

POLYCENTRIC DEVELOPMENT INITIATIVES IN ROMANIA AT THE FIRST LOCAL LEVEL OF THE NUTS SYSTEM (LAU1)

Cosmin CHIRIAC^{}, Liviu BUCUR^{**}*

Abstract: *Polycentric development has been in the focus of the European Union (EU) for more than two decades now, as an engine for social, economic and territorial cohesion, though its roots go deeper in time. It is a concept that is normally linked to the urban environment. However, in this study, the first local level of the NUTS system will be discussed, the equivalent of which, in Romania, would include both urban and rural administrative units.*

In this paper, two opposing initiatives, which aim at imposing a polycentric evolution at the discussed scale of analysis, will be presented and analysed. The first one implies a voluntary, inside-out construction, sustained by the current legislation, while the second one implies a non-voluntary, outside-in construction, based on multiple-criteria analysis.

The first part of the study provides an overview of polycentric development and some of the different conceptual views that have been proposed over time. A few characteristics of it are emphasized and the concept is put into the perspective of our case study. The second part of the study provides an overview of the current administrative system of Romania and of the ranking system used to categorize the urban and rural hierarchy of the country. The third part of the study presents the two initiatives, a legislative one and a regional one, and compares them against each-other and against the territorial realities of Romania.

The findings suggest that, while the regional initiative seems to have died out without producing any effects, the legislative one has the potential for balancing out and raising the level of development of the less developed areas while, at the same time, deepening the economic disparities between the developed and the less developed areas.

Keywords: *Polycentric development, Romania, Territorial Planning Units, Metropolitan Areas, Intercommunity Development Associations, NUTS4/LAU1*

^{*} PhD, Teaching Assistant, Department of International Relations and European Studies, Faculty of History International Relations, Political Sciences and Communication Science, University of Oradea, Romania. E-mail: cchiriacuniv@yahoo.com

^{**} PhD, Lecturer, Department of Geography, Tourism and Territorial Planning, Faculty of Geography, Tourism and Sport. E-mail: liviubucur@yahoo.com