STRATEGIC MODEL TO ATTENUATE THE RURAL INEQUALITIES IN THE SOUTH – WEST REGION

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ABSTRACT: In the achievement of the work "Strategic Model to Attenuate the Rural Inequalities in the South — West Region" we took into consideration the performance of two types of objectives: main and specific ones. Within the general objectives we considered: developing theoretical approach to combat the rural inequalities; strategic plans addressed to combat the rural inequalities and identifying the socio-economic strategic measures dedicated to the promotion of necessary measures in order to combat the social inequalities. And regarding the specific objectives was to establish the SWOT analysis and the elaboration of strategic plans in local profile, based on clusters. The rural space analysis in the South-West region was made at the level of local administrative units, the lowest local level from which is collected and then published statistical information. Using of this local level is a prerequisite for obtaining positive results with a high fidelity degree.

KEY WORDS: cluster; SWOT analysis; rural environment; investment; social democratic dimension; social infrastructure; economic dimension.

JEL CLASSIFICATION: Q10; R10.

1. SWOT ANALYSIS - SOUTH - WEST REGION

Analysis of the rural space in the South – West Oltenia region was conducted at level of local administrative units, known as NUTS 5, the lowest local level from which is collected and then published statistical information. Using of this local level represents a prerequisite in obtaining results with a higher fidelity degree.

The rural area of the region consists from administrative point of view of 408 communes. The South – West Oltenia region is, together with the North East one, one of the "most rural" in Romania. The rural area plays an important role in the economic and social life of the region.

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In terms of criteria and selected indicators for the typology of rural areas, villages in the South – West Oltenia region are significantly different. The results of cluster analysis of data series regarding the rural social – economic inequality led to the division of communes in the South – West Oltenia region in three clusters, as fallows:

- cluster I: 46 communes, representing approximately 11.3 %;
- cluster II: 172 communes, representing approximately 42.1 %;
- cluster III: 190 communes, representing approximately 46.6 %.

There is a commune group assigned to cluster I, which is *near the major cities* and especially near places with economical potential. The city proximity gives to residents in the communes employment opportunities and therefore additional sources of income, adequate infrastructure, better social services and even greater opportunities for investment, including public investment.

Another commune group that is identified within the cluster I, we can identify *along major roads*. Transport infrastructure, and therefore its status, is an important and decisive factor on the regarding quality life, but also plays a key role in removing barriers in the development process of regional communities. Infrastructure promotes accessibility and thereby supports business development and increased employment.

Is identified another group of communes included in cluster I in the *SubCarpathian area*. Fruit growing and wine production in the region is significant; the areas for these crops represent a high percentage of agricultural land of the area. Also, pastures and hayfields have a high percentage, Carpathian area having, among others, an important tradition and a real potential for the zootechnic sector. In the analyzed region and the balneary potential has an ample consideration.

Another commune group assigned to cluster I identify it is in *mountain and sub mountain areas*, representing major tourism destinations, particularly for rural tourism and its agro tourism form. Rural tourism has considerable potential in the north, due to favourable natural conditions, picturesque landscape and existing cultural and historical traditions.

Plain counties have lots of communes falling into cluster III. These ones have an agricultural profile and focus on purely plowing crops. Today we can say that there isn't a competitive and efficient agricultural productivity, this aspect being determined both because of inadequate technical equipment and also by the practiced operating mode, thing which makes these communities to have a low level of development.

Strengths	Weaknesses	Opportunities	Threats	
Territory infrastructure				
• High	 Housing 	• Developme	• Insufficient	
housing comfort in	comfort is reduced	nt of housing	financial founds on	
rural area from the	in Olt, Gorj and	comfort in order to	short and medium	
counties Dolj and	Vâlcea counties	increase the quality	run, for developing	
Mehedinti		of life for people	the rural	

Table 1. SWOT analysis – South West region

		, , , , , , , , , , , , , , , , , , ,	
• Higher technical-urban infrastructure in Gorj county regarding drinking water quantity distributed to house consumers • Higher technical-urban infrastructure in Mehedinţi county regarding the length of the water network and in Vâlcea and Mehedinţi counties regarding the length of the sewerage pipe • Higher technical-urban infrastructure in Gorj county regarding the simple length of natural gas distribution network	Technical- urban infrastructure reduced in Olt and Dolj regarding drinking water quantity distributed to house consumers Technical- urban infrastructure reduced in Dolj and Vâlcea concerning the length of the drinking water distribution and in Dolj and Olt counties regarding the length of the water network Technical- urban infrastructure reduced in Mehedinţi county regarding the length of natural gas distribution network	from rural space	infrastructure Disequilibr ium deepening between rural and urban environment Omission of investment orientation in the rural environment, support for business environment development
Demo-social dimensi	ion		
Traditional	• Reduction and/or	• Active	• Rapid
value keeping trend (family) • Weak external migration fluxes	population aging trend • Reduced social emancipation trend • Relative house instability	population increase by attracting the population from nearby urban centers, affected by the worsening of economic situation	rhythm of population decreasing
Social infrastructure	2		
Premises of	• Poor	Keeping of	• Leaving of
a good social services quality (education, health)	penetration of computers	didactic personnel and medics by increasing the quality of equipment	didactic personnel and medics in the context of reducing the demographic basin
Economic dimension			
High agricultural surface in total	• Touristic infrastructure	• Investment increasing in	• Impossibility of a real competence

agricultural one • High fertility of arable land • Experience and tradition for hilly communes in the region for vineyards activities • High touristic potential of communes situated in the mountain area of the region or in the climatic spa resorts • The existence of mining rivers in Gorj county	insufficiency • Lack of employment opportunities • Lower ability for promoting rural services complementary to agriculture (especially agro- tourism)	agricultural exploitations and in tourism activities • Economic development of the communes nearby the Danube river once with the intensified efforts to exploit it	between the inhabitants from rural and urban region (especially on the labor market) and the deepening of differences concerning socioprofessional preparation • High degree of dependency of rural population concerning the social and agricultural transfers • Young population migration from rural to urban area • Loss of opportunities regarding the tourism potential of the region
Investment			1 110 1 18111
• Good performances registered at local level in Vâlcea county	• Low interest for real estate investments (houses) in the communes that are outside of influence spheres of urban areas	Infrastructure and social services development Increasing the attractiveness of rural area	 insufficient financial sources for infrastructure and services development Slow development of rural economy Increase of economic disparities between north and south parts of the region Disequilib rium deepening in rural communities

2. SOCIAL INEQUITY COMBAT BY DEVELOPING THE TERRITORY EQUIPPING

2.1. Cluster I – analysis

At the level of South-West Oltenia region, we can observe disequilibrium between rural areas from northern counties (Gorj and Vâlcea) and the southern counties (Dolj and Olt) concerning the cluster classification. Concerning Mehedinti county, we can't map it in the above groups of counties.

The two northern counties include approx. 58.7% from the cluster I (46 communes), the most (16 communes) being situated in Valcea County (34.8% from the total number of region communes are mapped in cluster I, respectively 20.6% from the total number of Valcea communes are in cluster I).

In turn, Gorj county has 11 communes mapped in cluster I (23.9% from the total number of region communes are mapped in cluster I, respectively 20.6% from the total number of county communes). Both countries have a higher share than the average in the region that are mapped under cluster I, but most of them have communes mapped under cluster II (75.7% from Vâlcea county, respectively 57.4% in Gorj county).

At the opposite pole, the counties with preponderant agricultural economy from the region have a reduced number of communes included in cluster I: Dolj (7 communes) and Olt (7 communes).

Concerning Mehedinti county, here we have a reduced share of communes mapped under cluster I) only 8.2% from the total number of communes). Prevails communes mapped under cluster 2 (59%). The share of communes mapped under cluster III (32.8%) is bigger than in Valcea and Gorj counties, but much lower comparing with Olt and Dolj counties.

The share of communes from South-West Oltenia region mapped under cluster I is much lower than the share from national level (11.3% versus 20.5%). In return, the share of communes mapped under cluster III is much bigger in South-West Oltenia region than at national level (46.6% versus 38.8%). It is obvious that the reduced share of cluster I and the increased one for cluster III at the level of the analyzed region comparing with the national level prevails a lower level of development of rural areas in South-West Oltenia comparing with the national average.

South-West Oltenia region has a reduced share of communes mapped under cluster I. We can talk about a concentration of communes that are included in cluster I especially in Valcea and Gorj counties.

The most important commune concentration that is mapped under cluster I we can identify in the sub-mountain area from Valcea and Gorj, Is an area with a varied relief, picturesque places, historical monuments and cultural traditions. The area includes special natural objectives (caves), picturesque landscapes, but also antropic objectives (monasteries) and cultural traditions.

The tourism development in this area had led to new investments for improving the physical infrastructure and brought supplemental revenues for local habitants utilized for the communes' development. Communes like Sălatrucel,

Stoeneşti, Costeşti (in Vâlcea) or Polovragi, Leleşti, Peştişani (in Gorj) are included in this category.

The mountain region has communes mapped under cluster I. Even if it does not exist a very developed infrastructure, the special natural potential in this area permits a very big touristic activity, with favourable impact for rural areas. This area includes communes in cluster I, like Mahala or Voineasa (in Vâlcea) or Runcu (in Gorj). Voineasa is a recreation resort with national importance, and close by we can find Vidra resort (25 km away) – both being under Voineasa commune functionality.

The presence of those touristic localities have a positive impact for the territory equipping, but also the economic dimension in the respective communes.

We can identify another group of communes mapped under cluster I in the sub-Carpathian region from South-West Oltenia. In this category we include communes developed by putting accent on fruit-growing production, the occupied area with fruit trees having a big share in the total agricultural area. Also, pastures and hayfields have a big share, the sub-Carpathian are having, among other traditions, a big one and a real potential for zoo-technique sector (especially sheep and cattle).

In this category we include communes as Pietrari, Buneşti, Păuşeşti or Mihăeşti (in Vâlcea County), Mătăsari, Cătunele, Peştişani (in Gorj county). Also in the sub-Carpathian area we can find rural localities that have been developed because of the balneal potential, localities as Bala (in Mehedinți county) and Săcelu (in Gorj county) are situated in cluster I. They have important mineral water reserves, but big infrastructure investments are necessary for basic infrastructure, and also for the housing one, for a good development.

A different situation is in Olt county. Most of the communes from Olt which are included in cluster I are situated in *the transition area from heals to plain area* (in the northern part of the region). Communes as Sâmbureşti, Vitomireşti, Dobroteasca, Făgețelu, Spineni have a bigger development degree comparing to the lower parts of the region.

At the level pf South-West Oltenia region, the 4 county capitals from Slatina, Târgu-Jiu, Drobeta-Turnu Severin and Râmnicu-Vâlcea have a local relevance, but they are not regional growth poles. Craiova is the only city with transformation potential into economic growth pole for the entire region, representing a decision administrative centre, and also a very important university centre.

However, we can identify communes mapped under cluster I *nearby big cities*. Thus, most of Dolj communes, mapped under cluster I, are grouped near (Coţofeni, Işalniţa, Cârcea, Gherceşti). Also, nearby Târgu Jiu we can find a group of communes mapped in cluster I (Fărcăşeşti, Bălteni, Câlnic).

Strengths Weakness **Opportunities Threads Territory infrastructure** Good Presence of Communes Restrictions access to road and the isolation from cluster I are to develop economical railway phenomenon of the grouped around big

Table 2. Cluster I – swot analysis

infrastructure	communes The poor state of many county roads Areas around south of the region especially those situated along the Danube are traditional under developed	cities: Craiova and Targu Jiu Existence of a regional growth pole: Craiova Possibility to access financial founds through European programs Developing support infrastructure for economic activities	activities determined by some characteristics of the infrastructure Institutiona l capacity, relatively weak to access and implement projects Lack of necessary financial resources to co- finance projects Extinction growth of economy between north and south of the region
Demo-social density			5
 Social emancipation tendencies The tendency to reduce population aging 	 Degradatio n tendency of traditional values (family) High mobility of work force 	• Growth of active population by attracting population from neighboring urban centres affected by the degradation of the economic situation	 Rapid decrease of population Accentuati on of the social dissolution through perpetuating degradation of traditional values
Social infrastructure			
A good social infrastructure exists, especially, in the villages situated near big cities, for example Craiova and Targu Jiu	 Weak penetration of calculation technics There is a tendency to overload the teachers in villages from the mountain areas due to the phenomenon of merging schools 	Attracting teachers and doctors by maintaining a high demographic pool	Degradatio n of life conditions due to lowering the access to basic social services
Economic dimension			
 High agricultural potential (especially in the villages from the from south of the region) Experience and tradition of the communes from the 	 Low share of arable land in the agricultural surface Insufficienc y of touristic infrastructure Low ability 	• Increase of investments in agricultural exploitations and tourism activities	 Migration of young population from the rural area to the urban area Losing the opportunity to profit from the touristic potential of the

	1		
sub-Carpathian area	to promote rural		region
in fruit and wine	services		
activities as also a	complementary to		
real potential for	agriculture		
zootechnics	(especially agro-		
• High	tourism)		
touristic potential of			
villages situated in			
the mountain area			
of the region from			
the counties: Valcea			
and Gorj			
 Population 			
access to a paid			
working place due			
to the distance			
between villages			
and cities with			
economic potential,			
for example:			
Craiova and Targu			
Jiu			
Investments			
• Good	• Low	 Increase of 	 Accentuati
performances	interest for real	the attraction degree	ng disparities
regarding finished	estate investments	in rural areas	between communes
houses in	(houses) in villages		in the counties
2008/1000 existent	situated outside the		situated south of the
houses especially in	influence spheres of		region and those
Valcea county	the urban areas		situated north

2.2. Cluster II – swot analisys

Regarding the fitting of the communes from the South-West region in cluster II, the share registered in regional level is close to the national value (42.1% against 40.7%). Regarding the communes fitted in cluster II, at the level of Oltenia South-West region, they are numerous and dispersed. Most of them are in hill areas from Valcea, Mehedinti and Gorj county, a small number of communes situated in the plaines from Gorj and Olt counties are fitted in cluster II.

Table 3. Cluster II – swot analysis

Strengths	Weaknesses	Opportunities	Threads
Territory infrastru	cture		
• Location	Deficiencie	 Possibilities 	• Relatively
near important	, especially in the	to access external	low capacity to

	T		1		
cities: Valcea and Slatina Medium to good access at road and railway infrastructure	quality of communal roads Reduced living comfort Reduced technical and edilitary infrastructure regarding the quantity of potabale water distributed Reduced technical urban infrastructure regarding the sewage network and natural gas distribution	and internal founds	access European founds because of the lack of cofinancing		
Demo-social dimensi					
 Social emancipation tendency Weak external migration fluxes 	 Living instability Tendency to reduce and/or aging the population Degradation tendency of traditional values (family) 	• Growth of active population by attracting population from neighbouring urban centres affected by the degradation of the economic situation	 Rapid decrease of population Accentuatio n of the social dissolution through perpetuating degradation of traditional values 		
Social infrastructure					
A good social infrastructure exists, especially, in the communes situated near big cities	 Weak penetration of calculation technics There is a tendency to overload the teachers in villages from the mountain areas due to the phenomenon of merging schools 	Attracting teachers and doctors by maintaining a high demographic pool	Degradatio n of life conditions due to lowering the access to basic social services		
	Economical dimensions				
High agricultural potential	 Low share of arable land in the agricultural surface Low experience 	• Investment growth in agricultural exploaitations and tourism activities	• High degree of dependency of rural population concerning the social and agricultural transfers		

Investments	regarding pomicole and viticole activities Low touristic potential Poor access of the population to paid working places		 Migration of young population from the rural to urban area Losing the opportunity to profit from the touristic potential of the region
• Existence of medium support infrastructure for real estate investments (houses)	• Low interest for real estate investments (houses) in this communes because of the quality of life from this communes and because the lack of paid working places form this areas	Increase of the attraction degree in rural areas	Insufficient financial sources for the development of services and infrastructure

2.3. Cluster III – swot analysis

Oltenia South-West region is marked by it's adiction to agriculture, taking a form of sub-existance, practiced by an aged rural population and by those that were laid off from the urban environment. With a low contribution to the regional internal budget and a low productivity, this economical branch is characterized by the crumbled land and the lack of modern means and methods of production. The very low level of agricultural work productivity is because of low technical equipment, inexistent management make this so most of the communes from the South-West Oltenia region, most of them situated in the plains, to be fitted in cluster III.

In the counties: Dolj and Olt are frequent communes situated in cluster III, most of them (75 communes), being situated in Olt county (39.4% from the total of communes fitted into cluster III, respectively 72.1% from the total of the counties communes) and in Dolj county (67 communes, 64.4% from the total of the counties communes).

Table 4. Cluster III – swot analysis

Strengths	Weak spots	Opportunities	Threads
Territory infrastruct	ture		
 Good road 	• Weak	• Developme	 Omission
accessibility	railway accessibility	nt of technical and	of investment
	 Reduced 	edilitary	orientation in the
	housing comfort	infrastructures in the	rural environment,

	1	1	
	Reduced technical urban infrastructure regarding the quantity of distributed potable water to the consumers Reduced technical urban infrastructure regarding the sewage network and natural gas distribution	rural environments in order to develop the business environment • Expanding/ upgrading the road and railway network	support for business environment development Insufficient financial resources, for short and medium term, to develop rural infrastructures
Demo-social dimensi			
 Tendency to keep traditional values Relatively stable housing Tendency to grow and /or rejuvenate the population 	• Strong external migration fluxes	Growth of active population by attracting population from neighbouring urban centres affected by the redundancy	Migration of young population from the rural area to the urban area
Social infrastructure	<u> </u>	l	
There is the premise of an adequate human potential that can assure in the future an adequate social infrastructure Economical dimensions.	 The premises of a weak quality of social services (education, health) Weak penetration of calculation techniques 	 Attracting teachers and doctors by maintaining a high demographic pool Developing infrastructure and social services 	 Degradation of life conditions due to lowering the access to basic social services Large distance form the developed urban areas
High agricultural	• Low access	Increase of	• Migration
 Fright agricultural potential High share of arable land in the agricultural surface Investments 	of population to a paid working place	investments in agricultural exploaitations	of young population from the rural area to the urban area
investments	A Low	Increase of	Insufficient
	• Low interest for real estate investments (houses) in this	• Increase of the attraction degree in rural areas	financial sources for the development of services and

	communes because of the quality of life from this communes and because the lack of paid working places form this	infrastructure
I .	areas	

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