# 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
Mehedinți		of life for people	the rural

 Table 1. SWOT analysis – South West region

<ul> <li>Higher technical-urban infrastructure in Gorj county</li> <li>Higher infrastructure in Gorj county</li> <li>Dolj regarding drinking water equantity</li> <li>Mehedinți county</li> <li>Higher technical-urban infrastructure in</li> <li>Higher the length of the distribution and in</li> <li>Dolj and Olt valcea and Mehedinți counties</li> <li>He length of the</li> <li>He length</li></ul>	
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consumers• Technical- urban infrastructure reduced in Dolj and vâlcea concerning Mehedinți county of the water of the water distribution and in Dolj and Olt vâlcea andbusiness environmentorientation in the rural environment developmentvalue of the water of the water of the water of the water of the wateron orientation in the environmentorientation in the environmentvalue of the water value of the water of the water of the water of the water of the water on the term of the the length of the 	on
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Vâlcea and counties regarding	
regarding the length water network	
of the sewerage • Technical-	
pipe urban infrastructure	
Higher reduced in	
technical-urban Mehedinți county	
infrastructure in regarding the length	
Gorj county of natural gas	
regarding the distribution network	
simple length of	
natural gas	
distribution network	
Demo-social dimension	
Traditional      Reduction and/or      Active      Rapid	
value keeping trend population aging population increase rhythm of	
(family) trend by attracting the population	
Weak     • Reduced social population from decreasing	
external migration emancipation trend nearby urban	
fluxes • Relative centers, affected by	
house instability the worsening of	
economic situation	
Social infrastructure	
Premises of     Poor     Keeping of     Leaving of	g of
a good social penetration of didactic personnel didactic personnel	
services quality computers and medics by and medics in the	he
(education, health) increasing the context of reducin	cing
quality of the demographic	-
equipment basin	
Economic dimension	
High agricultural     Touristic     Investment     Impossibility of	
surface in total infrastructure increasing in real competence	of a

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	<ul> <li>insufficiency</li> <li>Lack of employment opportunities</li> <li>Lower ability for promoting rural services complementary to agriculture (especially agro- tourism)</li> </ul>	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 socio- professional 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	L		6
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	<ul> <li>Infrastructure and social services development</li> <li>Increasing the attractiveness of rural area</li> </ul>	<ul> <li>insufficient financial sources for infrastructure and services development</li> <li>Slow development of rural economy</li> <li>Increase of economic disparities between north and south parts of the region</li> <li>Disequilib rium deepening in rural communities</li> </ul>

# 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 (Cotofeni, 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 infrastruc	ture		
• Good	• Presence of	• Communes	Restrictions
access to road and	the isolation	from cluster I are	to develop
railway	phenomenon of the	grouped around big	economical

Table 2.	Cluster	I – swot	analysis
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<ul> <li>infrastructure</li> <li>Quick access to European roads</li> <li>High living confort</li> <li>The importance of touristic potential from Valcea and Gorj counties</li> </ul>	communes • The poor state of many county roads • Areas around south of the region especially those situated along the Danube are traditional under developed	<ul> <li>cities: Craiova and Targu Jiu</li> <li>Existence of a regional growth pole: Craiova</li> <li>Possibility to access financial founds through European programs</li> <li>Developing support infrastructure for economic activities</li> </ul>	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			south of the region
<ul> <li>Social density</li> <li>Social emancipation tendencies</li> <li>The tendency to reduce population aging</li> </ul>	<ul> <li>Degradatio         <ul> <li>Degradatio</li> <li>n tendency of</li> <li>traditional values</li> <li>(family)</li> </ul> </li> <li>High         <ul> <li>mobility of work</li> <li>force</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	• Growth of active population by attracting population from neighboring urban centres affected by the degradation of the economic situation	<ul> <li>Rapid decrease of population</li> <li>Accentuati on of the social dissolution through perpetuating degradation of traditional values</li> </ul>
Social infrastructure			traditional values
• A good social infrastructure exists, especially, in the villages situated near big cities, for example Craiova and Targu Jiu	<ul> <li>Weak penetration of calculation technics</li> <li>There is a tendency to overload the teachers in villages from the mountain areas due to the phenomenon of merging schools</li> </ul>	• 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	1		
<ul> <li>High agricultural potential (especially in the villages from the from south of the region)</li> <li>Experience and tradition of the communes from the</li> </ul>	<ul> <li>Low share of arable land in the agricultural surface</li> <li>Insufficienc y of touristic infrastructure</li> <li>Low ability</li> </ul>	• Increase of investments in agricultural exploitations and tourism activities	<ul> <li>Migration         <ul> <li>Migration</li> <li>of young population</li> <li>from the rural area</li> <li>to the urban area</li> <li>Losing the</li> <li>opportunity to profit</li> <li>from the touristic</li> <li>potential of the</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

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<ul> <li>sub-Carpathian area in fruit and wine activities as also a real potential for zootechnics</li> <li>High touristic potential of villages situated in the mountain area of the region from the counties: Valcea and Gorj</li> <li>Population access to a paid working place due to the distance between villages and cities with economic potential, for example: Craiova and Targu</li> </ul>	to promote rural services complementary to agriculture (especially agro- tourism)		region
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 infrastruc	ture		
Location	• Deficiencie	Possibilities	Relatively
near important	, especially in the	to access external	low capacity to

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

	regarding pomicole and viticole activities Low touristic potential Poor access of the population to paid working places		<ul> <li>Migration         <ul> <li>Migration</li> <li>form the rural to</li> <li>urban area</li> <li>Losing the</li> <li>opportunity to profit</li> <li>from the touristic</li> <li>potential of the</li> <li>region</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
Investments • 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
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Strengths	Weak spots	Opportunities	Threads
Territory infrastructure			
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,

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

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

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