



Patterns of Periphery Organization of the Rural Space. Bistrița Ardeleană Basin

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Introduction

Inside the hydrographic basin of Bistrița Ardeleană a pattern of spatial (socio-spatial) organisation of the rural settlements is very suggestively underlined: the pattern of the morpho-hydrographical habitation axis Bistrița-Bârgău. Any stepping aside from this framework implies the existence of a sum of differentiating characteristics which allows for the clear naming of particular patterns of socio-spatial manifestation.

Choosing the name of the pattern is not based only on the demographic characteristics, but also on the economic aspects and on those connected to the intensity of the spatial relations with the communal centre. It is not in our intention to detail the geographic and socio-historic context where this diversity phenomenon appeared and is amplified; we will focus on its naming and definition, based on the analysis of some indicators. It is mainly about the formulation of a working hypothesis and the synthetisation of the conclusions referring to the processes and the character of these processes (the organisation) through which the forms get a structure and the relationships shape up.

The human settlements have appeared and evolved in time as a result of a complex of factors (natural, historic and economic), suffering transformations from one stage of development to another. Generally, the evolution of the settlements happened from the bottom-up, with a lateral extension of the valley villages, with the apparition of new villages on the secondary valleys and the valley sides, with forest clearing and expansion of the meadows and of the working fields.

The rural settlements from the hydrographical basin of Bistrița can be divided into two categories: on one hand, the ones that belong administratively to the city of Bistrița, on the other, the ones belonging to the five main villages from the analysed area.

The analysis of the genesis of the social formation sustains the idea that the state and the social, economic and politic processes that happen inside the state remain the most important organisational force of the geographical space, in general, and of the rural space, in particular. In the Medieval times, directly and then indirectly (through the colonisation of the Germans and granting functions to the District of Bistrița), Bistrița becomes the polarising centre and strengthens this position by the monopolisation of the growth processes.

The administrative organisation had an important role in the achievement of the necessary cohesion for the apparition of a functional social organism. From the Middle Ages, through 1867 (when the District of Bistrița had been administratively integrated to the BN county and insignificant modifications of the borders took place) up to 1968 (when new territorial reorganisation took place, as a result of the new ideology animated by the concept of an equilibrated territorial development in all the regions of the country) there was a strong administrative stability, which led to the establishment and reinforcement of spatial relationships and interactions among the settlements.

Between 1945 and 1989 the state authority increased. After 1989, as a consequence of the retreat of the state there is a reorganisation of the relations inside the settlement system. Up to the sixth decade of the last century a simple and clearly hierarcal spatial structure shapes up (Benedek, 2000).

Investigation techniques

The effort of individualising the periphery patterns of organising the rural space consisted of combining two distinct and somehow complementary research directions concerning the rural space.

First of all, it is about the concept of *non-agricultural rural economy*, a largely debated subject in the paper “*Rolul diversificării activităților economice în revitalizarea așezărilor rurale din Bucovina*” (Guran-Nica, Liliana, coord., 2004).

Secondly, I have employed J. Benedek’s vision, expressed in 2000, in “*Organizarea spațiului rural în zona de influență apropiată a orașului Bistrița*”, as far as the socio-spatial patterns of organisation are concerned.

In 1996, OECD (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development) classified the rural areas into two main categories: deeply rural areas, where over 50% of the population was living inside rural communities and significantly rural areas, where between 15 and 50% of the population was living inside rural communities.

Agriculture has a multifunctional character. Agriculture is not only a source of food products for the population; it also represents an important resource of raw material for the productive industries. It is also an important market for the products coming from other sectors of the economy. It also has an important ecological function, in the fields of culture and tourism (regional products, gastronomy etc).

Lately, there has been a lot of attention on the idea that rural economy is not strictly connected to the agricultural sector, which still polarizes the labour force, the economic activities, the infrastructure and the rural natural resources.

Non-agricultural rural economy was strongly influenced by the macro-economical politics, by the progress at the level of the agricultural sector and also by the development of the small and medium-size companies.

Some examples of non-agricultural activities (Davis&Pearce, 2000, quoted by Guran-Nica, Liliana, coord., 2004): processing agricultural products, developing small business, pensions, interests and also incomes from temporary activities from the urban areas. In 1997, N. Islam (quoted by Guran-Nica, Liliana, coord., 2004) identifies 5 main categories of non-agricultural activities that generate income:

- non-agricultural activities that take place inside the homes;
- activities that take place in small towns from the rural area;
- activities that take place in the big cities (and imply the seasonal migration of the labour force);
- income earned by the members of one family that lead permanent activities in the big cities;
- income earned from the activities led abroad.

Defining from a territorial (spatial) perspective of the non-agricultural rural economy represents a difficult problem, as noted by Reardon (1999, quoted by Guran-Nica, Liliana, coord., 2004). An activity can be “local” when it refers to:

- activities that take place inside homes;
- activities that take place near homes:
 - ✓ activities led strictly in the rural space;
 - ✓ activities led near the towns in the rural area;
 - ✓ activities led near the big cities.

The attitude towards the risk is important. In transition economies, homes are really reluctant to risk.

J. Benedek (2000) launches the idea of considering several factors, in shaping certain more and more complex socio-spatial patterns:

- social division of labour (measured by the distribution on sectors of the active population), a variable having a main role;
- dynamics of the population;
- aging degree of the population.

The spatial relations of the different patterns also include the analysis of the informal relationships (they are important as far as the shaping of the connections between different settlements, being personal relationships that connect members of different villages).

In this category we focus on those persons that are involved in the migration from rural to urban and the other way around, and those persons that have strong relationships with the native village (they result from the analysis of the migration rate, at the level of the main village, completed with the evolution of the number of inhabitants in a certain period of time).

Taking into consideration the assumption presented in the introduction, the shaping of the different types of patterns is made according to the existence of a set of characteristics that clearly differentiate the settlements inside the area analysed – the individualisation of the periphery pattern of organising the geographical space, as we see it, following certain steps:

- spatial position: administrative, geographical (they belong or not to the communication axis), the communication potential – qualitative and quantitative. The absolute and the relative position (e.g. “sack bottom” type);
- demographic and social characteristics: the demographic dimension, the demographic evolution, the aging degree;
- level of education allows for the generalisation of some conclusions referring to the capacity of relenting, through the cultural vector (persons with university qualification);
- active population – social homogeneity;
- economical function, performances;
- spatial relationships, intensity;
- informal relationships.

The results of the research

The individualisation of the settlements which sustain the periphery model of organisation was done through a matrix, in which the evaluation indices have values between 1 and 5.

I have excluded from this analysis those settlements administratively dependent to the city of Bistrița and also those which define the axiomatic pattern of organisation of the rural space from the region analysed.

Consequently, the settlements that potentially contain the periphery pattern are the following:

Table 1. Potential settlements to be included in the periphery pattern

Settlement	Communes
Cușma	Livezile
Dorolea	
Dumbrava	
Valea Poienii	
Strâmba	Josenii Bârgăului
Colibița	Bistrița Bârgăului
Ciosa	Tiha Bârgăului
Piatra Fântânele	

The connection index at the administrative centre (the main village centre) and at the specific justifies for the selection made before. However, on a first basis we can eliminate the settlements situated in the tourist areas, that is Colibița and Piatra Fântânele.

Benedek individualises the following characteristics of the periphery patterns:

- spatial and social, economic mono-functionalism;
- strongly negative dynamics of the population;
- high aging degree.

We can add:

- social homogeneity and heterogeneity.

As for the demographic and social aspects, there is a relatively balanced evolution of all the settlements in the period of time analysed. The only criterion which could allow for the simplification of the number of settlements (according to the demands of a periphery pattern of organisation) is that of demographic size.

Table 2. Demographic structures

No.	Settlement	Sex	Year	Total population	0-14 year	15-64 year	65 and more year
1	CUȘMA	AS	1992	667	190	385	92
			2002	690	162	432	96
2	DOROLEA	AS	1992	652	156	411	85
			2002	687	135	455	97
3	DUMBRAVA	AS	1992	213	75	129	9
			2002	320	123	186	11
4	VALEA POIENII	AS	1992	161	45	98	18
			2002	169	33	114	22
5	STRÂMBA	AS	1992	296	97	169	30
			2002	382	136	204	42
6	CIOSA	AS	1992	244	83	149	12
			2002	238	70	147	21

In 2002, the situation of the population involved in the primary sector of activity is the following, for the settlements analysed:

Table 3. Population involved in the primary sector

Settlement	Total involved population	Population involved in the primary sector	(%)
CUȘMA	298	236	78,52
DOROLEA	258	173	67,05
DUMBRAVA	104	66	63,46
VALEA POIENII	80	69	86,25
STRÂMBA	184	153	83,15
CIOSA	128	125	97,66

Source: INS Bistrița-Năsăud.

The gathering of all these data allows for a rather surprising conclusion: the settlements that define the periphery pattern are Valea Poienii, Strâmba and Ciosa. The surprise does not come from finding out these settlements (which was rather predictable), but from the absence of Dumbrava. The explanation is that there is a high level of connection to the urban centre, eased by the superior quality of the access infrastructure.

Bibliography

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