

## THE RELATION BETWEEN THE LOCATION AND THE URBAN-SOCIAL ENVIRONMENT IN MATTER OF THE PERIPHERAL TOWNS. ANALYSIS ON: HARLAU TOWN

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**Abstract.** This work seeks to identify the probable relationship between the location in space, on the one hand, and its effects on the social group subject to the respective conditions, on the other side (the distance, first, the exodus of the young population, lack of resources, etc.). It's just the situation that determines the territorial peripherality of the town of Hârlău, both territorial point of view that socio-economic development. It is a marginal city form Department of Iași, Botoșani County near the north-east, bordering areas of polarization in a *between (entre-deux)* that escapes the influence of two departmental centers (Botoșani and Iași).

**Keywords:** *center, periphery, regional gaps, interstices, between, social groups, social structure.*

### **The notions of center, peripheral, intermediate space.**

The concepts of *center* and *peripheral* are two key-concepts of the human geography, because these ones define both the place of the space sites and their economical and social status as well. These two concepts are focused on accessibility (if we refer to the space site) and on that of position (if we refer to the status). Generally speaking, in order to be accepted as a center, a town has to enjoy not only a high accessibility, but also various positions and favors. This thing depends on some natural factors, respectively the geographical site, but, mainly on the social group and its ability of initiative and adaptation. For instance, the social environment of the United States is an extremely modern and active one (even if it is a fairly recent one) this environment becoming a center, a sight for other social groups an adaptable spirit – generally speaking, the emigrants are people with a strong desire to become someone, continuously looking for a “bien-être” and “bien-vivre”. But without a social group which is able to develop the existing resources, the center stays as only a potential but not as a real thing. A negative example could be Târgu Trotuș, situated nearly the municipal city Onești and nearly the well-known gorge Oituz; it owned an important role in the past, as it was a tranzit town, between Brașov and Bacău. After the 1918 Union, this site has become not such an important town, as it was not a frontier point anymore. A human local group that can't fiind the appropriate solutions loses its urban status.

“The center is that very place where things are happening. This plain sentence, taken out from an Italian comedy, sums up in a perfect way the concept of *center*. *Development pole, CBD, core area, heartland* are all some words used to express the *center*. Finally, the center is often associated to the idea of power (political, financial, economical power)” (A. Reynaud in A. Bailly, 1992).

“The central character is hard to be measured. the center is a place of concentration and of gathering, a place where everything is happening is important, a place of maximum action and interaction; it is a place of great accessibility, of focusing of convergence and divergence, a place that attracts or issues human, material or immaterial flows. The center draws people and activities near; it issues knowledge, information, decisions. The center is relative to the subject of research, to the questions the researchers are putting themselves from various areas to the problems we are interested in to a given moment. Because of this, the center (economical, cultural, administrative, etc.) is not always in the center (...). More than this, the center is developing and is going farther: a certain site can lose the functions that define it as a center (decline) or it can get them back (rehabilitation). Finally, a site seldom has a single center: generally there are one or more main centers and less important centers” (O. Groza, 2005).

If we focus on the *space*, the center is defined as an accessible place from any point of a certain surface. If the center focuses on a certain *function*, it becomes a place of attraction and issue. Put it in another way, the more central a place is for a function of stable favours, the more attractive (it owns a various offer) and the more accessible it is. This quality is called *centralism-attractiveness*. On the other hand, the more central for a function of information, order or travelling favours a place can be, a better *issuer* this place is (it concentrates an important offer, but it is also well situated in order to issue it, becoming, in this way, the source of the flows). This quality is called *centralism-issue* (O. Groza, 2005).

The centralism is the source of a space hierarchy, the central spaces owning the control of a surface, that is why the word “central” is ready to be called the synonym of the word “influx”, in most of cases this thing being true (talking about *functions*).

“The periphery is defined in a negative way compared to the center and it is characterized by a lower standard of living, by less elaborate productions. One of the main handicaps is the absence of the autonomy in taking the decisions” (O. Groza – 2005).

The periphery is the opposite of the center: it is not attractive anymore, but repulsive. It doesn't have elaborate services to offer. As regards the *centers* (the developed countries or regions, a city), the existence of the *peripheries* is necessary, because the profit of the center is achieved due to its attractiveness compared to the periphery's (the prosperity of the center can be easier achieved by *exploiting* the periphery – the periphery doesn't benefit from its own favours, it is obliged to use the ones offered by the center that can enforce some conditions, keeping the periphery at an inferior level). If the periphery stays as a periphery, the center has chances of surviving if the periphery becomes a center, due to the acquisition of new functions and services, then, the old center that once used to be attractive, is ready to lose its privileged status, being obliged to look for new resources, new services, that might make it different from the new come up center.

For the simple fact that the periphery is seen as a less important place, it is hard to realize that the center, in order to exist, needs the periphery. In this way the periphery can be different from it and achieve a profit. Even if all the regions become centers, gradually, due to the competition, some important areas will come out, becoming centers, and the other overcome areas will turn into peripheries.

The “peripheral” character of a site is mainly reflected in the urban and social environment: the urban physiognomy (the aesthetic and functional aspect of a place),

certainly determined by the ability of the existing social group of managing the habitat and urbanized place resources, the structure of population on age, studies, activity on areas (generally, the population is quite grown old or ready to be grown old and not so well prepared and it works for the first sectors of activity – in case it does exist, the young population that graduated some superior studies would rather live in the important urban centers in order to find a proper work place) the existence of the green spaces and those of entertainment (the situation is similar to the one from the less developed state, to an inferior hierarchical level: the local population can't afford to make investments in the entertainment spaces, being more preoccupied with ensuring the daily living, all the funds going to the cast of living activities and services).

### **The town of Hârlău – surroundings: historical data, demography, economic activities, urban physiognomy, sights**

All the characteristics listed in the previous chapter are generally available as regards the small towns. Hârlău doesn't make any exception. It is a small town, situated in the northern-western part of Iași County, on the route Iași – Botoșani, 50 km away from the municipal town Botoșani and 70 km away from Iași, with a population of 11.271 inhabitants. The first documentary certification dates since 1384 when mother of the ruler Petru Mușat settled his noble court here. During the Middle Age, in Hârlău there was a noblemen court, where Ștefan cel Mare built "Sf. Gheroghe" church we can still see it nowadays. Also, in this place we can visit "St. Dumitru" Church – built by the ruler Petru Rareș. There was a time when the ruler moved at the Noble Court settled here for a short period because of the fire that destroyed the Royal Court from Iași.

As regards the economy of this town, we can mention the textiles, the wood processing industry. Here, the students can go to two secondary schools and a high school. The nursing is assured by a hospital, a general hospital and family doctor offices. Eleven km away from the town, we can find the well-known wine-growing region – Cotnari. In the South-West and the border regions of the town there are the lands of Lupu of Totoescu family, a noblemen family that dates since the XIIth century. During the pre-communist period, all the lands were confiscated by the communist regime and the manor was also taken away by the secret police, the Security, after the mayor Eugen Nicolae Totoescu had been chased away in 1956.

The charts below show the demographic structure of the town (in spite of the fact that some available data are not actual).

Much of the industrial activity from this town was dominated by the food branch (the industrialization of fruits and vegetables milk processing). Nowadays this branch has diminished its activity (88% in 1965). Small local industrial units belonging to some private enterprising men made their appearance: corn and wheat mills, oil presses, joinery (workshops), mechanical workshops.

Hârlău doesn't seem to be the result of an urbanistic and edilitar preoccupation of a great importance. We can notice that the choice of this place – that was a preoccupation 6-7 centuries ago – was interested in finding a *shelter* against any invasion danger and nature harsh conditions (V. Lișman, 1972). For the moment, the town administrators are

obliged to look for new places in order to expand the town (the new ANL-s – are built on a high terrace) the initial site as regards the space being insufficient.

*Table no.1 The working force and the population of Hârlău (1996-2004).*

*The data source: INSSE*

Population	1996	1997	1999	2004
Total Population	11969	12201	11934	12134
Active Population	5095	2095	5695	5790
Busy Population	4048	4393	4882	5165
Unemployed	1047	702	813	625
Unemployment rate	20,55	13,78	14,28	10,79

The structure of the urban space of the town Hârlău is enough interesting, due to the fact that on a small surface there are concentrated many sights of economical, social and political interest.

*Table no. 2 The structure of the urban space of the town Hârlău*

*Data source: Hârlău Townhall*

No.	Functional areas	Surface (ha)
1	Residences and supplementary functions	65,65
2	Industrial units and deposits	14,11
3	Agro-zootechnical units	6,49
4	Institutions and services of public interest	11,94
5	Means of communications and:	
	- road transport	14,92
	- rail transport	7,93
6	Green spaces, sport, entertainment, protection	6,67
7	Technico-administrative constructions	0,39
8	The Council administration, cemeteries	1,24
9	Special destination	-
10	Free lands	75,31
11	Waters	0,27
12	Woods	0,43
13	Unproductive lands	1,82
Total		207,17

The *urban physiognomy* is interesting due to the fact, that only the central part of the town has an “urban aspect”. There, we can find most of services and population. So, in the urban area “it-self” (having a small surface, around 400/400 m) we can see the buildings for the habitat (long shaped block-of-flats, specific to the communist period, but also two recent block-of-flats, higher, called “tower-blocks”, adding the ANL-s). The next buildings have *public* and *economic* character: the Police Station, the Town Hall, The Post Office, the hospital, the Court, The Crown Prosecutor Service, three subsidiary banks, the cult places situated 200 m away from each other), the secondary school, the high school,

the “Vineyard and Wine” Museum, a hotel (it is not functionally), some insurances companies, specialized stores (chemical products, clothes, electrics, etc.), a small park. Beyond this area, the habitat is represented by some houses, having or not the access to these utilities. The railway station represents a problem, as it is a place situated a great distance away from the center (1,5 km).

As regards the *substructure*, the road network is less developed due to the fact that Hârlău is quite a small town. The streets *physiognomy* is exceptional, as they are separated from the pavements by trees. There is also a circular *square place*, with the role of both regulating the traffic (roundabout) and serving for different shows, demonstrations, etc. as well. The square (place) has also a distinctive feature owing to the statue of Ștefan cel Mare, placed in the center of it, and surrounded by flowerbeds. There are no means of transport as they are not useful anymore (it would be necessary a transport network: Center-railway station, but, anyhow, it still wouldn't be worthwhile as there are only six trains by day; only those people living in the isolated areas are travelling by train), but there are some bus lines serving for the neighboring areas.

The green and entertainment spaces are not numerous. The central park is the one that represents the only green space in the area. It is a small and well-cared for park. Another green space, much smaller, is represented by the place situated in front of “Sf. Gheorghe” Church. Otherwise, there are a lot of other simple green spaces, as trees and flowers planted all over the available areas and having a well-cared-for aspect, too. The entertainment spaces are represented by five libraries (three of them are school libraries) the school gym belonging to the secondary school “Petru Rareș”, some small clubs and pubs. There are no discos, as they were closed up because of some conflicts that broke out among the minorities in the past.

Even if it is a small town, Hârlău had an almost central position during the Middle Age Moldavia. That is why a series of elements belonging to the court administration settled here, the ones that has “survival”, becoming important sights.

As a conclusion, Hârlău is an interstitial town, situated inside a “gap” of the urban network. It is a peripheral town without being somehow influenced neither by the municipal town Iași – its own county residence (due to the distance), nor by the municipal town Botoșani – due to its situation in the nearly county (Hârlău was once part of it). Maybe this is the just reason this “administrative hesitation” was rather “harmful” to this town, especially as regards the economic and cultural activity. In spite of all the difficulties this town underwent, Hârlău “held-out”, trying to take advantage of the agriculture potential (especially the wine-growing one, favored by the well-known vineyard from Cotnari placed in the neighborhood) and of the existing sights (including the holiday village placed in Pârcovaci district).

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