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RURAL AREA OF THE REGION SOUTH-MUNTENIA – EVOLUTIONS AND GAPS OF THE SOCIO-ECONOMIC INDICATORS. CASE STUDY: ARGES, DAMBOVITA AND PRAHOVA COUNTIES

BUCUR SORINEL IONEL¹, BUCUR ELENA CARMEN²

Abstract: *The addressing to rural areas, coupled with the identification of indicators characterizing the degree of resource endowment, derives both from the size of the rural area and also from the share of employment in productive activities of social and cultural services, habitat, etc. Although the problem can be considered just as far as perennial agricultural activity, subject of much discussion and debate, rural development acquires new meanings in the context of the apparent trend of economic globalization. In this regard, it has become urgent the structural adjustment both economically and socially, on the background of higher migration flows from rural to urban areas and the increasing impoverishment of the rural population. From the methodological point of view, the current approach is based on public statistical information, using established statistical methods for processing, such comparisons, structures; mainly the results are presented in tabular form. The support information to the development of this approach was based on data provided mainly by the National Institute of Statistics, the Tempo-Online database. Given that public information at the regional level are limited in terms of accessibility and the release time during this process were also used data from the European statistics by Eurostat database.*

Key words: *rural area, sustainable development, indicators.*

INTRODUCTION

The issue of rural development was discussed both in academic and scientific research, especially in business and decision makers, in an effort to developing strategies and plans. Studies undertaken by academics and research provided relevant information in many cases the decision makers whose specialized expertise is often quite low as spectrum information and establish connections with the real evolution of the economy. Strengthening economic viability of rural areas is based provide the means to defend its social and economic functions. The social implications resulting from using the opportunities on rural employment, diversification of economic activities and promote local activities in the field of products, services, handicrafts and rural tourism. Conservation of the environment is also a prerequisite for lasting development of the economic potential in rural areas.

MATERIAL AND METHODS

Making a projection on sustainable and equitable development is based on the existence of an information database truthful and multilateral, which constitutes support in building a system of indicators expressing both quantitatively and qualitatively many aspects status, structure and dynamic behavior these. The studies conducted so far on actual knowledge of specific indicators rural development have contributed to some guidance on the course of development in order to maintain efficiency and steady state.

Connection the theoretical information to the evolution of the real economy had resulted in development of strategies for regional development, including in terms of attracting funds. In fact, bending to the side of the regional economy was manifested with higher intensity when they raised the issue of EU accession. Disparities between regions and especially so within regions have been and continue to be topics of debate in terms of establishing priorities for development.

Based on the above considerations it should be noted that in designing a system of indicators, studies reveal that they reflect the specific business processes, trends, factors with positively and negatively impact on the economy, as support knowledge of the economic potential

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of a country. The literature on the economy and local development, regional stresses practical, and the role of factors that may explain imbalances increasingly larger existing intra and inter-regional level. For example, an important factor approach is to determine the ability of the region to promote entrepreneurship and innovation potential, including human resource development in the process.

On the other hand, other experts consider that in fixing the demo-economic and social indicators are a number of criteria, namely: their real value, truthfully sides expressing general and specific economic and social activity of the country; the causal relationship between socio-economic phenomena and processes, by correlating indicators factorial outcome indicators in order to measure economic and social efficiency; unity of form and content of the indicators and their calculation methodology at all levels of the national economy; comparability of information worldwide and the economic content between the prospective and retrospective indicators.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

1. Characteristics of the rural area of the analysed counties

Addressing rural communities in three of the seven counties of the South-Muntenia starts, first, from the similarities between them, in terms of the characteristics of geographic location or combination of three forms of relief or mountain, hills and plains. On the other hand, the existence of multiple forms of relief gives to the three counties the ability to develop a variety of activities without being focused essentially on mono-activities such as, for example, agriculture.

In terms of area, Arges County holds first place from the three counties, covering 6816.3 kmp. In 2014, Arges County was composed of seven towns (3 municipalities), 95 communes and 576 villages, the average area of a municipality being 68 kmp. As a share of total area of the county, rural owns 94.2 percent, while urban holds only 5.8% of the total area. Of the 95 municipalities, 28 are situated in terms of surface held over the countryside, representing almost 29.5% of the total.

In 2014, out of the 650 332 inhabitants of the county, 51% lived in rural areas and 49% in urban areas. Compared to 1992, the rural population was reduced by aprox.8% while the urban population registered a reduction of 0.7 percent, resulting in decrease by 4.5% on total County.

Of the 95 municipalities in 2014 compared to 1992, 72 municipalities recorded a significant reduction of population, with percentages ranging from -0.1% (Berevoiești) and -64% (Albeștii Muscel), representing 75.8 % of the total. At the opposite pole, 8 communes that have experienced population growth by percentages ranging between 11.1% and 59%, explainable phenomenon, among others, polarization or ancillary activities developed around the Dacia-Renault plant.

As an indicator that expresses the popularity of a locality, the average population density in rural areas was in 2014 around 71 people / kmp, 40 joint hovering over this average. Compared to 1992, the population density was decreased in 2014 aprox.8% in just 22 communes recorded increases it.

Comparative analysis of population density of Arges communes allowed their classification into five categories, namely:

- Communities with a population density of up to 50 inhabitants/kmp (45 communes);
- Communities with a population density of between 50-100 per/kmp (28 communes);
- Communities with a population density between 100-150 inhabitants/kmp (11 villages);
- Communities with a population density between 150-200 inhabitants/kmp (6 communes);
- Communities with a population density of 200 inhabitants/kmp (three common);

Basically, in the 93 communes, only 21.5% of them recorded a population density of 100 inhabitants/kmp. It is noteworthy that in the communes located around the poles of local development (such as, for example, Dacia plant and some local units from the production of auto spare parts), the population has increased significantly resulting in increases in population density. It is the situation of Bascov, Bradu, Maracineni Schitu Golesti and Titești whose population density falls on a visible uptrend.

Unlike the County of Arges, **Dambovita County** in 2014 had an area of 4054.3 kmp, out of which 93% are rural. County comprises seven towns (2 municipalities), 82 communes and 353 villages, the average area of communes being 46 kmp. Out of the 82 municipalities, 40.2% have an area above the average, most common being Moroieni (287.4 sq km).

As with the Arges county, the population recorded in Dambovita County, the county total in the period 1992-2014 dropped by 4.3%, generated by the decrease in both urban (-6.2%) and rural (-3.4%). Of the 82 municipalities, 67% showed a significant reduction in the population with percentages ranging from -0.3% (Bucşani) and -69.7% (Bărbuleţu). Related to the area detained in 2014, the population density in the 82 municipalities varies between 18 inhabitants/ kmp (Moroieni) and 434 people / kmp (Doiceşti) over the period 1992 to 2014 is visible on a downward trend in the total rural county (-3.4%), but with significant oscillations from one joint to another (from -27% to + 27.7% in Lucieni in Cojasca). Basically, from the 82 communes in 53 there is a tendency of reduction in population density, which is aprox.65% of the total.

Compared with the above two counties, **Prahova County** record in 2014 a total area of 4715.9 kmp, out of which 85.2% is related to the countryside. County comprises a total of 14 towns (2 municipalities), 90 communes and 405 villages, the average area of communes being 44.6 kmp. Of the 90 municipalities, 36.7% have an area above the average, the highest common - Valea Doftanei (286 kmp) Măneciu (236.4 kmp) and Ceraşu (120,6 kmp) - pooling 16% of rural county area. Across the county, the total population decreased by 6.5%, while in rural areas has declined by 4.8% in 2014 compared to 1992. The average population of a municipality was in 2014 to 4395 inhabitants, 46.7% of the common hovering above average. The top five communes regroup 13.5% of the total rural prahovean, with a total of 53 542 inhabitants. Compared to 1992, the number of residents declined in 67 common values - 0.8% (Dumbrava) and -53.9% (Gheorghe), because the other communes number of residents to enroll on a slightly rising trend with percentages ranging from + 0.7% (Gura Vitioarei) and + 24.9% (Târgşoru Vechi).

In 2014, the average population density in rural areas is 117 inhabitants/kmp, hovering over this average to 34 communes. Basically, in 2014, the population density varied between 21 inhabitants / km² (Jugureni) and 435 inhabitants/kmp (Blejoi). Compared to 1992, the population density was low with the total rural aprox.5%, with percentages that vary greatly from one community to another. Near the poles of local development, mainly industrial, generated amplitude positive population density in two communes of Prahova (Blejoi and Lipanesti), just 10 communes of the 90 localities recorded a population density of 200 inhabitants/ kmp increase compared with 1992. Approx. 24% of registered common population density between 100-200 people/kmp, with visible oscillating trends in time, the difference is shared between the first two categories, namely the joint density between 0-50 people/kmp (11 communes) and common population density between 50-100 people/kmp (28 communes).

2. Diagnosis of the economy of rural communities from Arges, Dambovita and Prahova counties – evolutions and gaps of the socio-economic indicators

In the evaluation of any rural communities should consider, in a first stage, the existence of adequate information support. From this perspective it should be noted that at local level, territorial statistics do not provide enough relevant information to estimate existing disparities inter and intra county. Even in the presence of such information, relatively incomplete, it should be mentioned that the time is relatively limited, which does not lead, most often, to estimate with a high degree of accuracy, the changes in structure indicators.

Based on these considerations, the present approach envisages capturing the amendments made to the following indicators:

- a) The degree of endowment land resources;
- b) Demographic indicators;
- c) Indicators of the educational system;
- d) Indicators of social system in terms of endowment municipal level;

- e) The value of the local economy at county level in terms of GDP and GVA realized value.
- a) From the point of view of *endowment land resources*, analysis of counties allowed highlighting the following conclusions:
- In Arges County, in 2014, the average agricultural area owned by a municipality stood at 3395 hectares, 34 communes hovering over this average; of the 95 communes components, Buzoiești has the largest agricultural area, ie 14 600 ha;
 - In the county of Arges period 1990-2014 is characterized by an oscillating trend of agricultural area, with percentages ranging between -55.3% (Hartiesti) and + 43% (Albeștii Muscel);
 - Compared to the average 1708 hectares of arable land, from the 95 communes, 28 communes numbers are above that level; basically commune with the largest arable area is Buzoiești, with no less than 13 500 ha in 2014;
 - It should be noted that given the geographical location of Arges county, it benefits from large areas occupied by pastures and forests; thus, for example, Arefu holds the largest area occupied by pastures (9092 ha in 2014), because the most important area occupied by forests to return commune Nucșoara (32113 ha in 2014);
 - Unlike the county of Arges, in Dambovita the largest agricultural area owned by commune Corbii Mari (8767 ha), accounting for almost half of the village related Buzoiești of Arges;
 - Arable land in Dambovita county in 2014 ranged from 648 ha (Doicești) to 8767 ha (Corbii Mari); practical, in Corbii Mari the arable land represents 94% of agricultural land;
 - Compared to the previous counties, average agricultural area in Prahova was in 2014 to 2662 ha, hovering over it a number of 35 communes; unlike agricultural land, the period 1990-2014 is characterized by a trend of reducing arable percentages range between -0.3% (Sirna) and -84.6% (Berteau);
- b) From the *demographic perspective*, the commitment to the development detained birth rate, mortality and natural growth; so, in terms of birth rate, the period 1990-2014 is characterized by a visible trend of decline in rural percentages exceeding in most cases 30% (**Table no. 1**).

Table no. 1. Evolution of the birth rate in three counties of South-Muntenia Region (live births per 1000 inhabitants)

	South-Muntenia	Argeș	Dâmbovița	Prahova
1990	12,7	12,8	13,9	12,5
1991	11,4	12,1	12,6	11,4
1992	11,7	13	12,6	12
1993	11,7	12,3	12,7	12,1
1994	11,5	11,8	12,3	11,8
1995	11,2	11,5	11,8	11,2
1996	10,7	11,3	11,2	10,8
1997	10,9	11,5	11,2	11,1
1998	10,9	11,6	11,7	10,8
1999	10,8	11,5	11,5	10,5
2000	10,7	11,1	11	11,2
2001	10,3	10,5	10,9	10,3
2002	9,8	10,1	10,4	9,9
2003	9,9	10,2	10,5	10,1
2004	9,6	9,7	10,7	10,1
2005	9,6	9,5	10,1	10,6
2006	9,4	9,2	9,6	9,9
2007	9,1	8,6	9,4	9,7

	South-Muntenia	Argeş	Dâmbovița	Prahova
2008	9,4	9	10,1	9,2
2009	9,8	9,3	10,3	9,9
2010	9,2	8,9	10	8,8
2011	8,6	8,4	9,3	8,1
2012	8,7	8,3	9,3	8,3
2013	8,5	8,1	9	8,2
2014	8,4	8,2	8,8	8,1
2014/1990	-33,9	-35,9	-36,7	-35,2

Source: Calculations on the Tempo-Online database, 2016.

A frightening situation can be found at the level of mortality rate but that falls on a downward trend in two of the three counties analyzed, the highest increase being recorded in Arges (+ 47.6% in 2014 compared to 1990). Compared to the average regional population growth in rural areas during the period 1990-2014 has seen a downward trend in two three counties, the most significant increase being in the Prahova County (**Table no. 2**).

Table no. 2. Changing of the natural increase in 2014 compared to 1990 (%)

	Total	Urban	Rural
South-Muntenia	-469,2	-132,7	536,4
Argeş	-228,0	-100,0	1475,0
Dâmbovița	-241,7	-124,6	-816,7
Prahova	-350,0	-207,1	-1140,0

Source: Calculations on the Tempo-Online database, 2016.

Upward occurs in the infant mortality rate. Specialty literature ³ defines four waterfalls of infant mortality, namely:

- First rate level waterfall with a rate of dead children 4-6 / 1000 births;
- Second waterfall with a high rate of dead children 6-9 / 1000 births;
- Third waterfall with a high rate of dead children 9-15 / 1000 births;
- Waterfall fourth with a rate level of over 15 children dead / births.

By analyzing statistical information available except Arges County falling within category III, in the other two counties, Prahova and Dambovita, the infant mortality rate is related to the second category. Over the period 1990-2014, however, it is worth a noticeable trend improvement in this indicator.

- c) Regarding the *education system indicators* it should be noted that during 1996-2014, the available statistical information public, is characterized by a visible trend of deterioration both in total and in each region counties.
 - In rural areas, the total number of schools decreased in 2014 compared with 1996, not less than 83% across the region, the same trend is visible in Arges (-88.3%), Dambovita (-85.3%) and Prahova (-82.1%); the same downward trend was scored and the number of units in primary and secondary education, with percentages that reach up to -78.5% in Arges, being -70.5% regional average;
 - Regarding the number of units of high school, period 1996-2014 is characterized by a tendency to increase them, except Arges (-14.3%) and Dambovita (-16.7%); demographics and the deteriorating living conditions, rural school population of South-Muntenia registered in 2014 a decrease of 24.2%, generated by local regress in case of all seven counties components; thus, in Prahova County, the rural school population was reduced by 18.9%, while in Arges reduction was 31.4 percent; the same negative trend is visible for the

³ Bădescu, I.(2008): „*Viața și moartea în satul românesc. Sociodemografie rurală*”, Ed. Mica Valahie.

Dambovita county where the school population was reduced by 27.4% over the same reference period;

- It should be mentioned that the reduction in the school population is noted for all levels of education, with different intensities from one county to another and from one form to another type of training; therefore, reducing the number of teaching staff with a much lower than the school population, the number of staff / 100 students in the rural areas scored on an upward trend;
 - In terms of the quality of education, it should be noted that an essential element of academic success of a student is the school-family relationship. Over time there have been different forms of manifestation of this type of relationship, while in the democratization of education, cooperation between school representatives and students' families has become fundamental. There are a number of features printed this relationship by representatives of each party. On one hand, school type and characteristics of the teachers involved are important for the efficiency of such a relationship, and on the other hand, family involvement students differs depending on its structure, number of children, parents' education, occupation and their income, residence. Beyond this objective way of conditioning the relationship between school and family, there are a number of subjective aspects of this relationship, ie perceptions, aspirations, attitudes and behaviors of parents towards school.
- d) From the perspective of the *degree of endowment with utilities* in the urban, it should be mentioned that since 1990 we are witnessing a process of expanding networks of drinking water, gas and sewage, both in urban and in rural areas. In rural areas, in 2014 compared with 1990 drinking water network in rural areas reached 9035.5 kilometers, 29.6% of the total length being found in Arges county, followed by Prahova (1939 km) and Dambovita (1402 km); extension of drinking water generated implicitly increase the number of localities connected, both in urban and rural areas; for example, in rural areas in 2014, in Arges county, of the 95 municipalities, 87.4% were connected to the drinking water, while in Dambovita percentage is 74.4% and in Prahova 83%. Unlike the drinking water network, the number of localities connected to the natural gas, sewerage and thermal energy is still extremely low percentages range between 47.6% (Prahova natural gas) and only 6.7% heat (Dambovita) (**Table no. 3**).

Table no.3. The number of localities connected to utilities in rural areas in 2014 (no)

	Water		Natural gas		Sewerage		Thermal energy	
	No. localities	% of total	No. localities	% of total	No. localities	% of total	No. localities	% of total
Argeş	83	87.4	28	29.5	21	22.1	28	29.5
Dâmbovița	61	67.8	40	44.4	11	12.2	6	6.7
Prahova	75	91.5	39	47.6	26	31.7	6	7.3

Source: Calculations on the Tempo-Online database, 2016.

- e) From the perspective of *economic performance*, national statistics do not provide enough information about the value of GDP or GVA at county level or the media. From this point of view, during this process was used information from Community statistics, for the period 2000-2013, at the NUTS-3. Based on these methodological considerations, it should be noted that half of the GDP and GVA South-Muntenia were conducted in two counties, namely Arges and Prahova, followed in 2013 by the Dambovita with a GVA of 2349.65 mil. euro (**Table no. 4**).

Table no.4. Evolutions of GDP and GVA in 2013 compared with 2000

	GDP (mil. euro)			GVA (mil. euro)		
	2000	2013	2013/2000 (%)	2000	2013	2013/2000 (%)
Sud-Muntenia	5,082	17,612	246.6	4,566.46	15,511.07	239.7

Argeş	1,211	3,832	216.4	1,088.14	3,374.97	210.2
Dâmboviţa	732	2,668	264.5	657.56	2,349.65	257.3
Prahova	1,541	5,926	284.6	1,384.65	5,218.81	276.9

Source: Calculations on the Tempo-Online database, 2016.

CONCLUSIONS

The analysis of demographic, economic and social phenomena of three of the seven counties of the South-Muntenia highlighted the wide gap both inter and intra-county. The specific characteristics of each county in terms of geographical location, size or population gives to each attributes that distinguish them clearly from each other in terms of potential but held and how to exploit available resources. In this sense, it can be raised at least the following trends:

- Municipalities with the largest area do not, in general, and a high population density; although there are common resources valuable not only in industry and services (tourism), they have a low population density;
- The proximity to cities or municipalities, generating activities in different economic sectors, training in villages adjacent higher population density compared to those outside the poles of development;
- Oscillating the villages around the towns prints them another level of development, with implications not only on labor productivity and the quality of life in these rural communities;
- Extending the network of utilities is an asset to each community as a starting point in attracting investments in the development of productive activities;
- Limiting urban endowment only, without direct connection to local resources but does not lead to a high efficiency level, the impact on the sustainable development of those communities.

Starting from the premise that regional development in general and rural development, in particular, take place almost exclusively through local initiatives, we believe that the priorities of the complex development of rural areas of the three counties of South-Muntenia, derived from the priorities of rural nationally, it can be mentioned at least three direct impact on the level of performance and sustainability, namely:

- Speed up the restructuring of small and medium farms and turn them into economically viable holdings and improve the economic performance of farms and the processing sector to increase market integration of quality products and import substitution;
- Maintaining and improving the quality of the environment through sustainable management of natural resources and combating climate change;
- Diversification of economic activities, creating jobs, improving infrastructure and services to improve the quality of life in rural areas.

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