patrimony security and sustainability are considered essential conditions, and in this respect, some well supported statements, bringing into play both man and forest's importance, are noticed: „the following fundamental truth is clearly distinguished: the third millennium will be one of reconciliation between the Romanian people and the forest, or it will be a hostile environment for us or even it will not exist at all” (Berca, 1998).

As a consequence, the necessity of an education based on the forest conscience, within the larger and general context of environment conscience has

been applied. Today, education for the environment is concentrated on the person and his behavior. This consists in offering the right knowledge and information to population. But human beings do not act in accordance to their knowledge. They need specific conditions needs and knowledge for their referential group. We agree to offer a communitarian dimension to *environmental education*. Educating the communities, we stress their control power over man's individual behavior, power of traditional communities especially (Pascaru, 2003).

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