

THE SOCIO-CULTURAL CONTEXT AND PREDISPOSITION TOWARDS ENTREPRENEURSHIP IN THE RURAL ENVIRONMENT

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Abstract

Objectives. Rural entrepreneurship is a process of perpetual reinvention due to the physical, social, economic characteristics of the countryside. The purpose of this study was to analyze the influence that the micro-social environment – emphasis on values, attitudes, and trust relations – has on the tendency towards entrepreneurship in the rural environment of Galati.

Material and methods. The main method of research was the focus-group style of interview, centring of discussion themes such as: entrepreneurial resources, the micro-social environment, and the cultural-normative conditions associated with entrepreneurial predisposition.

Results. Entrepreneurial tendencies vastly depend on the presence of the entrepreneurial model in the social relations of the individual, or the lack thereof. Based on the analysis of the interviews it revealed that the presence of an entrepreneur among parents, friends, or relatives determines the decision of an individual to become an entrepreneur. The answers offered in relation to the availability of forming associations with a view to starting up a business point to a socially tense climate, predominated by distrust and discouragement. The cultural-normative conditions of the entrepreneurship potential are only partially present in the Galați county countryside.

Conclusions. The study showed that the personal network of potential entrepreneurs is wider than those of individuals which are not inclined towards entrepreneurship. Reaching a decision regarding starting up a business does not entirely depend on the resources of a household, the access to the necessary funds, or the general economic climate, but also on personal, or family entrepreneurial experience, the availability to associate, and the level of trust.

Keywords: social resources, entrepreneurial model, cultural conditions, trust relations.

Introduction

Entrepreneurship is a contemporary form of involving individuals within community life, with effects on a local and national levels, materialized in economic growth, and implicitly an increased quality of life. Moreover, entrepreneurship implies change and novelty, which is why one of the reasons for which it should be encouraged and supported is the fact that what is different is not always better, but what is better, is always different (Kuratko, 2005). Entrepreneurs are catalysts for change and progress, and, when the cultural and institutional environment allows individuals to discover and exploit business opportunities, economic growth entails.

Entrepreneurial activity stems from an individual level and it can always be followed to a single person, the entrepreneur. Entrepreneurship is, therefore, anchored by the attitudes, reasons, skills, and psychological endowment of a single individual. Nonetheless, the individual entrepreneur does

not engage in entrepreneurial activities in a temporal and spatial void but is affected by the context in which they operate. Therefore, the entrepreneurial reasons and actions are influenced by cultural and institutional factors, by the business environment and macro-economic conditions.

Approaching entrepreneurship in what regards cultural context offers a deeper understanding of the specificity of the phenomenon under study, the *modus operandi* of the individuals relying on specific cultural, and social goals (Bayad & Bourguiba, 2006), which determines a certain supremacy of the social context in the psychological model of the entrepreneur. As such, the cultural and socio-demographic factors represent variables which can explain entrepreneurial intent. Prior to the existence of entrepreneurship there must be entrepreneurial potential, be it a large organization which tries to innovate, or a community which wants to develop. (Hayton, George, & Zahra, 2002). Entrepreneurial activity does not occur within a void, it is rooted in a cultural and social context, made up from a sum of human social and economic networks (Krueger & Brazeal, 1994).

Researchers have been trying to explain the connection between the cultural variables on one hand and the entrepreneurial behaviour, namely its results, on the other hand. The way in which entrepreneurship is understood affects the appeal attributed to it (Dodd, Jack, & Anderson, 2013). There are cultural variables, specific to each country, which explain the preference towards entrepreneurship, and the regional variations in entrepreneurial activity. Cultural values change the way in which individuals from different societies perceive entrepreneurship. The decision to become an entrepreneur is taken voluntarily and consciously (Krueger, Reilly, & Carsrud, 2000), but it is based on the cultural values specific to the individuals of a certain culture. For this reason, entrepreneurship must be encouraged and supported by creating a favorable cultural climate. Entrepreneurship is developed in socio-cultural media which support behaviors based on performance, taking risks, where the individuals work at high standards in order to be successful, the latter being obtained through their own efforts, and not by inheritance (Hopp & Stephan, 2012). In transcultural management literature there is a widespread theory according to which cognition, perception, and behavior on an individual level are influenced by the cultural predetermination of each individual. In other words, individuals are predetermined by the national culture in which they were raised, before they become an integrated part of a company (Foreman-Peck, & Zhou, 2013). Consequently, organizational culture, the companies themselves, the Business Media, economy in general are all affected by a national cultural sensibility, the economic entities being individuals with values, attitudes, and behaviors culturally determined (Webster & White, 2010). The degree to which cultural and social existing norms encourage (or do not discourage) individual actions influences the emergence of new ways to do business or economic activities, which can lead to a dispersion of prosperity and personal income (Nagy et al., 2008, p. 27). An individual can adopt entrepreneurial behavior in a certain culture, and they cannot adopt one in another culture, depending on the cultural values promoted on a national level.

The process through which a person becomes an entrepreneur is determined by the micro-social environment from where they belong. The presence, or absence, of an entrepreneurial model in the social relationships of the individual influence the entrepreneurial behavior; on the one hand, the quantity and quality of these social relationships which can be used as resources for starting and keeping an enterprise, on the other. As such, the transformation of the individual into a potential entrepreneur depends on the existence of values and social models which can help entrepreneurial activities, and the general attitude regarding entrepreneurs, or entrepreneurial success. The identification of the specificity of the micro-social and cultural environment which

can influence entrepreneurial predisposition may lead to the understanding of the actual status of rural entrepreneurial business.

The rural environment presents certain specificities, which, on the one side can constitute distinct barriers in the path of the entrepreneurial spirit, and on the other side they can explain the necessity of treating distinctly the rural entrepreneur. Firstly, in the rural environment, the opportunities of finding work are rather small in comparison to an urban environment; secondly, the government programs which target the rural environment many times suffer an inconsistent approach so as to encourage small businesses; thirdly, in the rural environment the development level of the human capital is more reduced in comparison to an urban environment. Moreover, the expertise of the local administrations is not sufficient in order to fully capitalize the existent potential. Additionally, in the majority of cases the existent infrastructure within the rural environment is in a dire state, or even prevents the development of businesses and the reduction of the transaction costs. Finally, on multiple locations the governmental approaches to rural development proved inefficient especially because these have ignored the importance of the involvement of the communities and they did not follow the stimulation of the entrepreneurial spirit within the rural environment (Dołtu, 2011, pp. 15-16).

The status of the Romanian rural entrepreneurship can be explained through cultural values which do not encourage an entrepreneurial thought, and, implicitly, for the entrepreneurs themselves. The Romanian peasant household has been largely orientated towards self-consumerism and less towards a market economy; a fact which shows the necessity to understand and stimulate the business world within villages. Rural entrepreneurship is a process of perpetual reinventing due to the physical social and economic characteristics specific to rural country such as natural resources, social capital, governance, social networking, or the cultural normative context.

The purpose of this study was to analyze the influence that the micro-social environment - with an accent on attitudes and trust relations - has on the inclination towards entrepreneurship in rural Galați.

As a geographical position, Galați County is part of the peri-Carpathian-Danube counties, being located in the southernmost part of Moldova, at the confluence of three major flowing waters: Danube, Siret and Prut, in the river-maritime sector of the country. Galați County is part of the South-East Development Region (together with the counties of Vrancea, Buzău, Braila, Constanta and Tulcea), of the Lower Danube Euroregion (along with the districts of the south of the Republic of Moldova and the west of Ukraine) as well as of the Free Economic Zone "Galați-Giurgiulești-Reni". Unfortunately, these advantages were not capitalized by the local authorities, if we take into account the fact that in 2008-2012, the GDP at county level recorded a growth rate lower than the average per country and the one related to the South-East Region, and the unemployment rate was above the average per country and the South-East Region (National Bank of Romania [NBR], 2014). In the economy of Galați County, agriculture occupies an important place due to the exploited agricultural and arable area, and about 40% of the employed population works in this sector (given that 43.8% of the total inhabitants of the county live in the rural area). According to the study Atlas of Marginalized Rural Areas and Local Human Development in Romania, at the level of Galați County there is a high rate of rural marginalization (World Bank [WB], 2016). More specifically, 35 small rural and urban localities (representing 20.2% of a total of 173) have the lowest level of local human development, being considered marginalised rural areas characterised by low-income households, low-educated inhabitants and labour market-relevant skills and a lack of jobs.

The socio-economic environment in the area under study, correlated with the local specificities decisively influences entrepreneurial potential. According to certain macro-economic indices of analysis of the entrepreneurial practice within the regional profile, Galati county was labelled as having an entrepreneurial rate of environment to low (with a rate of active companies of 61, a rate of start-ups of 233, a rate of private enterprises of 23, and a rate of entrepreneurship in favorable sectors of 105), a level mostly due to the fact that it is one of the counties with a traditionally industrial profile (Mihalache & Croitoru, 2011). On the other hand, the agricultural potential of Galati county might be an argument for the association both in what regards the cultivation of farmlands, and the manufacture of raw material from this source. Unfortunately, association in the field of agriculture is fairly limited, mostly due to some issues of information, mentality, and over-taxation. According to *The Socio-Economic Analysis with the Perspective of Rural Development 2014-2020*, approximately 150 agricultural cooperatives are registered on a national level, 20.4% of which are active within the South-East Region (Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development, 2013).

Within an unsafe economic and social environment, adopting a new strategy of life as an alternative occupation, entrepreneurship entails the involvement of multiple forms of capital – human, material, trust and utility relations - in the confrontation with the risks and uncertainty associated to the process of starting and developing a business (Sandu, 1999).

Material and methods

The study was based on the results achieved through qualitative methods within a complex research financed by the European Union, which aimed mainly to evaluate the opportunities of socio-professional (re)insertion in a rural environment. The strategies adopted by the vulnerable occupational categories within the rural environment are shaped depending on certain local specificities in relation to the socio-economic context of the community, on the intention to start a business as an alternative occupation, the migration for work to urban areas/ abroad, the possibility of professional (re)qualification, etc. Starting from the fact that waged work possibilities are rather seldom in the rural environment, this study intends to evaluate the tendencies towards adopting alternative strategies of occupation in relation with "intentional entrepreneurship" (Sandu, 1999). The research begins from the premise is that capitalizing the entrepreneurial potential depends on the micro-social environment of the individual, more precisely the existence, or lack there of, of entrepreneurship in their social relations, of the values and attitudes towards entrepreneurs and entrepreneurial success.

The main research method was a focus-group interview, with themes of discussion such as: entrepreneurial resources, micro-social environment and cultural-normative conditions associated to a predisposition of entrepreneurship. Along the research 12 focus-group interviews were organized involving in total 112 attendees. The groups were selected in order to cover through qualitative characteristics the relatively homogeneous component of the different occupationally vulnerable categories of persons: people with no place of work, housewives, or people in sustenance agriculture. The multi-layered focus of the sampling had three variables: occupational status, gender, and age.

In addition to these methodological observations, possible limitations of the research caused by the data gathered must be mentioned. On one side, in the process of collecting qualitative data some difficulties in the organization of the group interviews came up, when the optimal number of participants (8-10) was not reached. On the other side, the impossibility to group participants depending on their experience on the labor market led to a heterogeneity of the

discussion groups. Also, the attendees manifested a somewhat reluctance to communicate among themselves, communication being bi-directional, interviewer-interviewed. A certain reluctance was also noticed in expressing their own opinion from the part of people of a younger age, and especially from people with unfinished studies or fewer school grades.

Results

Rural entrepreneurship is in a process of perpetual reinvention depending on the natural resources the entrepreneurial resources, the social capital, the cultural normative-conditions, social networking, and governance in the rural environment. Starting from this premise, the present research focused on the analysis of the influence that entrepreneurial resources, the micro-social environment, and cultural-normative conditions have over the intention to initiate a business of some professional categories with a difficulty of being integrated on the labor market.

The influential factors of occupation are very diverse: from insufficient, or unattractive workplaces, and living in a rural environment, to a low level of schooling, age, health, or gender (women are more vulnerable). Depending on the community, the strategies of (re)insertion and the active life rely on the economic potential of the rural area, the distance from an urban center, and the intention of starting a business as an alternative occupation. Entrepreneurial activity is more intense in the rural area of large cities or of county seats, but not in the area of influence of smaller cities. Along with the geographical location, the state of the infrastructure, the demographic factors, and the human resource, namely the potential of the workforce, have a significant impact on the entrepreneurial spirit. In Galati rural area also, an important role in the creation of companies is the local aspect: the quality of the human resource, the infrastructure, the cultural environment, and the socio-historical particularities.

The attendees of the focus-groups mentioned several problems in starting a business: lack of capital, excessive taxation, rapid change of rules, red tape, a lack of knowledge regarding starting up a business and a lack of information. It can be, thus, noticed that the difference in the chance to start a business in the rural environment compared to the urban one is due to a lack of entrepreneurial skills in all its three components: knowledge, skills, behaviors/ attitudes (Ştefan & Burcea, 2011, p. 52). The attendees of the focus-group mentioned the lack of entrepreneurial skills: *"I want to learn how to set up a business. I'd open a store ... not only because I have experience as a salesperson in the field, because you can learn this along the way or maybe I could find someone to teach me"* (woman, 27 years old). Still, the main obstacle in setting up a business is the lack of capital. It can be noticed that the importance of money is somewhat overvalued, while a lack of knowledge, of experience in the field, and the idea for a business seem to be undervalued. *"If I had a considerable amount of money, I'd open my own kindergarten. I like children very much and for the future, if there were jobs in the field, that would be another option. But, as I don't have either..."* (woman, 19 years old) *"In the village there aren't many chances... not even to set up a business...because we don't have money"* (woman, 52 years old). Excessive taxation is mentioned as an obstacle in setting up a business: *"I wouldn't start a business anymore, but if I did, it would still be in sewing. Taxation is a huge obstacle"* (man, 42 years old).

Rural entrepreneurship is mainly based on community and has strong and wide family ties. With a lack of financial capital necessary to start up a business, potential entrepreneurs, with family members that work abroad, rely on the money gained from this source: *"The children left abroad... and maybe in the future they will come back and maybe we will set up a business"* (woman, 52 years old).

The decision to become an entrepreneur is voluntary and conscious. Entrepreneurial activity is a planned behavior, intentional, and forming entrepreneurial intentions depends on personal attitudes regarding the act of setting up a business. Attitudes, in their turn, reflect the individual beliefs and perceptions determined by an individual's personality, formal and informal education, values and personal experiences (Krueger & Carsrud, 1993). The motivation to become an entrepreneur relies, firstly, on coercive factors in connection with the difficulties in finding a place of work: *"I have another opportunity in the family... we sell agricultural products... and I was happy that we managed as we did and I didn't insist on finding a job"* (man, 25 years old). Other reasons mentioned by attendees: the possibility of a better financial situation, and aspiration to personal independence, especially in the case of young people. *"I'm not of the idea but that only abroad you can earn money... if you're intelligent and you have a little courage... I'd try to set up a business"* (man, 25 years old).

Entrepreneurial intent is one tied to resources. Concerning the financial capital necessary to set up businesses, the majority of the attendees declared for lack of personal resources as a source of financing a business. Obtaining finances from a bank, or other financial institutions might be a solution in the case of fulfilling the eligibility conditions so as to obtain credit. *"Anyway, you can't access European funding so easily, some have tried... but I know only of one person who managed to get it here, in the village"* (woman, 22 years old). Government financing, or European funding might be accessible for agricultural investments. *"Here in the countryside, you could set up a business in agriculture, with sheep, cows, or pigs. I'm thinking of accessing government funding"* (man, 20 years old). *"If I could get some money from the state, from the European Union, I would invest in agriculture, because that's where you get the most money"* (man, 22 years old)

It seems that setting up a business is more a future projection for the majority of the intentional entrepreneurs in Galati rural county, the main reason for this probably being the need to accumulate the necessary financial resources. But, they should not ignore the fact that the most important elements on the road to being successful in business are courage, self-esteem, and a good professional training (Casnocha, 2010). Developing positive attitudes toward entrepreneurship is a necessary element, although insufficient, informing entrepreneurial intentions, and, ultimately, in manifesting entrepreneurial behavior. Attitudes are not a genetic component, but rather a social one, thus being formed in the family, at school, and at the workplace. Each person has patterns of thought, feeling, and potential action, the source of this mental programming being the social environment in which the individual has been living and from which they accumulated life experiences: the family, the neighborhood, the school, their group of friends, their workplace, and finally community itself.

The entrepreneurial potential of an individual does not only depend on the resources that they have, but also on other characteristics of the micro-social environment. The inclination toward entrepreneurship it depends, to a large extent, on the presence or absence of an entrepreneurial model in the social relations of an individual. Contact with business at the level of the family, but also their own experience in the field, can constitute future entrepreneur real orientation predictors. According to Sandu (1999), the larger the probability of adopting entrepreneurial behavior, the more educated in the context of the family, a person is. From the analysis of the focus group interviews, it was revealed that the presence of an entrepreneur among the parents, friends, or relatives he is a determining factor in an individual's decision to become an entrepreneur. *"I'd like to set up a business and take on as a partner my uncle, who has a lot of land. He has a large enough business"* (man, 19 years old). Therefore, in order to become an entrepreneur, the

entrepreneurial model must be present in the intimate environment of an individual, such as within marriage or kin: *"My in-laws have a business set up... in our very yard, with construction materials, we're hoping we can work there too..."* (woman, 34 years old). In the eventuality that persons from the smaller social entourage (husband/wife) are entrepreneurs or have gained experience as such, the probability that the individual becomes an entrepreneur also, gross: *"I want to set up a business in cosmetics... a barber shop, or something... my husband has experience... he's had a shop before, he knows what to do to set up a business"* (woman, 25 years old)

Another challenge of the potential entrepreneur is connected with the support of the family or the social group that they are a part of: *"I intend to set up an authorized person business, to grow mushrooms. What I lack is my husband's support because he has different plans, and we didn't agree"* (woman, 39 years old).

The sociocultural environment refers to the principles instilled upon the children at home, and the students in school. One of the main obstacles faced by the entrepreneur in the rural environment is a high level of this like towards risk and implicitly, a preference towards a constant revenue: *"It's risky to invest. I know persons who invested to no avail"* (woman, 41 years old). As such, the decision to become an entrepreneur is more influenced by the context in which the individual is active than the personal traits they have (Reynolds, 1991; Stanworth, Blythe, Granger, & Stanworth 1989).

Entrepreneurship is an economic activity which takes place in a specific cultural context, generated by the values and attitudes transmitted from generation to generation as cultural legacy. although persons of entrepreneur real characteristics can appear in all societies and cultures, there are some individual characteristics which are more stimulated by certain local cultural ones. A favorable socio-cultural climate for entrepreneurship means first and foremost positive attitudes, social values which conform to the needs of the business environment. the practice of entrepreneurship in the rural environment indicates a low level of personal self-esteem, and the negative relation between the two variables manifests especially in rural communities (Sandu, 1999): *"I've always set up a business associating with family, because you can't trust other people"* (woman, 27 years old).

Of course, a high level of trust is important, when suspicion prevents the development of attitudes that are absolutely necessary to the well-functioning of society, in general, and of the economy, especially. In the rural part of Galati count, the level of trust in the central administration and especially, the local one is rather low: *"Honestly, I wouldn't invest at all, because it's not worth it... to begin with we're not helped by the state... and once we try to do something, the state tries to take before you can produce anything"* (woman, 38 years old). What is more, at a level almost as low, there is the interest to associate with persons from outside the family so as to develop a business: *"Yes, I would associate to start a business... probably with someone from the family, because we don't trust strangers"* (woman, 36 years old). In this way, the development of entrepreneurial skills in the countryside should start from valuing of the sold potential and the relations with their kin: *"I'd like to make a team with my husband. He intends to open his own construction company, because he is certified in the field"* (woman, 25 years old).

Community discouragement many firsts in the mistrust of others, in the collective capacity to act, but also in their own community, and the erosion of trust in people has as an effect the decrease in solidarity (Zamfir, Ilie, Stănescu, Scutaru, & Zamfir, 2011). The attendees of the focus group manifest a low availability to associate in order to set up a business, a fact which reflects a tense social climate, where mistrust and undermining each other are predominant. A lack of trust in community cooperation takes shape in the intention of potential entrepreneurs from the rural

environment to set up a business of their own, or with someone from their immediate family, few being interested in associating with people from outside their inner circle: *"Yes, there is a need for people you can trust... because some come and work today, and tomorrow they stop coming... and so long as there is no one to help you do something, it doesn't matter if you have money and experience, because you can't make it on your own..."* (woman, 23 years old). As it is, there are people who appreciate personal relations, especially the ones with experienced entrepreneurs, while relations with their kin and close friends, are considered, in their turn, more important than the ones in the economic environment. Nevertheless, the trust of potential entrepreneurs in administrative institutions is quite low: *"To set up a business you need a lot of paperwork... we should be helped by the town hall in some way. But I don't see any involvement on the part of the authorities"* (woman, 41 years old).

Another aspect connected to the system of values regarding entrepreneurial attitudes from rural Galati are the conditions of the entrepreneurial success. The people attending the discussions had varied opinions. Apart from money and capital, which appear in almost every opinion expressed, there have also been mentioned: courage, personal relations, having a good business idea, self-esteem, communication skills. *"I can't say I don't have the courage to set up a business, but there are risks, what's more is you need a place, and official paperwork... authorities could try to support us more"* (man, 31 years old). *"I'd set up a business if I had the money. But I don't even have the necessary experience"* (woman, 42 years old). Summarizing, it can be said that for entrepreneurial success one must have, first and foremost, the money/ the starting capital, and the social connections (especially with the authorities).

Discussions

Entrepreneurship is an economic process integrated within a social, cultural, and political context. The individuals involved in the entrepreneurial process are influenced by certain social, cultural, and political factors. In other words, entrepreneurial economic activities "are held within a larger economic system which must supply the necessary resources, incentives, markets, and assistance institutions to develop new companies" (Nagy et al., 2008, p. 27).

Within an unstable economy, and an acute lack of financial resources, association with regard to setting up, and developing a business, can be a viable solution to expand rural entrepreneurship, and, implicitly, to create new jobs. But, entrepreneurial practice in the rural environment implies a low level of self-esteem, and the negative relation between the two variables manifests especially in rural communities, as Sandu (1999, pp. 108-109) considers.

Taking into consideration this reality, the development of association based on trust and cooperation so as to capitalize the social and symbolic role of family and kin relations in the rural environment might lead to a diversification of the agricultural production, the emergence of performant agricultural management, and, also, to the growth of agricultural productivity. Family associations could offer more social and financial protection, under difficult economic conditions (Sabates-Wheeler, 2007). The lack of necessary capital so as to set up a business, and the lack of an entrepreneurial culture represent but the main obstacles in starting and developing a business in nonagricultural fields and, especially in the field of rural environment services. The problem of financing and crediting small businesses in the rural environment with the necessary capital, faces serious difficulties, which is why special programs are needed to support the rural entrepreneur as an alternative occupation.

Generally, self-employment and small businesses are seen as an important source of creating jobs and, as a means to develop less advanced areas. But the obstacles in the way of one's

own business are large and for multiple reasons: a lack of financial resources, of knowledge (in the administrative field, accounting, management), of support systems, or skills. The entrepreneurial ability of people in the rural environment is not always appreciated at its real level because many times the categories of *owner* and *self-employed* are interpreted as being complementary. In reality, owners are not those which are involved only in retail, as this professional category is perceived, especially in a rural environment, and people who are self-employed can also be entrepreneurs even if their activity is interpreted by themselves as a family business.

Regarding the characteristics of Romanian entrepreneurship in the regional profile, the analysis of the statistical data shows that there are different levels of entrepreneurship intensity in the different regions of Romania (Mihalache & Croitoru, 2011). The disparities of cultural, economic and social development generated by the different historical course of the Romanian regions are reflected in regional differences regarding the level of intensity of entrepreneurial behaviors. On a geographical aspect, rural entrepreneurship tends to be placed especially in counties with a high degree of development (Sandu, 1999, p. 102). The southeast region is relatively well developed, being situated just under the national environment performance (National Institute for Statistics, 2010), but the variation of the economic performance is of counties employs the existence of certain disparities between these. Constanta, which is situated above the average on every criterion of classification, represents "a success story" of the region, while other counties have lower performances, which are still satisfactory, such as Galati county. This level of economic development of the county also reflects in the weak level of development of the actual entrepreneurship in the rural environment.

But official statistics do not allow us to analyze the informal dimension of Romanian entrepreneurship, the connection between national culture and entrepreneurial intentions. Despite these limitations, we consider that all the historical conditions in Romania played an important role in the formation of cultural values. Thus, the communist system has shaped the cultural values of the Romanian society, which explains the low level of social trust, highlighting an accentuated distrust, especially in the institutional environment, but also an increased importance given to collectivist values, which explains the strong ties with the family, seen as a source of comfort and trust. These Romanian cultural specificities also had some consequences at management level: the manifestation of a limited entrepreneurial spirit, the aversion to risk and the tendency to be dependent on the family.

Both the contact with a business at the level of the family, and one's own experience in the field can constitute predictors of entrepreneurial orientation for the future. According to Sandu (1999, p. 109) the probability of adopting an entrepreneurial behavior is the larger, the more a person is educated in the context of their own family.

In a socio-economic and current political context, relations between people in the countryside or continuously reinvented in a way in which negative visible effects are seen, although unintended: poor interpersonal communication, mistrust, tense social climate. Moreover, it appears that in time the trust between people has eroded, and cooperation or a mutual interest between the members of rural communities is neglectable, and almost entirely not institutionalized. People's availability to associate, be it to access certain European funds, or to start associations might be a solution to increase their chances of success in the entrepreneurial field. But a preference for associative entrepreneurship is closely tied to trust, including one interpersonal one. From the perspective of the people attending the discussions association is not sufficiently capitalized in relation to setting up a business. A lack of trust in the other inhabitants of the

community brings about a low availability to associate, being perceived as possible obstacles in the way of setting up small businesses. These obstacles, along with a lack of financial resources, are backed up by a lack of entrepreneurial spirit among the inhabitants of rural areas. Although many attendees want to become owners, or they do not have sufficient motivation in starting a business be it that they are not aware of what they can do, or they do not trust their own abilities, or they lack the courage to take certain risks or to have responsibilities, or they cannot keep up with the new challenges of society.

The lack of jobs also has the effect of reducing the availability to associate with the intention of setting up a business, and being able to help the welfare of the village they live in. It also seems that the economic and political instability has considerably eroded but the trust between people, so that a cooperation with a common interest between potential entrepreneurs, is neglected. Still, there are people who appreciate personal relations, especially those with experimented entrepreneurs, and the relations with their kin and close friends are considered, in their own turn, more important than the relations from the economic field. Nevertheless, the trust of potential entrepreneurs in administrative institutions is quite low.

Entrepreneurship into the countryside is not yet up to the level of market economy requirements, being insufficiently developed in large sectors of the economy. In the rural environment, small and environment-sized businesses are only developed in agriculture and commerce. A lack of a favorable climate, but also that of trained persons wishing to start the business might explain partially the lower level of small and environment-sized businesses in the countryside.

Setting up non-agricultural enterprises, in the countryside is considered by specialists the perfect idea to create new jobs, to reduce the underuse of the workforce, increase revenue, and diminish the risk of poverty. Unfortunately, entrepreneurial initiative does not manifest in accordance with the extremely high level of potential of the rural environment (Sandu, 2005). For the revitalization of the countryside local authority efforts should be oriented on multiple planes: developing economic infrastructure, changing mentality, and encouraging the motivation to start a business. Evidently, these efforts are also linked to the local context, the economic and social potential of the area. Additionally, the decrease in trust unit of the entrepreneurial endeavor presupposes a consistent effort of motivation and development of the specific abilities in the field.

Conclusions

The lack of employment opportunities in rural areas, in relation to the existing workforce potential, may lead to the adoption of a new life strategy for survival or success, namely rural entrepreneurship. From this research it results that making a decision to start a business depends both on the resources available to the family, on the access to the funds necessary to start an entrepreneurial activity, on the general economic climate, as well as on the personal or family entrepreneurial experience, on the availability of association and the level of trust. Taking into account the microsocial conditions of entrepreneurship, we find that the presence of an entrepreneur among parents, friends or relatives is decisive for obtaining the status of a potential entrepreneur. But in order to transform into an entrepreneur, it is necessary for the entrepreneurial model to be present in the more intimate environment of the individual, such as marriage or family relationships. On the one hand, the cultural and normative conditions that favor entrepreneurship are present only partially in the rural area of Galați County. For example, the willingness to associate of individuals, especially in the field of business, depends to a large extent on the trust they place in others. Thus, from the focus-group interviews it appears that a generalized distrust

prevails in the region, which limits social cooperation, including cooperation in the field of entrepreneurship. This lack of trust associated with negative perceptions about entrepreneurs makes it even more difficult for the chances of cooperative behavior in the entrepreneurial sphere. On the other hand, given the lack of role models and an entrepreneurial culture, it is necessary to encourage the acquisition and development of entrepreneurial skills in the case of vulnerable occupational categories in the rural area of Galati County. Thus, vocational training courses could be an important source of motivation on the way to rural entrepreneurship, and investing in their own farms or non-agricultural activities could successfully replace the occupation strategy through employment.

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