



DEINDUSTRIALIZATION AND UNDERDEVELOPMENT. CASE STUDY: VALEA JIULUI

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Abstract: *The paper is based on the preliminary results of the research project “Deindustrialization and under-development in the Romanian Transition. Individual/Collective Strategies and Reply Policies. Case study: Valea Jiului”, that will be done within the POSDRU project “Plural and interdisciplinary in doctoral and post-doctoral programs”.*

This paper intends to analyze the complex relation between economic development, social development and modernization. The basic hypothesis of the proposed analysis is that the economic development is not an irreversible process not even when it leads to social development as part of a modernizing program. Valea Jiului represents an example of how the economic and social development built on weak basis, become unsustainable. The collapse of this weak basis initiated after 1989 when the economy and the society changed and after a transition period produced a major negative social impact started with the restructuring of the mining. In less than 10 months, the number of the miners was reduced to half and the reduction continued. Today in Valea Jiului is only 15 % of the number of employees in 1989. The social effects of the mining restructuring were at communitarian level the underdevelopment, return to pre-modern occupations like the subsistence agriculture. A good example that will be deeply analyzed in this paper is the town Aninoasa, the first Romanian town in insolvency since 2013.

Keywords: *deindustrialization, social development, social change, the modernization theories, underdevelopment*

1. Introduction

The modernization theories suggest *the development paradigm as modernization* according to an evolutionist scheme. The social development, defined from such evolutionist perspective represents a process connected to another process – the modernizing one.

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The two socio-economic processes imply an evolution of the social system placed in an undesirable stage that might be improved in order to become desirable. Hence, the two processes are irreversible- is interesting to notice that for the two terms *development*, respectively, *modernization* there are no antonymic formulations.

The analysis I suggest refers on one side to the social development and modernization relation and on the other side to the circumstances when the effects of the two processes may become reversible.

Romania experiments for the past two and a half decades a process of social changing with effects within the entire economy and society. One of the basic desiderates of the post-communist transition was the passage from the centralized economy to the market economy. This change of paradigm had a strong impact on an economic system designed to function according to a different economic and social logic. During the first years after 1989 existed a certain inertia and a certain precaution manifested by the authorities in undertaking concrete measures in this respect and this led to the aggravation of the economic problems generated by the inadequate structure and functioning of the state economy within the new socio-economic context.

Beside the economic pressure generated by the inefficiency of these economic objectives registering great losses, the option to totally restructure the economy was influenced by the adoption of the new-liberal ideology promoted by the “external agents of the development” (MIF, World Bank) correlated with the new paradigm sustained by the “political elites of changing” whose influence increased in the second half of the ‘90s as an antagonism to the inertia manifested at that time.

I do not debate here the correctness of this option based mainly on a more or less accurate evaluation of the situation and the economic evolution in the first post-communist years. The lack of vision and strategic orientation and not the change itself is responsible for the negative impact on the social development that will be analyzed.

The analysis I suggest starts from a case illustrating a model of failure of the social policy of reducing the shock of the economic impact of the transition – the restructuring of the mining in Valea Jiului.

2. Theoretical and methodological frame. Data sources

The social development paradigm was developed from two types of approaching the underdevelopment based on the relative importance of the endogenous and exogenous factors as determinants of the underdevelopment. These are based on two competitive theories: *the modernization theories* and, respectively, *the dependence theories*.

The modernization theories suggest *the paradigm of development as modernization* according to an evolutionist scheme. According to this scheme the societies progress from the traditional to the modern stage, that represents the phase of their maturity. While the traditional societies, mainly agrarian, are characterized by a low efficiency of the agrarian activity, technical progress and industrialization and created what Rostow calls

the preconditions of the growth. The process of industrialization is considered one of the basic conditions of the appearance of the capitalist system (Cace, 2004: 28)

The sociological perspective on modernization introduces as determinants factors of modernization the social and cultural factors together with the economic ones. Beyond the different perspectives on the modernization factors and their manner of action, “the modernization theories lead to a common conclusion: underdevelopment is the common characteristic of the societies placed in an incipient or intermediary point on the road to modernity, in contrast with the developed societies that reached this point” (Preotesi, in Zamfir, Stănescu, coord., 2007: 565).

The dependence theories developed by Frank, Cardoso or Wallerstein emphasize the role of the external factors as determinants of the underdevelopment marking the unbalanced and inequitable power relations that sustain the difference between the developed and underdeveloped countries.

The paradigm of social development has a certain specificity – the theoretic approach is subordinated to a strong practical orientation; it takes steps in a planned social change. The so called post-communist transition represented the context for **the social change**.

In the sociological literature dedicated to transition authors like (1994,1999), Cătălin Zamfir (1994, 2007), Vladimir Pasti (Pasti, 1995, 2011), Lazăr Vlăsceanu (2001, 2007), Catherine Verdery (1996/ 2003), present explanatory models for the social processes and mechanisms that characterize the post-communist period in Romania. The differences of approach in the transition analysis refer to the focus either on the changing/social development processes or on the analysis of the impact on the population, or on the analysis of the mechanisms and factors involved. One of the directions of analysis well represented in the sociological literature dedicated to transition is that focused on the so called *external agents of development*. Within this category are organizations like the World Bank, Monetary International Fond, European Commission; these analysis approach both the ideology of the social development promoted by these organizations and the impact of their programs.

As regards the development strategy promoted by the World Bank and MIF for the European countries in transition – this was based on reducing the role of the state in the effort of eliminating of underdevelopment and reducing the differences comparing to the developed countries and increasing the role of other actors of development like the local communities and the NGOs.

The failure of some organizations like the World Bank in implementing some development programs led to a rethinking of the importance of the social capital as precondition of the successful implementation of the economic development programs (Preotesi, in Zamfir, Stănescu, coord., 2007: 565-566).

The newer approaches of the underdevelopment offer an increased importance both to the social capital and the human capital, on one side as indicators and on the other side as predictors of social development.

In the analysis model proposed by Dumitru Sandu, the human capital is operationally defined on three dimensions:

- the education stock on community level;
- the number of employees on local level;
- the percentage of population occupied in agriculture (this is correlate negative with the degree of social development within the Romanian context where the main form is the subsistence agriculture).

Even if this analysis is referring to the rural communities, and my analysis is referring to an urban space, the mono-industrial area Valea Jiului, the post communist evolution of this zone balances the report among different aspects of the rural and urban.

Such an illustrative exemple regards the local budget of some small towns like Aninoasa, which have under 3 million lei while most of the counties have an average budget of the rural localities of 3-4 million lei (21 counties, according to Mihalache, 2013: 135).

On the other hand, the topic of the social development of the towns is approached in the specialty literature from different perspectives – the economic perspective, the urban sociology perspective, the anthropologic perspective or the urban geography perspective.

The case of the mono-industrial towns is interesting for this project; the area of Valea Jiului is an area with a constant presence of the mono-industrial towns since the first half of the last century. (Dumitrescu, 2008). The accelerate restructuring of the mining in the second half of 1997 represented, due to its socioeconomic effects, a field of interest reflected in an well represented scientific literature. Reference papers elaborated from an economic perspective, like that of Mircea Coșea (Coșea, 2000), or from sociologic perspective, like that of Dâncu, Rotariu, ș.a., 2000, are added to the constant preoccupation of the research teams from the University of Petroșani and the Social Institute of Valea Jiului (Krausz, 1999, Stegar, 2007, 2014). All these represent basic sources in the research I made for this project.

A deep analysis of the impact of the socioeconomic changes associated to the post-communist restructuring of the mining, made from a mainly anthropologic perspective, is one of the research directions for the Valea Jiului mining, (Kidekel, 2010).

Will be presented preliminary results of the secondary analysis of data based on reference papers, like those mentioned above, on outcomes of some researches made in Valea Jiului on representative samples or even on the entire statistic population of restructured, or soon to be restructured miners, or employees in the still functional mines.

The results of this secondary analysis of data will represent the basic premises that will shape the evolution of this research project.

3. From unsustainable development to underdevelopment .The mono-industrial areas

The concepts of mono-specialized town and that defining the particular case of “mono-industrial towns” are elaborated from the perspective of functional classification of the towns, as a tool used for defining the socio-economic profile of a town or a net of

towns-Valea Jiului is representing such an example of net of towns that create (except for Petroșani) a zone with mono-industrial characteristics.

From the functional perspective the towns (according to Dumitrescu, 2008), can be contained in the categories:

- industrial towns (over 50% of the occupied population is in industry and constructions);
- agrarian towns (over 50% of the occupied population is in agriculture, forestry, hunting and fishing);
- services towns (over 50% of the occupied population is in third sector);
- mixed towns (none of the economic sectors has 50% of the occupied population).

In Romania, according to quoted authors, the general criterion for a town to be industrial is to have over 50% of occupied population in the second sector.

The mono industrial towns are those where the economy is based mainly on a single industrial branch; the inclusion within this category is based on the so called index of mono-specialization.

Resuming our study-it is interesting to notice that- 4 years after the massive restructuring of the mining in Valea Jiului the extent of extractive industry exceeded half of the occupied population in Lupeni, Aninoasa, Uricani and Petrila, with a value close to 50% in Vulcan also.

The towns in Valea Jiului continue to have even after the massive dismissals in mining sector a mono-industrial character (except for Petrosani, which has a more diverse economic base).

The number of the employees in the mining sector is only a fifth of its 1990' value and this is representative and illustrative as regards the economic (under) development of the area where no viable economic alternatives were developed. This is a negative premise for the dismissals that will start next year as a result of closing the mines Petrila, Paroșeni and Uricani.

4. The zone context. Mining towns in Valea Jiului: small towns, without development possibilities, with low qualified labor force

The negative effects of the massive restructuring of the mining initiated in the second half of the 90' were amplified by the existence of some characteristics of Valea Jiului, which define the socio-economic context of the zone.

On one side, the mining towns in Valea Jiului are small towns (the smallest of the mining towns built in the communist space, according to World Bank, 2003), deprived not only of economic alternatives, but also of economic potential (including consumption).

On the other side, the labor force, concentrated on mining was mainly poor educated and low qualified, with low chances and limited possibilities of professional re-conversion.

Being a category of relative highly paid employees the miners waiting to be dismissed had unrealistic expectations considering the wage offer available for them. According to data provided by a research made during the period of dismissals in 1997-1998, over 50% of the dismissed said that they would not accept a salary under that medium on economy and only 10% would accept a salary between 1-1,5 of minimum wage (Stegar, 2001).

Another specific element in this mining area refers to the structure and division of the roles in the miners families, which are traditionally constructed and the family provider status of the husband was consolidated by the relative high salary.

Considering that the miners families were rather numerous (according to a traditional reproductive model applicable mainly to the families that came from Moldavia after 1977 – Kidekel, 2010) and the women were reduced to the status of wives and mothers, when the dismissal started the percentage of house wives without any professional training or experience was very high.

The fact that the husband could no longer provide for the family had a traumatizing impact on the family and the changing of roles between spouses was very hard accepted.

The precarious job offer was addressing mainly women and consisted mainly in jobs on “black” and paid with the minimum wage, with no security and open to employers’ abuses.

According to Kidekel (Kidekel, 2010) for the recent dismissed miners such kind of jobs were considered unacceptable, but after they spent their compensatory salaries they had to accept these jobs, mainly the wives of the former miners. This change of roles in the family was difficult to accept and manage by the miners; the psychological and social effects were obvious in the evolution of some socio-economic indicators like the increase of the alcoholism rate, of the divorce rate and of the suicide rate (Kidekel, 2010).

The effects of the massive dismissals from 1997-1998 were disastrous on economic and social level.

An illustrative image based on a research made in 1999-2002 is elaborated by David Kidekel (Kidekel, 2010). Here are few elements of this image:

- Depreciation of the localities and houses’ infrastructure
- Dissolution of the social nets
- Increase of the divorce, suicide and crime rate
- Desperation caused by the perception of the lack of alternatives- the only viable alternative: external migration- a successful alternative until 2009.

Hence, the evolution from a secure and relative highly paid job to unemployment and precarious occupation is reflected from the socio economic reality towards the subjective reality, in people's expectations on psychological, individual, family and community level.

5. Closing of the mine Aninoasa in 2006. The multiplication of the effects of the dismissals from 1997-1998

Disregarding the disastrous effects of the massive dismissals from the mining industry at the end of the 90's, the closing of the mine Aninoasa in 2006 was made according to similar pattern, which led to similar effects.

Aninoasa town is located in the South of Hunedoara County, in Valea Jiului. It is documentary mentioned since 1453 and became town in 1989 and the mine was closed in 2006.

Even though the town was declared disadvantaged area by the Govern Decision no. 992/29.12.1998, this statute did never really encourage the investments; the only important economic objective was, until its closing, the Mine Aninoasa.

Certain elements of local context functioned as aggravating premises of the effects of the closing of this mine.

Aninoasa has the lowest number of inhabitants of all the towns from Valea Jiului (5423 in 2006) and the highest percentage of employed people (Stegar, 2014).

Hence, the closing of the mine led in less than 7 years to the declared collapse of this town, which is now in insolvency.

The insolvency as is defined by the Govern Order of Emergency no 46/2013 regarding the financial crisis and insolvency of the administrative territorial units was caused by several factors among whom are mentioned (in H.G no 804/2014):

- a. over indebted of the public institution by contracting a credit for investments of 2.783.992, 98 lei in 2006 and the lack of necessary resources to cover the rates and the interests
- b. unsatisfactory degree of covering the debts from own incomes, which in 31st of March, 2013 represented 4,28%;
- c. low degree of collecting taxes and imposts;
- d. difficult economic situation on zone level considering that the budgetary incomes diminished considerable because many companies in the area entered in insolvency and the chances to obtain the debts were very low and the percentage of these debts represented 66,95% of the total incomes at 31. 03.2013.
- e. the debts at 31.03.2013 represented 6.599.872 lei and the degree was of 100,20%

- f. decrease of the amount receive from the county council budget for balancing the local budget due to difficult economic situation on national level;
- g. high percentage of expenditure for employees of the total budgetary expenditures caused by the high number of employees comparing with the real need of the administrative territorial unit, which in 2010 had 126 employees, in 2011-2012 had 94, respectively 78 and now has 47 employees.

The main contributor to the local budget of Aninoasa was the mine Aninoasa until its closing in 2006.

The closing of the mine in 2006 had numerous negative implications over the budget of the town, like, according to the same H.G.

- significant reduction of the incomes of the local budget, the mine being the main contributor;
- increasing of the unemployment rate;
- decreasing of the degree of collecting of the taxes caused by the decrease of the inhabitants' incomes and also of the amount received from the County Council budget.

On 10.10. 2006 a loan contract was concluded with the Romanian Commercial Bank – Petroșani Branch that offered to Aninoasa a reimbursable investment credit of 3.000.000 lei for 10 years. Later, on 22.10.2007 was concluded an additional contract that diminished the initial loan to 2.783.992,98 lei.

In this analysis illustrative for the lack of vision and strategically orientation on local level is the destination of the credit. Disregarding the fact that the main employer of the town would be shot down that year, the Mayoralty of Aninoasa loaned money for modernizing the administrative headquarter, repair churches, sport complexes, and consolidate land of Arena Sport Complex, among others.

According to the quoted HG all these investments financed by the contracted credit were to a certain extend finalized, "except for the towns' natural gases net".

Due to the lack of financial resources the credit' monthly rates were not paid on time and its value at the moment of insolvency was of 3.400.080, 79 lei, later after the reimbursement plan it decreased to 2.380.056,55 lei.

The highest level of debt was reached in 2011 – 10,561,927.00 lei. These decreased at the moment of insolvency to 5.488.791, 98 lei and all of these were old debts.

6. Instead of conclusions: failed experiences, unlearned lessons?

The failure of the policy of closing the mines without any correlative measures configured by a sustainable local development plan leded to socio-economic effects like those mentioned above.

The closing of Aninoasa Mine 8 years after the restructuring started in 1997-1998 are made according to a similar pattern both as regards the socio-economic measures and the disastrous effects on socio-economic, individual, family and community level.

Analyzing the correlative social measures of the mining sector restructuring we may observe the prevalence policy of the passive support measures meant rather to calm the social tensions created by the un-popular restructuring of the mining than to offer solutions on long and medium term for this community on declared insolvency.

The purpose of declaring the so called disadvantaged areas was to balance the negative effects of the massive restructuring of the un-profitable state economic objectives; this restructuring was accelerated in the second half of the 90's.

Since 1998 the state offered different facilities for potential investors in these disadvantaged areas. In this category were the areas that fulfilled at least one of the following conditions:

- to be mono-industrial
- to be mining areas where at least 25% of employees were dismissed by collective dismissals;
- areas that by liquidation, restructuring or privatization of some companies collective dismissals were operated and affected over 25% of the inhabitants;
- areas with an unemployment rate 30% over the national rate
- isolated areas, without communications and low developed infrastructure.

The mining towns in Valea Jiului fulfilled at that time all, or at least 5 of these conditions, hence the area gained this statute.

In these disadvantaged areas the companies had different fiscal facilities for new investments, like exemptions from custom taxes and VTA for equipments, return of custom taxes, exemptions from income taxation during the disadvantaged statute.

Even though all these facilities were offered in order to absorb the dismissed labor force and for the economic development of the area, these did not have the expected impact as regards the new jobs nor as regards the economic development of these areas. According to an EFOR report (2011) at the moment of joining EU, when these disadvantaged areas disappeared, only 15.000 new jobs were created at a population of 1 million inhabitants and the unemployment rate continued to be 30% over the national rate.

The causes of the inefficiency of these measures were presented by numerous journalists that wrote about cases when the personal interest of some opportunistic investors that benefit from these "fiscal paradises" without externalizing the expected collective correlative benefits.

Another explanation would be that, in spite of all these fiscal facilities, these areas were not so attractive due exactly to the reasons they were declared disadvantaged and to the socio-educational profile of the labor force.

As I mentioned above, the profile of the labor force dismissed from the mining industry in Valea Jiului was characterized by precarious education and professional training, unrealistic salary expectations in reference to the education level and with the average age favoring un-dynamic behavior, lack of flexibility and adaptability to total different professional situation than those familiar.

Even after “Aninoasa experiment” the decision makers continued to disregard these very important elements of socio-educational context. The policy of closing mines without a viable strategy of development continues. This year the mines Petrila, Paroseni and Uricani will be closed.

The analysis of the comparative data of the local context 2011-2012/1998 (synthesized in Preotesi, 2014-data source: Stegar, 2014) shows that there are premises of a socio-economic disaster in each of these 3 mining localities and in Valea Jiului in general.

The data collected in 2012-2012 (presented and analyzed in Stegar, 2014) on a representative sample of miners in Valea Jiului containing over 60% of the total reference statistic population offer several interesting conclusions compared with the data collected in 1998:

- even though the average age of the miners is increasing, the percentage of those over 50 years is one extremely low (under 10% on total and under 7% in the case of the mines to be closed). Almost three quarters of the miners from these mines which will be closed are between 36-50 years. “The natural exit from the system by retiring does not represent a valid alternative for most of those to be dismissed and the high percentage of those over 45 years emphasized the vulnerability of those dismissed towards the integration on the working force market” (Preotesi, 2014: 212).
- the average level of education is higher than in 1997, the percentage of those without high school education is still important (almost 50%, a little higher at Petrila and Uricani and only 35% at Paroseni);
- less than half of the miners said that they would search for a job if they would be dismissed and over a fifth would be involved in their own household, mainly in subsistence agriculture (Stegar, 2014);
- more than a third of the miners would search for a job only in Valea Jiului and over a fifth would search for a job abroad. Even if the percentage of those that would get a job anywhere in the country (31,95%) reveals “a high opening towards the mobility within the national context, if we consider that 50% do not search for a job – this alternative can not be considered major” (Preotesi, 2014: 212).

The closing of the 3 mines will cost the state budget (according to the site of the Ministry of Energy) 143,475 millions lei only the next year. Almost two thirds of this amount will be allocated for the coal from the units that are in process of permanent closing in order to cover the losses from the current production. The works for the mines' closing will cost about 24 millions lei.

The compensatory payments for the dismissed employees will be about 26 millions lei.

Considering that these 3 mines function with an average cost of 1600 lei for each one thousand lei goods production (Stegar, 2014), the costs for the closing of the 3 mines may seem small comparison with the cost to maintain them functional.

But this is not the issue; the problem is the manner how this restructuring was designed and implemented and the correlative socio-economic effects.

The first mines in Valea Jiului started to be closed since 1994 (Lonea Pilier), others in 1998 (Câmpul lui Neag, Petrița Sud), in 2003 and 2004 (Dâlja, Valea cu Brazi) and 2006 (Aninoasa).

Hence, for the past 20 years the closing of mines and restructuring of the mining sector represented a constant presence in the socio-economic landscape of Valea Jiului.

Even so, these restructurings were not accompanied with preventive measures, like educational programs of professional reconversion, entrepreneurship for the future dismissed, which had been left to doubt until the last moment of the imminence of these dismissals. An illustrative example is offered by the data collected in 2011-2012 at the 7 mines still functioning in Valea Jiului that reports the technical and economic validity of the 7 mines, calculated by experts, referring to the perception of the menace of loosing the jobs. The 3 mines to be closed have the lowest technical-economic score and the lowest score of the perception of menace to loose jobs. In other words, the employees of the most un-profitable mines, with the highest losses, perceived the lowest menace. It is interesting the explanation offered by the quoted author: “the danger was not been really seen by the employees and the prejudice and legends (“Uricani can not be closed because an entire town will die”, “Petrița will never be closed) fully functioned” (Stegar, 2014, p.76-77).

The expectances of those who took these measures of economic restructuring regarding to the socio-economic evolution of the area were based on suppositions that turned out to be unrealistic.

Once partial solved the problem of social tensions generated by dismissals (by compensatory wages) several potential alternatives were available for those dismissed, but these turned out to be unusable:

1. Opening business and transforming the former miners in successful entrepreneurs. Beside the insufficient capital and the lack of business experience, these start-ups should have functioned in the absence of a real local market with a potential consumption.
2. The return to the origin places. The miners came after 1977 mainly from poor areas in Moldavia and these areas were even poorest after 1989 and had no local development opportunities. A significant part of those that choose to return were received with reticence and this reintegration can not be considered a success or a viable alternative (Kidekel, 2010);
3. Professional requalification/reconversion was not an accessible alternative for the dismissed miners over 45 years. On one side, the existent job offers corresponding

to their professional level and education were not corresponding to their salary expectations.

Synthesizing these expectations those making the decisions assumed that some of the dismissed will become entrepreneurs, some will be re-qualified and get hired, some will return to the origin places and all these options will comprise a significant part of those dismissed.

In reality, that part was relative small and the successes case were very few in reference to the number of those who did not choose any of these alternatives. Their post-dismissal evolution is illustrated by the mechanism mentioned above of underdevelopment/social declassification on the route: employee-dismissed-beneficiary of compensatory salaries-beneficiary of unemployment- social assisted.

The evolution from a stable and relative well paid occupation to non-occupation and precarious occupation is reflected on one side from the socio-economic reality towards the subjective reality, in the people's horizon of expectation on psychological plan, on individual, family level towards community level.

On the other side, the mechanism functions as implacable on the reverse route from individual, family and community level, closing the circle started with the unsustainable economic development to social underdevelopment.

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