

ELEMENTS OF CENTRALITY DYNAMICS IN BUZĂU CITY¹

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Keywords: centrality, blocking factors, amplification factors, intraregional development, Buzău city.

Éléments concernant la dynamique de la centralité de la ville de Buzău. La centralité de la ville de Buzău a connu une évolution fluctuante déterminée par les effets territoriaux que la succession de certaines séries de facteurs d'amplification ou de blocage a eu sur ses relations avec les localités urbaines et rurales de sa grande aire d'influence. Suite à l'action de ces facteurs se sont enregistrées des périodes de réduction ou de croissance des fonctions de lieu central de la ville de Buzău à différents niveaux territoriaux. Au niveau de la région de développement Sud-est – à l'intérieur de laquelle se trouve la ville – Buzău est le quatrième centre urbain, tandis que dans le département qui porte le même nom, la ville est située dans le top de la hiérarchie, polarisant dans une mesure importante toutes les localités urbaines et rurales du département. La dynamique de la centralité, dans les conditions de l'ex-régime, qui a fonctionné jusqu'en 1989, a été la conséquence d'une tendance de hypertrophie de tous les centres départementaux et a eu des effets évidents par la croissance des relations de dépendance entre la ville de Buzău et les localités de l'espace adjacent. Après 1990, à cause des processus de restructuration économique territoriale, parmi lesquels s'est distinguée la désindustrialisation, le liant de dépendance économique d'autres fois s'est diminué, ainsi que la centralité, d'une manière visible. Les dernières années, la tertiarisation des activités urbaines a pris le rôle des activités industrielles, réimposant la ville de Buzău comme le plus important centre de convergence des relations entre les localités de l'entier département. Suite à une croissance récente de la centralité de cette ville, nous participons à la réalisation d'un contour plus net de la dynamique des tendances concernant le processus du développement intra-régional.

INTRODUCTION

Centrality is one of the basic features of settlement systems, defining territorial geographic processes and phenomena generated by the tendency of agglomeration of goods and services in certain localities (Ianoș, Humeau 2000). They will be, on different hierarchical levels, localities with functions of "central places". The detection of such settlements and the correct assessment of their territorial functions is a challenge for both academic environment and the decision makers on local and regional development.

Buzău, noted for its development as fair since the late nineteenth and the first part of the twentieth century has witnessed a very volatile dynamic of service functions on an almost continuously positive trend, at large intervals of time (Posea, Ielenicz 1971). These functions were performed under varying territorial pressures exercised by big cities, in relative proximity, especially of Ploiești and even Bucharest.

The most significant adverse impact on the centrality dynamics had the loss of the function of county seat in 1948 (Petrescu-Burloiu 1977), through the abolition of counties as major territorial administrative units and their replacement with the regions. Regardless of the intensity of the economic or demographic relations, it was found that the administrative functions with their full suite of tertiary functions, is the cement of stable territorial relations and relatively strong especially with peripheral areas of a territorial structure.

¹ This paper was prepared under grants Nos. 1948 and 1950 financed by the National University Research Council (CNCSIS).

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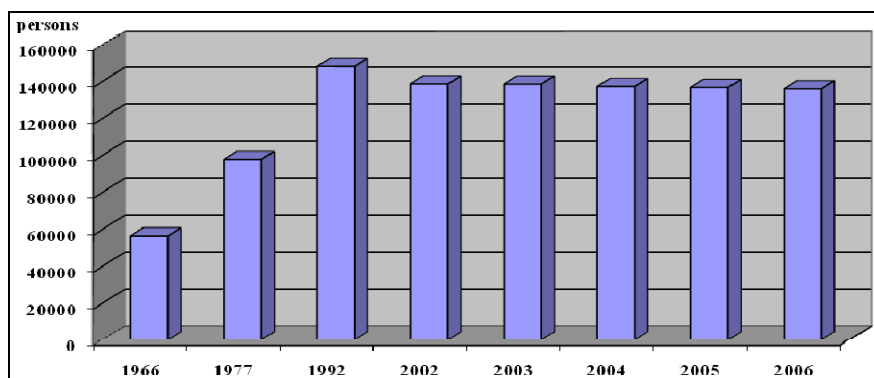
Regaining this function after about two decades, the explosive industrial development and de-industrialisation, followed by other specific post transition processes were felt on the relationship between Buzău and settlements in the same county, including on its centrality.

Clearly, the centrality can be interpreted as a consequence of the dynamics of relations between the settlements of a territorial structure by the notable imposing of a city, but also as a cause of the imposition of a city within a system of settlements. Through its dynamics, it may have consequences for development, by increasing relationships dependency, imposing a certain specialisation at intraregional level, but also by the emergence of conditions for development of local poles, as urban relays in the transmission of impulses from big cities to outlying areas.

THE INDIVIDUALISATION OF THE FACTORS AFFECTING THE RECENT DYNAMICS OF BUZĂU CENTRALITY

Known as an urban center that has become authoritarian in the interwar period at the influence interference of large cities such as Brăila, Ploieşti and Bucharest (Cucu *et al.* 1987), Buzău city rapidly retrograded within 1948–1968, when it loses the administrative function of county seat. Despite the process of industrialisation that was felt, however, the loss of administrative coordination functions had a negative impact on territorial centrality of Buzău city. Regaining this function in 1968 will lead to a complex evolution, in which the effects of industrialisation on relations with the settlements at the county level are seen (Nancu 1999).

The enhancement of Buzău centrality city was based on an almost explosive demographic dynamics, as demonstrated by the evolution of the number of inhabitants (Fig. 1). Although it might sound trivial, the concentration of population leads to characteristic activities, of agglomeration, which have direct consequences for the relationship between a city and the settlements in its space of coordination. If to such a natural process, we add that the time between 1968 and 1989 was one in which central planning has reached its peak in Romania, then we might consider what political influence over a system of settlements means (Mita, Stoica 2008). Hence between centrality and population growth is a direct relationship that can be blocked or enhanced by the promoted policies at a time.



Source: Population census of 15.03.1966, 05.01.1977, 07.01.1992; National Institute of Statistics;

Fig. 1 – Dynamics of the number of inhabitants in Buzău city.

The assessment of the general dynamics of centrality can be based on population growth, between the two elements being a relationship of direct determination. In Buzău case, the increase with over 40,000 inhabitants in the period 1966–1977 the population (over 42%), mainly based on migratory growth meant a deployment of the county seat in relation to other urban and rural settlements and hence a stronger centrality.

The upward trend of population growth is increasing even in the period after 1977, so Buzău reaches over 140,000 people in 1992. The consequence was that Buzău asserted itself in relation to all

other cities in the county and in particular to Râmnicu Sărat, but also its repositioning in regional context. This increase of the centrality was particularly based on extensive industrial development, which required labour movement from great distances, sometimes even exceeding 50 km (for example the commuting known to almost all settlements on the axis of Buzău, starting right from Nehoiu).

After 1989, as most cities of Romania, Buzău witnesses phenomena of economic restructuring, especially industrial, affecting the ability of territorial influence. The decrease by over 2/3 of industrial activities entail the sharp decrease of flow of commuters, with all addition processes associated with this form of daily travel. In parallel there is a decrease in supply flows for firms with raw materials (agricultural and non agricultural) and the almost complete disappearance of forms of industrial cooperation. In such circumstances, Buzău is not attractive any more and part of its population leave to settle in rural areas. Population structure in the rural area only means an apparent revival of the village, by the increase in the number of people, but, in terms of quality this is about pensioners, who will try to practice a typical subsistence agriculture.

Considering the complexity of centrality as a phenomenon, an attempt was made to individualise the main factors with blocking or amplifying role affecting its dynamics. They are close connected by the increase or reduction of Buzău importance at intra regional level.

1) **Centrality amplification factors.** This group of factors includes, on one hand those favourable elements or processes that occur within the city of Buzău and lead to the increase of its importance, and on the other hand those found in the capital of the county insertion environment. The analysis takes account of this distinction and therefore we distinguish:

a) **Internal factors of amplification.** This category refers to the existence and dynamics of new tertiary services and urban consumption, which requires a constant supply of products, and more recently with work force.

– **new tertiary services (university education, research, culture, special medical services)** tend to emphasise the centrality of Buzău city, by their size, variety and dynamics. Overall, *cultural and educational function* is one of the most obvious elements generating relationships between settlements. Through its specific facilities, with cultural and educational role, the city contributes to the increase of the standard of living and behaviour in a space that go far beyond its physical dimensions. After 1990, in Buzău, were established several state university institutions (University Economic College Buzău, which is a subsidiary of the Academy of Economic Studies in Bucharest, College of schoolmasters in Buzău of the University of Bucharest and University Technical College No. 1 – Buzău, Politehnica University of Bucharest) or private (subsidiary of Spiru Haret University and George Barițiu). The area of origin of students overlaps mostly on Buzău County, sometimes extended to some towns in neighboring counties (Vrancea and Brăila).

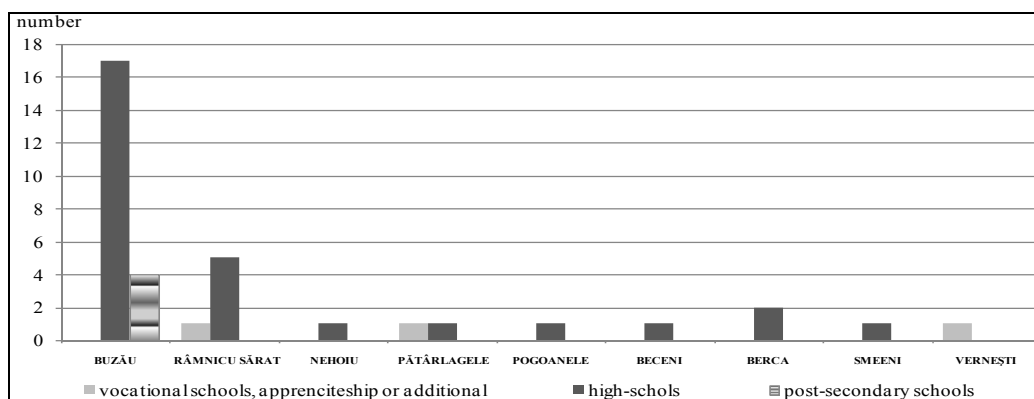
High schools, vocational schools, apprenticeship or additional, post-secondary schools and universities are attraction factors contributing to an increase of the centrality at county and intra-county level.

In Buzău county as a whole (Fig. 2), high schools are concentrated in only 8 localities of the 87 administrative-territorial units. Of these, 58.6% are located in Buzău, being the highest rated schools in the county, drawing as a result, many pupils: “B.P. Hasdeu”, National College “Mihai Eminescu” High School or Pedagogical High School (the only one in the county for those who want to pursue a teacher career) (Stoica, Pintilii 2008).

Another important element is the health services, sometimes specialised, which are concentrated in Buzău and gives it a high centrality. Here is the most important hospital unit in the county, the County Hospital, which covers a broad range of medical services.

– **market for a number of products** manufactured or processed in rural areas, which are used in Buzău as the main collection center for agro food products that come from the surrounding rural areas. A particular item is recorded in the rise of farming among the people who live in Buzău, but who currently exploit the agricultural areas of native villages. This is the effect of applying the law of the land in

1991, subsequently amended in several stages. As a result of individual agricultural activities, especially in suburban area, the products obtained are sold by the producers in the markets in Buzău.



Source: National Institute of Statistics; processed data;

Fig. 2 – Distribution of vocational schools, apprenticeship or additional, high schools and post-secondary schools on the territory of Buzău County, 2006.

– **resumption of urban economic activities, including by reindustrialisation process.** After a steep increase in unemployment, which exceeds in the 90s, even 20% of the working population, the socio-economic resetting processes caused an increased demand for labour. The presence of companies in need of labour and that supply from rural areas, given that in the city of Buzău the offer of employment has declined, contributes to increased city centrality. If before 1989 the majority of those who worked in Buzău finally moved into town, today, the tendency is to live in surrounding rural areas and practice commuting.

– **commercial function** generated by the presence of large hypermarkets and wholesale deposits impacts on the amplification of the effect of Buzău centrality. This is, for the neighbouring residents, the supply center for food commodities and nonfood products. The location of such activities in the county seat has a diffuse impact on rural settlements located at greater distances, as entrepreneurs or people in them regularly or occasionally go to Buzău, to supply its own stores, or for the purchase of durable goods.

b) Amplification factors from the external environment. These factors are rather assumptions that favor the growth of Buzău centrality, in a system of settlements with a little slower dynamics with regard to the low density of urban centers with substantial territorial influence.

– **strong ruralisation** is one of the main features of Buzău county. Of the five cities only Buzău and Râmnicu Sărat are asserted as true urban centers capable of running urban features on the territory. Cities of Nehoiu, Pătârlagele and Pogoanele have a limited influence on an adjacent space represented by a few communes. In addition, the first two are in a close geographical distance, and the city of Pogoanele is limited to territorial functions of a commune, more developed in Bărgan.

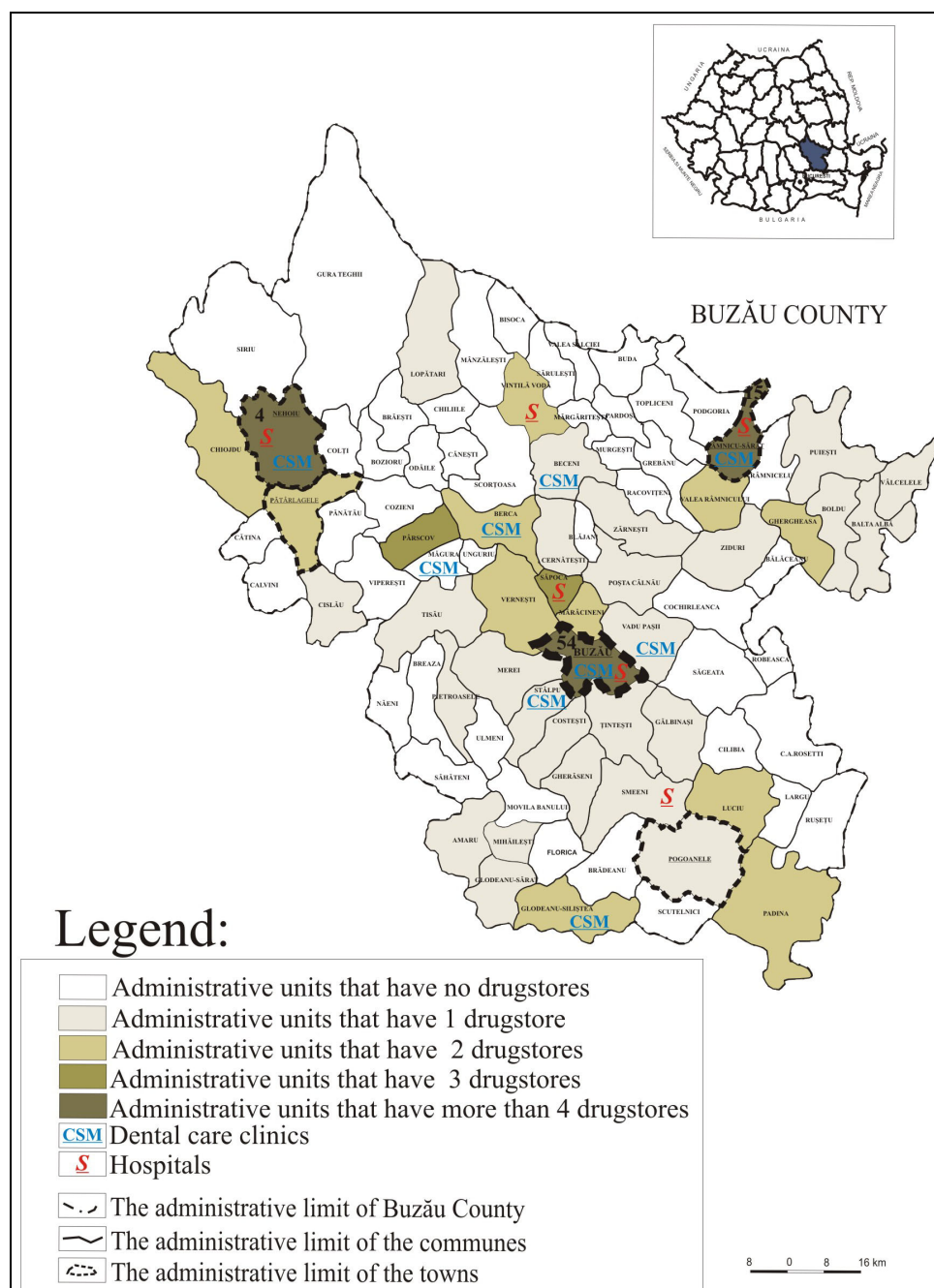
The analysis of the 82 communes of the county, by the number of inhabitants, shows that four of the seven communes included in the superior size class (over 6,000 inhabitants) are adjacent to Buzău, contributing substantially to the increase of its centrality. Their demographic explosion is based, in a first stage (before 1992) on the contribution of the rural population working in industry of Buzău, and in the second, subsequently, the attractions of these for a part of town inhabitants, which have built new residences in the suburban area.

The largest commune in the county is Berca, whose administrative residence meets the current legislative requirements for the granting of city status, but that is not concerned by this change because it believes that the city status would limit the access to certain European funds for development.

– **the scarcity of medical services in rural areas.** The territorial distribution and dynamics of health services in the settlements of Buzău County, stresses the centrality of the county seat. In most

communes, medical services are represented by a dispensary, which often shows not even the minimum facilities and where the doctor advises several times a week. In these circumstances, many people prefer to be enrolled in family doctors' offices in the city of Buzău.

In 48 communes of the district, representing 58.5% of the countryside, there is not even one drugstore (Fig. 3), thus residents are forced to go to places that have such a society, or to the city of Buzău, where are located the 8 pharmaceutical deposits on the county territory (Stoica, Pintilii 2008).



Source: Stoica Ilinca-Valentina, Pintilii Radu Daniel, 2008;

Fig. 3 – The distribution of drugstores, hospitals and dental care clinics on the territory of Buzău County, 2006.

Also located in the city of Buzău is the largest hospital and maternity, which concentrate characteristic population flows.

– *the general configuration of infrastructure*, which asserts Buzău as an important convergence center. It is located, as road junction at the intersection of several roads, including the European road E85, which provides the link between southern and northern European continent and between the settlements located along it. The convergence of communication roads is marked by a series of national, district and communal roads areas which cross the plain, hilly and mountain areas, following the main river valleys. All these roads are major thoroughfares in the city of Buzău linked to the belt that circles the city, protecting it partially of a high pollution caused by high road traffic.

The persons transport is provided by buses and maxi-taxis on set routes, which have Buzău as the end point, ensuring it an optimal connection with the rest of the county. In recent years there is an increasing dynamic private equity firms, providing transport of people in all areas and counties surrounding the city of Buzău.

Buzău is, at the same time, an important hub of railway for freight and passenger promoting the connection with all areas of the country on four main directions. One of them is limited to Buzău county, represented by the rail in the valley of the Buzău, connecting the county seat with Nehoiu city. The other three routes ensure the link between east and south, respectively lower Danube.

– *the relatively favorable distance to cities with over 100,000 inhabitants*, located in neighbouring counties. Buzău Municipality is located approximately 70 km away from Ploiești and Focșani, 100 km from Brăila, 115 km from Bucharest and 140 km from Galați and Brașov.

2) Factors blocking the centrality. Buzău's capacity to polarize through services the goods offer of a broad a space is often influenced by some factors, which comes mainly from the external environment. Among them stand out:

– *the competition for superior tertiary* (universities, specialised medical personnel) from the capital and some regional centers. Because in the city of Buzău are present only a small part of the specialisations that the labour market is looking for, most young people who want to pursue a higher education institution choose the capital, or university centers located in nearby towns, like Ploiești, Galați and Brașov. Most young people after graduation, choose to remain in that city, since in Buzău jobs offer in the field they graduated is limited or low paid. Also, in this city, some specialised medical services are low represented, so that a large percentage of patients are forced to be treated in other towns, preferring in most cases the capital.

– *the existence of larger urban centers around the county*, such as Ploiești and Bucharest, which attract the workforce, particularly the young one. Thus, in Ploiești, a part of the labour force from villages with access to rail that connects them to the city of Buzău is working. This practice daily or weekend commute. In terms of quality services are less developed in Buzău, compared with large neighboring cities, explaining the preference of workforce for these.

– *Focșani city revitalisation* could diminish the increase of Buzău centrality by attracting residents of the eastern segment of the county. It considers the historic role of this city, which could become a serious competitor for Buzău, if some of its assets are exploited, related to more convenient distance to the regional capitals. If an asset is the historical legacy, the geographical location is a disadvantage, as it has not the same degree of connectivity of communication lines of national importance, as in the city of Buzău.

– *further increase of the role of urban group Galați-Brăila* (by setting the Vădeni airport and construction of the bridge over the Danube), which may result in the diminish of Buzău centrality in the southern part of the current county. This, however, may encourage its development as a regional pole on Brașov-Brăila route.

Regarding the internal factors a major inconvenience is noted, that is the legacy of an economic base focused on the industry. Buzău Municipality has since the early '60s an unprecedented development of the industry that has a decisive role in strengthening other urban functions (Mănescu 1999). After

1990, most industrial units had difficulties, many of traditional markets losing sales. This resulted in massive restructuring, which increased the share of unoccupied population.

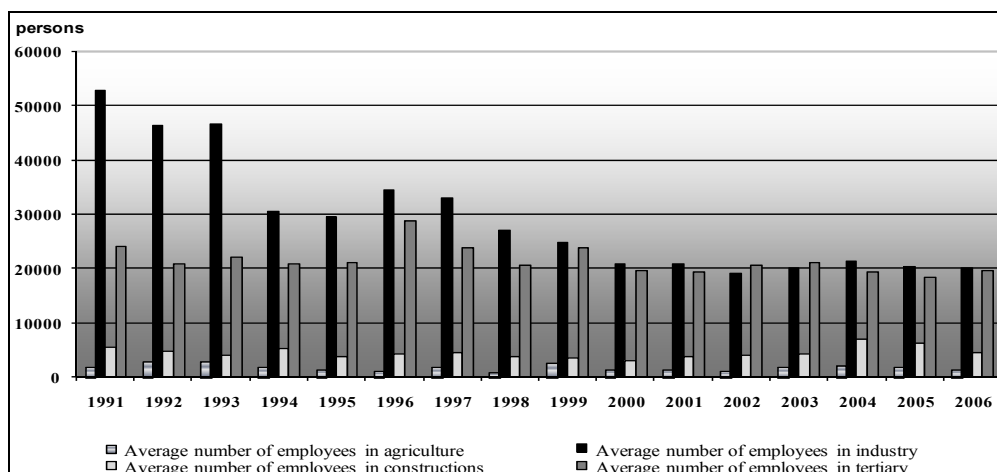
The current characteristics of Buzău economy are defined by the diversity of typical economic branches, mainly concentrated in two main industrial areas: the southern industrial area and the northern industrial area, plus some smaller units scattered within the entire city.

To reveal the importance of industrial activities in urban economy, an important indicator is the dynamics of the average number of employees in these branches (Ianoş 2004) (Fig. 4). As can be inferred from the chart below, at Buzău city level, between 1991 and 2002 the average number of employees decreases to less than half (54.2%). The analysis conducted on the dynamics of industrial activities, assessed in the light of the evolution of the number of employees, leads to some important ideas for the economic revitalisation of the city.

Firstly, the process of readjustment of the volume of industrial activity began even in 1991, which meant that by 1995 the average number of employees declined by 30,000 people. However, the number of large industrial enterprises, restructured or privatised, was still very low for the first years of post-centralised development.

Secondly, after a resumption of the growth in the number of employees in 1996, it will reach in 2000 the lowest level (about 19,000 persons). Starting with this year the number of employees remains relatively constant until 2006.

Thirdly, 2004 and 2005 were the years with the most employees in the constructions, area revived in the coming years, although in 2006 their number seems low.



Source: National Institute of Statistics; processed data;

Fig. 4 – Dynamics of the average number of employees (in economic sectors) in Buzău city within Buzău County.

Fourth, Buzău, by the share of employees in the tertiary close to the share of employees in industry, has an increasingly clear structure close to large cities with complex functions.

Regarding the centrality, we could say that Buzău benefited in the period prior to 2000, from the polarizing capacities of industrial activities, then the tertiary and industrial activities dominate the overall structure of the county seat.

THE RELATIVE CONTRADICTIONARY DYNAMICS OF CENTRALITY

Centrality is a defining feature of the polarisation power that a settlement generates. Its dynamics is the effect of the joint action of processes that accompany certain types of policies. When a country's development strategy is based on centralised policies, such a feature increases, while in the case of

typical market economy policies, the centrality is based on territorial flows carried out in relation to supply and demand. In periods of transition, centrality has a very contradictory evolution, due to unpredictable development, sometimes chaotic of processes with territorial impact.

In this case, the relatively contradictory dynamics of Buzău centrality results from the different behaviour in the period before 1989 and after, when there has been a relatively sudden replacement of a regime with another. Therefore, we can distinguish two types of evolution: one of increase and another of decrease of centrality.

I. The sharp and continuous dynamics of centrality. This trend was recorded by Buzău in the period 1968–1990 and was based on a number of processes with a strong territorial impact. Due to the convergence of these processes and their synergy, Buzău continuously increased its polarisation power and hence the increase of territorial influence. Such dynamics would not have been possible if it had it not been a similar development of some processes, whose territorial impact has resulted in different configurations of settlement systems. Among these processes we can individualise:

a) The extensive industrialisation process was one of the most potently of the urban- adjacent area relations being a major factor in the re-profiling of Buzău and Râmnicu Sarat cities. These moved from exchange and agrarian centers in the class of industrial centers with multiple territorial functions. Thus, in Buzău, by 1968 there were only a few companies, such as milling and baking, processing of hemp and some shops belonging to handicraft cooperatives, etc. After that date and until 1990, were built several large industrial units, aiming thereby harnessing the resources of agricultural raw materials, but especially the creation of new jobs (Mănescu 1999).

Along with the development at acceptable rates for the city's communist era, the process of industrialisation has contributed also to the development of relations between it and rural centers nearby. Also, by the decentralization of industrial activities the development of some rural settlements was boosted, which have entered into the category of cities in 1989: Nehoiu and Pogoanele and others who were targeted to become urban centers in the next step: Beceni, Pătărlagele. These urban or rural settlements have become true relays in the transmission of specific characteristics of urban life from Buzău to deep rural areas.

b) Agriculture mechanisation and creating an excellent local of workforce. Along with industry development a similar process took place in agriculture, where as a result of mechanization and its cooperativisation was issued a large amount of workforce that could be used in other economic branches. Thus, conditions were created for increasing divergent flows of population from rural areas to Buzău, causing an increase in its centrality. The effect of a very intense migration rural-urban type was Buzău's population growth almost three times (from 56,000 to over 148,000 inhabitants), based in particular on rural-urban migration.

c) The administrative – territorial country organisation measures were one of the basic factors in the location to a higher level of the relations between cities and adjacent areas. The nearing of the new coordinating centers and their corresponding development has spurred the overall development on larger areas. Following the administrative-territorial reform in 1968, Buzău becomes county seat having in coordination a large rural area (** 1980, *Buzău-monografie*). Eclipsed by that time by the city of Ploieşti, which was the residence of the region, Buzău will explosively develop, benefiting from the fact that it had not a large urban center nearby. Massive investments made in industrial field attracted human and material resources throughout the current county. A decentralisation process began after 1980, when the ineffectiveness of large industrial units was realised and when resources have been allocated for the development of industrial activities in rural centers such as Pogoanele, Pătărlagele or Beceni.

II. The downward and relatively continuous dynamics of centrality. Such dynamics is recorded in the period after 1990, when centrality has a clear downward trend, evidenced by diminishing the power of influence of Buzău. This decrease of centrality was supported by several processes with a high territorial impact:

a) Industrial destructuring was one of the main features of all extensively industrialised cities under socialism. In Buzău case this meant a drastic reduction in industrial activity, including a reduction in the number of employees in industry. By time intervals, the most significant decrease in the number of employees, for example, took place between 1991–1995 when it totalled over 23,000 employees. Over the next 10 years their number has dropped with nearly 10,000 people. The restructuring affected primarily large industrial enterprises: metallurgical enterprises, electrical contacts, plastics, etc. As a result of this destructuring, industrial commuting fell very hard, the first employees became unemployed being the commuters. By reducing distances to travel for work taking place the centrality Buzău fell, manifested also through the services that commuters used.

b) The application of agrarian reform, whose beginnings were given by Decree-Law nr. 50/1990, continued through the implementation of Law 18/1991, as amended thereafter. The excessive fragmentation of agricultural land and their management by former owners led a return to a subsistence agriculture. The positive effect of this process has diminished the social impact of decreasing the number of employees in industries and other economic branches. The form in which it was applied and the effects of this law were contrary to the economic progress in agriculture, especially in the plain area. The result was seen in the sharp decline in the yield of crops and livestock, in the reduction of delivered products to the market. The dynamics of farming appears to be accelerating, directing more and more toward the market, due to the shape processes of large agricultural units.

In parallel with these processes, which claimed the centrality decrease, others may be individualised contributing to regain the position previously held by Buzău and even amplifying its influence. Of these, the tertiary trend, even if takes forms of trivial tertiary, it is asserted as one of the most complex and having the highest share in accelerating the centrality. It seems surprising, but after 15 years of economic transition, the number of employees in the tertiary sector is still lower in 2005 than in 1991 with about 6,000 people. At the overall county level, the deficit of persons employed in the tertiary sector is more than 10,000 people, which means that over 60% is the direct influence of Buzău.

The return to previous values of the tertiary sector is based on the growth of persons employed in the commercial sector, especially those in other sectors such as finance and banking, social assistance, education (even university), financial and banking transactions, specialised medical services. Of them, within the mentioned interval, increases more or less significant were found in public administration, commerce, banking, finance and healthcare.

THE CURRENT CONFIGURATION OF THE COUNTY URBAN SYSTEM EXPRESSES THE CENTRALITY OF BUZĂU CITY

In the conditions of socio-economic development started in the communist period the importance of a city in ordering territorial relations and planning is evident. This is “a point of maximum accumulation” of material and human goods in a smaller or larger space being considered “the strong pillar of the county territory. It is obvious that the city of Buzău, by its tertiary functions, but also by those related to production is not an independent and isolated from other cities or from rural areas. Because this fabric of functional relationships, we can talk of an urban system centered on Buzău. This fabric of relationships is clearly evidenced by the presence of material and human goods traffic between the settlements of this system, by the relatively easy communications between them and the dominant convergence towards the county seat.

Buzău city was a part of the municipalities subordinate to Bucharest until 1989 with very close links with it and with Ploiești (Fig. 5).

Currently, on the ground of the existing connections with the capital and the city of Ploiești, there is noted the increased ties with cities of Râmnicu Sărat and Focșani, but also the emergence of new relationships that can develop in cooperation with other major cities in the same area of development (Brăila). Given the relatively large distances in comparison with other cities with regional functions,

the city of Buzău is likely to increase its centrality and to become a center with a diverse offer focused in particular on superior tertiary (Fig. 6).

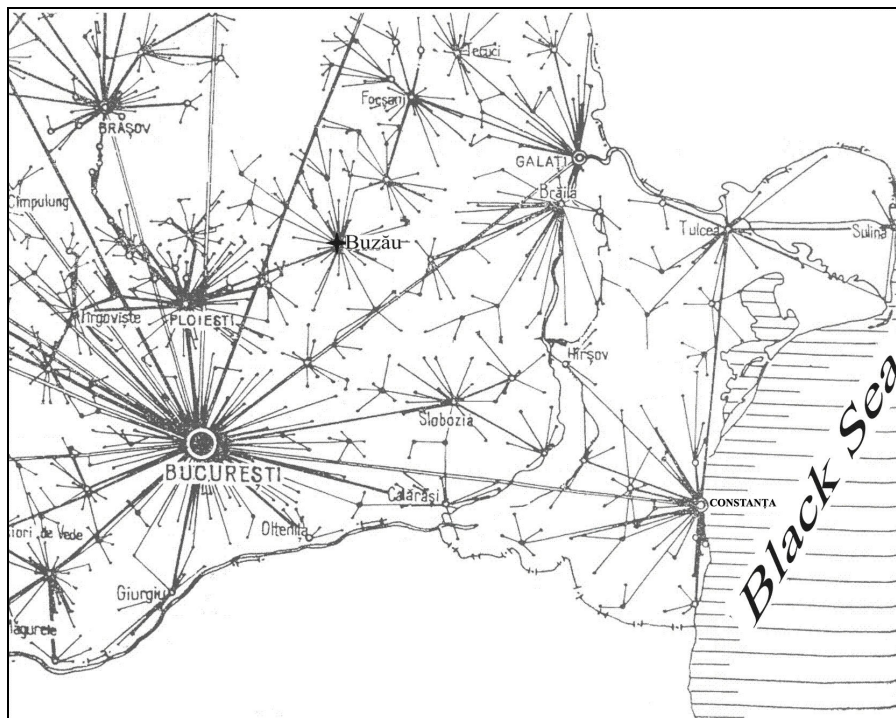


Fig. 5 – Bucharest urban system and its subsystems (socialist period), after Ianoş (1987).

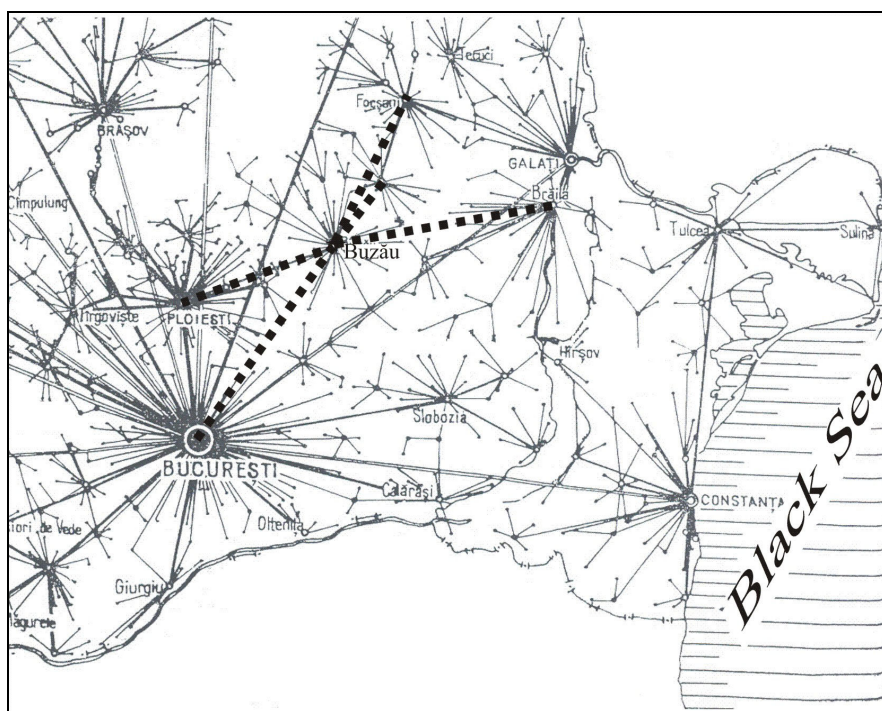


Fig. 6 – Bucharest urban system and its subsystems (actual period), processed after Ianoş (1987).

At the county level, Buzău city is situated on the top of the hierarchy, being situated on the hierarchical level I (Fig. 7). To it are directly subordinated Râmnicu Sărat, located on level II, Nehoiu, Pătârlagele, Pogoanele cities and Berca placed on level III, rural localities with central place functions Beceni and Săhăteni on the level IV and the 27 communes located the hierarchical level V.

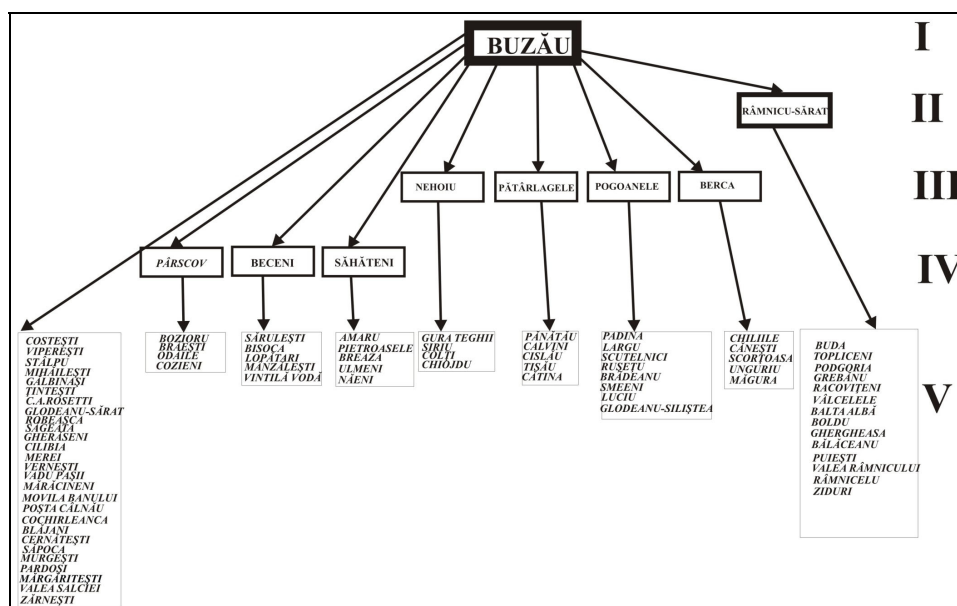


Fig. 7 – Buzău County settlements on different hierarchical levels.

At the intra-regional level Buzău is the fourth largest city after Constanța, Galați and Brăila, representing an isolated complex industrial center, which attracts mainly the population from Buzău county, but also from some communes in adjacent counties. In economic terms, it stands out by some industrial units quoted at RASDAQ (Ductil, Romcarbon, Zahărul), as well as certain industrial products for which is the sole producer in Romania (railway devices, metal sleepers, metal cord for reinforcing tires, filters and water purification complex systems, etc.).

Buzău city, under current conditions, may cause a significant growth in the area, but also the positive development of living standards. In view of its transformation from a growing center to a pole of development, the city development strategy has to be reviewed, which should be linked to the county development strategy and regional development strategy.

The efforts to attract investors in industrial production must be increased also especially in superior tertiary sector. Regarding the first point, the city of Buzău has an important volume of workforce and multiple opportunities to provide training or, if necessary, its conversion. Industrial activities have perspectives to continue the traditions in metallurgical and electrical technical field and take advantage of some local resources such as agricultural ones.

With a population of around 135,000 inhabitants, the city can develop special activities in healthcare and education. In terms of health infrastructure, the city of Buzău allow to locate highly specialised medical services, which provide the demand including for Vrancea County. This is about plastic surgery, ophthalmology hospitals, powerful investigative databases, etc.

The national strategy for development for higher education could include the possibility of development of university services at least for cycle I (Bachelor), in various fields, but connected to the county and regional needs. Other smaller towns in the country, as Alba Iulia and Suceava have state universities, although at least the first is not justified given that lies between two counties with universities having a more complex structure (“Babeș-Bolyai” University of Cluj-Napoca and “Lucian Blaga”, Sibiu University).

The increasing importance of Buzău city at regional and intra-regional level could be based on upgrading the main national roads, which can develop into networks of highways. Building the bridge over the Danube in Brăila-Măcin area may shorten the distance between Brașov and Constanța with over 100 km. A highway in the valley Buzău, targeting the Romanian seaside, crossed with the highway to Moldova would boost the city of Buzău to a development pole position in the territorial dynamics. Development in this regard could not be only endogenous, but should increasingly focus on networks of cooperation.

The fabric of relationships centered on capital, the development of the structuring axis Ruse-Brașov, having in the middle Bucharest metropolis, will cause some reduction in Ploiești role vis-a-vis the Buzău city. The latter, developed at the periphery of the mentioned structural axis, may cooperate with Ploiești, providing a direct connection with the bi-headed metropolis Galați-Brăila. The exploitation of these assets must be strategically, taking advantage by the fact that the city of Buzău, by geographical location is condemned to be only a territorial hub, without being directly integrated into an urban concentration.

CONCLUSIONS

The dynamics of Buzău centrality had fluctuations periods caused by amplifying and blocking factors leading to increased or reduced importance in local, intraregional and national context. To increase its centrality and visibility and to increase its territorial influence on local intra-regional and inter-regional development some processes could be galvanized, such as:

- replacement of attraction exerted by industrial activities with those of tertiary, including the superior one and create the premises for an active and sustainable polarization;
- cluster type integration of rural or urban centers of relay type: Berca, Pătărlagele, Pogoanele, Pârscov, Cislău, Nehoiu, through the development of some tertiary complementary activities;
- increase of the reduction process of intra-county disparities by disseminating good practices and by decentralisation of specialised services, located in the county seat.

Only by such a concentrated development of Buzău city and the space coordinated by it, we could witness a decline of territorial contrasts, a harness of the strengths of each locality compared with those located on higher hierarchical levels.

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Received June 23, 2009