

**INEQUALITY IN RURAL AREAS: DEMO-SOCIAL DIMENSION
(CASE STUDY: SOUTH-WEST OLTENIA REGION)**

**INEGALITATEA IN ZONELE RURALE: DIMENSIUNEA
DEMO-SOCIALĂ (STUDIU DE CAZ: REGIUNEA SUD-VEST
OLTENIA)**

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***Abstract:** The paper is part of an ample project which aims to realize a diagnostic analysis of Romanian rural space, by taking into consideration 5 criteria, the final scope being the classification of rural space by the level of inequity. The project aimed also the distribution analysis of each selected indicator at the level of communes included in the South-West Oltenia Region (criteria was the level of endowment in the territory, the demo-social dimension, the social infrastructure, economic dimension and investments). The present paper aims to analyze the demo-social dimension criterion, by this being selected the most relevant indicators for describing the actual level of rural inequality.*

***Key words:** rural development, inequality, cluster analyse, rural indicators.*

INTRODUCTION

Recently researches and politicians have unanimously agreed on the fact that stratification of population and inequality has increased, the social gap has become wider and the society experiences this process directly. It is well established that economic and social inequality is related with population's mortality rates, their health and the quality of life in general. In 2000, in New York, at the summit of the United Nations, in the presence of government delegations of 191 world countries, the Declaration of the Millennium setting out the goals of the millennium in order to eradicate poverty and reduce inequality. Being an European Union member, Romania has set out its goal of the Millennium with a deadline of 2015 and will draw on the basic of the EU indicators system, which will be used to measure the changing of these goals. Measuring of inequality helps to evaluate the

efficiency of political measures for reducing it. It is important to work more intensively to measure different forms of inequality on different levels.

MATERIAL AND METHOD

From the statistical time series which are available at rural level in Romania, it have been selected those information which will allow to calculate some relevant indicators for the description of the actual stage of rural socio-economic inequalities. There has been selected a series of 5 criteria which describe and condition the rural inequality degree. Each criteria has a number of indicators calculated at communal level, on statistical data available in 2008, data series being submissive to a cluster analysis for realize a Romanian rural space classification.

One of the criteria considered in this cluster analysis is the demographical size criterion. This provides information about local demographic perspective, the degree of disintegration of family values, attractiveness housing degree and socio-economical opportunities that we think the areas have. To analyze this criterion we chose the following indicators, calculated at communal level, based on available statistics for 2008: the rate of natural increase, divorce rate, balance of address changes/ 1000 capita, balance of residence changes/ 1000 capita and balance of external migration/ 1000 capita.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

To describe the actual stage of rural socio-economic inequity we proposed a suite of indicators with values that are available and easy to access in the national statistic system. The similar indices elaborated in Romania utilize data from population census, which, as we know, occur every 10 years. But, in actual conditions, the changes at rural communities' level are very fast and we cannot put a diagnosis for a commune or rural area by taking as basis data provided years ago. That is why I use like database commune files, the information presented in this kind of sources being very accessible.

The natural growth rate

The choice of this indicator is because we can establish a direct connection between its value and the development level of one community. The negative value of the indicator reflects a decrease of the population, which means a diminution of work potential for those communities, with

long term impact on the development level. Also, the negative values which are situated under the national average can reveal the fact that in a certain commune or zone the mortality rate is high, signifying that the level of development is very low (the lack of sanitary infrastructure, low endowment of housing etc.).

From data analysis presented in Commune Files, we can notice that comparing the national average of natural increase rate, – 5.36 person, 296 communes from a total of 408 communes from South-West Region is situated under the national average (representing 72.55% from total), and the rest of 112 communes are situated over the national average (27.45%). The minimal value of the rate of natural increase indicator is -46.12 persons and is located in Gogoși Commune from Dolj, and the maximal value is 6 persons in Lăcușeni Commune from Vâlcea. To note is also the fact that a number of only 27 communes have a positive natural increase rate/ 1000 capita, which means that only 6.62% from the grand total. The analysis of natural increase rate/1000 capita indicator in the Romanian counties is presented in the table below.

Table 1

Rate of natural increase by counties, in the South-West Oltenia Region		
	Communes with natural increase rate under the national average	Communes with natural increase rate over the national average
Dolj	85	19
Gorj	35	26
Mehedinți	45	16
Olt	87	17
Vâlcea	44	34
Total	296	112

Source: *processed data from Commune Files, INS, 2008.*

At the region level, the situation isn't balanced by comparison with the national average. The analysis on counties shows quite an accentuated imbalance, especially in Olt, Dolj and Mehedinți Counties. In fact, all counties are dominated by communes with natural increase rate per 1000 capita under the national average. The presented values can indicate a reducing trend and/or population oldness from the rural areas in this area.

The divorce rate

The choice of this indicator is due to the fact that I have considered that in the developed rural areas the divorce rate is increased because of the emancipation. In the more developed communes or in the communes located near the cities, women have access at professions which confers

them independence. Not the same thing is happening in the communes where peoples have like primary activity agriculture.

The analysis of data presented in the Communes Files [INS, 2008] indicate the fact that, comparing with the national average of 1.09 divorces/1000 capita, in the South-West Oltenia Region exists a number of 268 communes with a value of the indicator under the average (65.69%) and 140 communes with a value of the indicator over the average (34.31%). In the region exists 92 communes in which the value of the indicator is zero (29 communes from Dolj and Mehedinți, 14 communes from Gorj and Olt, 6 from Vâlcea). The maximal value of the indicator is located in Corbu Commune from Olt, with 4.38 divorces/ 1000 capita.

The analysis of divorce rate indicator situation by counties is presented in the next table.

Table 2

The divorce rate by counties, in South-West Oltenia Region

	Communes with the divorce rate under national average	Communes with the divorce rate over national average
Dolj	82	22
Gorj	48	13
Mehedinți	40	21
Olt	60	44
Vâlcea	38	40
Total	268	140

Source: *processed data from Commune Files, INS, 2008.*

It can be noticed the fact that Dolj and Gorj are the counties that have the biggest proportion of communes with the indicator value under the national average, which can suggest that rural environment from the county has been less affected by the social emancipation and familial values have been preserved very good, with positive long term effects connected to the stabilization and social cohesion. At the opposite pole, we find Vâlcea County where is the biggest proportion of communes with values over the average, indicating more accentuated dissolution and social instability, a loss of familial traditional values and a powerful trend of social emancipation.

The balance of address changes/ 1000 capita

The balance of address changes (net migration)/ 1000 capita is an indicator which represents the algebraic difference between the number of incoming persons by changing their address (immigration) and the number of departed persons by changing their address (emigrated), reported to 1000

capita. The choice of the indicator for characterize the level of inequity is due to the fact that, in general, as the value is much bigger, the level of community development is higher, the developed communes representing, like the cities, attraction poles.

The analysis of this indicator in the South-West Oltenia Region indicate the fact that, comparing with the national average, 255 communes from a total of 408 have lower values (62.50%), 153 communes have bigger values (37.50%). The minimal value of this indicator can be found in the Perișani Commune from Vâlcea County, with a changing balance of address/1000 capita of – 26.50 persons, and the maximum value is in the Arcani commune from Gorj County with 56.86 persons. To note that a number of 165 communes from the region have the balance of address changes/ 1000 capita negative (– 40.44%).

The analysis of changing address/ 1000 capita indicator situation by counties is presented in the table below.

Table 3

Situation of balance of address changes/1000 capita by counties,
in the South-West Oltenia Region

	Communes with balance of address changes/ 1000 capita under the national average	Communes with balance of address changes/ 1000 capita over the national average
Dolj	60	44
Gorj	42	19
Mehedinți	35	26
Olt	66	38
Vâlcea	52	26
Total	255	153

Source: *processed data from Commune Files, INS, 2008.*

We can notice that the region is dominated by communes with balance of address changes per 1000 capita under the national average. This situation can be observed better in Olt County. This trend, combined with the large number of communes with negative balance, indicates a low attractiveness of the region and a tendency for people to seek home in the surrounding urban areas or in developed communes.

The balance of residence changes/ 1000 capita

Similar to the anterior indicator, as the value is bigger, the level of community development is higher, offering bigger opportunities for those who want to establish in the area.

The data analysis presented in the Commune Files indicate the fact that, by comparison with the national average which is – 2.96 persons/ 1000 habitants, the balance of residence changes/ 1000 capita in the South-West Oltenia Region exceeds this value in 166 communes (40.69%) and is situated under this value in 242 communes (59.31%) from a total of 408. The indicator has a positive value in only 84 communes, i.e. in just 20.59% from total. The minimal value of the indicator is in Perișani Commune from Vâlcea County (– 23.60 persons/1000 habitants), and the maximal value is in Radovan Commune from Dolj County (49.41 persons/1000 habitants). The situation of the balance of residence changes/ 1000 capita indicator by counties is represented in the table below.

Table 4

Situation of the balance of residence changes/ 1000 capita by counties,
in the South-West Oltenia Region

	Communes with the balance of residence changes/ 1000 capita under the national average	Communes with the balance of residence changes/ 1000 capita over the national average
Dolj	35	69
Gorj	44	17
Mehedinți	29	32
Olt	65	39
Vâlcea	69	9
Total	242	166

Source: *processed data from Commune Files, INS, 2008.*

The situation is a little different from the precedent indicator, Dolj county and Gorj and Vâlcea Counties being at the two poles by comparison with the national average, the first one with the smallest proportion being under the average, the other two with the highest proportion under the average. Overall, the region is dominated by communes located slightly below the average for this indicator. This may lead to the conclusion that there is tendency of departure from rural areas then a tendency of return.

The balance of external migration/ 1000 capita.

The data analysis presented in the Commune Files indicate the fact that, by comparison with the national average which is – 0.019 persons/ 1000 habitants, the balance of external migration/ 1000 capita, the South-West Oltenia Region has only 50 communes situated below this average (12.25%) and 258 communes over the national average. The situation of the balance of residence changes/ 1000 capita indicator by counties is represented in the table below.

Situation of the balance of external migration/ 1000 capita by counties,
In the South-West Oltenia Region

	Communes with the balance of external migration/ 1000 capita under the national average	Communes with the balance of external migration/ 1000 capita over the national average
Dolj	16	88
Gorj	7	54
Mehedinți	7	54
Olt	12	92
Vâlcea	8	70
Total	50	358

Source: *processed data from Commune Files, INS, 2008.*

The minimal value of the indicator is in Babiciu Commune from Olt County (– 2.19 persons/1000 habitants), and the maximal value is in Prudeni commune from Vâlcea County (1.54 persons/1000 habitants).

CONCLUSION

From the criteria and selected indicators point of view for the classification of rural areas, the communes from South-West Oltenia region are significant different. The results of cluster analysis of data series regarding the socio-economical rural inequity led to the commune classification from South-West Oltenia Region in three clusters.

First of all, there is a group of communes classified in cluster 1 which are located near the big cities and especially near the cities with high economic potential. Cities were and are development poles and polarized centers for new industrial activities excluding the traditional ones and for foreign direct investments and attract the population from near communes, emanating development. The proximity with a city offers for the commune habitant's new employment opportunities and therefore supplementary and sure money sources, an adequate infrastructure, better social services and even great opportunities for investments, including public investments.

Another classification of communes situated in cluster 1 can be identified along the important roads. Transport infrastructure, and by default his status, is an important and determinant factor concerning the quality of life, playing also a key role in eliminating the barriers of the process of community development in the region. The infrastructure favors accessibility and by this sustains the development of businesses and the increase of occupation level.

We identify another group of commune which we can include in cluster 1 in the sub-Carpathian area of the three counties from the north area of South West Oltenia. The fruit-growing and viticulture production is significant; the areas of those crops have a high percentage in the agriculture surface of the region. Also, pastures and hayfields have a high percentage, the sub-Carpathian area having also a significant tradition and a real potential for the zootechnical sector.

Another group of communes classified in cluster 1 is identified in the mountain areas and sub-mountains, representing important destinations for tourism, especially for the rural one and its agro-tourism shape. The rural tourism has a considerable potential in the north part of the region, because of the favorable natural condition, beautiful landscape and existent cultural and historical traditions.

At the level of South-West Oltenia Region we can talk about a differentiation of counties from the north and the other one's. In north, the share of communes classified in the cluster 1 is bigger.

The counties located in the south have many communes that are included in cluster 3. These communes have an integral agricultural profile and are based on plant culture. Today, we can say that there is no competitiveness and efficiency agricultural productivity, this aspect being determined by the inadequate technical endowment, and also by the exploitation mode practiced, fact that make this communes to have a low level of development.

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