

## STRATEGIC MANAGEMENT OF THE RURAL AREA SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT RESPECTING THE PRINCIPLE OF BIOECONOMICS AND ECOECONOMICS AS BASICS FOR PROTECTING THE ENVIRONMENT

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### Abstract

*The development of the rural area, of the rural community respectively, constitutes a complex and up to date research subject because it relies on two basic elements closely interdependent: the source of sustainable resources that may generate development and, the inhabitants of the rural area representing both factor of action and consume as beneficiaries of the development. In this context, the present approach to conduct research leading to the design of strategic options for the development and diversification of the rural economy according to the principles of bio and ecoeconomy is justified and will try to meet the challenge of identifying those elements that lead to integration of the main activities in rural areas (agriculture, aquaculture, fishing, forestry, manufacturing, etc..), and to diversification of the rural economy while maintaining a balance between the need to preserve and promote rural tradition and impending modernization of rural life. It catalyzes the need to identify specific solutions to rural development imposed by its characteristics, by the change across all activities in rural areas and frequent reorganizations, or continuous adaptations to cope with changes produced both in and outside the countryside and which evolve over time and are characterized by dynamic random or unpredictable new elements.*

**Key words:** rural, development, diversification strategy, preservation, modernization, bioeconomy, economy

### INTRODUCTION

In the process of rural development special attention should be given to elements that characterize the authentic rural and give it individuality, specificity and authenticity. These features that form the golden triangle of rural protection and development should be developed and used sustainably, to keep them unaltered [6,8]. Achieving these goals is possible, as it is widely accepted by professionals, with the adoption and implementation of the sustainable rural development concept described as a "process in which the community is actively involved in all initiatives to mobilize their own resources available for the social, economic and ecological benefit of the community" [5]. Characteristic of Romanian rural area, of rural communities, for a long period of time was the abundance of natural resources which resulted in some progress at economic, technical and political level which triggered major changes in the area affecting mainly primary activity -

agriculture with implications for the rural economy and way of life of rural communities and the relationships between rural and urban areas, leading to drastic reduction of natural resources to putting them in danger. All these predict the pace of change for rural regions bringing both challenges and favorable opportunities. So, change is inevitable; sustainable development helps to achieve in an economically responsible way from the environment point of view and equitable from the social point of view and at the same time fighting for keeping the traditions [8].

Under these conditions economic and social concerns of international organizations, of the governments of the contemporary world, of civic organizations, scientists and experts in various fields became more intense with the goal to prevent, "saving" rural degradation. How can sustainable rural development be achieved, is a growing problem today, and we try to give an answer below, noting that a crucial role is the strategic diagnosis in order to develop strategic options of which the most

relevant ones to be selected for adoption and implementation.

Strategic management is the means by which one can adopt the most relevant strategies for sustainable development of rural areas leading to balanced economic development, to the expansion of media and information, to the development of non-agricultural activities, and the establishment of networks and partnerships between national agencies, civil society organizations and international organizations [7].

In this context, the bio-economic and eco-economic approach becomes particularly important for achieving the targets of sustainable development, which emphasizes the need to overlap the ecology of economy, the need to integrate environmental requirements in assessing economic activities [1].

The context in which such changes are implemented is not exactly favorable as the Romanian rural area continues to face "numerous problems both in terms of physical-geographical, demographic, economic, and housing viewpoints and from the point of view of social infrastructure and related services" [3].

The novelty and originality of the work lies in addressing the strategic management of sustainable rural development through the principles of bio and ecoeconomics in formulating, adopting and implementing the most relevant policy options knowing that "critical environmental problems are closely related to scientific, technological and information progress of human society, but at the same time, only the existence of generalized progress of the human race itself can not automatically solve environmental problems that people and accelerated development of mankind since the industrial revolution created.

The decisive factor is the willingness of human society as a whole to solve existing problems" [4].

At the same time one also must not forget that "modern economy should be based on fundamental rules of natural and artificial

ecosystems (anthropogenic or anthropic) to save the in danger planet and civilization" [1].

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

The studies targeted Sibiu Depression – a uniform area that has a remarkable habitat and geoproductive potential that paved the way for the emergence of a particular rural life and culture and an original approach to geographical reality, of relationships between the environment and the humans living in it, using it for their own needs and which, in all probability, they have the duty to give value and new potential [7].

The major objective of the research is the design of strategic options for the development of the rural area based on bio-economy and eco-economy and connected to the rural environment, supported by biodiversity, aimed at solving the problems of the rural area concerning both the rural economy and the protection of the environment.

The research aimed to both identify problems and potential economic development in the context of environmental protection, and to help better targeting policy measures for sustainable rural development.

To achieve the overall objective we identified three specific strategic objectives: (i) Identification of alternatives for economic development in rural areas and designing policy options to promote a unified and coherent set of criteria and principles of sustainable development, innovation and ICT for efficient use of human, natural, energy, material and information resources. (ii) Formulation of strategic recommendations to enhance the adaptation and development process of the rural economy in accordance with the requirements of sustainable development, with the values and global regulations concerning the environment, agriculture and tradition, promoting biodiversity, conservation of the environment and traditional landscape.

(iii) Increasing and stabilizing the rural population's incomes as consequence of the households' engagement in a wide range of

activities corresponding to economic opportunities existing in the micro-region.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

To diagnose the countryside in Sibiu Depression PESTEL model was used, whose usefulness is recognized in the context of globalization in that it highlighted some particular aspects of the studied community which allow economic environment adaptation and its resistance to frequent change occurring at the level of the environment [2]. Thus, local factors of rural development acquire the ability to better respond to actual conditions and therefore better develop and implement policies, development strategies, collaborations and consultations with all partners involved in rural development. For a better and more complete knowledge of the socio-economic characteristics of the studied rural area SWOT analyses were used. These methods are commonly used to identify strengths and weaknesses, external opportunities and threats that an organization or units faces [8]. At the basis of the SWOT analysis were the data collected using semi-structured interviews conducted with key local factors and interested parties (stakeholders). Application of the above methods led to the consolidation of the idea that the improvement of the physical infrastructure is considered by the respondents as the most important factor in rural economic development in addition to rural tourism and agrotourism supported by the exceptional tourism potential of the area together with the food industry of tradition in the area contributing to a better recovery of agricultural products. Other considered important factors were improved IT infrastructure, agricultural production and agricultural services. It also can be seen that all stakeholders consider that the strengths of sustainable rural economic development are great tourism and agricultural potential. Beside them, are mentioned two industrial parks, forestry and wood industry and local brands constituting visit cards of the

countryside of Sibiu Depression. The analysis also highlights the problems of sustainable development of rural economy due to the existence of Sibiu Depression in rural areas of weaknesses such as lack of knowledge necessary for attracting European funds for most of the farmers and entrepreneurs, lack of development strategies and sustainable vision in a large number of communities, lack of jobs for young people with higher education and not least poor educational infrastructure in small villages. Among the identified threats the highest scores were recorded the following: lack of action to support businesses in rural areas, local factors inability to create partnerships to attract funds, low interest of farmers to form associations and hence reduced bargaining power which makes, lack of policies and strategies to promote and support the products obtained in the areas, for which they are considered the most powerful threats targeted against development and diversification of the rural economy. What could bring more sustainable rural economic development is the best use of the opportunities manifested in the rural area of Sibiu Depression. Those on which to focus attention are: the development of rural tourism and agritourism, food industry development, public services, agricultural production and infrastructure. Development of public services and tourism infrastructure development are two opportunities that fit well with current international trends aimed at increasing the share of non-agricultural activities in rural areas. Evidence of the most relevant strengths and weaknesses, opportunities and threats enabled a SWOT presenting only the most relevant strengths and weaknesses, opportunities and threats for development and diversification of the rural economy in Sibiu Depression. Based on SWOT document analysis presented above, we showed relatively easy problems of development and diversification of the rural economy, we proceeded to establish the causes for problems by designing a problem – tree (Fig. 1) and to establish solutions to solve them by designing an objectives – tree

(Fig. 2) for the development and diversification of the rural economy in Sibiu Depression.

The data obtained as a result of research conducted on the used methods of analysis

(PESTEL, SWOT and focus group) formed the basis of discussions at a meeting with interested parts of Sibiu Depression which were presented the brief of research results.

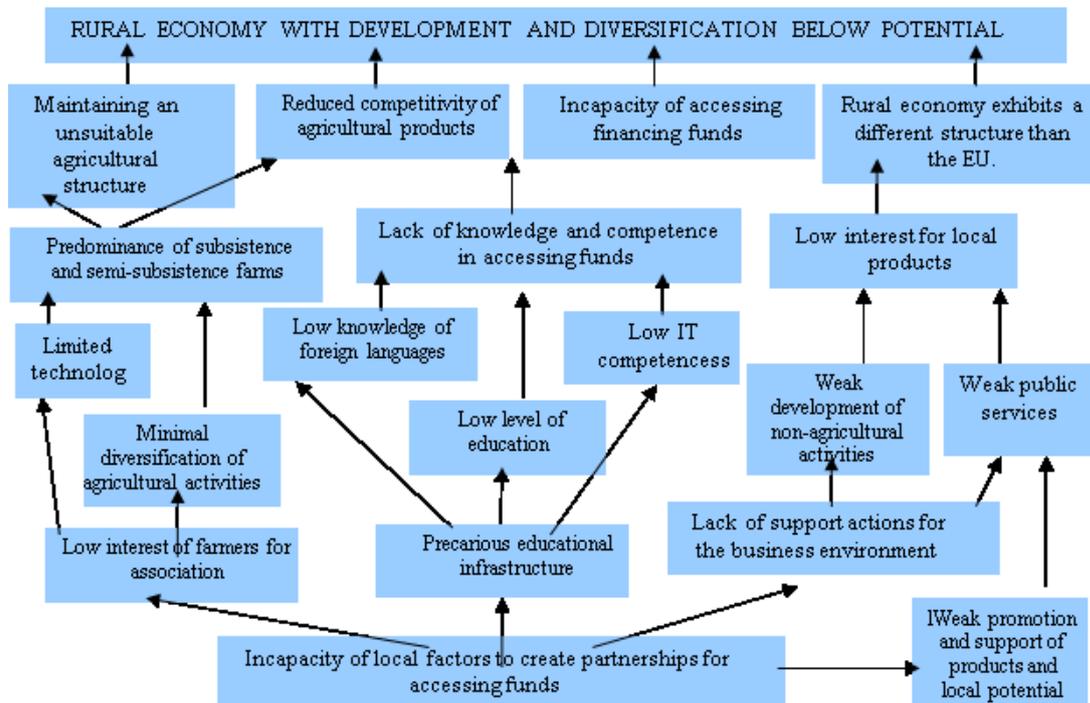


Fig. 1. Problem-Tree for the development and diversification of economic activities in the rural areas of Sibiu Depression

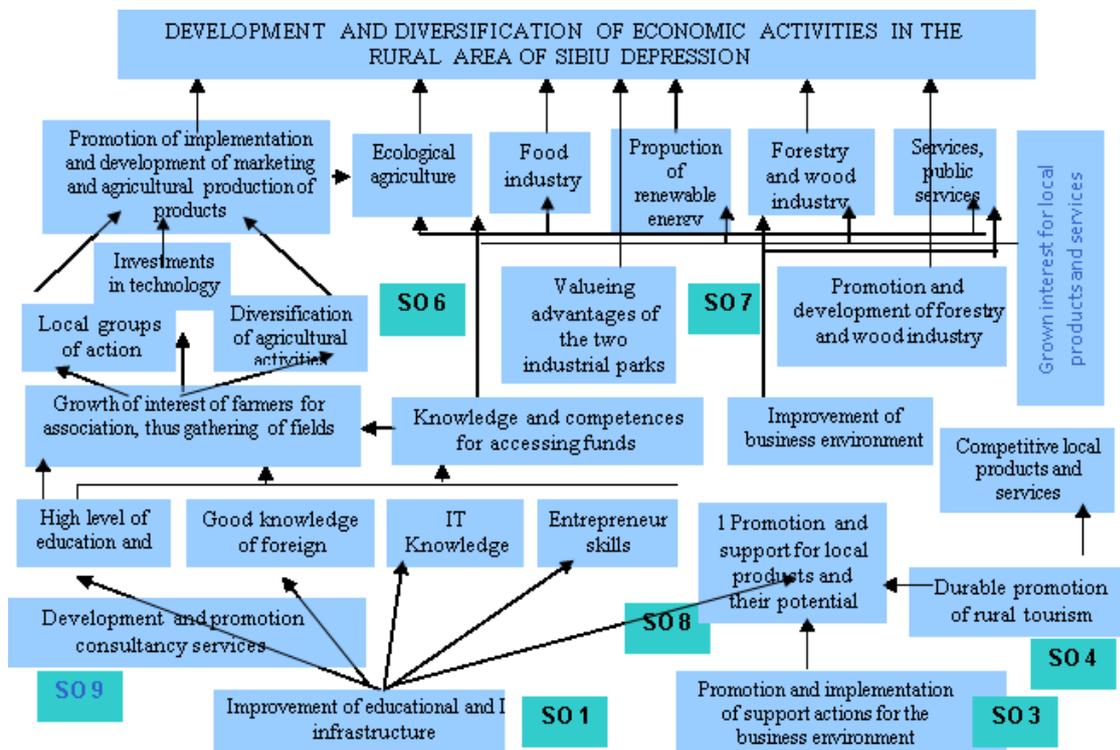


Fig. 2. The objectives-tree for economic activities development and diversification in the rural area of Sibiu Depression

## CONCLUSIONS

The addressed research area is part of the global research where each country in the light of its own experience in the Community and the reality of its own rural communities, is concerned with setting its own goals, strategies and measures for the development and diversification of the rural economy as every rural area is characterized by natural, cultural and spiritual diversity.

The development and diversification of the rural economy is also a strategic tool contributing to the flattening of economic and social disparities that occur in the countryside in different regions, between urban and rural areas of the country, caused by the varying endowment with natural resources, physical, human, financial capital etc.

The present research begins by highlighting the role of the socio-economic analysis in studying rural multidisciplinary scientific context, followed by a strategic approach to rural development with the study of major research methods for the two aspects, the quantitative and qualitative one respectively, and choosing the best for the strategic assessment of the rural area according to its characteristics and ends with the strategic assessment of the rural area of Sibiu Depression for the rural development and diversification of the rural economy representing the case study of the research.

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