

## DEVELOPMENT OF SMALL TOWNS AS RURAL AREA INTEGRATION POLES

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*Abstract.* This paper presents an analysis of the Commune of Dudeștii Vechi, a peri-urban locality of the town of Sânnicolau Mare, a town that could be a true integration pole for this rural locality.

**Keywords:** small towns; rural area; integration poles;

### INTRODUCTION

Rural area consists of three types of areas depending on its predominant socio-economic activity:

- Peri-urban areas;
- Intermediary or balance areas;
- Marginal, peripheral or disadvantaged areas. [1,2]

The peri-urban area is in the near vicinity of towns over a radius of 10-50 km, depending on the economic and administrative power of the town. Practically, towns are **strong development poles for neighbouring rural localities**. The larger and the more developed a town is, the larger its action area is. [3,4]

So far, at national level, they paid particular attention to large towns that play an important role in the reduction of territorial disparities, hence the higher gap between rural peri-urban areas and rural areas. This is why we need to **consolidate smaller towns that could become integration poles for the rural localities in their vicinity**. [5,6]

In Romania, there are numerous small localities that have the status of towns, but their features are mainly rural and, though no law stipulates it, they are called **small urban localities** or **small towns of the rural area**. [7]

### MATERIALS AND METHODS

The information analysed were collected through literature documenting (books, volumes of scientific papers) in the research field. The research methodology consisted in the statistical analysis of raw data using the quantitative analysis programme Microsoft Excel (tables, graphs). The data analysed cover the period 1990-2018.

### REASERCH RESULTS

In Romania there are, according to a study on the locality network, a typology of the small-town polarisation areas (Figure 1).

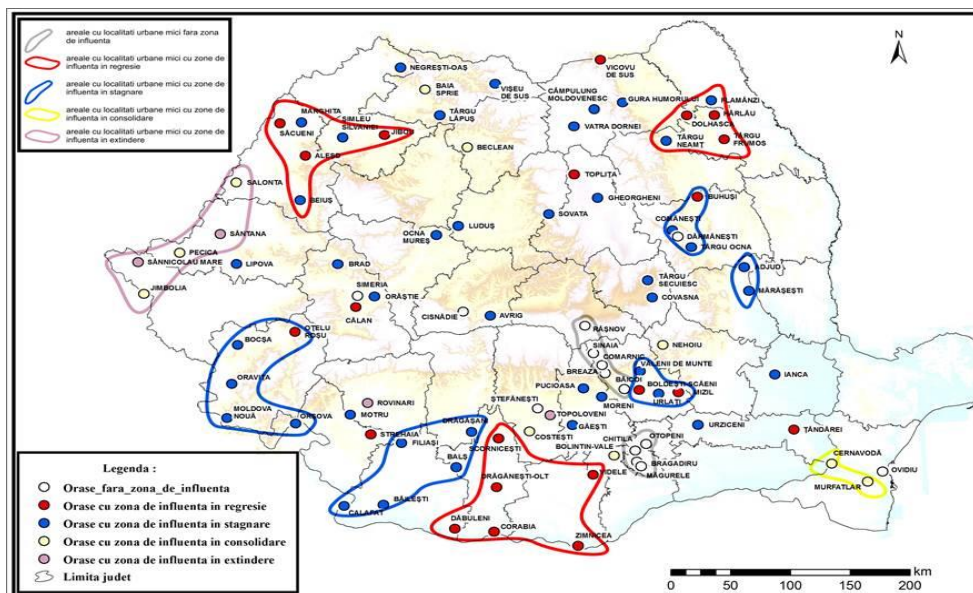


Figure 1. Small town polarisation area typology

Source: Studiu de fundamentare PATN-Rețea de localități <http://www.sdtr.ro/44/Strategie>, 2014

According to this typology, the town of Sânnicolau Mare (about 14 km from the commune of Dudeștii Vechi, a locality analysed in the project) is part of the **small urban locality areas with extension impact**.

There are nine categories of urban localities (Figure 2):

- Metropolitan poles with international potential;
- Metropolitan poles with supra-/inter-regional potential;
- Metropolitan poles with regional potential;
- Metropolitan poles with limited regional potential;
- Sub-regional poles with functional urban area potential;
- Urban poles with areal influence;
- Urban poles with specialised profile and diffuse territorial influence;
- Urban poles with local influence;
- Towns in the vicinity of metropolitan poles [8,10].

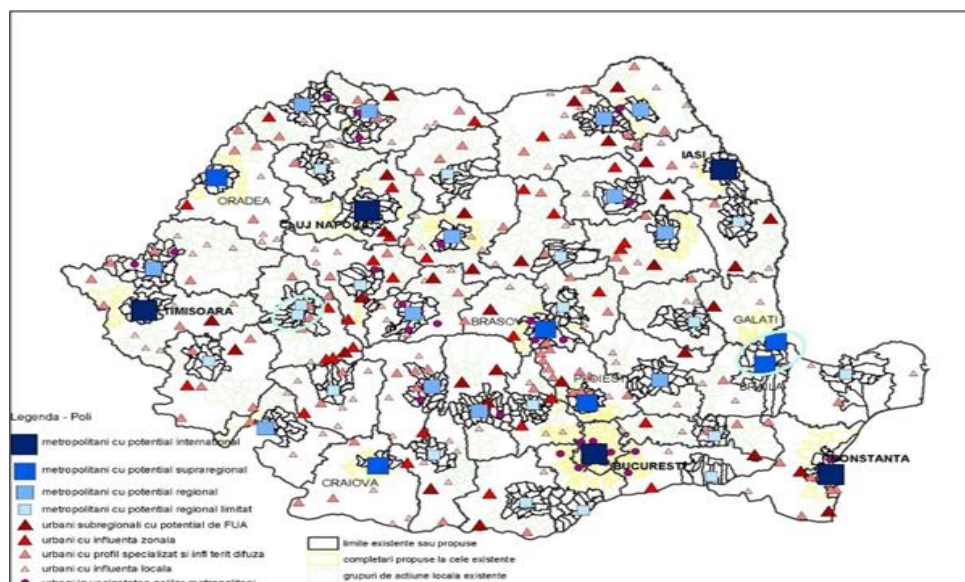


Figure 2. Typology of urban localities and of potential polarisation areas

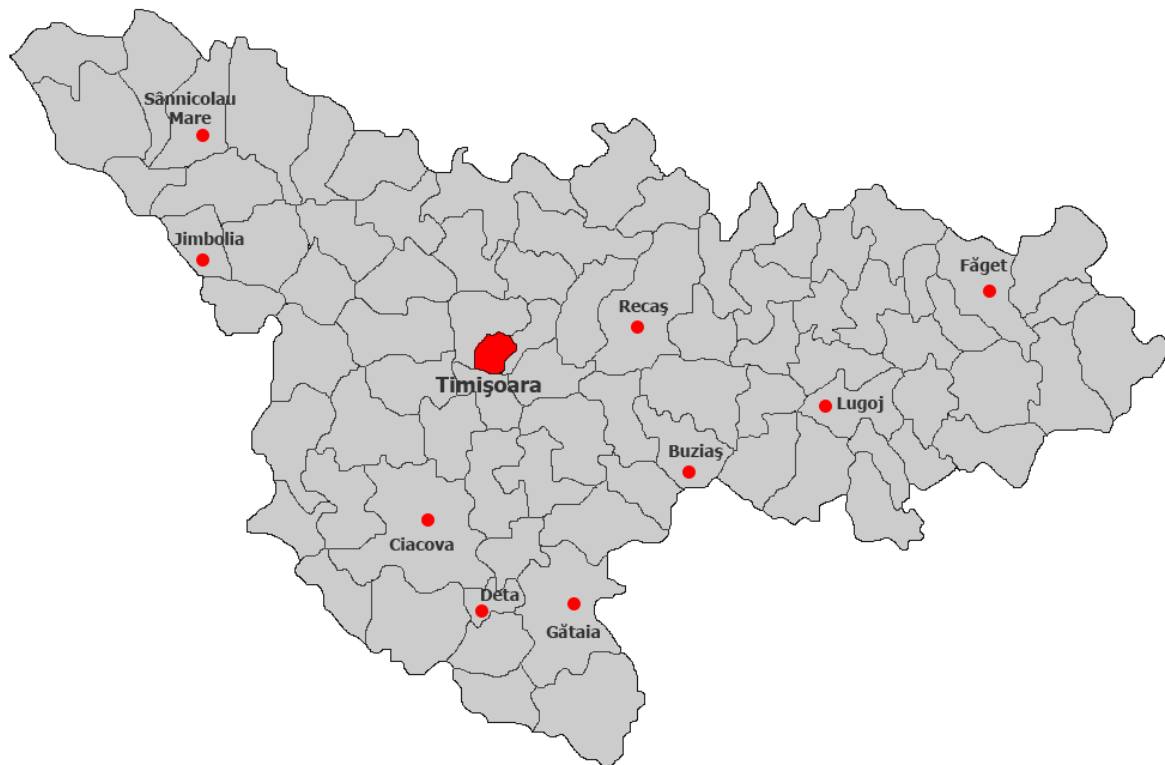
Source: Strategia de Dezvoltare Teritorială a României, 2014

According to Figure 2, the town of Sânnicolau Mare belongs to the category **metropolitan poles with regional potential**.

In its existence as administrative-territorial centre, the town of Sânnicolau Mare has always been in contact with the issues of the surrounding localities **thus gaining an influential role in the most western part of the country**.

The town of **Sânnicolau Mare has been, is, and will be a polarisation centre for its surrounding localities** due to its geographical location. Located at the crossroads of trade routes between west and east and between north and south and in the Mureș River Valley, the town of Sânnicolau Mare is a nodal centre with different administrative-territorial functions [9].

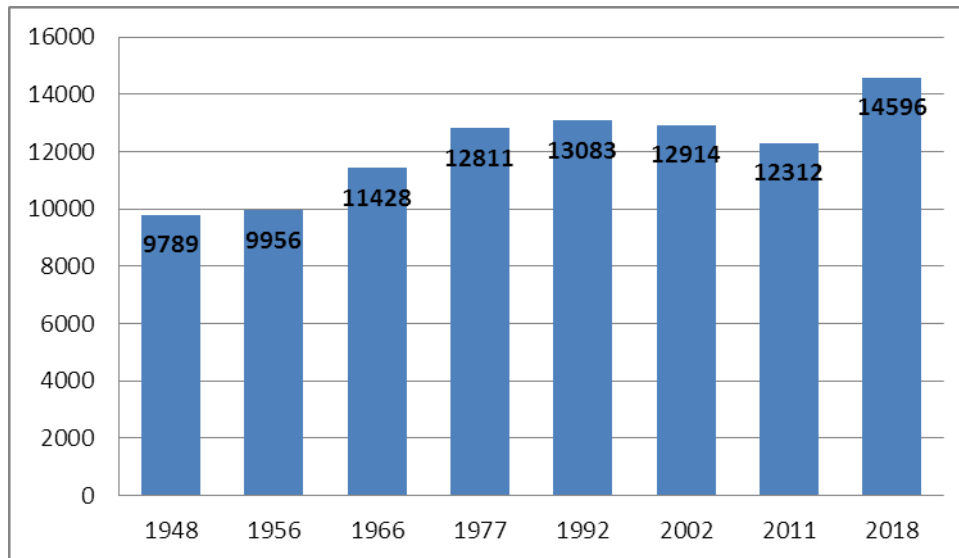
The town of Sânnicolau Mare is the most western town of Romania and of Timiș County; it is the third town of the country after Timișoara and Lugoj (Figure 3). It is attested in a document from 1247, the “Royal Privileged Diplomas”, but it is much older than that. It is a border town with a 6-km border with Hungary along the Mureș River watercourse.



**Figure 3. Map of Timiș County and of its towns**

Source: [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Harta\\_Orase\\_Timiș.png](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Harta_Orase_Timiș.png)

Figure 4 below presents the demographic evolution of the town of Sânnicolau Mare.



**Figure 4. Demographic evolution of the town of Sânnicolau Mare**

The commune of Dudeștii Vechi is located in north-west Timiș County, in the middle of the triangle made up by the border between Romania and Hungary (east-west) and Serbia (north-east and south-east) and the line uniting the localities Nădlac and Jimbolia (north-south). The commune of Dudeștii Vechi (old name Beșenova Veche) is **77.6 km** from the municipium of **Timișoara** and **13.8 km** from the town **Sânnicolau Mare** (on DJ 682). The mathematical position of the commune has the following coordinates: 26°28 eastern longitude and 46°03 northern latitude.

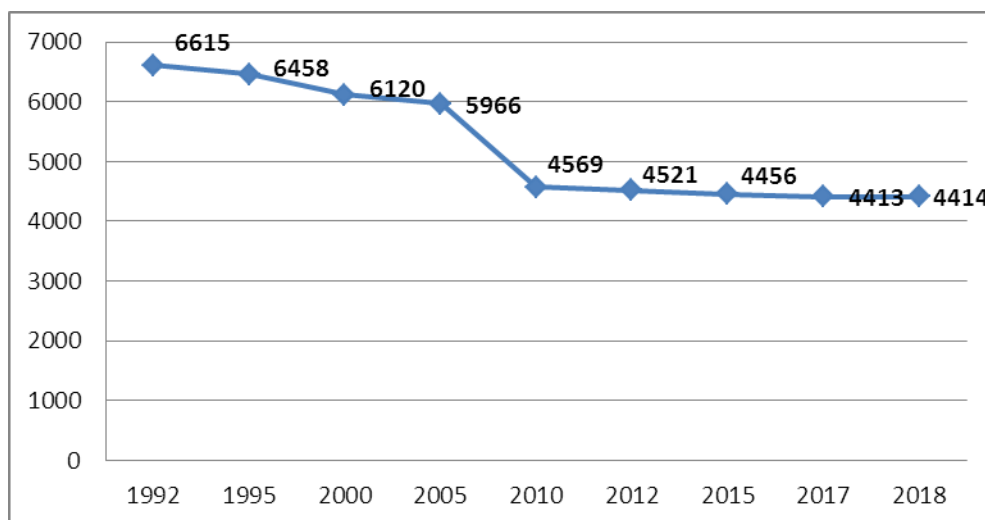
The commune of Dudeștii Vechi neighbours (Figure 5):

- The town of Sânnicolau Mare (the closest town) in the east;
- The commune of Cenad in north-east;
- The commune of Vâlcani in the south-east;
- The villages of Cheglevici and Colonia Bulgară in the north-east;
- The commune of Teremia Mare (with the villages Nerău and Teremia Mică) in the south and south-east [11,12,13].



**Figure 5. Location of the commune of Dudeștii Vechi**

In 2017, the population of the commune of Dudeștii Vechi was 4,413 inhabitants. It was 4,414 inhabitants in 2018 (Figure 6).



**Figure 6. Evolution of the population of the commune of Dudeștii Vechi (1992-2018)**

According to Figure 6, the population of the commune of Dudeștii Vechi is decreasing: from 6,615 inhabitants in 1992 to 5,966 in 2005. After 2005, the number of inhabitants fell drastically (with 1,397 inhabitants) reaching 4,569 in 2010. The trend maintained decreasing, though not drastically: from 4,569 inhabitants in 2010 to 4,413 inhabitants in 2017 and 4,414 inhabitants in 2018.

Due to its vicinity with the town Sânnicolau Mare (according to statistics, its unemployment rate is unique in Romania – 0%), inhabitants from the commune of Dudeștii Vechi have a job offer that improves their status and standards of living. Other inhabitants work in agriculture, mainly cultivating grains (wheat, sunflower, and maize), fodder plants (alfalfa and clover), and vegetables. The commune has, since 2014, a total area of **14,366 ha**, of which **13,113 ha** agricultural land and **1,253 ha** non-agricultural land. In 2013, they raised cattle, sheep, swine, and poultry; they now raise mainly poultry and swine for their own use.

**The dwelling style** make the commune a **compact village** with a church and other attractions in the middle. The households in the commune of Dudeștii Vechi are rather diverse due to population migration (inhabitants no longer invest in their dwellings). Building materials used in most houses consist in bricks and tiles.

As for **infrastructure**, there are sidewalks, roads, and railways, as well as water supply and electricity, but no connection to gas supply.

As far as **socio-cultural resources** are concerned, the inhabitants of the commune benefit from education services, health services (two medical dispensaries) and entertainment services (a culture house, the Museum of Banat Bulgarian Union, and a stadium). [14,15]

## CONCLUSIONS

The analysis of the commune of Dudeștii Vechi shows that the town of Sânnicolau Mare could become a polarisation centre for the rural localities surrounding it.

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