Beius Land as project territory for sustainable territorial development through rural tourism. Case study: Poieni de Jos

LUMINITA FILIMON, CLAUDIU FILIMON, RIBANA LINC, PAUL OLAU  
Department of Geography, Tourism ant Territorial Planning  
University of Oradea  
1-3 Universitatii str., Oradea,  
ROMANIA  
palelumi@yahoo.com, ribanalinc@yahoo.com, emilolau@yahoo.com http://istgeorelint.uoradea.ro

Abstract: The most important feature of tourism in Beius Land is the gap between the remarkable tourism potential of this extremely poor area and its capitalization. Rural tourism should become an option for future development of this land, both because its obvious touristic valences, and its values and ancient traditions which is only possible to maintain by appropriate tourism development. This values and ancient traditions are the most important "dowry" that a land type territory has. In order to achieve sustainable regional development through rural tourism, by using the local popular traditional medicine, the paper tries to implement the endogenous development theory in this little village-Poieni de Jos, within Beius Land. The village belongs to the municipality of Bunteşti, which is located in the eastern part of Beius Land, with a population of 4757 inhabitants concentrated in nine villages. The standing arguments for this option are the unique folk medicine tradition and the lack of other local resources. The singularity of this territory could only be saved with a good sustainable tourism strategy. Only that way, the "sons of the village", could benefit on the transformations of their territory which hopefully could be more attractive than Portugal’s, Spain’s and other countries where they are currently trying to build their future. Thus, intercepting the concepts of “land”, endogenous development, sustainable development, to create a project territory, we try to lay the foundations of a different approach of territorial planning which has to deliver sustainable development strategies for this territory.

Key-Words: Endogenous development, local development, project territory, rural tourism

1 Introduction

The present study is part of the attempt to demonstrate, once again, the need of development strategies, as an expression of optimal and sustainable capitalization of a territory’s potential. In our case, the approach is at a micro scale, centred on the village Poieni de Jos, in Beius Land, by using the theoretical concepts of endogenous development, local development, and project territory. For its integration into a superior level inside the territorial ensemble – Beius region, some brand – marks of "land" areas and mental spaces are also necessary. The central idea of the study is the implementation of the endogenous development theory in order to achieve a sustainable territorial development through rural tourism within Beius region, particularly the Poieni de Jos area, by using the natives’ knowledge in traditional medicine. The study consists of three parts: a part of theoretical support and argumentation for the proposed approach, a synthetic diagnosis of tourism in Beius area, and the case study of Poieni de Jos area as the project territory.

2 Theoretical background

This section presents different author’s description of the three major concepts the paper uses: endogenous development, local development and project territory.

2.1 Endogenous development

The theory of endogenous development has its roots in the works of Italian economists who describe the development of “the Third Italy” through forms of competition / cooperation and economic relations based on trust and bounds between local actors, attached to the territory. It is based on internal attraction, built on networking of the inhabitants of a territory, starting with an untapped local resource – material or immaterial. Created in this way, the endogenous development can become a territorial planning policy, based on ordinary culture, trust, solidarity between the inhabitants of a territory that consists in perennial socio – economic networks, aiming to the capitalization of a local sustainable resource. We believe that this theory should be applied for our study area, and even for some mental spaces, with strong territorial coherence, as are the lands of Romania.
2.2 Local development

Local development has been imposed in the recent years at European level, in the context of emphasising decentralization, this tendency being showed also within Romania. Local development compels us to take into account the ensemble of economic, social, and cultural factors of the respective territory. The brand – mark of local development idea and local development projects is the attempt of eliminating the existing breakthrough between economic, social and cultural environments, by mobilizing all potential actors in the territory. As a general principle, there is no economic development where there are social tensions, there is no social equilibrium where there is an anaemic economy, and there is neither of the two, outside culture developed during historic time in the respective territory (Pecqueur and Cuaresma, 1993). We consider that our study area concentrated on a single village corresponds to these theory desiderata.

2.1 Project territory

The project territory notion is based on the idea that each territory has untapped potential (Pecqueur and Cuaresma, 1993), a local development project referring to the evolution of economic life of a territory, even if in order to reach this result it has to go under a certain sector evolution. Project territories are spaces created through territorial planning, similar to programme regions, in order to enforce a project of sustainable territorial planning. The emergence of this concept has become more and more visible in the current concern for the field of territorial planning in France, for approx. 20 years, giving us an example for our proposal, with local areas as important actors in the dynamic development, with territories organising their own local development (Pecqueur and Cuaresma, 1993).

3 Tourism within Beius area

The most important feature of tourism within Beius Land is the gap between the distinct tourism potential of this region and its poor utilisation. The specific feature of tourist resources with distinct importance for the potential development of tourist activities in Beius Land is that of diversity, as there are both natural and anthropic resources in Beius, all of great value. Natural tourist resources are mainly located in the mountains border of Beius Land, and the anthropic ones are concentrated within the depression area, accomplishing a total untapped complementarity. The anthropic tourist resources are actually untapped, but they have a great authenticity, just because of the ‘land’ character of Beius area, synonymous at tourism level to a better preservation of traditions, customs, of ethnography generally. Beius ethnographic space is an exceptional one, coming from the joining of natural and human elements, materialized in the unique spiritual values and folk art: wooden churches, traditional crafts and peasant technical installation, folk costumes, peasant traditional architecture, traditional customs, etc.

Important is that although many of them have been lost in time, compared to other regions, in certain areas, Beius area still maintains the rural world from the 18th century, with its unspoiled novelty. The deep rural condition of this area may be one of the strongest points of territorial sustainable development through rural tourism. Without insisting on a situation which we consider already known as far as the tourist targets level is concerned, we consider that with an adequate strategy, the potential tourist areas in Beius Land that could turn it into a successful tourist destination (fig. 1), are:

- Padis – Galbena Valley area,
- Rosia area,
- Remetea – Meziad area,
- Budureasa – Burda – Cremas area,
- Stana de Vale area,
- Crisul Pietros Valley area,
- Chiscau – Magura – Giulesti area,
- Sighistel Valley area,
- Nucet – Vartop area,
- the upper of Crisului Negru area,
- Vascau Plateau area,
- Finis Valley area,
- Dumbrava de Codru – Crisul Negru Gorge area.

This rich touristic dowry is insufficient exploited because of the lack of a development strategy for tourism within this area, partially expressed in the following weaknesses:

- poor access infrastructure;
- inadequate accommodation facilities;
- lack of tourist facilities as objectives;
- attractiveness valences of the natural objectives aren’t unexploited at their;
- almost complete lack of antrophic touristic resources;
- lack of advertising strategy for this area;
- natives’ low information, potential hosts for rural tourism, etc.

In the light of those mentioned above, we consider that the arguments for approaching Beius Land as a project territory for territorial sustainable development through rural tourism are:

- its quality as ‘`land’’ area;
- high degree of archaism;
- good preservation of traditions and customs;
privileged geographical position, at the foot of Apuseni Mountains;
limited resources;
reduced fertility of terrains;
great tourism potential, but poorly utilized.

Therefore, we consider that rural tourism should become the main option for the future development of Beius area, both because of its particular tourist facets, and its maintaining possibility, through adequate tourist utilisation of ancestral values and traditions, the most important "dowry" of "land" areas.

4 Case study: Poieni de Jos as project territory

The village of Poieni de Jos belongs to the municipality of Buntesti, located in the eastern part of Beius Land, with a population of 4,757 inhabitants concentrated in nine villages: Buntesti (the municipality), Bradet, Dumbravani, Ferice, Lelesti, Poieni de Sus, Poieni de Jos, Saud, and Stancesti. The village has 167 households.

Since local resources are scarce, inhabitants have tried to exploit every existing resource, so that, in time, locality came to be known by its tradition in folk medicine, handed from father to son, unique within Beius area. This is an occupation with important tourist facets, even for curative tourism development.

Around the year 1900 more than 100 families from Poieni de Jos dealt a major part of the year with gathering, preparing and trading medicinal plants (Stefanescu, B., 2001). The monography of Buntesti Commune shows that this tradition dated back through 1700, receiving the right to practice this profession every time by King Ferdinand. At the present, their number has decreased, but those who practice have licences, operating as authorized persons, or as family businesses. The efficiency of the treatments made them popular on national level, but the activity is not touristic exploited. Nowadays, traditional folk medicine is practised in Poieni de Jos and Buntesti (only by 2 families, whose members are originally from Poieni de
Jos) by about 30 families. This activity structure reminds us of the economic activity described by the Italian economists in the case of the Third Italy, thus determining the appearance of the idea of capitalization for the uniqueness of this local savoir faire, in the shape of a project territory.

Each family has their own products, represented by teas, tinctures, ointments, oils, syrups, etc, unique combinations, different from the others. The recipes are inherited from ancestors and transmitted orally from father to son, and secrecy is piously kept, being known only to the head of the family. The whole family is involved in the activity, but the head of the family is the one who prepares the recipes, the rest of the family dealing with harvesting medicinal plants, drying them or distributing the products. Extremely important is that all those engaged in this activity have certificates issued by the Ministry of Health and collaborate with physicians who recommend herbal treatments.

The particular results of these treatments are certified by the distribution network spread all over country. Interesting is the way in which natives understand to cooperate, and not to compete, each of them having their own distribution network and covering a certain region of the country. In almost every market in cities we find a native from Poieni de Jos with his own products. Once with the development of the internet, a simple research revealed to us 7 sites where you can order on-line, and find many other ads.

For the village Poieni de Jos as project territory, the central idea is to apply the endogenous theory for sustainable development, to capitalize the knowledge of folk traditional medicine of the locals, through rural tourism combined with curative tourism.

Reasons in favour of the development of Poieni de Jos area as project territory are:
- the existence of local unique resource, totally unexploited: traditional folk medicine practiced by approx. 30 families;
- good cooperation and loyal competition between inhabitants (each has its own network of localities to trade products, the selling through post being of approx. 50%) – this being one of the endogenous development conditions;
- successful herbal treatments;
- availability of the natives to receive tourists for curative purposes;
- a good level of households endowment in order to assure accommodation for tourists;
- archaic type of practicing agriculture by families who do not deal with traditional medicine, which can provide organic agricultural products to feed tourists, or representing just one element of tourist attraction through the archaism of the agricultural techniques they use;
- outstanding tourist potential of Beius area in general, available at reduced distances, a variety of both natural and antrophic tourist offer.

5 Conclusion
The tourist resources of Beius area are invaluable, but almost entirely untapped and most important are the complementarities between the depression antrophic resources and the mountain area natural resources. In the village Poieni de Jos, in the absence of other natural resources, natives began to exploit the precious herbs since long time ago, reaching that point of being considered true producers of green pharmacy. The involvement of local authorities in order to provide the
village with technical and management infrastructure and its endowment with a functional strategy for development would surely help increase private initiatives, thus increasing the village visibility. Applying the idea of project territory for locality Poieni de Jos would provide sustainable territorial development through rural tourism, allowing also the continuation of the natives’ ancestral occupation, and capitalization of this village tradition. With a strategy for sustainable rural tourism, without any doubt, this area uniqueness could be saved at the same time with its transformation, for “village’s sons”, in a more attractive one than of Portugal, Spain, and other countries where they are trying to build their future.

References:

[13] * * * (1999), “Pays” et développement local. Logique et ambiguïté d’une politique des territoires, NOROIS, nr. 81, tom 46, MSHS-ITEEM, Université de Poitiers