

FUNCTIONAL STRUCTURE OF DEEPLY DISADVANTAGED AREAS IN GORJ COUNTY

CRISTIAN TĂLÂNGĂ¹, DANIEL PEPTENATU¹, ILINCA-VALENTINA STOICA¹

General contemporary economic and social development, but also the industrialization forward policy before 1990, led to some territorial imbalances. The alleviation of these imbalances should mean an important object for central, local and district administrations, on a general national regional development background.

Identification and analysis of territorial disparities were made on four type basis: demographical one, economic level, the infrastructure and life standard, each category is considered as equally involved in developing.

Functional structuring of deeply disadvantaged areas means the result of political and economic changes after 1990, when Gorj district suffer great basic economic changes, which had a major impact on territorial and functional structure of the settlements and, implicitly, on dynamics, structuring and quality life.

Key words: disadvantaged areals, territorial dynamics, development

Foreword

Gorj County situated in South-East of Romania, with a surface of 5602 square km, is a component of the South West Development Region of Oltenia, along with Dolj, Olt, Mehedinți and Vâlcea. It is one of Romanian counties in which few organization and administrative territorial changes were made after 1990.

The territory of Gorj County comprised, on July 1st 2007, 70 territorial basic units, of which 9 towns and 61 communes composed by 411 villages. Within the towns, Târgu Jiu and Motru are municipalities.

A brief analysis of the population reveals the fact that it has an irregular repartition in the territory; the deviation is between 1285 inhabitants (Commune of Arcani) and over 96000 inhabitants (Municipality of Târgu Jiu). The majority of territorial administrative units have a population of 3000-10000 inhabitants. It can be noticed a high dispersion of the inhabitants, each commune comprising 7-10 villages.

Another important element is the one concerning the urbanization level. At the county level, the urban population had a share of 47%. The real urbanization level is in fact irregular, fluctuating between 24% (Tismana) and 100% (Țicleni). Also in the case of the county capital it can be noticed a real urbanization level of 95%.

On the background of the economic and political changes after 1990, Gorj County has undergone basic economic changes which had repercussions on the functional and territorial structure of settlements and, implicitly, on dynamics and structure of population and of life quality on this territory, fact that can be noticed from the above synthetically resumed context.

Territorial Disparities and Disadvantaged Areas

General contemporary economic and social development, but also the industrialization policy before 1990, led to a territorial imbalance. The alleviation of the inequalities is an important object of central, local and district administrations, on a general national regional development background which has the following objectives:

¹ University of Bucharest, CICADIT – The Interdisciplinary Center of Advanced Research on Territorial Dynamics, cristian2851@yahoo.com; peptenatu@yahoo.fr; vallys_2005@yahoo.com

- diminution of regional development by stimulating a balanced development, an accelerated reclamation of delays, a consequence of historical, geographical, economic, social and political background, for the less developed areas in the economic and social field, as well as a prevention in the emergence of new imbalances;

- approval of the criteria and the priorities concerning the National Fund for regional development and proposal, for Government's approval, of priority programmes to be financed by the National Fund for regional development;

- correlation to governmental territorial policies of development and stimulation of inter-regional, internal and international cooperation, which would increase the economic growth, in conformity to the legal provisions and international agreements in which Romania is involved.

In the first place, it has been made the delimitation of some disadvantaged areas, within the economic down-grade (especially the industrial one) which induced an economic and social decline.

This was a first attempt to re-establish social and economic growth of the locations deeply affected by industrial restructuring and massive lay-offs and officially called "disadvantaged areas".

In conformity to GO no. 24/1998, the concept of "disadvantaged area" *means a geographical area strictly delimited by the territorial point of view, which meets the following demands:* "unemployment share of the human resources market in the territory should be three times more than unemployment share of the human resources market at the national level, within the last 3 months before elaborating the documentation concerning disadvantaged areas; these areas lack communication devices and the infrastructure is almost inexistent".

The economic agents, who develop their activity in these areas, benefited of exemption from income taxation related to new investments, until it reaches the maximum level of the state fund, according to Regional Statute of the state fund, with further changes and supplements.

In Gorj County, three disadvantaged areas were emphasized, by GD no. 191, 192 and 193 in 1999: Albeni, Schela and Motru Rovinari. Demographic structure and characteristics of the three areas are represented in *fig. 1*.

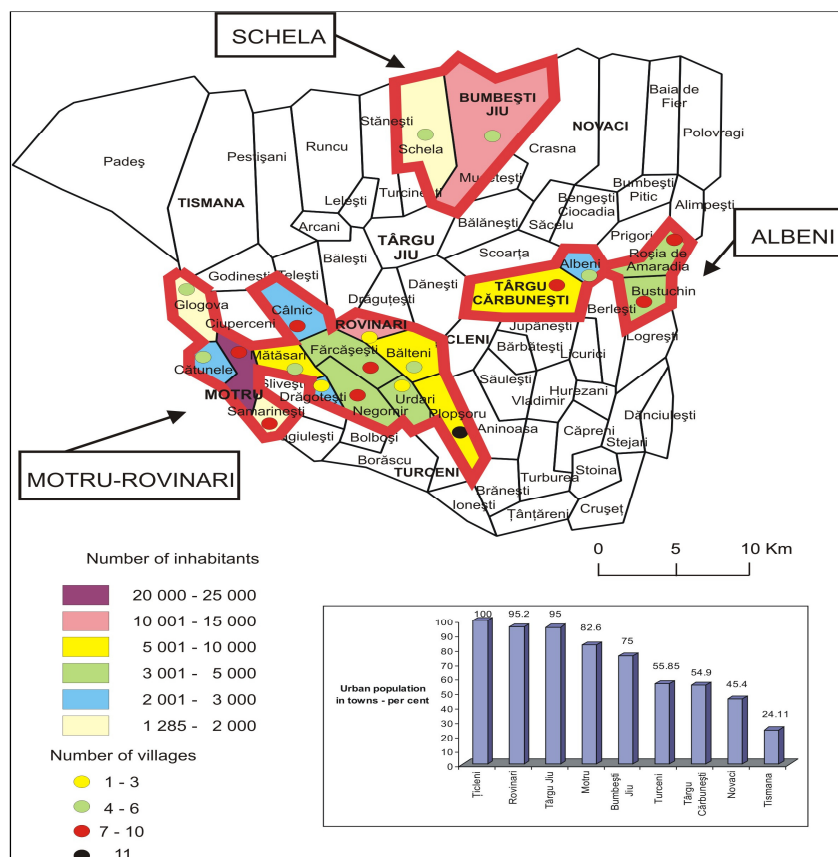


Fig. 1. Population and settlements (July the 1st 2007) in disadvantaged areas of Gorj County – declared by GD no. 191, 192, 193 in 1999 (Source: NIS)

As one can notice, the largest area is Motru Rovinari, an important coal mining region in regression along with stock and demand decreasing on energetic market. The other two areas have also important energetic fields. In 2009, the facilities for investors in these areas stopped. Normally, one should ask if these official statutes accomplished their objectives, and if the administrative-territorial component units knew an economic growth and, implicitly, an increase in population life standard.

The research on the territorial disparities in Gorj confirms the official enactment of the three areas, but a thorough analysis reveal minor positive changes which allow another territorial cut of deeply disadvantaged and advantaged areas.

Identification and analysis of territorial disparities were made on four type basis: demographical one, economic level, the infrastructure and life standard, each category being considered to be equally involved in development.

The demographic status was analyzed on the basis of three indicators: population growth/non-growth rate (fig. 2), population share of over 60 years and birth rate coefficient as reference between the total population and resident population. This reference implies a special appeal to some locations for floating inhabitants drawn by economic activities.

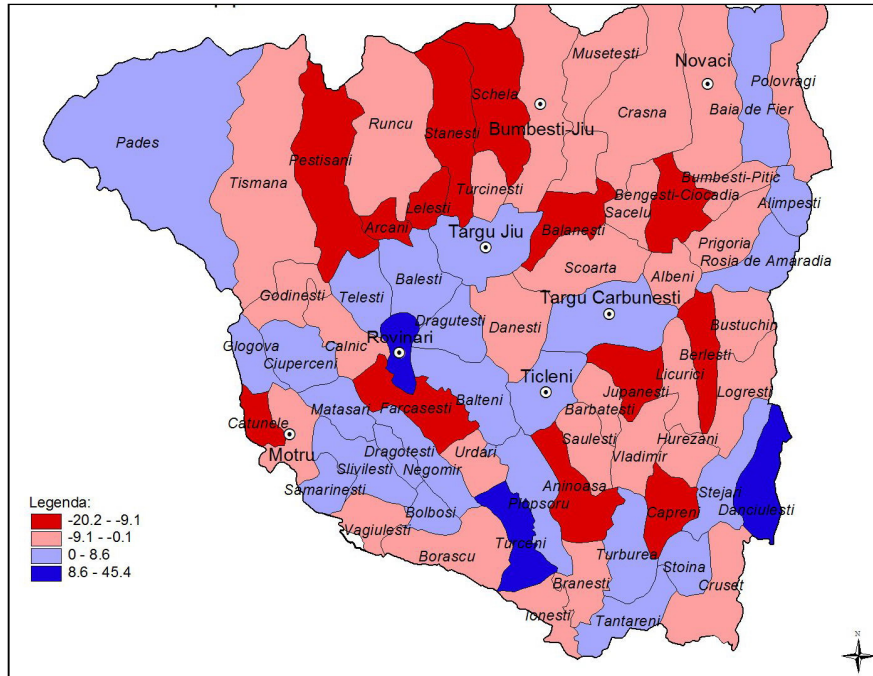


Fig. 2. Population increasing/decreasing rates (2005)

The economic status was analyzed on the basis of five indicators: the economic dependence rate, unemployment share within the occupied population, busy population share in the occupied population, physiological density and occupied population share in agriculture (*fig. 3*).

The infrastructure, a very important element in development, was analyzed on the basis of a system of indicators: habitable surface, road transport network updating (as reference between updated streets' length and total length of the roads), along with the length of municipal networks of water supply, sewage and natural gas.

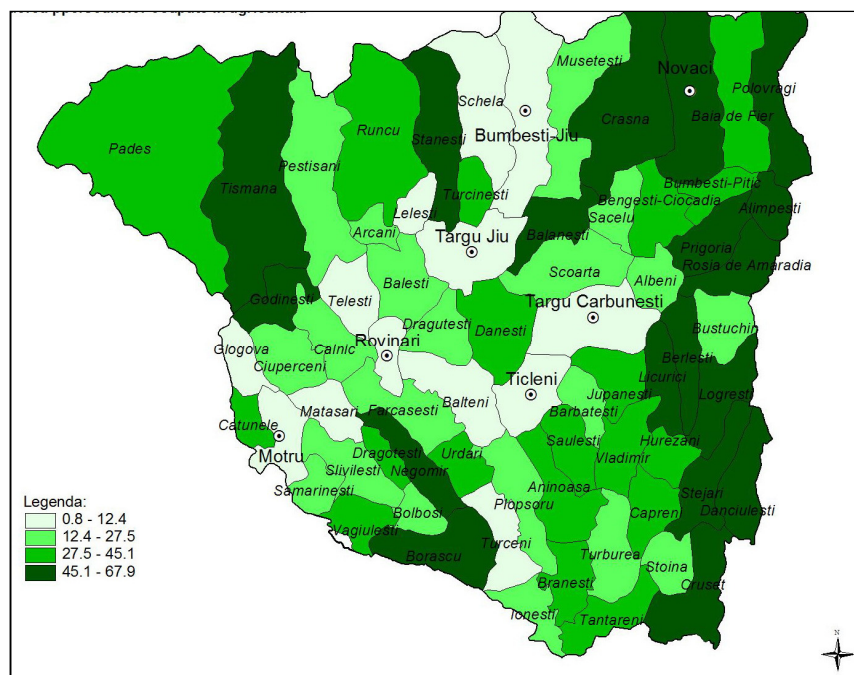


Fig. 3. The occupied population in agriculture – % (2005)

The standard of life was quantified by a set of indicators which implied, directly or indirectly, the quality of life: occupied population share in agriculture in total busy population share, habitable surface, own bath habitation population share, net transmigration. Occupied population share in agriculture in total busy population share reveals, in a contemporary social-economic background, geographical disadvantaged areas showing high values for this indicator. Net transmigration measures population flows, especially the occupied ones, induced, especially, by low life standard areas. Life standard measured by the population who attended high school was chosen due to the fact that an educated population is considered to have greater demands of living conditions on social-economic background of a settlement. Also, an educated population distinguishes itself through participation within development and decision process.

For each category, it was set out a synthesis on the base of a thorough analysis of each of the above mentioned indicators and of results of quantification: The four areas emphasized were labelled (*fig. 4*): deeply disadvantaged area I, deeply disadvantaged area II, disadvantaged area and favourite area, depending on the intensity of the processes and phenomena represented by the above mentioned indicators. In order to quantify them, it was issued a hierarchy of the administrative-territorial units (towns and villages) by an outline granted on a percentage deviation between 5 and 1 for each indicator separately.

The deeply disadvantaged areas from the demographic point of view counted 17 administrative units, 11 of them being concentrated in the northern part of the county. Among these ones, 5 units are facing a population decrease with 20% percentage and over 30% percentage for the population of over 60 years (Arcani, Căpreni, Lelești, Runcu și Săcelu). The other 12 administrative-territorial units (Novaci, Bălănești, Bărbătești, Bengești Ciocadia, Berlești, Brănești, Crușeț, Fărcășești, Godinești, Pestișani, Stănești and Turcinești) are characterized by a diminution in population number of 10-15% between 1991 and 2005 and of 25-30% of shares of over 60 years population within the total.

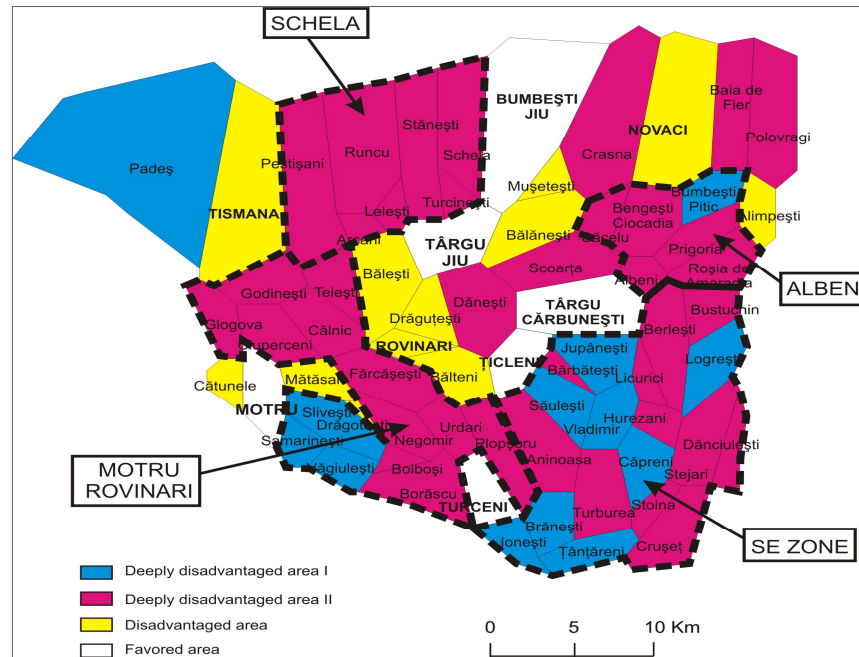


Fig. 4. Deeply disadvantaged areas of Gorj County

A synthesis concerning the economic status of Gorj County is based on the above mentioned indicators and emphasizes the existence of 23 administrative-territorial units which can be considered as deeply disadvantaged areas, involving a high unemployment rate, a low occupancy level and a high dependency level. Among the 23 territorial units, 8 are disadvantaged areas set out in 1999. A synthetic economic analysis revealed the structure of the 3 areas (Albeni, Schela and Motru Rovinari), to which a fourth area in the South of the county composed by: Ionești, Brănești, Țânțăreni, Stoina, Căpreni and Vladimir settlementd, could be added.

As regards the infrastructure status, there are the following deeply disadvantaged areas: Motru Rovinari – in the South-East of the county; Albeni around Târgu Cărbunești town, along with the South-West region of the county. The most important aspect emphasizing these areas is represented by the insufficient development of gas and water supply networks as well as by the inexistence of the local updated road transport network infrastructure.

The correlation analysis of the above mentioned indicators induced deeply disadvantaged areas from standard life point of view. The largest areas are in the South-East part of the county, Motru Rovinari region and the North-West part of the county (the mountains area).

Fig. 2 reveals the importance of the 4 categories of indicators used in this research, especially of the last ones (economic status, infrastructure and life standard), due to the fact that, as concerns human resources condition, these are better and do not represent a refinement element of deeply disadvantaged areas for some administrative-territorial units.

Within the county two categories of deeply disadvantaged areas can be noticed, marked in figures 2 with I and II. The differences consisting, especially, in the low outfit of the infrastructure and the economic background.

The use of the above mentioned indicators facilitated the identification of four deeply disadvantaged areas namely: the area in the South-East of the county, Motru Rovinari, Albeni and Schela areas. Padeș commune can also be added.

The extension of these areas is considered to be an “alarm” for local and district public authorities with the view to elaborate a developing and updating strategy.

STRUCTURA FUNȚIONALĂ A ARIILOR PROFUND DEZAVANTAJATE DIN JUDEȚUL GORJ

Rezumat

Evoluția de ansamblu a vieții economice și sociale actuale, dar și politica de industrializare promovată înainte de 1990 au condus la crearea unor dezechilibre privind dezvoltarea în profil teritorial. Atenuarea acestor dezechilibre trebuie să constituie o preocupare a administrației centrale, dar și a celei județene și locale, pe fondul general al politicii naționale de dezvoltare regională.

Identificarea și analiza disparităților teritoriale s-a realizat pe baza a patru clase: starea demografică, starea economiei, infrastructura și standardul de viață, fiecare categorie considerată ca influențând în mod egal dezvoltarea.

Structurarea funcțională a ariilor profund dezavantajate este rezultatul modificărilor politice și economice petrecute după anul 1990, când județul Gorj a marcat o serie de schimbări în baza sa economică, care s-au repercutat asupra structurii teritoriale și funcționale a așezărilor și implicit în dinamica, structura și calitatea vieții

Cuvinte cheie: arii dezavantajate, dinamică teritorială, dezvoltare.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- ALONSO, W. (1964), *Location and Land Use. Toward a General Theory of Land Rent*, Cambridge.
- AMIN, A. (1989), *Flexible Specialization and Small Firms in Italy. Mythes and Realities*, Antipode, 21, p. 13-34.
- ASHEIM, B., ISAKSEN, A. (1996), "Location, Agglomeration and Innovation: Towards Regional Innovation Systems in Norway?", *Scientific Communication within the Symposium of the Committee of the Industrial Area U.I.G.*, Hagen.
- BAILLY, A. S., GUESNER, B., PAELINCK, J. H. P., SALLEZ, A. (1988), *Comprendre et maîtriser l'espace ou la science régionale et l'aménagement du territoire*, G.I.P. RECLUS, Montpellier, p. 48-49.
- BENKO, G., DUNFORD, M. (1991), "Structural Change and the Spatial Organization of the Productive System: an Introduction", in G. Benko, M. Dunford (eds.), *Industrial Change and Regional Development: the Transformation of New Industrial Spaces*, London, p. 3-23.
- BERQUE, A. (1989), « Espace, milieu, paysage, environnement », în Bailly A., Ferras, R. și Pumain (ed.), *Encyclopedie de geographie*, Economica, Paris, p. 353.
- BERRY, B. J. L. (1967), *Geography of Market Centers and Retail Distribution*, Englewood Cliffs, NJ, Prentice Hall, p. 138.
- BERRY, B. J. L. (1961), "City Size Distribution and Economic Development", *Economic Development and Cultural Change*, 9, p. 573-587.
- BOUDEVILLE, J. R. (1969), *L'Espace et les poles de croissance*, P.U.F., Paris.
- BOUSTEDT, O. et al. (1975), *Grundriss der empirischen Regionalforschung*, I-IV, Hannover.
- IANOȘ, I., HELLER, W. (2006), *Geographical Areas, Economy and Settlements System*, Editura Tehnică, București.
- IANOȘ, I. (2005), „Global Localization and Local Globalization on a Sustainable Development Background”, *Scientific Communication within the Yearly Session of Geographic Department of University from Valahia*.
- IANOȘ, I., HUMEAU, J. B. (2000), *The Theory of Systems Settlements. Introductory Study*, Ed. Tehnică, București.
- ISARD, W. (1956), *Location and Space-Economy. A General Theory Relating to Industrial Location, Market Areas, Land Use, Trade and Urban Structure*, New York, London.
- KEEBLE, D., 1991, *Core – Peripheral Disparities and Regional Restructuring in the European Communities in the 1990ies*, Dussiburger Geographische Arbeiten, 50.
- KINDLEBERGER, C. P. (1965), *Economic Development*, New York.