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Sustainable Development of Rural Areas in the Conditions of Globalization: Ukrainian Realities

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Abstract

Ukrainian agriculture remains one of the most problematic sectors of the national economy, and revolutionary processes in rural areas are today in the center of attention of national scientists, politicians, and public representatives. The article carries out a scientific study related to the search for the fundamental reasons for the low effectiveness of reform decisions and actions implemented in Ukraine with the aim of bringing the level of development of Ukrainian rural areas closer to the EU standards. Such research can become the basis for forecasting trends in the development of rural areas of Ukraine in the medium and long term. It can also serve as a reliable basis for applied mechanisms of reforming the agro-industrial complex in the post-war period and the evolution of rural areas of Ukraine in the context of European integration.

It is noted that from the point of view of European integration, there is a natural, labor, technical, technological, scientific and information potential for the development of rural areas of Ukraine. At the same time, there is a need to find alternative approaches to the development of rural areas of Ukraine, in particular, focusing on those principles that ensure effective development of rural areas of EU member states.

Improving the economic security of the country and transitioning to a higher level of socio-economic development is impossible without the creation of a comprehensive, scientifically based strategy for the development of rural areas on the basis of sustainability.

Keywords: sustainable development, agriculture, agricultural land, food security, rural areas, European integration, rural reform.

JEL Classification: K32; R52; R58; R11.

Introduction

Throughout the entire period of state independence of Ukraine, the development of the agricultural sector and rural areas remained one of the main priorities of the economic policy of our state. A significant number of scientific publications are devoted to this issue. In addition, a number of programs aimed at revitalizing the

Ukrainian countryside and improving the efficiency of the domestic agro-industrial complex have been adopted at the government level.

At the same time, in practice, most government measures did not have the expected effect. Certain positive trends are leveled by the deterioration of the socio-demographic situation in the countryside, the strengthening of the monopolization of the agricultural market, the shadow circulation of land resources, etc. In addition, the war has been mercilessly plowing its way through Ukraine for 8 months, leaving an indescribably bitter mark, particularly in the rural areas, which occupy about 90% of the area of our country. As a result, Ukrainian agriculture remains one of the most problematic sectors of the domestic economy, and revolutionary processes in rural areas are today in the center of attention of domestic scientists, politicians, and public representatives.

On the other hand, in the EU countries, the development of rural areas ensures an adequate standard of living for their residents, and the economic aspects of the life of the European village are characterized by multifunctionality and steady growth. This actualizes the need to conduct scientific research related to the search for the fundamental reasons for the low effectiveness of reform decisions and actions implemented in Ukraine with the aim of bringing the level of development of Ukrainian rural areas closer to the EU standards. Such studies should become the basis for forecasting the development trends of the rural areas of our country in the medium and long term, as well as provide a reliable basis for the applied mechanisms of reforming the domestic agro-industrial complex in the post-war period and the evolution of the rural areas of Ukraine in the context of European integration.

1. Methodology

The theoretical and methodological basis of the study was scientific works, developments and scientific recommendations of Ukrainian and foreign scientists, concepts, methodological and reference materials, legislative acts, regulatory and methodological, policy documents of state, regional and local governments in the field of rural development.

In particular, the article uses works and achievements of representatives of various scientific fields (law, economics, agroecology, natural sciences): D. Bohdanov, O. Borodina, V. Vernadskyi, R. Humerov, V. Diesperov, D. Fedchyshyn, I. Ignatenko, H. Korniyenko, Y. Kulikov, P. Kulynych, L. Melnyk, H. Morozov, O. Pavlov, B. Paskhaver, P. Sabluk, M. Khvesyk, O. Shubravska, M. Shulga, V. Yermolenko, V. Yurchyshyn and others.

The normative and legal basis of the study was made up of: Constitution of Ukraine; international legal acts ratified by the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine; the legislation of Ukraine, the norms of which regulate social agrarian relations in the sphere of ensuring the sustainable development of agricultural production; the practice of applying the current legislation on the regulation of agrarian relations, the legislation of the EU states.

The information-empirical base of the study is the data of Ministry of Development of Communities and Territories of Ukraine, State Service of Ukraine for Geodesy, Cartography and Cadastre, European Commission on the financing of policies for sustainable rural development, as well as statistical and operational information of local self-government bodies, regional and municipal programs for the socio-economic development of territories, reports on the economic activities of district organizations, materials of scientific and practical conferences, articles in periodicals and personal observations of the authors.

The instrumental and methodological apparatus is based on the use of a system-functional approach to the object of analysis using epistemological tools. When substantiating the theoretical provisions and arguing the conclusions, the following were used: methods and models of logic (induction, deduction, abduction; hypothetical-deductive and deductive-pomological models), general scientific methods (generalization, abstraction, comparative comparison, analysis, synthesis, modeling).

The axiological method came in handy when establishing connections between the introduction of sustainable development of agricultural production and the realization of human rights to life and health, environmental safety, adequate living standards, etc. The synergistic method was chosen to study production, environmental and social components of sustainable development in the system and interaction. The formal and legal one is used to reveal the content of certain prescriptions of agrarian legislation in the field of ensuring sustainable development of agricultural production, management of its alternative forms, use of biotechnology, etc. The modeling method was reflected in the processes of construction and modification of legal norms proposed to amend the current agrarian legislation.

The combination and use of each of these methods in solving the problems of this study ensured the reasonableness of the assessments and the reliability of the results and conclusions.

2. Agriculture of Ukraine under Martial Law

Ukraine has huge rural areas, because the country has more than 60 million hectares of land, of which 42.7 million hectares (more than 70%) are agricultural land. As of November 13, 2020, there were 27,199 villages in which a significant number of the population lived, namely about 30% of the total population of Ukraine. More than 32 million hectares out of 42.7 million hectares are cultivated annually. For comparison, in Poland, two times smaller areas are used for agricultural production, namely 14 million hectares, in Germany - 12 million hectares, in Romania - 9 million hectares (Ministry of Agrarian Policy and Food of Ukraine 2021). A third of the world's reserves of the most fertile chernozem belong to Ukraine and it is the largest in the world, amounting to 28 million hectares. Ukraine occupies a fairly significant place in the global ranking (in the top 10, occupying 6th place in the world), owns 43.37 million hectares (that is, 2.31% of the world's arable land area). Of all the key players, Ukraine has the highest ratio of arable land to the total area of the territory it occupies, namely 74.82% (Superagronom.com 2019). Thus, all of the above indicates that rural areas are the basis of socio-economic development and a key advantage of the state's national security.

As correctly noted in the literature, modern changes in land relations dictate the need to have information about agricultural lands, their owners, tenants, and the condition of the land for planning agricultural production, development of leases, and land sales (Drebot *et al.* 2022, 1).

Today, the development of the agricultural sector of Ukraine is hampered by a number of unresolved problems that have accumulated during the reform period and during martial law. Key among them is the lack of appropriate legislative support for sustainable development of rural areas, a state program that would provide for the comprehensive and systematic development of the Ukrainian countryside in the future.

Due to the low level of local development of rural areas, the small size of the land plots of individual peasant farms, the lack of financial assets, equipment, high prices for means of production (seeds, livestock, etc.), the low quality of infrastructure and the lack of access to sales markets, small farms are unable to obtain added value and ensure a positive cycle of investment accumulation (Pavlov 2014, 84).

As it is known, raising the level and quality of life of the rural population, on the one hand, is a goal, and on the other, a necessary condition for ensuring the sustainable development of rural areas. Based on the concept of sustainable economic development of society, the criteria for assessing the level and quality of life of the rural population as indicators of sustainable rural development of depressed areas are selected. Among such criteria, the main ones are: growth of real incomes, reduction of lag behind city indicators; reduction of the scale of poverty and social differences, formation of population groups with average incomes; fair assessment of the level of remuneration, absence of delay in all types of payments; growth and optimization of the consumer spending structure of rural households; improvement and rise of the socio-psychological condition, confidence of the villagers in their future; improving the quality and level of social services available to rural residents, preserving the core of the social infrastructure.

Sustainable development of rural areas is a process of qualitative changes aimed at stable socio-economic growth of rural areas, increasing the efficiency of the rural economy, the level of employment and the quality of life of the rural population based on the adoption of a complex of economic, social and environmental measures at the state and local level (Bohdanov 2017, 61). The authors of the article agree with this definition, believing that it most fully reveals the meaning of the concept of "sustainable development of rural areas", and take it as a basis for their research.

According to modern scientists, today there is also no single concept of sustainable development of rural areas, which would make it possible to form directions for improving the mechanisms of their socio-economic development (Zahorskyi and Borschuk 2019, 15). The authors of the article have already proposed a solution to this problem by developing a typical model of sustainable development of rural areas and adopting the Law of Ukraine "On Sustainable Development of Rural Areas", which would contain criteria for distinguishing the production, social and ecological components of sustainable development of rural areas, in particular, fix their definitions, contain special norms and regulations in separate sections (Sharapova *et al.* 2021, 1904).

The majority of modern scientists are inclined to the opinion that the sustainable development of rural areas should be based on the main principles of sustainable development, which are defined in the "Agenda for the 21st century" (UNCED 1992). These principles ensure the achievement of the main goals of sustainable development, such as: improving the quality of life; guaranteed health of people; meeting the basic life needs of both the modern population and future generations; fight against poverty; rational production and consumption structures, rational nature management; preserving ecosystems, protecting the climate and the ozone layer, ensuring environmental safety; environmental awareness, environmental ethics; formation of civil society;

elimination of all forms of violence against people and nature (prevention of wars, terrorism and ecocide) (Morozova 2018, 75).

In our opinion, the main tasks of the sustainable development of rural areas in Ukraine should be the following:

- development of local self-government for the formation of a socially organized and responsible society in the countryside;
- creation of self-developing economic systems in rural areas based on: a) formation of the economic circulation of local resources as a result of the development of competitive and ecologically harmonious agriculture; b) diversification of agricultural production; c) increasing the economic activity of the population; d) revival of traditional and the development of new industries; e) development of modern production and information infrastructure; f) development of the local industry for the processing of agricultural raw materials; g) comprehensive development of cooperation in production, sales, financial and other spheres; h) strengthening of the market space and relevant production and sales relations;
- increasing the attractiveness of living in rural areas;
- increasing the competitiveness of rural areas.

Currently, the quality of life and level of well-being of the population of Ukraine lags far behind European and world standards, and this gap is especially significant in rural areas. Moreover, deformation of the production structure, social degradation of the population, destruction of infrastructure, dominance of agricultural holdings, corrupt government also play huge role in this.

Thus, Ukrainian agriculture is characterized by a deformed agrarian structure, which includes:

1) an individual sector focused on traditional goods and the domestic consumer market, ensuring domestic food security;

2) the corporate sector, which includes agricultural holdings and large agricultural enterprises with a significant share of foreign capital, focused on the constant expansion of monoculture and export.

Agricultural holdings lobby their interests on such a large scale that, despite high incomes from entrepreneurial activity, they also monopolize state support for the entire agricultural sector (before the war, 5–10% of the largest agricultural enterprises took 70–80% of national funds for measures to support agriculture). At the same time, incomes of agricultural holdings are taxed according to a simplified system. Their profits are largely siphoned off through tax havens (including Cyprus and the British Virgin Islands), which hurts Ukraine's local development and public goods. In addition, these entities receive significant investment resources from such institutions as the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund, and the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development. All these aspects of the functioning of agricultural holdings lead to unfair competition with other subjects of the agri-food market of Ukraine. Moreover, there is physical and economic pressure on private households and farms as a result of limiting their access to factors of production (agricultural land, means of production) and sales, as well as reducing their incomes (by lowering purchase prices, raising prices for means of production). In such conditions, it is extremely difficult to develop family farming, and in the future (taking into account the control of agricultural holdings over agricultural lands and production chains) it may become impossible.

Unfortunately, the pre-war successes of Ukrainian agriculture (especially its corporate segment) in the form of technical progress, increased labor productivity, production and export volumes were accompanied by significant social and environmental losses within the country. Russia's aggression revealed additional negative consequences of the agroholding model of Ukrainian agriculture. The war made the operation of large-scale agricultural production extremely difficult due to the disruption of logistics chains, environmental disasters at corporate livestock complexes, blocking of sales markets, etc.

In the conditions of hostilities, the primary task of the Ukrainian agricultural sector became the reliable supply of agricultural products and food to the population. Both farmers and private farms have demonstrated their key role in preserving and developing local markets and food supply chains. So, in practice, the conclusion of the classical agro-economic theory was demonstrated: the main basis for the stability of small-scale agriculture is not its economic advantages over large-scale agriculture, but the important fact that large-scale agriculture is conducted as a capitalist enterprise for the sake of profit and rent, while small-scale agriculture is run to ensure the existence of manufacturer himself. A peasant farmer will not stop farming even when it gives him nothing but an average wage. Because of this, small-scale agriculture can exist and develop with much lower income than large-scale capitalist agriculture.

Currently, Ukrainian agriculture faces a choice between two possible scenarios for further development. Under the first of them - within the framework of post-war reconstruction, Ukraine restores the pre-war structure of

agriculture and continues the policy regarding the agrarian sector with further excessive support of agricultural holdings. However, such a scenario would be unequivocally unfavourable for the state and society.

The second scenario envisages changing the agricultural policy to a sustainable one built on ensuring equal development rights for all groups of subjects involved in agricultural production, including transparent and fair access to agricultural and other lands, production resources, free access to sales and competition on a fair basis. The consequence of applying these approaches will be a change in the agrarian structure, which will allow family farms to use their production potential for the creation of public goods and local development. This will also contribute to the adaptation of the agricultural structure of Ukraine to the EU. Such a scenario of the revival of agriculture and rural areas in Ukraine requires the construction of a new institutional system to support domestic food security, the implementation of a European-oriented agrarian policy, responsible strategic planning and monitoring of the situation in the industry, and the collection of relevant data.

In Ukraine, it is necessary to implement solutions, in particular, regarding the management of agricultural development and the development of rural areas according to the Polish (as in the EU) model, including the creation of state institutions that provide small and medium-sized business entities with access to production resources and sales, and creation of agricultural chambers that unite farmers and sole proprietors. This would make it possible to strengthen social control over the distribution of state funds to support agriculture and ensure fair competition for land resources and in the markets of agro-food products. In addition, in accordance with European values, it is necessary to change legislation in the field of land relations (land market), taxation of agriculture and social security. It is highly desirable for the European community to support Ukraine in developing systems of registration and reporting of agricultural producers and monitoring the development of rural areas, as well as in the formation of models of cooperation between agricultural organizations and farmers, etc.

3. The Development Potential of Rural Areas from the Point of View of the Prospects of the European Integration of Ukraine

The development potential of rural areas is the available resources, the use of which can lead to an increase in quantitative and qualitative indicators, which will reflect socio-economic growth in these areas. Economic integration with such an association of countries as the European Union carries much more positive potential than negative. The fear of European integration is unfounded in relation to domestic rural areas. The existing potential is able to ensure their development, to activate the formation of new (including non-agricultural) types of economic activity; growth in the volume of production of agricultural products and improvement of both its quality and production processes. The main problem currently slowing down these processes is the quality of governance – state, regional, and local. Under the conditions of European integration, approaches to management, the way of their actual implementation, and public control over these processes must be reformed in accordance with European norms of transparency, responsibility, efficiency, and maximization of the social effect. This will make it possible to use the available opportunities to the fullest extent, to reform the rural economy and improve the social conditions of life of the rural population, and not just to declare support for these processes.

As noted in the literature, a wave of interest in Ukrainian land is already rising, including from foreign investors. This is due to the unique ratio of the following favorable conditions for the development of, for example, organic agriculture: 1) anthropogenic pollution of the territory in Ukraine is not continuous. There is still a share of relatively "clean" land, the level of pollution of which is much lower than in the countries of Western Europe; 2) Ukraine has the largest employment rate in Europe in agricultural production (18% of employed). Also, the country has a relatively low level of wages, which can be attributed to the competitive advantages of the newly created industry; 3) export attractiveness due to its proximity to the European Union market; 4) the possibility of expanding the domestic market, since the actual areas of organic agricultural land are not inferior in size to most European countries. At the same time, the volume of domestic consumption of organic products per capita lags far behind the European average; 5) the possibility of accumulating large land massifs by concluding land contracts (lease, emphytheusis, joint activity); 6) low rent for land (Fedchyshyn *et al.* 2022, 326).

Returning to the issue of the existing development potential of rural areas of Ukraine from the point of view of European integration, it should be emphasized that in economic science, attention is mostly focused on defining, evaluating and finding ways to realize the economic potential. It is customary to divide it into functional subspecies, each of which has a different application and characteristic features: natural, labor, technical, technological, scientific and informational.

Natural potential is a set of available natural resources (land, minerals), climatic features of their use. First of all, the rural areas of Ukraine have significant land resources that are used or can be used for the production of

agricultural products. The presence of significant areas of unique chernozem (according to various estimates, from 25% to 60% of the world's chernozem area is concentrated in Ukraine) creates natural favorable conditions for the development of crop production. In addition, a significant part of the total area of the country is allocated for agricultural land (68.9%), and a significant share of it (38.2%) belongs to citizens. In the case of European integration, Ukraine will become the country with the largest agricultural area, and its share in this type of area could be over 18%.

The production potential is formed on the basis of the previously described components and is actually an opportunity and an expression of their realization. Rural areas are characterized by the potential for the production of both agricultural and non-agricultural products, at the same time, currently in Ukraine they focus mainly on the agricultural sector, where their main product is created.

Ukraine has a unique potential for the production of significant volumes of agricultural products both to meet its own consumer needs and for export. At the same time, due to many unfavorable factors, the production volumes of these products do not correspond to existing opportunities. But it is worth stating the absence of the necessary intensification of production activity in the agricultural sector of the national economy. This is due to: 1) the lack of a well-founded, systematic and effective state policy to support agricultural producers, 2) the inferiority of the competitive environment in agro-industry due to the lack of alternatives to agriculture as a type of economic activity for the population of rural areas, 3) the disparity between the profits of agricultural producers, intermediary structures and processing enterprises of food industry.

The efficiency of agricultural production can be viewed from different levels and analyzed using different approaches and indicators. One of the methods of assessing the efficiency of agricultural production and realization of the existing potential is the determination of the yield level, which is calculated in quintals of products per hectare of agricultural areas used for its cultivation. Thus, the trends of recent years in Ukraine indicate a gradual increase in the productivity of most types of agricultural products. However, there is still a significant lag behind the indicators of most EU countries, although there is also a significant level of divergence of this indicator.

It is also necessary to remember that, depending on the development goal, the potential can be both sufficient and insufficient. In turn, such potential as labor, technological, technical, scientific - can be improved and with the help of specific mechanisms can be adjusted to achieve the set goal.

As an example of such a situation, the multifunctional development of rural areas of Ukraine can be. Theoretically, the potential for it exists. At the same time, this development is minimal due to the unwillingness of the population to actively participate in it. That is, the labor potential is not sufficient to ensure the desired development indicators. At the same time, subject to the application of appropriate methods (consulting, education, popularization and stimulation of the development of entrepreneurial activity, financial and credit support, simplification of administrative procedures, etc.), it is possible to significantly improve the labor potential and ensure the achievement of the goal of multifunctional development in the future.

Therefore, there is a need to find alternative approaches to the development of rural areas of Ukraine, in particular, focusing on those principles that ensure the effective development of rural areas of EU member states.

Studying the experience of the EU in the formation and improvement of the policy for the development of rural areas, the institutional support of this process deserves primary attention. First of all, this concerns the Common Agricultural Policy of the EU and the tools that ensure its effective implementation, as well as the mechanisms for financing rural development programs, the means of implementing infrastructure projects in rural areas, the characteristic features of the successful operation of numerous institutions focused on the development of rural areas of the EU.

The multifunctional development of economic complexes in the rural areas of the EU member states also has a positive effect on the modernization of industrial, communal and social infrastructure facilities in the European countryside. It stimulates the growth of the quality of human capital in rural areas by reducing the level of poverty, overcoming unemployment, and strengthening civic activity. Thanks to the multifunctional development of rural areas in EU countries, the use of their economic potential is being optimized. Its successive increase is also carried out.

In Ukraine, the experience of the EU, accumulated over a long period of economic evolution of economic complexes in rural areas, can be successfully used. First of all, in the spheres of institutional and infrastructural support for rural development, the formation of a favorable investment climate in rural areas of Ukraine. Deagrarianization of the rural economy, stimulation of innovative development of rural areas, diversification of mechanisms for improving the quality of human capital, promotion of sustainable development of economic complexes of rural areas can be such directions.

EU principles regarding the development of local self-government in rural areas should be implemented in Ukraine in line with the implementation of the principle of subsidiarity, aimed at ensuring the financial and administrative-management independence of rural territorial communities. After all, the effective development of rural areas of the EU member states is largely ensured thanks to their high level of financial autonomy. This enables rural communities to dispose at their own discretion of the majority of budget funds accumulated in their territories. On the one hand, this creates a sufficient level of motivation among the heads of rural local self-government bodies to encourage investors to invest in the economy of the respective rural areas. On the other hand, it enables the most rational management of budget funds, directing them to those areas of economic activity that are a priority for each rural area.

Thanks to the mechanism of decentralization, it is also possible to achieve a balance between economic, environmental and social development priorities in rural areas of EU member states. This makes it possible to ensure the principle of sustainable growth in these territories, when the intensification of economic activity does not cause irreparable damage to the environment and the social standards of life of rural residents.

Therefore, the implementation of the policy of European integration of Ukraine in the context of ensuring the effective development of its rural areas means the mandatory implementation of the principle of steady growth in the practice of management and economic activity. This means that the development of agricultural production in Ukraine cannot take place primarily on the basis of extensive and exhausting land use, as it is now. And the functioning of the rural economy must necessarily focus on the priority of organic farming and animal husbandry, conservation of natural resources, and the development of the human capital of the village.

The sustainable development of rural areas of Ukraine is closely related to the processes of diversification of economic activity. After all, the maximally complete use of the natural and climatic, human, land and other resources available in the rural areas of each region of our country means the need for their maximally complete preservation and multiplication. Therefore, primary attention in the context of the development of rural areas of Ukraine should be given to the creation of conditions for the development of agritourism and other areas of tourist activity in rural areas. It is also necessary to form a modern system of agro-consulting and counseling in the countryside, to spread the networks of motor transport companies and logistics centers, to promote the establishment of modern communication systems, including companies of the IT industry.

The multifunctional development of the Ukrainian countryside in line with the European integration policy of Ukraine is the main prerequisite for the introduction of an innovative investment model for the development of rural areas of our country. This model should be based on the implementation of investment projects in the fields of agricultural production and processing of agricultural products, light industry, oriented on the use of agricultural raw materials. It is also important to restore traditional types of economic activity in the countryside with the use of innovative production, modernization of infrastructure for the development of rural areas, adaptation of modern types of economic activity in rural areas, including those related to the development of software products, the introduction of new forms of distance learning, electronic commerce, etc.

Conclusion

The use of positive experience in the development of rural areas, accumulated in the EU member states during the long period of their socio-economic evolution, is an important component of the implementation of the European integration policy of Ukraine. It is also a powerful lever for increasing the efficiency of the functioning of economic complexes in rural areas of Ukraine and a factor in increasing the quality of life of the rural population.

For the purpose of European integration, it is necessary to pay attention to most of the listed issues and form the prerequisites for their solution. Strengthening cooperation with developed EU countries and trade liberalization can be both a prospect for development and a significant danger for the rural areas of Ukraine. Integration processes will intensify, but it is necessary to take all measures to get the maximum benefit from them, both economically and socially.

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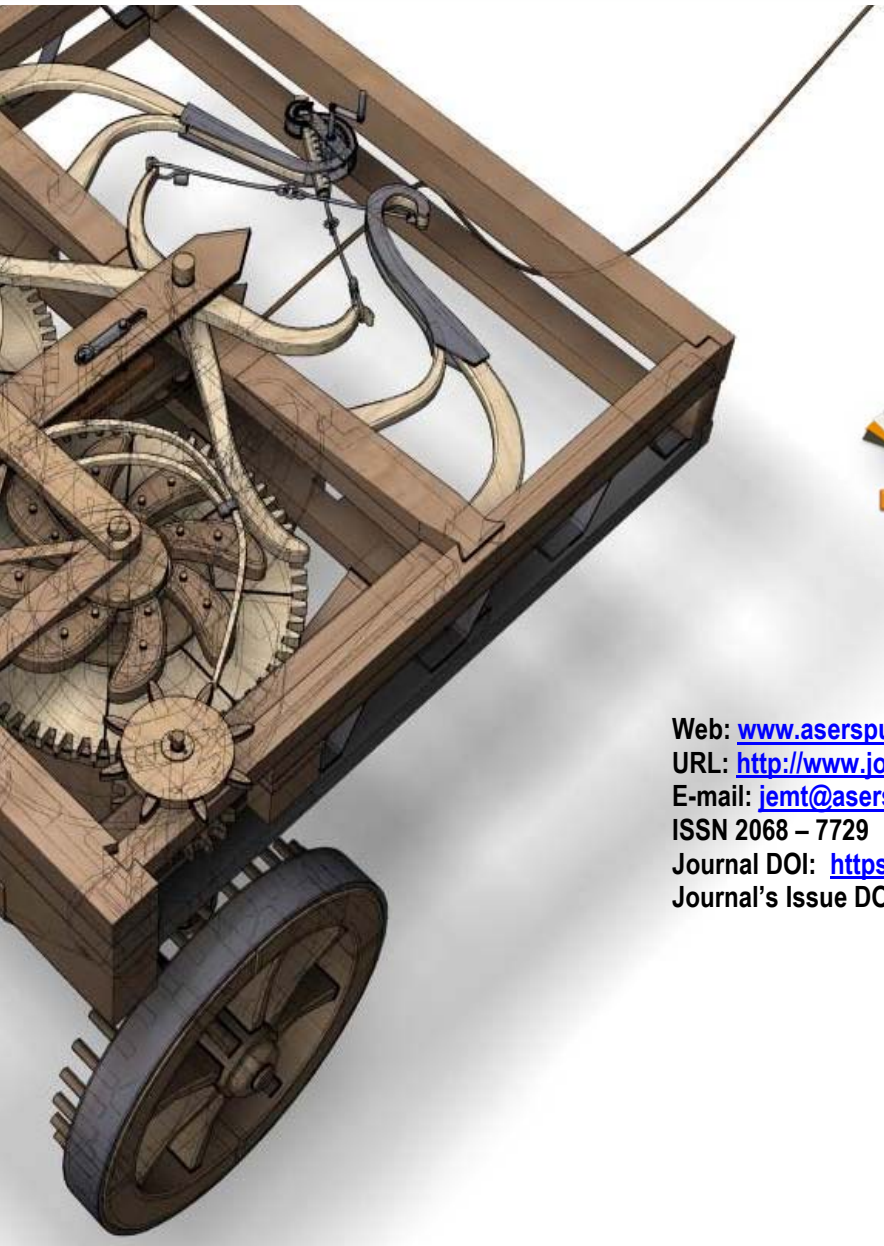

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