THE SPECIFICITY OF THE DEVELOPMENT OF LOCAL ECONOMIES FROM THE INFLUENCE AREA OF THE CITY RÂMNICU VÂLCEA

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Abstract. One of the most important problems of the contemporary society is represented by the elimination of discrepancies from the level of national territories, which appeared as a result of the unbalanced economic and social development. This can be accomplished only by a balanced and especially integrated development, a fact which will determine, in the end, the elimination of the disparities starting from national level and reaching even the local level. The situation is extremely complicated in case of an influence area, and this is the reason why we considered necessary an approach of the variation of development on a determined route: town – the limit of the influence area. In the present study, we aim at identifying the development level of localities from the influence area of the town Râmnicu Vâlcea, a consequence of the economic and social development which took place along the time.

Key words: influence area, development level, developed areas, weakly developed areas

1. Introduction

The unbalanced economic and social development which today’s society confronts with created, at territorial level, no matter we speak about national or local level, obvious discrepancies, which today represent important/real obstacles in the balanced and especially integrated development of the human community. Starting from this observation, it becomes obvious that knowing the degree of a settlement’s development represents one of the primary elements in contouring and accomplishing those viable development strategies, able to further ensure the increase considered from the economic and social point of view.

In case of the influence area, the town becomes the central element, as by its polarising power it influences concretely the neighbouring area (Ungureanu, al., Țurcănașu, G. 2008). This is a big consumer of resources, and here we refer to raw material and agro-alimentary products, but also to work power, all these being ensured by the close adjacent space, a space which provides it these resources, in exchange of the superior services offered (Ianoș I., 1987, 2004). The towns regarded as centres of coordinating the subordinated surrounding space adapted their functions along time, taking into account the technological level and the economic necessities of this space (Bourdeau-Lepage, Huriot, 2003).

Depending on its attraction power, the town will subordinate the surrounding space, directly influencing the functional complexity, the development of this space from the economic and social point of view being determined by the particularities of this influence (Mănescu, L. 1999; Negoescu, B. 1998; Peptenatu, D. et al 2010).

Influence areas are spaces which overlap the administrative territorial units, having certain characteristics which differentiate them from the adjacent space by the economic activities, but also social-cultural elements, being strongly dependent of the polarising centre. Within the influence areas, there may appear some problems related to the fact that the management and coordination of these spaces must take into account the special characteristics of each administrative-territorial component unit, as the dis-functionalities which appear in these spaces could have multiple causes (Paula Valdés Foulkes, 2008).
In this context, the specificity of the local economies from the influence area is given by the economic particularities of each administrative-territorial component unit, and knowing these particularities has a special importance from the perspective of a future balanced economic development. The identifying of the development level of the localities thus becomes an important element in this demarche, facilitating decisions’ taking and even focalising the existent resources towards those local communities which need support for the future economic-social development.

2. Methods

Identifying the development level of the areas represents a complicated action in case of the influence area of the city Râmnicu Vâlcea, due to the presence of the city county seat, which by its importance at regional and local level determines a much accentuated gap between its development degree and the territory under its direct influence. From this reason, we needed to take it out of our analysis and to focus only on the administrative units which are strictly in its influence area. Identifying these areas from the influence area of the city Râmnicu Vâlcea was done based on some specific criteria, so that their identifying should be as correct as possible. Thus, the main criteria which led to their identifying are as follows (Ianoş I. 2010):

- The indicators’ relevance (with an accent upon significance, and not on their number);
- The exact evaluation of the stage, based on the relevant indicators compared to the average at the level of the influence area of the city Râmnicu Vâlcea;
- Performing the analysis at the locality level, so that an adequate delimitation of the development areas could be done;
- The capacity of blockage of some territorial components upon the dynamic of social and economic life (restrictions regarding the development process);

For the analysis carried on at the level of the influence area of the city Râmnicu Vâlcea it was used a system of indicators composed of four classes, which refer to the demographic and social dimension, the status of economic development and the level of life standard, for each locality situated in the influence area of the city Râmnicu Vâlcea. As a result, for the first class there were considered representative a series of 4 indicators, as: the weight of the population that attended high school and university, the population with a domicile, the weight of the persons aged 65 and over and the migration balance. For the second class, 3 indicators were taken into account: the long duration unemployment rate, the weight of the persons employed in agriculture and the employees from the industry. For the third class of indicators, there were taken into account for the analysis of the general state of infrastructure a number of 2 indicators represented by: the number of pharmacy units and the number of TV subscriptions per 1000 inhabitants. For the last class of indicators which reflect the differences within the life standard, there were taken into account the following indicators: the inhabitable surface/ inhabitant and the number of persons for one doctor.

The main methodology applied for the analysis of the spaces from the influence area of the city Râmnicu Vâlcea allowed/ permitted the processing and analysis of elementary indicators.

As the 11 indicators were expressed in different unit measures, it was necessary to standardize them in order to operate more easily, thus: for the commune X (Xsi), characteristic I, was obtained by the formula: $I_R - I_m / I_M - I_m$, where the real value for commune X the characteristic I is represented by $I_R$, the maximum value of the characteristic I is $I_M$, and $I_m$ represents the minimum value of the characteristic I. Thus, in the end, development index was calculated as a Hull score, with variations of these values between 0 and 100. In determining the value of this coefficient, it is important to appreciate the direct or opposite balance of each partial indicator with the development measuring, thus the indicators
that have a direct influence are considered positive, and those with opposite influence, are considered negative.

3. Results

The identifying of the development degree of the localities from the influence area of the town Râmnicu Vâlcea imposed a detailed analysis of the 33 administrative territorial units from its structure, using a series of indicators which characterise the main social-economic field: the human capital, economic activities, the education level of the population and infrastructure.

The ranking of the 33 localities from the influence area of the city Râmnicu Vâlcea, based on the coefficient of development, emphasized 5 classes of values under 50,61, between 50,62 and 51,59, between 51,60 and 52,28 between 52,29 and 54,40 and over 54,41. In case of the influence area of the city Râmnicu Vâlcea, we can identify 2 categories of localities, depending on the development level. A first category is represented by the localities which distinguish by higher values for several indicators and another category by a single characteristic placed under the average of the influence area.

The transposing of these territorial intervals determined the identifying of several areas with different development levels.

Thus, at the level of the influence area of the city Râmnicu Vâlcea there were identified two large categories: areas with a high development level and areas with a lower development level.

Globally regarded, the influence area presents localities with a high development level which exceeds the value of 52,29 mostly to the north of the polarising town and in its close proximity (fig.1). However, it can be noticed that the areas with a high development level are localised along some structuring axes and some development centres. The county seat city, due to the very high development level, compared to the other localities, engaged, by stagnation, the development of some localities from the close proximity which they directly polarize, either they are part of the urban or rural category.

![Fig 1. The repartition of the development levels in the influence area of the city Râmnicu Vâlcea](Source calculated data)
The economic development of these localities can be regarded in correlation with that of the polarising town. Also, a series of towns and especially the towns-resorts determined, on their turn, the development of the rural localities from the close proximity. If we analyse the map, we can notice the contouring of a development belt / strap/band inside the influence area of the city Râmnicu Vâlcea, formed by the localities from the close proximity of the capital, and an axis oriented towards the direction North-South. Following the calculation of the development coefficient for each locality situated in the influence area of the city Râmnicu Vâlcea, it resulted relatively high values which exceed the value 52 for a number of 15 localities, which represent 45.5% out of the total number of the 33 localities (fig.35). Thus, the highest value is recorded in case of the town Băile Govora, with a value of 56,53, the next place being occupied by Voineasa 55,30 being situated at the northern extremity of the influence area. The high degree of development of these localities is determined by a high degree of concentration of industrial activities, services (tourism), etc. The lowest values of the development coefficient (under the value 50) from the entire analysed space is recorded for two localities, as follows: Stoilești (49,99) and Berislăvești (49,55).

Among the demographic characteristics with a very strong impact in the field of human resources, the weight of the persons aged over 65 is very important. Thus, there is a series of 16 localities which exceed the average of 0,40 for the entire area, 5 of these having even over 0,60 (Runcu-1, Dăniccei-0,65, Stoenești-0,70, Păușeni-0,64 and Milcoiu-0,74), which could represent a big problem in their future development.

Another extremely important demographic component is represented by the weight of the population aged 21 and over, with high school or university studies. Compared to the average of 0,35 for the entire area, the highest values are recorded in case of urban localities, due to the existence of an education infrastructure relatively well developed, compared to those from the rural environment. Thus, on the first places there are urban localities resorts, such as: Băile Govora-1, Voineasa-0,93, Băile Olănești-0,68, Călimănești-0,66; these localities (except Voineasa) benefit of a specific pre-university educational structure, and in the university field, of the branches of some state universities from the capital (in Calimanesti, a branch of the Faculty of Geography from the University of Bucharest functions).

A special importance as a demographic component is represented by the population increase or decrease rate, for which the natural balance of population on the one hand and the migration balance on the other hand participate. This component reflects in fact the degree of attractiveness or the polarisation of a territory.

Thus, among the localities with the highest rate of demographic growth there are: Budești-1, Păușeni-Măglași-0,90, Vlădești-0,88, Bujoreni-0,78, Milcoiu-0,75. Such a high growth rate from the above mentioned localities is not because of a high natural balance, but rather because of the very high migratory balance, determined by the spectacular evolution of the real estate market from the last years. The lack of building spaces which the city confronts with in the last years determined the spectacular growth of the space consuming between the neighbouring localities and more. Among the localities affected by a rate of accentuated decrease of population there are rural localities: Sălătrucel-0, Stoiști and Runcu each with 0,02, Păușeni-0,09.

The economic indicators which were taken into account for calculating the degree of development of the localities from the influence area of the city Râmnicu Vâlcea are three, namely: the weight of the people employed in industry, the number of unemployed and the weight of the people employed in agriculture.

The rate of long time unemployment is a very important economic indicator in evaluating the possibilities for the development of a territory and implicitly of a locality. In the influence area of the city Râmnicu Vâlcea there are 16 localities (meaning 48%) which
confront with an unemployment rate pretty high (over 11.6%, a value which represents the average of the standardized influence area 0.48). From among these localities, we mention: Olanu (1), Frâncuști (0.97), Brezoii (0.93), Bunești (0.80), Băbeni (0.74). At the opposite pole there are only 5 localities with values under 5%, one of them even under 1% localities with a very accentuated agricultural profile: Păuşești (0), Bărbațești (0.13), Mihaiaști and Pietrari (0.16), Dănicei (0.18). In all these localities, the weight of the employed population in the agricultural sector is over 45% (in case of the locality Dănicei it reaches even over 60%). On the other hand, the localities situated at relatively short distances from the capital and whose work power activates in the capital have a low unemployment rate.

The weight of the persons employed in agriculture at the level of the influence area of the city Râmnicu Vâlcea also represents a relevant economic indicator. Thus, there are 14 localities where the weight of the population employed in agriculture is very low, under 10% (0.25), representing 42% of the total number. Here are to be noticed the other small towns and localities situated in the close proximity of the polarising town, recording a small weight of the population employed in agriculture (Ocnele Mari, Câlămașeni and Milcoiu with the value 0 after standardization, Vlădești and Băile Olănești with the value 0.01). At the opposite pole there are the localities: Dănicei (1), Pietrari (0.89), Runcu and Bărbațești (0.85).

The number of the people employed in the industrial sector in the influence area of the city Râmnicu Vâlcea represents a relevant economic indicator which could indicate the degree of development of the localities in terms of the development of industrial activities. Thus, there are 5 localities where the weight of the employees from the industrial field exceeds the value of 0.90 (Mihăiaști, Ocnele Mari and Băbeni with the value 1, Budești 0.99, Golești 0.96, Galicea 0.93). These are localities situated in the close proximity of the city county seat, a part of the active population being involved in industrial activities taking place at local level and another part moving to the polarising town, unfolding the activity in the enterprises localised here. At the opposite pole there are other 5 localities which have values of under 0.10 (Berislăvești, Voineasa 0.01, Băile Olănești, Câlămașeni 0.06, Malaia 0.10). The low value can be explained by the fact that a large part of the active population is employed in the services sector, more exactly in tourism.

Infrastructure indicators are very important in the analysis of the development level of a space. Therefore, from this category there were selected those who come from the sanitary infrastructure (the number of the pharmaceutical units) and the technology infrastructure (TV subscriptions).

The sanitary infrastructure represented here by the weight of the number of pharmacies per 1000 inhabitants indicated the degree of accessibility of population to the basic sanitary infrastructure. In a number of 24 localities, meaning 72% of the total number of localities from the influence area of the city Râmnicu Vâlcea, the pharmaceutical units lack. This situation is pretty alarming, as a large part of these localities have an important weight of the third age population and also for some of those the accessibility is difficult due to the existent infrastructure which is often in a deplorable state.

As regards the technological infrastructure, and here we refer to the number of the TV subscriptions per 1000 inhabitants, the highest values are recorded for the localities: Bunești 1, Voineasa 0.94, Băile Olănești 0.82, Păuşești 0.79. At the opposite pole there are the localities: Berislăvești 0.14, Pietrari 0.02 and Olanu 0.05.

From among the indicators of the life standard, the most representative were considered the inhabited surface and the number of doctors per 1000 inhabitants. Thus, there are 14 localities with a large inhabited surface compared to the number of population which exceed the average calculated for 0.35. The highest values are recorded for the localities: Bunești 1, Voineasa 0.94, Băile Olănești 0.82, Păuşești 0.79 and Milcoiu 0.72. the lowest
values are recorded in case of 3 localities: Frânceşti 0,02, Muereasca 0,02 and Berislăveşti 0,08.

The second indicator of the life standard, namely the number of doctors per 1000 inhabitants shows a hierarchy which is dominated by the balneo-climateric touristic resorts (Băile Olăneşti 1, Băile Govora 0,98, Călimăneşti 0,83). The very high number of doctors for the three resorts is explained by the existence of the treatment units which serve the three resorts. Other localities with values exceeding the average (of 2 doctors/ 1000 inhabitants) are: Voineasa 0,69, Brezoi 0,60, Mihăeşti 0,27.

By corroborating the 11 indicators which were the basis for identifying and delimiting: 2 developed areas which do not imply special problems within development and 3 weakly developed areas which might arise certain problems related to their future development.

From the analysis of the map (fig.2) the two developed areas were marked D1 respectively D2, and those weakly developed with S1, S2 and respectively S3 for their future quantifying. For the evaluation of the real situation and to indicate the possible development directions in an integrated manner, we will pass to a detailed analysis of the 5 areas, following the 11 indicators grouped in the 4 classes: demographic indicators, economic indicators, infrastructure indicators and indicators of the life standard.

**Developed areas**

Developed areas individualised by the territorial gathering of all the localities with the development coefficients superior to the threshold 52 (fig.). For the compaction of the area, there were very rarely included communes with inferior, but very close values. Thus, two very well individualised areas resulted, grouping the localities from the mountainous area and those from the perimeter of the valleys of the rivers Olăneşti and Olt. In both areas there are included all urban centres of the influence area, which also influenced the incomes and the life standard of the inhabitants from peri-urban localities (the maximum distance towards urban centres is in both cases shorter than 20 km).

After the calculation of the development coefficient on each area, very high average values resulted. Thus, on the first place there is D1, with values of almost 54 (53,55), and on the second place D2 with approximately 53 (53,18).
The most developed area (D1) is characterised by complex economic activities, dominated by industrial activities, mainly localised in urban centres, but also in some rural localities, Mihăești, Bujoreni. The facile possibilities of access towards urban centres, but especially towards the polarising centre diminished the process of depopulation of rural localities, during the period of extensive industrialisation. The available work power preferred to commute towards industrial centres, maintaining their households, and the incomes succeeded to detain the process of physical degradation of localities and even the growth of the comfort degree.

Among the major problems of these areas, we can mention:

- **The industry’s restructuring.** At the south-eastern extremity of the area there is the polarising centre, namely the city Râmnicu Vâlcea, strongly specialised in chemical industry (chlorine-soda products), which once the lost of the internal and external sales market proved to be unviable at the present dimension. Also, a series of industry branches present in other localities add: oil exploitations (Băbeni), salt exploitation (Ocnele Mari). The impact of production diminution and of the partial restructuring of industry was felt both at the towns’ level (unemployment rate increase, the diminution of the inhabitants’ buying capacity, social insecurity etc) and of the surrounding communes, by the strict limitation of the number of commuters/daily travellers, by the diminution of economic, cultural and educational influences of the respective centres;

- **The use of the natural and anthropic touristic potential this area disposes of.** According to the Strategy of Regional Development 2007-2013, in chapter VIII, dedicated for the tourism, it is established as a general objective the attenuation of the development disparities between regions and as a specific objective the increase of regional attractiveness and the sustainable development of the region by the improvement of infrastructure, the development of urban areas and of the touristic potential. As a matter of fact, among the measures taken are also the support for the development of the tourism infrastructure and the increase of the tourism attractiveness in the region, the development of regional marketing. All the localities, but especially the three touristic resorts: Călimânești, Băile Olănești, Băile Govora can use at a higher level the natural or anthropic potential they dispose of. Thus, there can be improved or built new structures in the field, able to determine the use at a high level of the touristic resources they dispose of, so that they could bring economic benefits for these localities. The advantageous geographical position within the county but also regarding the polarising centre to which the cultural and historical significance add, represent favourable elements in the impulsion of the touristic activity.

The second developed area of the county (D2), situated in the mountainous space of the Southern Carpathians includes 3 localities (1 town and 2 communes). One of these communes, namely Voineasa, records the highest value of the IDEV, exceeding some towns, as it characterises by the presence of the activities specific for forest and touristic exploitations, and even energy production. The evolution of the indicators was strongly influenced by the existence of these local activities, as well as of the permanence of the private property in agriculture, which blocked the display of the attraction exercised by the industrial centres outside the mountainous area.

The main problems of this area are:

- **The specialising of the work power in activities specific for wood exploitation and processing,** which in the conditions of the strict diminution of production could be reduced to levels which are unable to ensure the sources of existence. The incapacity of absorbing in the field of services the possible work power surplus makes tourism the only possible market;
• The inexistence of a local centre of economic growth, as the 3 localities seem to be more in competition, rather than reciprocally complementing themselves in the economic, cultural and administrative field;

• Adverse infrastructure, the only axis of major circulation/ traffic is represented by the modernised national road which crosses the area in the central part of the Lotru valley. The particular geographical conditions do not allow the construction of a traffic longitudinal artery, so that the connecting of these settlements to the county system can be done only by cross-cut communication channels.

• The high touristic potential, weakly exploited from the economic point of view; the three localities dispose of a high touristic potential, especially the natural potential, but which for the moment is weakly exploited in the locality Voineasa.

Weakly developed areas

The weakly developed areas are at the periphery of the influence area of the city Râmnicu Vâlcea and include more than half of the localities of this influence area (Tabel. ). The 3 areas were analysed in terms of the average values of the IDEV, being classified on different levels of under-privilege.

The most weakly developed area (S1) from the influence area of the city Râmnicu Vâlcea includes 5 communes which overlap the sub-Carpathian area between the Olt and the Topolog. This area detaches by the very low levels recorded for all indicators.

Table 1. The structure per communes of the weakly developed areas

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The detailed analysis emphasized the following:

• Reduced connection to the level of the influence area and the local system of settlements; in this respect, the difficult accessibility towards nearby urban centres or towards the localities having a function of central place is the main impediment. The two existent normal access ways, which cross the area only in the southern and western extreme parts (only tangentially on the territory of the commune Dâești) are completely insufficient;

• The high intensity of the depopulation process; the precarious local conditions and the attraction exerted by the neighbouring developed areas determined negative values of neat migration, especially during the period after 1970. This fact caused a strong ageing of the population, a strong biological degradation of the communes from this perimeter, which, by high mortality, will maintain the depopulation process at relatively high values (Runcu, Berislăvești, Sălătrucel);

• The impossibility of using/ exploiting the surplus of agricultural products; represented by animal products, very perishable, this surplus cannot be exploited because of the isolation degree, of the reduced possibilities of ensuring the transport on urban market.

The second weakly developed area (S2) includes 7 communes which are situated at the southern extremity of the influence area, with a larger extension on the left side of the Olt. Among the problems which are to be mentioned, there are:
Adverse infrastructure; the only major axis is represented by the national road DN64 (Râmnicu Vâlcea-Slatina). Also, social infrastructure is precarious, a fact reflected also by the number of TV subscriptions / 1000 inhabitants, or the number of pharmacies (Olanu, Stoilești, Dâești).

The high rate of unemployment; the work power’s dependence of the industrial units which diminished their activity was reflected in high values of the unemployed people in payment, reported to active population (Olanu, Ionești, Șirineasa, Stoilești);

Accentuated depopulation; based on the attraction exerted by the town Râmnicu Vâlcea in the last three decades upon the work power but also based on the other new town, namely Băbeni, the emigration of a part of the population overlapped, especially after 1990; the large weight of the population over 60 still feeds natural depopulation (Stoilești, Șirineasa, Nicolae Bălcescu).

The weak urban polarisation; despite relatively small distances to nearby towns, the communes’ position is somehow marginal compared to the influence areas of the towns, and here we refer to Băbeni, Drăgașani.

The third weakly developed area (S3) is situated to the west of the city Râmnicu Vâlcea, being marginal to the influence area of the town. Also it has the highest development coefficient from among weakly developed areas, this area is characterised by low values of the indicators analysed in most of the cases. Among the most important problems which characterise this area the following detach:

The prevalence of agricultural activities; the high rate of the population employed in agriculture, the limited financial resources and the low level of technical facilities are elements that prove the use of physical force mainly. This fact cannot determine but very low productions, which rarely exceed the necessities per each household (Bărbătești, Stoenești, Pietrari);

The relatively high rate of unemployment; there are effectively some localities where the coefficient of unemployed people exceeds 15% (Frâncești, Stoenești), indicating the dependence of work power on the industrial units in the area, many of them reducing their activity;

The low level of infrastructure; the social infrastructure reflected by the number of TV subscriptions and the pharmacies’ weight is weakly represented, limiting the population access to elementary services, as those from the health field (the lack of pharmacies in all 5 localities);

Modest life standard; relevant values of indicators, as the number of TV subscriptions per 1000 inhabitants or the inhabited surface per inhabitant, even if it is over the average in some communes as Păușești or Bărbătești, due to the high coefficient of aged population but also of the population employed in agriculture, determines us conclude that this is not due to a special life style, but especially to depopulation process.

The localities from weakly developed areas represent the most affected category, as regards the development level, to which it must be given the highest attention, with the purpose to reduce the tensions generated by the discrepancies between the development levels. Tourism may represent an alternative in reducing these differences as regards the development by the complex implications which it can have both at economic and social level.

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5. Conclusions

The influence area of a town is characterised by the existence of some morphological characteristics, determined by the areas with different development levels, a result of the attraction generated by the polarising centre by the dimension of the existent economic activities, but also by the historical relationships between the town and the surrounding area.

The obvious territorial disparities which exist at the level of development areas but especially at the level of the weakly developed areas from the influence area of the city Râmnicu Vâlcea are given especially by the accessibility degree, to which the economic dimension adds, but also the position vis-a-vis the polarising centre and the degree of attractiveness of the latter. The process of demographic ageing, common to all these areas, but especially in case of the weakly developed areas, determined directly or indirectly the depression of the discrepancies which already exist.

In conclusion, we can assert that the dynamic of the economic activities from the influence area of a town can be influenced by the coordination of the complex processes which unfold at its level and this thing can be accomplished only by creating an administrative territorial unit which would manage as efficiently as possible the relationships at the level of the influence area (Fumio Takuma, Komei Sasaki, 2002; Peptenatu et al. 2010).

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