

PRESENT AND PROSPECTS FOR THE RURAL DEVELOPMENT OF VILLAGES FROM OBCINA MESTECANIS REGION

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Abstract

Obcina Mestecanis represents a region with a high natural and anthropic potential, which gives the possibility to create a geopark structure in this region. The communes benefit from numerous, attractive landscapes and cultural elements, but from an economic perspective, many of them have an inferior status, compared to the county average.

The purpose of this study consists in the emphasis of natural and anthropic potential, the existent economic context in the villages from Obcina Mestecanis region, Suceava county, in order to propose a feasible model of rural tourism.

The analysis of economic and human resource is based on several indicators, among which the most important ones are: the economic, natural and human indexes, as well as the correlation with infrastructure quality. The aim of the analysis focuses on finding the most suitable model for each village, related to its specificity and capability of implementing future plans.

Human activities have developed on and in a natural environment, creating unique shapes. The natural potential of the area was analyzed by assigning and classifying areas of touristic interest and, by using known indexes, the rates of ecological degradation for each village we established.

Considering previous analyses, we find it necessary to present different scenarios of touristic development which include the multitude of touristic variables, based on rural reality, models which are shaped in the third objective of this study.

Key words: geopark, Obcina Mestecanis, rural tourism, rural development, tourist facilities, GIS

The research area cover the 10 communes which overlap the Obcina Mestecanis, with a total surface of approximately 129000ha, situated in the North-Eastern part of Suceava county. It serves as model for creating a geopark, offering a touristic management plan and territorial division according to the general structure and objectives of the above mentioned type of protected area. As defined by Unesco, a Geopark is a territory encompassing one or more sites of scientific importance, not only for geological reasons but also by virtue of its archaeological, ecological or cultural value. European Geopark is a well defined territory, which includes a particular geological heritage and a sustainable territorial development strategy supported by a European program to promote development (Environmental education and geotourism).

Obcina Mestecanis is defined by rare and also unique geological characteristics, which make it an ideal location for creating a geo-park - the paleontological reservation - Triassic Klippa, the geological reservation - Aptychus formation, glacial relicts - *Betula nana*, *Arctosphyllus uva-*

ursi, floristic reservation Tinovul-Lucina-Gaina, and Lucavei gorges.

The area is inhabited by a predominantly rural population who has preserved unique traditional customs illustrated by a complex and colourful clothing, unique pottery objects, ancient celebrations and also small old populations generically called “**hutuli**”. It is a harmonious combination of natural beauty, rareness and ancient cultural tradition.

These two important elements are taken into consideration when speaking about developing a geopark in the area.

It is also important to highlight the balance in the relationship between humans and nature, which comes as a natural result after hundreds of years of habitation and a positive or neutral impact on the biodiversity.

The major focus of current research is to examine the natural and anthropic potential, the present economic context in the villages from proposed area, in order to identified a feasible model of rural tourism. The study has the following objectives:

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- the analysis of economic and human resource;
- analysis of the available natural resource;
- development models oriented towards touristic development.

MATERIAL AND METHOD

To achieve the objectives nine indicators were taken into consideration: three natural and six anthropic, as a sum of other several sub-indicators, being described as it follows:

- **the geology – geomorphology – biodiversity indicator (GGB)** - was calculated as a sum of the total natural objectives (mountain ridges, passes and saddles, peaks, special buttes) and reservations, which were weighted with their importance and accessibility;

- **the anthropic influence (AI)** – was designated in the inverse sense, as percentage of the natural areas for each commune;

- **ecological stability index (ES)** – represents the degree in which each commune is stable or not from an ecological point of view;

- **community poverty index (CP)** (Tudora D., 2010) - represents the social status of the population with respect to the monetary and social indicators;

- **active population (AP)** - represents the ratio between the percentage of employed population and the total population, as an image of the human resource potential.

$$AP = \text{Emp}_{\text{pop}} / \text{Tot}_{\text{pop}}$$

- **migratory balance (MB)**- represents the difference between new-comers and departed between 2000 and 2008 calculated from the total population- indicates the attractiveness of a commune.

$$MB = \text{Mb}_{90-2006} / \text{Total}_{\text{pop}}$$

- **dependency rate (DR)**- the ratio between the adult population, the youth and the elder population- indicates the demographic situation

$$DR = (P_{0-19} + P_{>65}) / P_{20-64}$$

- **cultural index (C) (taken from CSCDC)**, includes the grades obtained by the communes for 4 elements: the presence of historical monuments (the maximum grade is 8 for historical monuments class A, 6 for historical monuments class B, 4 for historical monuments which are not included in the list of historical monuments 2010); 9 for the presence of museums, 4 for festivals and traditional workshops and 4 for traditional folkloric groups (ensembles). The sum of all these elements can reach the maximum of 25.

$$C = 8 * \text{monuments} + 9 * \text{museums} + 4 * \text{festivals} + 4 * \text{ensembles}$$

- **ethnic index (EI)**- (calculated according to the Simpson diversity Index);

- represents the probability of meeting 2 persons from the same commune which are of different ethnicity. There is a minimum value of 0 where there is only one ethnic group in that commune. The maximum values vary between 0.5 and 0.8 according to the number of ethnic groups and the number of individuals.

$$EI = 1 - \sum_{n=1}^N \left(\frac{\text{Ethnic pop}_n}{\text{Total pop}} \right)^2$$

To accomplish the present study several steps have been completed, including documentation, data collecting, GIS analysis, mapping.

To put into evidence the typologies for the development of the study area the following procedure has been applied based on some statistical indicators.

a. transforming the variables into indexes, where the value of 100 is considered the mean value;

b. comparing each variable to the mean;

c. linking statistical individuals of the communes according to the positive deviation of the variables, considered as strengths when proposing regional touristic development strategies;

d. mapping the results and creating the typologies.

The materials used for the data interpretation were complex, both statistical data, quantifiable as well as unquantifiable being used, like statistical data - for localities and other indexes, including data from Census (CUGUAT-TIGRIS). Through methods applied, ranking, standardization, reduction, class influence method, interview and field observations could be mentioned. As cartographic sources for Bucovina region, topographical maps 1:50.000, geological map 1:200.000 satellite images from Google Earth, Google, Maps, Open Street Maps, Bing Maps, AsterGdem, were used. For GIS analysis and mapping the ArcGIS platform versions 9.3 and 10 have been used.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The general favourability for developing the Obcina Mestecanis geopark is a result of calculating the above mentioned indicators, initially unquantifiable, giving them marks according to specific criteria and interpreting the hierarchical ascendant classification for each commune. This analysis represents the basis for reaching the other two objectives – offering touristic development models which best fit our research area and dividing it into the specific regions of a geopark. More than that, it helps to draw the final conclusions – to identify those types

of tourism and the implicit activities which correspond to each commune.

To accomplish the first objective concerning to the analysis of the natural and social-economic potential of the area, the following map (fig. 1) was created based on these nine indicators.

From the map of commune development typology a few particularities could be observed, such as:

Cultural Strength

Is the result of positive deviations from the mean value of the Cultural and Ethnic indexes variables. The communes which fit in this typology (Carlibaba, Izvoarele Sucevei, Fundu-Moldovei) have a development potential of the cultural function due to the presence of a rich cultural infrastructure (museums, monuments) and of numerous artistic activities (festivals, folkloric groups, traditional workshops).

Also, these communes have a great ethnic diversity, the presence of the so-called “*hutuli*” group having a strong impact on the cultural activities in the area. The ethnic communities have a great potential of development but are insufficiently promoted due to a lack of cultural-touristic development programmes.

Enviromental Strength

Breaza commune, being one of the most underdeveloped commune from the study area, can focus on exploiting the potential of the natural attractions present within its limits (Rachitisu Mare reservation, Manaila meadow). The anthropic pressure is low in this commune so this is another factor which can contribute to the development.

Eco-tourism, scientific tourism and agro-tourism along with pastoral tourism are forms of tourism which can be applied in this commune, leading to a social, economic and cultural development of the area.

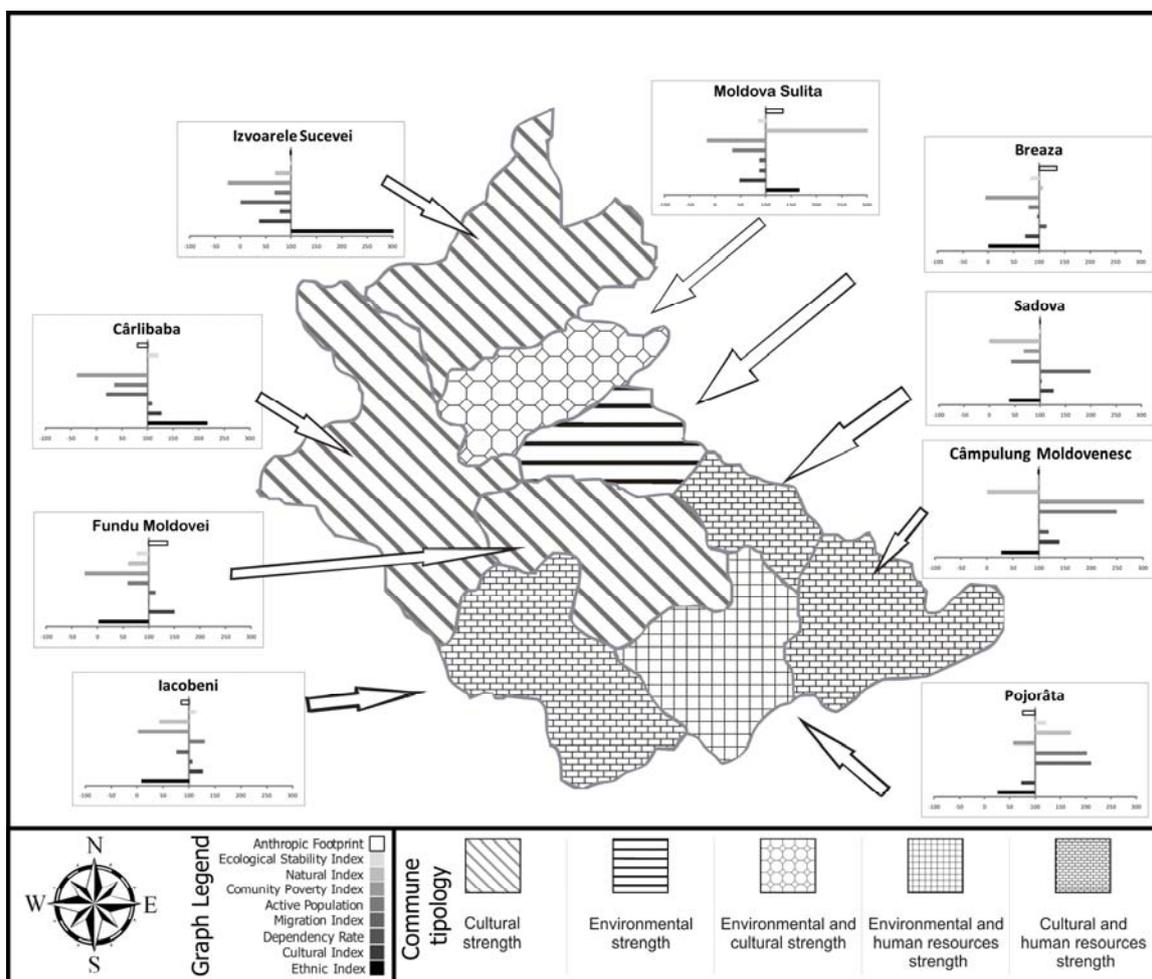


Figure 1 Map of commune development typology

Environmental and Cultural Strength

The Moldova-Sulita commune is an example of multiple development opportunities. The natural background (Tinovu-Gaina-Lucina reservation, Lucavei gorges, Lucina peak) is a favourable

environment for developing touristic activities based on natural attractions and the ethnic group of “*hutuli*” along with the Lucina stable, offer the premises of a cultural and agro-touristic development in the area.

Environmental and Human Resources Strength

Besides the natural attractions from the Pojorata commune (Triassic Klipa geologic reservation), the human resource is a powerful element which can contribute to the commune's development. The commune is placed along the transport axes (both road and railway) which connect Vatra Dornei to Suceava, allowing the region to develop.

Cultural and Human Resources Strength

The development potential for Campulung, Iacobeni and Sadova is focused on the cultural aspect, which includes various festivals, folkloric groups, traditional workshops and also cultural infrastructures (village-museum, museums, and monuments). The high accessibility from the main cities in the region (Suceava, Vatra Dornei, Gura Humorului) allowed the area to develop and create the background for a further touristic development.

The communes overlap on their largest surface the geo-park territory, fact which greatly influences the organisation and structure of the region. The common parts of a geo-park are:

- **Strictly protected areas** – they have a protection and preservation status for the scientific reservations;

- **buffer zones** – with a protection role for the first mentioned regions, in which several activities are admitted for promoting the available resources, according to the geo-park administration;

- **Areas for sustainable development** – which are economically valued through traditional or modern customs, within the resources renewing rates (John, S. 2008).

Two touristic development models were identified, which have to be corroborated and adapted to the general structure of a geo-park, in order to characterize as pertinent as possible the Obcina Mestecanis area. These are: the development of natural areas model and the organization and development of touristic village's model.

The study area fits, according to the classification of schematic types of touristic development, in the protected natural area with a shallow touristic infrastructure (in the proximity of urban areas or in isolation).

Tourism development models

The development of natural areas model

The objectives for establishing a protected natural area are the following: research, the protection of wildlife, the preservation of species and ecodiversity, the protection of natural and cultural endangered elements, the sustainable use

of resources and natural ecosystems, the conservation of traditional cultural characteristics.

The functions of a protected area are: scientific, touristic, educational, economic and offering a background in international relationships (Cianga, N. 2007).

The organization and development of touristic villages model

The minimal conditions which must be met by a touristic village are related to the presence of a natural attraction, non-polluted, part of a compound of attractive resources which can be exploited through diverse holiday activities within the community, doubled by a solid welcoming infrastructure (with a reasonable number of places, traditional architecture adopted for newer buildings as well as using, besides classic materials, those found in the area- wood, stone, sulphur etc, and ensuring a minimal degree of comfort with regard to local utilities- water, gas, drainage). (Cianga, N. 2007).

Typology of touristic villages

Etno-folkloric touristic villages – comprise rural settlements that possess an authentic ethnographic background, in which the architecture, traditional habits and activities, clothes, traditional games and songs are essential characteristics and also attractions for potential convergent touristic fluxes.

Touristic villages with scientific attractions - possess in their perimeter or in their proximity, natural protected areas-national parks, natural reservations, monuments of nature etc- for example Sadova.

Touristic villages with historical monuments, art or architecture - possess elements with a historical, artistic or cultural value.

Agro-touristic villages

According to this typology, the communes from Obcina Mestecanis were classified into the best suitable proportion. The obtained map completes the previous analysis and offers supplementary information for knowing the specific of each commune, in order to sustainably develop the region.

The proportions were obtained by quantifying all the available data concerning natural attractions, reservations, scientific objectives, and also anthropic attractions.

Therefore, Izvoarele Sucevei commune has an equilibrated proportion from ethno-folkloric, historical monuments, art or architecture and agro-touristic typologies, with a slight majority of the last mentioned type. This can be an advantage for the commune to develop its' natural and pastoral characteristics and to offer to visitors nice activities within the inhabitants' farms.

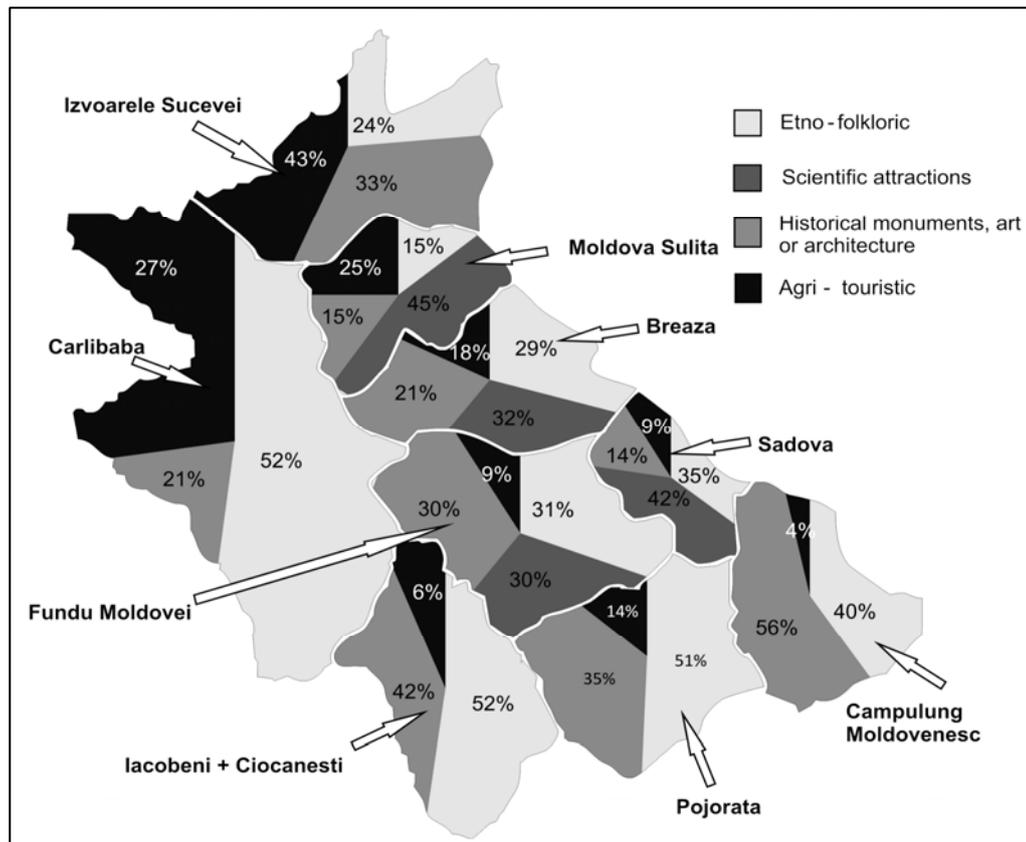


Figure 2 Touristic development potential in Obcina Mestecanis

Moldova-Sulita commune possesses all the four typologies, with a majority of historical monuments, art or architecture type, due to the large population, the so-called “hutuli”, of Ukrainian origin that have their own artistic and architectural style.

Breaza commune also comprises all the types of touristic villages identified for the studied region: it can be developed taking into consideration the scientific attractions – Rachitisul Mare floristic reservation, as well as other natural attractions (peaks, mountain crests, meadows etc).

In Sadova commune the largest proportion is represented by the scientific attractions typology, while in Fundu Moldovei the majority is almost the same for the ethno-folkloric, scientific attractions and historical monuments, art or architecture type of touristic villages. Although, a slight majority is held by the ethno-folkloric typology.

In Campulung Moldovenesc town the largest proportion is held by the historical monuments, art or architecture typology, fact demonstrated by the numerous manifestations of the type.

CONCLUSIONS

The general goal of Geoparks is to integrate the preservation of geological heritage into a strategy for regional sustainable economic and cultural development.

The study reported in this paper represents one of the first attempts at exploring the perspectives of the local communities on the designation of Obcina Mestecanis in Suceava county as a Geopark.

It is premised on the widely acknowledged assertion that the local communities constitute an important group of stakeholders in the planning and implementation of development activities. Hence, the communities living in the geopark areas are considered important stakeholders who play a crucial role in the development of heritage tourism in Obcina Mestecanis Geopark.

The major findings are:

- Each commune has a potential or cultural or socio - economic development that can be used in unitary Geopark;
- Efficient management of Geopark must take into account both the potential site and the main access roads;
- By analyzing the current situation can propose various activities to benefit the sustainable development of all villages which are Geopark.

Biggest challenges in creating a Geopark related primarily local government cooperation, then the local population aware of the concept of Geopark.

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