

APPLIED SOCIOLOGY AND HUMAN RESOURCES DEVELOPMENT STRATEGIES A PROJECT IN APUSENI MOUNTAINS (ROMANIA)

Călina Ana BUȚIU, Ph.D.¹,
Mihai PASCARU, Ph.D.²

Abstract: *This paper presents some findings of a sociological research of the connections between applied sociology and potential development programs. The aim is to provide better guidance to the socio-economic program implementation strategy design process. The project's scope included human resource development objectives, encompassing 51 rural communities from the Apuseni Mountains Area of western Romania. An ample research study has been undertaken in order to supply a SWOT analysis of the employment problem and of the main priorities, objectives and actions that will make up the content of a strategy. The authors consider it appropriate to signal through their study, the possibility of transition from the classical simple sociological recommendations aims, to more applied (and possibly more courageous) strategic implementation goals, ends that are more consistent with the aspirations of modern sociology.*

Keywords: *applied sociology, human resources, transversal competencies, strategy.*

1. Introduction

It is in general agreement that modern economies of today rely a lot more on knowledge and expertise than on raw materials and physical labour. To stay

¹ Lecturer, Social Sciences and Education Department, University „1 Decembrie 1918” Alba Iulia, Romania, Email: bcalina@yahoo.co.uk.

² Professor, Social Sciences and Education Department, University „1 Decembrie 1918” Alba Iulia, Romania, Email: m_pascaru@yahoo.com.

competitive in this new environment Europe should strive at creating those types of jobs needed by a dynamic, knowledge-based society. Hence, a prime spot should take investment in education and science, and in intelligent workforce occupation policies. As commendable as this holistic "One Europe" ideal may be, one must take into account the disparities between European states on one hand, and European regions on the other. In addition, one must not lose sight of the transversal dimension of disparity, the ever-present urban-rural divide, albeit at the national or regional levels. Let alone the problem of disparities, simply understanding a knowledge society, raises big intellectual challenges and demands complex diagnosis and a profound and multi-disciplinary scientific analyse; and we refer in particular to the challenges faced by the fields of applied sociology, economics, environment and territorial management.

Romania's economic transition has led to profound transformation of the labour markets and has generated powerful forces affecting the human resources (Osoian, 2005; Turtoi, 2005; Voicu, 2006; Otiman, 2008). Many changes have been negatively felt by the population in rural areas (Sandu, 1999; Schrieder, Munz and Jehle, 2000; Davidovici and Davidovici, 2008). In addition, the accession to the European Union implies a switch for these rural communities, from subsistence farming, to a modern, more efficient agriculture (McQuaid, 2006, Kerekes, 2007, Otiman, 2008).

The changing social conditions led to a reduction in the birth rate and to the amplification of permanent emigration. All of these led to a constant decline in the population and implicitly, in the economically active population (Vincze, 2000; Naghiu, Vázquez and Georgiev, 2005; Istudor, 2006). An analysis of the remaining economically active population shows evidence of local demographic ageing.

In the labour market of a knowledge-based economy, the quality of training and the acquired skills become extremely important competitive factors. Market entry and re-insertion of certain categories of workers such as young people, housewives and middle-aged workers becomes a problem when many economic sectors undergo deep restructuring and their level of education is not responding to the changing demands (Hodge, Dunn, Monk and Fitzgerald, 2002; Chițea, 2007; Dumbravă, 2007; Florian, 2008; Otiman, 2008). Under such conditions, the achievement of a flexible labour market which includes disadvantaged groups requires the creation of instruments for improving these groups' odds of success and of social services that simultaneously respond to their needs.

Ana Bleahu stated that in 2002 almost half of the total population of Romania (44.5%) lives in the rural area and a large proportion of it is employed in agriculture. The massive occupation in farming can be explained by two major causes: 1) the abrupt decline of manufacturing, industry and mining and 2) the low level of specialisation and the poor market orientation of the non-agricultural activities (Bleahu, 2004).

The regional disparities mentioned above are even more pronounced in the mountainous areas of Romania. The Apuseni Mountains region is of particular concern, especially the section belonging to Alba County. In a 1997 diagnosis, this region has been legally recognised as being economically vulnerable due to restrictive economic factors (Guvernul României, Banca Mondială, 1998).

The area has a predominantly lowly-mountainous geography, with many human settlements crossing 1000 m altitude. Due to a wide distribution of settlements over mountain slopes and rolling peaks, rather than just being concentrated on the valleys, the area displays the highest population density of all mountainous areas in Romania. The typical household economic system relies on a plurality of occupations in agriculture, small crafts, mining and more recently, agro-tourism. Depopulation, the lack of road infrastructure (which makes for the difficult access and thus for the partial isolation), the decline of mono-industrial employment actors, the lack of social services, the limited educational facilities and a general lack of investment are the main challenges faces by these communities. The demographic decline is more acute in the most isolated villages and is the result partially of demographic ageing, but mostly of the youths' emigration towards larger employment centres. As in the past some of these communities relied heavily on mono-industrial employment agents like mining centres, they have been profoundly affected by the industrial restructuring process and the resulting closures of these significant facilities (Buțiu, 2011a).

Several of our previous research studies in the area have been more descriptive in nature (Buțiu, 2005; Pascaru and Buțiu, 2005; Buțiu, 2006; Pascaru and Buțiu, 2007; Buțiu, 2009; Pascaru and Buțiu, 2009; Pascaru and Buțiu, 2010; Buțiu, 2011a; Buțiu, 2011b; Pascaru, Vedinaș, 2011; Pascaru, 2012) and paid most attention to historical and theoretical aspects of the problems. Knowledge restitution efforts however, spent for the benefit of the source communities (Bergier, 2000; Pascaru, 2006) elicited the demand for more applied undertakings, and gave us better guidance in the design of more practical methodologies.

We will start the following section, with a brief review of some fundamental aspects of applied sociology.

2. Applied sociology and territorial human resources development

Steele and Price stated that all sciences have at least two components: basic science and applied science. In their view, the purpose of basic science is to produce theory, while that of applied science is to solve real-life problems. Sociologists thus need to know both the theory and how to apply it to practical purposes. They consider that applied sociology consists of any (often client-centred) utilization of sociological perspective, or of its' instruments, towards the understanding, intervention and/or improvement of human social life (Steele and Price, 2008, pp. 3-4).

The understanding, intervention into and/or improvement of human social life, according to the authors, refers to the fact that applied sociologists work at improving our collective understanding of social phenomena, at problem solving through intervention, or at the general improvement of social interaction. It is not uncommon for sociologists to work at all three dimensions simultaneously, as Steele and Price notice.

Starting from the same distinction between base science and applied one, Thomas J. Sullivan describes three distinct domains of operation for the two parts: 1) *the theoretical domain*, where the interest lies in developing the theory explaining the phenomena, 2) *the observational domain* where data is collected and 3) *the political or action domain*, where action is being taken for real-life problem solving purposes. For Sullivan, basic sociology refers to sociological research, whose purpose is to increase our knowledge of human social behaviour, with little interest in any practical benefit that could follow, while applied sociology consists of research and other activities aimed at focusing our sociological knowledge and research instruments on a particular problem, as identified by a client who expects a practical result (Sullivan, 1992, p. 16).

Aside from the existing research design employed in both base and applied research, Sullivan mentions that applied research has developed a special set of techniques. These require the application of research methodology for both observation and recommendations useful to project managers and analysts alike. These techniques are the centre of applied sociological research. Sullivan concentrates on five of them: 1) *program evaluation*, 2) *necessities identification*, 3) *social impact assessment*, 4) *social indicators* and 5) *cost-benefit analysis*. *Program evaluation* for Sullivan represents the systematic observation undertaken in order to evaluate if a program or a social practice succeeds in its' goals. Such evaluations are ways of assessing if the society's investment in such programs is justified and wise (Sullivan, 1992, pp. 140-141).

Steele and Price state that people create social systems like the Social Services or Defence Departments in order to satisfy the possible discrepancies between *what it is* and *what it is necessary, or would be necessary* in the future. Needs assessment can be accomplished with qualitative, quantitative instruments or both, consider Steele and Price. Although one normally contemplates objective results, the determination of necessities (priorities) always entails a degree of value judgement (Steele and Price, 2007, p. 22).

For Sullivan, who sanctions the view points of some of the specialists, the *necessities determination* research concentrates on a data collection aimed at determining how many people in a community need a certain service or a specific product, in a particular period of time (Sullivan, 1992, p. 147).

In the view of the same author, the *social impact assessment* refers to the building of an estimate of the probable consequences of the programs, or of the projects

undertaken by individuals, groups, neighbourhoods, communities, regions, institutions, or by other social units. In these situations, sociologists typically work with economists, anthropologists and other specialists within the realm of the social domain (Sullivan, 1992, p. 150).

He also views social indicators as quantitative measurements of significant social phenomena. The term 'social' implies that the onus is on the groups', on the institutions' or on the whole system's social behavioural changes. An important observation of Sullivan is that, by themselves, the social indicators are of descriptive nature: their intent is to describe social phenomena without making any evaluation and without attempting an explanation. They are however very useful when comparing different time periods (Sullivan, 1992, pp. 157-158).

The *cost-benefit analysis* for Sullivan represents the weighting of a program's benefits against its' costs. It sometimes is part of an evaluation program or of a social impact assessment study, and it allows program managers and decision makers alike to judge if the benefits warrant the costs involved.

In the following section, the general findings of a recent project will be presented, a project in which applied sociology is engaged in building a human resource development strategy. We'll start with the presentation of a few elements of social policy which presume to generate specific strategies.

3. The sociological underpinning of a human resource development strategy for the communities of the Apuseni Mountains

3.1. Programmatic context

Starting from the premise that modern economies are increasingly being built on a foundation of knowledge rather than processing of raw materials and physical labour, the European leaders acting within the scope of the March 2000 Lisbon European Council have decided to embark in the creation of the most competitive and dynamic knowledge-based economy in the world, capable of sustainable economic growth with more and better jobs and greater social cohesion (European Council, *Lisbon European Council 23 and 24 March 2000, Presidency Conclusions*). The poor practical results of this ambitious objective led to a 2005 Lisbon Strategy restart and refocus (European Commission, 2005, *Communication to the Spring European Council*) and, more recently, under the imperative of the current financial crisis, to the launch of the new Strategy for Europe 2020 (European Commission, *Communication from the Commission*, 2010). All documents issued recommend investment in science, education, and workforce employment programmes that would keep up with the changes in EU and with the evolution of the economic crisis. Romania responded

to these challenges with several strategic documents from which we can mention: *Cadrul Strategic Național de Referință 2007-2013*, *Strategia Națională de Dezvoltare Durabilă a României 2013-2020-2030*, *Programul Național de Dezvoltare Rurală 2007-2013*, *Cadrul strategic de dezvoltare Regiunea Centru 2007-2013*, *Cadrul Regional Strategic de Dezvoltare 2007-2013 al Regiunii de dezvoltare Nord-Vest*, *Planul de dezvoltare regională 2007-2013, Regiunea Vest*, *Planul Regional de Acțiune pentru Ocupare Regiunea Centru 2009-2011*, *Planul Regional de Acțiune pentru Ocuparea forței de muncă Regiunea Nord-Vest 2006-2008*, *Planul Regional de Acțiune pentru Învățământul Profesional și Tehnic Regiunea Vest 2007-2013*, *Planul Regional de Acțiune pentru Ocupare Regiunea Centru 2009-2011*¹.

The setting in action of the human resource development component has been financed through the 2007-2013 European Sectoral Operational Programme *Human Resource Development*.

3.2. The methodology and the main results of the sociological research

The methodology rested on the use of questionnaires which were distributed in October 2010. The scope of the research included 51 communes (shires) from Apuseni Mountains belonging to the counties of Alba, Bihor, Hunedoara, Cluj and Arad (Figure 1).

Figure 1
Geographic position of the area under study



¹ We only considered those documents with direct relevance to the area of investigation, from a much larger list of documents.

The sociologic survey which was an integral part of the research, involved 600 employable subjects from 27 settlements (out of a total of 501) which were deemed representative for the area of research¹. Details of the sampling distribution can be found in Table 1.

Table 1
Sampling point and subject distribution

	Very Poor Villages	Poor Villages	Medium – developed villages	Developed Villages	Maximum – level developed villages	TOTAL	
Total no. of Villages	263	100	62	44	32	501	
Sample	Villages	7 (25.9%)	6 (22.2%)	4 (14.9%)	3 (11.1%)	7 (25.9%)	27 (100%)
	Subjects	124 (20.7%)	106 (17.7%)	107 (17.8%)	120 (20%)	143 (23.8%)	600 (100%)

The sample was randomly stratified on three criteria: the development level of the village, age and gender of the respondent. To achieve the classification of settlements in relation to the level of development, the social development index database (IDSL) of Dumitru Sandu has been used.

The age and gender ratios have been calculated from the 2002 National Statistical Survey, which was the most recent source at the time. Based on the age groups, the data indicate highest weight of the middle-aged adult group of 25 to 44 years old and lowest for the young between 15 to 24 years of age. Males made up 52% and females 48% respectively of the total population (Table 2).

Table 2
Age and gender-based structure in the 51 communes

Years old	Male	Female	Difference
0-6	3.24%	3.04%	0.20%
7-10	1.84%	1.70%	0.14%
11-14	1.90%	3.50%	-1.60%

¹ The research has been undertaken within the scope of the Apuseni Mountains Occupational Opportunity Caravan project, financed from the Social European Fund through the Sectoral Operational Programme Human Resources Development 2007-1013, the priority axis 5 «The promotion of active occupational measures», Beneficiary: The Ecology and Mountain Tourism Club ALBAMONT. Project team: Călina Ana Buțiu - Project Manager, Mihai Pascaru - Scientific Coordinator, Lucian Marina – Methodology Expert, Vlad Milea - Formation and Education Expert, Petronela Talpaș - Occupation and Unemployment Expert, Claudiu Ștefani and Angela Bara - Field Operator Coordinators, Lavinia Holunga and Liliana Ionaș - Database Coordinators.

Years old	Male	Female	Difference
15-24	5.79%	5.39%	0.40%
25-44	13.39%	11.66%	1.73%
45-64	12.06%	11.20%	0.85%
Over 64	11.37%	13.91%	-2.54%
TOTAL	49.59%	50.41%	-0.83%

* Based on 2002 Population and Dwelling Statistical National Survey, 2002, DJS Alba, Arad, Bihor, Cluj, and Hunedoara Counties

Occupational status at the time of the survey

When looking at the occupational status (Table 3), one notices the large proportion of economically inactive population (students, pensioners, housewives) of 42% and the low proportion of entrepreneurs (privately self-employed and incorporated alike) operating in the formal economy, of 12%. Wage earners make up 28% of the population. The villages with highest development indices have the highest number of salaried workers and the lowest number of family associations. Respondents from the poor villages tend to make extensive use of the “other” category.

Variations between men and women are less than 5%. However, a larger proportion of males are engaged in formal economic activities than females, who were captured mostly in the “other situation” category. The majority of the official entrepreneurs and wage earners are of middle-age (25-44 years old). The large proportion of youth that do not belong to either of the two categories is due to its' enrolment in different forms of education.

More than a third of the population never had a salaried or entrepreneurial activity. Close to half of the working age population that had any job was employed by the state (44%), which is more than double of those that ever held a job in the private sector (at 19%). A much smaller proportion ever had a business (5%). For the 70% that held a formal job and stopped working, the main (declared) reasons are lay-offs due to personnel reduction and bankruptcy, followed by retirement and resignation.

Table 3
Current occupational status

Occupational Status	N	%
Salaried	165	28
Housekeeper	106	18
Pensioner	82	14
Student	61	10
Unemployed	34	6

Occupational Status	N	%
Self-Employed (PFA)	27	5
Family Self-Employed (AF)	30	5
Agricultural Worker	26	4
Day Labourer	19	3
Business Owner	12	2
Other	27	4
No Answer	11	2
Total	600	100

Source: Buşiu, 2011a, p. 27.

In the medium-developed villages most respondents state an ex-salaried or formally recorded self-employed status. The proportion of those who were employed by the state is the same for both the maximum-level developed villages and for the poor ones. In poor villages however, there seem to be more respondents who were employed by a private firm.

Women lack formal employment status more so than men, but they also (more so than men) seem to have been employed by private companies.

Working abroad and future intentions

In 14.4% of the households, at least one person laboured or is labouring in other countries, - men and women equally - some as skilled construction, transportation and commerce workers, but mostly as unqualified labourers in agriculture and housekeeping activities. The middle-age group displays most experience in overseas employment.

The largest proportion of household experience in relation to working abroad is being found in the poorest villages, at 21.3%, followed by the developed villages at 15%. The difference comes from the fact that in developed villages more qualified workers have been working abroad.

Less than a third of the population (29.5%) is actively seeking employment and 10.17% declared entrepreneurial intentions. Equal number of people wish to work at home with those wishing to enrol in a qualifying or professional re-conversion course.

Most of those who declare to be in search of a job reside in poor villages. Poor villages are also the source of most of those who declare interest in following professional re-training (Table 4).

Out of those who declared some intent in career advancement, men show more inclination towards entrepreneurship and women towards continuing education

through qualifying courses. The drive to both entrepreneurship and education decreases with age. Younger people are more interested in economic opportunities than the 46 to 64 year old segment who desire to work within their own homestead and small farms.

Table 4
Career intentions

In regard to the work place, in which of the following situations are you NOW?	N	%
I am searching for a job	177	29.50
I wish to start a business (PF, AF, SRL)	61	10.17
I ONLY wish to work in my homestead	137	22.83
I wish to enrol in a training course (qualification / re-qualification)	136	22.67
No Answer	89	14.83
Total	600	100

Source: Buțiu, 2011a, p. 27

As far as the competencies of those expressing their intentions, one can say that High School is the highest level attained by the majority of the respondents, followed closely by trades. A significant proportion (approx. a quarter) graduated only the gymnasium cycle. Higher education has only been achieved by 12.66%.

Poorest villages have the highest number of high-school and professional school graduates. Poor villages have the highest number of people with no school, with primary school only, or with graduates of basic apprenticeship training. In medium-level developed villages most are high-school graduates. The villages with highest level of development show most of the higher level graduates (university and post-university). They also don't show any persons with no school at all.

More women than men lack education. The levels of formal education in which women predominate are Gymnasium, High-School and University. Men make up the majority in the medium-level qualification segment (skilled labour and trades), but also in the post-University category. Young people 15 to 24 years old make up the majority of High-School and University graduates. Approximately one quarter of respondents take or have taken a qualification course and 15.8% declare that they intend to follow some form of education in the near future.

In very poor villages there are the fewest persons with formal training, but also the most people wishing to enrol in some form of training. In both the poor and highly

developed villages there is an equal proportion of persons which are either taking or have been taking training courses. The medium-level developed villages have the highest number of those who never took nor do they intend to take any training.

Although variations are not significant, women more so than men are enrolled in, or have graduated from professional courses, while men display a higher proportion of *intent* to enrol in such courses.

Transversal competencies

As far as qualifying and re-conversion options, computer studies seem to elicit most interest. The most prevalent intended fields of activities of Gymnasium and High-School graduates are constructions, services and agriculture. Of the higher education graduates, most of those who continued their education followed project management, finance and taxation paths.

Looking through the gender lens, advanced skills are held by men and women equally (23.7% and 24.0% respectively). There are more women with no computer skills than men however (54.5% as opposed to 45.8%). We find out that 54.9% of the young can utilize a computer without difficulty. This proportion decreases with age. More than half of the respondents (51.3%) lack computer skills, 23.8% have advanced computer skills and 24.8% declared limited skills.

Overall, 64.4% do not have any foreign language competencies, while 21.9% have limited knowledge. Only 13.7% declare the ability to hold a conversation in other language than the native one. More women seem to hold advanced language skills and less of them declare no skills at all, although the gender variation doesn't seem substantial.

Foreign language skills are more frequent in developed villages (29.2%) than in the medium-level developed villages (at 13.2%). Poor villages display poor foreign language skills.

At no surprise comes the fact that among the young, the proportion of those who claim advanced knowledge is highest, only 16.8% declaring that they cannot sustain a foreign language conversation.

As seen in Table 5, most of respondents (74.4%) do not know how to put together a business plan; only 8% declare good knowledge and 17.6% limited skills. Developed villages also display the highest number of subjects with basic business plan development skills at 20.8% these competencies being lower for all other villages.

More men have advanced and limited business plan writing competencies than women (11.6% v. 4.2% for advanced and 21.2% v. 13.6% for limited respectively).

The largest age segment of those with good skills is the middle one. The older segments have poor business planning skills.

Table 5
Transversal competencies

Are you able ...	to use a computer ?		to carry a conversation in a foreign language ?		to write a business plan ?	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Yes, with difficulty	149	24.8	131	21.8	105	17.5
Yes, without difficulty	143	23.8	82	13.7	48	8.0
No	308	51.3	385	64.2	444	74.0
Total	600	100	598*	99.7*	597*	99.5*

* the difference represents no answers, Source: Buțiu, 2011a, p. 30

3.3. Human resources development strategy in the Apuseni Mountains

Based on the above mentioned findings and in correlation with other contextual data a SWOT analysis has been performed. This allowed us to identify strengths and weaknesses, opportunities and threats¹.

Some of the strengths that deserve mentioning are: 1) The existence of a qualified rural elite; 2) The propensity of women for education and professional formation; 3) The build-up of the tourism potential awareness; 4) The predominance of enlarged, multi-nuclear families which create the support environment for some of the members' professional training; 5) The existence of expense management capability for roughly half of the households, which can also contribute to freeing some of the members for training and education; 6) The existence of fairly good computer skills among the young and of fair foreign language abilities; 7) The existence in many households of computers and mobile phones.

¹ The strategy, as a project, has been extended over a number of 51 communes in the Apuseni Mountains *Alba County* (Albac, Almașu Mare, Arieșeni, Avram Iancu, Bistra, Blandiana, Bucium, Ceru Băcăinți, Ciuruleasa, Cricău, Galda de Jos, Horia, Ighiu, Intregalde, Livezile, Lupșa, Meteș, Miraslău, Mogoș, Ocoliș, Poiana Vadului, Ponor, Poșaga, Râmeț, Rimetea, Roșia Montană, Sălciua, Scărișoara, Șibot, Stremț, Sohodol, Unirea, Vadu Moților, Vidra, Vințu de Jos), *Bihor County* (Cărpinet, Câmpani, Cristioru de Jos, Lunca, Pietroasa), *Hunedoara County* (Balșa, Buceș, Bulzeștii de Sus, Tomești, Vața de Jos), *Cluj County* (Iara, Valea Ierii, Băișoara, Moldovenești) and *Arad County* (Hălmăgel, Vârfurile). All communes received the document, remaining to adapt it to local conditions.

As far as weaknesses go, one can mention: 1) Children's and youths' vulnerability to exclusion from education, due to fairly large distances from school; 2) Adults' vulnerability to socio-occupational exclusion, also due to distance from urban centres; 3) Elders' vulnerability to health and social service exclusion for the same reasons; 4) A process of demographic ageing affecting the human resource pool; 5) De-population due to drop in birth rates and to emigration towards larger employment centres; 6) A lack of local training and re-qualifying education offers; 7) Cultural resistance to entrepreneurial activity and to professional re-conversion; 8) The migration of young persons towards urban and overseas opportunities, especially of those highly qualified.

Some of the opportunities worth mentioning are: 1) The transition towards the post-industrial, knowledge based society, which shifts the onus from economic growth to knowledge; 2) The existence of European, national and regional level specialists with objectives, priorities and measures focused on rural human resource development; 3) Increasing interest in rural tourism development which stimulates the need for local specialists; 4) The existence of a large number of human resource development programs; 5) The poor absorption rates of European funds lowers the competition and raises the chances of new applicants; 6) The existence of examples of success in the attraction of funds for human development projects.

Some of the threats identified are: 1) The current economic crisis which can result in a drop of government funding levels; 2) The increase of black market employment with effects on statistical and fiscal distortions; 3) The drop in interest for rural development due to the recent multi-centric regional development concept (2008 Strategic Territorial Development Concept in Romania).

Our analysis led to the following objectives and priorities being identified: 1st PRIORITY: *Vulnerable Groups*, with following objectives: 1) The de-marginalisation and increase in social inclusion through the improvement and extension of social services; 2) The identification of measures to facilitate labour markets integration of vulnerable groups; 3) The creation and promotion of professional development and occupational instruments for young people and other vulnerable groups. 2nd PRIORITY: *Education and Professional Training*, with the following objectives: 1) The enhancement and diversification of the educational and professional training offer; 2) The development of life-long learning; 3) The formation of local specialists in management, marketing and human resource management. 3rd PRIORITY: *Workforce Occupation*, having a more complex set of objectives: 1) The adaptation of the workforce to the changing market conditions; 2) The support of private initiative for job creation and entrepreneurial promotion; 3) The development of services to match the labour market requirements with the available pool of professional skills; 4) The encouragement of positive attitudes towards job search and entrepreneurship; 5) The reduction in black-market employment; 6) The reduction in the number of people

without qualifications or whose qualifications are inadequate for the labour market demands; 7) The development of job competencies for productivity, competitiveness and labour flexibility, to enhance professional stability; 8) The development of local social services for professional orientation, tutoring, counselling, social assistance, psychological support and job matching; 9) The reduction in ability and skill deficit which would help the medium and long-term employment.

To each objective, a series of both financial resources and activities have been associated, activities that can easily be related to local actors (local public authorities, regional development departments and institutions, educational institutions, entrepreneurs, labour unions, non-governmental organizations and informal local leaders). In order to facilitate the development of local community and regional partnerships between social actors, a tentative list of interested stakeholders (Table 6) has been drafted. It remains open to additional suggestions.

Table 6
Indicative stakeholders

Stakeholder	Presumed / declared interest
Public Local Authorities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>To retain young workforce in the community</i> - <i>To preserve a healthy demographic growth rate</i> - <i>To have people with superior qualifications that can be valuable to the community</i> - <i>To develop local expertise in development programs</i>
County Authorities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>To ensure a balanced development in their administrative realm</i> - <i>To decrease the excessive migration and demographic pressure on urban centres</i> - <i>To engage the local human resources through the encouragement of rural tourism and agro-tourism</i>
Regional Development Institutions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>To reduce the regional and micro-regional disparities</i> - <i>To increase the European funds absorption capacity through human capital development programs</i>
Educational Institutions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>To diversify and adapt their curricula to local needs</i> - <i>To ensure a sustainable student flux in all years of schooling</i>
Local Firms	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>To benefit from locally available human resources</i> - <i>To create partnerships with government and educational institutions for local human resource development purposes</i>
NGOs and Labour Unions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>To benefit from a well developed civil society with well informed citizens and well trained professionals</i>

Stakeholder	Presumed / declared interest
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>To ensure a democratic governance</i> - <i>To promote and enhance dialog between partnerships, firms and state institutions</i>
Informal Leaders	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>To sustain the community development efforts</i> - <i>To have self-driven initiatives, adapted to the real needs of community members</i> - <i>To enhance public participation in the decision-making process</i>
Ministers and Government Agencies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>To ease the state budgets of the financial burden demanded by the many vulnerabilities of the rural environment</i> - <i>To ensure rural development according to national-level planned strategies</i>
International institutions and Organisations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>To re-focus the financing efforts on high priority objectives</i> - <i>To supply know-how to the persons, groups and communities which are on their current programs' target list</i> - <i>To achieve a sustainable development of the area</i> - <i>To benefit from the tourism potential of the Apuseni region</i>

4. Conclusions

The human resource development problem is more complex at the territorial level than at the organizational one. One reason is the socio-occupational heterogeneity, which grows proportionally to the diversity of the territory, another one being the conditionality created by the educational offer and by the labour market demands, and the final one being the need to synchronise the human resource development strategy with the public policies of the local and regional authorities. The design of a territorial human resource development strategy requires thus a series of methods out of which the sociologic survey takes a central position.

Our Apuseni Mountains area sociological survey reveals a low number of salaried employees and a 2:1 ration of respondents willing to work on their own homestead, rather than involving themselves into a formal entrepreneurial undertaking. As a matter of fact, business plan devising skills seem to be one of the least developed competencies in the territory.

The analysis of the data resulted from our survey and from several other regional sources of information (territorial statistics, research studies, and local and regional program strategy foundation documents) provided the foundation for articulating a project strategy. The project was then submitted to community debate.

While the strategy traditionally suggested in such cases is one that is centred on the institutions needed to drive the change, the human development strategy we propose moves the beneficiary at the very centre of attention. Our argument rests on the specific representations, behaviours and competencies revealed by our analysis.

Just because a strategy usually follows a set of policies is no reason why one should not use the strategy as a policy correction and re-definition opportunity. This is applied social research can emancipate itself from the boundaries of political theory and deliver practical (and hopefully effective) solutions.

According to Sullivan, applied social research is employed by both public policy and private business domains with a more intensive use in public policy making (Sullivan, 1992, pp.168-169). A public policy for Sullivan represents a course of action defined legally, through administrative procedures and through other formal and informal governance practices, in relation to a particular social problem.

The role of applied social research within this process of public policy making Sullivan remarks is that of supplying systematic data aimed at facilitating the assessment of political alternatives. The process can be thought of having three phases: 1) *problem statement*, 2) *policy design* and 3) *policy implementation*. In the *problem statement* phase, the sociological data can be used for passing judgements on the public importance of a social problem. During the *policy design* phase, the applied research is being used for solution measurability and feasibility assessment purpose. Effective results from previous research can be passed over to newly designed policies in order to take advantage of the existing knowledge base. In the *policy implementation* stage Sullivan appreciates, the applied research becomes a key instrument in assessing the degree to which the policy has attained the intended objectives and in capturing any side effects being negative or positive, intentional or unintentional. During this stage, the applied research takes the form of program evaluations or of cost-benefit analyses explicitly designed for the assessment of the effectiveness of a particular policy (Sullivan, 1992, pp. 69-170).

The final purpose of our human resource development strategy for the Apuseni Mountains communities is to provide support for the inclusion of a fuzzy, lightly defined and thus (bureaucratically) typically neglected problem on the public agenda.

Finally tying up all of the above, we express our hope that the new development policies for the rural space, in which agriculture will (and should) continue to be an important component of village life (Pascaru, 2012), should also include a coherent approach to the development of an available, willing and vibrant human resource. This strategic coherence, we think, *can* emerge, if supported by a rigorously founded sociological scrutiny.

Bibliography

- Agenția pentru Dezvoltare Regională Regiunea Vest, 2007, *Planul Regional de Acțiune pentru Învățământul Profesional și Tehnic (PRAI) Regiunea Vest 2007-2013*, Retrieved December 09, 2010, from <http://www.adrvest.ro/index.php?page=articol&aid=578>
- Agenția pentru Dezvoltare Regională Regiunea Vest, 2009, *Planul de dezvoltare regională 2007-2013, Regiunea Vest, România*, Retrieved February 12, 2010, from <http://www.adrvest.ro/index.php?page=articol&aid=458>
- Bergier, B., 2000, *Repères pour une restitution des résultats de la recherche en sciences sociales. Intérêts et limites*, Harmattan, Paris.
- Bleahu, A., 2004, O perspectivă istorică asupra sectorului neagricol din mediul rural, *Calitatea Vieții*, nr. 1-2/ 2004, pp. 85-95.
- Buțiu, C.A., 2005, Probleme și oportunități de dezvoltare în Munții Apuseni. Reprezentări comparate în micro-regiunea Albac-Scărișoara-Horea (județul Alba), in *Studii și cercetări din domeniul științelor socio-umane*, Institutul George Bariț, Vol.15, Argonaut, Cluj-Napoca, pp. 147-163.
- Buțiu, C.A., 2006, *Satul românesc în spațiul social al sărăciei. Studiu de caz în comuna Ponor - Alba*, Presa Universitară Clujeană, Cluj-Napoca.
- Buțiu, C.A., 2009, Approaching the territory as a space of the action. Predictors of the participation in the Livezile-Rimetea micro-région (Romania), în Jean-Jacques Girardot (coord.), *Acts of the Annual International Conference Besançon 2008*, Aeternitas Publishing House, Alba Iulia, pp.185-196.
- Buțiu, C.A., 2011a, Probleme strategice în dezvoltarea resurselor umane din Munții Apuseni, in M. Pascaru, L. Marina, C.A. Buțiu, V. Millea (coord.), 2011, *Dezvoltare socială și inteligență teritorială. Abordări pluridisciplinare*, Alba Iulia, Editura Aeternitas, pp. 23-32.
- Buțiu, C.A., 2011b, Mihai Pascaru: The habitat scattered by globalization: The psycho-social and residential impact of the Rosia Montana project, *Transilvanian Review*, 20 (1), pp. 156-159.
- Cadrul Regional Strategic de Dezvoltare 2007-2013 al Regiunii de dezvoltare Nord-Vest – Transilvania de Nord*, iulie 2006, Retrieved March 01, 2010, from <http://www.runv.ro/docs/PDR%20Nord-Vest.pdf>
- Cadrul strategic de dezvoltare Regiunea Centru 2007-2013*, 2008, Retrieved February 12, 2010, from http://www.mdrl.ro/_documente/scheme_grant/doc_referinta/bio_RMDB_1.pdf
- Centrul Național pentru Dezvoltare Durabilă, *Strategia Națională de Dezvoltare Durabilă a României 2013-2020-2030*, Proiect Versiunea V, Rev. 3, 29 mai 2008, București, Retrieved December 20, 2011, from <http://strategia.ncsd.ro/docs/sndd-v5-r3.pdf>

- Chițea, L., 2007, Femeia rurală - factor favorizant sau restrictiv în dezvoltarea comunităților rurale, in V. Florian (coord.), *Dezvoltare rurală. Abordare multidisciplinară*, Editura Terra Nostra, Iași, 2007, pp. 159-164.
- Davidovici, I., Davidovici, A.S., 2008, Posibile evoluții în ruralul românesc, in I.G. Roșca, et al. (eds.), *Conferința internațională Dezvoltarea economică performantă și complexă a spațiului rural și regional, 19-20 septembrie 2008*, Academia de Studii Economice, București.
- Dumbravă, V., 2007, *Managementul resurselor umane în agricultură*, Editura Irecson, București.
- European Commission, 2005, Communication to the Spring European Council. *Working together for growth and jobs. A new start for the Lisbon Strategy*, Brussels, 2.2.2005, COM (2005) 24 final, Retrieved January 15, 2011, from http://www.fonduri-structurale.ro/Document_Files/docutile/00000074/7u922_Strategia_Lisabona_revizuita_eng.pdf
- European Commission, 2010, *Communication from the Commission. Europe 2020. A strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth*, Brussels, 3.3.2010, COM (2010) 2020 final, Retrieved January 15, 2011, from <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=COM:2010:2020:FIN:EN:PDF>
- European Council, n.d., Lisbon European Council 23 and 24 March 2000, *Presidency Conclusions*, Retrieved January 15, 2011, from http://www.europarl.europa.eu/summits/lis1_en.htm#.
- Florian, V., 2008, Gradul de modernizare al comunităților rurale, *Economie agrară și dezvoltare rurală*, 5(3), 2008, pp. 291-306.
- Guvernul României, 2006, *Cadrul Strategic Național de Referință 2007-2013- Al doilea proiect, octombrie 2006*, Retrieved October 10, 2010, from http://www.fonduri-structurale.ro/article_files/CSNR_versiunea2_18oct2006_RO.pdf
- Guvernul României, 2010, *Programul Național de Dezvoltare Rurală 2007-2013, versiune consolidată iunie 2010*, Retrieved September 15, 2010, from http://www.madr.ro/pages/dezvoltare_rurala/pndr-versiune-iunie2010-romana.pdf
- Guvernul României, Banca Mondială, 1998, *Cartea verde. Dezvoltarea rurală în România*, București.
- Guvernul României, n.d., *Programul Operațional Sectorial Dezvoltarea Resurselor Umane 2007-2013*, Adoptat prin Decizia Comisiei Europene C(2007)5811/22.11.2007, Retrieved October 01, 2010, from http://www.fse.romania.ro/images/downdocs/pos_dru11.pdf

- Guvernul României, Octombrie 2008, *Conceptul Strategic de Dezvoltare Teritorială România 2030*, Retrieved April 14, 2010, from, http://www.mdrl.ro/_documente/publicatii/2008/Brosura%20Conc_strat_dezv_teritoriala.pdf
- Hodge, I., Dunn, J., Monk, S., Fitzgerald, M., 2002, Barriers to Participation in Residual Rural Labour Markets, *Work, employment and society*, 16(3), 2002, pp. 457-476.
- Istudor, N., 2006, *Dezvoltarea rurală și regională a României în perspectiva integrării în Uniunea Europeană*, Editura ASE, București.
- Kerekes, K., 2007, Employment opportunities for people living in rural areas, in K. Kerekes (ed.), *Proceeding of the International Conference Competitiveness and European Integration, Regional and Rural Economics, 26-27 October 2007*, Editura Alma Mater, Cluj-Napoca, pp. 133-139.
- McQuaid, R.W., 2006, Job search success and employability in local labor markets, *Annals of Regional Science*, 40, pp. 407-421.
- Naghiu, A., Vázquez, J. L., Georgiev, I., 2005, Rural Development Strategies through Rural Tourism Activities in Romania: Chance for an Internal Demand?, *International Review on Public and Non Profit Marketing*, 2(1), pp. 85-95.
- Osoian, C., 2005, *Piața forței de muncă: restructurare-șomaj-ocupare. Teorii, politici și propuneri pentru România*, Dacia, Cluj-Napoca.
- Oțiman, P. I., 2008, Strategia de dezvoltare durabilă pe termen mediu și lung a agriculturii și spațiului rural din România - România rurală XXI, *Economie agrară și dezvoltare rurală*, 5(1), pp. 3-20.
- Pascaru, M., 2006, *Intelligence territoriale et gouvernance locale*, Presa Universitară Clujeană, Cluj-Napoca.
- Pascaru, M., Vedinaș, T., 2011, Le sociologue Ion Aluș: L'actualité de ses recherches entreprises à l'époque du communisme, *Transilvanian Review*, Vol. XX (Autumn), No 3, 2011, pp. 77-87.
- Pascaru, M., 2012, Satul și agricultura, in T. Rotariu, V. Voineagu (coord.), 2012, *Inerție și schimbare. Dimensiuni sociale ale tranziției în România*, Polirom, Iași, pp. 223-250.
- Pascaru, M., Buțiu, C.A., 2005, Sociological Inquires and Community Development. Exploratory Investigations in the Commune Garda de Sus (Alba County) Romania, *MicroCAD 2005 International Scientific Conference, Section R: Humanities*, 10-11 March 2005, Miskolc, Hungary, pp. 19-24.
- Pascaru, M., Buțiu, C.A., 2007, *Restituirea rezultatelor și dezvoltarea comunitară*, Argonaut, Cluj-Napoca.
- Pascaru, M., Buțiu, C.A., 2009, Civil Society, Public Participation, and Religious Affiliation. Exploratory Investigations in the Livezile-Rimetea Area (Apuseni

- Mountains, Romania), *Journal for the Study of Religions and Ideologies*, 8, 22 (Spring 2009), pp. 150-170.
- Pascaru, M., Buțiu, C.A., 2010, Psycho-Sociological Barriers to Citizen Participation in Local Governance. The Case of Some Rural Communities in Romania, *Local Government Studies*, Volume 36, Issue 4, 2010, pp. 493 -509.
- Planul Regional de Acțiune pentru Ocuparea forței de muncă Regiunea Nord-Vest 2006-2008 (Transilvania de Nord)*, iulie 2006, Retrieved December 08, 2010, from http://www.nord-vest.ro/Document_Files/Documente-de-Programare-Regionale-Sectoriale/00000127/v21em_PLANUL%20REGIONAL%20DE%20ACTIUNE%20pentru%20Ocuparea%20Forței%20de%20Munca%202006-2008%20Regiunea%20NV_jg4450.pdf
- Sandu, D., 1999, Dezvoltare și sărăcie în satele României, *Sociologie Românească*, nr. 4, 1999, pp. 117-138.
- Sandu, D., n.d., *Baza de date cu valorile IDSL*. Retrieved October 10, 2010, from <https://sites.google.com/site/dumitrusandu/IDSL2008.sav?attredirects=0>
- Schrieder, G., Munz, J., Jehle, R., 2000, Rural regional development in transition economy: The case of Romania, *Europe-Asia Studies*, 52 (7), 2000, pp. 1213-1235.
- Secretariatul Tehnic Permanent al Pactului Regional pentru Ocupare și Incluziune Socială în Regiunea Centru, n.d., *Planul Regional de Acțiune pentru Ocupare Regiunea Centru 2009-2011*, Retrieved December 06, 2010, from <http://www.stpcentru.ro/fileadmin/templates/stp/prao/prao.pdf>
- Steel, F.S., Price, J., 2007, *Applied Sociology: Terms, Topics, Tools and Tasks*, Second Edition, Wadsworth Publishing, Belmont.
- Sullivan, T.J., 1992, *Applied Sociology. Research and Critical Thinking*, Macmillan Inc., New York.
- Turtoi, C., 2005, Structural aspects regarding agricultural labour force in the perspective of Romania's accession to the EU, *Agricultural Economics and Rural Development*, 2(7), 2005, pp. 49-58.
- Vincze, M., 2000, *Dezvoltarea regională și rurală. Idei și practici*, Editura Presa Universitară Clujeană, Cluj-Napoca.
- Voicu, B., 2006, Satisfacția cu viața în satele din România, in D. Sandu (coord.) *EuroBarometrul Rural: valori europene în sate românești - 2005*, Fundația pentru o Societate Deschisă, București, pp. 7-20.