THE ROLE OF THE ROMANIAN UNIVERSITY IN LOCAL AND REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Ioan IANOȘ
CICADIT, University of Bucharest

Abstract. At the beginning of the current century, characteristics of the urban and regional development models are resulted from the radical change of the territorial policies and planning. Fundamental restructuring of the regions and human settlements requires many territorial actors to be involved. Among these actors the universities could play an important role due to its research and education potential. In parallel with the process of restructuring of the higher education in Romania, universities should get increasingly involved at the local and regional level. Involvement potential of a Romanian university in solving local and regional problems, in ensuring the conditions for accelerated development at these levels is extremely varied, taking account of its direct and indirect relationships. Direct involvement is observed due to its research capacity for a correct individualization of the needs, and for a better solution to cover. Indirect involvement of the university implies training of the specialists; local or regional community can have great benefits, using their skills. In the training process, the important role is played by the structure of study programs and curriculum attached. Regarding direct participation of the universities in the local development of the cities, which they are situated in, we should point out projects financed by local city administration for the elaboration of the cadastral evidence programs or regional and metropolitan development programs. According to the abovementioned, there is no real perception of the highly increased capability, hold by universities, to promote local and regional development; as a result, long-lasting partnerships between universities and main actors of the socio-economic, cultural, and politico-administrative life at these levels are absent. Such permanent partnerships could support universities in constant adaptation of the programs of initial and life-long formation to the specific needs, on the one hand, and could convince local and regional communities to resort, in a usual way, to the expertise, consultancy, and surveys provided by the universities, on the other.

Rezumat. Rolul universităților românești în dezvoltarea locală și regională. La începutul acestui secol caracteristicile modelelor de dezvoltare urbană și regională au rezultat în urma schimbărilor radicale în politicile și planificarea teritorială. Restructurarea fundamentală a regiunilor și așezărilor umane implică numeroși actori locali. În cadrul acestora universitățile pot juca un rol important datorită potențialului de cercetare și educație. În paralel cu procesul de restructurare a învățământului superior din România, universitățile trebuie să devină tot mai implicate la nivel regional și local. Potențialul de implicare al unei universități românești este în rezolvarea problemelor locale și regionale, în asigurarea condițiilor pentru dezvoltare rapidă. Implicarea directă se observă datorită capacității de cercetare a unei particularizări a nevoilor pentru o soluție mai buna. Implicarea indirectă a universității implică instruirea de specialiști, de care beneficiază și comunitățile locale. În procesul de instruire un rol important îl joacă studiul programei.
The Role of the Romanian University in Local and Regional Development

INTRODUCTION

For a long time, the university limited itself to just passing knowledge, participating less in creating it. At least in Romania, the main function of the university was didactical, scientific research and producing coherent knowledge systems beeing a secondary objective or not existing at all. This is one of the reasons why there is a gap between Romania and other european countries when it comes to top research and innovation.

It has been demonstrated in the last years that the main instrument for achieving excellence in economic, social and cultural development seems to be the university. The transition from a spectator of the development processes to an actor of territorial development is not a simple one, but presumes changing mentalities in the two environments: university and social and economic environment in the insertion space of that particular university. Changing mentalities in the university environment is somewhat difficult, especially in the case of redundant structures and behaviours. The difficulty also resides in the fact that Romanian universities have a greater autonomy compared to the restucturation degree, in the direction of responsibilisation. If the fundamental restucturation in the field of mission and management had been done previously, then the present autonomy would have been rightly given. But now, blockings regarding dynamics and adaptation forces hit the wall of "the principle of university autonomy".

The orientation of universities towards local and regional environments, assumes a correct evaluation of their potential, on one hand, and the confidence that this environment must have in the innovation and creation capacity of the universities. This trust can be obtained from past and future cooperation experiences, which to represent the argument for an efficent attachment of all the actors inside any area.

1. PRODUCING KNOWLEDGE – THE UNIVERSITY'S BOND WITH THE TERRITORY

Producing knowledge represents the source of the comparative advantage between regions or groups of settlements. The regions and settlements that have universities have to be considered as having development premises which are directly proportional with the size and complexity of these universities.

When the mission of universities in the process of development is reconsidered, going mainly on producing knowledge for the benefit of communities at different scales, the
universities with conservative and rigid structures have to transform themselves in flexible structures, with a high capacity to adapt to the dynamics of the economical and social life. One of the most interesting implications of universities is that which regards local and regional development.

A first matter is the rethinking of the concepts of local and regional development, including the way of maximizing efficiency of the policies in this field. This has to be followed by the correct identification of the development targets, including the instruments for implementing strategies and policies in this field and their assimilation by the local and regional communities. The universities’ place in this process is given by their capacity to make correct diagnosis of the reality and to offer support in creating the strategies for territorial development. It is obvious that this implication calls for a correct evaluation of the university’s own forces, to respond to the trust that the local or regional community invested in it.

To accomplish this mission, the university needs resources. A part of them comes from the national budget, through institutional contracts, another part comes from taxes and a third part comes from projects that the university works on for different partners from the economic and social environment. Education investments call for many resources, including time, money, ideas, discussions and debates, evaluation and actions (Braun, 2007). These investments are continuous, because of the specifics of the university products: the specialist and knowledge. The specialist has to become more flexible and to possess knowledge and abilities that can make him compatible with the place and region in which he lives. The second output is represented by the knowledge, skills and behaviours that the graduate obtains from studying in the university. The product of universities has the characteristic of creating the ideas and knowledge. It it is not limited to only accumulating information, but also has the capacity of producing it, for a better insertion in the work market and also for achieving individual goals that are tied to personal or collective needs.

The effects of a perfect adaptation of the university to the local and regional needs does not imply a limitation of the distribution area of the products, on the contrary. Thus, a good part of the specialists formed will contribute to the prosperity of other spaces at variable distances, through the so called brain-drain process, and a part of the knowledge and inventions will be emitted to great distances through publications, licenses or patents. For this, and the flexibility of the formed individuals and their different behaviour, the investment in education has many uncertainties. These are manifested through the incapacity to exactly measure the quality of the product and through the impossibility of predicting its location.

As a consequence of the connections game at a global level between the world’s regions, it is observed that there are more losers than winners. In other words, from the international regional trades, the number of winners diminishing and the number of those who lose is growing.

In this situation, it seems that the university is the most dynamic and efficient actor, capable of transforming the losers into winners. The influence of the university is manifested both spatial and structural, in the way that it promotes those domains that can constitute important edges in the way of accelerated development of places or regions. For this, the university has to offer a high quality service for the area in which it activates, this service being the production of knowledge. As G. Braun (2007) remarks, the old post-fordist slogan
"Education, education, education" is replaced in the new stage by another: "Knowledge, knowledge, knowledge".

Unlike other products, education and knowledge are more difficult to identify as clear inputs, limited in time and space, in territorial development, because they have different forms of propagation and localization. The transformation of the university into centers of knowledge production, will determine its reorientation of its activity towards local and regional. This means that the forming of specialists can be seen as a consequence of their education through research.

2. TODAY’S CHALLENGES FOR UNIVERSITIES

The university is today in the position of fulfilling a big part of mankind's hopes. By producing knowledge, it finds, or should find solutions to the problems that arise in the process of territorial development. Societies become more fragile, the basis of their evolution being an increasing quantity of knowledge.

The changes in the field of knowledge, it's spectacular progress, sit at the base of accelerating the labour productivity and permanent restructuration. Many researchers, because of these permanent changes, consider that the world is in a continuous transition.

Knowledge is at the base of numerous changes in the structure of economical activities. If we were to observe the changes in the last century, we would see that the dominance has moved from the primary to the secondary sector and today the tertiary activities are dominant. Due to the knowledge production, the tertiary itself is going through a diversification and change of its internal structure. Thus, an increasing percentage is represented by totally new activities, such as: services for companies, marketing, administrating human resources, publicity, research etc.

The formidable evolution of the communication and information technology requires a highly qualified workforce, capable of not only using these technologies, but also to contribute to their continuous perfecting. The general informatization requires that all the specialists and the general population as well to have minimal knowledge in order to be connected to the dynamics of scientific and general life.

The great structures where the important centers for producing information at a world scale are concentrated, have a certain stability. The same stability is to be found in the general configuration of the settlement system at different scales. Despite this almost general stability, changes have a great speed in a society based on knowledge and the new strategies for territorial development which take into consideration these characteristics contribute to the hierarchical differentiation of the settlements.

These permanent changes are the reason for which work places are highly uncertain the future evolution of the qualifications is hard to predict. That is why the universities, through their study programs, have to take into account the uncertainties of the workforce market and offer increased possibilities for requalification. The existing programs today, for lifetime learning are based in the necessity for continuous requalification. It is already thought that in the society based on knowledge, a citizen, during his lifetime, has to know 4-6 "jobs". This means an average job duration of under 10 years.
3. THE IMPACT BETWEEN TWO SETS OF KNOWLEDGE

In an increased globalized world, the universities try to differentiate themselves by a precise space that is under their influence. This delimitation can be process of real territorial selection of the services offered by the universities, based on their qualification, but can also be a decision taken by the national administration. For example, a classification of the universities in national, regional and local universities, made by decisions taken at central level, is an artificial one, which will lead to the favorization of some and defavorization of others. There are universities with tradition, with renowned national prestige, but which have valorized this prestige without contributing significantly to it's consolidation. In opposition, there are smaller universities, which are now building their own prestige and which are very good in one field or another and which would be in disadvantage through decisions made at central level.

That is why the quality evaluation systems and the population as well, through the direct perception of the learning results, have to decide the place of each university inside the institution system.

This evolution in the field of knowledge and it's placement at the base of society development is a direct answer of the communities to the globalisation process. In this process based on cooperation, but mostly on competition, keeping the local and regional identity, in the way of the real value at these levels, is a necessity. If today's world is so efficient at what it does, this is mainly due to the diverse values it possesses. In this differentiation, space had a very important role, despite the capacity to immitate that human groups had throughout history. This immitation came along with more complex processes of adaptation and creation. In other words, immitation tried to make the world uniform and adaptation and creation tried to diversify it.

An present analysis of the development processes shows a category of global universities, which supply knowledge for increasing the influence of the multinational corporations. These universities are sustained by these corporations, in order to consolidate their position in economy, scientific research, high technology.

A second set of knowledge sustain the cities and regions, through the type of knowledge delivered by some universities, called regional or national, with a fundamental role in keeping their own identities. In this case, these universities come to support these entities, increasing their conservation force and putting to good use their strong points in the processes of global interaction.

Between these two sets of knowledge there can appear other types of knowledge, which can facilitate either their compatibility or grow the gap between them. The latter aspect can lead to some conflicts that can affect the economical, social, and cultural life of the society, in general.

4. THE UNIVERSITY – POTENTIAL FOR IMPLICATION IN RESOLVING TERRITORIAL ISSUES

As it has been shown, the university is not a closed fortress, with it's own renewable resources, which is creating knowledge solely for the individual or group satisfaction of the intelectuals. It is an institution resulted from the development of human
The Role of the Romanian University in Local and Regional Development

society and which has to have precise missions in forming specialists. The knowledge, practical abilities and creative capacity of these specialists have to respond to individual and collective needs of the citizens from a certain territorial system. (Ianoș, 2000).

From this point of view, the university has to, on one hand, to harmonize it's curriculum to the necessities of the society and the dynamics of the workforce market and on the other hand, to participate in the identification of the problems confronted by these in the process of administrating space and to contribute to their resolve.

In the conditions of transition from a planned economy, outdated in terms of equipment and organisation, to a concurrential, market economy, the universities can have a special role, if they will couple themselves syncronously or in advance, to the dynamics of this society. Classic universities, by definition, are very conservative and are reluctant to change and because of this, coupling with the realities will help them to react and anticipate the perspective needs of the society. It is known how hard the curriculum is modified, because it is tightly bond to the teaching staff, which do not adopt change very easily, without it being tested for a long period. And the speed at which the present changes are taking place, leave no time to waste.

In our opinion, the universities would have a great deal to win if they were more coupled to the territorial reality, market dynamics, including workforce and changes that occur in the society. From this point of view, two situations occur: one of implication in the immediate environment and one of implication in the regional environment, from which also the big city in which the university is located, draws it's resources. In other words, the permanent contact with the decision factors and urban actors is good for both the communities and the universities.

5. UNIVERSITY INVOLVEMENT IN URBAN RESTRUCTURING

Theoretically, we can say that in the field of urban restructuring, universities, with their scientifical and creative potential, can contribute in three major domains: forming, expertise and consulting (fig. 1). As for forming, we focus not only on initial formation, but also, and mainly on continuous formation, assuring the possibility of reconversion or postgraduate specialising in the field of urban practices and urbanism. In this case the university with the respective specialisation is involved, but also other faculties or departments from other technical or mixed universities, which have specialisations in urbanism or similar fields (geography, for example).

The expertise is demonstrated through the participation in elaborating general or zonal urbanistic plans, direct involvement in elaborating projects that aim certain aspects that can improve the functioning of a city.

The consultance given by universities to municipalities can be centered on evaluating crisis situations or on some major punctual problems, appeared in the process of urban restructuring. At he same time, this consultance can target elements of efficient monitoring the process of urban restructuring, university specialists contributing through technical committees to a better administration of urban development, in general.

University typology based on the degree of involvement in the urban restructuring processes. A synthetic analysis on the volume of information inside projects connected to local urban development, existing in univeristies, show that they participate differently in resolving local problems. It is obvious that there are many perspectives for
creating a relationship of cooperation between municipalities and universities, the latter having a potential that is still not turned to good account, only accidentally and/or only in certain territorial sequences.
Looking at the degree and way of implication of universities in the process of urban restructuring, we can distinguish the following categories of universities: (fig. 2):

a) **Universities that are permanently involved in the process of urban restructuring**, having one or more projects, which coexisted for more than three years. This makes us believe that these universities, through specialists, are involved directly or indirectly in the change processes inside urban environments. Evidently, in this process, the "Ion Mincu" Architecture and Urbanism University in Bucharest is a leader, by elaborating many zonal urbanistic plans, and through some members of the faculty, especially urbanism, detailed urbanistic plans. This university has participated in elaborating the general urbanistic plan of Bucharest, as well as participating in many sectorial studies solicited by the municipality or institutions abilitated by it. Some members of the faculty are members of the urbanism committees of Bucharest, trying to limit the risks of a chaotic development of this metropolis.

In the same category are the other technical universities which have the urbanism specialisation in their structure, and who's faculty members participate in creating urbanistic plans and are members of technical committees in their cities. There are also other universities which have in their structure this specialisation and are involved in urban development.

b) **Universities that are frequently involved in resolving major problems of urban restructuring**, which, with small interruptions, have consistent collaborations with municipalities for resolving problems with: the structure of functional areas, traffic, social and town issues, landscaping. In this category, there are 12 universities, with a wide range of profiles, but some of them are specialised. In this case, the most important are the complex universities in three big university centers: Bucharest, Cluj-Napoca, Iaşi. Following closely is the West University of Timişoara. All these are found by themselves or in cooperation with technical universities in various projects based on structuring certain neighbourhoods, industrial spaces, resolving environmental problems or optimizing transports. From the specialized universities in this category, we can mention only the Economic Studies University in Bucharest, which has a series of projects for economical restructuring and workforce reconversion.

c) **Universities involed episodically in urban restructuring**. Here there are both state and private universities. The elements aimed at are from demographical, economic and technical and municipal domains. Most of these universities are specialized in the technical fields, like engineering and are found especially in the elaborating of strictly specialized documentations (thermal installations, water and natural gas supply, sewerage). The "Spiru Haret" University has an architecture specialization that participated in the creating of zonal urbanistic plan projects.

d) **Universities not involved in urban restructuring**. The rest of the stata and private universities fall into this category. Most of them are specialized in music, visual arts, cinema, or sports. It is obvious that these universities have a reduced potential for theoretical implication in major urban problems. In the same category are the medical and pharmacy universities, as well as veterinary and agricultural science universities, which do not have a direct way of intervention at the urban space level. Individually, there are preoccupations which could facilitate such participations in resolving some problems, especially in the field of landscaping for the agricultural science and veterinary medicine universities.
Fig. 2 Implication degree of the universities in the local development process
Gradul de implicare a universităților în procesul dezvoltării locale
Most universities in this category are private, which are permitted to function temporarily, with a decreased implication potential, mainly because of their focus on economic and juridical studies and less on technical fields and natural and exact sciences. Still, the potential of some of them can be put to good use by local communities, especially in the economical field, for a better administration of the local resources.

6. UNIVERSITY IMPLICATION IN REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Regional development is the second big target of a country's development, implicating the reducing differences between the center and periphery and those that appeared in the process of different evolution of society in territorial terms. Universities have unlimited possibilities in this field, that is why systematic implication, including by creating a university – region partnership, can contribute to transforming a region or parts of that region into success areas.

The process of forming specialists involved directly or indirectly in the process of regional development is a complex one, aiming not only initial forming, through masters and doctorate, but also permanent forming, during the entire life. This is where very diverse specializations can be found: urbanism, architecture, geography, sociology, economy, constructions etc. Of all these, directly involved are only some: urbanism, territorial planning, regional and urban development.

As expertise fields, we can notice the involvement of university specialists in creating the regional development strategy for each of the regions where universities are located and creating the regional plan. These refer to both the Zonal Arrangement Plan for the Regional Territory and those that refer to trans border territory, inter communal and inter city territory.

The consultancy in the field of regional development is extremely diverse, starting with the assistance that universities can give to small and medium companies and other regional actors, starting with creating the projects and finishing with evaluating the territorial impact of these projects after implementation. At the same time, the consultancy also aims the elaboration of intraregional policies, sectorial projects and even the elaboration of the regional development plan by the regional councils.

The typology of universities based on the degree of implication in the regional development processes. The study on the volume of information in the projects aimed at elements of regional development shows a more accidental implication than a systematic one of the universities in this field. The involvement of universities is found especially at the level of initial forming and masters/doctorate and less at the level of research in favor of regional development. But in this field there is a formidable potential, which can be materialized by a correlation between individual research preoccupations and direct objectives of regional development. If we look at the number of doctorate theses in the field of natural science, economy and social sciences, we can observe an impressive number of works that could be put to good use in favor of the regional communities.

Judging by the degree of implication of these universities and having into account the number and quality of projects with territorial impact, we can distinguish, just like in the precedent case, four classes of universities (fig. 3).
Fig. 3 Implication degree of the universities in the regional development process

Gradul de implicare a universităților în procesul dezvoltării regionale
The Role of the Romanian University in Local and Regional Development

a) Universities implicated permanently in the processes of regional development. In this category there is one university, specialized in territory arrangement: The "Ion Mincu" Architecture and Urbanism University in Bucharest. This university has the most projects on spatial and regional development, is participating at elaborating and updating the plans for arranging county, trans border and other types of territories. Furthermore, through it's faculty from the field of territory arrangement, the university offers specialists that are part of the decision structures at national level.

b) Universities implicated frequently in the regional development processes. In this class, there are 20 state universities, grouped into 3 main categories: mixed universities, technical universities and agricultural science and veterinary medicine. The mixed universities most implicated in regional development are the ones in Bucharest, Cluj-Napoca (Babeş-Bolyai University) and Iaşi (Al. Ioan Cuza University). These have a few specializations that detach them from others (territorial planification, geography, environmental sciences, regional development etc), but also specialists and research contracts centered on elements of regional development.

The second category is formed by the technical universities, specialized, which have in their structure specializations of urbanism, architecture or others with direct connection to regional development. They are located in the university centers of Bucharest, Iaşi, Cluj-Napoca, Timișoara.

The third category is comprised of universities with agricultural profile, strongly anchored in the process of rural development and with specializations in this field. As well, an important part of regional development is held by the forest fund, which must be administrated so that there is a balance between exploitation and planting. The role of forest space in regional and sustainable development is well defined and through specializations of sylviculture, some universities, like the one in Braşov or Suceava are directly involved not only in forming specialists, but also in the integration of forests, as a resource, in regional development.

c) Universities implicated episodically in resolving problems of regional development. Grouping 18 state and private universities, this class includes small universities, but universities which through specializations in economics or social and human sciences, have implicated themselves accidentally in projects of regional development. Practically, in the last 3 years there has been a small number of research contracts, despite the fact that in some cases there is a high scientific potential (Petroşani University, "Eftimie Murgu" University in Reşiţa). As a difference from the private universities implicated in urban restructuring, universities involved in regional development include other names such as: The Christian University "Dimitrie Cantemir", The Romanian – American University and "Spiru Haret" University, all from Bucharest, as well as "Vasile Goldiş" West University in Arad.

d) Universities not involved in the process of regional development. This clas includes the rest of the state and private universities. State universities are represented by those specialized in music, plastic arts, theatre, sports, but also medicine. Through their characteristics and the competence of their faculty, these cannot be implicated directly, only very rare and mostly theoretically in the process of regional development.
7. THE OPTIMUM INSERTION OF UNIVERSITIES IN REGIONAL AND LOCAL DEVELOPMENT

For an optimum insertion of universities in the territory, which means an active participation in its development, all the assets of such an institution must be put to good use and through these, the universities can become the best allies of the territorial development forces, participating through their expertise and consultancy to all the steps of implementing the urban and regional development projects.

The implication of universities in regional and local development will give substance to an idea recently launched, that of respect for the space. This has an ethical value, but also a practical one, because it implies more reflection before acting; there has to be a correct assessment of not only the beneficial effects, but also of the consequences, especially those on long and very long term. When there is action in the spirit of respect towards the space, the initial solutions are modified through credible feedback. Of all the actors of a space, the universities are among the only ones that can contribute to growing awareness towards respect for the space.

The best step to assuring a good territorial insertion is promoting an efficient partnership, putting to good use the expertise and scientific assistance of the universities in the area of developing an optimal cooperation between big groups of actors inside a space. This partnership with the local and regional public administrations is centered on territorial development objectives and programmes. To eliminate the eventual distortions created by subjective approaches, the partnership is based on sets of principles, which have to be well defined and followed. In this context, the scientific and moral prestige of the teaching staff and researchers, can certify the correct defining of the action principles and especially their following. The universities, because they enjoy such an image, can put their entire potential to good use in the interest of the local and regional communities.

In a partnership process, the university provides a correct basis of analysis through the level of expertise that it has to offer, so that the identification, inventorying, hierarchying and prioritizing the problems and needs can be based on scientific arguments, can be realistic and relevant for decisions on future development.

In the case of limited financial resources and a high quality human potential, but with a behaviour that bears the print of a centralized leadership, in order to achieve local and regional development, the main priority is defining and sustaining the efforts of all the actors, for growing the awareness of the population towards the importance of synergic and coherent actions to support territorial development. In this context, the university can improve and adopt forming and specialising programmes capable of contributing to a complex implication the process of diagnosis and construction of the psychological component for sustaining the development projects.

For an optimum insertion in the territorial development processes, a new legal frame must sometimes be created at sub-national levels. Through the expertise of its specialists, the universities can establish rigorous criterions for creating a legal implementation frame, which to respect the country's laws and the directives of the European Union. The most frequent types are those generated by the implementation of development projects and programmes. To this end, the universities, through cooperation with other institutions, can contribute to updating or creating the general urban plans and other different types of plans for territorial arrangement.
Another essential aspect in territorial development, is that of allocating resources for attracting marginalized classes in these processes. Scientific studies carried out by universities can help the process of allocating resources towards the defavoured groups, with great chances of social inclusion. Universities are those that, through participative programmes, can determine the population to be more aware regarding the viability or the danger of implementing territorial development programmes.

CONCLUSIONS

The analysis of the role of the universities in local and regional development implies the interpretation of an immense volume of information and statistical data, representing all the aspects of the connections between the universities and localities or regions of insertion. The difficulties in the unitary interpretation are linked to the evidences in different databases, to the specifics and responsibilities at the level of these entities for the correct knowing of the social, economic and cultural environment, the interest for an efficient implication in the interest of the local or regional communities, and the university.

Case studies will be the ones that, through detailed analysis, can form a critical mass in order to assure sufficient elements for a specific policy in the field. Our conclusion is that universities hold an immense knowledge potential, which is not put to good use in the interest of the local and regional communities and that theoretical approaches need practical validation and fundamentals from the real world. In other words, the relation between the universities and their insertion environment is a mutual one, with compatible in and out flows, with great chances to lead to a better territorial correlation of the general welfare resources.

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