

DIAGNOSTIC ANALYSIS OF THE COMMUNE SADU, SIBIU COUNTY IMPERATIVE OF SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

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Abstract: *The sustainable development of rural areas is a complex and always current problem, for which there is a special interest, materialized at the level of the European Union through the elaboration of policies and strategies accordingly. This calls for the active involvement of the rural community, in the development process, for the development, adoption, and implementation of the best solutions to mobilize all initiatives for sustainable capitalization of own resources for the social and economic benefit of the community. Taking into account that rural development has dimensions and importance at the national and international level, which underlines the complexity of the rural economy, through this research I will try to answer the challenge of identifying those elements that lead to the integration of the main fields of activity in the countryside (agriculture, aquaculture, fishing, forestry, manufacturing industry, etc.).*

Key words: *diagnosis, sustainable, rural*

INTRODUCTION

Rural development is a complex research topic, which for Romania is strongly influenced by January 1, 2007, the year of Romania's accession to the European Union and the beginning of a new era in the rural economy of our country. The rural development process is focused on the full adoption of the Common Agricultural Policy and adaptation to the requirements of integration into the internal market of the European Union and adoption [9]. The development of the rural economy is oriented towards sustainability and is based mainly on the resources available at the territorial level but also on the active involvement of the community in the development, implementation, and adaptation of relevant strategies for the superior exploitation of its potential. The justification of the research is based on the wealth and diversity of the resources, respectively on the need for their sustainable exploitation. The motivation for this topic is given by the interest shown by the European Union through the Common Agricultural Policy, respectively by Romania through the National Strategic Program, and by the numerous situations of irrational capitalization of resources that require the promotion of research aimed at determining a positive change in this sense [5]. Sustainable rural development is influenced by numerous internal and external factors with the mention that recently the role of internal factors has been emphasized. The present research is subordinated to the concept of territorial development, which specifies that economic development is mainly determined by endogenous factors [10], and investments in human capital, innovation, and knowledge are relevant supporters. The endogenous forces involved in this process are represented by factors of local responsibility and various resources - natural, human, material, economic, social, cultural, and spiritual – [12]. At the same time, the research takes into account the fact that any territory has several characteristics that give it individuality, specificity, and authenticity that must be developed and exploited sustainably, to keep them unaltered [4]. The purpose of the work is to sustainably capitalize on the endogenous resources available at the territorial level, for the achievement of which the following objectives were established: a diagnostic analysis of the Sadu commune concerning the endogenous resources and how to capitalize on them; adopting the case study methodology as a research method and selecting the most relevant strategic analysis methods; the

development of strategic options for the sustainable exploitation of endogenous resources. The commune of Sadu is the gateway to the mountains of Lotrului and Cindrelului, being located in southern Transylvania, 18 km south of the city of Sibiu on the Sadului Valley, on which the first hydropower plants in the country were built. The geographical coordinates are 45°40'13"N 24°10'56"E and it presents a pronounced variety of natural elements due to the big difference between the highest peak – the Prejba peak, 1744 m, and the lowest altitude – the Praharia meadow, 450 m and its has an area of 74 km² [2].



Figure 1. Location Sadu commune

Source. https://ro.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sadu,_Sibiu#/media/Fi%C8%99ier:Processing_3D_for_Sadu,_Sibiu.jpg

Local stakeholders and community members are concerned with sustainable utilization of available endogenous resources and encourage rural entrepreneurship in agricultural and non-agricultural activities. It is also concerned with the elaboration of studies that highlight the particularities of the area and the development opportunities on the basis of which to formulate measures, respectively relevant strategic options for achieving sustainable rural development. This paper provides a model for their development, a model that can be replicated for other areas.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

To carry out the research, he adopted the case study as a research methodology because it involves the in-depth study of the rural economy, in the natural framework of the Sadu commune, from several perspectives [6]. The motivation for choosing this methodology is given by its applicability in complex situations as a method of holistic analysis and the complete illustration of the analyzed phenomenon "in a real-life context and using multiple sources of information (interviews, questionnaires, testimonies, evidence, documents, direct observation, participant observation)" [11]. Concretely, within the research methodology, quantitative and qualitative methods were used "in a parallel and complementary way [8], such as secondary analysis of specialized literature, identification of critical factors and successful initiatives, application of models of PESTEL (political, economic, social, technological, natural, legislative) and SWOT (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, threats) analysis. The application of the mentioned methods was carried out successively according to the structure shown in figure 2.

From the schematic structure of the research, its development in four stages is highlighted. In stage 1, we proceeded to collect data and information for the research using the questionnaire applied at the territorial administrative unit (UAT) level, the secondary analysis of statistical data, and the relevant specialized literature, respectively the observation for the qualitative improvement of the information.

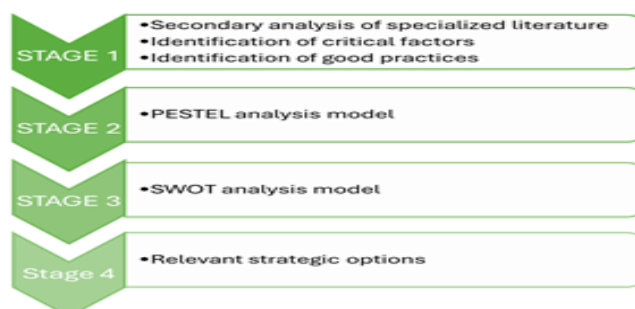


Figure 2. Schematic structure of the research

In the second stage, the strategic diagnosis of Sadu commune, Sibiu county was carried out according to the PESTEL strategic analysis model [1]. The results obtained led to the realization in the third stage of the SWOT matrix [7]. In the fourth stage, relevant strategic options were developed for the sustainable development of the rural economy in Sadu commune, Sibiu County.

RESEARCH RESULTS

The applied research methodology allowed for capturing the specific elements and highlighting the necessary measures to continue the economic development process and orient it towards sustainability and the adoption of the smart village concept. The factors with impact on sustainable development and integration in the rural economy of the European Union were also identified.

I. The results obtained from the secondary analysis of statistical data and specialized literature highlight a development process at the level of UAT Sadu, Sibiu County at the level of the three pillars of sustainable development - economic, ecological, and social, as well as the interest of local responsibility factors and specialists for available resources and their sustainable exploitation by adopting modern methods and techniques both in the agricultural and industrial fields, respectively services [20].

II. The PESTEL diagnosis applied to UAT Sadu, Sibiu county highlighted defining elements of its sustainable development centered on 6 criteria that define its life framework: political, economic, social, technological, environmental,

The analysis of the political criterion highlights a legislative framework favorable to the sustainable development of the rural area represented at the level of the European Union by the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) carried out based on the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union. The role of the cohesion policy is also noted, which for the period 2021-2027 will especially support public investments for the objectives of ecological and digital transition. The CAP 2023-2027 is based on the specific legal framework and the set of detailed specifications in the CAP strategic plans (PS) approved by the European Commission [15,18]. PS CAPs are intended to make a major contribution to meeting the objectives of the European Green Deal, the Farm to Fork Strategy and the Biodiversity Strategy (European Green Deal, Farm to Fork Strategy, Biodiversity Strategy) [13,14,16]. For the period 2023-2027, the implementation of the PAC in Romania is carried out through the National Strategic Plan (PNS) which contains measures for the development of a resilient, sustainable and competitive agricultural sector, the development of deficit sectors and the balanced socio-economic development of rural areas. At the level of UAT Sadu, Sibiu county, the Local Development Strategy (SDL) is the document that ensures the sustainable development of the community in close accordance with the objectives of the cohesion policy and the objectives of the PAC 2021-2027. Also, within the Sadu City Hall, there is a rural development department that offers

specialist advice to the Sadu community for accessing European funds, encouragement and support for the establishment of associative forms and the promotion of producers.

The analysis of the economic criterion attests to the existence of a corollary of activities belonging to all economic sectors (primary, secondary, and tertiary). Agriculture is one of the old occupations of the inhabitants and includes cultivating the land and raising animals. They are carried out on the 2561.8 ha of agricultural land of which: 520 ha are arable, 955 ha are pastures, 1084.8 ha are hayfields and 2 ha are fruit orchards and nurseries. The number of animals is 12,734 of which 58.3% are sheep, 33% birds, 4% cattle, 2.8% pigs, 1.1% goats, and 0.4% horses (SDL, Sadu - an area of the forest fund and number of animals in 2021). Also, forestry is a field that has always been a strong point of the Sadene community and currently totals 4062.3 ha and a turnover of about 1.1 million lei, to which 1 million lei is added from the manufacture of other carpentry elements and carpentry for construction. The industry is represented by Hidroelectrica S.A. through the Sadu I and II hydropower plants that provide 24 jobs. In the administrative territory of Sadu commune, 269 economic agents operate with a turnover of 55.6 million lei in 2020, 205 employees, and a profit of 6.2 million lei (SDL, Sadu). Rural tourism is the activity that has seen an obvious development within the radius of UAT Sadu, Sibiu county in the last two decades, due to the tourist potential classified as very high, according to the Emergency Ordinance no. 142 of October 28, 2008, regarding the approval of the National Territorial Development Plan Section VIII - areas with tourist resources. The tourist infrastructure includes 7 tourist reception structures with accommodation functions with an accommodation capacity of 101 places. In conclusion, the local economy is represented by small and medium enterprises.

The analysis of the social criterion highlights a behavior characteristic of mountainous areas with the specification that the depopulation of UAT Sadu, Sibiu county stops at the level of 2015 when a slightly significant increase in the population begins until 2024 as can be seen in figure 3 [17]. The involvement of local responsibility factors in the implementation of policies, programs, and projects included in the local development strategy has generated this state.

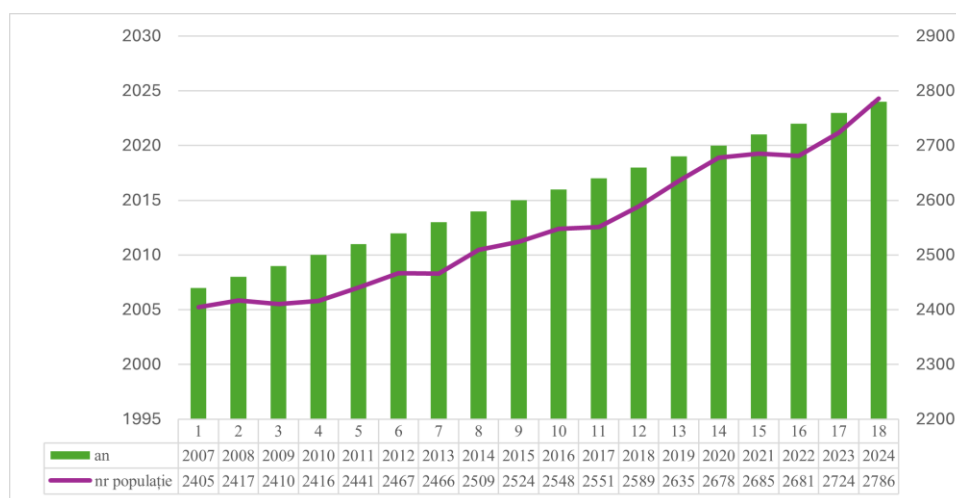


Figure 3. Population evolution in UAT Sadu, Sibiu county

Source: INS data Tempo, 2024, own processing

The location near the city of Sibiu gives a high degree of accessibility. The road infrastructure of UAT Sadu, Sibiu county is modernized in proportion to 80%. The density of road transport infrastructure corresponds to the current level of development and prospects, its quality requires improvement. The infrastructure of public utilities is well

represented, thus 750 homes are connected to the gas network and there is a feasibility study for its expansion. Sadu commune was the first rural settlement in Romania to be electrified in 1897. Today Sadu commune has implemented a digital public lighting system, equipped with LED bulbs, a remote management system, and motion sensors. The simple drinking water distribution network is 15 km long, and the total simple length of the sewage pipes is 13.1 km, that is, 940 homes are connected to the public drinking water distribution network, and 800 homes are connected to the sewage. The households of Sadu commune, Sibiu county benefit from telecommunication services (telephony, internet network, cable TV) Investments in fiber optic infrastructure and the WI-FI network allow people who live in or pass through the commune free access to the Smart Sadu internet network. Education is provided for the levels: preschool, primary, and secondary school by the educational unit with legal personality: Samuil Micu Sadu Secondary School, which has the Sadu Kindergarten with an extended program. The investments made in the telecommunications infrastructure allowed the authorities to create the Smart School educational platform. The teaching staff is 17 teachers, of which 5 for preschool education, 5 for primary education, and 7 for secondary education. The collection and transport of residual waste is carried out based on the contract of delegation by concession of the management of the activity of collection and transport of municipal waste in Zone 1 Sibiu. The health protection of the population in Sadu commune, Sibiu County is carried out by a family medical office, a dental office, and a pharmacy.

The analysis of the technological criterion highlights the capacity of UAT Sadu, Sibiu County to assimilate sustainable technologies and concerns for increasing the population's access to information and professional training, increasing innovation capacity, and increasing research and development expenses. Investments in telecommunications also create the conditions for increasing access to education. There is an appreciable number of entrepreneurs who have innovated in products, technological processes, and organizational and marketing methods. The main objective of the innovation was to improve the quality of the products, the orientation towards the mention of mountain product quality, and subsequently towards the expansion of the range of products and services. The local administration has numerous projects aimed at innovation and sustainability, as follows:

- "Smart public lighting system, Sadu Commune, Sibiu county", through which the efficiency of the system was achieved.
- Investments in telecommunications infrastructure and the creation of the Smart Sadu network and the Smart School educational platform.

The analysis of the natural criterion highlights an area with mountain characteristics located in the contact zone between the Sibiului Depression and the Cibinului Mountains. The geographic coordinates place Sadu commune at the intersection of the parallel of 45°40'13" north latitude with the meridian 24°10'56" east longitude. The maximum altitude is at the peak of Prejba (1744m), and the minimum is at the Praharia meadow (450m). The climate has a moderately differentiated character on the two main relief steps depending on their altitude [3]. The flora and fauna are well represented and harmoniously framed in the relief steps. The flora is arranged zonally, in several layers: the subalpine layer where we find juniper, dwarf juniper, mountain peony, blueberry, etc., the forest layer (1800-1400 m) which contains spruce and fir that mix in the lower part with beech and the oak, there are also hayfields in the 800-1000m area and places azonal vegetation [2]. The fauna is diverse and stands out for the following species: rabbit, fox, vizure, wolf, bear, wild boar, deer, and squirrel. lizards, snakes, swallows, sparrows, crows, cuckoos, blackbirds, larks, woodpeckers, thrush, finch, owl, the hen, the hen, the hen and the mountain grouse [2].

The analysis of the legislative criterion highlights a series of laws and regulations regarding the development of the mountain area to which I have referred. The existence of specialized research and executive institutions in the field of rural development, non-governmental organizations recognized for the activities carried out in the field of rural development, numerous studies and pilot projects, normative acts, and specialists for the application of the EU/EC Resolutions regarding the concept of "mountain product" is also attested with Protected Designation of Origin (PDO) and Protected Geographical Indication (PGI), etc. [19]

The relevance of the criteria/sub-criteria of the PESTEL model, for the sustainable development of UAT Sadu, Sibiu county

The results of the diagnosis are presented centrally, relative to the analysis criteria, specifying the relevant sub-criteria for the development of strategic options regarding the sustainable development of the rural economy (table 1). The characterization elements were used in the process of assessing the relevance of each selected subcriterion for the sustainable development of the rural economy in Sadu commune, Sibiu County (table 2). 18 sub-criteria were identified (3 each for each analysis criterion) whose relevance for the development of measures for the sustainable development of the rural economy was obtained with the help of working groups made up of local responsibility factors and rural development specialists. They were asked to appreciate on a 5-level scale from 1 to 5 points where 1 represents the very insignificant appreciation and 5 the very significant appreciation, the importance of each sub-criterion for the development of strategies for the sustainable development of the rural economy. These are benchmarks for a better orientation of the responsible factors and stakeholders in the process of developing relevant strategic options for the sustainable development of the rural economy and the farming community.

Table 1.

Results obtained from the use of the PESTEL model (criteria and sub-criteria)

Politics	Economic
corresponding legislative framework represented at the level of: •EU of Cohesion Policy, Common Agricultural Policy, European Green Deal, Farm to Farm Strategy, Biodiversity Strategy. •Romania by National Strategic Plan (PNS) •UAT Sadu for Local Development Strategy (SDL).	The rural economy is structured by branches Agriculture, Industry, trade, construction Rural tourism is an economic branch under development A business environment favorable to the development of small businesses The labor force in a slightly increasing trend
Social	Technological
The depopulation characteristic of mountain areas is stabilized at the level of 2015 for UAT Sadu The implemented social policies numerically enroll the population in an increasing trend The road infrastructure is eco-friendly and ensures connectivity with national roads Public utility infrastructure is well-represented Education is well-represented	UAT Sadu has the capacity for: • Assimilation of sustainable technologies • Increasing the population's access to information and professional training • Increasing innovation capacity and spending on research and development Numerous projects aim for innovation and sustainability
Natural	Legislative
Predominantly mountainous area with little human modification The rich diversity of flora and fauna The meadows have a qualitative composition that positively affects the quality of mountain products.	Laws and regulations for the development of mountain areas (PAC, PNS, Mountain Law) normative acts for the application of EU/EC Resolutions - "mountain product" product with protected designation of origin (PDO) and protected geographical indication (PGI) normative acts regarding the Smart Village concept

Table 2.

The relevance of the PESTEL model criteria for the sustainable development of the rural economy in UAT Sadu, Sibiu county

Domeniu de diagnoză	Subcriterii	Impactul asupra viitoarei strategii				
		1	2	3	4	5
Politics	The corresponding legislative framework at the EU level (CAP)					
	National legislative framework (PNS) harmonized with the European one					
	Appropriate legislative framework at the local level (SDL)					
Economic	A business environment favorable to the development of small businesses					
	Rural tourism is an economic branch under development					
	Implementation of the City Manager digital platform and development of the Smart Village concept					
Social	Social policies appropriate to population enrollment in a slightly increasing trend					
	The road infrastructure is eco-friendly					
	Adequate educational system					
Technology	Ability to assimilate sustainable technologies					
	Increasing innovation capacity and spending on research and development					
	Implementation of projects aimed at innovation and sustainability					
Natural	Predominantly mountainous area with little human modification					
	The rich diversity of flora and fauna					
	Meadows with a qualitative composition that has a positive effect on the quality of mountain products					
Legislative	Laws and regulations for the development of hilly and mountainous rural areas (PAC, PNS, Mountain Law)					
	Environmental protection laws and regulations					
	normative acts for the application of the EU/EC Resolutions regarding the concept of "mountain product" protected origin (PDO) and protected geographical indication (PGI)					

III. Results of using SWOT models

The realization of the SWOT analysis is based on the results obtained at the PESTEL diagnosis and consists in the matrix arrangement of the external and internal factors in the form of four quadrants from the combination of which strategic options are easily identified (Table 3).

The information acquired and the results obtained from the implementation of the methodology used led to the outline of eight strategic directions for the sustainable development of the rural economy.

1. *Developing basic infrastructure and increasing accessibility.* Within this direction, the following strategic options are proposed:

- ❖ Improving accessibility and basic services;
- ❖ Urbanism and spatial planning

2. *Local economy and agriculture:* Within this direction, the following strategic options are proposed:

- ❖ Balanced development of the local economy
- ❖ Promoting a smart, resilient, and diversified agricultural sector that ensures food security

3. *Education and vocational training.* Within this direction, the following strategic options are proposed:

- ❖ Reducing school dropout, improving access to quality and inclusion-friendly services in education, training, and lifelong learning;

Table 3.

SWOT Matrix

Strong Points		Weak Points	
1	Easy access to the town	1	Failure to cover the entire area with public utilities
2	The relatively large number of economic operators	2	No industrial park
3	Favorability for rural tourism development	3	Actions reduce the promotion of support programs for entrepreneurs
4	Increasing interest in the association	4	Lack of collection, storage, and recovery centers
5	High potential for the establishment of local gastronomic points	5	Lack of public transport in UAT
6	Developed zootechnical sector	6	There is no center for the after-school program
7	Adequate educational infrastructure	7	Lack of professional training activities, qualifications, retraining
8	Development of local economic activity with tradition, including the mention of mountain product	8	Lack of regulations on vulnerable land in the city
9	Recognized local brands: Sadu (pate, meat, and canned food), Sadu Beer.	9	Insufficient measures to combat global warming and reduce its effects
10	Internet access and free WI-FI	10	Lack of infrastructure for charging electric or electric hybrid cars
11	The existence of natural protected areas	11	Lack of a nursery unit
12	Selective waste collection	12	Limited medical services
13	Existence of medical services (family doctor and dental services)	13	Poor promotion of resources and tourist attractions
14	Fiber optic infrastructure throughout the territory	14	Unrestored historical monuments and traditional houses are not included in the tourist circuit.
15	Smart public lighting	15	Limited investment to transform the conventional village into a smart village
16	The existence of the Smart School educational platform Sadu Smart Village strategy	16	New technologies are not used to improve the quality of life or tourism development
17	Strategie Sadu Smart Village	17	Lack of public-private partnership
Opportunity		Threats	
1	Laws and regulations for the development of rural areas (PAC, PNS, Mountain Law)	1	Reducing the share of the active population
2	The post-2020 financing framework favorable for the development of the rural economy	2	The effects of the global and national economic crisis
3	The development of industrial areas in neighboring towns	3	Low interest of young people in agricultural activities
4	The existence of non-refundable funds to support entrepreneurship and start-ups	4	Lack of policies for the revival/revival of rural businesses
5	The possibility of collaboration with the Mărginimea Sibiului LAG for rural development projects	5	The predisposition towards an exaggerated consumption of resources
6	The possibility of developing agriculture and organic products	6	Frequent changes in education legislation
7	Possibility of rehabilitation, modernization, and expansion of fishing areas.	7	Low interest in specialized teaching staff to practice in rural areas
8	The possibility of creating partnerships with educational institutions in the EU	8	The increase in the degree of pollution
9	Availability of economic agents for partnership development with the school	9	High costs of medical services
10	Sources of funding for environmental protection and the circular economy	10	Poor responsiveness of patients to national health programs
11	Potential for tourist development	11	Limited financial resources for tourism development
12	Possibility of public-private partnership development	12	Lack of coordination at county and local level for actions to attract foreign investors

4. *Environment and climate.* Within this direction, the following strategic options are proposed:

- ❖ Environmental protection, increasing energy efficiency, stimulating the use of alternative energy sources

5. *Health and social inclusion and cults.* Within this direction, the following strategic options are proposed:

- ❖ Development of health and social services

6. *Tourism, culture, sport and leisure*. Within this direction, the following strategic options are proposed:

- ❖ Local territory attractive for tourism, culture, and sports

7. *Sadu Smart Village*. Within this direction, the following strategic options are proposed:

- ❖ Fruiting the advantages of digitization for the benefit of citizens

8. *Administrative capacity and cooperation*. Within this direction, the following strategic options are proposed:

- ❖ Development of cooperation and association.

CONCLUSIONS

The present research is part of the area of global concerns, in which each community, based on the experience gained, carries out actions to identify the available resources, establish realistic objectives, and develop strategic options for their fulfillment and the achievement of their sustainable development.

The development of strategic options for the sustainable development of UAT Sadu, Sibiu county has as its scientific foundation the methodology of the case study, which includes diagnostic methods frequently used in the strategic planning process.

The diagnosis made was mainly based on the PESTEL and SWOT analysis model. The results obtained highlight the following at the level of the six analysis criteria that define the framework of rural life: the existence of a legislative framework favorable to rural development, an easy business environment favorable to the development of small entrepreneurs, rural tourism in development, the implementation of the City Manager digital platform and the development of the Smart concept Village, Road infrastructure is eco-friendly, a Predominantly mountainous area little anthropically modified, Rich diversity of flora and fauna, Meadows with a qualitative composition that has a positive impact on the quality of mountain products Laws and regulations for the development of hilly mountain rural areas (PAC, PNS, Mountain Law).

The evaluation of the internal specificity of the studied area was carried out with the help of the SWOT analysis. The results obtained are represented by the developed strategic options. These are oriented toward the development of the basic infrastructure, the development of the local economy, education and professional training, environmental protection, health and social inclusion, the development of the implemented Smart-Village concept, and the development of cooperation and association.

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