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PHD TESIS SUMMARY

**STRATEGIC MANAGEMENT AND PUBLIC
POLICIES FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT
IN LOCAL PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION**

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II. KEYWORDS: strategic management, public policies, rural development, sustainability, managerial model of rural development

III. SYNTHESIS OF THE DOCTORAL THESIS

SUMMARY

The paper "*Strategic management and public policies for sustainable development in local public administration*" addresses one of the most current and important issues local public administration is facing in rural areas in the context of adaptation to political and economic dynamics.

The motivation for the doctoral thesis is the dissemination of the research findings, materialized in the development of a managerial model of sustainable development used as a tool to permanently improve the work and vision of public sector authorities, but also the mindset changes on public sector's managerial approach.

The main objective of this study is to identify strategic management mechanisms that will help substantiate the process of strategic planning of rural communities in the next period.

The specific objectives are generated by:

- identifying the factors that influence the development level of local communities in rural areas and implicitly leads the decision-making system in local public administration towards efficiency and effectiveness,
- determining the factors which influence the strategic planning process (existence of a local development strategy, the degree of involvement in accessing projects from non-reimbursable external sources for the operationalization of a mechanism used to implement the local development strategy);
- recommending alternative sustainable development scenarios, applied as an extension to the existing strategic practice.

THE STUDY OF LITERATURE

The first three chapters of this doctoral thesis are dedicated to the study of literature. This part highlights the scientific contributions of this paper, as well as the current study of knowledge in the field. In this paper, a chapter was allocated to clarify the notions of strategic management, public policy and sustainable development; the interaction between these concepts and the presentation of tools and methodologies supported the premises for their application in practice by local public authorities.

CHAPTER I - STRATEGIC MANAGEMENT IN PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION aimed at making an introduction to the topic "Strategic management process". First of all, we highlighted the importance of using a planning system to determine the future evolution of the public organization and the results of its activity. If we analyze strategic planning, starting from this statement, in correlation with strategic thinking, we notice that the main beneficiaries of these concepts' usage are public managers, who can build an optimal strategic plan, recognizing the existence of problems, but simultaneously anticipating solutions.

At the same time, civil servants with positions of responsibility are involved in this process, having the opportunity to broaden their horizons of action and think ahead in order to meet the objectives of the organization. Although the approach of decision-making staff was traditionally focused on exercising control, this is not true anymore when using a planning-based system, as we notice that it involves permanent collection of information in order to increase the quality of decisions taken. Progress begins with changing the officials' mentality who need to change their behavior in order to support and direct the organization in the desired direction. However, achieving the goal of this process also depends on how the need to make these changes is communicated.

The relationship between strategy, strategic planning and strategic management requires an open approach of public organizations, because these notions, used mainly in the private sector, generate extensive reforms. Of course, the reform in the public sector is not an easy process to implement, as we encounter managerial reluctance, prefigured in maladaptation by managers, but the finality comes down to the efficiency of the governing act.

We cannot overlook that reluctance to everything that is new for the organization's culture, in most cases, has hidden tracks of interest behind it, and the dependence of the public sector on the political factor limits the possibilities of reorganization. In this context, the new managerial approach makes the legal representatives of the local public institutions responsible in the development and adoption of coherent, responsible decisions and adapted to the reality of the organization.

Given that traditional management has become inoperative, the new modern management focuses on professionalizing the function of public manager, global vision, increasing the predictive nature, increasing managerial dynamics. Strategic planning is about identifying the organization's vision and preparing for the future by developing an efficient and effective management style. This concept tries to answer the following three key questions: what do we do? for whom do we do? how can we become very good at what we do?

A fundamental parameter that makes its mark on the entire process of achieving a local development strategy is participatory management, involving all local actors, from citizens, to

local authorities, the private sector, the educational sector to the non-governmental sector. The permanent consultation of these actors guarantees the profitability of the planning process.

CHAPTER II - PUBLIC POLICIES APPLIED FOR RURAL DEVELOPMENT

was developed after it was found that the challenges identified globally end up putting pressure on central and local administrations, so adapting global policies to the national or local framework becomes a rather stressful process.

The theoretical sphere of research does not establish a unanimous definition for the concept of public policy, assimilating it as an activity governed by state force. Another explanation of the notion of public policy is highlighted by the actions initiated by public authorities regarding the indication of solutions to the problems raised by the society.

Public policies are political decisions expressly taken in order to achieve a certain status or achieve certain goals. Politics' public space is delimited by the unification of common interests of citizens and groups of interests in order to achieve the set goal, and the essence of public policy aims to mobilize members around the permanent rethought interest, following negotiations, compromises or even disputes.

In order to complete the conceptual paradigm regarding public policies, we nuance the idea that public policies are the effect of decisions taken by governments, highlighting the key elements of public policy analysis, namely: public decision, political actors; means used to solve a problem.

Public policies are implemented on three levels, characterized by representative interests, so we identify: the international level (involvement of international institutions in the process of defining national and local policies), national level (central government decisions are based only on solving problems of public interest), but also the local level (public policies used at this scale are confused with those developed to provide optimal solutions to problems faced by local communities).

In essence, the process of implementing public policies explains their development as a logical succession of stages, materialized by: setting the agenda, formulating the policy, implementing and evaluating it. The explanation of public policies is based on two main aspects: the public policy cycle, which coincides with the logical staging of actions (setting the agenda by defining problems, identifying alternative answers, evaluating options, decision, implementation, evaluation) and analysing policies based on methodologies for determining the results of a particular policy and for making comparisons between alternative policies in terms of their results (application of a decision-making instrument).

There is an infinite number of issues that can be on the agenda of decision-makers, but not every issue can be translated into a public policy, determining both the context and the limits of predicting solutions helps clarifying the context in which it arose (standalone or may

be developed as an impact of previous decisions). In order to decipher the process of public policy development, it must be structured in stages and analysed on each pillar, so the implementation of public policies includes three phrases: elaboration, implementation and evaluation.

All local policies are developed in order to intelligently promote the interests of citizens, requiring transposition into regulations, programs, projects or investment plans. The legitimacy of policy and decision-making processes is ensured through a consultation process.

It involves not only communicating information to stakeholders, but also a decision to encourage citizens to express their own views in order to improve the whole process of expressing and implementing local policies. The public consultation process must be permanent, standardized, formalized in written documents, so that any public policy is passed through the community filter, and it is constantly informed about the status of each policy initiative.

CHAPTER III - SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT - COORDINATES AND FACTORS OF INFLUENCE IN LOCAL PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION deals with issues related to the need to include sustainable development objectives in public policies for the development of rural communities. This chapter is opportune, because both the objectives and the indicators of sustainable development aim to increase the quality of life in rural communities, balancing the three dimensions of sustainable development: the economic, the social and the environmental component.

Integrating sustainable development goals into all local government initiatives can structurally transform the community, as a responsible allocation of resources will support a high long-term standard of living. The legal representatives of the local public administration are directed to refer to the use of a strategic management tool, based on the correlation of the sustainable development objectives with the profile of their community.

The set of research methods through which the degree of development of rural communities can be analysed is described in the **CHAPTER IV - RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**. In order to evaluate the degree of development of the administrative-territorial units, information from programmatic documents and data provided by the National Institute of Statistics, respectively Eurostat database were used, and in order to determine the degree of reporting to the sustainable development objectives of local elected officials and civil servants, it was used to take over the perceptions on development by applying the questionnaire.

The total group was estimated to be 272 respondents, but only 170 valid responses were collected from the total number of potential respondents (62.5%). More precisely, in order to make the representative sample, institutional addresses were requested from the 68 communes in the county and the questionnaires were distributed in online format. Although responses were

delivered depending on the availability of respondents, they covered the characteristics of the target group.

In this study, we start from the following premise: assuming sustainability at the level of local public institutions guides the representatives of local public administration authorities in the sense of optimizing local and institutional resources, which will contribute to increasing the performance of public organization. The main question we considered in the research study is the harmonization of development directions to maximize the value of a public organization.

The methodology is based on the analysis of the main components to observe the factors that influence local resources' availability. From the variety of these variables we selected the human resource, directly responsible for preserving the existing framework and the sustainable development of rural communities. The research results support the practical implementation of intangible resource management.

This social engineering aims to develop a resource planning system available to a community to substantiate its future social, economic, educational, cultural, demographic, institutional policies, and the results of the questionnaire draw attention to issues that affect the level of living and quality of life in the sampled communities. Surveys on rural development highlight aspects of territorial location of different objectives and resources, correlated with the dynamics of infrastructure systematization, the possibilities of rehabilitation, modernization and expansion of localities, constantly prospecting socio-economic factors.

In order to verify the hypotheses stated above and to formulate pertinent conclusions, a questionnaire was applied among the local elected officials and civil servants from the administrative apparatus of each town hall in the rural area of Vrancea County.

The research questionnaire was built in order to collect perceptions regarding the degree of development of each community in the established area, being structured in three parts:

- ❖ Investments made in the last programming period (2016-2020);
- ❖ Determining the current stage of development (inventory of existing resources);
- ❖ Establishing the perspectives of community development (2020-2024).

The questionnaire was distributed to all Local Action Groups in the area of Vrancea County. Of these, most respondents were from the area of Vine and Wine Land (25%). Most respondents held the position of executive civil servant (25%), and most have a seniority of more than eight years (37%). Almost half (49%) of the respondents have been working in the local administration for over eight years. Although most respondents did not take a strategic management course (82%), they would consider such a course useful (80%).

The complexity of the sustainable development process requires many possibilities to study the targeted phenomena, so we opted for an applied research, because this type of research

is what underpins the decision-making process, contributing to the objectives assumed by each local public authority.

The present research involves the investigation of all development pillars in an administrative-territorial unit, drawing up a set of indicators whose result will measure the viability of investments in basic infrastructure, including utilities, and their inclusion in sustainable reasoning and deductions. In order to understand the complex mechanism of transforming the needs of the community into requests to direct investments towards basic infrastructure and service development, it is important to determine the degree of compliance of legal representatives of public institutions with the objectives of sustainable development.

The element of novelty this study proposed to highlight is also marked by the interpretation of personal perceptions on the rural communities' development degree, which representatives of rural public administration institutions have chosen to express in order to be guided in the decision-making process. Considered to be the final beneficiaries of this study, local elected officials and civil servants can have an overview of the real needs of the communities they represent, taking into account the current degree of development (investments made during the term of a local elected official).

The comparative analysis of the investments made in the past (last 4 years), the identification of the current degree of development and the issuance of value judgments on the importance of developing certain sectors in the next period, will be the basis for new strategic development directions. The consensus on development priorities in a given community will mobilize the human resource towards a portfolio of projects and an action plan, based on the same reasoning as stated in local development strategies.

In formulating the hypotheses, we started from observing the rural design of Vrancea County and establishing the area that faces special problems, in order to build a model responsible for smart growth, based on economic diversification. In order to meet the stated objectives and obtain relevant results from this study, the research started by defining hypotheses, formulated to collect perceptions about recent investments (4 years ago), inventory of existing resources, and enunciation of prospects for improvement for future 4 years, as follows:

- ✚ H1A - H7A: The perception of the current state, recent achievements and prospects for improvement is similar between employees in different Local Action Groups in terms of: road infrastructure of local interest, utilities, educational institutions, health, cultural objectives of local interest, leisure infrastructure and infrastructure social.
- ✚ H1B - H7B: The perception of the current state, recent achievements and prospects for improvement is similar between employees in different positions in terms of: road

infrastructure of local interest, utilities, educational institutions, health, cultural objectives of local interest, leisure infrastructure and social infrastructure.

- ✦ H 1C- H7C: The perception of the current state, recent achievements and prospects for improvement is similar between the different seniority groups (in the current position) in terms of: road infrastructure of local interest, utilities, educational institutions, health, cultural objectives of local interest, leisure infrastructure and social infrastructure.
- ✦ H 1D- H7D: The perception of the current state, recent achievements and prospects for improvement is similar between the different seniority groups (in public administration) in terms of: road infrastructure of local interest, utilities, educational institutions, health, cultural objectives of local interest, leisure infrastructure and social infrastructure.
- ✦ H 1E- H7E: The perception of the current state, recent achievements and prospects for improvement is similar between the different groups depending on the training in strategic management in terms of: road infrastructure of local interest, utilities, educational institutions, health, cultural objectives of local interest, infrastructure leisure and social infrastructure.

The process of formulating hypotheses will improve the quality of decisions taken at the local level, as it has been found that in general at the level of local public administration: human resources do not have a well-founded and sustained opinion on a particular issue, but rather a ideas, most of the time, until the point of view is expressed, the human factor does not notice that it has possible contradictory ideas, respectively for the expression of an opinion it is necessary for the human resource to be aware of the importance of structuring ideas.

The data were centralized and processed using Microsoft Excel 365. The data was verified, encoded and formatted accordingly, and the IBM SPSS v.26 package was usefully contributed to the advanced statistical analysis of the data for testing the hypotheses. Main component analysis (PCA) was used for hypothesis testing to reduce the number of analysed variables and Main component analysis (PCA) was used for hypothesis testing to reduce the validation of the previously stated hypotheses will contribute to the formulation of proposals to improve the activity of the public sector, applied mainly to the needs identified in rural areas. The level of socio-economic development of the communities participating in this study needs to be mastered by the local management, regardless of its stage, in order to adopt a visibly improved performance model.

CHAPTER V STUDY OF THE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT OF THE ADMINISTRATIVE-TERRITORIAL UNITS FROM VRANCEA COUNTY captures the analysis of the rural Vrancea area, which includes aspects related to: location, relief, climate, administrative-territorial organization, social organization (Local Action Groups) or other elements that can make their mark on the personality of the habitat and the socio-economic

status of rural communities. To all these factors, we add the perceptions' analysis of the civil servants and local elected officials regarding the degree of development of each locality in the rural area, data that were collected through the questionnaire.

The study not only aims to gather information that reveals the degree of satisfaction of policy makers and their administrative apparatus regarding investments in the infrastructure of the area they coordinate, but also aims to highlight differences in perception and the level of incidence they can generate by affecting different components of the environment (institutional, socio-economic, cultural trends).

Experts in national strategies noted that the government factor does not fully understand the socio-economic value of the Romanian rural area, so it is important to support the national interest, start a research study to identify whether these weak development trends are similar to prophylaxis of the rural environment in a county with mixed resources, such as the one located at the foot of the Curvature Subcarpathians.

The analysis of the respondents' satisfaction level regarding the current stage of development, highlighted some defining aspects for the researched area, among them the road infrastructure of local interest, utilities, educational infrastructure, cultural heritage, social and leisure infrastructure are evaluated as "well-developed" by the respondents from the Local Action Group "The Land of Vine and Wine" and the Local Action Group "South-East Vrancea". This aspect proves that the administrative-territorial units included in these territories have a rather high degree of development compared to the rest of the Local Action Groups. In the case of health infrastructure, no different opinions were registered.

Analysing as a whole all the evaluation elements from the point of view of the respondents with seniority in administration, but also on the current position, we find that respondents with more than 8 years of experience perceive the basic and technical-urban infrastructure as sufficiently developed, compared to the categories of people with a lower degree of seniority.

Most of the respondents (respondents with more than 8 years of experience in the current position, but also in the administration), have a positive perception of the main elements evaluated. Although apparently this aspect can be characterized as positive, we can see that a generalized attitude on the part of those with seniority in the system can induce the false opinion that the current context is sufficiently developed, so that any other intervention is not absolutely necessary.

The same trend is shown by the contract staff with executive function, from which we deduce that the people recently employed in the public system consider that the local infrastructure can still absorb investments in order to rise to high quality standards.

Regarding the analysis of perceptions on the development of the existing framework between employees who have strategic training, there are significant differences only in the field of education. Thus, we can outline a clear picture of the requests for modernization of the infrastructure of educational institutions, stated mainly by people who focus on continuous development. This information sends an alarm signal about the need to intensify vocational training activities and increase the level of qualification by modernizing the existing educational infrastructure at local level.

The impact of the investments made recently (last 4 years) can be reflected in the opinions expressed by the respondents regarding the degree of development of the rural communities of Vrancea county. Thus, among the fields of action for which the development of a complex intervention plan is required are the road infrastructure, the infrastructure for providing utilities, the educational, cultural, recreational, but also social infrastructure. Analyzing the profile of the respondents we can see that all those from the Local Action Group “The Land of Vine and Wine” and the Local Action Group “South-East Vrancea” express their positive satisfaction regarding the recent investments made on their territory.

These data confirm that the high level of development was due to an efficient management that continued the projects started in the past, the local representatives relying on a multidimensional development.

In order to understand the development gaps between the Local Action Groups, we consider relevant for this study the comparison of the degree of access to the structural funds between these organizations.

Among the notable differences in this section, we nuance the profile of the civil servant with a leadership position who evaluates the school infrastructure as less developed compared to local elected officials, which may highlight a negligence of local representatives in financing this type of investment.

Regarding the consultation on determining the prospects for improving the current medium-term framework (4 years), respondents aligned themselves with the need to fund all directions for action. The only differences were noted among the different categories of staff, in which the participants in the research with chosen position considered in the basic infrastructure is sufficiently developed, relying on future funding of investments such as social, educational, health care primary, respectively recreational units and leisure. On the other research directions, no noticeable difference in perception was identified, this aspect referring to the need to modernize and permanently maintain local investments.

Vrancea County is one of the eight counties of the South-East Region, with a balanced administrative-territorial structure, the county consists of 5 cities (Focșani, Adjud, Marășești, Panciu, Odobești) from which: Focșani, Adjud are classified as municipalities - county seat,

and the rural area includes 68 communes and 331 villages. Approximately 64% of the population of Vrancea, after the last census live in the rural area of the county, exploring this hierarchy we notice that the situation is similar at European level (85% of the European area is occupied by the rural population).

Territorial cohesion and population structure require a rational use of land, regardless of the type of policies formulated, and the data set allows the development of economic, cultural and environmental forecasts to develop sustainable communities of Vrancea, without affecting the territorial identity and their specificity.

The study of trends in employment, unemployment and job supply in Vrancea County highlights other causes of these imbalances, such as: poor management and media coverage of available offers on the labour market, occasional counselling and mediation activities, allocation generous amount of social protection incentives, the non-existence of a system of incentives for the training or retraining of the workforce, etc.

In addition to the local economy and the practice of agricultural and viticultural activities, a potential income could be obtained from the practice of agrotourism or local tourism. The analysis of the leisure infrastructure highlights the fact that this sector is not exploited at its true value, aspects related to the degradation of the access infrastructure, the degradation of cultural monuments, as well as the lack of accommodation lead to the loss of local identity. That is why new local development strategies should focus on reducing discrepancies between large wine processors and local producers.

The issue of association in this sector is not very visible, and the insufficient capitalization of the wine sector puts pressure on the subsidy system, while affecting performance and competitiveness. Until 2007, the European Union focused its objectives on expanding the territory to the countries of Central and Eastern Europe, proposing financing mechanisms such as the European Social Fund, the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD), the European Agricultural Guarantee Fund, respectively instruments for financing the fishing sector, as well as for the development of rural localities.

The 2007-2013 programming period was marked by a transformation process, simplifying these instruments and reducing funding only to the EAFRD, the European Social Fund (ESF) and the Cohesion Fund. The first period of the financial year 2007-2013 was also representative for concentrating efforts on achieving the following objectives: convergence (financing of poor areas within the community block, with a GDP / capita value <75%), regional competitiveness and employment (specific to the achievement of this objective was the budgeting of regional programs for the EAFRD and national programs for the ESF), European territorial cooperation. Previous funding has shown that the Romanian rural area faces a rigidity in identifying various funding opportunities, being affected by the inability to develop a

portfolio of projects appropriate to their needs, and identifying financial resources to ensure co-financing of investment projects.

Therefore, it was concluded that local public administration should be encouraged and supported by the European Union to build its own local development strategy. In this context, the funding supported by the Regional Operational Programs becomes complementary to the instructions of the LEADER program.

The grouping of administrative-territorial units in the Local Action Groups is done to encourage and support the communities to develop sustainably, grouping their needs on integrative project proposals. The concept of the National Rural Development Program proposes the unitary financing of all applicants without considering the needs of each area. LEADER funding is much more appropriate for rural communities, as needs have been found to be different and a national approach is difficult to manage. The analysis of the local development strategies related to each LAG highlights the fact that the measures financed from the LEADER axis have been structured in order to be accessed by the public and private sector. The European Commission encourages funding focused on inter-municipal development. Taking into account the observations of the European partners, the local public administration authorities, together with the representative economic agents or other representatives of the civil society met and, as a result, founded eight Local Action Groups, of which seven have territory mainly in Vrancea County.

The demographic decline registered at the level of Vrancea county is supported by factors aimed at decreasing the able-bodied population, increasing the elderly sector. The development and financing through Local Action Groups of measures to combat these effects will generate economic growth while reducing the negative pressure on social and health systems. Under these conditions, it is necessary to identify innovative solutions that can combat these dominant challenges at regional level. Although structural fund financing is an important capital contribution for financing local investment, it should not be accessed in a unitary way.

The analysis of the measures accessed by the representatives of the local public institutions highlights a high number of projects developed to alleviate the economic decline in Vrancea County. The logic of the interventions carried out by the involvement of the local public authorities aimed at:

- improvement of road infrastructure (rehabilitation and modernization of existing infrastructure, development of alternative road transport networks to take over traffic with heavy means of transport, construction and expansion of bicycle lane networks);
- improving the capacity of the workforce by developing training programs in the textile industry, in the wine sector, as well as for mastering the craft of locally made products;

- increasing the administrative capacity of local public institutions for the prompt delivery of services to citizens, facilitating the interaction between the citizen and the administration, as well as continuing the process of digitization of the public sector.

An optimal infrastructure level will also reduce the gaps between localities, respectively between urban and rural areas, so it is imperative to generate partnerships between local actors, to support technology transfer and increase the rate of absorption of Community funds. In the same context, we mention that an adequate local infrastructure (basic and utilities) will create a network of local economic agents, with increased capacity in providing consumer goods for the local community. The approach of the representatives of the local public authorities to transform the challenges into perspectives will contribute to the definition of a scenario for the sustainable development of the rural area.

The analysis of the documents and the evaluation of the perception of the civil servants and local elected officials regarding the development of the communities in Vrancea County, highlighted the fact that the realization of a development model of the rural space differentiated from the urban space is quite difficult to operationalize. However, **CHAPTER VI MANAGERIAL MODEL FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT OF RURAL COMMUNITIES** proposes an innovative tool, adapted to the profile of the studied communities. Considering the need for assistance for the development of administrative-territorial units in rural areas, the local public administration has shown openness, trying to assimilate all the mechanisms that can direct it towards a more balanced development.

The dynamics of the socio-economic environment in rural areas is not linear, therefore the directions of action do not have to be developed depending on the zonal context (mainly agricultural or non-agricultural). In this sense, it is necessary to adapt them to the local specifics, and the investments to support a series of diversified economic activities.

Consequently, the spatial diversity of rural economic activities and the increased dependence on the urban economic sector highlight the need to design an integrated development model. We consider that the operationalization of this mechanism based on alternative models: sectoral, multisectoral, territorial and local is a visibly improved approach, compared to traditional interventions, which referred strictly to the development of a certain sector.

The present research focused on assessing the differences in the perception of local public administration staff, to determine whether they are correlated with the reality captured by statistical data (real index of rural development). If the outcome of the consultation process indicates certain differences in perception, they need to be analysed and correlated in order to draw up a set of investment proposals with a direct impact on rural development. In addition to the consultation carried out by two factors: civil servants and citizens, the balanced

transformation of the rural area can also be achieved by taking over models of good practice from other European countries. The research study reports these rural development contexts using practical examples which highlighted how the development of action directions, captured in the body of local development strategies, contribute to the multidimensional development of rural space.

Integrated rural development policies focus on the well-being of individuals, which is why they must be consulted on all issues related to the revitalization of rural areas. Thus, a bottom-up approach allows the development of public policies taking into account the specificity of the local context and the needs of communities. This sequential development model involves the following phases: consultation, design (definition of strategic directions), identification of the optimal development methodology, impact assessment.

The correlation of national policy amendments with regional specificities and local resources requires extensive interinstitutional cooperation activities. The territorial approach allows a complete strategic perspective on the interaction of the economic segment with social and environmental issues. At regional level, a series of measures have been defined that can contribute to sustainable development, but the most relevant have been built around reducing disparities by promoting zonal potential (agricultural, fisheries, border areas, characterized by very high density).

The local approach can be assimilated with an individual perspective, so the problems identified at the local level must be correlated with national objectives and resources. This system can only be implemented if it is found that there is an appropriate institutional capacity to manage the multiple problems identified locally.

In this context, the public sector can call on a number of institutional arrangements (Local Action Groups, Intercommunity Development Associations) that can support and facilitate the whole process of implementing public policies.

Community association is the most viable solution for achieving all local development goals (for example, support for local producers can only be provided under the conditions of an association, and this must be in line with the processing activities developed by the food industry (prepared from meat, dairy products, vegetable oils, cereals). This type of activity can have a public-private character which implies a high accumulation of resources for the implementation of local policies.

The process of identifying the local vision of development cannot be done without consulting civil servants, as they have the capacity to highlight the action plan related to the local development strategy. Moreover, the representatives of the local public administration can reconfigure the action plan, adapting the development directions to the environmental conditions. The management structure is directly responsible for the sustainable development

of the rural community. It is required to inventory the resources it needs to coordinate the activities in the action plan.

Each public administration is obliged to initiate a public consultation process to collect opinions (from citizens or staff in the mayor's administrative apparatus) regarding the feasibility of future directions of community development, as well as on the reporting degree of the civil servants in the current development framework. The result of these approaches is influenced by the methods used to interpret the collected perceptions, but for the most part an application methodology is not known by citizens. However, the outcome of the consultation process should be made public.

The objective of an annual consultation process is transposed by determining the perception of the community regarding the trajectory of local development, the implementation of the local strategy, as well as determining the efficiency of actions, respectively the proposal of new development directions. Regarding the staff in the local public administration, the objective of the consultation process is to assess the capacity to implement the action directions established by the local development strategy, in order to optimize this process.

The advantages of the existence of a strategic plan in each local public organization are translated by a series of advantages, represented by the existence of responsible management, connected to the fulfilment of objectives and indicators, as well as by the existence of ample perspectives of action.

The thesis ends with the presentation of the general conclusions of the author, formulated based on the bibliographic materials studied and the results of the research conducted. Personal contributions, issues regarding the validity and limits of research, as well as future research directions are also materialized.

The experience gained in the field of public administration along with the tendency to anticipate issues that could affect the performance of the public institution has helped to structure the ideas in order to deepen the notions in the field and to develop a mechanism for regular adjustment of the action plan. Moreover, we must not lose sight of the multitude of projects that a local public institution must manage, and the results obtained from operating with this logical model will confirm the need to operationalize this managerial model for sustainable development of rural communities.

The innovative element of this study is the construction of an algorithm for strategic planning of development directions of rural communities, based on the operationalization of forecasting (recommendations for the use of forecasting tools used by local representatives). The innovation consists in mapping the development directions, a tool that legal representatives of the local organizations can access, visualizing the sectors that need interventions

simultaneously with the problems that slow down the development process, respectively with the alternatives through which the threats can be mitigated.

This concept could also be translated into an intelligent expertise of locally elected officials, which involves involvement in the process of reviewing the future and other actors, that can add value to the process: universities, business and civil society's representatives.

Lately, there is a tendency to increase the visibility of communities that have developed by practicing management strategies based on innovative development forecasting tools, other than those developed on the assumption of improvement.

Personal contributions, issues regarding the validity and limits of research, as well as future research directions were also materialized.

The bibliographic material studied and exploited in order to achieve this scientific approach includes reference works in the field of strategic management, studies, normative acts and regulations regarding the activity of local elected officials, contents that delimit the theory and practice of management activity in local public administration, as well as published materials at international level which capture the positive impact of rural development, in the context of assuming the sustainable development's objectives.

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