
RURAL DEVELOPMENT. THE CASE OF TWO COMMUNITIES

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Abstract: *The article was elaborated within the MarginalRural project, a grant of the Romanian Academy, carried out between 2019 and 2022. The purpose of the grant was to collect data from several rural and small urban communities and analyze the demographic data but also data regarding infrastructure, health and education services, sources of income, local employers and more. The analysis included different perspectives, respectively an institutional one (through the opinions of representatives of public institutions), an entrepreneurial one (through the reflected opinion in interviews with local entrepreneurs) and that of vulnerable groups (through the opinions of interviewed disadvantaged people). The objective of the project was to analyze the phenomenon of rural development/underdevelopment and reveal the factors that influence development or marginalization.*

Key words: *rural community, development, social inclusion, education, employment, social services.*

Introduction

Approaches to the phenomenon of development give greater importance to both the stock of social capital and human capital, but also to infrastructure as predictors of social development. The model for measuring local/ community development such as that proposed by Dumitru Sandu, for example, identifies two types of structural factors of community development: human capital and community-level infrastructure. The conclusions of the author's analysis (D. Sandu, 2011) show that life chances are strongly differentiated in Romania depending on where you live, and the gaps are structured on four main dimensions: residential environment, residential concentration, access to services and infrastructure, occupation field/sector. These dimensions are proposed to the analysis in our study too, together with the fields of education, health, consumption,

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social relations, they form the framework for the analysis of development equality / inequality social issues manifested at the regional and local level. The residence, the positioning in relation to the city/ county centre, on the one hand, the size of the locality, as well as the degree and type of occupation, represent the main elements which configures different local development profiles.

Mihalache Flavius (2020) also proposes an approach to the rural environment, rather as a sum of various social and economic contexts, "outlined *from the point of view of regional specificities and the different economic orbit of rural UATs around important towns (...)* The generic term of rural environment is not based on common characteristics of different areas but represents an accumulation of rather varied local coordinates" (Mihalache, 2020, p.70). The author identifies the existence of some major profiles of rural localities, located in different stages of socio-economic development. The use of small areas of agricultural land, the use of traditional methods and the involvement of household members in agriculture activities are characteristics of the Romanian countryside (Mihalache, 2020, p.71).

The World Bank proposes a local human development index (LHDI), built on six indicators. This index is used to position and differentiate small villages and towns in Romania, from the perspective of local human development, on a 5-step scale. Comprehensive development requires "stocks on all five dimensions of community capital (education, housing, employment and mobility experience), in a national context" (Teșliuc, Grigoras, Stanculescu, 2016, p. 159)

To measure local/community development, as we showed previously, Sandu D. (1999, 2011) constructed the local social development index to show the current configuration of social development gaps in Romania. The local social development index is calculated by aggregating seven primary indicators. The relevant and available indicators for the community capital of localities are (Sandu, 2011, p. 5) human capital (education stock at community level), vital capital (average age of personnel over 14 years and life expectancy at birth), material capital (number of cars per 1000 inhabitants, average area per dwelling, gas consumption per capita) and category of size and residency of the locality. The conclusions of Sandu's analysis show that life chances are strongly differentiated in Romania depending on where you live, and the disparities are structured along four axes: urban-rural living, residential concentration, access to services and infrastructure and employment sector, a fifth axis with limited relevance in urban space refers to relational capital, associated with cultural diversity. These axes, together with four domains: education, health, consumption, social relations constitute the framework of social development inequality manifested at the regional level.

Sandu shows that the biggest axis of differentiation is that between urban and rural. The rural continues to have a much higher infant mortality than the urban, a lower life expectancy than the urban. The quality of housing is systematically better in urban areas than in rural areas for all the counties of the country. A second axis concerns the chances of accessibility. Sandu shows that social development is higher in the communes close to the city and in communities with access to European roads, compared to those that only have access to communal or county roads. The shuttle also represents a relevant factor. Increased commuting bring income within the community and plays a role of development. The third axis refers to the predominant agricultural

occupation of the population. In rural communities, the activities of cultivating cereals in particular, associated with low incomes. Communities where animal husbandry is a developed sector tend to be more socially developed. The fourth axis is given by the size of the locality as a number of inhabitants. In communes with a small number of farmers, mortality rates by age group tend to be higher. The fifth dimension is given by relational capital. Regarding the education stock, the average number of school years completed by the population of a locality is a relevant indicator for both urban and rural areas. (Sandu, 2011, p. 18-20).

Another direction of analysis is represented by studies on the impact of structural factors of development and how they are regulated by the operation of some local social mechanisms. In Romania, authors such as Catalin Zamfir (2007), Voicu M (2004), Voicu B. (2005), Tesliuc, Grigoras, Stanculescu (2016), Preotesi (2013) have designed analysis models of the social development of the community to the people from the Romanian area. In the following, we will present two rural communities in Romania, at which we look at from the perspective of the indicators described above.

Vlad Tepes commune, Calarasi county

Socio-demographic data. Vlad Tepes commune is in the north-eastern part of the Baragan plain, on the Bucharest-Calarasi national road, approximately 30 km from Calarasi Municipality, and consists of the villages of Vlad Tepes and Mihai Viteazul. The population of the commune is of 2078 people, in 1142 households. The ethnic structure of the commune does not officially include Roma, although there is a significant number in the village of Vlad Tepes, but they are undeclared in the census and in many cases Romanized. Population it is in an accentuated aging, the number of children born in the last 3 years being only 7 babies, and the number of deaths 134. Of the 2078 inhabitants of the commune, more than half, 1263, are pensioners. The total number of children in the locality (0-18 years) (2021) is 276, of which 51 are enrolled in kindergarten and 168 are enrolled in general school (2019/2021).

Infrastructure. The distance from Calarasi Municipality is 30 km on DN3, the commune has no access to the railway. A percentage of 90% of the households are connected to water, but there are older local problems related to the potability of the water, the one from the network has a sulphurous component and the one from the well has nitrites and nitrates and, dangerous substances for infants, representing a significant danger for them. Approximately one third of the commune's households are already connected to the sewerage, through a connection project. There is no gas connection to the commune, but there is a '*submitted project for gas connection*'. (Authority representative)

The waste collection system is carried out based on a contract through the town hall, with weekly collection and selective collection. School is active in recycling actions of various types of waste (collect including batteries for recycling), they ran a project in this sense in the locality through the school, a project that also generated an online platform, which is a favourable point for the community. This has an important role in educating children regarding recycling and shows the importance of the involvement of the main formal local leaders in local development. *There is a contract through the town hall,*

weekly, for all the residents, not only at school, and the garbage is collected selectively, we received from the town hall specially for each type of waste a container. We at school are more ecological, we like it. We also collect batteries. It's an older project of my soul and I 'm trying to change something, but it's hard. At least with the children the change is possible, and maybe through them we can change with the adults. (School representative). Garbage is collected and deposited on a platform near the village of Mihai Viteazul, the problem is the proximity to the village, in the summer the smell becomes unbearable, say the interviewees: *The garbage platform is not even a kilometer from our village, but it belongs to Ciocanesti, who owns the land here close to us, but it is a large sewage treatment plant, made at the county level.* (Retired judge).

Transport. Local transport is provided by local minibuses. *They come from 5 am, until 7 pm, because there are minibuses that run between Calarasi and Bucuresti and then there is a continuous flow on this part of transport.* (Entrepreneur). Public transport is characterized by the locals as being quite good, with enough bus stops, the DN3 passes through the commune, and Calarasi is 30 km from Vlad Tepes. The railway is 25 km away from the commune, at Lehliu Station. The situation of the sidewalks is problematic in the commune. The asphalt was broken up to introduce sewage and running water, and then there were no funds to restore them. *It's a disaster. DN3 is asphalted and on the otherwise we are in a disaster with the road. They paved the roads and finally received approval for sewage and running water and broke their roads to put in the sewage and running water pipe and let them have leftovers, because there was no more money for reasphalting.* (Local leader)

Housing In Vlad Tepes commune, a large part of the inhabitants is Roma, but not declared as having this ethnicity, compared to the village of Mihai Viteazul where Romanians predominate, according to the respondents' statements, but there is an aging population. The condition of the houses is altered for the elderly population in case they do not benefit from the help of relatives. With the employment of local people at the Makita company, the packaging sector, but also other companies from Calarasi, Bucharest or Ilfov county, the houses became more beautiful, they were renewed, say the interviewees. Also, 50 homes of some social cases were rehabilitated through a project carried out by the town hall. The proximity to urban centres, where the inhabitants of the commune could find a job, but also the appearance in the commune of an important employer, Makita company, clearly represents a local development factor.

Agricultural activity. The area of arable land of the commune is of 6,303 ha, and the number of agricultural economic units is 22. *The land is no longer worked individually with the horse, the plow is gone because the people have grown old. Now 85 % of the land is leased by agricultural associations.* It is estimated that at least 15 % of the population is self-employed in agriculture. Many of the households have solar panels for vegetable cultivation and pigs and poultry for their own consumption. Very few families have large animals: cows (37) and horses. There are only a few shepherds with sheep (400) and goats. There is a decrease in the number of animals, those who have jobs during day, have no way to take care of animals.

Animals are very rare in the whole area of the village, not only in Vlad Tepes. Very few people have cows anymore, so cows have become a rarity in a village, because the old people who took care of them have kind of gone and the young people ...some don't want to work, others have work in the city and

even then, they don't have time to take care of animals, and there are very few who have animals. Cows, horses are very rare. Now they started to be rare the pigs. Every household has a few birds and a piglet there. (Entrepreneur)

The use of animal products is done in the locality. *There are still some shepherds who have animals, but they exploit them from the gate, from home.* (Local authority). *It is an area with 15 agricultural farms. I am one of them. This also leads to a better life. There are people employed on these farms. They are modernized, i.e., with new equipment. We are very well. Renting land let to earn money. There are very few self - supporting households. There are many vegetable gardens.* (Local authority) (...) *Our land is basically leased, we have several leasers who do this, considering that the population is older No, they don't have animals anymore.* (Local authority)

Occupation. One of the main employers in the community is Makita company and agricultural farms. It is estimated that with this company entering the commune, starting from 2015, the standard of living in the community increased and this was seen in the modernization of houses and the introduction of bathrooms in the homes. The total number of employees in the locality is approximately 250 people. The number of people who went to work abroad, according to the city hall data, is of approximately 200 people. A number of 80 shuttle workers are also estimated. 60 % of the commune residents are already pensioners (1263), a quarter of the commune's workforce are salaried, and the rest of the active workforce are day laborers. Those without education use a combination of daily work, child allowances, pensions of extended family members and social aid. *Starting in 2015 this village was saved by the Makita company near Branesti, where they gathered everyone from there and gave them a place to work and from that moment on, his standard of living increased to about two or three times, because they all have a job. (...) When I came here in 2006, they asked me to give them work because they were dying of hunger, most of them were unemployed, but since 2015, let me say, the standard of living increased about two or three times, maybe even better. They all started to build houses, to modernize their bathrooms, toilets, that is, the village has changed radically since 2015* (Retired)

Health services. In the locality, there is a permanent centre, six doctors and six assistants from other localities who change every four hours, therefore medical services are accessible, including in case of emergency. Health problems of the locality are specific to the aging population. The co-payment and the waiting list for a check-up with a specialist, outside the locality, are mentioned as barriers in accessing some specialist medical services. *A very large percentage of the patients is the elderly population and here all kinds of affections intervene. As for the young population up to 60, there are not very big health problems.* (Representative of health services) *Sick in all ways, but untreated, unsearched, everyone is very bad here. Anyway, there is a queue at the pharmacy, it's the most crowded place, I think.* (Representative school) *People in the country even if they allow it, they don't give money to go to the control because they schedule you in seven months, I mean the referral, the analyses as well, that they are for a few days a month, at the doctors you have to have something to give on the side and I will stay until, in the phase either they take the rescue or something happens, they usually do not go to the doctors. But we have an advantage in this regard, we are the third locality in the county in which we have non - stop emergency medicine, that is, we have doctors on call. Nonstop is a doctor and a nurse.* (School representative)

The local family doctor has attracted a home-care company for immobilized patients in the community. There is a contract with a medical analysis company from Calarasi that collect samples and bring the results to the community. *We also have a homecare company organized by me, which addresses mainly for disabled people, those with sequelae of cerebral stroke, immobilized patients, collection of medical tests at home is ensured for them. They have everything, there is no obstacle for them. Networks provide them with national programs, the pharmacy offers them medication.* (Representative of health services)

Education. The school in Vlad Tepes is modernized: the furniture is new, the equipment is of the latest generation, computers, video projectors, etc. Through several projects with European funds, the school and kindergarten were renewed. In contrast, the school and kindergarten in the village of Mihai Viteazul were abandoned. Even if it was modernized it cannot be used because of the mold in the walls, the lack of involvement of the local authorities in the maintenance led to a degradation of the initial investment. The Pro-community project was successfully carried out between 2014 and 2020, approx. 54 adults between 40 and 60 years of age were enrolled in the program.

Financial shortages are considered an obstacle for the children of the commune to access a university. *Only those who have the opportunity can keep their children studying, only those who have a commercial or agricultural company or a job, because it is quite difficult to you have a child in college/university. I didn't really see him return in this commune after graduating from school (college).* (Entrepreneur)

Once they finish their studies, the young people do not return to the community, but look for employment in Calarasi, Bucharest or other cities. The phenomenon of urban migration after finishing studies is widespread. *Some of the children went to vocational school, others to high school and others stopped at secondary school. In principle, they did not return to the commune after finishing high school, they went to college and got a job either in Bucharest or in Calarasi. They never came back. There are few who have returned. Or they leave abroad at work. Those who qualified in certain trades left for better, better paid jobs.* (Social worker)

The involvement of the school management in programs/projects, fundraising, other ways of uplifting the school and the community is to be appreciated.

We didn't have anything inside, until we got the furniture and so on. They all came with a bit of luck, I guess we're a bit lucky. Through that project we bought video projectors in all new classes, of laptops for computer science, all new, I have 30 intelligent, interactive boards, as well, and after, through a friend who has an NGO, we made a partnership with them and made an association and let them publicize that we are a school in which we care a lot about the environment and offer recyclable materials for free, we offer batteries, we offer everything and we want it too, we don't want money except anything that can help a school instead. My colleagues donated materials made by them personally, various, we have colleagues who are good at computers and do various things, after which the association developed, and we started giving certificates of volunteering and various documents by which they would prove that they had participated. (School representative)

Vulnerable groups and benefits/social services addressed in the community.

The number of people receiving Guaranteed Minimum Income in 2021 in the community is of 26, and the total number of people receiving heat aid in (2021) is 76.

Vulnerable groups in the commune are identified as elderly, children (especially those of Roma ethnicity) and people with disabilities, according to the statements of residents.

There is the elderly who have small pensions and they still have grandchildren next to them who do not want to work and take their mother 's and father 's pension, I tell you, this is the reality. There are those who work as much as possible and have social assistance and still go to work during the day, day laborers, so to speak, but there are also some who have no income and they don't want anything to work.

Children because they are victims at some point of irresponsible parents, because you can no longer put parents in vulnerable groups because they could, so there are chances to take an attitude, to rise from the comfort zone in which they are... but children are sure victims because they have no chance with some parents. (Entrepreneur)

Roma ethnic groups. These are the worst conditions, but also these young people from the age of 14 who finish 7th grade, 8th grade, how are they hanging around here and finally they have children, and they are not well (Local doctor)

Children living in poverty are vulnerable, say the authorities, because they are victims of uneducated parents, some addicted to alcohol. The elderly can also be victims of domestic violence. Another vulnerable group is that of young people that have a very low educational stock, therefore they lack the opportunity to get employed, but they also lack the confidence that they can overcome their situation, following a second chance gender education program. The after-school program that was run in the community was considered very effective for the children because they had a meal provided.

How could these people be helped... Well, financial help if they receive it, they should receive it directly, not through their parents, possibly with educational resources. But the discussion keeps coming back to the education part. (Entrepreneur). Mobile home unit for homeless people would be good. They benefit from services provided by caregivers at home. We employ 4 people who do this. For children it is a little more difficult here. We had the "after school" project, the children served meals there. But we didn't manage to continue this project, we hit the financial side. We employ 11 personal assistants for people with disabilities and about 50 allowances, people with severe disabilities accompanied. (Public authority representative)

They need guidance from this to manage in society, those from vulnerable groups, some of them are cut off from the real world. They have no idea when they need something, they do not know where to go. They start to question each other and give each other erroneous information. These offices at the county capital level should also exist at the locality level. In that locality, someone at a certain time, or a platform, should come to the town hall to guide the people, to enlighten them: what they must do, where to go, what documents they need. (Representative of public authority) (...)

A centre for the elderly, but also for children, would be good, but it is very difficult because of the finances needed and we should have a place for this activity. (Public authority representative) (...) Counselling centres at least for a period, not to be daily functional. Regional centres, not necessarily in Vlad Tepes. I had also proposed that it be done regionally, I don't know three or four localities... I was

referring primarily to schools, but even localities have many social and family problems. (Representative of public authority)

Locality development opportunities. Investments in agriculture and job creation are seen as the main ways of local development by the interviewed locals. *Agriculture, I don't see anything else there, because it is in an area where there are no tourist attractions, for example we are facing this problem because a lot of people ask, " what else can we see in this area ". And it can't be done anymore, I do not know of any other tourist attraction here. So, we focus on this side with the lavender culture visit on everything that means visit.* (Entrepreneur) (...) Funds from PNRR are expected as a saving solution for some of the local problems: infrastructure, school dropout. *And now I also submitted the PNRR, I submitted the project on abandonment and fortunately I entered the first stage, I was selected to the school, so we are fine. I waited to submit the financing application on Monday and three years if I receive financing it will be a success,* (Representative of public authority) (...) Investments in jobs are also seen as the main engine for raising the standard of living. *Garment factory, for example, factories with something to exist. It would be profitable for those who would invest because labour in the country is cheap.* (Public authority representative)

Because there are also meadow areas here to make not a big factory but a small one to make for canning vegetables, for example, they would ask him and say if we do it's more convenient to give them our products to run to... But even the times do not help us anymore, because Baraganul is no longer what it once was (Retired) (...) *Apart from agriculture, it is possible that in other parts of the garment factory, in shoes, they could qualify them for the workplace, they would someone could do something like that, but I don't see anything else here in the area.* (Public authority representative)

In the case of Vlad Tepes commune, the residential environment, the positioning in relation to the big cities / county seat, on the one hand, the size of the locality, as well as the degree of and the type of occupation represented the main elements that shaped local development. As Sandu also shows, social development is higher in communities with access to main important roads, and commuting has increased and brings income within the community, being a growth factor. In the case of those with a very low educational level, it is mainly the case of the Roma population, who represent a vulnerable group - their potential labour force supply is, in many cases, considered inadequate, in itself, by employers, not only relative to certain positions that demand special skills and knowledge, but ethnic stereotypes, fuelled by particular experiences of certain interactions, also contribute to such a situation deficiencies of some ethnic Roma with the labour market.

Comana commune, Brasov County

Comana is a commune in Brasov county, Transylvania, consisting of the villages of Comana de Jos (residence), Comana de Sus, Crihalma and Ticusu Nou.

Socio-demographic data. According to official data, the population of Comana commune amounted to 3,076 inhabitants in 2021, an increase compared to the census data of 2002, when 2,635 inhabitants were registered. Most of the inhabitants are

Romanians (75.38%), with a minority of Roma (18.6%).¹ From the analysis of the demographic indicators, it can be noted that there is no population replacement rate, the number of deaths exceeds the number of births, in 2021 a number of 31 deaths were recorded and only 9 births. The total number of pensioners is of 328 peoples, approximately 10% of the commune. Population growth was achieved through immigration to the commune.

Comana commune infrastructure. The commune is crossed by DN1S, which connects DN13, E60 (Hoghiz) and DN1, E68 (Sercaia). DJ 104 K connects Comana de Jos with Bunesti, and DJ 104 N unites Comana de Jos with Comana de Sus. Bus stations are located in all four villages of the commune. For access to rail transport, Comana residents use Sercaia and Rupea railway stations. The road infrastructure of the commune is quite developed, as all the interviewees mentioned. 80 % of the roads are paved, the quality of the roads is good, there are connections with the main towns, Fagaras and Rupea. The only aspect that could be improved is the public transport schedule *"there is only one company that connects Rupea-Comana-Fagaras, in the morning it goes to Fagaras, and at 3 it returns"* (Representative of local public institution). Like public transport and the roads that connect the commune, pedestrian transport is also appreciated by the locals. Thus, it is mentioned that there are enough sidewalks, there is public lighting, even in a larger proportion, *"the public lighting has been done for two years, absolutely the whole commune is lit, we have economical LED bulbs"* (Local public authority representative). The connection to the water network is over 80%, the commune being in the process of establishing a public water management service. *"we have water purification and filtration station, it is a modern station that, now, we are in the moment of receiving and testing it, and DSP Brasov periodically comes to and take water samples, the water is good, I had no problems. We also have a general meter that can tell us how many cubic meters per day we consume"* (Local public authority representative).

The gas network is working in two of the four villages, in Comana de Jos commune (residence) and in Crihalma (covering approx. 40% of the commune), the commune 's strategy being the expansion of the network the other two villages, Comana de Sus, respectively Tihusu Nou through the National Recovery and Resilience Plan (PNRR). The number of families connected in Comana de Jos is *"somewhere around 100 and in Crihalma about 80, now with the facilities made by the operators, several families have been connected in free mode"* (Representative of local public authorities). In the case of those who do not have the possibility to heat with gas, they use solid fuel, mainly wood.

To garbage collection chapter, there is a management delegation contract concluded for a period of 5 years with an operator from Brasov that sanitizes the commune, *"the contract being made with the one that generates the garbage, not with the City Hall"* (Authority representative). For the collection of waste, there is a platform in the commune, where the population deposits the residues, later, they are picked up by the operator. The issue of pollution in the community was discussed. This first source of pollution seems to be the cement factory from Hoghiz, owned by the ROMCIM company, because the commune is transited by large machines that pollute through the noxes emitted and on

¹ <http://www.comuna-comana.ro/cadru-demografic/>

the other hand, it is about the location of the factory, in the immediate vicinity of the commune. This also generates cement dust, which is brought by the wind into the commune. More than that, there is a section within the factory where garbage is burned. Currently, cement dust pollution has decreased thanks to the installed filters: *"there were problems with the cement factory, when there were no special filters, when we had another row of cement on the tiles of the houses because of the dust which rose from the chimneys, the furnaces from there and came to us"* (Representative of local public institution). **The housing situation** is, in general, good, according to the declarations of the authorities, there are only to a small extent buildings in an advanced state of deterioration, there are buildings where citizens who have a precarious financial situation live, *"but most of the buildings are in good condition, that is, they allow good living"* (Representative of local public authorities).

Agricultural activity and the use of animal products. The total land area of the commune is 3478.12 ha, composed of arable land (2735.23 ha), and meadows (742.89 ha). The main common activities are agriculture and animal husbandry. Elderly people without power, they assigned, leased or gave the land for free in use to the youngest who develop agriculture and animal husbandry at an average level, *"as much as the geographical position allows"*, being located at the foot of the central group of the Persani Mountains. From the statements of the authorities, for 30 % of the households in the locality, agriculture is a source of income, and for 60% of them the household provides them with products for the strictly necessary *"they have two, three, four cows or some 20 sheep, I'm not talking about chickens or ducks, but not an economic gain, and the rest have other occupations, not all of them work in agriculture"* (Local public authority representative). The use of animal products is done by milk processors in the area who have opened collection points in the villages belonging to the commune, authorized by the Veterinary Sanitary Directorate. Thus, people take milk to these centers, where, subsequently, they receive the price according to the quantity brought. Regarding meat, *"everyone does as he can on the free market; there are also the big operators who, in the first summer, come and collect the lambs. We have several animal breeders in the community who have made a name for themselves by raising Angus cattle that are only for meat"* (Representative of local public authorities).

Occupation. The activities carried out in the commune are mainly agricultural and services. The number of employees in the locality is 64 people and commuters 44 people, according to official data. The opportunities to work outside the commune are represented by the economic operators who come and take the workers to integrate them in the factories they manage, the opportunities to work in the locality are from agriculture and animal husbandry to forestry work or logging. In the locality there are forest and basalt exploitations, and the reactivation of the basalt quarry in the Comanii valley and the construction of the Fagaras hydroelectric power plant, whose reservoir would extend to Hoghiz. However, commuting represents a source of work that is more and more common among the locals, whether it is done through the means of transport of economic operators, or by using their own cars. In the commune, a small part is represented by employees, because there are many people who have not graduated eight classes and that can be hardly become employed. Currently, within Crihalma Secondary School the "Second Chance" program for adult training *"An industrial platform was found in Codlea that allows the employment of unqualified people"* (representative of a local public institution).

The lack of continuity of work and, implicitly, of income amplifies the phenomenon of community impoverishment, *"there are many who benefit from social assistance, many who earn income for short periods, working on daily, or receiving benefits only for a short period of time"* (Representative of local public institution). Some of the villagers work as day labourers or amplify the phenomenon of migration abroad for a job, mainly seasonally. Regarding migration abroad for gainful purposes, the answer was unanimously affirmative, a sign that this is becoming increasingly attractive to the population. The pandemic stopped the phenomenon of migration, but the locals are optimistic that once the restrictions are lifted, they will be able to return to the economic activity that ensures them and their families a decent living; *"there is the seasonal issue that we all know, once, twice a year, more difficult in the last two years due to the pandemic situation"* (Local public institution representative). Qualified labor force is represented by the people who work at state institutions, at the town hall, at schools *"where all staff are qualified, in number of 33"* (Representative of educational institutions), but also professions such as the electrician or engineer. They carried out their activities at the factories in the area, such as the cement factory in Hoghiz, Rupea or Feldioara.

Social problems in the locality. The biggest social problem identified by the interviewees refers to economic aspects. Thus, regarding the quality of life, the inhabitants of Comana position themselves in the lower quintiles of income, because of the lack of investors in the area, a fact that comes along with reduced revenues to the local budget and stopped and reduced work on the formal market. Another problem identified is the situation of school dropouts and absence of parents gone for work in the past, it led to an increase in the school dropout rate, both among Romanians and among the population of Roma ethnicity, say the authorities". The children are left with their grandparents who, in a short time, can no longer control them, I think it is a general problem in the Romanian villages, says a representative of the authorities. In our village, there are families with departed parents, raised by grandparents and other relatives, as well as the Roma, there are financial problems that we are trying to support and we keep them close to the community, to the church (Representative of a local public institution). The number of children who dropped out of general school in 2021 was 23. School dropout is, therefore, a problem, as the interviewees unanimously expressed, but a mean of stimulating school completion would be economic operators in the metropolitan area of Brasov which impose eight classes for employment.

People with disabilities. Comana commune supports the 62 people with physical disabilities who live in the locality. Among the facilities listed by the authorities as offered to people with disabilities are access to the town hall, to the school and at the medical office. There are no social service providers in the locality to ensure support programs for people with disabilities. According to the social worker in the community, disabled people enjoy legislation that protects and promotes their rights, such as Law 416/2001 on the guaranteed minimum income, Law 277/2010 on the allowance for maintaining the family, as well as guidance through law 448/2006 on the protection and promotion of the rights of disabled persons.

Health services. The state of health of the population in the commune is perceived as generally good by the representatives of the interviewed authorities. According to the data obtained from the local public authority, the percentage of people from the locality

registered with the family doctor is 90%, being only one case of TB on record in the year 2021. In the commune, there is only one medical practice where a family doctor works, who offers his patients on - call services three times a week, a practice that has the necessary equipment, according to local declarations, there is also a dental practice and a pharmacy.

Education. There are two secondary schools and four kindergartens in the commune. The total number of children enrolled in kindergarten and general school in 2021 it is 470, and the number of children who dropped out of general school in 2021 it is 23, the total number of children enrolled in high school is 35. The main endowment within the school is the multidisciplinary synthetic field, where students can play sports such as football, volleyball or handball. After graduating from secondary school, 75% of students choose to continue their studies, either at a high school (60%) or at a vocational school (approx. 15%), the most requested being Fagaras because it is the most accessible in terms of transport. Regarding the continuation of university studies, approximately 50% of high school graduates from the commune choose to attend a college. According to the representatives of the educational institutions, some of the young people will remain in the village after finishing school, and others choose to leave, but *"the possibilities to continue the activity in the village after finishing the faculty are very limited due to the possibilities offered by the community"* (Local public institution representative). Perhaps the most important aspect related to education in the Comana commune is given by the "Second chance" program, within the Crihalma school, a program intended for adults who have not succeeded to complete their primary or secondary education. *"We are now fighting for the reduction of abandonment, for better promotability, we have also tried through various projects to stimulate them, so we attract them. Since October, the "Second Chance" program has been taking place, it is for the training of adults, i.e. those who did not complete four or eight classes at that time. They now have the chance to register to complete their studies because the factories in Coldea, Brasov, Feldioara required a minimum of eight classes, many of them could not get a job and even then, with the help of the Inspectorate, we implemented this project for the training of adults which is carried out until in July"* (Representative of an educational institution). Also, in the locality, there is a school of arts and crafts within the premises of the primary school.

Vulnerable groups. In the perception of the authorities, the vulnerable groups are represented by young families without jobs, by people between ages because they can no longer find a job and old people alone, who no longer have their children around. There are 117 people whose files regarding the Guaranteed Minimum Income (VMG) were approved (out of 117 applications) in 2021, as well as 493 people who benefit from the Guaranteed Minimum Income in 2021. Out of a total of 306 files of heat aids in 2021, all were approved, being a total of 768 beneficiaries of heat aid in 2021. The number of children from single - parent families is 32 in 2021. to take care of relatives for migration abroad for gainful purposes, but we do not have official data on this number.

Opportunities / barriers to local development. The potential for development in the perception of the authors is given by attracting investors with the aim of processing the raw material from animal husbandry, such as milk and meat, this would constitute an opportunity for development and could leads to the creation of jobs for the community, both skilled and unskilled. Tourism presents potential in the area,

considering the forest from Comana de Sus, where accommodation places, forest trails and roads can be built for those who are passionate about cycling (walking countries by bicycle for recreational purposes). The presence of natural reserves, such as Pestera Comana, the geological reserve at Piatra Cioplita or karst landscapes make Comana commune an area with tourist potential to be considered. Despite the developed infrastructure around Comana commune, attracting investors is difficult, a fact that brings the lack of more jobs in the locality, or funds to the local budget. A brake on local development is represented by the limited financial possibilities of some young people after completing their secondary school studies to go on to high school: *"lack of money; they finish the eighth grade, maybe they would continue their studies, if they had financial support or guidance from the family"* (Representative of a local public institution), but also the problem of school dropouts in the commune.

In the case of the Comada commune, we are dealing with an aging population, and a high percent of active population with low level of education, the high share in the economy of income sources of a poorly efficient agriculture, carried out in small individual farms and low share of employees in the working - age population, high rate of migration of young people with a high educational level to the cities; lack of occupational alternatives for those remaining in the respective localities; requiring the local social services. The route of internal migration is to towns with good high schools. In addition to the poor quality of education, another problem identified from the data collected is that of the inadequacy of school training to the requirements of the local market. One local strategy seems to be enrolment of the adults in the second chance school to finish 8 classes in order to get a job afterwards.

Among the social problems mentioned most often by the locals, the problem of jobs comes first and the local context that generates a very low degree of attractiveness for potential investors, the local offer of jobs being a very precarious one. The problem of jobs also has a qualitative dimension aimed at matching the supply of labour to the demand for labour. Employers complain that "the good workforce is over", they have either retired or left the locality/ country, and the school does not prepare young people in the fields in which they need knowledge of employees. Although there are many people without employment, a part of them are not willing to work, or consider that the offered salaries are too low. If, in the case of young people, it can be, in some cases, about the help of parents, as far as some of the unemployed are concerned, it is about a mix of social benefits, in which informal incomes from day/occasional work and their/the family's incomes from subsistence agriculture are added - whether it is self-consumption, or the valorisation of products through sale.

Conclusions

The study aimed to analyse the local socio-economic contexts and explain the factors and mechanisms of (under)development at the local level. The first factors detected in the analysis refer to the socio-economic impact of some deindustrialization phenomena in the nearby (so that active workforce was not able to find a job anymore) and the significant presence of activities in subsistence agriculture. The second type of factors refers to the ways in which the population responds to social changes - accessing social benefits, returning to subsistence agriculture, or emigrating outside the locality or

outside the countries to find a job. In the rural environment where neither the environmental conditions nor the local economic characteristics offer favourable premises for a successful agricultural activity, and the work in one's own household fails to ensure the needs of daily family life, in the absence of an adequate offer of jobs at the local level, the alternatives are more likely to be daily labour and access to social benefits, as in the case of Comana commune. The prevalence of such situations is specific to poor communities, which present characteristics of poor development such as: lack of sufficient jobs locally and in adjacent areas and lack of attractiveness for investors

In the case of Vlad Tepes commune, the residential environment, the positioning in relation to the cities / county seat, on the one hand, the size of the locality, as well as the degree of and the type of occupation represented the main elements that shaped local development. As Sandu also shows, social development is higher in communities with access to important roads, and commuting has increased and brings income within the community, being a growth factor. In the case of those with a very low educational level, it is mainly the case of the Roma population, who represent a vulnerable group - their potential labour force supply is, in many cases, considered inadequate, in itself, by employers, not only relative to certain positions that demand special skills and knowledge, but ethnic stereotypes, fuelled by particular experiences of certain interactions, also contribute to such a situation deficiencies of some ethnic Roma with the labour market.

Administrative capacity is also one of the important factors that can shape different development trajectories in localities with similar characteristics and development opportunities. During the development of the data collection approach, we encountered very different situations, in a local context, rather similar - LPAs that accessed many projects such as the example of the Vlad Tepes commune, others that failed to access. Mayors who expect development to occur exclusively through the interventions of external courts, but also active mayors.

The data analysis reveals, despite the diversity of the configuration of factors that configure a diverse typology of local (under)development, a common conclusion. This spiral of underdevelopment can only be stopped by increasing the stock of human capital, which is the strategic variable of any local development model.

As a WB report also shows, policy to improve employment opportunity in rural areas should highlight the growth of human capital. The diversity of rural conditions, combined with large geographic areas and low population densities in rural areas needs each place to have an almost independent approach and the challenge is to design a limited set of programs that can be combined in several ways to address rural development needs in different places. (WB, 2000)

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Declaration of conflict of interest

The authors declare that there are no conflicts of interest.

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