



ULBS

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Summary of PhD. Thesis:

**Cultural Regeneration of Rural Communities
A Strategy Model based on Sibiu Mountain Outskirts
Area Case Study**

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The cultural life is a concept that sums up a series of values, customs, dogmas and heritages that have contributed to the creation of a community – and at of its core. Culture is a unique corpus of the acts that have defined our ancestors lives, for example, this might be understood as a combination of ideas and customs, which whould have functioned for future generations as a system of norms that should be appreciated and followed on the path of continuous development of the environment. All that we have inherited must be carefully kept as it is the evidence that defines us as a community, which helps us to develop what culture means, and it is our duty to enhance and multiply cultural creation. These values must be promoted more often, given the fact that the future generations will be increasingly assaulted by the imposition of prototypes promoted by the media, globalization, social networks, etc. Through a cultural regeneration which should be based on old values, the communities can become more aware of the important precepts of an strategy which might redefining social life.

Urban revitalization was a concept that began to grow in the seventies, when industrial cities gradually began to deteriorate, this was one of the factors which so it was desired to move the economy to a *creative economy*. So, more and more followers of this "current" were of the opinion that only through the use of creativity, innovation and technology a sustainable development of the urban landscape can be done. The next step was to include the cultural space in the equation, which is very important considering that there are still many untapped resources. Revitalization policies have been increasingly designed and promoted by leading cultural organizations, but also by a number of international institutions that aim to a globalisation purpose. The examples created by the many researches in the field, are mainly based on real cases, which will serve as a starting point for a consolidating research that has as subject the regeneration of the rural areas. Having in consideration that we are using as an example an area of great cultural importance for our country, the area of „Mărginimii Sibiului”, we would like to draw relevant parallels between the culture of rural space and urban space. Although the rural space is characterized by the traditional form of culture and the urban space by its global form, we will be able to define characteristic aspects of the two determined spaces that are applicable to both one and the other one.

The regeneration of rural communities is a must to be taken into account by the managers and entrepreneurs of the cultural environment. There are a multitude of villages in which the cultural heritage has been very well preserved and passed down from generation to generation, and

this is the foundation of a sustainable development of the community as well as of the entire nation. What honors us, as a nation, is its own goods but not the values we continually take from other cultures. It is very important to look at the environment of rural communities because here we can still find a lot of cultural resources here that have not been exploited. Due to this exploitation, of these specific resources, in a regeneration space we can reach an increase in the degree of "culturalization" of those living in the rural area, and not only. I believe that the cultural activities in the rural area will help to improve the socio-economic environment in these spaces, because they will help to increase the "popularization" of the tourist areas, the degree of learning and the interest towards the cultural life, of those who live here. etc. Regeneration means re-birth, or re-enforcement of old, traditional cultural models but in a new vision that can be adapted to everyday life.

In the statement of the this actual study, the following aspects were imposed:

1. The revision of all cultural resources that have created value over time, and at the same time defined the rural cultural heritage in the „Mărginimea Sibiului” - in all its forms: referring here to folklore, architectural heritage, household objects, and clothing objects. ;
2. It was desired that the popular culture would be perceived as a form of existence that can give rise to unique "home art" types, which will speak about the way of life of the past and about the customs that were the main foundation of the emancipation in the rural communities;
3. We wanted to understand and highlight the entire potential load offered by traditional culture, and the role it plays in the socio-economic development of Romanian villages;
4. Also, the non-existence of the concept of cultural strategy in the Romanian rural area was another decisive point in the elaboration of present study hypothesis;
5. The last but not least: the absence of a plan which aimed in the direction of revitalizing the localities from „Mărginimea Sibiului”, make me to wish to elaborate that "skeleton", which represents a starting point in the organization of cultural life in other ethnographic areas of our country.

So, the central purpose of the present work *Cultural regeneration of rural communities*. A model based on the case of „Mărginimii Sibiului”, was the statement of a strategy for regeneration and / or rural revitalization by creating a guide of good practices to support this endeavor. Thus, the following actions were requested:

- a. Creating a parallel between the models of urban cultural revitalization and the reality faced by the rural area of our country;
- b. *Creative city* versus *creative locality (village)*: by implementing some forms of creative economy to help the local rejuvenation;
- c. The tradition born from the culture of the masses, and implicitly viewed as an element that gives the flavour for unique places and creates identities;
- d. The „Mărginimea Sibiului” must also be seen as an area in which creative industries can be coordinated and on this basis the process of cultural revitalization can flourish.

The content of the present work was organized into four chapters preceded by the preface, in which the hypothesis was pointed out, and a chapter containing the annexes which referred to the survey that helped me to draw the relevant conclusions.

In the first chapter, a retrospective of the urban revitalization models presented by the European urban environment was prepared, as well as the important steps that were registered in the urban space in Romania. One of the important issues discussed here was the local identity, and how it can be involved in the process of revitalization and implicitly of cultural regeneration.

In the second chapter were defined the elements that make up the cultural reality and how the process of regeneration can be organized on their side, in a creative way. The man, through his experiences, makes the culture to vibrate differently, and through the innovative approach of the cultural reality will reach the social development of the communities that support and promote the artistic work. In other words, different types of groups need to understand that the artist has a defined role in transforming the material, social and spiritual reality (of the community) into an artistic experience.

In the third chapter was exposed, in a quite broad way, the reality portrayed of some villages belonging to the „Mărginimea Sibiului”, and the important cultural evidence that characterizes them. There was an example of the way in which "cultural programs" of rural cultural regeneration were put into practice in the past. Each element surprised in detail a new additional reason for the necessity imposed by the drafting of a project, which aims to expose cultural experiences, in a way that is characterized by quality and sustainability.

In the last chapter we wanted to give some conclusions that were based on the scientific material that served us in the elaboration of the research as a whole, but also on the survey made, on a range of ninety people, who offered us clear answers regarding the "market" of cultural

services, the level of consumer satisfaction in these markets, their expectations, but also the relationship between demand and supply. We considered it good to draw a diagram of the strategy of cultural regeneration, outlining at each level the steps to be taken.

As I have specified, the starting point was created by the scheme that underlies the revitalization of urban space and which, first of all, envisages setting out the strategic objectives of regeneration, which must be similar to and overlap with those of the sustainable development policy; created by the representatives of the communities. As a next step, it is desired to analyze in detail the "supply offer" that the urban space creates, and its potential must be maximized through the efficient use of all the resources held. Basically, there will be created parallels and connections between institutions, between cultural actors, between the forms of artistic expression and even between individuals, establishing partnerships that actively support for a long period of time, the entire process of development and reinvention of the society.

Therefore, urban revitalization speaks about the mark we give over the society, about emancipation of the individual through the creation of forms of expression that will help to discover the creativity within each one, and especially about the self-determination to get involved in the projects that refer to the development of the community from which we are a part. It is very important that cultural actors give birth to "types of characters" with whom individuals can self-identify, creating a place in society for anyone who wants to be included in the programs of redefining the community space. As we specified, the creativity is part of us, being a human capacity which helps us develop. In order to create a creative city, one will want to find, first and foremost, those spaces that have to take on a new color and that once brought confidence and dynamics in the lives of citizens and residents. At the same time, all the traditional specifics must be included in a policy that produces, promotes and preserves all the local products that create impact among the visitors. Greater emphasis will be placed on creating jobs (especially in the cultural field), organizing and preparing the workforce and motivating all those involved in this process of renewal and urban redefinition. Partnerships will be established with the communities already involved in such "problems", but also with those who have expressed their views vis-à-vis this subject - to conclude truths that will be included in policies characterized by sustainability.

Moving on to the characteristics of the rural environment, we can bring here a lot of reasons for which the specific character, the tradition and the values promoted have given birth to a popular

culture that inspires uniqueness. Therefore, traditional culture is a form of popular culture, of the masses, because:

- It is born from the existence of some groups of individuals;
- It is the way of expressing the feelings that the authentic peasant had;
- The product of each artist's work is authentic, it is an experience through its own authenticity;
- The traditional culture is the living, the breath, the people who lit the voice for him, and for cultural diversity;
- Traditional culture is increasingly subordinated to "commercial culture" and capitalism, which requires approaches that create differences and bring out uniqueness.

Ont that account, in order to give power to the sustainable regeneration process, it is necessary to implement projects for this purpose, on all the layers that make up the culture of a community:

- a. The material part must be preserved and reorganized in the most faithful form, creating a space that brings to light the old values that are worth remembering. At the same time, the village must be rebuilt in such a way that it can be easily discovered by tourists, but also beneficial to the coexistence of individuals through the arrangement of an affordable infrastructure.
- b. The second substrate of the culture is the one that refers to the social part and the relationships that develop within the society. Partnerships between institutions will be established, taking into account the old social reforms that have registered socio-economic progress.
- c. As regards the spiritual side, we will point to actions that offer solidarity and those that support the collective spirit. Spirituality must always activate the consciousness of each individual, and make them aware of the strengths they have, and offers them the place where they lives.

Therefore, a creative rural environment envisages the inclusion and solution of the challenges embodied by the three components that were the basis of creating the cultural reality; by achieving the objectives set for each "layer" of the company. Thus, for each component of the culture (the material, the social and the spiritual), we assumed that it was necessary to carry out several related actions. For that reason, the ultimate goal, namely the social, cultural and economic revitalization of the group of individuals through sustained work of all the cells that make up the body of the society, is considered. It is desired to work in a team, that is the sustained activity of a group of individuals who coordinate the process, whose final result must at least to a small extent

satisfy each citizen. At the same time, an improvement of the environment on all levels must be noted.

Because of this, the realization and enunciation of a strategy that aims at the cultural domain, we need to carry out several steps, starting from the lowest level that characterizes the society. Therefore, the most important resources available to the area will be sought, and on their edge and the capabilities that they embody, will be outlined actions that give rise to strategic objectives that in turn will designate the supreme purpose of the strategy. All of this, will materialize in the approach of cultural policies, which will ultimately dictate the cultural strategy aimed at regenerating the rural area. The strategy refers to a complex process of long duration, which may undergo (during) changes imposed by the internal or external environment. It must relate to competitiveness, being necessary to approach it in a creative way, leaving room for the emergence of innovative ideas - more than that their purpose is primordial in perceiving changes.

Taking into account the hypothesis from which the actual research started and the answers we have stated during it, we can draw the following conclusions:

- There were created parallels between the models of urban cultural revitalization and the development possibilities that embody their rural area;
- The outline of the creative rural environment was drawn up;
- The tradition has been defined as a culture of the masses: giving of unique value that creates identities;
- Examples were given which referred to the different creative industries from rural cultural revitalization;
- The strategy of regeneration and / or rural revitalization was stated by scoring the objective that must fulfill these steps.