STRATEGIC MODEL FOR ATTENUATING RURAL INEQUITIES IN SOUTH-MUNTENIA REGION

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ABSTRACT: *In carrying out the paper: "Strategic model for attenuating rural inequities in South-Muntenia Region", I had like primary goals the accomplishment of two kinds of objectives: general objectives and specific objectives. For the general objectives, I followed: developing the approach theoretical mode for combating rural inequities; the development of strategic plans for approaching the rural inequities combat and identifying strategic socio-economic measures dedicated for promoting necessary measures for combating social inequities. And the specific objectives had like goals the SWOT analysis and the development of strategic plans in local profile, based on clusters. The analysis of rural area in South-Muntenia Region has been made at the level of local administrative-territorial units, the smallest territorial level from which is collecting and after the statistic information is published. Utilizing this kind of territorial level is a positive premise for obtaining results with a high accurate degree.*

KEY WORDS: *cluster; SWOT analysis; rural environment; investments; demo-social dimension; social infrastructure; economic dimension.*

JEL CLASSIFICATION: *Q10; R10.*

1. SWOT ANALYSIS - SOUTH – MUNTENIA REGION

The rural environment of the region contains, from administrative point of view, 509 communes. Different than the urban environment by the profile of economic activities, by occupational structure and available resources, the rural environment, having a great development potential, plays an important role in the socio-economic life of the region.

Concerning the criteria and the selected indicators for classifying the rural environment, the communes from South-Muntenia Region are significant different.

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The results of cluster analysis concerning the data series of rural socio-economic inequity led to a commune split in three clusters:
- cluster I: 98 communes, representing approx. 18.9%;
- cluster II: 195 communes, representing approx. 37.6%;
- cluster III: 226 communes, representing approx. 43.5%.

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.

Table 1. SWOT analysis - South – Muntenia region

Strengths	Weaknesses	Opportunities	Threats (restrictions)
Territory infrastructure			
• High housing comfort in Arges and Prahova County's • Higher technical-urban infrastructure in Arges and Prahiva County's (drinking water pipe and sewerage pipe more developed in Arges County, natural gas pipes more developed in Prahova County)	• Housing comfort is reduced in Teleorman, Ialomița and Călărași County's • Technical-urban infrastructure reduced in Giurgiu, Teleorman and Ialomița County's concerning the quantity of drinking water distributed to household consumers and the distribution pipes of drinking water • Technical-urban infrastructure reduced in Giurgiu, Teleorman and Ialomița County's concerning the sewerage pipe and Giurgiu and Călărași County's concerning natural gas distribution	• Development of housing comfort in order to increase the quality of life for people from rural space • Development of technical-urban infrastructure in rural environment in order to develop the business environment • Extension/ modernization of transport road network • Development of support infrastructure for economic activities	• Insufficient financial founds on short and medium run, for developing the rural infrastructure • Disequilibrium deepening between rural and urban environment • Omission of investment orientation in the rural environment, support for business environment development • Discrepancies deepening between northern developed areas and the undeveloped areas in south • Disequilibrium deepening between rural and urban communities

Demo-social dimension			
• Social emancipation trend • Relative housing stability • Weak external migration fluxes	• Reduction and/or population aging reduction trend • Traditional (family) values degradation trend	• Active population increase by attracting the population from nearby urban centers, affected by the worsening of economic situation	• Rapid rhythm of population decreasing • Accentuation of social dissolution because of a perpetual traditional values degradation Young population migration from rural to urban areas
Social infrastructure			
• Weak social infrastructure (excepting Arges County)	• Premises of a weak social services quality (education, health) • Weak penetration of computing technique	• Attraction of didactic personnel and medics for maintaining a high demographic basin • Infrastructure and social services development	• Degradation of life conditions because of a decreased access to basic social services
Economic dimension			
• High agricultural potential (especially for communes in south) • Experience and tradition for hilly communes in orchards and vineyards activities • High touristic potential of communes situated in the mountain area of the region	• Touristic infrastructure insufficiency • Reduced access of rural population at a paid workplace • Lower ability for promoting rural services complementary to agriculture (especially agro-tourism)	• Investment increasing in agricultural exploitations and in tourism activities • Rural environment attractiveness degree increasing • Discrepancies attenuation between urban and rural areas regarding the standard of living	• Impossibility of assuring equal conditions for inhabitants from rural and urban region (especially on the market place) and the deepening of differences concerning socio-professional preparation • High degree of dependency of rural population concerning the social assistance and agricultural measures • Loss of opportunities regarding the tourism potential of

			the region capitalization
Investment			
• Good performances in the communes from Argeș, Dâmbovița and Ialomița County's • High rate of real estate investments in the communes that are close to municipalities	• Low interest for real estate investments (houses) in the communes that are outside of influence spheres of urban areas	• Increasing interest for real estate investments (houses) in the areas with a big touristic potential	• insufficient financial sources for infrastructure and services development

2. SOCIAL INEQUITY COMBAT BY DEVELOPING THE TERRITORY EQUIPPING

2.1. Cluster I – SWOT Analysis

At the level of South-Muntenia region, we can observe a disequilibrium between rural areas from northern counties and the southern counties (Călăraşi, Giurgiu, Ialomița, Teleorman) concerning the cluster classification.

The three northern counties include approx. 92.9% from the cluster I (91 communes), the most (42 communes) being situated in Arges County (42.9% from the total number of communes of Arges are mapped in cluster I, respectively 44.2% from the total number of Arges communes are in cluster I). In turn, Prahova county has 30 communes mapped in cluster I (30.6% from the total number of region communes are mapped in cluster I, respectively 33.3% from the total number of county communes).

At the opposite pole, the counties with preponderant agricultural economy from the region have a reduced number of communes included in cluster I: Călăraşi (1 commune), Giurgiu (2 communes), Ialomița (3 communes) and Teleorman (1 commune). In return, in this county group prevails the communes situated in cluster III, most of them (54 communes) being situated in Teleorman county (23.9% from the total number of communes mapped in cluster III, respectively 58.7% from the total number of county communes) and in Giurgiu County (39 communes, representing 76.5% from the total number of county communes).

Concerning the regional analysis of mapping the communes into clusters, at the level of South-Muntenia region we will analyze the distribution of communes, trying to identify similarities concerning the membership to a certain cluster.

We demonstrated that at the level of South-Muntenia region we can talk about a differentiation of counties from the north part and the rest of them. In these three counties (Argeş, Prahova şi Dâmbovița) the share of communes situated in cluster I is very big. The territory distribution of those communes let us delimitate more types of areas in which we can find communes mapped in cluster I.

First, it exist a group of communes mapped in cluster I that are *close to big cities and especially close to localities with economic potential* (Piteşti, Mioveni, Câmpulung, Târgovişte, Fieni, Pucioasa, Ploieşti, Câmpina). The proximity to a city offer to communes inhabitants employment opportunities and thereby supplemental and safe revenues, an adequate infrastructure, better social services and even high investment opportunities, including public investment. We can find in this group very developed communes, as Mărăcineni, Bradu, Albota, Poiana Lacului, Budeasa (in Argeş County), Ulmi, Doiceşti, Aninoasa (în Dâmboviţa county) ot Blejoi, Bucov, Plopu, Bărcăneşti (in Prahova county).

Another group of communes that are mapped in cluster I, we can find *along major roads*. The transport infrastructure, and thereby their state, represent an important and decisive factor concerning the quality of life, playing also a key role in eliminating some barriers in the process of community development from the region, Infrastructure favorise accesibility and by this sustain business development and an increased occupation rate.

South-Muntenia region is crossed by major roads, as European Road E60 (DN1), which connects Bucharest and Brasov (along this road are communes that belong to cluster 1, as Floreşti, Băneşti, Poiana Câmpina, Bărcăneşti – all in Prahova county), European Road E574 (DN73), which connects Pitesti and Brasov (communes like Stâlpeni, Schitu Goleşti, Boteni, all in Argeş county, are part of cluster I and are along this road), DN1B, between Ploieşti and Buzău, has along communes mapped in cluster I (Valea Călugărească, Albeşti Paleologu, Ceptura in Prahova county).

We can identify another group of communes that we include in cluster I in *Sub-Carpathian area* of the three counties from the northern region of South-Muntenia. In this group we include communes, as Tigveni, Mălureni, Pietroşani, Bogaţi or Priboeni (in Argeş county), Măneşti, Tătărani, Malu cu Flori (in Dâmboviţa county), Ştefeşti, Vărbilău, Dumbrăveşti, Cărbuneşti, Doftana (in Prahova county).

Another group of communes mapped under cluster I, we can identify in mountain and submonuntain areas, representing important destinations for tourism, especially for rural tourism and his form, agrotourism. Communes as Arefu, Corbeni, Brăduleţ, Nucşoara, Lereşti (in Argeş county), Moroeni, Runcu, Pietroşiţa, Buciumeni (in Dâmboviţa county), Măneciu or Poseşti (in Prahova county) are situated in this cattegory.

In the other four counties of the region, only few communes are mapped under cluster I: in Calarasi county, only one commune (Dragalina), in Giurgiu county two communes (Găişeni and Greaca), in Ialomiţa county three communes (Borăneşti, Giurgeni, Mihail Kogălniceanu), and in Teleorman county only one commune (Poeni).

Table 2. Cluster I – SWOT analysis

Strengths	Weaknesses	Opportunities	Threats (Restrictions)
Territory infrastructure			
• Advantageous geographic position reporting to	• Presence of isolation phenomena for some village	• Proximity to cities like Piteşti, Mioveni, Câmpulung,	• Development restrictions for some economic

the main regional roads • Accessibility to a good and very good and very good road and railway infrastructure • Fast access to European roads and to railways • High housing comfort • Higher technical-urban infrastructure	• Poor condition of many communal roads	Târgovişte, Fieni, Pucioasa, Ploieşti, Câmpina • Posibility to access European funds • Support infrastructure development for economic activities	activities determined by specific infrastructure characteristics • poor institutional capacity for project accessing and implementing • Lack of financial resources that are necessary for co-funding projects
Demo – social dimension			
• Social emancipation tendency • Reduction tendency for population aging	• Degradation tendency for traditional values (family values) • High mobility of labor force	• Active population increase by attracting population from nearby urban centers, affected by the worsening economic situation	• Fast decreasing rhythm of population • Emphasis of social dissolution by a perpetual degradation of traditional values
Social infrastructure			
• Good social infrastructure, especially in the communes that have big cities nearby	• Weak penetration of computing technique • It exists a tendency for merging teachers in communes from mountain and sub-mountain areas because of the school merging phenomena	• Teachers and medical personnel attraction for maintaining a high demographic basin	• Life condition degradation by reducing the access to basic social services
Economic dimension			
• High agricultural potential (especially for communes in south) • Experience and tradition for hilly communes in orchards and vineyards activities • High touristic	• Reduced share of arable land in the total agricultural surface • Touristic infrastructure insufficiency • Low ability for promoting complementary	• Increasing investments in agricultural exploitation and tourism activities • Diversification of economic activities in rural area • Urban population migration	• Opportunity loss of touristic potential advantages in the region

potential of communes situated in the mountain area of the region • Population access to a paid workplace due to communes proximity to cities with high economic potential, as Piteşti, Mioveni, Câmpulung, Târgovişte, Fieni, Pucioasa, Ploieşti, Câmpina	rural services (especially agro-tourism)	in nearby communes	
Investments			
• Good performances concerning the finished houses in 2008/1000 existent houses, especial in Argeş and Dâmboviţa County's	• Low interest for real estate investments (houses) in communes that are out of urban areas influence	• Increased attraction degree of rural environment	• Disparity accentuation between southern and northern communes

2.2. Cluster II – SWOT analysis

When talking about communes mapped under cluster II, at the level of South-Muntenia region, we can say that they are present in all areas and are very spread. most of them are in the sub- Carpathian areas from Argeş, Dâmboviţa and Prahova, but also in Teleorman we can find lots of communes, situated in the plain area, which are mapped under cluster II.

Table 3. Cluster II – SWOT analysis

Strengths	**Weaknesses**	**Opportunities**	**Threats (Restrictions)**
Territory infrastructure			
• Location near to important cities as Piteşti and Câmpulung Medium-good road and railroad accessibility	• Defficiencies, especially qualitative, concerning communal roads	• Possibility to access internal and external funds	• Relative reduced capacity for accessing European funds because of the co-funding lack of resources
Demo – social dimension			
• Social emancipation	• Housing instability	• Active population increase by	• Dramatic decrease of the

tendency ● Weak external emigrational fluxes	● Tendency of reduction and/or population aging ● Traditional values (family) degradation tendency	attracting population from nearby urban centers, affected by the worsening economic situation	population ● Accentuation of social dissolution because of a perpetual traditional values degradation
Social infrastructure			
● Good social infrastructure, especially in the communes that have big cities nearby	● Weak penetration of computing technique ● It exists a tendency for merging teachers in communes from mountain and sub-mountain areas because of the school merging phenomena	● Teachers and medical personnel attraction for maintaining a high demographic basin	● Life condition degradation by reducing the access to basic social services
Economic dimension			
● High agricultural potential	● Reduced experience concerning viticulture and fruit related activities ● Low touristic potential of those communes ● Reduced population access to a paid workplace ● Weak technological endowment	● Investment increasing in the area of agricultural exploitation and tourism activities ● Economic activities diversification in rural area	● Increased dependency degree of rural population concerning social transfers and agriculture ● young population migration from rural to urban areas ● Loss of touristic potential opportunities in the region
Investments			
● Existence of a medium infrastructure, support for real estate investments (houses)	● Low interest for real estate investments (houses) in those communes because of poor quality life and the lack of paid workplaces in the area	● Increased attraction degree of rural environment	● insufficient financial resources for infrastructure and services development

2.3. Cluster III – SWOT analysis

The majority of communes from South-Muntenia region are mapped under cluster III. The plain counties from the region (Giurgiu, Teleorman, Ialomița și Călărași), and also the southern parts of Argeș and Dâmbovița have a big number of communes mapped under cluster III. These communes have an eminently agricultural profile and are based on plant cultures. Today, we can state that it does not exist a competitive and efficient agricultural productivity, mainly because of a poor technical endowment and also due to the exploitation mode practiced, that leads to a very low degree of development for these communes. Most of the communes from this region mapped under cluster III are to a considerable distance from developed urban areas (especially in Argeș, Teleorman or Dâmbovița), having a negative impact on the physical and social infrastructure and also on public investments.

Table 4. Cluster III – SWOT analysis

Strengths	Weaknesses	Opportunities	Threats (Restrictions)
Territory infrastructure			
• Good road accessibility	• Weak railroad accessibility • Low housing comfort • Technical-urban infrastructure reduced concerning the quantity of drinking water distributed to household consumers and the distribution pipes of drinking water • Technical-urban infrastructure reduced concerning the sewerage pipe and natural gas distribution	• Development of technical-urban infrastructure in rural environment in order to develop the business environment • Extension/ modernization of road and railroad network	• Omission of investment orientation in the rural environment, support for business environment development • Insufficient financial founds on short and medium run, for developing the rural infrastructure
Demo – social dimension			
• Traditional values perpetuation • Relative housing stability • Increase and/or rejuvenation tendency of population	• Strong external emigrational fluxes	• Active population increase by attracting population from nearby urban centers, affected by the worsening economic situation	• young population migration from rural to urban areas

Social infrastructure			
• Premise existence of an adequate human capital that can assure in the future a good social infrastructure	• Premises for a weak quality of social services (education, health) • Weak penetration of computing technique	• Teachers and medical personnel attraction for maintaining a high demographic basin • Infrastructure and social services development	• Life condition degradation by reducing the access to basic social services • increased distance from urban developed areas
Economic dimension			
• High agricultural potential • High share of agricultural land in the total land surface	• Touristic infrastructure insufficiency • Reduced population access to a paid workplace • insufficient occupation of labor force • Weak technological endowment	• Investment increasing in the area of agricultural exploitation and tourism activities • Productivity and population revenue increase • Economic activities diversification in rural area	• young population migration from rural to urban areas • Loss of touristic potential opportunities in the region
Investments			
• Existence of a medium infrastructure, support for real estate investments (houses)	• Low interest for real estate investments (houses) in those communes because of poor quality life and the lack of paid workplaces in the area	• Increased attraction degree of rural environment	• insufficient financial resources for infrastructure and services development

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