

The urban micro region: Deva - Hunedoara - Călan - Simeria

Professor Silviu Neaguț, PhD.
Lecturer Liviu Bogdan Vlad

The article approaches the “Deva - Hunedoara – Călan - Simeria” urban micro-region, from a development perspective, analysing its background and its contemporary evolution from the point of view of the economy, of the population and of the geo-historical landmarks and traditions, and based on this analysis, concludes in the drawing-up of some guidelines for its future functioning.

Key words: *urban micro-region; human geography.*

1. The urban anteriority

The Hateg - Orastie depression, distinct entity within the space of the Southern Carpathians presents a wide opening towards the valley of the main river of Transylvania, the Mures river, through the valleys of the Strei and Cerna rivers. Within the Hateg – Orastie depression, the Călan Corridor and the Hills of Hunedoara singularise. Within this space, an urban form with specific features has come into being, practically, an urban micro-region, within which the position of the four cities (Deva, Hunedoara, Călan, Simeria) stands out bearing a nearly perfect rectangular symmetry.

The four cities are singularised as urban settlements ever since the Dacian-Roman ancient times and have preserved this statute until modern times. The main factor they benefited from throughout their long historical evolution has been their geographical, in this case, geo-historical position. As such, they present to this day, a territorial configuration through which a functional unity asserts itself

thanks to: the administrative-political situation of the Deva city (a district residence), the major industrial centre of Hunedoara, the Simeria railway junction and the complementary industrial centre of Călan.

Two of these human settlements, respectively Hunedoara and Deva, are situated within the area of the Hunedoara Hills, in the proximity of some iron ore deposits exploited ever since the geto-dacian period. On the other hand, Simeria and Călan excel through their situation which crosses the ancient connection roads to the former capital of Dacia (*Sarmizegetusa Regia*) and to the dacian and roman influenced cities from the valley of the Mures River, which are situated along the commercial road towards the former deployment of *Colonia Splendisima Porolisum*, recognised from the Hills of Moigrad in the Salaj region.

It is interesting to state out the fact that among the Romanian Carpathians within which the analysed region is en-framed, the historical hearths of the settlements have been, thanks to the resources of the subsoil, permanent func-

tional hearths, perpetuated afterwards throughout all historical eras until today. It is not by accident that within this region, both the capital of the Dacian state (*Sarmizegetusa Regia*), as well as that of the Dacian roman province (*Sarmizegetusa Ulpia Traiana*) were set up.

Between these two poles, within the Romanian space, that quasi-administrative (political) form, known as “The Land of Hateg” asserted. As a matter of fact, the strategy of the bipolarity Sarmizegetusa Regia vs Sarmizegetusa Ulpia Traiana has determined, to a great extent, the constancy of the roman administration, on one hand, and the provision of ingression into the areas that presented a geo-strategic and economic interest, mainly, the gold mines in the Apuseni and Banat Mountains, on the other. Such a strategy has obviously favoured ever since Antiquity, the emergence of some nuclei of the urban persuasion, which can be found today among the inventory of the Roman camps, and respectively of the later medieval forms.

These evolutions have been concurrently favoured by the quality of the resources form the adjacent (Carpathian) areas of this urban quadrangle. The area, in its whole, has maintained a healthy environment for the agric-pastoral activities, situation propitious to the development of the human settlements, in general. Also, the urban forms emerged here have attracted other resources into the productive circuit: mainly iron ores, from which, the urban centre of Hunedoara especially benefited however, later on.

2. Contemporary evolutions

The necessity for developing and expanding the modern communication ways, correlated to the regional-

administrative role of the city of Deva have stimulated Simeria to become a railway centre of regional and even national importance. In its turn, the functional amplification of the Hunedoara centre has favoured the industrial complementary stimulation of the city of Călan. Therefore, ever since the beginning of the industrial development period, an urban equilibrium has been outlined, through which an urban formation of a unique persuasion, was configured, the urban micro-region of Deva - Hunedoara - Călan - Simeria, characterised by:

- Limited spatial association of a significant number of cities
- Functional diversity within this limited space
- Convergence area within which the dacian fundamentals coalesce and not lastly, the roman encrypted significations
- The frequency of some unique resources (ex. iron)

Important shifts may be noticed, however, especially after 1970. It is the moment when the industrial position of the cities of Călan⁶ and Hunedoara is nationally asserted. Hunedoara, therefore becomes between 1950 and 1970 the largest and most important iron and steel centre of Romania.

In the following times, respectively after 1980, one may remark a diversification of the industrial resources and their distribution towards the near cities, respectively towards Călan (the new coke-

⁶ The statistics of the time shows that the iron and steel centres of Hunedoara and Călan reached to produce 166 times more steel and respectively 11 times more pig iron than in 1950, in Romania.

chemical foundry) and towards branches of apparent local interest, but actually, of national level, such as the great thermoelectric power station of 1000 MW from Mintia-Deva. The city of Deva, which was known until then due to its administrative responsibilities, gains complex industrial structures, becoming better enframed into the specific of the region, unlike Hunedoara and Călan which can be distinguished through a greatly specialised industry.

The excessive industrial development has determined functional and demographic shifts in the existent relations

Such elements have determined the assigning of the concept of urban micro-region to this city ensemble, according to its definition as such in the geographical literature⁷.

and structures within the settlements networks from the area and especially among those settlements positioned in the valleys of the Strei, Cerna and Mures rivers. Simeria is endowed with new attributes.

In such a process of evolution, the villages in this region distinguish through a higher potential than that of the surrounding regions, as the cities of Deva, Hunedoara, Călan and Simeria find themselves tied in tight and complex social and economic inter-relations, functioning as a true *unitary urban subsystem*.

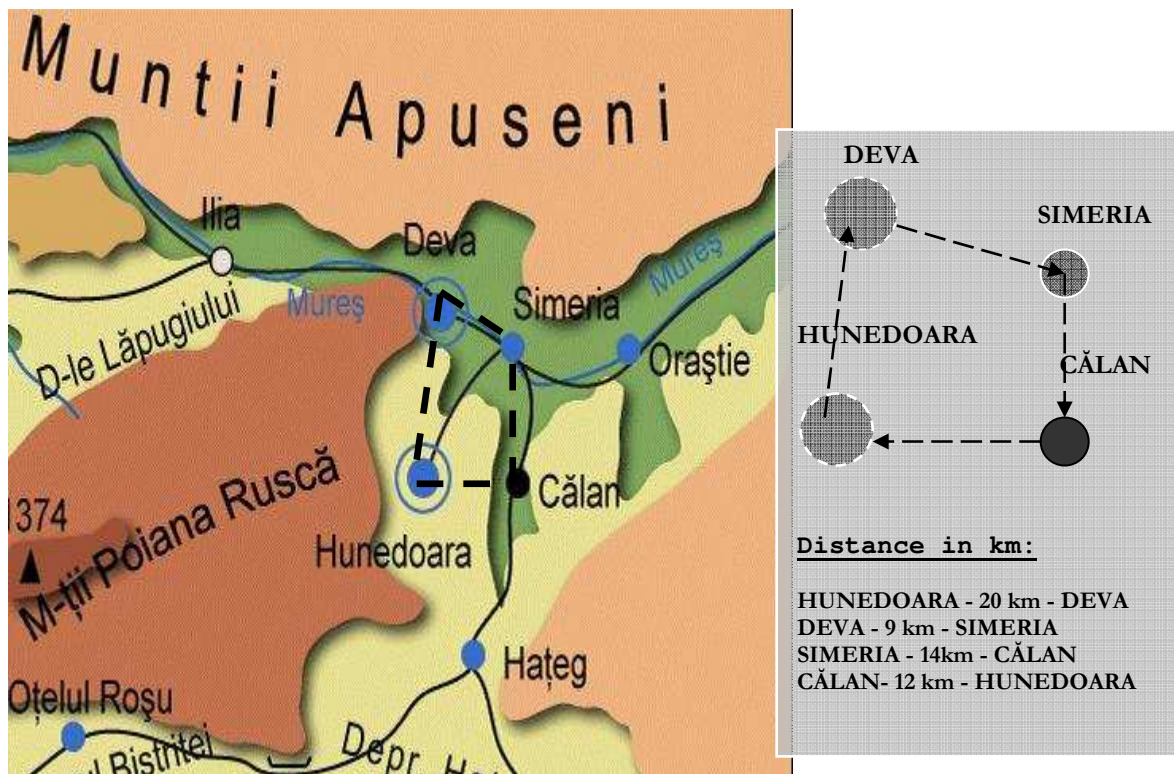


Fig. 1 – The map of the urban micro-region: Deva-Hunedoara -Călan-Simeria

⁷ Vintila Mihailescu, *Geografie urbana in Romania*, BSRG, Human and economic Geography, Bucharest

The key elements of this territorial urban form, unitary urban subsystem, consist mainly of:

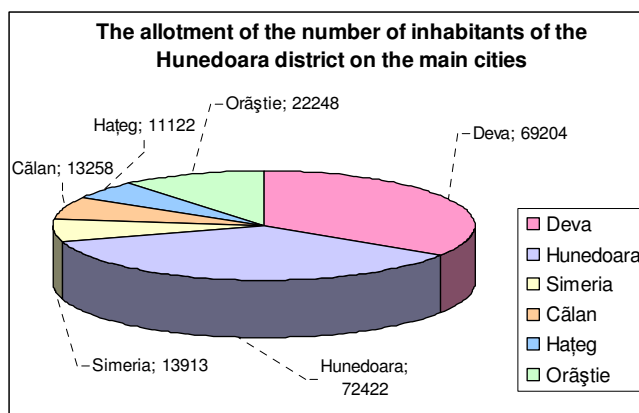
- The very small distances between cities, respectively 15-20 km
- The presence of the common features concerning the economic and social aspects, respectively:
 - Hunedoara and Călan: highly specialised (iron and steel) industrial centres
 - Deva and Simeria: relatively complex functions
 - Excessive evolution of the human potential
 - The complementarity of Deva and Simeria (both, with functional diversity) as opposed to Hunedoara and Călan (which are mono-specialised)
 - The complementarity of the touristic attractions

These are the defining features of the cities from the above mentioned urban quadrangle in the transition period towards market economy.

tants and a surface of 58.83 km². It excels through a *functional diversity* in a relatively limited space, with branches of national and regional importance. Through its position and its functional tradition it has influenced the railway activity and mainly, it has stimulated the functional amplification of the Hunedoara centre. Deva, through its situation on the left bank of the Mures River, within the space of the interrelations between the Apuseni and Poiana Rusca Mountains, appears as a gate of the analysed area, opening towards the west of the country. Altogether, through its altitudinal situation (187 m) and through its geo-historical⁹ sympathies, Deva represents an important centre of tourist attraction.

The main point is the Citadel Hill (371 m), a volcanic formation disposed under the form of a conoid, which offers a unique view of the entire valley of the Mures River and of its surrounding areas, and not lastly, of the entire city.

On the top of the Citadel Hill lie the ruins of the Deva Citadel, built in the 13th century, during the Mongol invasions.



Deva remains the capital of the Hunedoara district with 69 204⁸ inhabi-

⁸ According to the National Institute of Statistics - 2005

⁹ Deva is considered to come from the dacian word „dava”, meaning *fortress* or *walled city*.



Fig. 2 – The Deva Citadel

The development of the city in the following centuries is a consequence of the protection offered by the fortress. As a military and administrative centre, it has played an important role in the history of Transylvania. The initial function of providing services has diversified, as the city became a strong industrial centre. The industrial profile is given by the Mining Factory (The Copper's Autonomous Administration), Macon (construction materials), Sarmismob (wood processing), Matex (silk weaving mill), the Tire Retreading Factory, units of the alimentary, transport, geological prospecting and exploring industries, etc.

Hunedoara – municipality with a population of 72 422 inhabitants and a surface of 97 km², situated at 18 km south-east of the Deva municipality, is remarked, besides through its industrial position, through its situation in the valley of the Cerna river, at its confluence with the Zlasti bourn. The city is dominated by the industrial area, individualised in its urban structure.

It is an ancient economic centre, influenced by the position of the Huniads Castle (14th -15th centuries). Such a position is magisterially picked up from the Chizid Hill, from where the panorama above the entire city opens with its so differentiated functional areas.



Fig. 3 – The Huniads Castle

Hunedoara was, and is to this day, a centre of prioritised importance in the process of urbanisation of the entire region, inducing radical changes in the economic and social profile of the human settlements in the surrounding closer or farther areas. Typically industrial municipality, specialised in the field of the nonferrous metallurgy (The Iron and steel Aggregate Works), Hunedoara has diversified in the past decades its industrial activities, through the functioning of the shoes (“Corvinul”) and runnables (“Metropa”) factories

It is a typical example of a distinct hypertrophied evolution in the communist times. After 1990, it continues to function as an industrial centre, favouring, altogether, the tertiary sector, including the tourism one.

Călan is the centre of the most ancient historical vocation, attested in the ancient times, known as *Aquae*, as a watering-climatic spa with thermal waters, renowned

for treating rheumatic disorders and anaemia; the documentary attestation as a city is found later on, in 1966, due to the industrial development.

Therefore, the city amplifies, both from the demographical point of view, but also from the territorial one, counting today a population of 13 258 inhabitants, living on a surface of 101.5 km².

Economy is based mainly on the industrial activities, the “Sidermet” Iron and Steel Aggregate Works imposing itself, through the production of grey pig iron, coke and semi-coke, metallurgic equipments, household appliances, etc. Relatively recently, the “Plaster Factory” began functioning.

The most acute problem lies in the structure of this city – half industrial and half urban – which is now unbalanced. After the year of 2000, the city faced a profound crisis, due to the closing of the existent factories (the only ones specialised in grey cast iron in the entire Southern

Europe). The cease of activity and the start of chaotically unrigging the steel and iron platform have caused a “dramatic” landscape, both for the aesthetical condition,

but also for the functional one. A certain development has been known by the services actuated by the evolution of the Călan-Bai resort.



Fig. 4 – Industrial scenery (Călan)

Simeria also excels through the old historic vocation, mentioned as *Terra episcopalis*¹⁰. Simeria is known as one of the country’s most important railway (but also road) centres, with an intense traffic of commodities and passengers. Among its economic units (besides the Triage Station) excel the mechanic factory of rolling stock, the “Marmosim” factory (marble and sinter processing), the dairy factory, the lamb breeding complex, etc. Although affected by the restructuring, Simeria holds favourability elements both for the development of the sectors in the tertiary field, but also through the tourism valences it can benefit from.

The Dendrology Park here is unique among the structures of the kind in Romania. The variety of species, as well as its age of over 300 years asserts this unique space.



Fig. 5 – The Simeria Dendrology Park

¹⁰ Documentary attested in 1276

3. Perspectives towards the functional articulation of the urban micro-region – the Hunedoara Industrial Park

A significant measure, which may constitute a first phase in the functional articulation of this micro-region, is represented by the development of the Hunedoara Industrial Park. This solution makes it possible to stimulate the entire analysed micro-region, which, in the last years has known a contradictory evolution, through the dramatic decrease of the workplaces, which obviously led to a chronic state of unemployment; in order to back up the above statements, we must mention that it was only in that last lay-off wave (from May-June 2003) that over 3500 employees have been put off.

The accomplishment of this industrial park has started in the spring of 2003. The surface of the park is 193 000 square metres, split into 26 subdivisions, with surfaces ranging between 2 500 and 10 000 square metres. The so dimensioned surfaces will be able to be patented for a period of 49 years, or to be sold to the entrepreneurs who would wish to invest in the industrial park. The access to the park is made directly from the national road Hunedoara-Deva. The park disposes of complete utilities for any kind of industrial investment, being adequate for the implantation of industrial objectives.

Among the competitive advantages that the Hunedoara Industrial Park has to offer to the investors lie:

1. Advantages related to the active population

- The existence of workforce well qualified in many fields specific to the extractive and iron and steel industry. The Hunedoara Iron and Steel Aggregated

Works, a giant built after the model of the great iron and steel factories from the French Lorene, or the Ruhr (we remind that this aggregated works has been built in 1837), was in fact, an integrated industrial complex, in which workers of all specialisations co-worked. The tradition has perpetuated to this day, and as such, practically, for each industrial qualification there are well trained workers in Hunedoara and in the surroundings.

- Long industrial tradition: Hunedoara is an industrial city of about 200 years, and in Central and Eastern Europe there are few locations that could benefit from such a tradition, as it is a guarantee of the quality of the workforce.

- The willingness of the workforce to accept poorer working and salary conditions, willingness accentuated by the growth in the number of people unemployed from the last years.

- The malleable character of the workforce: in Hunedoara there were no social conflicts, no strikes, not even during the massive lay offs.

- The existence in the city of a university centre and of a qualitative high-school teaching network, able to train the graduates with a high degree of knowledge

2. Geographical and Economic advantages:

- The situation at only 7 km from the main European road that crosses Romania (E64).

- The position at maximum 20 km from the future highway which will be built on the European transport corridor E4, Budapest-Nadlac-Bucharest-Constanta, the main corridor that crosses Europe from west to south-east.

- The position at 15 km from the existent railway from the E4 transport cor-

ridor, railway that is currently being modernised through a project of the European Union.

- The placement at no less than 200 km from the Romanian boundary with the European Union.

3. Advantages related to placement:

- The possibility to make new, modern, unfenced constructions, next to a place in which all utilities exist. The advantages of the “Greenfield” placement are combined with the diminishing of the investment cost.

- The possibility to quickly perform the investment works: in the city, there are construction enterprises with adequate organisation and tradition in the carrying into effect the civil and industrial construction.

- The existence in the city of enterprises specialised in carrying out adequate services for the accomplishment of the maintenance works for equipments

- Multiple recreational possibilities: near to the mountain tourism area from the Retezat Mountains, to the Cincis Lake (with nautical endowments) and to sites important for the antique history (Sarmizegetusa, the dacian strongholds, and others) or for the medieval one (The Castle of the Huniads, The Deva Citadel, the Densus Church, other churches, monasteries), etc.

To all these, let's say, local arguments we may add the fact that Romania is starting to become an emergent economy attractive for foreign investors. The relaunch of the economic activity, starting with 2000, the progresses made in the political scene, the admission to NATO in 2004 and the firm calendar set by the

European Union for the adhesion of our country in 2007, all these will make the flux of foreign investments grow in the following period.

The administrative society of the Hunedoara Industrial Park is willing to accept investments in very different fields, investments that will obviously generate workplaces. For example, it is expected to have investments for production capacities, such as:

- a. Electronic components, components for satellite communications, batteries for the mobile phones, electrical installations based on solar energy and others;

- b. Mechanic constructions and sub-ensembles: sintered metallic products, rough carbide products, hydraulic sub-ensembles, etc;

- c. Plastics objects

- d. Wrappers for the alimentary industry, but also for other fields.

In conclusion, we may assert that, once with the setting up of the Industrial Park, plus other local and regional projects that are now kept in mind (for example the ones based on the tourism services), the Deva-Hunedoara-Călan-Simeria micro-region will gain more and more accentuated individualisation.

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