

METHODOLOGY AND RESEARCH TECHNIQUES

CAUSES OF ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL DECLINE. ANALOGY WITH THE STOCKHOLM SYNDROME

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Abstract: This article is based on a series of surveys that were conducted in Strehăia in the Mehedinți County. The statistical analyzes performed by consulting the database of the National Institute of Statistics, supplemented by field research regarding the prospects of development of the city have revealed that the level of development is low, and in the last twelve years have been missing a strategic thinking required for the community development. Local pride, the lack of vision and institutional objectives limited the institutional efforts to the electoral cycles and the fatality invoking as a cause of the current problems.

Keywords: community development, public institutions, symbolic capital, Stockholm syndrome, elite.

INTRODUCTION

Romanian society undergoes a perpetual crisis since 1989, characterized by the social, economic and value decline. The symbolic capital is disrupted in the absence of some benchmarks that can guarantee the individually or collectively success. The inspired comparison of the sociology professor Dumitru Sandu in the work: “the sociological transition with a trip that of a social group is moving towards a specific destination, defined as indicators of quality of life”. To what extent these destinations are thankful for all social categories or contain values universally accepted for all group members is reflected in public opinion expressed, fears, social involvement, group cohesion and political options which set elites act as guarantors of direction effective.

After a research of this kind we get to the questions about the five prospects mentioned in the cited work: “Who are the ones who represent the new elite, with what resources have they reached that position, what values they support or what scale of values relate to, do you have trust or not, we know them or detest them,

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which are the behaviours that characterize etc.”. In the case of the researched community we stop at the community’s capacity to conserve its own symbolic capital in the conditions of some confused internal factors that correlate with the external ones with the decline in the life quality, living conditions and life opportunities. Thus, we find a correlation between hope and fatalistic resignation in the real changes undisturbed election cycles.

In the absence of a real and change capable middle class it arises a need for effective elite to drive the community development. But assessing the effectiveness of new local elites remains at the discretion of a poor population, disoriented without analytical criteria based on a symbolic capital sufficiently developed and adapted to current times. Instead we witness a syncretism of traditional principles, specific to the autarkic Romanian communities, and welfare principles, defined by the global processes influence, handy for local staff attached to political parties ideologically shaped only in major cities and supported locally by the vehemence of local elites.

1. WHY THE STOCKHOLM SYNDROME WOULD BE A MODEL FOR UNDERSTANDING THE COMPLEX PHENOMENA THAT AFFECTS THE SYMBOLIC CAPITAL?

Understanding the contributing factors to the total decline of a community involves more complex explanations than the reductionist ones, such as the economic or demographic nature. The Stockholm syndrome describes the behaviour of the victim to the aggressor, due to insulation, captivity and violence. Relative benevolence of the aggressor is perceived positively by the victim who goes to a state of sufficient sympathy. The events of 1973 in Sweden revealed an atypical behaviour of human beings in a compelling context, hostage’s attachment to the bank robbers. But the reasons are complex and based on specific traits of human nature¹, and in this relationship we are dealing with aggressor rationality and the captive emotional experiences.

Transfer elements from The Stockholm syndrome toward the individual experiences that may help explain collective behaviour of people in a social group that supports the state of dependence towards the elite at the expense of democratic rights to vote in favour of changing the individual freedoms and opportunity to express their potential.

The symbolic capital is “any property type (any physical capital, economic, social, and cultural)”², whose function is to support economic and social valorisation of capital so as to meet the objectives of the group.

¹ Nathalie de Fabrique, Stephen J. Romano, Gregory M. Vecchi, Vincent B. Van Hasselt, *Understanding Stockholm Syndrome*, FBI Law Enforcement Bulletin, Volume 76, No 7, July 2007, pp. 10-15, available at <https://leb.fbi.gov/2007-pdfs/leb-july-2007>

² Pierre Bourdieu, *Rațiuni practice. O teorie a acțiunii*, Bucharest, Meridiane Publishing House, 1999, p. 85.

The community that is the subject of this study we cannot explain the maintenance of a status quo undesirable by this syndrome than compensates disaggregating the components in the use of the symbolic capital and human capital stock that can provide “the trip” towards the desired objectives. Accepting the current context it can only be explained by the collective mind that accepts captivity from different considerations of social action rationality.

2. COMMUNITY CHARACTERIZATION BASED ON THE DATA

Statistical data analysis allows assessing the situation of the urban infrastructure of the city while placing thereof in the context of other cities in the Mehedinti County in particular and Oltenia in general.

From a demographic perspective Strehaia is the third urban community of the county, comprising approximately 8.1% of the total urban population of the county, placed in the same category with other cities in Oltenia such as Rovinari, Dăbuleni, Orșova, Scornicești, Drăgănești Olt and Bumbesti Jiu, is the 19th largest city in total 40 cities in Oltenia.

In terms of urban infrastructure Strehaia city ranks 24 being surpassed by smaller cities. In relation to the urban area in 2011³ in Strehaia every kilometre of the street was 11.03 Km², each kilometre of water network was 37.55 Km², and a sewage incumbent was 71.67 Km². On average the area covered by all utilities (measured in square kilometres of built-up area per one kilometre from complete utilities) was 40.08 Km². For comparison cities of the same size have the following areas covered by the three utilities (paved streets, water and sewerage).

Table 1

The area covered by utilities in Oltenia cities with population between 10,000-15,000 inhabitants

<i>Nr. Crt.</i>	<i>City</i>	<i>The average area covered by all utilities*</i>
<i>1</i>	Rovinari	12,29 Km ²
<i>3</i>	Orșova	13,73 Km ²
<i>4</i>	Scornicești	15,44 Km ²
<i>5</i>	Strehaia	40,08 Km ²
<i>6</i>	Drăgănești Olt	43,70 Km ²

Source: National Institute of Statistic, Tempo online database, available at: <http://statistici.insse.ro/shop/index.jsp?page=tempo2&lang=ro&context=75>

Ddata processing by author

**Note: a lower average surface covered by utility indicates greater length utilities*

³ *National Institute of Statistic, Tempo online database, available at <http://statistici.insse.ro/shop/index.jsp?page=tempo2&lang=ro&context=75>*

By this situation we find that Strehaia is far below the level of development of similar cities. We note that economic investment in the city's development is dependent on the existing infrastructure and facilities offered to investors. A poor infrastructure is not attractive for potential investors, and by comparison with other cities shows that Strehaia is far from what the entrepreneurs are looking for.

Analysis of urban infrastructure on Strehaia revealed that the municipality has remained constant for a long time (at least between 2000-2010 for which we have available data). But stagnation areas covered by basic public utilities highlights the lack of involvement in local development by the local decision makers. We note that the city is at the confluence of two metropolitan areas of influence: in relation to Mehedinți county resident, Dr. Tr. Severin the urban area of influence is 5 km (measured from the town centre), and compared to the most important city of Oltenia (Craiova), the urban influence is 2.4 km⁴. The stagnation of investment in infrastructure development will decrease these areas and develop potential loss due to expansion of urban services to areas under the influence of the city. Moreover, the lack of investment in urban development capacity causes decreased revenue from taxes collected by local authorities which affect revenues to the state budget. Demographic decline is influenced by the infrastructure condition, lack of life opportunities and attraction shown by other urban centres as well as international migration.

Add to these statistics the decrease of the healthcare quality by closing and reopening the hospital, increasing number of people per one doctor and the number of potential patients to beds. Therefore the conditions necessary for urban services quality are affected by even the extinction, pausing and resuming the activity syncope. It is challenging to provide a coherent strategy on the background of eliminating the urban services that serves the bordering areas, which are shrinking as can be seen from the influence of urban areas.

Statistics data prove that Strehaia is in a directional retrieval stage which requires numerous investments in improving, maintaining and expanding investments. The location along the European road, linking the west of the capital can be an important asset by increasing the city's attractiveness for investors.

To get closer to the urban infrastructure with the highest density of Oltenia (town Motru) were required in 2011 investment in the construction of 50 km of tap water and sewerage, which means employment and increase the number of payers of these services, which means a surplus of revenue to local government. The level of investment by 2016 is far from being achieved which shows that the statistical analysis and inventory needs of the local community was not found in the management plan of the local Mayor.

⁴ These measurements are based on the statistical data of the National Institute of Statistic with the method Reilly-Converse.

3. POPULATIONS OPINIONS AND VALUES

This data is based on two opinion surveys conducted in Strehaia in 2015 and 2016. Knowledge based on statistical data requires knowledge of community field. Please note that in this case Strehaia is not an atypical case, its specific phenomena being found in many places in Romania.

Data collected and their dynamics, resulting after processing data from two consecutive studies have shown a paradoxical state of mind of a part of the population. In the last 12 years there have been no major changes among the local Mayor, and their performance proved that the choice of their state reasons which go beyond rationality required a vote based on logical assumptions which also induced the idea for this article title in an attempt to explain the specifics of the village.

Community status and life quality are viewed in a negative way by the population. The question about the mayor's work highlighted that in 2016 a percentage of 34.7% of respondents gave the note "1", while a rate of 16.9% gave "10". The remaining options were distributed between "2" and "10". By aggregating the extreme options shows that more than half of respondents (51.6%) tends to analyze in a radically way the mayors activity, being in complete opposition. By reporting on pre-election efforts you can find some differences between 2015-2016: the critical attitude fell by 6.8% (note "1" was given by 41.5% of respondents in 2015 and 34.7% in 2016), while appreciations increased by 7.1% (16.9% in 2016 from 9.8% in 2015).

The local council, now dissolved, was appreciated in the same way, although currently not working: between 2015 and 2016 the share of those which were awarded the note "1" fell by 1.1% (from 38.9% to 37.8%) and "10" was granted 5.8% in 2015 and 10.6% in 2016, an increase of 4.8%. This positive change in favour of an institutional entity that no longer exists is due to the same atypical way of understanding the things of a population category in terms of information.

The City Hall institution was appreciated in the same way, the growth of satisfaction with the way in which it operates. The mark "1" was mentioned by 6.7% fewer respondents in 2016 compared to 2015 (32.8% vs. 39.5%) and "10" has met several options by 8.8% in 2016 to 2015 (15% vs. 6.2%).

These considerations suggest that the hope given by the work started in the pre-election period had a positive effect on the population, which although not directly associated with these works with a certain person, I think in the future things will get a good direction.

Political debates are reflected in conflicts between the local decision makers. The Local Council is suspended by the decision of the mayor but without this being made known to the public. Awareness of local political realities of the population is evidenced by the 37.6% of people who heard about the dissolution of the council.

A percentage of 34.9% of respondents believe that the decision was bad and only 24.9% of respondents said that this is a good decision.

The opinions concerning the issues addressed by the local authorities' shows that the activity is unknown or limited to work around urban areas of strength. The largest proportion of respondents (34.76%) has highlighted that so far local authorities have not solved any problem of the village. The main issues addressed were road works (by asphalt or pavement), sewerage and tap water. The remaining issues resolved hold shares of less than five percent. Analysis of the data collected shows that there is a collective short-term memory: are forgotten the works for more than a year before (water, public lighting) and current popular works, visible even if they are just begun without there being any evidence that will be completed in the future.

Data comparison between the two surveys highlights a few elements to be taken into account:

- In 2016 it increased the number of references to the problems solved (13 issues mentioned in 2016 compared to 7 issues in 2015);
- Increased by 6.81% percentage of those who believes that local authorities have solved the roads problem;
- Increased by 0.72% percentage of those who consider that the authorities have solved the sewage problem;
- Decreased by 1.74% percentage of those who believe that local authorities did nothing.
- Decreased by 6.50% percentage of those who believe that the current water problem has been solved;
- Decreased by 3.21% percentage of those who believe that public lighting has been solved;
- Decreased by 3.21% percentage of those who think the authorities did the right thing;
- Instead mention of problems appear solved in 2016 and not mentioned in 2015: repair sidewalks, drainage ditches, city sanitation, school repair, carrying wells, repair bridges, green spaces development.

Future solutions are simplistic, referring to replace the mayor (up 5.99%), staff reduction (up 2.98%) and cooperation with companies specialized in European funds (0.79%). Trying to guess the positive consequences of these measures is discouraging the population as proposals are more punitive and less than constructive. Replacing the mayor with a person with the same management vision will not generate any community development and improvement of life quality. Moreover, possible solutions and specialized activity represented variants cooperation with companies specialized in attracting European funds registered a minor increase of only 0.79% and the option of hiring specialists in population opinions fell 4.15%, the same as drastic staff reduction (5.45%). The data resulting from the processing of potential solutions for the future are reduced to sanctioning

the mayor, but not completed for proposals on ways to improve the professionalization of business and administrative skills team. Thus, in the future we expect that the city hall activity is centered on a single person (the mayor) who can use its discretion to fund community passivity and lack of qualified advice. There is a risk reconstitution the same context of the community captivity in a vicious circle of passivity, the lack of performance of clerks, the lack of a real strategy of development and the lack of specialists in community development derived from the internal or external resources.

In this way expectations will be materialized through reporting to a single person, subjectively, will seek to preserve the mandate (power position) becoming an “aggressor” by imposing certain measures that will create community’s state of dependence.

Rejecting the human capital stock from outside the community represents a sufficient argument, in our opinion, for understanding the nature of cultural captivity of small communities. Increasing appreciation for local leaders under conditions of repeated setbacks over twelve years ago small investment, some not yet finalized, highlights a supra-innovation fear and modernization to the detriment of subsistence sanctioned capacity of the current state of affairs. Thus, the slowing modernization and integration into the competitive world of globalization is perceived as a valuable mediator of the community interests in a manner contrary to the evidence.

Understanding the attitudes towards the community problems can be divided into two broad categories: a higher degree of interest in terms of personal as well as the hospital (32.25%) and workplaces (29.63%), followed by another category of issues concerning the Community organization: roads (25.16%), stray dogs (5.11%) and the amount of taxes (3.83%).

Regarding the last point raised – the amount of taxes – making them more difficult to collect and reduce their impact on the local budget through the demographic decline, poverty and the low number of economic agents, plus the significant migration of population and consumer goods and services. The multiplication of local government services can support a revenue growth at the local budget.

The belief that wellbeing depends on the activity of the mayor and the Town Hall (75.6% in 2015) in a ratio discrepancies with other options (foreign investors, attracting EU funds, agricultural development or the Romanian State, not exceeding 10.0% of options) highlights the concentration of the expectations around the local institution and its leader. These views support the idea of the Stockholm syndrome in the community. The only relationship assessed as positive by the captive citizens is the nearest administrative institution and its leader: the mayor. The community members behave such as being isolated from the world, ignoring the institutions and organizations that can provide material support, logistics and professional development of the city. This attitude contributes

authoritarian behaviour of the city representatives imposing a model of compliance according to the social prestige sought.

The traditional elements are found in the general population views. Thus, the business of the mayor's positive attitude is reflected in the personal aid they provide to those in need. Moreover, the mayor ideal for Strehaia should be male (69.4% of the options), politically unaffiliated (64.85), young (63.2%), to be born in the locality (55.6%) and rather poor (43.8%).

This image features a mayor highlighted that the population's vision is based on the leadership role specific as a man (the origin patriarchal), politically independent (unconstrained by any community external force) young (a guarantee of future), born in the locality (warranty attachment to the community) and poor (guarantee fairness and honesty).

We find that the decision is based on a traditional cultural model, commonly found in the policy choices of the early 1990s.

Associating honesty with poverty is a widespread in Romanian rural areas, where wealth is associated with negative traits of character and honesty. Through such considerations we believe that the decision criteria are compensated based on a solid reasoning related to the modern management.

CONCLUSION

The link we are trying to realize between the power relations within a community and isolation which develops through self-assumed dependence towards the leaders can identify the most effective ways to support small communities. They prove incapable of identifying their own development resources and their use for enhancing life quality. Decisions based on those principles determine auto-exclusion the small communities that can provide the institutional development support.

The objectives of the modernization projects are reported in the literature as "the integration of local communities in political structures (nation-state) and national and international economic (market)"⁵. Although the democratic organization requires election cycles of four years, we find that voting intentions are based on the principles of traditional culture and not on modern performance on reasonable indicators of life quality or the democratic principles that allow the necessary corrections from time to time.

Political competition is reduced to an exercise in gaining legitimacy of community representation and conservation of power within the community. Late

⁵ Liviu Chelcea, *Cultură și dezvoltare: perspectiva antropologiei culturale*, în Cătălin Zamfir, Laura Stoica (coord.), *O nouă provocare: dezvoltarea socială*, Craiova, Polirom Publishing House, 2006, p. 131.

modernization aggravates the social issues and community decline due to overlapping the self-sufficient relationships of those specific to globalization. The syncretism between overlapping of the two value systems results in decreased life quality. Adapting to the new challenges requires integrating in the world current of the local potential that should only be selected from those favouring and those blockers. We are currently witnessing, unfortunately, to the candidates empowerment that guarantees the context of subsistence at the lower survival rather than initiating opportunities to express their potentialities individual or group.

The analogy with the Stockholm syndrome has an explanatory power sufficient to the small communities specific phenomena, with connections between people based on tradition, autarkic Romanian and that attaches irrational on people who retain their privileges and legitimacy by maintaining the economic, social and cultural turn them into leaders.

