

DEVELOPMENT AND ADOPTION OF STRATEGIC OPTIONS FOR RURAL DEVELOPMENT

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Abstract

The particularly complex and timeless issue of rural development, of rural community respectively, is based on two fundamental elements which are in close interdependence: the source that can generate sustainable resource development and rural residents representing both the action and the consume factor, being the beneficiaries of development. To identify the potential problems of sustainable resources and human cells in order to develop policy options to guide the development and diversification of agricultural and non-agricultural activities in rural areas, there were used strategic analysis methods, recommended by the literature in the domain. Thus, the results obtained are summarized in this paper that contributes to a better targeting of rural development policy measures to flattening economic and social disparities manifested in the rural areas in different regions, and between urban areas and rural areas of a country, generated by the varying endowment with natural resources, physical, human, financial capital.

Key words: complex, community, current, development, resources, rural, strategy

INTRODUCTION

The theoretical study undertaken situates, at the heart of its self, the structural and functional changes of the rural area as a result of the evolution of human society, generated by the emergence and development of non-agricultural activities and the general trend of urbanization. These threaten the rural authenticity, which requires, in the process of rural development, paying attention to the elements that characterize the authentic rural environment and give the following: individuality, specificity and authenticity, which symbolize stability and sustainability features which make up the golden triangle of protection and rural development. Rural development and the preservation of these features unaltered are one of the most complex issues of our contemporary time [8], which can be achieved by ensuring a balance between the development of rural life and modernism and the need to preserve and promote the traditions of rural environment. The success of this approach is provided only

through the knowledge, development and improvement of rural issues, which require development of complex activities, vital to the community, whose solutions can not be resolved in a short term basis, requiring successively integrated programs with lasting effects that need to be completed by improving human and institutional conditions. The facts are consistent with the point of view of the distinguished sociologist Dimitrie Gusti on Romanian rural research, expressed in 1938 current even nowadays, after more than 70 years [3]: " In the current era of intense organization of our nation, particularly research upon Romanian reality is needed. Effective actions require thorough documentation ... I'm sure that only diagnoses based on research of the kind undertaken by teams can provide the documentation required for drawing a total plan of the organization of the national life ". The context in which rural development is to be achieved is the one of need "to achieve a global economy that can sustain economic progress" because "our future depends on reducing the spread of

hunger and the growing number of failed states" [1].

Therefore, concerns about finding solutions and rural development methods require a modern approach, which takes account of the variety of local resources and superior capitalization based on sustainability [6].

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The many problems needed to be addressed when discussing about the research in rural areas require a methodology able to adapt to regional specificities. This includes methods, both quantitative and qualitative, such as statistical research and literature in the field (reports, strategies, studies, monographs), semi-structured interviews with key local stakeholders and structured interviews to collect data on successful initiatives and SWOT analysis [5]. Thus, to identify strategic options to promote the development and adapt to concrete needs, we should start from a more complete characterization of the rural area studied, in order to connect to this dynamic rural economy. Specifically, we proceeded to grouping dimensions of the size of the living area, in a set of six criteria for rural macro analysis for which we used the model PESTEL (political, economic, social, technological, and legal and environmental criteria), (fig. 1).[2].

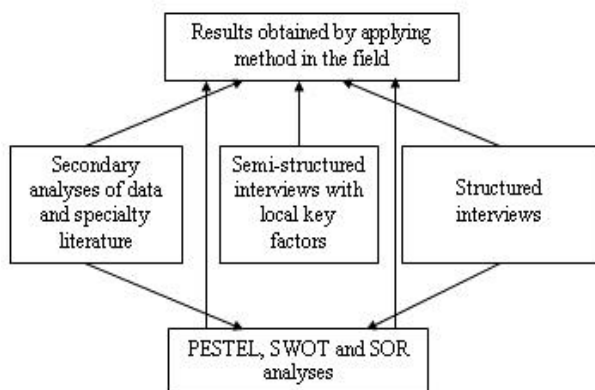


Fig. 1. The methodological structure of the field research

Subsequently for each of the six criteria of analysis of rural space with the PESTEL

model, there were identified a series of criteria of which were sub-selected those with high degree of relevance and correspondence for the study. A Selection and Assessment of sub-criteria analysis was carried out by groups constituted for this purpose, whose members were within the area analyzed (local factors), consumer groups, i.e. groups of experts. In order to characterize the rural fullest of Sibiu depression, we have chosen to use the SWOT analysis because it combines the method of audit findings with those of endogenous potential with non-endogen potential, but also enables identification of the problems and help to solve them. Analysis and understanding of the internal environment is the first step in the formulation of the strategy [9].

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The socioeconomic diagnosis held in the rural area of Sibiu Depression, regarding the development and diversification of economic activities, revealed a number of specific issues. The study on the characteristics defining these points highlights some conclusions. The villages in the depression express, at the level of population, a relatively sharp distinction both quantitatively and qualitatively, which influences the objective regarding the development and diversification of economic activities. Activities taking place in rural areas of Sibiu Depression are relatively less diversified and its economic life is still dominated by agriculture. Agriculture is a traditional activity in Sibiu Depression, and is generally the main occupation and source of income for rural inhabitants. Rural non-agricultural activities conducted in Sibiu Depression recorded an appreciable number however, and include both production and services belonging to handicraft cooperatives and companies, etc. and to private producers.

To a better knowledge and more complete socio-economic view on characteristics of the rural area studied, a SWOT analysis method was used, which led to the identification of strengths and weaknesses, opportunities and

threats of the territorial unit studied. Thus were identified, as strengths of the development and diversification of rural economic activities, sustainable tourism potential and great agricultural potential. Together they are referred to the two industrial parks, forestry and related industries, respectively - branded local settings is an important statement in Sibiu Depression, representing rural resources that can be used to obtain a strategic advantage [4]. Weaknesses identified concerns about the lack of knowledge on attracting European funds by most of the farmers and entrepreneurs, lack of sustainable development strategies and visions, a large number of young people with higher education without jobs and not finally, poor educational infrastructure in small villages. These weak points must be neutralized or mitigated because they can lead to failure to achieve the established objectives [7].

Threats to development and economic diversification are due to the lack of support actions of the business environment in rural areas, failure of local stakeholders to create partnerships in order to attract funds, low interest of the association of farmers hence the low power of bargaining which makes the price of their products to be reduced, the economic crisis that causes a number of companies to cease trading, and others to make layoffs, lack of policies and strategies to promote and support their products in rural areas.

What could bring more to the development and diversification of the rural economy is a good use of the opportunities manifested in the rural area of Sibiu Depression. Among those on which we should focus all our attention are: the development of rural tourism and agro-tourism, food industry development, better services to the population, agricultural production and infrastructure. Development of public services and the development of tourist infrastructure are two opportunities that fit well with current international trends aimed at increasing the share of non-agricultural activities in rural

areas, given that tourism has become an essential part of the rural economy [10].

Based on the diagnosis of the countryside in Sibiu Depression, we can formulate the following strategic options for development and diversification of economic activities in rural areas:

Attracting investment in physical infrastructure and information and communication technology to increase the efficiency of use of natural resources, energy, materials and information specific noting the countryside.

Improving educational infrastructure and adapt educational programs to market needs to develop entrepreneurial skills, which leads to catalyzing the process of development and diversification of the rural economy.

Promote actions to support businesses in rural areas both in terms of business creation as well as in the self-financing field;

Support the implementation and development of rural tourism activities, agro tourism, cultural tourism and eco-tourism.

Promote the implementation and development of agricultural production and marketing activities of agricultural products.

Promoting rational implementation and development activities in forestry and wood processing;

Support the development, promotion and better use of specific products, rural traditions of Sibiu Depression for a sustainable development.

Development and promotion of information and advice to staff situated in the rural area and to local government in order to access funds for rural development.

Development and promotion of public services in rural areas is one of the major concerns of local key factors regarding people in rural zones.

CONCLUSIONS

To identify specific territory on the potential of sustainable resources and human cells in order to develop policy options to guide the development and diversification of agricultural and non-agricultural activities in

rural areas, there were used strategic analysis methods recommended by literature.

Conducting development and diversification of activities in rural areas is done according to the territorial specific and supported by the rural community who gives life and maintains the rural Sibiu Depression.

Activities taking place in the rural areas of Sibiu Depression are relatively less diversified, reflecting a positive image in the SME-oriented development and diversification with increased tourism and agro tourism, without succeeding a better use of the important touristic potential of the depression.

To identify strategic options to promote the development and adapt to concrete needs, it is necessary to start from a more complete characterization of the rural area studied, in order to connect to it to dynamics of the rural economy.

Better awareness and opportunities manifested in the rural areas of Sibiu Depression can lead to the development and diversification of the rural economy.

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