Development of Peripheral Areas through Tourism - disadvantages and benefits: case study for Romanian Coastal Area

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Abstract
Economic and social transformations in the last decades in EEC induce new challenges for development of new activities in order to cope at global level. Tourism is one of the activities high developed in former socialist countries, and that generates at spatial level new models of distribution of activities and new models of mobility. This new tourist development increases the attractiveness of a region. Development of mass tourism induces a profound urbanization of the landscape (agricultural, rural and cultural). Some of this new created (or re-invented) landscapes (transformed from rural settlements to urban cores, branded, marketed and sold in any possible way) are consumed and deeply transformed.

The study refers at two different case studies, which evolved different in the last decades due to their branding and accessibility and outlines the needed measures necessary to preserve the landscape and not at least the local identity.

Keywords: mass tourism, coastal areas, landscape, consumption.

Introduction

In Romanian case, at national transitional level the local government concern to protect and valuate the “common landscape” was almost inexistent and the main goal was focused only on the protected natural and build areas. In this context, dynamic of the coastal territory (Black Sea Shore and Danube Delta) was typologically different in the last century related to development of tourist activities (but without a continuous approach in sense of protection and valuation). The study focuses on changes of landscape due to mass tourism and also outlines basics measures necessary to develop the coastal area in a sustainable way by identifying the most appropriate approach and also the tourist’s structures needed in order to cope with masses.

The case study refers at coastal area of Romania (tourist destinations at Black Sea - Vama Veche and Danube Delta - Sulina Town) and discusses the quantitative and qualitative implications of tourism on the landscape, taking into account the development of this peripheral territory in the last decades.
**General Context for Romania: 1989-2012 Spatial Evolution**

The political changes that have place in Romania in 1989 induced economical, social and cultural transformations both at urban and rural level. These transformations generated new patterns of urban evolution (sprawl in most cases), of mobility for population and activities (inside urban fringe and also at territorial level) and they generated the alienation and deeply fragmentation of landscape.

The most profound processes which affected in the last two decades the Romanian space were the decline of agricultural and industrial activities and the accelerated development of tertiary activities, including tourism. Also, due to this processes the entire urban network hierarchy changed, new towns (as former rural settlements) rose and their development induced deep changes of the landscape (urban, rural, agricultural, and cultural). Because urban policies weren’t adapted and focused on the reclamation of derelict land (mostly industrial) in order to satisfy the necessity of development land for new activities as commerce, services and tourist related activities (recreational areas, new cultural equipments, infrastructure and tourist structures), the spontaneous solution was the reclamation of agricultural land situated nearby urban fringe (the first peri- urban development ring).

Also, the accelerated tourist development of some locations, which were the most branded and marketed destinations at national and international level, without an appropriate development of infrastructure designated for mass tourism and also a coherent strategy for building sector, lead to urban sprawl, incoherent urban development, low public facilities and tourist facilities. Not at least, all these issues generate fragmentation and alienation of landscape, and lost of its features and identity.

If until 2000 these processes were mostly characteristics for the urban space and its influence territory, after 2007 the accelerated development extended these processes also to rural areas (even rural- tourist settlements) which now are threatened to lose their attractiveness due to emphasized consumption of landscape.

**The Main Tourist Interest Areas**

In accordance with Master Plan for Tourist National Development 2007-2026, the main tourist interest areas in Romania are Bucharest City, for its cultural and recreational potential, Transylvania, Bucovina and Maramures for their natural, cultural, eco- tourism, sky and adventure tourism potential, Black Sea Coast for recreational and cultural potential and Danube Delta for natural heritage, eco- tourism and recreational potential.

Figure 1: The main tourist area in Romania, in accordance with Master Plan for Tourist National Development 2007-2026.

The two case studies are situated in Danube Delta tourist area and on Black Sea Coast. They are both peripheral locations, and in accordance with National Accessibility Master Plan they have different development opportunities.
Tourist Development Indicators 2000-2008

As presented above, the development process in Romania in the last two decades is marked also by emphasized tourist development. In the last ten years, as seen on data series presented, the tourist sector evolved, also due to EU accession in 2007. In most cases, the development of tourist sector, related to an increased number of tourists, was not sustained by infrastructure development (including tourist facilities). For example in 2006, the total number of accommodation units was 281.835, from which 70% are low quality units, 2 stars or less (in accordance with Master Plan for National Tourist Development 2007-2026).

Impressive growth from year to year of the number of arrivals since 2002 transformed in 2005 into a reduction with 11.5% which was largely due to outbreak avian influenza and severe floods in different regions of the country. The growth registered after 2007 it is also generated by the increased accessibility of Romanian territory (development of low- cost airlines and new airports), even if, the tourist accession is still made mostly by roads.

Figure 2: International trips registered at Romania’s borders 2003-2008.

Figure 3: Structure of tourist accommodation capacity in operation, 2008.

Transportation and Accessibility for Black Sea Coast and Danube Delta

At national level, in the past 15 years, pattern of passenger transport at territorial level changed, due to low infrastructure. As a result, the total number of passenger journeys decreased dramatically from 1.19 billion in 1990 to 317 million in 2004.
During 1990 - 2004 the number of tourist arrivals remained broadly the same. Tourist arrivals by rail fell from 2.3 million in 1990 to 308,000 in 2004. In the same period, arrivals by road increased from 3.6 million to 5.4 million. The most significant increase recorded an arrivals is by air, with an increase of 260% of tourist traffic.

Figure 4: Proposed communications- roads. Figure 5: Proposed communications- rail.

The Sulina Town has no road and rail accessibility due to its position in Danube Delta (one of the most peripheral location in the country, the settlement can be accessed only by water transportation trough Tulcea City) and is connected only to European VII Transportation Corridor which links Black Sea to North Sea. The other case, Vama Veche (situated at Bulgarian border, also with peripheral location), can be accessed by road and rail and it is linked to the European Transportation Corridors trough Constanta City (only 100 km distance).

As it will be shown further, the two settlements developed different, due to their accessibility, which, in that case was one of the main driving force for development.

**Sulina Town Development**

Sulina Town was in history one of the most important harbors at Black Sea Coast due with its relation with the inland trough the Danube Channel. Since XVIII century was choose by ottomans as harbor in their way to Constantinopole. If in 1850 the town had around 1000 inhabitants, due to its development in XX century as Porto- French harbor, its population increased to 20,000 inhabitants. Due to decline of it harbor and industrial activities and also decreasing of water commerce importance on Danube, its attractiveness decreased, despite the city natural and build heritage attractions, and nowadays, its population is less than 5000 inhabitants (Integrated Development Plan for Sulina Town).

Sulina’s territory is a large swampy area, situated under the sea level and limited by marine grinds. The link with the sea its made trough Sulina Channel which is 7 km long inside the sea and it is ideal for navigation. The main natural resources of the city are the natural landscape (part of the International Reservation Danube Delta), the thatch and rush resources, the fish and medicinal plants.

After 1990 the town started a long process of socio- economical transformation. The economical profile of the city changed from an industrial one to a tourist and cultural attraction. Despite this, the city’s attractiveness decreased due to its peripheral position and low communication and undeveloped
infrastructure (even naval). In order to exemplify its low economical development in sector of naval and industrial activities and also fishery, in present there are just 5 economical agents for fishery and two small shipyards. Also, the city has problems with unemployment rate, less than 40% of total population being employed (a large part of this percent is working in Tulcea city, 100 km far on the Danube Channel).

![Sulina Town location, Sulina Channel and its surroundings.](image)

The main spatial characteristics of the town are: the decreased possibility to develop inland, due to the swampy surroundings, which constitute a coastal agricultural landscape, the distance and low relation with the inland territory. Despite its built heritage, a major part of its monuments are in bad shape and derelict. Also, former industrial sites and tourist resorts are derelict and the new tourist resorts are developed on the sea shore, despite the reduced resources of land. Even in last ten years the tourist sector developed, the town has low public facilities (commercial, public, administrative, education facilities), low quality dwelling and also the tourist infrastructure is almost inexistent (the accommodation is mostly informal in locals houses and the official accommodation units are less than 500).

### Main Advantages of Tourist Development

- The tourist development can generate the local regeneration and remodel of heritage buildings. It can contribute to build and natural heritage protection and conservation, if these local features are seen as assets.
- Tourist sector can generate local economical development and can increase local attractiveness for development of new activities and people location (increase demand on local labor market).
- Low accessibility of the town can be an asset for its development, because discourages mass tourism.
- The attractiveness of local traditional activities can be used in order to enhance local manufacture sector: traditional fests, fishery activities, traditional materials.
- If the tourist sector requirements are satisfied trough traditional and soft measures (building with traditional materials, preservation of traditional spaces and architecture, preservation of its surroundings by practicing a soft tourism) city’s attractiveness can increase due to its landscape and cultural identity.
- Local development should be correlated with infrastructure development and also public facilities.

### Main Disadvantages of Tourist Development

- Due to decreased accessibility (only naval) the tourist period is limited at two months per year
- Low developed tourist infrastructure and public facilities can lead in tourist periods to a consumption of local resources and affect the cultural landscape
- Urban sprawl, land and landscape consumption
• Affecting local resources and the natural reservation by practicing an unsustainable tourism
• The urban sprawl, development of tourist resorts and roads, can affect the local landscape

Figure 7: Sulina town- with red, proposed development for tourist resorts and infrastructure (more than three times its actual surface).

Vama Veche Development

The rural settlement was founded at the beginning of XIX century by a few families. Today it is part of a larger commune, and has a total population of 178 persons (living in 126 family houses). Before 1989, this village had the reputation of a non-mainstream tourist destination, which started to accelerated develop just after 1990 (more than 60% percent of the buildings are realized after 1990 for tourism). Famous because its coastal landscapes, a small build core and a nude beach, the village started to gentrify and extend after 1990 in correlation with mass tourists attraction.

The main tourist resources of the village were the coastal landscape, the natural marine reservation, the local traditional architecture, traditional activities as fishery and also the traditional tourism, so called “yard tourism” meaning accommodation and tourist provision of services inside the locals houses, or beach camping. Even if the traditional activities were agriculture and fishery, in present the most part of population is involved in tourist activities.

In accordance with the sociological study realized in 2006, main present problems of the village are the low provision with recreational and public spaces (in the summer time, all the spaces are used for tourist attractions), state of the beach, low provision of public facilities (education, administration and health facilities), and also the decreased offer of jobs (due to the seasonal character of tourist activities).

Figure 8: Vama Veche village in 2012. The traditional core of the settlement is situated along the principal national road (which relates the village with Constanta City). The village was accelerated developed between 1990-2012, by consuming the agricultural land and sea shore.

Source: google.maps 2012

Because increased attraction of the village for tourism and a deficitary local policy concerning urban development, in the last two decades, the village was deeply affected of urban sprawl, development of new tourist building and resorts having place mostly in the adjacent agricultural land and also on the sea shore. This type of development affected both the local landscape (mainly agricultural and marine) and the local identity (by the appereance of new tourist facilities at high standards). Also, the development
of tourist attractions wasn’t accompanied (as revealed by the sociological study) by the provision of needed infrastructure (for tourist and locals also) as shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Results of sociological study realised in Vama Veche in 2003.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Public facilities Provision</th>
<th>Unsatisfaction rate (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Water provision</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Water quality</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Energy</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communications</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sewerage</td>
<td>Doesn’t exist</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public Lightning</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accessibility</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medical services</td>
<td>86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Educational services</td>
<td>85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Security</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public transportation</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recreational spaces</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shore state (beach)</td>
<td>74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jobs offer</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


This development pattern led to “Save Vama Veche” Campaign that was lobbying for the areas environmental conservation and practice of soft tourism. In 2003 the campaign was founding the “Stufstock Fest” in order to make publicity for the unsustainable development of the village. Despite the campaign objectives, due to its accesibility and promotion as cultural location and “freedom destination” the Fest in August 2003 attracted a crowd of 10,000 tourists, and increased in 2005 at 40,000 tourists.

Due to the campaign, the legislation was enacted, limiting construction of new houses and roads, or paving the existant roads (in accordance with the study Analysis of Typology and Morphology of Limanu Commune). Also, the future development should taken into account provision of public facilities and recreational spaces, increasing local activities and job offer and also preservation of sea shore and Marine reservation. Because it attractiveness, the development process was stopped just for a short time, and beginning with 2009, in accordance with the new local development strategy, were developed new roads and new tourist facilities.
Figure 9: Construction and public space typology in Vama Veche.

Main Disadvantages of Tourist Development

- Because of collective perception before 1989 as “freedom destination”, the village became after 1990 subject of mass tourism
- Due to its increased development the main traditional tourist attractions were affected or even disappeared: fishing, yard tourism, rural character, coastal landscape
- Due to its promotion and accessibility, mass tourism developed rapidly
- Despite the main objectives of the Campaign Save Vama Veche, the fest is attracting more tourists than can be supported by local infrastructure
- The requirements of space to develop tourist facilities (hotels and resorts) affected the local landscape (cultural, rural, coastal) by developing of urban constructions with 4-5 levels.
- Insertion of new buildings near the sea shore affected the Marine Reservation
- The tourist development of the village required also provision of facilities which modified the local landscape (concrete roads, parkings near the beach, etc.)
- The tourist development, without a coherent strategy, have not enhanced the living conditions of the locals.

Figure 10 and 11: Mass tourism and new buildings in Vama Veche village.
Case Studies Conclusions

Due to public perception and media promotion, the two coastal settlements developed different in the last twenty years. Also, in the Vama Veche case, increased accessibility encouraged mass-tourism, and some of the actions proposed in order to preserve the local character attracted more tourists and promoted more the location.

Based on the two case studies, the main actions and measures for a sustainable tourism in coastal areas (for rural settlements) refer at preservation of traditional residential tourist accommodation, traditional for these locations, preservation of spaces and buildings which are representative for the settlements, the local tradition and cultural identity. Not at least, preservation of local architectural typology and traditional activities enhance the local identity of the tourist rural destinations and also their attractiveness.

In those cases, sustainable tourism can mean a balanced development of road infrastructure (accessibility) in order to support access for a limited number of tourists and also emphasizing local economy and local environment. Tourist development of the rural settlements should respect the local traditions and cultural landscape and should integrate with local economy and traditions.

Conclusions

A scheme of management and development of rural tourist destination should represent an operation of preservation of local values and local resources. In the same time, the success of a project depends on the recognition of collective interest and public consensus on development objectives.

Regarding the tourist development of a settlement, four major problems can be outlined:

- Who are the targeted visitors and what is their demand from the location?
- Can this location to provide required facilities in a sustainable way?
- Can the tourist developed assure also the local development requirements, as public facilities?
- Which are the values and components of the settlement that should be protected and preserved in order to maintain the local identity?

Mass tourism is a phenomenon characteristic of recent. The initial response to the growing number of tourists has been positive and was regarded as a generator of economic prosperity, communities, investors and governments doing their best to attract tourists. Gradually, the constraints placed on local services, interference with traditional ways of life, uncontrolled development and decline of tourist destinations that followed their decreased attractiveness, have modified many communities and affected heritage values and not at least the landscape (because the irreversible alteration of its features). From this perspective it is important to strictly manage the tourist site development, aiming to protect the community and its cultural values.

References


