

Heritage as an Alternative Driver for Sustainable Development and Economic Recovery in South East Europe

Tourism development after the implementation of sustainable strategies in Neamt County

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Abstract

Several actions were put in practice over the last decade in order to support the global environment, the development targets and various strategic opportunities have been identified for the improvement of the territory. Unfortunately at local level they have remained only political challenges. The purpose of this paper is to identify the challenges that restrain the development of the cultural heritage of Neamt County and to draw some conclusions regarding the whole process of sustainable development. As a focus of the study, the present research brings in discussion the community and its involvement in the preservation and integration of the cultural heritage.

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Peer-review under responsibility of the Scientific Committee of Heritage Sagittarius 2014.

Keywords: Cultural Heritage; Sustainable development; Management; Tourism Neamt County.

1. Introduction

Sustainable development it is one of the most emphasized topics when talking about tourism. It is a multi-dimensional theme that emerged and it became prominent and on everyone's agenda after the Bruntland report from 1987, when it was defined as: "development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability for future generations to meet their own needs". According to Adams, 2006 sustainable development encompasses 3 aspects: the economic, environmental and social. The economic facet comprises several features like: stimulating the local businesses, by generating income and creating employment, therefore enhancing the multiplier effect and an equitable distribution of the benefits arisen from tourism activities in the local community. The second one raises awareness about the protection of environment while the social component fights against poverty, exclusion and promotes equality of rights. The social impacts can present negative effects when they try to stir up the local identity, family relationships, lifestyles, ceremonies or traditional activities Torrent, 2008. Swarbrooke, 1999 appreciates that the socio-culture impacts cannot be quantified for the most part and they are not that dynamic. They may have different impacts in changed environments but a balance between them is ought in order to yield a synergetic outcome.

Several researchers argued that cultural heritage represent the forth essential pillar of sustainability Duxbury & Mateus, 2012; Hawkes, 2001; Folke, 2006; Nurse, 2007. It is an important topic that is present for some time in the discussions about cultural identity, ownership and development of sociocultural. One fundamental aspect in the heritage conservation is the modality in which it is evaluated and how it is integrated in the present and contemporary beliefs. A sustainable development strategy for long term might offer a viable solution if it is combined with a participation and support of the local community (availability of resident advisory boards).

In Romania the national strategy for development of heritage stresses the fact that heritage represents an important factor in maintaining the national cultural values and the identity while the action plans proposed support a sustainable development, cohesion and social inclusion. The positive contributions in the Neamt County are thanks to the prepared human resources, performances in the research and the availability of investments while there are perceived as negative contributions: the low quality of the infrastructure and an inappropriate distribution of funds for the fields of intervention.

Alongside with the economic benefits that tourism brings in a region there are as well some negative effects that have an impact over the community of that region. Nistoreanu et al. 2003 argues that over the years it intervenes a shift in the values of the local population under the influences of tourists, a higher general cost of life a degradation of the environment and we add that sometimes it generates philosophical conflict.

2. Overview of heritage and cultural tourism

Cultural heritage is any aspect that holds an impact into the present or past upon its community and it is wanted to be passed on to future generations. Nuryanti, 1996 says that heritage is a part of any society and appreciates that the material culture is consisted of archaeological sites, buildings, monuments, museums, displays but as well literature, poetry, sports, performances and other. European Cooperation in Science and Technology defines the cultural heritage as a combination of material and immaterial evidence that are a part of the cultural identity of those populaces. Gorrod and Fyall, 2001 argue that heritage tourism is an activity carried on by tourists in area that presents historic artefacts.

The cultural tourism implies the cultural nature and the role of tourism that provides a set of practices long established in the pragmatic behaviour of societies that are transmitted through symbols, personal and collective identities different forms of art Robinson, 2006. Cultural heritages are divided in 2 directions the tangible and intangible, private and public Conway, 2014. Over the years, art and culture alongside heritage has received a greater attention from tourists in major destinations Zeppel and Hall, 1992.

Christou, 2005 appreciates two dimensions of heritage and cultural attractions, one in which for developed areas a specific category of tourists travel to particular sites, to visits museums or to assist to performances and another one where in the less developed regions they become involved in traditional religious practices and handicrafts.

Romania exceptional cultural heritage includes painted monasteries, medieval towns, fortified churches, memorial houses, archaeological sites, ancient Dacian ruins, the Danube Delta and cultural traditions.

In our present research the focus is on the Neamt County where the cultural heritage consists of 3 national parks: Ceahlau National Park, Cheile Bicazului Hasmas National Park and Vanatori Neamt Natural Park and according to the 2010 rapport of the Culture and National heritage Ministry the Neamt County numbers 537 historic monuments.

The main governmental institution in charge with the conservation, protection and implementation of present and new projects related to cultural heritage is The Ministry of Culture and Religious Affairs. The budgets allocated for the conservation or restoration of cultural, religious and historic sites represent a small part of what in reality is needed. For that purpose the local decision makers, hence local councils have the responsibility of deciding the priorities or the division of the funds. Other public institutions that contribute with different policies and have an impact in the development of sustainable cultural heritage are the Ministries of Public Works and Agriculture, Forest and Rural Development and the Ministry of Regional Development and Tourism.

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