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DOCTORAL THESIS

**STUDIES ON RURAL DEVELOPMENT
STRATEGIES IN VRANCEA DEPRESSION**

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ABSTRACT

Key words: rural space, rural development, management, strategies, rural tourism

Agricultural-rural development of Romanian village became a reality and a necessity for national economy. Through to the events of 1989, but the discontinuity of a normal development caused by the Second World War, contemporary Romanian village pass by extensive and profound changes.

Rural issues has been addressed by many researchers from various fields who giving solutions to improve good or less good for problems in rural area.

The research on rural development is timely because the population living in rural areas faced with many problems requiring viable solutions who contributing to substantial improvement living conditions and motivate young people to appreciate and promote the values and traditions of the village.

Doctoral thesis contains research undertaken which had main purpose identify resources and factors contributing to the area development area and achievement of rural development strategies in Vrancea Depression.

Doctoral thesis „*Studies on rural development strategies in Vrancea Depression*” is structured in seven chapters.

Chapter I of doctoral thesis is entitled „*State of research in rural development*”. This chapter is a bibliographic study done at national and international level on rural development issues.

Rural world is characterized by simplicity, perennials and force of the truth. Rural areas today face many difficulties. Supporting rural communities is particularly important as it strengthens the will of the Romanian people to become fully European.

In the first part of the chapter are presented theoretical aspects concerning the definition and functions of rural settlements specific rural Romanian village. A formal definition of the countryside is given by Recommendation 1296 /1996 of Parliamentary Assembly of the European Charter for rural areas as follows: agriculture, forestry, aquaculture and fisheries; economic and cultural activities of housing these areas (crafts, industry, services, etc.); facilities on non-urban areas for leisure and entertainment (or nature reserves); other uses (except residential).

Also in this section are presented theoretical aspects of rural development by presenting concepts, boundaries, principles and objectives of rural development.

Agriculture is a predominant rural sector and therefore are given both the importance and functions of agriculture, the integration of agriculture as a branch of the national economy, organizational and structural features of the Romanian agriculture in rural development and strategic management of the farm..

In the second chapter there are presents aspects of rural tourism and agritourism in the area and the rural economy.

The chapter concludes by presenting strategies and programs for rural development in the European Union. Romania must implement EU policies in rural development, the principles of the Common Agricultural Policy (C.A.P.) and use the main instruments and mechanisms for agricultural policy and rural development.

Chapter II is entitled “Aim of researches, followed objectives, studied material and research methods”. The scientific approach is based on realized the importance of economic, social and tourism in rural area studied, Vrancea Depression (Bârsești, Jitia, Năruja, Negrileşti, Nereju, Nistorești, Paltin Păulești, Soveja, Spulber, Tulnici, Vrâncioaia).

Theme studied presents a diagnostic analysis of the level of rural development Vrancea Depression, along with identification and analysis of direct and indirect factors which determine this development. There were designed different types of strategies to ensure growth area.

The research methodology used is specific economic and financial diagnosis and used modern methods of research: comparison, statistical data analysis method, the method of direct observations, the SWOT analysis.

Research strategy included elements specific methodological research phases: searching and collecting data, formulating hypotheses and their validation by research findings, conclusions and proposals on the area investigated.

The objectives were: individual preparing documents related to research theme - achieving a state of the research literature on rural development at national and international

levels; development of diagnostic tests to identify rural development resources and rural development factors specific Vrancea Depression; actual analysis from the countryside of Vrancea Depression as a whole and customization through a case study on rural development strategies for a local representative of the Vrancea Depression.

The case study was based on achievement SWOT analysis of Tulnici commune. Identifying priorities for development of commune was achieved through participatory research that was to collect data in the territory. As a research technique was used the questionnaire. Data processing were used following procedures: analysis of indicators and indicators, comparison, process graphics, monograph.

Chapter III entitled “*Description of the natural, organizational, institutional of Vrancea Depression*” the following aspects: name of Vrancea, relief, boundaries, divisions, climate, hydrography, flora and fauna, soil and subsoil resources, the Vrancea seismic zone.

To explain the topic name Vrancea researchers have proposed a variety of etymologies as follows: Bogdan P. Hasdeu home thought it Sanskrit, *from Vrana* = mountain; N. Iorga and S. Mehedinți puts about *bung* - hole barrel, because depression located between the Carpathian and Subcarpathian looks like a hole or bung; Other experts embrace the idea that the country could mean *black Vrancea*.

Vrancea Depression consists of: Soveja-Crimineț Depression (consists of depressions Crimineț and Soveja in the upper basin of Șușița); Vrancea itself, which includes the so-called Depression Negrilești; Bisoca-Necule Depression.

The climate is temperate continental plains, hilly and mountainous, with irregular rainfall, prevailing winds from the north and north-west or mountain-valley winds, temperature inversions in the Vrancea Depression and fohn effects on eastern slopes.

Rural areas is considered a land rich in mineral water available: oligometallice water (Nereju, Lepșa), alkaline water (Tulnici, Nereju, maple), chlorinated water, sodium (Herăstrău, Nereju), iodine water (Lepșa, Nistorești, Herăstrău), water sulfate (Nistorești), ferruginous water (Lepse, Nistorești), carbonated water (Greșu , Lepșa, Tulnici).

Vrancea Depression vegetation belongs to the forest area. Peaks Vrancea covered pure spruce surrounded on the outside of a belt of pure and mixed trees. In terms of wildlife, in the mountains we meet deer, which sometimes descends to lowland. Among mammals can be cited the following species: wild boar, marten, squirrel, weasel, and in the hills and plains rabbit and hedgehog.

In submontane depressions, on bridges terraces, predominate typical brown soils, easier podzolic or pseudogleizate. Soils covering the area meadows are superficial and skeletal, the parties tending to a stable brown soil.

Studies and papers of geologists and specialists seismological (Șt. Hepites, Gr. Ștefănescu, I. Atanasiu, N. Mândrescu, etc.) shows that Vrancea is the most important and most active seismic zone in Romania recognized and prosecuted as such world and European level.

Chapter IV *“Authenticity of Romanian village - an asset for development of rural tourism and agritourism in Vrancea Depression”* presents resources that help develop the village in Vrancea Depression. There were identified natural resources and heritages existing in rural areas in Vrancea Depression.

Natural resources existing in the Vrancea Depression are hidrogeomorfologice, forests, flora, fauna, landscape reserves protected by law: Zăbala - Răoaza, Peak Goru, Keys Năruja II – Forest Green, Boilers Zăbala – Black Creek, Waterfall Misina, Small Zarna, Bottomless Lake Răoaza, Keys Năruja I – Black Lake, Forest Reserve Forest springs Năruja, , Keys Năruja II, Keys Teșița, Lepșa – Zboina, Trout Lepșa, Waterfall Putna, Algheanul area.

Depression Vrancea area, although is an area hidden behind Vrancea Mountains, has the potential anthropogenic varied. Even if it is an area known even in Europe, for seismic risk, residents, over time, built monuments that have now become true tourist attractions. According to the National Institute of Historical Monuments, Depression Vrancea area can boast an impressive number of historical monuments and churches that are presented in this thesis.

There were identified measures and actions for environmental protection, ecological restoration, avoiding and combating natural disaster researched area.

When speaking about the authenticity of an area should be discussed the following items: traditions, customs, dress, lifestyle of locals, their culture and beliefs, the architectural style of homes and buildings in the area, language and cultural manifestations. The 12 rural localities of Vrancea Depression are observed by tourists for the authenticity of the area, traditional customs, folk and artistic events occurring in the study area.

The existence of elements of natural attraction so many in rural areas in Vrancea Depression offers several advantages for the host community as follows: products made and services provided by the host community can be developed and marketed more easily, the area being recognized in Europe; possibility of developing ecotourism and rural tourism; attracting various special funds provided by the European Union for agriculture and forestry, traditional management and favorable for environment.

Chapter V “Studies of resources and rural factors of development in Vrancea Depression” are presented: analysis of factors (physical, geographical, demographic, economic and natural risks) that contribute to rural development in Vrancea Depression; existing infrastructure, infrastructure in progress and proposed infrastructure for rural areas analyzed; measures to improve the quality of life; SWOT analysis of Vrancea Depression.

By studying the literature and analysis of analysis sheets existing Vrancea County Council was found that, this year, Vrancea Depression consists of 12 communes managing 52 villages.

The total area of Vrancea Depression is 120.123 ha, of which the share of each locality, in descending order is as follows: Nistorești - 20.86%; Tulnici - 18.92%; Nereju - 15.19%; Păulești - 14.44%; Soveja - 7.95%; Vrancioaia - 4.83%; Jitia - 3.80; Paltin - 3.44%; Spulber - 2.80%; Negriștești - 2.74%; Năruja - 2.74; Bârsești - 2.29%.

Vrancea Depression is an area less populated, specific of the mountain population, where the population falls well below 30 inhabitants/km². It was found that rural population density of Vrancea Depression, at the Census of population and housing of 18 March 2002 it was 25.51 inhabitants/ km². Population density is continuously decreasing during the years 2002-2009, being 24.42 inhabitants/km² on 1st July 2009.

The evolution of population is decreasing during the years 2002 – 2009. Comparing 2009 with 2002 there was a decrease of 4.30% of the population in rural areas analyzed.

The analysis of birth, death and natural increase for the period 2002-2009 showed that in the Vrancea Depression there was a lack of population during the years 2002-2007 (from -1.54 ‰ in 2002 to -3.87 ‰ in 2007). Compared with 2008 when growth was -3.09 ‰, in 2009 there was a lack of population -3.28 ‰ because of increased deaths.

Agricultural area, by use of rural areas in 2009, was 29.643 ha, as follows: arable land - 11.41%; surface - orchards and nurseries - 1.13%; surface - come and grapevine nurseries - 0.34%; area - grassland - 37.66%; area - grassland - 49.46%. An area of 87.12% is used for pastures and hay fields because the basic occupation of the inhabitants of the Vrancea Depression is shepherding.

Increasing trend was observed in the number of employees, their number being 63.41% in 2009 compared to 2002.

Chapter VI entitled “*Case Study on rural development strategies of Tulnici commune*” was described, in the first part, the specific rural area analyzed and the second part of the village was presented SWOT analysis

Ethno-historical studies show that the oldest attestation of villages Tulnici dates from 1507, are written in the acts Royal Divan. Tulnici commune is situated in the south-west of the Vrancea County, at 65 km. of Focsani, in the Sub-Carpathians of curvature in Tulnici-Bârsești depression. It is bordered to the north - Soveja and Bârsești communes, south - Nistorești commune, to the east - Bârsești commune and west - Covasna County.

In the study performed there were analyzed the factors who contributing to rural development of the commune. There were identified the factors: physical, geographical, demographic, economic and natural risks. Scientific approach accomplished revealed that the existing tourism heritage is a strong point for development of commune.

According to surveys we can say that Tulnici has not a long tradition of hospitality, but local community seeks to promote the authenticity of the Romanian village, human and natural resources existing in the area and satisfy the requirements of any tourist, whether Romanian or foreign.

There were presented the sectoral SWOT analysis: SWOT analysis on the geographical location and local administration; SWOT analysis on population and workforce; SWOT infrastructure of utilities, environmental, social and cultural; SWOT analysis on development of rural economy; SWOT analysis of tourism and leisure; SWOT analysis of Tulnici commune. For each analysis were identified: strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats.

The research was based on questionnaire survey conducted by using the identification for development priorities of Tulnici commune.

In the second part is presented a survey based on questionnaire on identifying priorities for development of Tulnici commune. Respondents made comments on the degree of development of the Tulnici commune and identified priorities for: improving the infrastructure of utilities; improving quality of life; sustainable economic development; environmental protection and conservation; population and workforce; promotion of authenticity village from Vrancea by actions to promote rural tourism and agritourism; local administration.

Rural development strategy of the Tulnici commune presents: principles underlying the achievement of rural development strategy; sources of funding for implementation of rural development strategy; areas and strategic objectives; programs and projects to achieve strategic objectives identified.

The rural development of Tulnici commune must be aligned with national development priorities of rural defined by the National Development Plan (NDP), Rural Development Programme 2007 – 2013 (RDP), Regional Development Plan 2007 - 2013 of south-east Region, Vrancea County Development Strategy 2007 – 2013.

Rural area development approach should be explored to integrate and correlate the proposed solutions to priority development areas of the village: infrastructure of utilities, social, cultural and leisure; sustainable economic development and environmental protection; population and workforce; the local administration.

Recovery potential Tulnici community requires effective management, transparent and accountable public goods: infrastructure and equipment, including natural and cultural heritage to be highlighted, but at the same time, protected and preserved for future generations.

Doctoral thesis is completed by **Chapter VII** “*Conclusions and proposals*” presenting the conclusions resulted on the research made and the proposals synthesized on strategic options who contributing to rural development of analyzed area of Vrancea Depression.