

FOREST RESTITUTION IN ROMANIA AND THE IMPACTS ON RURAL COMMUNITIES: CULTURAL DIMENSION

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Résumé. Les caractéristiques de la relation communauté–forêt dans le contexte du processus de rétrocession des propriétés forestières en Roumanie: la dimension culturelle. L'évolution de la société humaine s'est avérée être extrêmement rapide durant ces derniers siècles, nécessitant des modifications extrêmes au milieu naturel, son empreinte bien définie étant représentée par son milieu entropique avec des caractéristiques modifiées en profondeur. Le développement socio-économique puissant et rapide a affecté dans un mode extrême la relation entre deux milieux, naturel et entropique, éléments de base du milieu géographique. L'analyse de la relation existante entre les communautés humaines et la forêt, met en exergue la corrélation étroite entre les deux sous-systèmes de base du système géographique. Cette communion, qui souligne le caractère unitaire du système, tend actuellement à se transformer (comme suite de l'apparition du processus de rétrocession des terrains forestiers en Roumanie) dans une dichotomie conflictuelle qui risque d'affecter de manière irréversible celui-ci. De l'étude réalisée, il ressort quelques idées majeures au sujet de la position actuelle de la communauté rurale en relation avec l'espace forestier référent. Les relations historiques entre les deux ont subi des changements importants au cours du temps, changements qui doivent être surveillés pour pouvoir intervenir de manière constructive dans le processus de rétrocession des propriétés forestières, de reconstitution de l'équilibre du système territorial. Un rôle important revient à cette analyse dans la perspective culturelle, la perception des individus et les images résultant de celles-ci offrant de nombreuses réponses aux problèmes avec lesquelles se confrontent actuellement les communautés et les institutions responsables dans le domaine pour atteindre les objectifs proposés.

Motivation

Evolution of human society has proved to be extremely rapid during the last few centuries, setting extreme changes in the natural environment, its well-shaped imprint being represented by the anthropogenic environment, which has deeply modified features. Rapid socio-economic development has altered extremely the relationship between the natural and anthropogenic environment, the basic components of the geographical environment.

An elaborated study of the subject calls for a systemic approach, which offers tools to analyze the components of the territorial (geographical) system and the relation among them. Starting from the great complexity of the last centuries one can predict the difficulties that human society confronts at present, which require a new and relevant analysis

Right from the start, the analysis of the present relation between the human communities and the forest shows the close correlation between the two basic subsystems of the geographical system, the natural and the anthropogenic one. This communion, which underlines the unitary feature of the system, tends to transform itself presently in a conflict dichotomy which risks affecting it irreversibly.

The forest, an element of the natural environment, is essential for keeping the planetary balance. This relation born out of the close existing interdependences among its components is negatively altered by the impact the modified behaviour the human society has in the last centuries. The communities – as society subdivisions – relate in a different way to the natural environment, to its component elements, and through the action it displays this gives birth to a new anthropic environment, less and less hospitable.

The relation between the forest and the human communities is, in other words, strongly modified, the forest suffering important pressures, which deteriorate its balance and thus the balance of the natural environment.

1. The role of cultural values in the relationship outlining

The behaviour of the Romanian rural communities has been outlined in relationship with the forest ever since old times. One of the decisive environmental factors which led to the first rural settlements, the forest, offered those groups the necessary survival resources. Thus, the people had the necessary material to build the houses and the outbuildings, they had fuel to warm up their houses and to cook the food, a favourable environment for breeding (the contact between the forest and grassland) which also provided them with different other supplies which supplemented their food resources (fruits, mushrooms, venison). Just as important, is the protective role of the forest during the times in which the population was threatened by barbarian invasions throughout the history. The function of the forest is also important in maintaining the balance of the natural environment by improving air quality, by offering protection against strong winds and soil degradation.

All these can be found in that community's memory, which has developed during many centuries basing itself on an intense communion with the forest. That is why in this situation we can speak about a cult of the "forest", of its relationship with man and which we can find in all the Romanian culture.

Thus, the idea of an approach of the community-forest relationship, seen from a cultural perspective was born. Many features of this community are known through numerous studies of folk traditions, which are maintained in rural areas. It is important to know what is currently happening with this relationship, and whether its cultural dimension can have an important role in restoring the connection between forests and rural communities, a connection which suffered a lot in the second half of the last century.

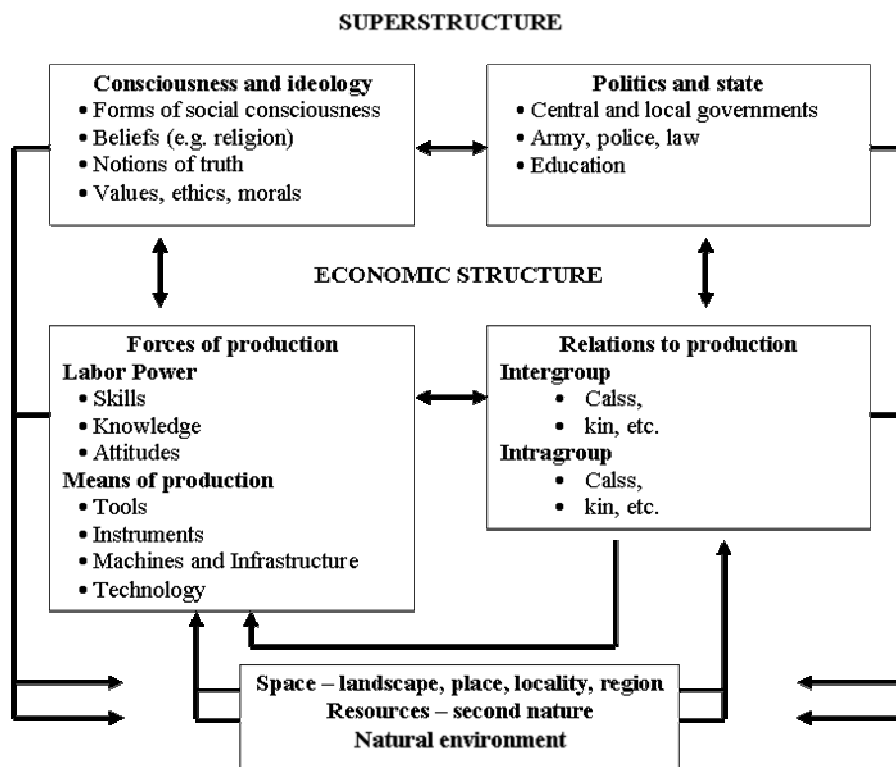


Fig. 1 - A sophisticated base-superstructure model
Adapted from Peet (1998), in Mitchell, 2005, p. 45

Such an approach must start by outlining the position and function of the “cultural system” within the territorial system. ‘Culture’ is defined in many ways. One useful definition is that it is “a total way of life of a people, encompassing language, dress, food habits, music, housing styles, religion, family structures and, most importantly, values” (Mitchell, 2005, p.13). Briefly, one can say that it is an ensemble structured by values, created by human society during its evolutionary

process (***, 1986). Everything we do, say, think, except for a few elements of instinctive behaviour, is culturally conditioned and it materializes in elements of material, social and spiritual culture. It is a form of manifestation of human existence besides the economic, politic and social activities. "It is always in conjunction with the economic, social, and political forces that have made it" (Mitchell, 2005, p.293) and which, also determines in his turn (fig. 1). Thus, "culture is both a source of power and a source of domination and linked with the space, places and landscapes must always be reckoned with" (Mitchell, 2005, p.293-294).

So, from this perspective we can hypothesize that, in the general case of the post-communist countries, and specifically in Romania, the degradation of the relation between communities and the forests within their boundaries, is due to the change in property relations. The loss of forest private property altered deeply individuals' perception on the afforested land, especially because the period of time that is characterized by such an abnormality was prolonged. The forty-five years of communism, and the lack of private forest ownership, led to an alienation of rural people from the land, which was once so vital for survival. That period altered deeply the life style of the rural population. The old economic and social organization shapes specific to the rural space were slowly replaced with the urban ones. A great number of peasants lacking their workplace (forest and agricultural land) have reoriented towards industrial activities found only in towns, leading to an intense migration from villages to towns.

This complex socio-economic process had a great impact on the Romanian peasant's behaviour, on the owner of agricultural and forest land. Especially in the second case, where for many years all property belonged to the state, the effect was dramatic on perceptions of both the inhabited place and of the place formerly owned. This study aimed to focus on these phenomena as a necessary part of the analysis which deals with understanding the difficulties of the restitution process confronting Romania forestry.

2. Geographic and socio-economic characteristics

The study used information from two communes placed in to opposite areas of Romania. One is Chiojdu, in Buzău County, and the other Dorna Candrenilor from Suceava. Although they are placed at a great distance one from another, in two very different regions from cultural and historical point of view (Muntenia and Bucovina), there are many resembles among them, geographically speaking (fig. 2).

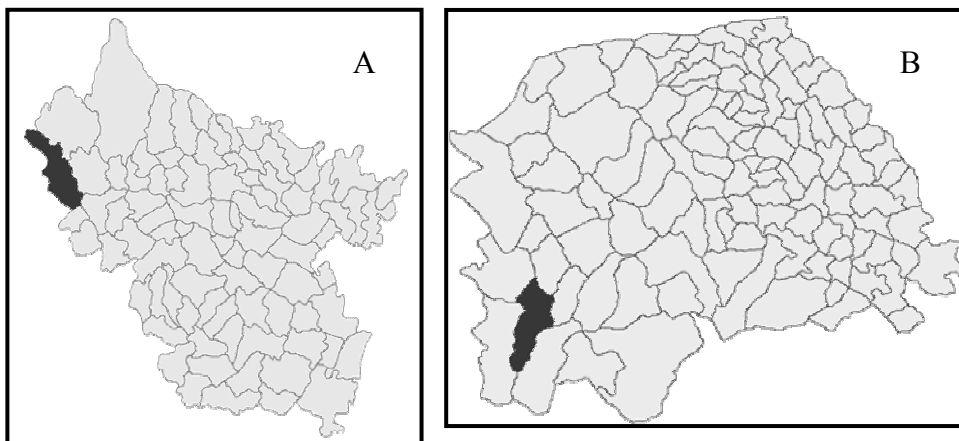


Fig. 2 - The position of the two communes in the counties: A. Chiojdu; B. Dorna Candrenilor

Chiojdu commune is situated in the Curvature Subcarpathians in the north-west part of the Buzău County, in Chiojdu Depression, at the foot of the Siriu Mountains. *Dorna Candrenilor* lies in the western end of Suceava County, in Dorna Valley, at the contact between Dorna Depression and the southern areas of Suhard Mountains.

On the administrative territory of *Chiojdu* there is a complex relief, a combination of mountains and hills. The Siriu Mountains, partly placed on this surface, form a massive surrounded by lower areas one of them being Chiojdu Depression. The highest peaks found here are Mălâia (1663 m) and Siriu (1659 m). The southern, lower part is dominated by Cornetu Hill, an area with intense torrent induced degradation. The highest altitudes vary here between 700 m and 800 m. These are excellent conditions for the development of the forest vegetation that covers around 61% of Chiojdu commune.

The administrative territory of *Dorna Candrenilor* commune lies on a mountainous area and also on a depression one. Suhard Mountains, partially placed on this territory, have a prolonged form, dominated by some picks over 1600 m (Omu 1931m, Suhardu 1709 m, Oușoru 1639 m). Țara Dornelor Depression, placed in the southern part, have a combined relief, plain and hilly, with medium altitude varying between 800 m and 900 m. It is largely opened to west and has good inhabitable conditions. The major part of the forest land lies in the mountains.

The dominant vegetation, the forest, is a combination of *Abies alba* and *Picea excelsa* on the highest slopes, *Fagus silvestris* at 700–1300 m altitude and *Quercus petraea* at lower altitudes. This vegetation covers the major part of the

two territories, over 8.400 ha in Chiojdu and 30.300 ha in Dorna Candrenilor. It is important to underline the fact that the two communes are included in the category of the largest rural settlements in Romania (Chiojdu – 12.841 ha and Dorna Candrenilor – 40.064 ha).



- Traditional house in Chiojdu



- Traditional house in Dorna Candrenilor

From this point of view, it is obvious that the main traditional activity in these settlements is the forestry operation. Their inhabitants exploited and processed timber for hundreds of years, excepting the communist period. They used it to build houses, annexes, tools, and for heating their houses and preparing food. The traditional folk art is dominated by objects made of wood.

Combined with forestry operation is animal raising and keeping, almost all the households in the both settlements raising cattle and sheep on large meadow surfaces. The adjacent forest land is useful for the animals especially during the hot days of summer or the bad weather.

3. Methodology

The methodology used in this study is complex. Some information has been obtained from *official sources*, from central institutions involved in the land restitution process and from local ones. There are data published in Romanian Statistical Yearbook by the National Institute of Statistics, in the studies accomplished by the Romanian National Company (RNP) and the local institutions (the mayoralities). Another method used was the *interview* with key-actors (managers in RNP, mayors, forest-range managers, foresters). The database was improved with information obtained by questioning 50 inhabitants from the two communes (two villages in each of them). The *questionnaire* contained questions with *limited answers* (about the economic characteristics of the households and the

socio-demographic characteristics of the family) and *unlimited answers* (about the opinions, feelings and attitudes of the interviewees about the analyzed subject).

The questionnaire was made of 8 groups of questions from different domains: general information about the interviewee, general characteristics of the household, information on forest restitution process and the relations with the institution, economic data, culture, values and beliefs, the level and sources of information, environmental problems, attitudes, opinions and projects. Based on the answers, statistic tables and analysis files were elaborated. The results of this analysis consisted of data on the resemblances and differences between the present conditions that exist in the two communities, concerning the subjects tackled. The accent was put on the qualitative dimension of the study, namely the unlimited answers, that offered the interviewees the opportunity to freely present their opinions.

The two interviewed groups were chosen taking into account the rules used in this kind of analysis, so that the information obtained to be close to the reality. A determinant element was the property status, all the interviewees being landowners (70% – 5 ha, 15% – 5–50 ha, 15% – more than 50 ha). The majority (67%) were males, more than 80 % being older than 45. The education level was medium (50% graduated the secondary school and 36% the high school). Economically speaking, 37% of the individuals were active, the rest of them being pensioners and housewives.

4. The characteristics of the community-forest relationship

To explore the development of a close relationship between the inhabitants of an area and the natural environment, questions concerning **the source and the age of this relationship** were introduced in the questionnaire. Responses were in many cases similar, emphasizing the existence of an old attachment towards the forestry environment. Many of the inhabitants of the two communes have stressed that they have been present in those specific areas since birth. The idea that they belong to that community and to the rural and forestry land can be found in the answers of more than 90 percent of the interviewed group. There are a lot of references to the moment of birth, of their child hood: “*I was born here. We got used to it, like the bear is.*”; “*My eyes were opened here.*”; “*My roots are here.*” The feeling that they belong to this land is obvious also from the permanent inhabitation of this place, some people emphasizing their presence here ever since their ancestors. This attachment means that some inhabitants, who left their native land communist years, feel the need to come back and to restore the sentimental relationship with the native land. More frequently, they return when they retire, which allows them to change their place of residence for good. This is the time

they restore the connection with their birthplace, they resurrect their old views on that place.

In addition, in the answers given we can frequently see references to grandparents and parents, the source of their own relationship with forest being centered in **the family**. This basic unit of society, at whatever point in time, is the primordial environment for individuals' formation, for their intellectual and spiritual growth, for the shaping of their own perceptions of the surrounding environment. Such a thing is also true for the inhabitants of the afforested places in our Romanian territory. The families in which they grew up had an essential role in developing a close relation with the forest. Some of those interviewed say: *"I saw my parents in the forest, and I followed their life-style."* Others underline their family's contribution to **the education** they were given.

The development of a positive relationship between children and the forest was made directly and indirectly by the parents. Various respondents mentioned the activities they were displaying with their parents in the woods: walks in the forest, sheep and cattle grazing, inspection of the forest's general health state, communication of information about property limits, etc. On these occasions the children learnt to recognize the property they were going to inherit, to know the signs of the forest health state and to respect nature. Some advice which respondents received from their parents and still remember today, includes: *"Don't put the axe on the tree, you'll hurt it and make it sick"; "Never you dare put the axe on good trees ."; "Even as a child I took pity on a tree, took care not to hurt it.";* *"The forest is trained like a garden."*

Although the family remained the main source, the young people's education was conducted partially in schools, too. This institution had in its timetable elements of enriching pupils' knowledge about the environment, because the forest is the main element of those lands. However, only 5% of respondents referred to the role of school in children's education to protect forests.

Responses also offered information about positive feelings towards the forest derived from the permanent presence of those people in its vicinity. Continuous contact with the forest, which was an integrative part of that community's life, induced the feeling of a normal state, of a physical and spiritual addiction to a certain environment. Those inhabitants, who largely for economic reasons, left for a certain period of time their native land, now emphasize the difficulties they encountered when trying a totally different environment, deprived from the forest. Here is how one of the people interviewed in Poiana Negri refers to such a situation: *"I have lived for some time in Giurgiu and I felt I was stifling"; "The block of flats is a prison in which you lock yourself up"* .

This situation is not valid for the younger people in these communities. The education received in schools in the last decade was not enough to strengthen the

bond between young people and the forest, thus they separate easily from their native places and prefer to live in urban areas or areas which lack the forest landscape if the job and location are advantageous. This was typical behavior for the communist period, characterized by intense industrialization and urbanization, which have deeply disfavored the rural communities. The disappearance of the private forest property also led to the disappearance of a pro-forest education within each family, so while the elderly still remember their families enjoying the forest they owned, the youth remember a community with great economic difficulties and with restrictions when it came to the forest resource. There are remarks among the response (especially from the older people) about the youth's weak attachment towards the forest, which is strictly economically determined. Those who are interested in the forest only want to exploit it for their own benefit.

Among all the findings, one can notice the fact that at the root of the community-forest relationship, is **the information** obtained from individuals over time and from different sources, based on which they create mental maps about the inhabited space, about its characteristics. A close analysis of the images, which take shape in the various members of the community, gives us the possibility to group them in different categories.

One can notice the presence of **positive images**, which underline the presence of a communion between man and the natural environment, demonstrated through a favorable behavior for both sides, through strong feelings towards the forest. It is important to underline the fact that the idea of a strong attachment arises in the context of the existence of private forest property. Here are a few of the answers of the interviewed people to the question: "What was the forest like in the past, what relation was there between the people and the forest?":

"Everyone knew his own forest and cutting was not done at random."

"People loved the forest. It was as dear to them as the light of the eyes because it was theirs."

"Father lived in the forest, when cutting a tree he would weep. He used to cut only scrap. "

"He who owned forest land was the richest man in the village."

Owning the forest was a reason for their attachment and the people's positive behavior towards the forest. There are, however, a few remarks about the characteristics of the relationship concerning the state property. Some of the collectors underline the good shape, which the forest had during the communism years due to a good organization of the upkeep and exploitation process.

"It was well protected until 1989, the communist regime took great care of the forest; they were well organized."

"The communists took care of it, they rationally exploited it, not like now."

Two ways of interpreting the positive relationship between man and forest illustrate respondents' position on this. Those who consider private property to be essential for creating a positive image towards forest land are the present owners of large areas, inherited from their grandparents or parents, or purchased recently (about 10-50 hectares). Those who have not yet been restituted the whole area that they inherited and wish to obtain, also hold the same opinion. The second opinion is that of the people who cannot benefit from restitution, who never owned forest but some of whom worked at the forestry departments in those regions and have grown fond of this activity. They also express dissatisfaction about current exploitation of the forest, which has as a result the destruction of large forest areas.

The positive dimension of the community-forest relationship is also reflected in the spiritual perception of some respondents. They consider the forest as being an alive organism, an integral part of their vital and spiritual space, as being one of the elements, which have during the divine creation process in which God is felt.

"God took care of the forest."

"Our parents took great care of it, the forest was sacred for them, they would enter the forest like they entered the church."

"The elderly used to say: "when much of the forest is brought down, many people die"."

In a space marked by intense spiritual experiences, in which mystical perceptions are still present and religious behavior is part of the community's daily life, such a reference to the natural environment in which the man lives is very motivated.

In contrast to the first image is **the negative one**, in which. The two above-mentioned groups blame the behavior of various actors and the present state of the forest. Thus, those who possess large areas of forest, or are still waiting to inherit some land tend to accuse the state, the ex and present owner, instrument of the communist power for a long period for the current disastrous state of the forest.

"People were forced to abandon it (the forest)."

"..... the state ownership was chaotic."

"The communists neglected it."

The interviewed people have the same perception about those who contributed and are still contributing to the difficult situation in which the forestry land was. Frequent references were made about the foresters' behavior, employees of the state or private forestry department, in connection with the forest (its exploitation) and the private property of the community members: *"Foresters love the forest for themselves."*; *"..... they exploit it for the money."*

The negative attitudes towards foresters are always related to people's economic situation and with their general wish to get rich rapidly, especially if they do not have large areas of forest. Although they do not have concrete evidence (or

they are afraid to mention it) they suggest that the actual state of the forest is seriously thinned out, and the appearance of great wealth amongst some forestry employees leads inhabitants of the communes to make such accusations.

They have the same attitude towards the young people whose impatience to obtain bigger income over a short period is extremely obvious. This is due to their perception of private property in the terms, which they have never previously owned. Only a part of those who inherit a forest from their grandparents and still keep in touch with their place of origin and their families show some interest in correct forest management. One of the interviewed people remarked that most young people do not have a sense of property, they are not keen on working and that procrastination about restitution for 15 years induced a feeling of aversion among young people who only want things to be solved sooner. One respondent said, *“those who come from behind are fond of money”, and another commented, “the youth is capable of anything wringing your neck just to take your land”*.

The same negative image is induced by the contrast between the past and present condition of the forest. Not all respondents are satisfied with the state of the forest resource, by people's behavior and by the institutions' behavior which they criticize insistently. Many of the responses underline this contrast.

“Now (people) cut good forest and leave the sick ones.”

“..... the last years have witnessed unrestrained actions, much is being cut and the terrain is left empty. ”

“There is nothing now that was before, there the ownership feeling and now has disappeared.”

They partially make comparisons with the communist period, some of the respondents mentioning the good state of the forest compared with its present state.

“(The forest) is O.K., however, the communists have taken care of it”. “They exploited rationally, not like it is being done now.”

This large range of mental perception appears also in their inner emotions, feelings, which thus are grouped into two categories, **positive and negative feelings**. The positive ones come from the direct relationship between individuals and the forest as a distinct entity of the natural environment. Numerous references are made towards the feeling of attachment, usage, pleasure:

“This is what we were used to. I can't stand living between four walls”. “We are used to this, the air is different, the water

“I like the forest, I loved it”. “It's a part of my soul”.

“I walk in the forest and I leave aside all the sorrows”.

“Those who cut the forest don't know they cut down a hope.”

Intense emotions are also affected by ownership. Those who inherit the forest are proud of it, and feel responsible for it.

“I feel good, the feeling has turned into care, I’m responsible when it comes to the forest.”

“.....happy and proud because not everyone has got one”.

In contrast, there are negative feelings such as regret, weak attachment, anger and fear related to a behavior in connection with the forest.

“I haven’t been to the forest for two years. No one ever goes there; I don’t even know where it is. It’s like I don’t have it. I buy wood. “

The motivation of such a state of mind is very well rendered by one of the respondents who underlined the lack of attachment due to the existing disorder, disorder in the restitution process, in the organization system, in maintenance and exploitation activities etc. There is also the feeling of regret as a result of all the thoughtless exploitation conducted on restitution properties, right at the moment they were returned to their owners. There is a constant fear and suspicion towards those who do not enforce the laws of restitution.

“There is a constant fear; it’s easy to manipulate the people in the country.”

The description of the forest, and the way it is was seen during childhood leads to intense feelings, currently a mixture of nostalgia and regret.

“Oh, God! How I was fond of it! There was laughter, jokes. At 6 in the evening the sheep would come in, were milked and closed in before 10. There was nothing more beautiful than releasing the sheep in the fields. The sheep would crop the grass guarded by the dogs, the shepherds sound trumpet, blow the bugle” (bucium). Oh, it was very beautiful. Those are by gone times.”

A better understanding of community members’ perception of the state of the forest resource, and of the relationship they have with it, derives from the analysis of their mental maps for the future. The most significant feature is the feeling of **uncertainty** as a result of the frequent usage of “if”. Most of the answers start with this word, which shows the conditional feature of their impression. However, their opinions can also be grouped in two categories. The positive ones are in a direct relationship with the desire to strengthen the private property.

“If the forest is left to their owners it will be a good thing but it should not be cut down in an abusive way. People should be given the right to forest ownership so they can be admitted in the European Union.”

“If it were given to its owners it would be well taken care of. Man will take good care of it.”

“The forest was and will be the basis of the people around here. It will be a good thing if it were given back to the people and they will take care of it.”

“If it were kept that would be a good thing. The one who says he doesn’t need it, is not normal. Without the forest one cannot live.”

The negative opinions focus on the way it is exploited and taken care of, presently.

“We would like things to be all right, but I don’t think that would be the case because too much forest is being cut. (...) They steal too much, both from the state and from the owners. They have trucks, carriages.”

“The forest would turn into deadwood if they don’t vote a law which would stop the cutting down. It will all be a disaster, everything will have a selenary aspect.”; “What charm will Omusoru have (peak in Dorna Candrenilor) without any wood?”

The perception of the forest restitution process also affects rural people’s potential to get involved in the community’s problems in this respect. Analyzing the opinions of those interviewed concerning the possibility of their own involvement in making decisions one can notice the existence of potential initiatives in the field.

The most frequent answer is the one connected to the effective forest restitution process. Half of those interviewed in Dorna Candrenilor and a quarter of the Chiojdu commune collocutors mentioned the need to reconstruct private property along previous structures. This would motivate owners to support good organization of forestry activities.

“One should give the person what they have promised. No one mocks the forest in their own property.”

“The owners should be treated with respect. They should give them back the forest. The people didn’t take into account if their exact land wasn’t given back to them.”

There are still some opinions concerning the process of putting back in possession regarding the needs of the community’s members: *“The land should be given back rationally to everybody. “They should give it back to the poor people who don’t have anything.”*

The individuals’ attachment to maintaining the forest in good shape is demonstrated by numerous references to its rational exploitation (rational cutting, cleaning, and planting). Respondents also suggested improving the organization of activities and institutions, modifying the law, applying sanctions, diversifying economic activities to decrease pressure on the forest resource. There are numerous ideas about setting up wood processing firms or other activity fields, reopening coal-bearing exploitation in different places of the country or the reintroduction of natural gases, with the purpose of reducing the wood consumption to warm up the homes and to offer jobs and new income sources, drawing on European funds (SAPARD, for example), development of tourism, etc.

In conclusion, we can say that a large number of the community members feel responsible towards the wood, the answer of a Chiojdu inhabitant being memorable: *“...I wouldn’t leave it at the mercy of fate for everyone to cut it the*

way they want". One can also notice their real capacity to get involved in the community's problems from the point of view of the analyzed process.

Conclusion

From this study, the first of its kind in Romania, some important ideas emerge about the present position of the rural community in relation to forests. The historic relations between the two suffered important changes in time, changes which have to be monitored to be able to constructively intervene in the restitution process of forest properties. Analysis from a cultural point of view has an important role in this process, to take account of the perceptions of the individuals.

The community is an important source of information but also a basic structure in the forest restitution process, from which we can start in the outlining of the conception concerning this process and its coordination.

The results of this study reveal a tendency towards disappearance of "the former owner of a forest" and together with it of the balance gained over time in the traditional forestry spaces. Good habits within the individuals' behavior in the context of their existence in a balanced natural environment, habits, which took into account both their own needs and the surrounding nature and which offered to man the status of being its component have deeply deteriorated. They are now just pleasant memories. 'The new man', to whom so many references were made during the communism period, forgot to live in communion with nature his feature as a 'work force in the industrial field' makes him see the forest just as a mere income source, a quick way of getting rich.

From here, we can distinguish two types of conflicts between the members of a community such as the owners and the employees of the forestry department (the foresters) and the one between generations having more or less different conceptions regarding the forestry fund and the way in which it should be managed and exploited.

The role of tradition in establishing the balance in the relationship between the communities and the forestry environment is important. The information from this field can be helpful in the process of reintroduction of the pro-forestry spirit among the young population.

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