

TRADITIONAL PROFESSIONS – ELEMENTS OF TOURIST INTEGRATED DEVELOPMENT IN RURAL AREAS

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Abstract

Integrated development seen at the level of local community assumes a global approach of all influence factors over these on the one hand, but also the evolution of these in time on another hand. In these conditions there must be taken in consideration a series of aspects as: economic activities, local community and environment protection. The purpose of this paper is to analyze traditional trades/professions from rural areas in order to surprise these interconnections with environmental factors, economic aspects and local community. Traditional trades can be looked at from many points of view. First of them and the oldest one is the economic point of view. Employed populations in traditional fields are insuring a source of income and contribute to a raise of local wellbeing. The second aspect is bound by the attraction possibility of tourists in the area through the angle of these original activities, which are ever rarer due to the economic progress and competition. A third aspect, under which we are going to follow the trades, is referring to the development of the feeling of pride and community belonging, the maintaining of youth in the locality, at valuating the customs and folk traditions as a first step towards the perpetuation of these in the future. Last but not least we will analyze the connections between traditional trades and the natural framework as well as the impact of the above mentioned on the environment.

Keywords: integrated tourism, local community, rural, traditional handicrafts, customs

JEL Classification: L83, O21, Q56, R11.

Introduction

Traditional crafts, practiced for centuries in villages that could constitute an important tourist resource, risk to fade away due to the lack of sales market and of the youth's unconcern to take over the customs from the elders, because these customs and practices do not offer enough income to live on. In such a situation are : pottery, embellished eggs, wood carvings, painted icons on glass or wood, masks and folk jewellery or knitted works, folk instruments, decorative objects, weaved pieces of folk costumes. Among causes of the decline of these handicrafts can be counted both the modernizing of rural areas (especially in Bran, Dobrogea or in Teleorman) and the lack of sales of folk products on the market. Unfortunately there is no law of crafts, and the local authority has not got involved in introducing one in tourist circuits of folk traders.

Another reason for which traditional crafts have not got success is that the raw material for making the products is relatively expensive, and their manual labour requires time and skills while the buyers are few. Although in present, at the European level there can be felt a tendency to financially support the traditional crafts, the main sales market of folk trades is represented by the stores in museums or by the few organized fairs in these museums.

The people who are young and resourceful, and who live in regions with high touristic potential like Maramureş, Bucovina or pre mountain Oltenia manage to have orders from abroad, that provide them nice incomes, but these situations are rare. For maintaining alive some of the Romanian trades that date from the Middle Ages, the experts in ethnography explain that it is necessary to have a national strategy of renewing the traditional handicrafts, which can permit to the capitalization centers of creation to be more active. Of course, the tourist lines could include also the traditional folk centers because many times tourists, especially foreigners don't know that these traditions are still alive. If we let t these handicrafts die, we lose a sort of small national wealth.

1. Integrated tourist development – conceptual classifications

The concept of integrated development has started from the necessity of the economic development of localities/regions gaining new dimensions in time: the integration of environment factors in the economic activity (Wahab and Pigram, 1997), methods of integration of economy and culture (Priestly, Edwards and Coccossis, 1996; Stabler, 1997), but also the role and the participation of local community. On the basis of these last dimensions of integration, has also followed

the percent of local employed population, the type and the rank of participation, the power of decision and the control of communities over the resources from the local tourist sphere (Briedenhann and Wickens,2004; Stem, Lassoie, Lee, Deshler and Schelhas,2003).

The observation of the negative impact of pollution on environment has lead to integration of this factor in the process of development. Also, the dissatisfaction of local communities towards the measures promoted by the local economic agents or by the local or central public authorities have made necessary to consider them in these planning programs of development. In these conditions the term of integrated development is reached as a sum of all influence factors on the one hand, and as an evolution process and customized, according to the regional specificity, on the other hand.

Starting from the necessity of development of Europe's rural region, the SPRITE project (Supporting and Promoting Integrated Tourism in Europe's lagging rural region) tackles the concept of *integrated tourism* as a solution for raising the living standard of local communities without any connection with the notion of sustainable development. The SPRITE authors offer also a complete definition of *integrated tourism* "as the tourism which is directly tied by the economic, social, cultural, natural and human structures of the region where it takes place and which searches to use these at an optimum level". In this definition there can be observed the influence factors over integrated tourism namely: local resources, local activity and economy, and an interested local community. In these conditions, *integrated tourism* has the potential of offering to the customers a distinctly package of products, services and local experiences.

As part of the integrated development process, the paper analyzes traditional handicrafts from more points of view: economic, social and environment, and also their potential to assure a sustainable development of local communities through more methods: developing an economic sphere, creating new places of work and increasing the incomes, transforming the locality into a point of tourist attraction, developing local pride in community and stopping the migration of youth to other more developed regions.

2. Traditional professions – the relationship with environment

Traditional crafts are closely bound by the variety of natural resources which people dispose of in their living region. The exploitation of these resources was made, for a long period of time, rationally without modifying the ecological balance of the area. The rural communities were aware of the necessity of keeping

this balanced relation and were trying not to develop economic activities over the support capacity of the area. Developing of the mass production brings a series of changes and affects the ecological balance. On the base of raw materials found in nature we will follow the traditional handicrafts into a landing more detailed for identifying the action directions which can be followed by any of the local communities with a history in this sense.

The first analyzed resource is wood which, a long time ago, was found in abundance on the whole territory of Romania. Having like raw material wood, a series of works has been developed bound by processing it under the most diverse forms: from pipe and house use products to furniture and living houses. Going on the specialization wire in carpentry art there can be met a series of trades like: two handled tub, circulars, shingle splitters, plankers or wheelwrights.

The pottery is bound by the quality of clay found in the region and by the skills of masters to give forms, from the most diverse, of this resource so commonplace. Formerly there were villages of potters where the peasants lived from this trade which they were passing by to the next generation. The nice small pots resulted from the master's hands were charged into carts and then were taken in the next villages or even on longer distances, where were changed for maize, corn or necessary tools for farming.

The extract of ores and of other soil resources, as well as metal working, due to the relatively rich natural resources, was another occupation of Romanians. The variety of these, lead to a diversity of traditional crafts most of the times associated with the Roma ethnic group: coppersmith (processing copper), whitewasher (tinning metal vessels) and also smith, stone cutter, etc.

Raising animals satisfied, beside the need of food, the need of people to dress. In these conditions, many trades related to this need have been developed: tanning, skins, furriers' trade, scourging, boot making and peasants' sandals making.

Among these traditional jobs, there still can be found many crafts, more or less extended at the level of the whole country: manufacturing slack lime, manufacturing palinca, coaling, preparing wool, etc.

Traditional art developed based on the people need of beauty but also due to religion. In these conditions, appeared different occupations related with painting icons on wood or glass, egg's embellishing, carving wood, masks and folk jewel or knitting works, making folk instruments or decorative objects, weaving of pieces of folk costume.

3. Traditional professions – economic interconnections

After a long period in which traditional professions were forgotten, in present, in the Romanian villages there is a feeling of renewal of these professions. The communist period manifested by collectivization, forced urbanization, atheism etc. together with the industrial development, the mass production and the intensification of competition lead to the diminishing of traditional professions in the rural areas. In the last years, due to some favourable aspects, one feels a renewal of these and especially of those connected to traditional art due to some favorable aspects. The central authority supports the founding of Folk Schools of Arts and Handicrafts in localities with tradition in this direction. For example, The Alba District has opened a class with specialization Ceramics at Săsciori on Sebeş Valley and another class in the touristic station Arieşeni for specialization Art of Wood. At Şugag also a class of “Notches in wood and folk instruments – pipe” was founded, and in Bucerdea Vinoasa a class with the specific “traditional tissues, sewing”. These are examples from only one district of Romania.

At renewing of the traditional professions also contributes “The multiannual national program on the period 2006-2009 for sustaining trades and handicrafts” enrolled by the Government of Romania. This one has an anticipated national budget of 4.000.000 RON and can be accessed from the beginning of 2008 by small and middle enterprises, co-operatives, authorized physical persons and family associations, partners and foundations that have the activity of, manufacturing and commercializing hand-made products or products and services with traditional specific. The program intends to stimulate the development of the small industries of handicrafts especially in rural localities having in mind trades that are supposing a big number of manual operations executed for producing folk art objects. It is an operation that can practically save traditional crafts and even can transform those in a profitable business. The next types of expenses are eligible: participation on fairs and national or international expositions, elaboration of promotion printed materials, making presentation websites, buying computers, tools and other necessary equipments for carrying on with the usual activity.

The development of traditional professions in the framework of local communities with tradition in this direction can lead to a renewing of locality from many points of view. First of all, there can be workplaces assured for the young people from the locality by initiating and sustaining some small businesses. Secondly, making known these traditional activities transforms the locality in a tourist point of attraction in the region of rural tourism. Organizing traditional festivals attracts a

huge number of tourists in locality, occasion with, it can be valued the obtained products.

In their turn, the pensions can have an important role in promoting the traditional professions. The guests appreciate an experience that includes the possibility of buying things which can remind them of Romania and about that region or place. Tourists like to spend money on art objects, handicrafts and other souvenirs which can remind them of holiday. This thing is a proof, for the locals, that, what they have to offer is important and interesting. Even more tourists want to explore the surroundings but, most of the times, do not find information on what to do or to see in that region. It is the responsibility of the locals and tour operators to be well informed. This way, they can give information and suggestions to the visitors interested in exploring surroundings. It is very important to bound different fields of the rural economy with the touristic field. Some of these are the handicrafts field, farms, rural attractions and alimentation field. Once the tourists find out the specific products of a distinct rural area, they will tell their friends and relatives about all these things. Except the fact that the number of tourists increases in the area, there are also consumers that buy different object directly from traders or from the external market. The creative and tourist economy are complementary. In tourism, the period of staying, from the tourist cycle, is the period when tourists do go shopping and get involved in diverse activities through which they can fill their time. The concept of commercialization extends from the simple presentation of some objects on a shelf to delivering information for tourists into a variety of forms. Commercializing has the potential to connect many business and gives, to a local community, the possibility to create a complex and unitary tourist experience. The benefits for the whole tourist economy can be huge when pensions, on one side, and firms on the other side promote each other. This means an increasing responsibility for the landowners of pensions. Anyhow, all operators and owners will learn from their own experience that handicrafts makers, restaurants and the others, involved in the economy of an area, are complementary to tourist pensions and by working together, everybody wins.

Beside the help given by the state through different programs of financing or by central authority through founding Folk Schools of Arts and Handicrafts, the local will is also necessary for running to success in this step of renewing traditional crafts. Supporting children in the frame of community, organizing events in the frame of town and promoting these as it should, participation of genuine handicrafts at contests and/or folk art manifestations contribute to the increase of prestige and notoriety of the community on national plan. Seeing that they are valued at their true value, the traditional hurdlers will continue and will develop the practiced activities, and the young generations will have an impulse to practice

these old professions in competition with the search of some better paid activities in town or in another country. Stopping migration will provide the necessary workforce for all types of activities more or less tourism related: accommodation, food, entertainment, small production, commerce.

Conclusions

There can easily be observed the connection between traditional professions and the development of a town. Nowadays, when competition stays at the base of the economic relations, traditional crafts are those which can sustain co-operation relations at a local level and the competition can be transferred to a higher level, the regional area. This aspect is just as profitable for everybody. At a local level there are developing quality tourist services and tourists can benefit of unique and authentic experiences. At a regional level, the competition will stimulate other towns to renew their tourism offers, Romania having a rich potential in the direction of rural tourism. By valuating customs and traditional handicrafts as the main difference element in the rural tourism offer, in time and with the participation of the local stakeholders, it can be reached a sustainable development of the town with certain advantages for all.

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