SPACE AND LOCAL CULTURE PROVISION
vs.
TOURIST CONSUMPTION

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Abstract

Space is a stationary datum, culture is a dynamic, evolutionary process, while tourism is a consumption of space and culture. Theories presenting tourism as a growth factor or as an enhancer, although they do not mistake, they overlook a variable: tourism is not an inexhaustible multiplier. As any other industry, tourism is a resource consuming process. What could be the consumed resource in that case? The space, the landscape and the culture or, better said cultural diversity. With every step made on a territory that is foreign to his community the tourist takes a share of local culture and leaves, in exchange, an equivalent share of his own culture.

Keywords: *rural tourism, cultural tourism, space consumption, sustainable tourism.*

Despite the almost unanimous qualification of tourism as the "hobby horse" of the regional development policies, the field research shows that tourism development is conditioned by various restrictions. First of all, tourism has not the capacity of being the engine for development without major investments in the auxiliary upstream and downstream fields - means of transport, accommodation and loisir services. Therefore the tourism development policy needs a holistic approach, together with the other economic sectors. Secondly, the option for tourism is restricted by the availability (long/short term) of the tourist offer, depending on the environment and cultural factors. More precisely, as we will prove below, tourism and particularly its cultural aspects (visiting historical sites, monuments, ecumenical tourism, exploration tourism, etc.) nourishes with its own intrinsic value, being a draw. Its supply, once consumed, decreases both the tourist's demand and the space's offer. Although it might sound incredible, we will enumerate below few arguments to support this statement.

Space (landscape) consuming and culture consuming problems

In the economical geography there is expressed the idea that space / landscape, as live environment for the human kind, conditions society and also is conditioned by the characteristics of the community it serves. The studies concerning the human dimension of landscape have become more and more important in space researches

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because of the growing role humanity has in altering the environment as its legitimate user. Landscape has a double utilization value. On the one hand, it is the physical "space" for life, on the other it is a "place", with its afferent meanings and with its contribution to the social identity. Implicitly, "landscape" studying theories are concerned either with the environmental preferences and the psycho-social processes through which one reaches those preferences, or with the aspects related to landscape as "place". In this last situation, concepts such as "the sense of the place", "local identity", "affiliation", and so on are treated. Landscape researches have, from this point of view, an ecologic dimension, and also a sociological one, or, better said, a "human" dimension, covering the aspects of the complex inter-relations between landscape, society (community) and individuals (HUNZIKER et al., 2007). Nowadays' importance of those studies is increased because of two reasons:

- first, for a comprehensive understanding of the man-landscape-ecology system, the legitimate use of landscape vs. its degradation through utilization dilemma must be cleared up. Humankind has been considered the source of all perturbations in the natural system. But, on the other hand, men are legitimate users of the system both as beneficiaries of the material goods produced through agriculture and of the immaterial goods such as "psychological restoration" and also as beneficiaries of the esthetical and information (visual) function space offers. Therefore, from an elementary scientific point of view, the research on landscape human dimension is required by the comprehensive understanding of the socio-ecological systems that manifest in "landscapes".

- secondly, sustainable development requires an ecological equilibrium. The final purpose of this development is long term assuring of material and non-material humankind's needs. As such, investigation of those needs is required. Because human needs which represent the social aspect of sustainability are underrepresented in sustainability researches, there are required supplementary efforts in order to cover this problem. Knowing human needs, including the justifications of those needs represent the first step for planning the landscape conservation and conservation measures that can be accepted by public. The intervention requires planning, and planning requires knowledge.

Because peoples are at the same time biologic (with a unique set of needs, capabilities and experiences) and social (being part of different groups, playing different roles) creatures, the various theories treating landscape are expected to differ in the ways they treat the biological aspects vs. the social determinants of landscapes. But there is a common idea in all these theories about the inter-conditioning man-landscape: that of establishing a degree of integration between communities and landscapes as life spaces and as social "location". More precisely, men or local societies become a part of the landscape through the connections they establish. For instance, Simmel (cited in HUNZIKER et al., 2007) sees a difference between animals' perceptions regarding the space, considered the result of their

"instincts", and humans' perception, which is presented as a "creative act". Therefore, when men or groups became familiar with a particular space, and become fond of it through cultural values, social meanings and personal experiences, then the landscape became a "place" for them. In other words, personal, social and cultural "harmonization" processes enforce the outlining of a "meaning" for the space, transforming it into a "place". This first process may be assimilated to the so called "sense of the space", concept that describes the primary relation between the individuals of a community and the occupied territory or environment. It is the sum of other more refined concepts such as *place devotion, local identity* and *local dependency. Place devotion* is described as the positive emotional bound between individuals, groups and their environment. *Dependency* refers to the measure in which a certain arrangement man – space resists to the offer of alternatives. And, in the end, *local identity* represents the personal, individual identity defined in relation to the physical environment influenced by ideals (conscious and unconscious objectives), believes, preferences, feelings, values, purposes, behavior tendencies etc. Williams et al. (1992) suggest that man can see the place as part as his own personality and, at the same time, as resource for satisfying his purposes or his explicit behavior.,. So, local identity shouldn't be understood as a sub-aspect for the sense of space, but rather as a specific auto-reflexive perspective on human – space relations. According to Proshansky et al.(1983) the place serves as individual's "external memory" regarding his own identity. Local identity has, from this point of view, a regulator psychological function (of stabilization and development) for man's identity (it creates the comfort with his own identity). The diversity of those concepts of place, space, landscape reflects the multi-dimension of this construct that researchers described in emotional, cognitive or behavioral terms.(Hunziker et al., 2007)

Tourism or recreation activities make an attempt on this human – landscape relation in two ways. That's because tourist activities impose a change of landscape, a physical intervention upon it. Researches show that the impact of tourism (especially of recreational tourism) on natural spaces appears quickly, is stable during long periods of intensive usage and the time needed for environment recovery is typically longer than the one needed for its degradation. Even when speaking about conservation imposed by policies or about recovery through funds spending there is a certain percent of irreversibility of landscape transformation. On the other hand, landscape exposure to individuals outside the integrated community represents space consumption "in itself". If we consider the esthetic value of a landscape, this is a value that decreases while exposed (a landscape exposed on a postcard will never be as beautiful as an undiscovered landscape).

The second and most important attack form of tourism against the relation between community and space is on the cultural channel. It is worldwide accepted the fact that tourism has an impact upon space identity. What weren't yet established are the nature and the level of this impact. For instance, local identity

captures a wide range of social relations that contribute to the so called "sense of the place". So, the first break in the identity system of a space is the very existence of plural identities or the existence of various versions of identity that moves within that space (formed either by different experiences or by different social affiliation and statutes). From this point of view Moya Kneafsey (1998) speaks about various forms of intervention on local identity through tourism.

- first of all, tourism builds and rebuilds local identity. Local identities are (re)built in order to harmonize with tourists' wishes. The first values to fall are precisely authenticity and traditions which can adapt to either demand, or the preconceptions or myths tourists bring into the destination space. It is known that often during the campaigns for tourists attraction, in the context of building an image with a promotional purpose, the images and texts emitted by promoters contribute to (re)building the national (local) identity. For instance, in Romania, when looking for that "national brand", the purpose was not defining its identity, but finding an attractive identity for its position toward the exterior world. Despite all these, the result of the search became a "brand" assumed by Romanians as well. O'Connor (quoted by Kneafsey, 1998) sustains that tourist images represent the source of a nation's dominant visual representations. For example, in time, Dracula become an assumed national symbol. In other words, imagism plays a significant part in finding the so called "native self image" through direct exposure to host population and its contribution in choosing the images (campaigns are usually made with public debate) and also indirectly, through their contact with the tourists exposed to imagism.

- secondly tourism destroys local, singular and archaic identities. MacCannell writes that the edification or construction of some local identities leads to the death of old rural ethnic cultures, weakly represented in community. Similarly some authors sustain that tourism brings the destruction or "prostitution" of some authentic forms of culture. Rural communities may become dependent on tourism and in order to gain their trust, the hosts make cultural "compromises", complying with visitors' expectations. For tourists' comfort, the locals give up to some traditional activities or change the traditional calendar with one appropriate to commercial activity. Those aspects lead to the erosion of collective culture. Another form of compromise is the acceptance of clichés and myths the tourist has about the host community, although they are not true. For example one of the attraction points of Romanian rural tourism is / might be "Romanian joyful nature ", known as a person that "use to talk in front of his house" or "make friends while drinking a glass of wine". "The deliberate confirmation of expectations" for that kind of information is included in this arsenal of identity renunciation or low-living one's own culture.

- on the other hand there is the argument that culture, being dynamic, might be criticized, disputed, under the pressure of change, especially through globalization, without being harmed by it. From this point of view, tourism may be

an agent of change, but also one of continuity for local culture. The hypothesis of (re)construction or of the simple destruction of previously built identities may be an over-simplified one. We can also say that tourism contributes to a continuous change and transformation process, mediated at the same time by continuity elements stable in local identities. Tourism is nothing more than one of the processes through which identities are continuously rebuilt. Tourism can be as well a valuable instrument for reaffirming and reevaluating local identities, reported to external pressures and especially to globalization.

In other words, tourism is an example of the way global-local relations are negotiated in the context of some particular spaces, allowing in this way the maintenance of diversity and differences. In accordance to this vision, even if the identities are submitted to change, there are those elements of continuity to maintain the "sense" of the space. As Boissevain (ed. 1996) says, communities are capable of responsively using their cultural resources as offer for tourism, and at the same time, of preserving spaces of cultural autonomy off-the-map for tourists' expectations. Moreover, case studies have proved that there are forms of local identity very resistant to change, situation in which tourist development is carried on by the cancelled social relations.

Concluding, tourism might be considered a transformative cultural process and must be studied from this perspective. Present studies on this theme had their focus on two directions. On the one hand there were discussed the transformations generated by production and by tourist offer, and on the other, the tourism consumption, itself a source of cultural invasion into spatial identity. The transformations produced by the interaction of the two implicated parts were less studied. Johnson (1986) speaks about a so-called "circuit of culture" between tourism producers and the receptors or the consumers of tourist services, that is between the cultural message sent by producers and the way consumers interpret it, circuit that reproduces or modifies local culture. Culture is a synergic sum of processes (natives' ideas and way of living) and products of those processes (buildings, arts, customs, "atmosphere"). Looking culture in this way, tourism doesn't mean only visiting places and monuments, but also implies "consuming" the way of life of the visited space, accumulation of information and experiences. As such, tourism does not cover only the consumption of the "past cultural product", but it also invades contemporary culture. On the other hand, resident cultures are dynamic and continuously developing. They contain certain "fixity" elements and a certain "historical memory", but are also capable of assimilating new elements and of transforming. From this perspective there must be carefully taken into consideration both the potential transforming elements and also the local interpretation of some stability factors.

Particular aspects of cultural tourism and of rural tourism

Paradoxically, the most invasive form of tourism in aspects of local culture is precisely the most elevated form of tourism, created especially for an elite that is not interested in changing or that is even educated in what concerns the need for local identity conservation: *cultural tourism*. Although its purpose is a declared exploratory one, cultural tourism is invasive, and most of the times, its substantial practicability results in identity transformations of the host space.

If the very term "culture" is difficult to define in Romanian, we shouldn't be surprised that "cultural tourism" is almost impossible to delimitate. The problem has increased during the last years when new meanings for "culture" appeared, result of democratization and growth of convergence between culture and day to day life. Culture holds a spectrum of growing "responsibilities" especially in relation with tourism (cultural tourism, patrimony tourism, ethnic tourism, agro tourism, tradition tourism, handcraft tourism, industrial tourism, ecumenical tourism etc). Of course, terms are evidently interchangeable in utilization, but seldom is it clear for users if they talk about the same thing. The delimitation of various types of cultural tourism is less important for this article; what really matters is the way cultural tourism influences the destination cultural space (it consumes the cultural resource of the space).

In fact the distinction between cultural tourism and other forms of tourism must be looked for in its functions. More precisely, learning function is the one that delimitates cultural tourism from other forms of tourism. "Cultural tourists" are those who travel in order to learn something from the culture of the destination place and to earn new cultural experiences (dependent on the destination culture and the tourist's perception about culture).

For example, a tourist may visit a monastery being interested in the Orthodox religion, being interested in Moldavian medieval history, being interested in the Romanian culture and traditions, or in East Europe or in Latin nations and so on so forth. His tourist activity on destination place will depend by this interest. For instance, if he is only interested in the historical aspects, he will want to stay in a hotel, if he is interested in local traditions and customs, he will want to practice agro tourism. His cultural impact upon the visited location will also be different, his contacts with the local community will be different, and so on. In this entire spectrum "his space consumption" will have different values, the feedback of his life medium will be different, and the transmission to own community or cultural circle will differ. That would be the problem from the point of view of the destination place and local culture: *Is it necessary to calibrate the tourist offer for all those variations of the demand?* Isn't this very calibration the one that provokes an invasive intervention against local space culture? For example, how do we delimitate the interest of the cultural tourist, interested only in the historical aspects of a monastery building from his comfort standards? If he wants to be housed in a

three stars hotel, shall we offer him a three stars hotel in the monastery locality or somewhere close? If he is in a hurry, shall we offer him a direct transport line from hotel to monastery? What kind a monastery is a monastery of this type? What if we can't offer him all the facilities he wants and he gives up the journey? Who makes the rules of cultural tourism? And how is space identity conserved in the case mentioned above?

All those questions are more acute for the aspects of traditional culture in rural because any of those answers will have a direct and substantial impact upon local rural culture. Moreover, rural landscapes usually reflect the productive activities associated with agriculture, combined with the cultural interpretation of the rural. Various customs or economic traditional activities may impose certain specific characteristics upon the rural landscape. For instance in those villages in Bucovina where people grow cabbage and prepare a famous pickled cabbage, the inhabitants have in their yards those huge wooden barrels as tall as or even taller than the house. Those specific elements of culture certainly become, by exposing them, tourist attractions, but they lose their force and cultural value through "consumption". For certain those barrels can not become returning factors of the tourist into that space. Exploration tourism (as form of cultural tourism), of discovering new places, new traditions and customs, is, in a certain way, of "single usage". Once consumed, it doesn't require coming back. And this produces a new problem for the local space and for the rural local culture. To maintain a tourist behavior it should continuously attract new tourists (exhaustible resource).

It is also true that Europe's rural zones have become important locations for tourism and "loisir", but the growth of rural tourism also reflects the growth of the middle class, with a finer taste for "authenticity", also related to a search of the past or to a return to nature. In the end, those are urban values, supposed to fashion and other tendencies. No matter how authentic a service may be, it won't suppose the return to past. Inevitably, a class with profound urban standards will influence rural culture no matter how restraint the possible influences might be. It's about an exterior or "external" consumption (the difference between seeing a movie and acting in a movie). Viewing a tradition is almost like a virtual show. The tourist is in the middle of the action, but he doesn't take part in it. If he participates then he would become a part of it and implicitly a part of the local culture. But, as mentioned, looking for this "authentic" can lead to "the deliberate (re)creation" of the traditional rural aspect for the tourists. These kind of simulacrums abound in those rural areas exposed to tourist consume. This cultural (re)construction of the rural area which commercially exploits the "rural idyllist" is exclusively an "identity" show in which nature and rurality appear as "themes" and in which takes place a permanent (re)negotiation of the traditions (Richards, G., 2001).

The negative effect upon the local culture generated by the cultural tourism should not be considered absolute. There are also positive elements. For instance, more and more attractions are "cultural". The demand of cultural tourism can

increase the culture production (genuine or new culture upon a genuine base), a fact that is not necessarily harmful, on the contrary. Also, the tourism can attract funds which might be an investment in monuments preservation and in natural restoration of the areas which were however degraded.

When speaking about "the rural", there is anyway a trend for inner urbanization that tourism has nothing to do with. In these conditions, traditions saving might come even from this apparent disadvantage that tourism produces. The peasants will be forced to change their lifestyle and household under the pressure of urbanization, globalization, UE standards and so on, they can learn that the solution to preserve their traditions is to "pack" and "sell" traditions and culture which otherwise have no other chance of survival. For instance, "Europeanism" has not defined yet all policies at the conceptual level, militating for preserving the cultural values of rural life and at the same time requiring structural changes in the same environment in order to meet some quantitative standards, people from rural areas can become the certain victims of an alienation system which is imposed from outside and which crushes them. Moreover, a variety of traditions are subject to enormous pressure from outside, although policy talks about diversity in very beautiful terms. On the other hand, these traditions cannot be put to preserve in "ecological reserves". Diversity and tradition aren't something "exhibiting", they involve different ways of life, different calendars, which sometimes aren't profitable. The true peasants can't be put in bowls made of glass and exposed as some rare species. They cannot keep the old material and spiritual culture of their homes just for the sake of tradition or "for the tourists". For them this is just their lifestyle. Once it changes, the objects of rural culture dies.

We are facing a paradox. Changes are inevitable. Even if the EU makes some "standard exemptions" under the banner of preserving cultural aspects, or even if efforts would be made in order that everything stays unchanged, life itself will require changes through the main springs of natural evolution towards modernization. This includes also agro tourism, which will enable practitioners (hosts) to modernize themselves through the income it generates. The chance of rural traditions (utopian speaking) remains in this context: on one hand, the capitalist exploitation of the peasant product, of the religious habits, of the specific local traditions and on the other hand, the voluntary option for a traditional lifestyle, even if wealth allows escape. The peasant can sell in a capitalist manner his "expertise" of a man linked to his place of birth, (meaning, for example, that the source of his existence will not be the field work itself, but the money someone is willing to give to see him working the field). Moreover, many of the traditions and crafts such as pottery, eggs painting, etc had already lost their original significance and even their symbolism and the touch with the traditional calendar, becoming more a commercial craft. For some families in areas with monasteries and other tourist areas, agrarian tourism has become their mean of subsistence. So, traditions and local culture become the source of capital accumulation (primitive) that leads

to local development. But, there is either a small scale production kept in order to preserve the environment that suits to those attractions, or they grow and are evolve into something else (mass tourism or development without tourism).

This dilemma limits rural tourism, in general, and agrarian tourism in particular. Although it might really be the strongest way of development in some regions, rural tourism and its characteristic feature, agrarian tourism, shouldn't be mystified, as it happens in the workshop halls of public authorities. For politicians, an enumeration of "our resources" is not a difficult step. In this regard, agrarian tourism risks to become a cliché, without a solid analytical basis to determine a correct diagnosis on its offers for regional development. Therefore, we should weigh the costs, consequences and long-term trajectories, in addition to a realistic debate about the advantages and disadvantages of this sub-product. Clearly it cannot causes "economic miracles", as long as it depends precisely on the quality of providing "scarce goods". For these reasons, tourism cannot cause agglomeration effects and large scale economies, than in a holistic sense and in terms of its attachment to an "architecture" that highlights the area in an integrated manner.

The forms of tourism applicable in rural regions are largely, either costly, or distorting for the region's natural and cultural status. Therefore, the authorities or the private agents either have no resource funding for them, or a self-earned proportion will embezzle on long term exactly the motivation basis for those forms of tourism. As such, ecological and calibration restrictions must provide the sustainability trajectory and the perennial values conservation in the tourist destination areas. The endowed regions of this type can be funded from tourism without pushing tourism towards large scale providing. Their tourist value has as source that very form of exclusivity. For example, in Athos Mountains tourism is heavily restricted just in the interest of conserving the cultural environment, and this restriction paradoxically maintains the constant interest in this destination.

Encouraging urban proximity tourism might be an alternative solution to meet the growing demand in a local system which is in cultural preservation. Calibration restrictions are imposed in this case as well. But urban culture, by definition, is an opened culture unlike rural culture which is closed due to its vulnerability. Actions to attract tourism can revitalize and catalyze the cultural life of the city itself (not only for tourists). As such, the city should not prevent a tourist demand, but for the conservation of architecture. Otherwise, it can absorb the new culture creation. In addition, urban is a good outlet for the abundance of pro-tourism policies in election bids. Politicians are tempted to invest in cultural attractions because they have positive effects on the local patriotism and on local identity. The only potential problem derives from regional competition which moves the interest from consumption to production and to "the industrialization" of the tourism services. For example, a phenomenon present all over Europe is the so-called "the feasting of the City" or "the festivals inflation". For some cities, the

emergence of some festivals was a relatively good measure. For example, a fashion week in Iasi, although an invented tradition, created a regional emulation in the fashion industry with positive economic effects. Urban space is such constructed that it's less exposed to degradation and has a greater new culture absorption capacity than the rural space has. But also the inflation of events with tourist purpose is likely to deteriorate the authentic cultural environment in one region, by entering the market and even by the competitive gain of some forms of cultural kitsch.

Sustainable tourism, alternative to cultural tourism

Because of the grounds discussed above, Greg Richards (2001) sustains the evolution of the concept of cultural tourism towards *sustainable tourism.* Taking into consideration the need of tourism in economy and the need of preserving cultural authenticity, tourism policy should endure some transformations. Cultural tourism is a dichotomical concept between culture and tourism or, better said, between the need of culture and the need of tourism. Sustainable tourism represents a triad: tourist – environment – community. While cultural processes are seen as part of community, placing the environment between tourist and community decreases the power of community without distorting its inalienable rights. The environment becomes an asset at everyone's disposal, under the condition of its preservation. This fact underlines a potential incoherence of sustainable tourism concept. When speaking about cultural tourism the dichotomy tourism – culture represent a bet that can be won either by community or by tourist. The community wins if it succeeds in imposing or in keeping control over the cultural resource wanted by tourists. This feature of cultural tourism mainly explains its acceptance by various local circles. But for assuring the local community's benefit reported to cultural tourism, without negative consequences produced by the cultural transformation and by commercialization, we should consider the distinction between the inner aspects (in their broad sense, as way of life) and the external aspects (generally those related to the cultural product) of culture. The first one should be sacred (inalienable), the second one can be presented, exposed and sold. Therefore, the preservation of local culture must become and it gradually becomes an element of local policy.

For sustainable tourism management it's essential to assign some indicators to measure and control the situation at a certain time, reported to sustainability criteria, in order to counter attack in time the evolutions that might lead to lacks of balance, negative effects or even to the decline of tourist destinations. The European institutions and those of The Resort United Nations have already discussed the theme of sustainability in tourist activities. Beginning with 2004 and periodically updated, The World Organization of Tourism emits the so-called "Indicators Guide for sustainable development of tourist destinations" (*www.world-tourism.org/*). The publication describes almost 40 indicators for

sustainability, classified from the management of natural resources to the satisfaction of tourists and host communities, the preservation of cultural patrimony, seasonality, economical dispersion (the charge degree of tourist facilities), climate changes and so on. Every item has suggestions of possibilities and evaluation methodologies, with practical information sources and examples indicated. The publication also includes a procedure for developing specific indicators for specific destinations and afferent ways for their integration in policies and planning processes. The European Commission, through DG Enterprise, also periodically publishes DETOUR study, accompanied by a package of indicators capable of identifying in time and of warning about destinations' decline. Those indicators are reunited in the so called IDES (Interactive Destination Evaluation System), a prototype instrument for identifying the factors that threaten tourist destinations. Also at a practical level, above the institutionalized schemes already mentioned, the decision makers may work with well-known theoretical models of sustainability evaluation. For instance a useful concept for sustainable tourism may be the so called "*tourist load capacity of a destination*". Load capacity is a concept borrowed from human geography and anthropology. In the given context, that of tourism, the concept refers to the "ability" of a destination to absorb certain amounts of visitors related to the existent infrastructure, till the level where space is solicited in an unacceptable measure. For the use of the concept there are needed measurement instruments both for capacity and space usage limits.

Another useful model in tourist research is "Tourist zone life cycle". Introduced by Richard W. Butler in 1980 (Butler, R., 2006), the model offers us a general background for describing the stages of tourist development of a destination, taking into consideration both the evolution of destination space and also tourists' and hosts' perceptions. According to this scheme there would be six stages for a tourist destination, from attraction point to neutral tourist point: exploration, involvement, development, consolidation, stagnation and decline. The life cycle model has been a debate and permanent transformation subject. Butler (2006) offers a collection of contributions to the theoretic and conceptual problems which played an important part in changing the model. The model has already been applied in various tourist areas.

Conclusion

Development through tourism is not a universal "panacea". When elaborating the intervention measures the political decision makers must take into consideration both the new environment restrictions and the preservation of cultures that represent tourist attractions. From this point of view, development through tourism is a limited opportunity. But applying some concrete measures offered by durability instruments tourism may be an effective factor of prosperity in regional economy.

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