



Today's Rural Metamorphosis of the Rural Area in Bistrița Ardeleană Basin

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Introduction

Today's dynamics of the Romanian village are tributary *sine qua non* to the general transformations of the Romanian society and economy which find themselves on the verge of European integration. The means for adapting to the quality and rhythm of this change constitutes an essential premise for the future evolution. Inside the area submitted to the present study, there are specific forms of revitalization of the economic and geographic spaces that spring up, more or less, according to the patterns of evolution previous to the 1990's. This quasi-restructuring is comprised in a trend that, *volens-nolens*, induces mutations in the organization of the rural space. The nature of these mutations and their consequences constitute the subject of the present investigation.

According to the geographical conditions of localization and of socio-historical evolution, the rural settlements in Bistrița hydrographical basin can be divided into two categories:

- the settlements close to the town of Bistrița (the villages that belong to the town and partially those that administratively belong to Livezile head village) developed in the depression are Bistrița-Livezile;
- the settlements in Bârgău corridor (an area of depression corridor, with a progressive opening from upstream to downstream) and the mountain area of Bârgău and Călimani. The settlements appeared and developed either inside the little basins of the depression that resulted after the differential erosion, in the flat areas of the valleys, inside the dejection cones, on their treks or valley sides or the corridor areas, where the habitats developed from the narrow valleys, on the small bridges over the structural terraces or on the smooth and sunny mountain sides.

The settlements near Bistrița town have always been deeply connected to the historical dynamics of the urban centre, while the settlements from the second category have had a different evolution. It is obvious that within the entire valley the villages constituted linearly along the morpho-hydrographical axe Bistrița-Bârgău and also under the form of a true habitation mountain-side belt, where the homes were scattered. The particularities of the oicumanisation of the area consisted of the early occupation of the local population of the whole Bârgău trace, thus appearing a habitation axis impressive through its length (over 30 km) and also through the frequent changes of the homes inside the valley sides of Bârgău and Călimani mountains and the flat areas of valleys and of terraces placed along the main valleys.

Work hypotheses

In the development of the research endeavour suited to the proposed theme, I have started from the following specific and general considerations:

- the whole Romanian society has been, from the beginning of the 90s, in a large process of remaking and replacing, clearly reflected in the village world as well;
- the rural settlements are *volens-nolens* submitted to a reorganization process, under the conditions of the European integration;

- important investment projects regarding the technical infrastructure have been proposed and they are developing, inside the analyzed area;
- the potential of the natural environment allows for the development of profitable activities related to tourism.

The naming of these work hypotheses, which derive from a *common sense paradigm*, has the merit of shaping the sense of the rural development, analyzed through the point of view of a *competitive and long-lasting evolution*. By the *competitive evolution* we understand an evolution that starts from the identification and the knowledge of all the key-factors of an equilibrated development, in view of the defining of all the main problems.

Investigation techniques

The metamorphosis of the rural area has a double connotation:

- social: quantitative and qualitative;
- spatial: physionomical and functional.

I have used the following methods and means of investigation of this developing process:

- the statistic interpretation of the data of the census in 1992 and 2002 (the dynamics of the number of the population, the occupational structure on the three sectors);
- the consulting of the projects connected to the development management of the area under analysis;
- the analysis of the landscape modifications.

Results

From the point of view of the development at the level of the demographic structures we can make the following observations:

From the point of view of the evolution of the number of the population (see table 1), for the studied area the growth rate is positive, with only one remarkable exception – the people of Bistrița Bârgăului. I have proceeded to the introduction of the data related to the urban centre, because inside the demographic, social and territorial system of Bistrița basin permanent exchanges of density, energy and information take place.

Table 1. The dynamics of the number of the population.

City/Head Village	Year	Total populations	Absolute growth	Yearly medium growth	Growth rate
Bistrița	1992	87.710	- 6.451	-645,1	- 7,36
	2002	81.259			
Livezile	1992	4.004	301	30,1	7,52
	2002	4.305			
Josonii Bârgăului	1992	4.922	158	15,8	3,21
	2002	5.080			
Prundu Bârgăului	1992	6.389	- 4	- 0,4	- 0,06
	2002	6.385			
Tiha Bârgăului	1992	6.245	43	4,3	0,69
	2002	6.288			
Bistrița Bârgăului	1992	4.617	- 221	- 22,1	- 4,79
	2002	4.396			

From the point of view of the structure of the population on the three sectors of activity, it is obvious that the population placed in the primary sector prevails (with one exception, the head village Prundu Bârgăului), thus having a radicalization of the process of ruralisation of the population in the studied area. The explanation is the cease or the diminishing of the activity of the industrial centres. There is, still, a constant growth of the population placed in the third sector.

Table 2. The structure of the population in the activity sectors.

City/Head Village	Year	Sector I	(%)	Sector II	(%)	Sector III	(%)
Bistrița	1992	1.817	4,02	25.519	56,50	16059	35,55
	2002	1.737	4,31	17.083	42,48	19.964	49,65
Livezile	1992	725	47,08	435	28,25	262	17,01
	2002	1.033	55,87	410	22,17	370	20,01
Josonii Bârgăului	1992	1.406	58,05	588	24,28	345	14,24
	2002	1.987	69,31	453	15,80	395	13,78
Prundu Bârgăului	1992	739	24,82	1.465	49,21	634	21,30
	2002	1.556	47,14	819	24,81	821	24,87
Tiha Bârgăului	1992	1.915	67,12	491	17,21	394	13,81
	2002	2.073	70,80	273	9,32	440	15,03
Bistrița Bârgăului	1992	815	41,56	723	36,87	316	16,11
	2002	1.416	62,05	383	16,78	426	18,67

There are coherent strategies of absorption of the structural funds and also of developing programmes:

- the strategy of sustainable development of Bistrița-Năsăud county between 2003-2004 and the horizon of the year 2010;
- PATZ The peri-urban area of Bistrița town;
- ISPA project of the water system in Bârgău Valley;
- the project of rehabilitation of DN 17 Cluj-Bistrița-Suceava;
- the building of a water treatment station in Prundu Bârgăului.

As for the SAPARD project, in the analyzed area, there are 3 projects from a total of 68 inside the whole county:

- the restoration and the modernization of the sheep farm in Livezile;
- the finalization of the tourist motel in the holiday centre Colibița, Bistrița Bârgăului head village;
- the making of craftsman workshops in Mureșenii Bârgăului.

The analysis of the landscape modification presents two situations:

- the rural area near the urban centre Bistrița (Sigmir, Unirea, Viișoara, Ghinda, Sărata);
- the rural area in the tourist zone Colibița-Piatra Fântânele.

Both situations reflect the same phenomenon that is the expansion of the territories occupied by constructions. In the first case it is about villa-type permanent individual lodgings that have lead to the apparition of real neighbourhoods, contributing to the aggressive, almost exhaustive occupation of the space and very often without respecting the urban regulations of the whole area that existed between the city of Bistrița and the homes of the belonging neighbouring villages. By these constructions the junction between the urban centre and the neighbouring rural areas has the character of a continuous space built on variable aesthetics. It is here that we also find the new assembling of some industrial production and services centres.

The second situation illustrates the raising interest in the areas that have tourist potential inside the basin. Territorially, this is reflected through the integration in the building circuit of some very large surfaces. The landscape aesthetics of the constructions is different in the two areas, but it is fitted more or less to the matrix of the tourist specificity:

- almost periphery-grouped around Colibița lake;
- scattered, in the case of Piatra Fântânele.

Conclusions

Today's metamorphosis of the rural area in the hydrographical basin of Bistrița Ardeleană is a developing process. Although only thinly sketched (can we really talk about a metamorphosis of the rural space?), this process adopts specific forms, fitted to the development support.

It does not appear as a unitary phenomenon for the whole basin.

In the case of the investment projects in the infra- and upper-structures, it is worth mentioning a sum of grotesque-hilarious inadvertences, specific to a transitional Romania. The rehabilitation works of the routes coincide with those of the water system of Valea Bârgăului which are financed by ISPA programme (on October, 28,2004, the Management Committee of ISPA approved the application of the plan that aimed at the rehabilitation and extension of the water system in the city of Bistrița and in Valea Bârgăului). But ISPA programme was already facing problems that "had not been taken into consideration" at the beginning of the application. The county authorities announced that the initial project would have to go through certain substantial changes, because the distance which is too short between the homes in Valea Bârgăului and DN 17 is a strong reason to reconsider the placement of the main water pipes. In other words, it is the fault of the rehabilitation of DN 17 main road, because it is necessary to break the sidewalk in order to place the pipes by the ISPA programme, a sidewalk that was just being repaired thanks to another financing programme in the benefit of the county! The county authorities have solicited approval from AND (the Agency of National Main Roads) in order to break the sidewalk, but this misunderstanding triggered enormous costs, in the sense that the sidewalk resulted from the rehabilitation of DN 17 will be broken for the introduction of the water pipes by ISPA programme and only then the County Council, the involved Town Halls and Aquabis will pay the costs, after the completion of the works. On the other hand, the future individual connections from the local distribution networks will create problems of their own.

Two main projects, highly important for the county that is ISPA programme and the rehabilitation programme for DN 17 Cluj-Bistrița-Suceava step on each other's shoes because of the bad management.

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