THE FUNCTION OF POLYCENTRIC DEVELOPMENT IN THE REFINEMENT OF WEAKLY POLARIZED AREAS

Cristian BRAGHINĂ, Daniel PEPTENATU, Cristian DRĂGHICI
University of Bucharest – The Interdisciplinary Center of Advanced Research on Territorial Dynamics

Abstract. The spatial approach of developing process emphasizes the determinants relating to the basic difference within the scope of areal structure and economic activities repartition. The attenuation of territorial disparities is one of the most important stings of our contemporary society, especially for scientific circle which is preoccupied with some theoretical patterns implementation which should provide a comprehensive idea on the territorial disparities. On the multi-criterion analysis, areas at a deep disadvantage were spotted; within these areas some implicit growth factors have been emphasized in order to represent development motives. It has been noticed a shortcoming of first importance at the level of renovations and good practice which are primary in development.

Rezumat. Funcția de dezvoltare policentrică în optimizarea ariilor slab polarizate. Abordarea spațială a procesului de dezvoltare scoate în evidență factorii care determină diferențe fundamentale în structura sectorială și distribuția activităților economice. Atenuarea disparităților teritoriale este una dintre cele mai importante provocări ale societății contemporane, în mod special pentru lumea științifică preocupată în prezent de realizarea unor modele teoretice care să ofere o imagine cuprinzătoare asupra disfuncționalităților teritoriale. Pe baza analizei multicriteriale au fost identificate ariile profund dezavantajate în cadrul cărora au fost conturați potențialii poli de creștere care să se constituie în locomotive ale dezvoltării. La nivelul ariilor profund dezavantajate s-a observat un deficit major de inovații și bune practici pe care le considerăm indispensabile dezvoltării.

Key words: polycentric development, weakly polarized area, disparities

The geographical dimensions of developing process are contingent upon a determinant system which causes some important differences in factors of production endowment at quality and quantity levels, in areal structures and in economic activities repartition, as well as the social level. The differences lead to a permanent competition between settlements, meaning a difference in growth or development factors and some areas made of more competitors which form the polarized area. Some important unbalances of this growth factors pattern can be noticed, because of diffusion contents diminution of many nuclei “developing”, an aspect which led to successive unbalances at the subordinated areas level, in many cases critical ones.

The regional development policy is one of the most important stings of European Union, the main objectives being the legal and institutional background settlement, which should be, on a good functioning, favourable to the economic and social disparities diminution. The great importance of regional development is emphasized by appropriations
The Function of Polycentric Development in the Refinement of Weakly Polarized Area

of budget (about 1/3) of the total budget allocated on solidarity principle (the common assets allocation for the economic regions on the wane).

The attenuation of territorial disparities is one of the most important stings of our contemporary society, especially for scientific circle which is preoccupied with some theoretical patterns implementation which should intercede with the determinants.

The areas at a deep disadvantage analysis are a great opportunity for every specialist in territories, these areas being far from the economic growth trend which can be noticed in the vicinity of these ones, as well as its refinement (I. Ianoș, W. Heller, “Territory, economy and settlements systems”, 2006, page 334).

This analysis proposes studying an attenuation pattern for deep territorial disparities, based on a system of growth factors and developing factors which should make certain the innovation and good practice diffusion up to the last hierarchical level.

1. THE POLYCENTRIC DEVELOPMENT – GENERALIZATION

It has been noticed and experienced that there are some meaningful discrepancies on economic growth in all Romanian regions and the average of European Union, but also at developing regions level, within there are several towns as regional growth factors. These discrepancies on the local, regional, national and international levels were explained by a series of theories, among which, the most well-known are “the poles theories” and “growth focus”.

The growth factors theory – general. These theories are based on the idea that developing and economic growth occur in an imbalanced way, thus trying to show how this growth is distributed geographically. Consequently, these theories are also well-known as imbalance theories, meaning a reaction for the approaches faced on balance theory (neoclassical, that of Keynes, post Keynesian, exports base theory, economic levels theory, von Thünen and Christaller theories). The final objective is a balanced geographical development of economic activities.

The researchers, who elevate imbalance theories, consider that the real development is based on some internal discrepancies (some focus and areas sustaining) later contributory to long-expected economic growth. They think that these imbalances will lead to an areal or regional polarization.

Therefore, there are two types of approach concerning the polarization line.

• The first one is “the areal polarization” initiated by the Frenchman Perroux in the 50s – 60s (poles de croissance) and who enunciated a theory with his name on it. According to this theory the economic growth is distributed through some centres (growth poles or motive units), being an unbalanced and not a simultaneous process.

• “Regional polarization” is represented by Gunnar Myrdal (1957), who developed the areal growth factors pattern of Perroux. He established that interregional wants of lack may be explained by a circular cumulative process. In consequence of this argument, every economic change (on a market economy background) at a structure level causes a gradual reaction in the same direction, a change emphasis. Afterward, Hirschmann A.D. (1985) enunciates two concepts, namely the positive effects of drainage and the negative effects of polarization, concepts which are related in content with diffusion effects and centripetal effects expressed by Myrdal.
Following the researches of the three experts in time, several theoretical studies concerning polarization were developed. Thuss, Boudeville in 1966 (growth focus theory) finds two types of factors, namely growth factors and developing factors. In his opinion, developing factors are superior to growth factors, being represented by the habitations of the highest level and being situated in the centre of a polarized region, where they influence positively low level habitations (growth factors). Lasuen is the one who developed a theory concerning an areal dynamic system of growth factors based on Boudeville’s concept. His theory was based on a few ideas: growth factor is a regional and areal cluster of enterprises which evolve the export; growth factors development is related to the national demand; the geographical development is influenced by locations factors of that settlement.

2. THE REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT IN THE EUROPEAN BACKGROUND

The legal framework of regional development policy is based on the “Section XVII” of European Union Treaty (1993) (respectively, “XIV” of “Treaty of Rome”), within is specified the major objective of the European Union, meaning territorial disparities diminution, especially in deep rural areas. In consequence of this treaty, “Cohesion Fund” is created for supporting the projects on environment protection and transport system within deep affected states in this field (Spain, Portugal, Greece and Ireland). As a consequence to the summit from Berlin in 1999, important decisions are taken concerning development PHARE Programme in two new directions, namely ISPA – Instrument for Structural Policies for Pre-Accession and SAPARD – Special Accession Programme for Agriculture and Rural Development, with a view to supporting the states not yet integrated in the European Union. Structural funds are the main support for regional policies, being built on programmes and project depending on the main objectives.

The funds configuration is based on the following principles:

- a) programming principle;
- b) partnership principle;
- c) additional principle;
- d) monitoring, controlling and evaluation principle.

Programming principle involves the achievement of multiyear developing plans in national and regional priorities establishment as Functional Programmes or Unique Programming Documents.

Partnership principle involves a functional relationship between European institution and national, regional and local ones, a relationship based on administrative decentralization principle.

Additional principle resides in completing the amounts afforded at the common level with national contributions.

Monitoring, controlling and evaluation principle resides in member-states involvement at the administrative level by “Monitoring Committees” formation and providing an appropriate functioning of the institutions which administrate the structural funds. The principles implementation on regional development trend is supervised by the National Counsel for Regional Development with the following prerogatives:

1 Based on GD no. 772 in 14 July 2005 and published in the OM nr. 671 in 27 July 2005.
The Function of Polycentric Development in the Refinement of Weakly Polarized Area

a) Decides the policy and national strategy for regional development, as well as Development National Plan which involves the priorities and multiyear financial measures of national objectives of the economic and social cohesion;

b) Approves with criteria and priorities concerning the National Budget use for regional development and informs the Government, for implementation, of basic programmes financed by the National Budget for regional development;

c) Analyses the use of funds allocation for regional development of National Fund for regional development on the base of monitoring reports elaborated and drifted by the councillors for regional development;

d) Proposes a way of handling the pre-accession funds of European Union for regional development in Romania in the pre-accession period;

e) follows the fulfilment of objectives of regional development, inclusively in cooperating external activities for developing areas, such as trans-frontally type, interregional type at the level of European regions;

f) decides on the projects suggested by regional development agencies and approved by Counsel for Regional Development for their financing in regional development programmes, in the case of projects bidding organized at the national level;

g) approves the projects suggested by regional development agencies and approved by Counsel for Regional Development for their financing in regional development programmes, in the case of projects bidding organized at the national level;

h) analyses and approves the activity reports proceeded by the National Committee of PHARE Programme Coordination – the economic and social cohesion element, founded on the base of the PHARE financial Memorandum provisions, as well as the ideas suggested by this Committee.

Romania settled the regional development policy coordinates by the mean of the Law no. 315 in 28 June 2004; regional development policy is defined as a system of policies elaborated by the Government by the central and local public administrative authorities and regional specialized authorities, by consulting the involve socio-economic partners with a view to providing the economic growth and social lasting constant development of the geographical areas formed in some regions of development, to upgrading the international competition of Romania and to reducing the economic and social discrepancies of Romania and other member-states of the European Union. The implementation of regional development policies is made in accordance with Romanian general development objectives and priorities, as well as European Union objectives in economic and social cohesion field. The basic principles of regional development implementations are, as follows:

- subsidiary character;
- decentralization’
- partnership.

According to these normative acts, the basic objectives are determined in conformity with the frame-strategy of European Union:

---

2 Law no. 315 in 28 June 2004 concerning the regional development of Romania published in MO (The Official Monitor) no. 577 in 29 June 2004.
a) diminution of regional development by a balanced development stimulation, accelerated reclamation of delays of the less developed areas in the economic and social field, as consequence to historical, geographical, economic, social and political background, as well as prevention of new imbalances emergence.

b) approval the criteria and the priorities concerning the National Fund for regional development and propose the prior programmes financed by the National Fund for regional development to the Government, for approval;

c) the stimulation of inter-regional, internal, international and trans-frontal cooperation, including within euro-regions, as well as developing regions involving in the European organizations and structures which increase their economic-social and institutional development, with a view to concluding some common interest projects in conformity with international agreements in which Romania is involved.

According to Ministry of Development, Public Works and Housing, the regional developing policy is a system of measures planned and promoted by local and central administrative authorities, in partnership with different agents (independent, public, volunteers) with a view to providing a sustainable and dynamic economic growth, throughout an efficient capitalization of the local and regional potential, for better living conditions.

The main objectives, concerning the regional development policy, are the following:

- Diminution of regional development by a prevalent balanced development stimulation and revitalization of weak areas (with a backward development); prevent causing new imbalances;
- Complying with integration criteria in the European Union structures and access to assisting financial instruments of the state-members (structural and cohesion funds);
- Correlation with governmental areal policies of development and stimulation of inter-regional, internal and international cooperation, which increase the economic growth, in conformity with the legal provisions and international agreements in which Romania is involved.

3. DIMINUTION OF TERRITORIAL DYSFUNCTIONAL BY POLYCENTRIC DEVELOPMENT

A very important document for a new policy of regional development in Romania is the National Plan of Developing 2007-2013 (NPD) (approved within the Government meeting in December 22nd 2005) within Ministry of Public Finances (GD no. 272/2004, its institutional and partnership background being elaborated by GD no. 1115/2004), whose objective is “the fastest diminution of social-economic development disparities between Romania and the State-members of the European Union” (P.N.D. 2007-2013).

In order to reach this objective, six national priorities for development were established, namely:
- Economic competition increase and economy developing based on knowledge;
- Transport infrastructure upgrading and restyling;
- Environment quality upgrading and sustainable conservation;

---

See www.mie.ro
The Function of Polycentric Development in the Refinement of Weakly Polarized Area

- Human resource development, occupational and social involvement accession and administrative authorities involvement;
- Rural economy development and agricultural output increasing;
- Alleviate developing disparities between the country areas.

Additionally, another strategic document is added, namely the National Strategic Reference Background (NSRB) (2007-2013), by which there are settled the priorities concerning Structural and Cohesion Funds utility for the above mentioned period of time. NSRB sets out, practically, the connection between NPD’s priorities and European ones. Among these priorities of NSRB, the most important one is a balanced territorial development with a view to reducing the territorial disparities on work regions level, development which cannot be reached if “the conditions necessary to an integrated development” are not followed (NSRB 2007-2013).

To support this idea, that regional development is a priority for Romania, on January 31st 2008 the Memorandum concerning integrated development support of growth poles’ network in conformity with CSDT 2007-2030 and CNR 2007-2013. According to this Memorandum, the growth poles are represented by metropolis and their influence areal, in this case the cities of the first level (Bacău, Braşov, Brăila, Galaţi, Cluj-Napoca, Constanţa, Craiova, Iaşi, Oradea, Ploieşti and Timişoara) and the cities of zero level (Bucharest) settled by Law no. 351/2001. Cities of over 10,000 inhabitants are considered to be urban development poles, their access to necessary development funds not being restricted at all.

The main objective, for which this legal instrument was agreed to, is that of promoting the cities above mentioned as main agents of national and regional development, new urban-rural relationships and polycentric networks configuration which should comprise important local growth poles at the last hierarchical level and County habitations - at inferior levels.

Concerning deep affected areas, the polycentric development involves some growth poles establishment which should structure areas’ functionality.

On a multi-criteria analysis, there were identified deep affected areas; within these areas there were concluded potential growth poles which should change in development driving force. At the level of these areas deeply affected it can be noticed an important deficit of innovations and good practice which we consider necessary to development.

In the scientific work “Geographical proximity, economics and settlements systems” (Iaşi I., Heller W., 2006) it is made a theoretical pattern of way in which innovation contributes to territorial economic development, a pattern which we can extra-polarized to polycentric development in which developing nuclei contributes to development diffusion towards polarized areas. In the authors’ opinion, economy dynamics is based, especially, on science and “know-how”, especially organizational and technological one. This type of dynamics depends on the scientific research, having as premises the fact that science multiplies itself by inventions and discoveries, with a direct effect on economy. In order that economic processes to become dynamic, science and, implicitly, knowledge output should increase and spread in general. Spreading the scientific knowledge means accepting and applying the scientific measures. The specialized term for “accepting” is the concept of “implementing”, as for “applying” – “innovation”, but sometimes “applying”. The concept of “innovation” becomes, in these conditions, a sort of “over-concept”, which one should meet in many phases of development and which signify
introducing something new. Implementation and innovating process of “the new”, which should reflects itself directly in the society upgrading, is named “innovation process”.

Territorial spread, respectively the diffusion of an innovation is not chaotic, but adaptive to some phases which follow the entire process, starting with the first moment and up to the end. Throughout this trajectory, it is singularized a true pattern of diffusion, with 3 important phases:

a) The first phase of diffusion or the starting phase, externalized by the innovation center “construction”, is characterized by the fact, that, the ones who implement the innovation in this phase, are yet a few. Usually, acceptance of an innovation is made by imitation or transfer and, therefore, most often, geographical proximity is necessary to those who implement the innovation;

b) The second phase is that of the alleged diffusion or of “distribution”. This one leaves the proximity effects from the first innovation center and is based, mostly, on a round diffusion (cascading diffusion) (as we can observe in Section III of this paper). From the first center, innovation diffusion is made towards other far of places, but which have a receiving, developing and transfer system. From these multiplied centers, diffusion can be done near by near, as in the first center case, but also cascading towards other far of centers;

c) The third phase corresponds to saturation one, meaning that phase in which the innovation comes into “banality” being something common, which can be used, currently, in economic, social or cultural activities. Practically, this row of those who apply this sort of innovation involves, also, the ones who were reserved at first or those who opposed to this idea.

In order to emphasize the importance of polycentric development in the regional one, a diffusion pattern of innovation and good practice was initiated for Gorj County. It is based on a polycentric network constituted on distribution hierarchical nuclei of “development”. Growth poles identified at the local level are not complying yet with innovation redistribution function, but there are some premises for a functioning structure of the polarized area by an appropriate institutional development and resources development.

At Gorj county level, there were identified the following areas weakly polarized:
- Tismana-Runcu multi-polar areal;
- Bumbești Jiu-Baia de Fier multi-polar areal;
- Rovinari-Târgu Cârbunești multi-polar areal;
- Turceni mono-polar areal;
- Stoia-Bustuchin by-polar areal;
- Scoarța-Roșia de Amaradia by-polar areal.

In the areas weakly polarized there were found the settlements; this could develop in diffusion local centers of innovation and good practice.

In weak the polarized areal Tismana-Runcu, 4 settlements were identified (Padeș, Tismana), which, by their geographical position and developing potential, could materialize in diffusion local centers of innovation and good practice, provided with the condition that district institutional mechanisms create a structure which should support the implementation development strategies here.

In the areal multi-polar of Bumbești Jiu-Baia de Fier, 3 local growth poles were found (Bumbești de Jiu, Novaci and Polovragi) which have the ability to diffuse integrated
economic developing strategies in the subordinated areals, based on the complementary resources found in mountains and sub-Carpathians areas.

The weakly polarized areal Rovinari-Târgu Carbunești implies a special treatment, because of economic problems caused by mining activities reorganization prevailing in the functional structuring of this geographical area. Special treatment involves monitoring the implementation development strategy and error correction non-forecast characteristic to geographical areas with great economic problems. To support an efficient diffusion of the innovation and good practice, one can resort to local development centers: Rovinari, Târgu Carbunești and Țicleni.

In the mono-polar areal of Turceni, development supporting by innovation and good practice diffusion can be ensured by the main center – Turceni. But external (outside the counties: Craiova and Filiași) polarization center influence should not be minimized at all, due to their contribution to the economic growth of this areal through near by near diffusion.

In the poorly polarized area Tismana-Horezu have been identified 4 settlements (Padea, Tismana, Runcu) that, throw the geographic localization and the potential of development, could

The poorly developed areas Rovinari – Târgu Carbunești needs a special attention because of economical difficulties marked by the restructuring of the mining activities, primary in the functional structure of this geographical territory. The special attention is regarding the

The bipolar area Scoară-Roia de Amaradia has been build once the polarization capacity of the city Tg. Jiu has been reduced and, in the same time, because of

In the poorly polarized area Turceni, the supporting of the development, throw innovational and good practice diffusion, could be ensured by the

In the multipolar area Bumbăști-Jiu – Râșa de Păsău have been identified 3 local growth poles (Bumbăști de Jiu, Novaci and Polovragi), that have the capacity to

In the bipolar area Stoina – Bustuchin has the disadvantage to be located in the periphery to the

Fig. 1 Innovation transfer and good practice related to polarization centre and local development centers

Transferul de inovație și bune practice în relație cu centrul de polarizare și centrele de dezvoltare locală

Stoina-Bustuchin by-polar areal is disadvantaged by its peripheral or outlying position toward the district growth poles Motru and Târgu Jiu, the need for innovation and
good practice being emphasized by some economic and demographic indicators’ values. As local growth poles, we can relate to Stoina and Bustuchin.

Scoarța–Roșia de Armadia by-polar areal was emerged when Târgu Jiu polarization capacity decreased and some peripheral positions of some settlements within the county. Scoarța and Roșia de Armadia localities could be founded on the available resources of the central poles diffusion of innovation and good practice.

The management of weak polarized areas implies some coherent strategy principles or theories based on regional and local poles support, which should take over, by hierarchal institutional structures, the innovation and good practice and to diffuse it towards subordinated areas.

The economic growth of a territory depends on a series of institutions which should support, directly or indirectly, innovation and good practice diffusion, as far as the lowest level of the territorial system. This mechanism functioning is ensured by an appropriate identification of growth poles and the insurance of the proper/accurate motivations/impulses for suggested or submitted objectives.

**BIBLIOGRAPHY**


Ianoș, I., (2005), *Global localization and local globalization on a sustainable development background*, Scientific communication within the yearly Session of Geographic Departement of University from Valahia.


