Economics of Agriculture SI - 1
UDK: 316.334.2

SOCIOECONOMIC INEQUALITIES IN THE RURAL AREA. REGIONAL ANALYSIS

Violeta FLORIAN[1]

Abstract

The complexity and extent of inequality, the existing interdependencies between different aspects of individuals' life and their impact on human development, in general, is one of the most controversial aspects of economic and social discourse, globally and locally in recent years. In this context, the present study aimed at assessing the socio-economic inequalities in the Bucharest – Ilfov Region, inequalities that take many facets. This objective was achieved using a set of dimensions and indicators describing the condition and extent of rural inequality.

Key words: *socio-economic inequality, rural area, development region*

INTRODUCTION

The complexity and extent of inequality, the existing interdependencies between different aspects of life of individuals and their impact on human development, in general, is one of the most controversial aspects of economic and social discourse, globally and locally, in recent years. Summarizing the conclusions of this type of speech, the specialists of World Bank and United Nations Development Program make a distinction between two categories of inequality issues: a) economic issue (income distribution, the extent of poverty, occupational status, etc..); b) non-economic issue (health, life expectancy, education, malnutrition, ethnicity, region of residence, etc.).

Through the proposed objective, the paper focuses on understanding and evaluating the social and economic inequalities in the Bucharest – Ilfov Region, inequalities that takes many facets. Their complexity and their effect on individual and human development, in general, require further contextual study. As the models to reduce inequalities must respond to the type of deep social and economic implications and to be tailored to the specificity of rural actors, at risk of being on the lower level of the social hierarchy.

1 Violeta FLORIAN, PhD. Institute of Agricultural Economics, Romanian Academy, Casa Academiei Române, Calea 13 Septembrie 13, sector 5, Bucureşti, cod 050711, florian_violeta@yahoo.com

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The analysis of socio-economic inequalities in Bucharest-Ilfov Region was based on a set of dimensions and indicators describing the condition and extent of rural inequality. Each dimension comprises a number of indicators calculated at the commune level, based on available statistical data for 2008. The presence or absence of indicators was subject to both their characterization power of a phenomenon and the existence of statistical records.

The selected dimensions for the typology of rural areas were the following: *equipment endowment* - provides information on housing and technical infrastructure in rural area; *social and demographic dimension* - provides information on social and demographic local prospects; *social infrastructure* - provides information on educational and health infrastructures and their adjustment to the community needs; *economic dimension* - provides information on the opportunities for access to a paid job and the degree of dependence of rural population on agriculture and social transfers; *investment*s – reveal the future development potential of the rural communities.

For the typology of rural areas by the inequality level, the aggregate theoretical model was based on a cluster analysis. The proposed method permitted the classification of objects into homogeneous clusters, according to a given set of variables.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The spatial amplitude of the social and economic inequality process in the Region Bucharest-Ilfov is generated by the content of the main dimensions studied:

Equipment endowment quantified by the following indicators:

- *living area per capita*: the variation of the indicator is very broad indicating different housing conditions, from 10.69 sq.m per capita in the Stefanestii to 44.38 sq.m / capita in Corbeanca. Urban comfort is specific to rural areas situated in the immediate or medium-range influence of Bucharest. The phenomenon of "holiday houses" coupled with the change of residence from urban to rural areas has a strong social vision for rural localities of Ilfov County: the average living space per capita is 21.89 sqm.
- *quantity of drinking water supplied to domestic consumers*, is one of the most illustrative indicators of economic inequality, with deep implications in the area of social inequality; there is a broad range of micro-regions where this indicator recorded zero value (Berceni Cernica Chiajna Ciolpani Ciorogârla, Clinceni, Corbeanca, Dascălu, Domneşti, Dragomireşti Vale, Găneasa, Glina, Grădiştea, Gruiu, Jilava, Moara Vlăsiei, Nuci, Petrăchioaia, Ştefanestii de Jos, Tunari, etc.) and areas where the value is low, ranging from 4.00 c.m. per capita to 79.43 c.m. per capita. On the average the amount of distributed water is 12.16 c.m. per capita.
- *length of drinking water network* is, on the average, 8.15 km; 55.0% of municipalities have no kilometer of distribution network for household water. The commune

Periş has the longest drinking water network compared to other communes in Ilfov county - 68.53 km, while Copăceni recorded the lowest length, only 10.40 km.

- *length of sewerage network* - on the average, the sewerage system has a length of 3.4 km; 61.0% of communes have no sewerage network; the longest sewerage network is in Chiajna - 25 km and the lowest is in 0.20 Ştefăneştii de Jos – 0.20 km.
- *length of natural gas supply network* - on the average, the natural gas distribution network is 28.6 km; Snagov has the longest network of 137 km while Dragomireşti Vale only 10 km natural gas distribution network.

There are striking economic and social inequalities generated by the rural infrastructure: there are communes that have a minimum influence of the urban comfort of Bucharest determined especially by the processes of change of residence and development of holiday homes.

The social and demographic dimension generates inequalities in the rural areas of Ilfov County; in its turn, the nature and size of this dimension are the consequences of socioeconomic inequalities specific to rural areas. The analyzed indicators were:

- *natural growth of population* - with positive values,ranging from 0.33 ‰ (Domneşti) to 6.79 ‰ (Mogoşoaia); the negative values range from -0.15 ‰ (Afumaţi) to -11.03 ‰ (Copăceni). In both cases the values indicate the demographic erosion of rural regeneration.
- *rate of divorces* - allows, according to the values recorded, the setting of rural family cohesion; while the values are very low, the oscillation ranges from 0.21 ‰ (Stefanestii de Sus) to 2.62 ‰ (1 Decembrie). It can be concluded that there is a high degree of intra-family cohesion which can alleviate rural inequalities to a very limited extent.
- *rate of change of domicile* - an indicator of rural "social fluidity" recorded moderate values, with limits between 11.78 ‰ (Periş) and 65.59 ‰ (Corbeanca); the only exception is the Stefanestii de Jos, with 120.94 ‰.
- *rate of change of residence* - an indicator of "openness" of rural communities has been positive between 0.29 ‰ (Periş) and 24.83 ‰ (Cernica); negative values range between - 0.79 ‰ (Berceni) and - 2.0 ‰ (1 Decembrie). Out of total number of communes from Ilfov county, 84% represents communes with high residential attraction.
- *external migration balance* - only 26% of the communes in Ilfov county have a negative balance of external migration; the oscillation range was between - 0.12 ‰ (Brăneşti) and - 0.47 ‰ (Dragomireşti Vale). The positive values ranged from 0.15 ‰ (1 December) to 0.55 ‰ (Jilava).

As determinative factor of social and economic inequalities, the demographic and social dimension stands out especially by the values taken by the "natural increase of population".

The social infrastructure is the most visible consequence of rural economic and social inequalities. Thus:

- *number of students per teacher* is relatively small; there is an improvement in the quality of education in rural areas as a direct consequence of reducing the number of students per a teacher; the value of this indicator is fluctuating from 8.2 students / teacher (Periş) to 32.8 students / teacher (Chiajna).
- *number of PC/1000 inhabitants* represents the degree of modernity in the process of communication and information; its values describe a process of early-modern information and knowledge in rural areas: the indicator values range from 2.09 ‰ (Mogosoaia) to 20.53 ‰ (Snagov).
- healthcare is poor - the values of the indicator *"number of inhabitants per physician"* range from 304 inhabitants per physician (Jilava) and 2618 inhabitants per physician (Dărăşti).

The economic dimension describes the amplitude of economic inequalities. Indicators reveal a poor use of occupational diversification, leading to strong dependence on agriculture. The low modernity level of labour relations induces and maintains weak contractual relationships.

- the values of the indicator *"number of employees/1000 inhabitants*" range from 595.5‰ (Chiajna) to 37.9 ‰ (Vidra), depending on local rural economy and employment structures. Out of total communes, about 10% have a share of employees in total population of over 50% (Chiajna, Clinceni, Tunari); 39% of the communes have under 100 employees per 1,000 inhabitants, which indicates a very large discrepancies map of inequalities.
- agricultural character of rural economies is defined by the high *share of arable land in total agricultural land;* the indicator mainly describes the economic situation for grain-oriented activities; its values range from 100% (Dobroieşti) to 86.6% (Grădiştea). The share of vineyards and orchards in total agricultural area ranks from zero in the commune Dobroieşti to 5.2% in the commune Domneşti. These features may induce a matrix of rural inequalities and underdevelopment.
- *economic diversification* is at a low level; measured indirectly by tourism activity indicators, it was found that 67% of localities have not any value of the indicator "number of tourist beds / accommodation unit " and 80% of them have no value for the indicator "number of overnights in accommodation units / beds".

The investments size described the economic and social inequalities. In Ilfov county it was found that there is a phenomenon of relatively high investments: the value of indicator *"number of finished dwellings/1000 existing dwellings"* ranges from 3.7 ‰ (Vidra) to 111.7 ‰ (Domneşti). The proximity to Bucharest distorts the value of endogenous investment efforts. We can distinguish several municipalities that have been attractive to investors: Domneşti, Berceni, Clinceni and Corbeanca. The main factors explaining the real estate boom were: proximity to the city (many Bucharest residents chose to build a second home or permanent home outside the city), the low

price of land purchased and investments in infrastructure. These communes comprised 29.9% of total new dwellings constructed.

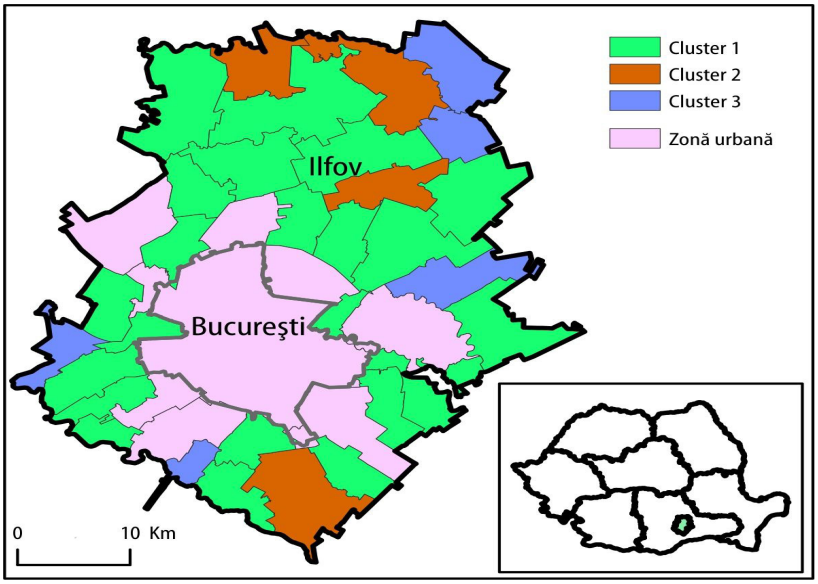
CONCLUSIONS

The results of cluster analysis and data series on rural economic and social inequalities led to the partitioning of the communes in the Bucharest – Ilfov Region into three clusters. These categories can be interpreted as combining the localities according to the cumulative intensity factors describing the event and / or socio-economic condition. Thus, we distinguish between:

- rural communities characterized by a lower level of rural socio-economic inequalities (cluster I) - 71%;
- rural communities characterized by a medium level of socio-economic inequalities (cluster II) - 16%;
- rural communities characterized by a higher level of rural socio-economic inequalities (cluster III) - 13%.

The typology of rural areas in the Region Bucharest-Ilfov by the degree of social and economic inequality allowed a hierarchy of rural areas. Thus, the most vulnerable rural micro-regions were identified. This hierarchy may serve to choosing the areas that need support interventions to reduce perpetuation of inequalities and their effects.

Figure 1. Typology of rural areas depending on socioeconomic inequalities - Bucharest-Ilfov Region



The mitigation of socio-economic inequalities and reducing regional disparities based on local opportunities by maximizing local factors that can ensure equal opportunities in both rural socio-economic actors, both endogenous and community development. The mitigation of socio-economic inequalities and reducing regional disparities should ensure equal opportunities for rural actors.

ACNOWLEDGEMENTS

This paper was elaborated under the MESAIR Project - Contract no. 92072.3/01.10.2008. Program no. 4 – Partnership in priority domains.

REFERENCES

1. **EU, (2005),** Measuring progress towards a more sustainable Europe - sustainable development indicators for the European Union., EU: Luxemburg.
2. **EUROSTAT,(2008),** Sustainable Development Indicators. http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu (query: 14/02/2008).
3. **OECD (2002):** Employment Outlook, OECD, Paris.
4. **OECD (2007): OECD Factbook 2007** - Economic, Environmental and Social Statistics. http://masetto.sourceoecd.org (query: 14/02/2008).
5. **OECD (2007b)**: Society at a Glance: OECD Social Indicators - 2006 Edition. OECD, Paris.
6. *** Project PN II, Partnership, no. 92072/2008 "Economic-social models to attenuate the inequalities in the rural areas by regions" (2008-2011)
7. *** **NIS (2010)** Commune fiche 2008