

BUCHAREST UNIVERSITY OF ECONOMIC STUDIES

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DOCTORAL THESIS

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Title of the doctoral thesis:

**ENHANCING THE RURAL BUSINESS ENVIRONMENT
THROUGH THE IMPLEMENTATION OF SMART VILLAGE
SOLUTIONS**

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Abstract

The purpose of this PhD thesis is to explore the impact generated by the implementation of Smart Village solutions on rural entrepreneurship and the rural business environment, responding to current research directions as emerging from the literature analysis. Researchers such as Cleveland M. and Cleveland S. (2018) or Satoła and Milewska (2022) advise that innovative solutions can enhance rural entrepreneurship, emphasizing the potential of Smart Villages to create a favorable environment for the development of local enterprises. The conducted literature analysis in the thematic areas of rural entrepreneurship, rural business environment, and Smart Villages serves as theoretical grounding for the present research, aiming to identify research gaps in order to develop the scientific and practical objectives of the PhD research. The research methodology is carefully detailed, predominantly approaching qualitative methods of analysis. The thesis presents how the triangulation method has been used, which facilitates an in-depth investigation of the correlation between rural entrepreneurship and Smart Villages, through content analysis, multiple case study analysis, and structured interviews. Strijker, Bosworth and Bouter (2020) emphasize the importance of triangulation in rural studies for understanding complex phenomena such as rural entrepreneurship, and validating research findings through multiple perspectives.

Consequently, this thesis provides significant contribution in research areas related to rural business environment, rural entrepreneurship and Smart Villages. From a theoretical perspective, the study enriches the existing literature by addressing theoretical gaps as regards the correlation between rural entrepreneurship and Smart Villages. The practical implications lie in the importance of understanding how the implementation of Smart Village solutions improves the rural business environment, by promoting practical examples of Smart Villages in both European and national regions. However, research limitations must be as well noted. The subjective nature of qualitative data interpretation, as well as the narrow scope of data could be considered as limitations of the study. Further avenues of research are also identified in the thesis, to enhance the importance of the topic with complementary studies.

Keywords: rural areas, rural entrepreneurship, Smart Villages, smart solutions, sustainability

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