

THE CONCEPT FOR REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND THE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

MUNTEANU Rares

University of Petroșani, Faculty of Mining
rares73@yahoo.de

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Abstract: A concept for regional development is an instrument for regional planning and economic revival that was introduced and applied especially in Germany in the 1990s. It has an informal character, and regards the local actors of a region, such as: human resources (citizens of the region), local authority, educational institutions, local economy. In Romania there are some regions with one-industry tradition (e.g. the Jiu Valley mining region). They are now in a difficult social and economic situation. In order to ensure the social and economic revival, concepts for regional development must be implemented for each of them.

1. GENERAL PRESENTATION OF THE CONCEPT FOR REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT

A concept for regional development is an instrument for regional planning and economic revival that was introduced and applied especially in Germany in the 1990s. It has an informal character, and regards the local actors of a region, such as:

- human resources (citizens of the region);
- local authority (decision makers at the first political level);
- educational institutions (vocational schools, universities);
- local economy (decision makers at the first economical level).

It is not a compulsory planning tool, it can be voluntarily drawn up and is effective only for the involved actors.

The recommended perspective of action is in the short and medium run, maximum six years. Usually, the cause of a concept for regional development is a special development problem in the context of a region; nevertheless, the problem cannot be separated from the context, so the concept for regional development must take into account the conditions from a broader area, national or even international.

The concepts for regional development should:

▶ internally

- mobilise the internal forces of the region,
- better coordinate the activities of the regional actors,
- create a common view on the objectives of the region and mitigate the conflicts of objectives,
- concentrate the main development projects of the region,
- identify and use the synergy effects,
- develop the inter-communal collaboration,
- develop concrete proposals for activities and projects,

▶ externally:

- decision-making support for politics and administration to identify the resources and ways for development,
- determine the preference and acceleration for the attraction of funds,
- assign pilot projects and assistance offers in order to increase the efficiency of the actions.

The development strategy must be integrated (coordinated horizontally, vertically and intersectorally), concentrated (include all the actors), sustainable (preserve the opportunities for the future generations), connected (voluntary connection of the actors, orientated towards consensus and dialogue), orientated towards the economy.

A future successful development of a post-closure region needs coherence. Therefore a concept for development is necessary. The reclamation and rehabilitation of the former mining areas need a comprehensive analysis of the general conditions after the mine closure and of the potentiality at national, regional and local level.

The concept for regional development or even the plan for development is the work-foundation for the Local Action Groups as well as their main decision instrument for choosing between the options. The concept for regional development can be considered as a draft for the future development of the region. As a basis of a SWOT analysis, the plans, the projects and the measures are integrated in a concept. The goal is therefore the intentional influence respectively the initiation of a development process in a particular region.

In order to implement the concept for regional development it is necessary to have a coordinating body. This is the job for the local action groups. The local action groups are a combination of private and public actors of the region, organised in an association or private society.

It is essential that the structure of a local action group encompasses a representative mix of local actors and that at least half of the economic and social partners are represented. The local action groups lead and control the development process, launch and sustain projects and bind in a network the different actors of the region. They can also initiate and implement their own projects.

It must be underlined that there is no available pattern for a concept for regional development. It cannot be, because every region has its specific problems and offers its specific developing opportunities.

2. THE DEVELOPMENT OF A CONCEPT AS A BASIS FOR THE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT OF THE JIU VALLEY REGION (VALEA JIULUI)

The problems of the Jiu Valley region are not specific to this area only. All over the world there are mining regions experiencing similar situations. In the beginning, the mining area has an intensive and fast development, and the number of inhabitants grows very fast. Later on, as the reserves exhaust, the mines get in a process of conservation and/or closure and as a result the economic and social problems follow. The unemployment grows, the economy of the region has difficulties, especially because all the activities are more or less connected to the mining industry and thus the social discontentment arises. But some regions offer better conditions than the others to develop alternative economic activities. There are more factors that influence the general situation:

- the economy of the land and of the region
- the distance to other important towns and regions
- the infrastructure (road networks, railways network, utilities network etc)
- alternatives for the investors
- the level of education of the labour.

In Europe, the coal mining industry is in a complicated situation. One result of the efforts to make it profitable is that many mines were closed and the afferent areas rehabilitated. In other words, the needs of the Jiu Valley are familiar to other regions as well. In addition, the nowadays process of globalization of the world economy offers to the investors the possibility to seek easily possibilities for profit elsewhere in the world. This means that the European countries are in competition with countries from other continents, countries where the labour is cheaper (e.g. countries from Asia).

Neither in Romania the Jiu Valley is a singular case, as there are other situations with similar social and economic situations. This means that an original and successful solution must be found.

A future successful development of the Jiu Valley needs coherence. Therefore a concept is necessary. The rehabilitation and the retrocession to the economy of the former mining areas also imply the examination and the evaluation of the general context of the areas post-closure and their potential. This can be done only from a comprehensive perspective, at national, regional as well as local level. Lausitzer- und Mitteldeutschen Bergbauverwaltungs-gesellschaft (LMBV) – Germany – made an important step in this direction by developing some informal concepts and frame plans for the re-utilisation of the former mining areas.

The concepts for development follow two main objectives:

1. the planning and preparation of the post-closure surfaces for a superior utilisation (for the economy, residential buildings, leisure activities)
2. harmonising the plans for actions, the analysis and evaluation of the way that the individual projects answer to the general needs.

The elaboration of these concepts is based on:

1. the analysis of the frame conditions of the area (place, size, history, structure of the economy, environment for tourism and so on)
2. the description of the state of the rehabilitation process and of the measures to be taken in future
3. elaboration, evaluation and integrated management of the projects for re-utilisation taking into account the development plans and perspectives at regional and national level
4. setting a development direction taking into account the characteristics of the region and the future structure of the economy
5. defining the needs and recommendations for action, connecting to a general touristic concept, harmonising the interests for the planned projects in the target-area, up to the particular intentions for development and marketing of the region.

This concept for development must be appropriated, understood and accepted by the population, business men and authorities and must take into account the advantages and the characteristics of the Jiu Valley.

A successful concept for the Jiu Valley can be formulated as follows: **The Jiu Valley will be taken into consideration as one single administrative unit, the socio-economic and environmental rehabilitation process will be unitary administrated and, under these circumstances, the tradition and the newness, with original solutions for sustainable development interfere.**

The Jiu Valley becomes one town, the present towns will represent districts of this new town – meaning only one administration for the whole Jiu Valley (this idea was first launched in the year 2000 by the prefect of Hunedoara county). The whole potential must be analysed, evaluated and all the strengths must be included in a plan for regional development. Everything that is unique and attractive must be found in this plan, in a global context. A successful plan must focus on the specific features of the Jiu Valley and convert them in advantages. The Jiu Valley must develop in a way to become attractive for the local population in the first place, so that the people would no more emigrate to other towns or countries, but rather stay and work in the Jiu Valley.

In order to achieve this, help must not be expected from outside. The key to success is inside. The people who live in the Jiu Valley must try to make the region be attractive. This means that the key elements must be identified and the connected problems be approached. The number of the persons working in the mining industry during the communist era was too high and it is impossible or very difficult to create new jobs for all the unemployed but, in spite of this situation, the Jiu Valley can offer better living

conditions.

The aspects that must be followed in the process of reconstruction of the Jiu Valley are:

- a clean and agreeable urban environment;
- clarifying all the legal aspects regarding the ownership of the lands;
- attractive buildings for living and working – many of the existing buildings must be rehabilitated;
- good schools for the children;
- possibilities for leisure activities;
- an active cultural life;
- transport network to enable the fast access to other destinations;
- a responsive infrastructure.

At the same time, the development plan must emphasise the local values:

- a nice landscape and nowadays a clean environment;
- the people, including the tradition of good living together of the Romanians with people from other nations from the old Habsburg Empire – a good european model;
- education – there are many persons with good education and this is caused by the fact that in the main town of the region, Petroșani, there is a university (the graduates are engineers or economists);
- the university offers the possibility to develop new technologies, modern and ecological, either on its own or in collaboration with other local companies and/or research institutes;
- possibilities for culture (theatre, house of culture, mining museum), leisure activities (trips in the mountains).

3. CONCLUSIONS

Defining a concept for regional development is mainly a problem of human resources, because the persons belonging to a certain region must collaborate in order to contribute to the future development of a specific region. They must get organised and act together in order to achieve goals that are set by themselves. Getting together various actors (from business, administration, institutes) and making them a team is a real challenge, but absolutely necessary for a good future of a region having a difficult social and economic situation.

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