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THE BEHAVIOURAL DIMENSION IN URBAN COMMUNITY: EMIGRATION BETWEEN THE "EASIEST" WAY OF LIFE AND COMMUNITY PRESTIGE IN CURTEA DE ARGEŞ, ROMANIA

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The behavioural dimension in an urban community: emigration between the "easiest" way of life and community prestige in Curtea de Argeș, Romania

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The behavioural dimension in an urban community: emigration between the "easiest" way of life and community prestige in Curtea de Argeș, Romania. Social groups relate to the spatial distribution patterns of groups. Geographers seek to explain concrete territorial situations resulted from the social groups' presence and actions. Our study aims to assess the spatial extension of social groups. By choosing an "easy" way of life based on pronounced frustrations, individuals have risked in their choices. When neighbourhoods preserve the same membership communication, relationships between the community groups does not lose the community character. Neighbourhood fragmentation maintains the community character, and, by applying quantified values of the distance, we can identify the extension of the territories. Thus, within the neighbourhood proximity has been exceeded and the distance has cancelled.

Key words: community, urban social space, social group, social behaviour, leader dependent groups.

Dimensiunea comportamentală într-o comunitate urbană: emigrarea între mod de viață „ușor" și prestigiu comunitar în Curtea de Argeș, România. Grupurile sociale se află în legătură cu pattern-urile distribuţiei spaţiale a grupurilor. Geografii caută să explice situaţii teritoriale concrete, rezultate din prezenţa şi acţiunea grupurilor sociale. Studiul nostru are ca obiectiv analiza extensiei sociale a grupurilor. Alegând un mod de viață „ușor", pe baza unei frustrări accentuate, indivizii au riscat în alegerile lor. Când comunităţile menţin relaţiile de comunicare, grupurile de vecinătate nu îşi pierd caracterul comunitar. Fracţionarea vecinătăţii păstrează caracterul comunităţii, iar, aplicând valori cantitative ale distanţei, putem identifica extensia teritoriilor. Astfel, în cadrul vecinătăţii s-a depăşit proximitatea, adică s-a anulat distanţa.

Cuvinte cheie: comunitate, spaţiu social urban, grup social, comportament social, grupuri dependente de lider.

1. INTRODUCTION

Social groups, as called in the German school of geography - "Geographical social groups", relate to the spatial distribution patterns of groups.

Geographers seek to explain concrete territorial situations, resulted from the social groups' presence and actions. Obviously, the landscape image is differently modified from one group to another. The German school of space outlined a typology which includes the categories: social landscape, social space, territorial space, perceived space.

Our study aims to assess the spatial "extension" [1:192] of social groups.

2. IDENTIFICATION OF GEOGRAPHICAL URBAN SOCIAL GROUPS

a) **Marginalized groups**

This category includes those active working groups affected by changes within the economic space: groups of fired, unemployed and in early retirement people.

Basically, the social categories affected by such changes are pushed to the margins of the society and to isolation, decreasing their possibilities to play an important social role, as said by D. Abraham [2]. In the same context, the author evidence that, in the absence of internal organization and sense of belonging to a social group, the excluded individuals are not a collective force and even less a group or social class, even if sometimes they may refer to certain forms of protest. Social marginalization is more than a form of downward mobility [2].

Thus in 1990-1999, approximately 90% of the population of Romania changed its occupational position. For about 40% of the active working groups, social changes have meant exclusion and / or social exclusion, mainly for the industrial workers. For another 40% of the workforce, changes meant vertical and horizontal mobility.

Ethnic subgroup of the Gypsies. The spatial distribution of the ethnic group is reflected in three main areas:

- the downtown area with residential areas, where they occupied the former nationalized houses (houses now damaged and insalubrious).
- residential areas near the industrial sites.
- on the outskirts of Curtea de Argeş and in its area of influence.

Skinheads. The youth marginalization is represented by the so-called *skinheads* that are those who are predisposed to antisocial deeds. To a certain extent, we can associate them to "gangs", but the difference is that they do not join together in large groups, they have reduced material conditions and they are prone to vicious facts (e.g. drug use, antisocial behaviour, aggressive behaviour). They found themselves in such situations due

to poverty and family break-ups. Their spatial identification is related mainly to the central areas.

W. I. Thomas and FL. Znaniecki in the *The Polish Peasent* consider marginalization as a process of isolation of a person or group from the society, relating it to a peripheral position [3].

b) **Leader dependent groups**

They include only normative professional attitudes, and even if their requirements are large and involve uncertainty and inconsistency, the leader is left to coordinate as a "totalitarian" (Figure 1).

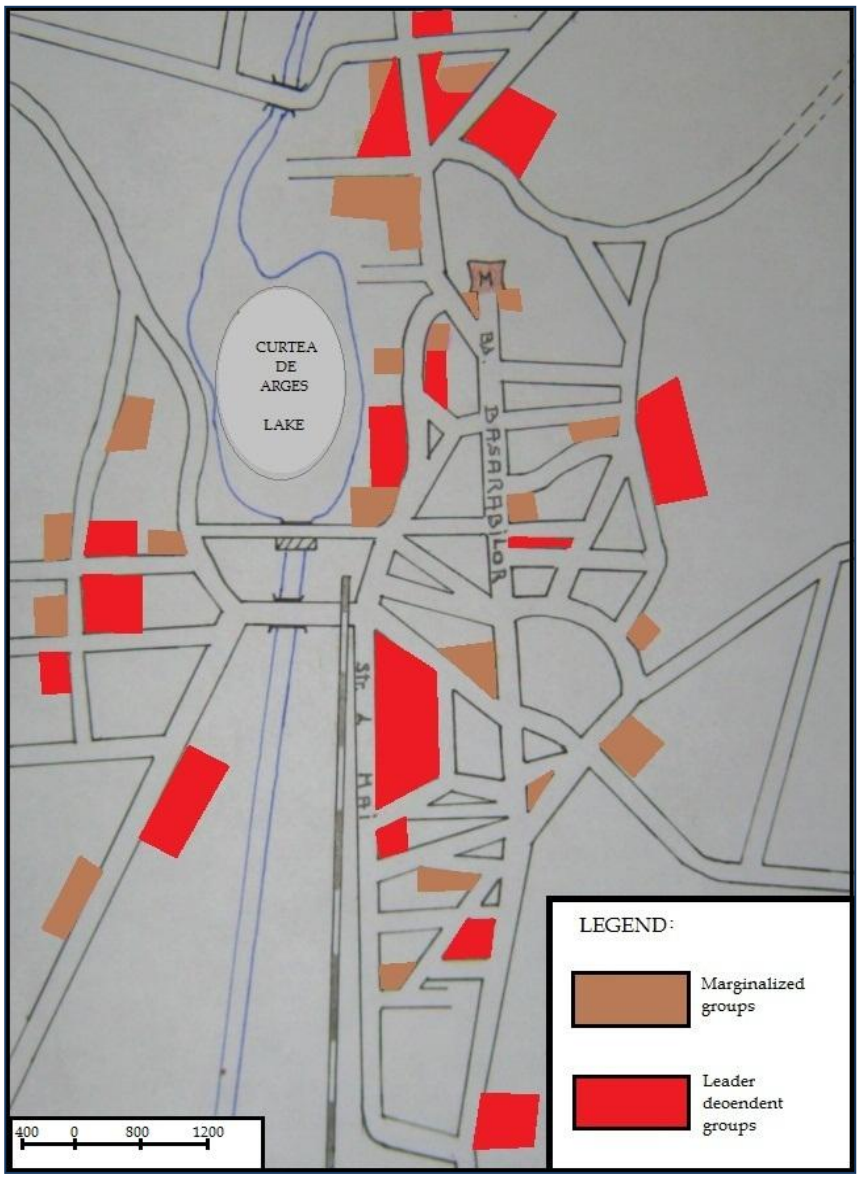

Figure 1. Urban social groups' pattern

Oscar Hoffman, in 1994, found that Romanian totalitarian society was highly idealized within the communist totalitarianism that imposed conducting rules in all areas [4]. O. Hoffman writes further *"that created a state of symbolic interactioness, as a structure of actors acting according to the meaning of rules. The groups define themselves and others by these rules, labels (roles) that symbolized the truth of reality, and begin to act according to what follows from "label". As each group separates itself by reference to other groups, human relations are generated by this symbolic interactioness causing people and action of which results in the label (the name given to the role) and not from real analysis itself [...] The paradox is that the company's groundbreaking post became particularly diffuse ideologysed, according to an ideology and a little confusing"* [4].

The explanation of the situation of these groups can be found in their low educational status, the destruction of the political class and in the violent nature of totalitarianism in Romania that generated an ineffective ideology.

3. PATTERN OF SPATIAL BEHAVIOUR GROUPS

a) Marginal behaviors are those which play an important role due to the prevailing social integration of all groups to ensure cohesion of the nation [5]. Within the phenomena that characterize the marginal groups, as described by I. Ianoş *et al*., nine indicators are analyzed: the index of crime, the family and social fragility index, the offence index, the divorce index, the number of children born outside the marriage, the suicide rate, the number of social conflicts, the unemployment rate and the number of rapes.

b) Leader dependent behaviour. As a group situation, especially since 1971, Curtea of Argeş was marked above all by uncertainty and a less need for growth or personal development. The transition to utility and to convenience led to a cognitive uniformity and to a single individual recognition as a decision-maker. Thus, the need to structure the action of a single decision-maker becomes therefore necessary.

The emphasis on the professional ability of the leader hides in fact the general ability to produce an image dependent on it as basis for the group activity. Generalized in time, such thinking of socialist attitude generated a dependent behaviour and inhibition of the civil society, but also it instilled a strong distrust referring to the administrative capacity of the state.

Without complete modernization, as B. Voicu (2001) argued, the Romanian society began to take over, through some sort of contagion, and to imitate behaviors of postmodern nature (but not in the true meaning of the word). Contrary to this trend, it reaffirmed their traditional values and inductive conservative behaviors to reduce existential uncertainty.

The whole society swings between modernity and traditionalism with some postmodern influences [6].

As a measure of industrialization and urbanization excess (above the territorial support), the collectivization process led to the destruction of economic and social identity of the rural population, lowering the growing role of the peasantry in the social and economic life [7].

c) Electing behaviour

The objectives of this field study are: highlighting electoral options, highlighting the spatial distribution of the electoral districts options, the analysis of options and links belonging to certain groups.

For this survey, conducted between 26 and 30 November 2007, we have used a random sample of 100 people from the all 10 urban neighbourhoods.

We found in the analysis that 25% of the respondents have higher education, 35% have secondary education and 40% attended vocational schools. 66% of the total indicated that they do not like to discuss politics and the remaining 34% agreed that they are interested in politics.

Sources of information with reference to the political issues are television, chosen by 60% of the respondents, print media, with 23% of the answers, radio (10%) and Internet (6%). 1% of the respondents refused to specify the source of information.

Among the political preferences of political parties are P.N.L. – National Liberal Party (34%), P.D. – Democratic Party (11%), P.S.D. – Social Democratic Party (29%), P.R.M. – Great Romania Party (8%), P.L.-D, a fraction of the liberal party (4%) and P.N.G. – New Generation Party (2%). Also, 5% refused to answer to this question, while 7% indicated no political preferences. Their political interest is low, as 63% of the respondents suggested the lowest level of interest on a scale from 1 to 5.

Asked if they participated in the elections for the European Parliament in 25 November 2007, 89% of them said that they have not participated.

On question no. 7 - *"Have you been sufficiently informed about the political actions?"* - respondents indicated: 77% - enough, 5% - very much, 15% - less and 3% - not at all.

At question no. 10 - *"In whom do you trust more (...) on a scale from 1 to 5?"* - the highest value of the trust was allocated to the Church institution, with 27%, followed by the Presidency institution, with 7%, and the Police institution, with 6% of the total answers.

When asked: "*Do you think that Romania's position within the European Union is influenced by its political affiliation?",* those sampled responded "much" at a rate of 92% and only 4% responded "somewhat" or "very much".

The questionnaire was conducted again in November 2008 and it was supplemented with a few other questions about the respondents' intention to vote at the local elections and at the European Parliament elections in 2009.

4. EMIGRATION, BETWEEN THE "EASIER" WAY OF LIFE AND PRESTIGE COMMUNITY

In a study accomplished by T. Rotariu and E. Mezei, referring to exclusive internal migration in Romania, the analysis is based on two main types of data: the census and information about the residence change.

The authors of the study remark that the reduced share of rural-urban migration in total migration is accompanied by an increase in the migration of family groups at the expense of individual migration and increasing the reverse migration at the same time [8].

The situation is similar in the case of foreign migration which tends to turn from individual migration to group migration thus transforming it to a real social phenomenon.

After the year 2000, the specific internal migration continued largely with the external migration that turned into a social phenomenon due to the economic restructuring and the growth of unemployment.

In the study "Romanian Migration in Spain", Ana Bleahu noted that the low bid of jobs created restrictive pressure locally and regionally, inducing a higher migration outside the Romanian space [9]. The author said that the first Romanian emigrants have intended to leave for a strictly limited period, well defined, in order to earn money and then come back to Romania. However, the ratio between the different communities has sharpened the frustrations related to integration.

The state of being an immigrant involves: the absence of family, culture, religion, or some other geographic aspects, difficult integration, discrimination (discrete or expressed), xenophobic attitudes of the majority population.

By choosing an "easy" way of life, as A. Giddes says **"*to live in the easiest way*"** [10], due to pronounced frustrations, individuals have risked in their choices.

The methods used to emigrate before the liberalization of the borders included namely: the passage of illegal borders, paying a guide "stalker", using the relationships of kinship or friendship (in Spain, Italy, France or Germany), using the right of political asylum (for reasons of persecution and discrimination for Roma/Gipsy ethnical group).

Our debriefing questionnaires were accomplished in three distinct periods: November 2007, December 2008 and March 2010. The survey was carried out in 10 neighbourhoods of Curtea de Argeș, on a random sample of 100 people.

At the fourth question: *"Do you have any of your family member abroad?"*, 38% of the respondents stated that yes, they have a family member in Spain, 41% in Italy, 9% in

Germany, 3% in Israel, 6% in other countries (United Kingdom, France, Portugal, Greece, Denmark, Ireland, Netherlands, United Kingdom, United Arab Emirates), and 3% did not have relatives or close friends abroad.

At question number five, *"What do you think is the reason for their departure?",* everybody responded unanimously that the reason for emigration is the lack of jobs correlated with the financial need.

In order to work abroad, 97% of those questioned said they are willing to provide the services. Favourite countries for emigration are: Spain, Italy, United Kingdom, Germany, Switzerland, or even "anywhere".

54% of the respondents said that they are willing to stay abroad for an indefinite period of time, 36% would stay between 2 and 5 years, 9% between 1 and 2 years, and 1% for more than a year.

In the event of departure abroad, the interviewed stated that the responsibility for the education of their children goes to the other parent (71% of the answers), to the grandparents (15%), to other relatives (11%), while 3% of the respondents refused to comment.

The determining factor that leads to school abandonment is considered to be the financial need, as 43% of the respondents stated, 56% others mentioned the lack of a parent and 1% stated other reasons (such as entourage).

88% of total people questioned indicated that the work abroad is one factor that contributes to the disintegration of the family, while 12% said the opposite.

We found that the majority of people (54%) who went to other countries due to the lack of jobs and due to financial gaps, have the intention to remain indefinitely abroad.

Although the absence of a parent is considered to be the determining factor that leads to school abandonment (56%) and that work abroad is one factor that contributes to the dissolution of the family (88% of those questioned), people who go abroad are, paradoxically, appreciated (87% of the answers) and only 11% had a feel of disapproval.

Due to the economic recession that began in 2008, we had the purpose to find out the intentions of the emigrants, and we replaced in this case some questions from the original questionnaire.

At the question - *"You know the high degree of criminality among the Romanians in Italy. Under the effect of discrimination and the economic crisis context, would you be willing to work in this country?"* - 80% gave a positive response.

At the question - *"Because of the global economic crisis, if you would have the opportunity to go abroad would you accept? If you accept, how long would you be willing to*

go to work abroad?" – the answers showed that the intention to stay abroad increased compared with 2007.

At the question: *"If you are on the verge of becoming unemployed in the country you immigrated, what would you do?"* - 20% would remain unemployed, 50% would look for another job (even more poorly paid), and 20% would return to Romania.

At the question: *"If you would become unemployed in Romania now, would you intend to emigrate?"* - more than 80% of the respondents said that they have the intention to emigrate.

5. CONCLUSIONS

When neighbourhoods preserve the same communication relationships among the members, groups maintain the character of the community. The fragmented neighbourhood community type maintains the same problems of the community, and when applying quantified values of distance we can analyze extensive territories [11].

A concrete example within the neighborhood network is represented by the people who want to return to the country for a specified period of time (at least one month), but want to maintain their life and work in the host country. In this situation, they resort to the people from the country of origin, relatives or friends, especially people they trust, in order to replace their absence during the return. During this period, the newcomer has time to look for a job, so that when the person that called for support returns, they can remain to work abroad.

In conclusion, the solidarity and the group membership in the neighborhood support the resilience of a community, although the mobility factor is involved in it. Therefore, the context shapes a very important information device and its stability is no longer provided by the lack of mobility of the individuals or of the neighbourhood members, but only communication is involved.

Thus, in the neighbourhood the proximity has been exceeded and it cancelled the distance. The continuous process of sedimentation on the perceptions of distance (near-far) within a community [12] is not an essential feature of the space.

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