

**UNIVERSITATEA DE ȘTIINȚE AGRICOLE ȘI MEDICINĂ VETERINARĂ  
A BANATULUI TIMIȘOARA**

**FACULTATEA DE MANAGEMENT AGRICOL**



**ING. FIRU GHE. ADRIAN**

# **TEZĂ DE DOCTORAT**

**CONDUCĂTOR ȘTIINȚIFIC:**

**PROF.UNIV.DR. LIVIU SÂMBOTIN**

**Membru Titular al Academiei Oamenilor de Știință**

**TIMIȘOARA  
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**CONTRIBUȚII PRIVIND VALORIFICAREA  
RESURSELOR NATURALE ȘI ANTROPICE ALE  
JUDEȚULUI MEHEDINȚI PRIN ACTIVITATEA DE  
TURISM RURAL**

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## ABSTRACT

The purpose of this paper is to identify the useful rules necessary to the rural development process, sustainable, if possible. Why do I want this along with my PhD scientific supervisor? The answer is very simple. Because in Romania, the countryside and everything related to it, we could say, is in a sorry state, it is already found in a chronic poverty.

The reality is that the Romanian rural area "benefits" of a state of chronic underdevelopment. In this case the researchers have the duty to seek, to find, to identify the resources necessary for the Romanian rural area to find the first steps on the road of development that ensures the rural communities the subsistence means for a decent living.

This is the synthetic goal that I proposed along with my PhD scientific supervisor. At the introduction of my PhD thesis training plan, we decided that the future PhD thesis, the one that I started working at, to make a modest contribution to the eradication of the chronic state of poverty in the Mehedinti county rural areas.

We chose as research area the Mehedinti rural area for two reasons: firstly I am from Mehedinti and I have a sense of pride that I could contribute to improving the living standards of people in these lands, so beautifully described in their letters by Radulescu Motru Peter Mehedinti.

Mehedinti also gave numerous personalities of science and culture in addition to those already listed, such as Stephen Odobleja author of "Consonatist Psychology " book that he ought to take the Nobel prize, not Norbert Wiener, the latter had the chance to publish his works, of the same scientific essence as of Odobleja, in occidental publications read by the scientific world from where he was worldly recognized, followed by the long waited Nobel prize.

Secondly, I chose to develop my PhD thesis research in Mehedinti county since this district provides a wide area of study for the rural development, to identify the rural development resources, and especially, to teach the people that they can also live differently, that they can live better, and that for the achievement of this ideal it is required a coordinated effort, more determination and tenacity in the face of those who make from this Romanian ideal a means of their own welfare.

Romanian rural area occupies 93% of the country and hosts 45% of the population. That is about 10.5 million people are living in rural areas, the space where they should find the means of subsistence for them and their family. However, things are not like that at national level nor at the county level. As a local man, born in these lands, I seek a sense of utter desolation, truly entitled when reaping the rewards of some compatriots, who by following the Mehedintian rural areas summarize their impressions in phrases such as: "spots as poor as the one of Motru have only some parts of Moldavia". The sadness comes from the authenticity of the statement, on the one hand, and individual inability to produce any change, on the other hand. Or maybe we have found a handy

way: the careful study of this area, the deceleration of truth from malicious propaganda, identifying the resources needed in the complex process of rural development, setting the targets and designing the strategies and tactics that lead to the empowerment of rural communities living standards of Mehedinti. If I do this, then surely that my work in the doctoral school has not been in vain.

One study, whatever it may be, including that one provided in the doctoral school, should reflect a certain opinion of the author, in this case, of my own.

Regarding the socio-economic status of the Mehedinti county, my view is clear - that of underdevelopment. As regards the means to eradicate this state of underdevelopment, in its infancy, I believe that there are more, which is a positive thing. The first activity that should revive the rural life of Mehedinti must be agriculture. We do not refer to super-crop farming systems field, as this is not possible in the Mehedinti rural areas. Instead this space blessed by God, is very favorable for the two plant branches: fruit tree, branch with some earlier fame, and vineyards, which today must confront memories of a past dominated by hybrid vines.

And again we think of Motru Radulescu, professor at University, who used to spend his holidays in his native area, where he had vineyards producing world-class wines that honored his fellow professors at the University of Bucharest. Not few times, they accepted Radulescu Motru's benevolent invitations to be visited at the estate during the holidays, periods turned into unforgettable evenings of wine tasting and winery estate discussions on the psychology of the Romanian people.

The fateful year of 1944 came, when the natural order of things has been demolished. After 45 years, period which at historical scale is not enough for an age, that was desired to be bright, the light and the heat of the sun is here again on Mehedintean lands. The light and heat of the sun, combined with the rare qualities of land suitability for vine cultivation, made that vineyards so noble (noble epithet appears again) to reappear on the lands of Mehedinti, with high-class wines so popular of the internal market and European wines.

This is how the Vinarte wines reappeared - Danubian terraces, Castle Starmina location, great wines who through their special quality conquered most refined tastes, even great European wine competitions, which shows that Mehedinti wine-production is an inexhaustible resource in the complex process of rural development. Viticulture and wine production is a development of rural resources that can induce genuine feature of sustainability or sustainable development. We will return on this systemic vision of sustainable rural development during this thesis.

Sustainable rural development requires both the rational use of renewable resources, and especially non-renewable. The category of the most important renewable natural resources is the earth.

Rational use of resources in sustainable rural development is a fundamental way to increase wealth. Non-renewable natural resources must be used in a manner that takes into account the needs of future generations. This restriction has been asked since immemorial times.

Therefore rural development investments result in a first stage. Then the economic effect of investments resulted in a surplus of cash value transferred to new investments to promote a new round of rural development that still can not be called sustainable. The economic effects of investments become causes for the onset of new stages in the process of rural development. After a number of cycles the rural development self stimulates, since it can be called sustainable. Here, then, that it occurred that mechanism that in the theory of systems is called feed-back, mechanism that once triggered continues to generate new stages in rural development. This complex process resulted in the phrase "sustainable rural development" must be defined through its internal mechanism, which is none other than the feed-back, retro action or reverse connection. That process of rural development that has its own feedback can be called durable or sustainable. The sustainability of a process, including the rural development cannot and should not be defined by the length of time, as some internal references particularly try to do. This way of defining rural development process is narrow, which makes use of the internal mechanism of generating and perpetuating it, it is important, very true, but it still remains only an effect.

This is our systemic vision on rural development process. It is important to clarify this vision because the system creates multiple angles, multiple variants of identifying new resources and new complex process involved in rural development.

Returning to the Mehedinti County, we find that it has multiple levers, resources that may be involved in rural development process that could generate sustainable feature.

As noted above, one of these levers is wine production and wine industry. Viticulture in the conditions of modern updated technology maintains an industry of high profitability. This creates the first jobs for the rural population, being a high manual labor consumer, which is the only source for financing investments, either within the viticulture industry or other industries within the rural economy. This ensures the sustainability of rural development process. It is one of the issues that we want to study and expose in this PhD thesis.

Secondly, Mehedinti County by its specific natural beauty of the landscape, by many popular reasons that may delight the sight and hearing - rich garments, beside popular architectural palette of homes in the rural area, the richness of customs and traditions, and the variety of local cuisine, which is dominant on the county's economy can become an area of maximum attraction for consumers in rural tourism and agro tourism.

We do not rediscover America by promoting these new and modern forms of tourism. Instead through the study that we conducted we find many variations of this development in terms of economic activities that characterize Mehedinti County.

In Mehedinti County, in areas devoted to tourism, there are plenty of areas that have emerged and have developed unconventional travel units, units which at one point, taking into account the current development trend of the county's economy, will dominate the Mehedinti tourism industry.

By this doctoral thesis we anticipated this trend and want to contribute to a new dimension to the rural economy of the county. We study the two modalities in this regard, that, we believe

they could revive the Mehedinti rural economy: agriculture through its most intensive industry, viticulture and rural tourism with all forms that characterize it, but especially agro-tourism. We believe that these two types of rural economic activity will reconsider the social status of rural communities on the lands of Mehedinti.

The PhD thesis is divided into eight chapters, grouped into two parts: the first documentary which includes Chapters 1 and 2 and the second part of our own research which includes Chapters 3-8.

In the first part we tried to achieve a sufficient documentation of local literature, especially since it has the particularity of the Romanian rural economy development through tourism and other rural economic activities specific to the Romanian areas, and also to foreign literature, a source which by many titles defines the circumstances and developments in that specific rural economic activities.

We sought to respect the formal rules that ARACIS indicated regarding the size of this part, not exceeding the weight of 30% of the entire thesis.

In this PhD study there has been made a study in improving the rural tourism and tourism activities and thus improving the income and quality of life of rural communities and pre-mountain areas. In this context there were two areas of study required, the one of specialized bibliography of natural and anthropogenic conditions that the areas with potential values for unconventional tourism development offer, expressed in rural tourism and agro tourism.

Rural tourism and agro tourism found initial development in the countries of Western Europe. These forms of unconventional travel are profitable and represent a way to increase rural household incomes. It was expected that rural tourism and agro tourism to grow especially in poorer European regions, areas that normally had to show clear trends to achieve additional income to those achieved in the core business. In reality, things just did not stay so, which is another argument which demonstrates that poverty is self stimulating.

Such a feature of psycho-social behavior can be contercountered only by a high awareness of the status quo, through which induced immobility can be continually overcome among local populations from one area or another. Such a situation still characterizes the Romanian rural area, which despite a chronic poverty continues, with few exceptions, a state of sleep and lack of initiative.

Field studies included two components:

a) studies conducted in areas where rural tourism and agro tourism have achieved a certain level of development as the area municipalities of Eselnita, Ponoarele area, village of Tănuna, Clisma Dunării, that limited the area around the Danube from Baziaș to the Iron Gates II. A special attention was also paid to the areas of wine production - Rugova, Vanja Mare, Castel Starmina, etc.

b) Viticulture and wine production is a very valuable potential resource in the complex process of rural development. Oltenia, including the county area of Mehedinti, known for wines "of the poorest quality " under the " Famous" names of molan or zaibăr, famous not so much by their

intrinsic qualities but especially by the predominant figurative comical-satirical sketches of " Nea Marin", today produces world-class quality wines. We can only recall products under the brand "Crown domain", from Segarcea, the wines from the series "Terraces of the Danube" or "Great Vânju wines". These are some examples of wine products able to satisfy the most exacting demands in the field.

I tried to find in the land the wine development potential of mentioned areas and the extent that the wine production may be involved in the complex process of rural development.

In general, native studied literature is dated after 1990, given that rural tourism and agro tourism were forms of economic activity totally unknown in the communist era.

Therefore bibliographic works could not have references to such period. Statistical information research related to rural tourism and agro tourism, as well as the organizational framework of the county's rural areas are located over the past three years, with references, where necessary, to prior periods.

We have limited the land research area at the size of the Mehedinti county, given the expansion of mountain and pre-mountain areas within the county, and the fact that in the studied areas contribute potential solutions for rural tourism and tourism development in other areas of the country with similar natural and anthropogenic conditions.

Romanian rural area contains 93% of the national territory and 45% of the population. Therefore, the rural share in the economic structure of Romania has a very high percentage. Romanian rural area has to be organized in such a way as to provide livelihood for the rural population, which is much larger than the rest of the European Union.

Mehedinti County has a total area of 4932.89 km<sup>2</sup>, of which the countryside has 4608.44 km<sup>2</sup>, which means a share of 93.42%. We find a strong dimensional similarity between rural of Mehedinti and the national level.

At the same time Mehedinti County had the total population on 1 July 2006 of 301.515 people of which 14.914 persons or 48.7% in urban areas and 15.461 persons, or 51.3% in rural areas, the average density is 61.1 people / km<sup>2</sup>.

Here, then, that under the population aspect, Mehedinti County shows some particularities. The share of rural population is much higher than that one recorded nationally, and the population density is much lower nationally, 90.5 persons/km<sup>2</sup>.

Since the beginning of the analysis I would like to make a statement which is related more to conceptual aspects than the structural and functional ones in general and of Mehedinti in particular. Specialized works consulted, especially the domestic ones, describe the structural and functional features not of the countryside as a whole, but only one of the components, namely the agricultural rural area. However, the use of forestry for rural areas is quite high and this share is characterized by specific structural and functional features different than those of rural agriculture. The forest area is differentiated by features derived from the structure of forest species, delimited firstly by altitude floors, the age structure of forests and especially the categories of productivity.

It is not our competence to analyze forest fund in every detail that characterize it, it doesn't suit within the research of this doctoral thesis, but we believe that structural features and functional approach should take into account the fact that at least conceptually the whole rural area, not just one or another of its component.

The economic recovery of Mehedinti rural area requires precise recognition of local structural and functional features. European Carta for rural areas, adopted by the Council of Europe, identifies its rural economic activities and groups them in three functions:

- A. economic function;
- B. ecological function;
- C. Socio-cultural function.

There are the well known features that characterize all the rural areas in the country. But they have evolved in the context of local peculiarities of Mehedinti countryside, where the structure of economic activities, whether primary (agriculture, fisheries, etc.) or tertiary (services generally) is different from that of other rural areas of the country or the European Union. Secondly we believe that this is the most important thing and we want to present our view, our vision on the functions of the countryside, especially in terms of their precedence.

With reference to the three functions we can say that the socio-cultural function has the characteristic of primary function. The activities that circumscribe this function directly and immediately provide environments that meet the material and spiritual needs of man. The economic function encompasses activities that generate economic environments of material, moral, and spiritual satisfaction of people. Ecological function creates the setting in which the activities that circumscribe the other two functions are carried out.

In support of our opinion we could say that even man's historical development comes. At the very beginning these people, the few that existed, did not know what working is; the concept of work appeared much later. In these ancient times man ate what nature gave him. He raised his hand just to pick the fruit and then consumed it. He made this gesture not for reasons of the movement need or which would be maintained by further realizing the fruit of that tree. He made this gesture to feed, and not explaining this gesture a long time. Only later did he realize that he must eat to live. And to this belief has remained mankind to this day. But today, given the multitude of people, the fruit of stray trees would no longer satisfy the need for food. Man at a time, by logic, concluded that he must produce the necessary food. And in this period, a group, few people, warned that the food production activity must be conducted under conditions of environmental cleanliness.

Therefore, the natural orders of priority of the three functions are: socio-cultural function, the ecological function, the economic function. We think it is the normal order, despite not many but I could tell, all written works on this issue in our country and especially in the environment where I studied. Was it the influence of earlier works in 1990 that in the spirit of proletarian culture promoted the order of succession ideological-political-economic-social, as one that serves the interests of the proletariat? I thought Marx said that man is the most valuable chapter. Then so be it.

Sustainable rural development of mountain and pre-mountain areas is a possible alternative of Mehedinti, necessary and I could tell, even obligatory. It constitutes a possible solution as rural mountain and pre mountain area of Mehedinti has a particularly favorable natural environment, with multiple opportunities for economic development in the period ahead: the work of forestry, rural tourism, agro tourism, viticulture and wine business, subsistence agriculture in areas less favorable for agriculture, etc.

Sustainable rural development of Mehedinti mountain and pre mountain areas is a required solution. The need stems from its large area of Mehedinti rural development - over 97% and especially of its poor economic development. There are Mehedinti areas, such as between Drobeta Turnu Severin and Motru whose only feature worthy of being considered is the general poverty of economic development more than poor. For such areas, rural development is not only a pressing need but also a unique alternative, given that there are no settlements in these areas with legal status that could add another type of development, other than rural.

Thirdly, but not least, rural development of Mehedinti pre-mountain areas is a mandatory solution. It is compulsory as the alternative requirement stems from the poor quality of life of rural communities in areas considered. With the exception of micro agricultural industries such as viticulture and vegetable growing have found good conditions for development, the vast majority of Mehedinti and pre-mountain areas are characterized by a very low standard of living. The economic structure of these areas imposes the rural development as unique and at the same time, compulsory alternative of rural development.

Rural development means sustainable growth of individual productivity, community and institutional, that can lead to higher income insurance for individuals in a community. The development may involve increasing, but the link is not direct, for example, work can be changed with a better one, without changing their number. Rural development programs must have regard to a fundamental change of the framework in which rural communities operate. However, such a change requires a long time. But we must start from the idea that no matter how long, the road starts with the first step. Such an approach to rural development is not only of Mehedinti mountain and pre mountain areas, but also of other parts of the country.

Changing the basic economic framework of rural areas involves institutional development, identification and enhancement of local resources, improving the quality of human resources through appropriate training programs or conversion ratio of circumstances. It must be promoted the strategic principles that lead to sustainable rural development.

Strategic development of rural areas has, among others, the following major components:

- a) Identify the concept and practical alternatives for resolving strategic issues;
- b) Establishment of setbacks, obstacles that stand in the way of strategic objectives;
- c) Develop proposals for overcoming obstacles;
- d) Determining the mode of action on long term;

e) Develop detailed action programs, supporting the strategic tasks.

The complexity of the remedial process of economic development in rural areas of Mehedinti from mountain and pre mountain areas implies a different approach of possible strategies and tactics in this regard. There are two models in this approach, models favored for a situation that is Romania. A first possible alternative for Mehedinti area is the approach of programs. In this regard it is necessary to establish rural development programs rooted in the particular area addressed. Funding such programs can be achieved through European funding grant funds, funds that Romania has so broad access that could provide broad rural development not only of the Mehedinti area.

A second variant presents an integrated approach to micro-regions, identified and defined in relation to the economic development and specificity level. In a next step it takes place the project development which provides financing for rural development.

In one case and the other it is necessary to develop the institutional network to provide advice for potential entrepreneurs to draft documents and projects for financing rural development activities.

Sustainable rural development strategies through tourism areas and agro tourism require a careful study of conditions that characterize a particular geographic or administrative area, especially Mehedinti County case. Any development strategy requires a strong technical and economic background in the analysis of regional peculiarities, through the study of economic and human resources available to study the subject.

It must be achieved a perfect bi-univocal compliance between sustainable rural development solutions and resource consumption that impose such solutions on the one hand, and existing resources in the reserve area and the extent to which they can reproduce during the proposed development, on the other hand. Only by providing such correlations one can provide sustainable rural development strategies transfer from the ideated phase to practice. Only in this way one can print to realistic character development process, durable and sustainable for as long as non-renewable resources have not yet exhausted.

Such results are obtained by applying the SWOT analysis (Strong, weakness, opportunities, threats), which proved a very useful method for identifying ways to promote sustainable rural development by binomial studying cause and effect line. SWOT analysis allows, as its name says, identifying the strengths, weaknesses and opportunities hazards by strict reporting to natural, organizational, economic, and social features characterizing Mehedinti County.

In the done study we could identify more opportunities for sustainable rural development in pre mountainous and mountainous area of the Mehedinti county, among which:

a) Rural tourism and agro-tourism, the biggest opportunity, valid for the entire mountainous and pre mountainous Mehedinti area, since the entire area is characterized by similar features in terms of anthropogenic conditions.

b) Development of wine production. Mehedinti County has a massive structure that supports the development of viticulture industry. Due to geographical position, most of the hilly areas have average slopes with southern exposure, something that leads to the most favorable microclimates for growing grapes.

Southern slopes are characterized by a fraction of isolation and temperature sum of degrees very favorable for vines. Through these two climatic the pre mountainous, Mehedinti area falls within the Romanian perimeters very favorable to the viticulture industry development.

To these very favorable climate conditions, genetic characteristics of soil are added: calcareous skeleton of their forming, predominantly neutral response, medium texture, with a high percentage of large fraction, good structure, resulting in increased thermal characteristics of soil.

The wine production embodied in high quality wines that have already won several medals in organized European competitions, is a vigorous lever of recovery the sustainable rural development process on a specific path connected to the particularities of Mehedinti county and certainly on the economical level.

c) Further development of vegetable production, particularly early and mid early tomatoes to cover the consumption needs, not only of local ones, but especially of large areas such as Timisoara, Resita, Arad, Bocsa, Buzias Jimbolia, etc.

Early and mid early production of vegetables for 30-40 km wide strip along the Danube River downstream of Drobeta Turnu Severin, there is not an alternative, the option being taken a long time ago (by the years 1976 to 1980), but certainty of sustainable rural development of the area referred to;

d) Promote tourism classic.

Mehedinti county has a particularly favorable natural environment for development of classic tourism. It might make the objection that tourism is a classic component of rural tourism. It is true, but equally true is the fact that classic tourism runs in rural areas, therefore it is a definite way for sustainable rural development.

From this point a particular interest is Danube enema related to the Mehedinti county (city Svinița upstream - up to Orsova city) and Cerna Valley, which hosts one of the most famous spa resorts. We refer to Herculane, town with thermal waters, known since Roman times, where they draw the name of the resort itself.

e) Promotion of information tourism, in this case archaeological one.

The perimeter of the village Hinova, located on the river Danube, 15 km downstream from the center of the county, in Drobeta Turnu Severin there is an archaeological resort, which includes a cemetery from the Iron Age and Roman-century castle from III and IV century with 20,000 surface m<sup>2</sup>.

In the villages Sirian, Hinova, Bălăciță the trail "Brazda's luck" goes. At Piscului Point there is the archeological resort which is inhabited since the Neolithic until the Iron Age, with an area of 10,000 m<sup>2</sup>. In Grânarul de pe Dealul Viilor, the location 1 km from Hinova city the feudal

cemetery is located with 5,000 m<sup>2</sup> surface, and in Clinics an archaeological resort is located with an area of 2.000m<sup>2</sup>.

Here are, then, a number of local attractions for lovers and specialists in archeology, attraction that could lead, through an appropriate promotion policy, at a higher level of development of the countryside in the area of reference.

f) To promote sports tourism.

Mehedinti County has wide possibilities for the development of sport tourism. Apart from practicing the traditional tourist activities, Mehedinti County has special conditions to practice sport tourism. And water sports. Danube River by the bay made in the city of Orsova presents great opportunities to organize water sports, sports in which Romania has more valuable athletes than the existing sports clubs have.

The lack of water flow in the mentioned bay creates an opportunity for the organization noted in the water sports and programming appropriate water kingdoms in this area. This issue remains a decision for the attention of county authorities, who by an appropriate policy and strategy could transform the area mentioned in a strong basis for promoting water sports.

As for weaknesses and risks we can include an idea that is the continuation of the past one: poor or lack of expertise in rural tourism and agro tourism. Basically people do not know about rural tourism and agro tourism, not knowing that outside the agricultural work on small portions of land that can be exploited by agriculture, apart from forestry perimeters or any activities in mining, rather isolated in the area, there are other forms of existence and still winning in a manner more adapted to the 21st century in which we live.

Mehedinti area, as any other ethno-geographic area in the country, is characterized by a strong local tinge of folk melds from Oltenia, the rites, customs and folklore events give another meaning of space where they belong. Or ethno-religious ritual is not geographically throughout analyzed Mehedinti territory. Hence the need for intercultural exchange between differentiated rural communities identified in this area.

A decisive factor for Mehedinti rural area development, in the process of sustainable rural development evolution in mountain areas, is the very poor policy in the county management and sanitation in rural areas where people are living now, at the beginning of the 21st century.

Given the wide possibilities for the development of nautical sports and appropriate sequences of tourism connected to the water frame generated by the Danube, it seems inexplicable the attitude of county governing bodies in promoting the sustainable rural development programs supported by EU funds and to have as aspects of the aforementioned objective.

Strengths points are in equilibrium with the weak ones, the opportunities are balanced with risks, in general, good and evil lies in the balance. This state of balance somehow must be resolved in favor of sustainable rural development. That strengths and opportunities should outweigh the weaknesses and risks.

This is achieved through an appropriate managerial act-a moment that we live and a place where we intend to stay. Human role, the one of management is to make the impossible possible, the strengths weaknesses, risks into opportunities, potential for effectiveness harm the good.

Only then we can say that man, manager, community, society have done fully their duty and reached a steady state of giving hope for the next period of economic and social development.

In this regard, Mehedinti County presents an almost virgin field of action, from which we infer that the source area is so great that taking action is the guarantee of success.

As a general conclusion we can say that the Mehedinti County has a strong potential for future development. The greater potential, the lower achievements are. High potential means reduced consumption of resources; values produced in small quantities, so the slow growth rate.

Conclusion: we do not want the potential to transform what we want to have in what we already have. Only then we will be fine.