THE PERCEPTION OF JIU VALLEY POPULATION REGARDING THE SOCIO-ECONOMIC REBOUND OF THE AREA

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ABSTRACT: The article is the result of the effort of ordering the empirical researches which I have made in the past few years in Jiu Valley. Here are presented some of the resident’s opinions regarding the economic evolution of the area and the chances of socio-economic rebound of it.

KEY WORDS: economic situation, economic evolution, quality of life, socio-economic rebound, social conditions, economic alternatives

1. ECONOMIC EVOLUTION OF JIU VALLEY

The future of carboniferous industry in Jiu Valley through the view of National Coal Company is defined by the coal production’s stagnation after 2007, by the constant reducing of the average number of personnel (which will drop to 10,400 employees in 2010) and by a productivity of work in value of 620 tones/person/year.

According to the General Directorate of Mineral Resources, Ministry of Economy and Commerce, after 1991 pitcoal’s production in Jiu Valley raised up almost constantly until 1997. Decreasing of pitcoal’s demand from 7.1 mil. tones in 1997 to 2.5mil.Tones at the present time conducted to mining diminishing in Jiu Valley. Continuing the effort of investing in carboniferous industry from Jiu Valley is mostly justified because here there are important industrial coal deposits, under the circumstances that National Coal Company’s coal demand on commodity market is over the present production capacity. Willing to find out how the people are scenting the economic situation of Jiu Valley in comparison with the rest of Romania, the results appear as follows in figure 1. It is to emphasize the fact that economic situation of Jiu Valley is considered to be worse than generally in Romania. It is to be observed the pessimistic note regarding the economic situation of the area comparing with the rest of the country. If on nationwide it is seeing a slight improvement of economic

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situation (19.7% of the area’s residents perceive the economic evolution of the country as bad and very bad, comparing with 31.6% - good and very good), regarding to Jiu Valley’s chances people are more reserved (31.9% don’t believe in any improvement, 33.3% state to be the same and only a quarter hope for better). The image of Jiu Valley, as we see, it’s unconvincing for a specific group of subjects whom would wish or at least would finally try an economic and social invigorating method by giving up the traditional unity basis. Such try, it is without doubt, a success of many years of persuasion to the idea of Jiu Valley, of unity’s and solidarity’s dissolution which characterized until not long ago this urban mixture.

![Figure 1. Perception regarding the economic situation of Jiu Valley over 10 years](image)

But with all these rather centrifugal manners, Jiu Valley cannot be dispossessed of what characterizes it has, in collective mentality of the resident people. That is why we asked for the residents’ opinion regarding the aspects which impose the most Jiu Valley, in counterpart to the negative terms which manifested until now:

![Figure 2. Qualities of Jiu Valley](image)
Beauty of the environment is constituted itself in a promise for tourism development, in an economic alternative which allow employment of many people whom either work for the first time, either were made redundant, unemployed, or wish for professional reorientation. Yet, there are aspects which concern us and we are thinking about low appreciation of the people, appreciation made from the very residents of the area. Also negative is the shade upon the historical past of the area, either talking about the far past, or newer past. So there are problems from this point of view, Jiu Valley being appreciated in collective mentality only through its natural beauty. In the category “Something else” we integrated the answers with low values such as: taste of water, area protected of unfavourable meteorological events, etc.

In order to end this segment dedicated to the economic perspective in residents mentality, we surveyed their opinion regarding to what chances they give to tourism development, as main business of the resident people.

![Figure 3. Chances given to the development of tourism branch in Jiu Valley](image)

Resident people whom indicated to be pessimistic regarding the development of tourism branch are 33.7% of the population and those whom indicated to be optimistic are 32.6%. The rest give moderate chances to the tourism development in this area.

2. OUTLOOK FOR SOCIO-ECONOMIC REBOUND OF JIU VALLEY

In connection with the E.U. join, starting with 2011 Romanian State won’t be allowed to subsidize the mining industry in Jiu Valley. Maximum amount of subsidy for mining during 2007-2010 can be in between 1.1-1.2 milliards Lei (approximate 350 mil. Euro). Working conditions in Jiu Valley’s mining are becoming worse more and more, because there was not any new investment in mining equipment, the existing one being many years old. Also the young from area are completely disinterested for this trade.
Annual coal production of National Coal Company (C.N.H.) is approximate 3mil.Tones of pitcoal, at this moment the pitcoal deposits are over 300mil.Tones, which would assure continuity of pitcoal extraction for another 80-100years. C.N.H.’s coal production is delivered to thermoelectric power plants Mintia and Paroşeni, which use pitcoal. An eventual closure of mines belonging to C.N.H. would cause either cessation of activity of both plants, or massive import of pitcoal.

In “Sustainable Development Strategy of Jiu Valley microregion” is showing that in this region in 1990 there were 50.000 employees belonging to C.N.H., but not all of them were miners, because C.N.H. was dealing with administration of blocks of flats, schools, hospitals, water supply, electric power supply, etc. In last few years, seven mining operations belonging to C.N.H. were put to conservation or ceased the activity. In correspondence with these facts, the manufacturers of mining technology and spare parts for mining industry restrained their activity. At present, in Jiu Valley, belonging to C.N.H., work approximately 11,000 miners. They and theirs families are depending on mining activity of the area.

Massive personnel restructuring from 1997 marked heavily this region. Unemployment at first and chronic poverty after, there were two constants which accompanied people for many years after. That is why, taking notice at all ideas that the authorities exposed during the time, we asked the resident people what chances of survival they will give to Jiu Valley if, after that big shake up in 1997, others will follow, not with the same magnitude as 1997, but with similar consequences on individual level.

![Figure 4. Chances of Jiu Valley’s survival in case of new restructure](image)

The economic survival of Jiu Valley is conceived indissoluble connected to the mining’s existence. In fact, Jiu Valley is not summarized only to mining, it is also a strong urban and educational centre, but in the last decade things didn’t move from an economic point of view, the regress of 1997 being felt even nowadays.

Aiming for the survival chances of Jiu Valley, in conditions that mining would pass again through a restructuring process, we wished to mention which are, in the
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perception of the area’s residents, the advantages and disadvantages of keeping functional the mining operations. So we will get a mirror image, gradually presenting, to each advantage the disadvantage which corresponds.

**Figure 5. Advantages of maintaining the mining operations in Jiu Valley**

**Figure 6. Disadvantages of maintaining the mining operations in Jiu Valley**
It is a pretty clear and suggestive image regarding the thinking mechanism characteristic to Jiu Valley population. Same population admits there are advantages but also disadvantages, both generated by the same element: mining operations. It is to be observed higher concentration of answers on advantages (54%), comparing with the disadvantages linked to the pollution (20%). Yet, it is a step forward modelling in good people’s mentality, by accepting that a thing can bring not only benefits but also expenses, which at the first view would appear to be less important or indistinguishable.

At present, in Jiu Valley, beside mining activities there are operating also other firms in different fields of activities such as:
- manufacture of extraction and construction equipment;
- metallic confections;
- works and installations;
- plastics processing;
- constructions;
- ready-made clothes;
- trading, producing and merchandising of food products;
- services, etc.

Yet, all of these are not enough to use all available manpower from the area. Without mining sector, at least kept at actual level, it will be necessary the economic development of other sectors of productive activities. What possibilities people are scenting from this point of view for reducing the unemployment and to rebound the economy of Jiu Valley?

![Figure 7. Economic alternatives for Jiu Valley’s rebound](image)

It is not us to evaluate the chances of materialization of each solution or theirs veracity, seen through the view of their efficiency, but selecting tourism as main
activity would be a really easy decision to take and this in spite of other sectors of activities which could, for real, absorb thousands of working people. It shouldn’t be neglected the fact that there are estimations about the capacity of absorption of manpower in tourism industry and the figures are alarming: only a few hundred of people.

But over the economic alternatives it is to feel a reserve of the investors to start a business in Jiu Valley. We have already seen that at the level of collective mentality of every one of those questioned, the quality of resident people it is not perceived as a strong element which could convince any investor Romanian or foreigner. We developed this idea and we established the following hierarchy of motives which made possible the foundation and maintaining such kind of reserve:

![Figure 8. Motives of reserve in investing in Jiu Valley region](image)

We have above a multitude of motives, whence we are sure would be able to extract the real ones, but we don’t want to deviate from our axiological neutrality, that’s why we limit only to present them in the order they are perceived by the population.

Life in a certain area means not only to live on that territory, but also involve a multitude of other dimensions, which we examine through the view of satisfaction expressed by the people regarding the quality of education, of infrastructure, services, etc. That is why we tested the satisfaction’s degree of the resident people regarding of many aspects such as: education, number of commercial operations, social services, number of services operations, means of transport, quality of pavements and streets, working conditions, possibilities of leisure time’s spending, state of the environment, mass-media’s quality, habitation’s quality, family relationship, neighbours relations.

For lack of space we won’t present graphical results, but we present textual the most deficient aspects, but also the most valuable ones:
a). the most deficient aspects:
• working conditions - 68.80%;
• quality of infrastructure - 53%;
• possibilities of leisure time’s spending - 47.70%;
• quality of pavements and streets - 43.50%;
• social services - 39.30%.

b). the most valuable aspects:
• family relationship - 87.80%;
• neighbours relations - 73%.

REFERENCES: