



COORDINATES OF RURAL DEVELOPMENT IN 20 VILLAGES IN THE SOUTHERN PART OF COUNTY ARGES¹

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Abstract: The present study analyses the situation of a cluster constituted from 20 villages in the southern part of county Arges, from the perspective of local budget coordinates and of the ongoing local development projects. From structural viewpoint, the social and economic characteristics of the analysed villages are circumscribed, according to several aspects, to the general coordinates of the Romanian rural area. The goal of the paper is to explore the different experiences that local authorities gathered in the last years of unfolding development projects with national or European funding. The analysed data are public data, gathered from official statistics, and reports delivered by various institutions. The main conclusions of the analysis show that the differences between localities regarding the coordinates of local budgets and the implementation of development programmes are significant, even at micro-regional level, when villages of the same geographic area are analysed. The involvement of local authorities in accessing funds intended for local development is the element which makes, very often, the difference between prosperous villages and the ones with development deficit. The analyses in this paper support this differentiation based on the various experiences recorded among local administrations.

Keywords: rural development, NRDP, public infrastructure, local budgets

Theoretical framework and objectives

The Romanian rural area presents multiple particularities, constituted on the dimension of the socio-economic coordinates of the localities. The diversity registered at the level of the localities allows for debating on the various aggregation forms of the rural world, constituted based on the heterogeneity of social and economic characteristics at the level of regions and localities (Man et al., 2015; Marin, 2014; Sandu, 2011). The analyses

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at regional level and, especially, micro-regional one present detailed images about the importance of local contexts in favouring development or, as the case may be, in maintaining communities in a state of under-development (Balogh, Balogh and Filip, 2015; Marcu, 2015; Preotesi, 2015; Petrescu, 2015; Vincze, 2015; Croitoru; 2013; Ilie, 2013; Marquardt; Möller and Buchenrieder, 2012; Stănescu, Căce, 2011; Căce, Arpinte, Scoican, 2010). Rural micro-regions can be defined as areas shaped by territorial communities that have as basis geographic proximity and functional similarity criteria. These constituents comprise localities sharing a common social and demographic framework and which gravitate economically and functionally around the same centres represented either by urban localities, or more developed villages. In order to study the territorial differences and gaps in Romania, micro-regions represent optimum units of analysis, both from the viewpoint of socio-demographic coordinates, and from the perspective of the possibility to catch local factors that might be highlighted by macro-level analyses.

Based on these premises, we intend in the following to analyse a micro-region from the flatland area of the county Arges. The study is focused on analysing the social and economic coordinates of 20 villages located in the southern part of the county. At this level, the rural heterogeneity albeit present is much toned down by the economic, territorial and demographic coordinates comparable for the majority of analysed communities. The arguments regarding the selection of these localities for the analysis are, on one hand, based on the similarity between them and, on the other hand, grounded in the fact that this micro-region can be considered to a certain extent, representative for the type of rural localities with an average development level from Romania. By and large, we may consider that this micro-region meets the main defining characteristics for the Romanian rural area: negative demographic evolution emphasised by negative natural growth rate and marked ageing of the population; a predominantly agricultural profile of local economies, non-agricultural employed population working especially outside the locality of residence, low level of local infrastructure, and high dependency on the financial allocations from the state-budget.

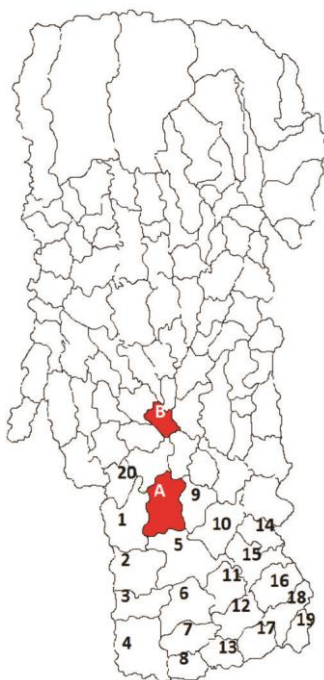
The proposed analysis is focused on two correlated dimensions. The first part of the paper pursues to describe the characteristics of rural localities in the area of interest, from the viewpoint of socio-economic coordinates and of the development level reached by them. In the second part, the emphasis is on presenting the development projects implemented by local authorities, and by underpinning the programmes developed by means of national and European financing. Both components pursue exploring the differences existing at local level based on the hypothesis according to which existing gaps in rural Romania tend to deepen becoming obvious not only in comparative studies realised at national level, but also in the analyses performed at the level of localities.

Particularities of the micro-region

In the following, we focus on analysing the social and economic characteristics of a rural micro-region located in the southern part of the county Arges, in the flatland of the county, with a total surface of 1360 square km and where by the beginning of the

year 2015 were registered about 54 thousand inhabitants (NIS, Tempo-online database). This constituency comprises 20 villages, most of these having a medium level of development, as compared to the situation recorded at national level. The respective localities represent a territorial analysis unit with internal relevance and consistence from the viewpoint of symmetrical evolutions before and after 1989 and based on approximately similar economic coordinates. The differentiations between them result from the local economic context, based on the weight of individuals employed in nearby towns (especially in the Pitesti municipality), and on the level of conditions provided for community life.

Figure 1: Southern Arges Micro-region in the county context



The villages of the micro-region constituency: Bârla (4), Buzoești (5), Căldăraru (7), Hârsești (3), Izvoru (12), Lunca Corbului (1), Miroși (8), Mozăceni (16), Negrași (15), Popești (13), Râca (17), Recea (11), Rociu (10), Săpata (20), Slobozia (18), Ștefan cel Mare (19), Stolnici (2), Suseni (9), Teiu (14), Ungheni (6), oraș Costești (A), municipiul Pitești (B)

From the geographical viewpoint, the micro-region consists of two formations which are circumscribed in the larger structure of the Romanian Flatland. These are the Flatland Găvanu - Burdea in the western and southern area and the Flatland Câmpia înaltă a Piteștiului in the northern and eastern area. The region is crisscrossed by a

network of rivers on the North-South direction, and from these the most relevant are Argeş, Teleorman, Neajlov, Cotmeana and Dâmbovnic. At the level of roadways, the most important roadways are DN 65 – E574 Piteşti-Slatina-Craiova which cross the locality Lunca Corbului and DN 65A Piteşti - Roşiori de Vede which crosses from North to South the micro-region. The system of communication ways is completed by a series of county roads ensuring the connections between the component localities and the towns Piteşti, Costeşti or Topoloveni. At the same time, the relative easy access to the localities in the eastern part of the region should be mentioned, towards the highway A1 Bucharest-Pitesti. The railways network has not underwent any significant development, and most of the villages we refer to have no direct access to this type of transport.

Most of the analysed localities are connected functionally to the town Costesti which is located in the northern part of the region at a distance of 25 kilometres from the Pitesti municipality. This town is included into the category of small urban localities (population barely exceeds the threshold of 10000 inhabitants) and is characterised by a low level of social and economic development. After 1990, the locality entered into a marked decline considering the economic coordinates, and lost most of the entities ensuring jobs for the inhabitants of the town and for a good share of individuals from the neighbouring villages. Currently, the town Costesti maintains its influence at micro-regional level, especially due to the two high-schools, of the hospital and justice court which provide the respective type of services for the entire southern area of the county Arges. At the same time, in Costesti are operational work points of the Public Finances Administration Arges, the County Employment Agency of Labour Force and of the General Directorate of Population Records. Nowadays, large part of the employed population in the town is active outside this town, in Pitesti or on the industrial platform from Mioveni. Thus, the small town has a diminished economic functionality, but plays an active role at micro-regional level based on its social and administrative functions ensured by institutions developing activities at its level.

From the demographic perspective, the southern area of the county Arges is faced as many other rural areas from Romania, with the spectre of considerable population ageing, obviously visible in the decrease of demographic density and in the emergence of depopulation risk in certain areas. According to the data of the National Institute of Statistics (Table 1), the population of the region diminished between 1995 and 2015 by 22%, thus decreasing from 70 thousand inhabitants to 54 thousand inhabitants. On localities, the most important decreases in the numbers of registered population, of over 30% in the period 1995-2015 were recorded in the villages, Teiu, Negrasi and Ungheni¹. At the opposite pole, the smallest decreases as percentage (12%) were recorded in the villages in the northern part of the region (Suseni, Buzoesti) where, due to the proximity of the villages Costesti and Pitesti, internal migration was attracted on the way urban-rural. A particular situation is registered in two villages in the southern part of the county (Slobozia and Stefan cel Mare) where the population numbers

1. The significant diminishment recorded in the case of the Popesti village was determined by the separation from it, in 2003, of the hamlets Raca, Adunati and Bucov, and which based on Law no. 185/2003 constituted the village Râca.

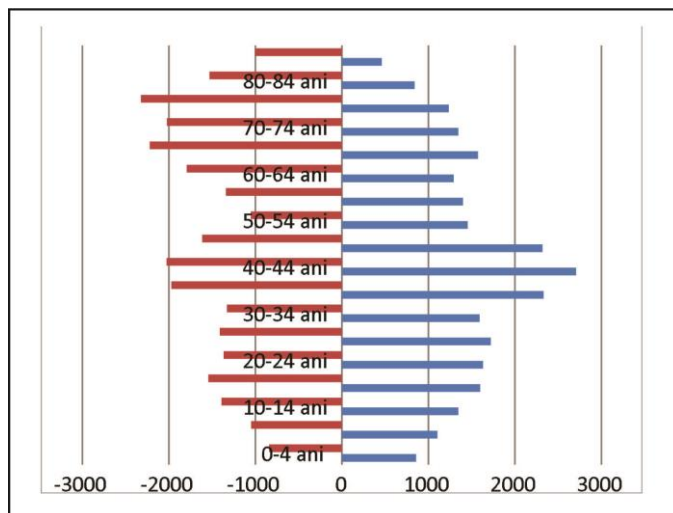
decreased (by 12%, respectively 15%), while benefitting, at the same time, of a relatively high birth-rate for the micro-regional context.

Table 1: Demographic evolution of the villages from the micro-region South Arges

	1995	2005	2015	Evoluție
Bârla	6205	5551	4738	-1467
Buzoiești	6548	6106	5716	-832
Căldăraru	3261	2804	2407	-854
Hîrsești	3065	2662	2332	-733
Izvoru	2923	2594	2224	-699
Lunca Corbului	3548	2871	2725	-823
Miroși	3319	2836	2425	-894
Mozăceni	2938	2590	2179	-759
Negrași	2985	2478	2104	-881
Popești	4505	2556	2044	-2461
Râca	Lipsă date	1247	1144	
Recea	3643	3155	2817	-826
Rociu	3240	2840	2535	-705
Săpata	2123	1852	1660	-463
Slobozia	5411	5241	4794	-617
Ștefan cel Mare	2832	2584	2386	-446
Stolnici	4054	3462	3121	-933
Suseni	3489	3214	3065	-424
Teiu	2025	1686	1387	-638
Ungheni	4142	3508	2858	-1284
TOTAL	70256	61837	54661	-15595

Source: NIS, TEMPO-online database (www.insse.ro)

The age pyramid of the population from the 20 villages has a rhomboidal graphic representation, which indicates a strongly aged structure, as the numbers of population aged 65 years of age and over are by almost 50% higher than the volume of population with ages up to 20 years of age (Figure 1). On the graphic structure of the ages' distribution we find the existence of two more numerous age groups. On one the hand we have the population aged 65 years and over, that corresponds to the mature age cohorts of the communist period and who were active before 1990 in particular in agricultural cooperatives or industry and, on the other hand, we have the population with ages between 35 and 55 years of age, that corresponds to the generations born during the communist period. The less numerous rural generations, now with ages between 50 and 60 years are explained by the urbanisation policy of the sixties and seventies, based on which an important share of the rural population was moved into the expanding towns of that period. The basis of the ages' pyramid reflects very precisely the substantial decrease of the birth-rate after 1990, and which turned even stronger in the last decade on the background of constant consistent diminishment in the numbers of rural population of fertile age.

Figure 2: Ages' pyramid of rural population in the micro-region South Arges (2015)

Source: own data processing based on NIS, TEMPO-online database

The decreasing trend in the number of rural population, and the increase in the weight of elderly population are two demographic processes which are expected to continue also in the following period. Due to these instances, the small and aged hamlets of the southern area of the micro-region are placed under the spectre of depopulation. In this context, legitimate questions arise regarding the functional viability of the villages with reduced numbers of population. Even if the topic stirs nowadays controversies at the level of local authorities, considering the demographic evolutions in the areas affected by marked ageing processes, measures of administrative reconfiguration are necessary by aggregating small-sized villages. Most probably, for the southern area of the county Arges the effects of marked population ageing will become chronic on a medium-term time-horizon (10 to 20 years), as the current negative trends gain in consistency.

The development level of villages in the southern area of county Arges – An image about the local development programmes

The first necessary observation is that all 20 analysed villages represent localities with an average level of poverty at community's level. According to the poverty degree classification grid for villages, as used by the Ministry of Agriculture and Development for evaluating the financing applications submitted for measure 322 within the NRDP (National Rural Development Programme) 2007-2013, the majority of analysed villages have poverty levels between 30% and 40% from total population (Table 2). The poorest localities are situated in the southern extremity of the micro-region (Popesti,

Izvoru, Harsesti, Barla, Recea and Stolnici) where estimates based on this indicator showed values of over 40%. For these villages, the absolute poverty rate, considered to represent the weight of population suffering from severe material deprivation exceeds 10% out of the population. Beyond any other debated about the fidelity of this type of estimates, it is obvious that the analysed micro-region does not represent an advantaged area from the economic viewpoint and that, overall, the issues recorded in this area are rather similar to those registered at the level of most rural areas from Romania.

Table 2: The poverty degree of villages

	Rata sărăciei (%)
Bârla	41,4
Buzoiești	34,5
Căldăraru	39,5
Hîrsești	43,1
Izvoru	46,8
Lunca Corbului	31,7
Miroși	39,5
Mozăceni	36,9
Negrași	38,3
Popești	46,6
Râca	Lipsa date
Recea	41,4
Rociu	26,3
Săpata	34,3
Slobozia	40
Ștefan cel Mare	38,3
Stolnici	40,3
Suseni	30,5
Teiu	31,7

Source: MARD, Applicant's guide for measure 322, Appendix 11: List of villages with the corresponding poverty rate (www.apdpr.ro)

In the context of the analyses regarding the development level of the rural localities, a series of observations are necessary about the coordinates of local budgets and to the main sources by which the development of localities is supported by the administration. Four main dimensions contribute to building up the public amounts managed by mayors: *own incomes, amounts allocated from the central budget, subventions granted for specific objectives, loans and sums from the EU and other institutions for projects* (Law no. 273/2006 regarding local public finances). Own incomes represent the sums that local administrations collect and manage locally from dues and taxes. The financial autonomy degree of a locality is the higher the more own incomes are higher in relation to the sums directed from the central budget. Another category of incomes based on which local budgets are constituted, and preponderant in the case of villages without an extended taxation basis, is represented by the amounts allocated from the central budget. Public transfers are intended to support the activities of public institutions and to contribute to balancing local budgets by supporting less developed localities. Another important dimension for ensuring the financing of local budgets is represented by subventions. These are public sums directed from the local budget by the ministries for specific purposes. The three enumerated sources were completed by another

resource in the last years, together with the implementation of the new structural programmes, respectively the fourth category representing sums from the European Union for implementing projects at local and regional level. Next to these resources, the local administrations might supplement their budgets by donations, sponsorships, or loans, yet most times the amounts obtained by these means are very scarce.

The data regarding the coordinates of the income budgets of the analysed villages show an important variance from one case to the other, but also on multiannual basis. The explanation resides in the differentiated allocations of the sums directed from the central budget for investments, and the differences recorded regarding the amounts entering into the budgets of villages due to implementing some European financed projects. In the period 2008-2014, the most consistent amounts were managed by the villages Barla (63 million Lei), Buzoesti (40 million), Suseni (34 million), Harsesti (33.9 million), Slobozia (33.1 million) and Rociu (30.5 million), while in the villages Popesti, Teiu, Sapata and Izvoru the multiannual budgets were below the threshold of 20 million Lei (Table 3).

Table 3: Total incomes collected to local budgets in the period 2008-2014 (million Lei)

	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	TOTAL
Bârla	6.5	5.3	5.3	12.6	15.5	11.5	6.7	63.4
Buzoiești	5.2	5.1	5.8	5.1	5.3	5.2	8.2	39.9
Caldararu	3.4	2.7	2.7	2.5	2.5	4.5	3.7	22
Hârsești	2.9	2.9	2.3	2	11.3	8.1	4.4	33.9
Izvoru	3.2	2.3	3	2.3	2	1.9	2.6	17.3
Luca Corbului	4.3	4.2	3	3.4	2.6	4.5	5.8	27.8
Miroși	2.7	2.4	2.6	2.6	3	4.5	4	21.8
Mozăceni	4.2	4.1	3.7	2.9	3.3	4	4.6	26.8
Negrași	4.9	3.1	2.7	2.5	2.5	2.6	3.3	21.6
Popești	3.6	3.3	3.1	2.2	2.2	2	2.3	18.7
Recea	4.5	3.2	2.9	2.8	2.6	3.4	4.1	23.5
Rociu	5.9	4.1	3.7	5.6	3.5	3.2	4.5	30.5
Săpata	1.9	1.9	1.8	1.8	1.9	2.8	3.8	15.9
Slobozia	6.8	4.4	4.1	3.7	4.1	4.3	5.7	33.1
Stolnici	4.4	4.6	3.1	3	3.1	3.1	5.7	27
Suseni	5.3	3.9	3.4	4.6	5	3.8	8.2	34.2
Ștefan cel Mare	3.7	2.6	2.3	2.7	2.8	2.8	7	23.9
Teiu	5.6	2.2	1.6	1.7	1.8	1.6	2	16.5
Ungheni	3	2.8	4	3.1	3.5	6	5.2	27.6
Raca	2	1.9	1.9	3.8	1.6	2.2	2.4	15.8

Source: Own processing after the data of the Ministry of Rural Development and Public Administration, the Directorate for Fiscal Policies and Local Budgets http://www.dpjbl.mdrap.ro/sit_yen_si_chelt_uat.html

The own incomes recorded by the villages are in none of the analysed instances enough for supporting development programmes. In most cases, the weight of own incomes varies between 30% and 40% from total budget, in the context of some limited total income budgets, such as the case of the localities we refer to, and where the amounts collected yearly on this dimension vary between 500 thousand and 2 million Lei. In the period 2008-2014, only five villages had own budgetary incomes exceeding the threshold of 40%: Sapata, Stolnici, Izvoru, Roiciu and Buzoesti. The first three from

these had, however, registered high values of this financial indicator, under the conditions in which the administered budgets were very low.

Regarding the volume of subventions that villages benefitted from, the data show a considerable dispersion. The multiannual differences between the amounts from the state budget directed towards projects for modernising the rural area are significant (Table 4). A first observation that can be detached from analysing this type of data shows that in the majority of cases the subvention amounts were insufficient for supporting vast projects and that sums directed in this manner had the role to ensure the financial flow required for supporting some multiannual projects or the activities of local institutions. Nevertheless, at the level of the micro-region were financed from budgetary sources a series of important projects for developing local infrastructure. From the most important amounts, which exceeded in the period 2008-2014 the amount of three million Lei benefitted the villages Ștefan cel Mare, Barla, Ungheni, Suseni, and Rociu, while for villages such as Teiu, Miroși, Negrasi, Săpata, Caldăraru or Mozaceni the amounts were significantly less.

Table 4

	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	TOTAL
Bârla	455,166	28,894	422915	231,222	1,787,616	1,554,047	161,869	4,641,729
Buzoiești	393,731	24,557	656303	89,848	31,195	46,745	118,147	1,360,526
Căldăraru	210,379	111,520	183611	104,618	73,569	93,096	38,275	815,068
Harsești	210,265	113,745	129572	107,358	43,643	80,000	1,333,899	2,018,482
Izvoru	145,267	108,637	112731	68,263	67,866	64,560	163,693	731,017
Lunca Corbului	227,668	9,223	229180	490,112	76,154	25,005	1,115,967	2,173,309
Miroși	167,924	39,892	140621	59,931	24,730	38,982	44,563	516,643
Mozaceni	219,438	6,274	177450	31,842	30,503	46,535	326,354	838,396
Negrași	421,195	14,880	173805	81,899	35,705	36,635	33,783	797,902
Popești	432,219	732,275	203352	452,526	109,774	50,696	24,864	2,005,706
Recea	1,171,490	272,606	373929	141,983	110,263	430,334	477,690	2,978,295
Rociu	751,779	7,096	152711	1,625,862	72,589	118,935	816,167	3,545,139
Săpata	133,387	10,009	106106	22,984	22,722	26,593	468,905	790,706
Slobozia	991,256	39,263	417170	47,742	44,602	61,598	924,036	2,525,667
Ștolnici	261,776	18,636	206377	117,729	67,353	99,150	1,389,764	2,160,785
Suseni	373,809	697,025	522506	966,709	1,006,015	37,826	674,678	4,278,568
Ștefan cel Mare	638,978	610,884	243145	41,063	325,528	61,716	3,270,329	5,191,643
Teiu	222,446	5,447	119143	78,805	10,487	19,742	13,043	469,113
Ungheni	317,646	16,503	752679	1,008,032	816,339	168,961	932,343	4,012,503
Râca	129,957	257,138	101716	1404789	139,324	142,023	127,959	2,302,906

Source: Own processing after the data of the Ministry of Rural Development and Public Administration, the Directorate for Fiscal Policies and Local Budgets http://www.dpfbl.mdrap.ro/sit_ven_si_chelt_uat.html

Regarding the dimension of accessing European funds intended for the modernisation of rural areas, the situation is just as diverse. The sums received into the account of effected payments within projects of this type reveal a strong differentiation of the villages according to the size of received financial support (Table 5). The localities Barla and Harsești, which developed several such programmes, received 20 million Lei, respectively 15 million Lei for the realised investments. The villages Suseni, Ungheni, Lunca Corbului and Buzoesti benefitted also from amounts varying between 2 and 3.5 million Lei for implementing in-point projects. At the opposite end, eight localities

didn't manage to attract any European funds at all, and another six have developed small-scale projects. At the core of this differentiation are two dimensions, regarding the specifics and nature of the developed projects. Thus, localities that accessed large financing lines, such as the National Rural Development Programme and the Environment Operational Programme have benefitted of generous financial allocations, as compared with the localities where smaller-scale projects were implemented.

Table 5: Budgetary incomes of villages in the southern area of county Arges ensured by implementing European funded projects

	2011	2012	2013	2014	Total
Bârla	7,590,026	8,357,031	4,020,071	0	19,967,128
Buzoiești		0	0	1,906,274	1,906,274
Căldăraru		0	0	0	0
Hârsești		9,251,145	5,739,304	171,967	15,162,416
Izvoru		0	0	0	0
Lunca Corbului		0	1,303,200	1,085,821	2,389,021
Miroși		0	0	88,695	88,695
Mozăceni		0	0	0	0
Negrași	39,000	12,520	117,000	177,343	345,863
Popești		0	0	0	0
Recea		0	0	226,173	226,173
Rociu		0	0	0	0
Săpata		0	0	0	0
Slobozia		0	0	0	0
Stolnici		0	0	84,075	84,075
Suseni		0	0	3,563,161	3,563,161
Ștefan cel Mare		0	0	220,363	220,363
Teiu		0	0	0	0
Ungheni		0	3,393,156	1,650	3,394,806
Râca	490357	0	0	229,189	719,546

Source: Own processing after the data of the Ministry of Rural Development and Public Administration, Directorate for Fiscal Policies and Local Budgets http://www.dpfbl.mdrap.ro/sit_ven_si_chelt_uat.html

The amounts available by means of the measure 322 of NRDP represented the most consistent financings available to the rural localities for the last years. In Arges, based on measure 322 were financed 17 integrated development projects from which only two were implemented in villages in the south of the county (Barla and Harsesti). Both projects were selected for financing in 2009, being developed effectively in the period 2010-2013. The respective projects benefitted of generous financial allocations of over 2.4 million Euros each and aimed at investments in drinkable water networks and sewerage, road modernisation, rehabilitation of some cultural houses and the creation of an after-school type centre. All in all, the majority of the projects accessed based on measure 322 present a marked symmetry from the viewpoint of the objectives proposed for investments, a thing originating in the way the programme was designed at national level, based on the proposed percentage grid.

Other important projects developed at the level of the micro-region were those implemented based on measure 125(a) dedicated to modernising agricultural roads at the level of the villages Harsesti, Suseni, Lunca Corbului, and Buzoesti. These localities benefitted of financial support up to an amount of 1 million Euro for investments in

access roads to agricultural areas located next to the villages. The impact of these projects on the quality of life of the rural population is, obviously, low having more an economic functionality for the communities. There are many voices debating over the opportunity of implementing these projects, considering that the allotted amounts should have been directed to objectives aimed at increasing the quality of life for the population, motivating that an agricultural road according to high quality standards contributes less to reaching this type of objectives.

The financing framework for the modernisation projects of rural infrastructure underwent a significant reorientation in 2013 as the National Local Development Programme (NLDP) was initiated. The initiation of this governmental programme was a requirement on the background of contracting the entire available amount based on European funds and aimed at investments in rural infrastructure. Thereby, the National Local Development Programme had the role of contributing to covering partially the financing demand of modernisation projects for the period 2013-2016. This programme was set-up by merging and harmonising several specific measures which were previously regulated¹. NLDP was substantiated by the Emergency Ordinance of the Government no. 28/2013 and structured on three sub-programmes: a) “Modernising the Romanian Village”, b) “Urban Regeneration of Municipalities and Towns”, c) “Infrastructure at County Level”. The development objectives of rural areas aimed at by the sub-measure “a” from within the National Local Development Plan pursue a wide range of investments in the public infrastructure of the villages: drinkable water and sewerage, road and bridges networks, school and medical infrastructure, sport halls, investments in touristic and cultural objectives, etc.

The list of development projects financed by the National Local Development Programme (Table 6) show that public funds were directed towards financing 11 priority projects. The projects with the most consistent budgets are those providing for setting-up public networks of sewage in the villages. Beyond these objectives, two projects were selected regarding the expansion and modernisation of drinkable water networks (in Lunca Corbului and Ungheni) along with four projects meant to realise investments in the rehabilitation of the communal roads (Barla, Lunca Corbului, Recea, and Rociu).

¹ Up to 2012 there were several ministerial programmes with distinct objectives, which were subsequently included in NLDP:

- *Governmental Resolution (GR) no 577/1997: “The Programme regarding rehabilitation, modernisation and/ or asphalt works for roads of county and local interest, water supply, sewage and treatment of used waters for villages, and in the territorial-administrative entities with touristic resources”*

- *Governmental Emergency Ordinance (GEO) no. 7/2006, approved and completed by Law no. 71/2007: “Programme for developing infrastructure and some sport bases in the rural area”.*

- *GEO no. 40/2006, approved and completed by Law no. 61/2007: “Multiannual priority programmes for environment and water management”*

- *GR no. 530/2010: “The Rehabilitation and modernisation programme - 10.000 km roads and ways of county and local interest”.*

Table 6: List of objectives financed by NLDP

Locality	Objective	Period	Total project value (Lei)
Barla	Communal road modernisation	2015-2017	1,5 million
Izvoru	Sewage and treatment station	2015-2017	2,2 million
Lunca Corbului	Communal road modernisation	2015-2017	1,4 million
Lunca Corbului	Water supply	2014	1,8 million
Mozăceni	Sewage and treatment station	2015-2017	1,2 million
Recea	Communal road modernisation	2015-2017	1,5 million
Rociu	Communal road modernisation	2015-2017	1,1 million
Ștefan cel Mare	Sewage and treatment station	2014- 2015	5,2 million
Ungheni	Expansion of water supply network	2013-2015	1,8 million
Slobozia	Sewage and treatment station	2014	4,7 million
Stolnici	Sewage and treatment station. Water supply	2014 – în implementation	3,7 million

Source: Ministry of Regional Development and Public Administration, List of objectives financed in 2015 (<http://www.mdrap.ro/lucrari-publice/pndl/-8564>)

Conclusions

We could mention the existence of a certain degree of symmetry between villages that benefitted from the most consistent support based on amounts directed from the state budget and the villages that managed to access the most important projects with national or European financing. Actually, a cluster of villages can be highlighted that attracted significantly more public funds, whether we consider subventions granted from the state budget, or financing granted by the National Local Development Plan, the National Rural Development Programme, or the Operational Programme “Environment”. The village Barla is the best example in this respect. This village benefitted in the period between 2010 and 2015, of over 26 de million Lei for supporting local development (most part of this amount was assured by gaining a

project of integrated development financed by measure 322 of the National Rural Development Programme 2017-2013). In a similar situation is also the village Harsesti, which had available over 17 million Lei for developing investments in local infrastructure. Consistent sums (between 7 and 11 million Lei) were to the benefit of the villages Stefan cel Mare, Ungheni, Lunca Corbului and Slobozia, as well. At the opposite pole are six villages (Caldararu, Mirosi, Negrasi, Popesti, Sapata and Teiu), which did not succeed to develop any important project of modernising the local infrastructure. Actually, for these localities the period of the last years did not bring any notable development regarding an increase in the quality of life level within the community with respect to the dimension of modernising local infrastructure. Thus, the local development gaps, even at the level of a relatively homogeneous micro-region from the economic and social viewpoint, such as the southern area of the county Arges, have only turned more marked for the last years.

The distinct experiences recorded by the villages in their approaches for accessing funds aimed at rural modernisation might be explained starting from the dimension of competences and of the varying degree of local administrations' involvement in writing and implementing projects. Gaining a project brings with it additional competences, useful also for accessing other programmes of this type. In most instances, the success in implementing a development project brings with it increased chances of gaining other projects in the future. Comparatively, administrations failing to implement important projects remain with an experience deficit which decreases their chances in attracting such financing. Leaving aside this objective aspect, we might also discuss about the existence of a subjective component in ensuring access to financial resources, highlighted by the dimension of direct allocation of resources under the form of subventions from the state budget. The differences appearing on this dimension between villages might be explained, largely, based on the political influence networks at various decision levels.

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