

CULTURAL-HISTORICAL AND EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES OF RURAL AREAS

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Abstract

The process of urbanization is changing the relationship between cities and villages in each of the developed countries in the world. The tendencies are towards reduction of the rural areas, which outlines the risk of destruction of a specific, social-normative culture, bearing the marks of the traditions, customs, rituals preserved over the years - characteristic of the village. The geographical and natural features of the different rural areas presuppose the formation of specific crafts in the past, whose authenticity is preserved to this day through the created ethnographic complexes in many regions of Bulgaria, which have become the basis for the development of rural tourism. These areas have not only cultural and historical significance for generations, but also have educational potential. For the full qualification, education and practice of students in the field of veterinary medicine, zootechnics, agronomy, etc. it is necessary to invest in the maintenance and development of rural areas. Returning to the village and assessing it as a potentially important sector is a strategic priority not only of the EU, but also of any country that values its past but also thinks about its future. The present study aims to prove the need to rediscover the cultural, historical and educational resources of rural areas as a possible perspective for their social and economic development. In the course of the research a comparative and dynamic analysis, literature review, review of legislative frameworks and official documents of the institutions were used. A methodological framework for assessing the potential of rural areas has been proposed, through which stakeholders and institutions can rediscover these resources. Based on the theoretical and empirical analysis, the following conclusions are made: First, the cultural and historical heritage has the potential to become a successful tool for the social and economic development of rural communities. It is the platform for the development of tourism in rural areas. Second, investing in the creation, maintenance and development of training facilities - serving the interests of various educational institutions (schools, colleges, universities) is a necessary perspective that supports learning and is a chance to revive rural areas as authentic sites for cultural and educational purposes.

Key words: *development of rural areas, rural tourism, educational potential, cultural and historical significance, practice of students*

INTRODUCTION

The process of urbanization is changing the relationship between cities and villages in each of the developed countries in the world. The tendencies are towards reduction of the population and the geographical area of the rural areas, which outlines the risk of destruction of a specific material, social-normative and spiritual culture, bearing the marks of the crafts, traditions, customs preserved over the years - typical for the village and rural communities. The purpose of preserving and promoting this tangible and intangible cultural heritage is a priority for the future prosperity of rural areas. In many parts of Bulgaria, this potential is reflected in the development of rural tourism, which supports

the local population socially and economically. On the other hand, these territories are becoming a good educational platform and their potential in such a direction is yet to evolve. Especially in the last pandemic year, when open learning spaces are preferred and even tentatively created, orienting in such a direction is a logical alternative. For some specific professional sectors, the connection with the village is a mandatory condition for gaining experience and qualification. Cognitive and cultural-educational interest is also not to be neglected. It is in continuity that the germ of the preserved tradition and the created innovations lies.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The present study aims to prove the need to rediscover the cultural, historical and educational resources of rural areas as a possible perspective for their social and economic development. The proposed methodological framework for assessing the potential of rural areas is indicative, but it is possible to apply it at municipal and regional level and observing the main criteria, requirements and methods set out in it, stakeholders and institutions can rediscover these resources that have certain areas. In the course of the research a comparative and dynamic analysis, literature review, review of legislative frameworks and official documents of the institutions were used. Consultations with experts in the respective field have been carried out. Previous experience/initiatives for assessment of cultural and historical resources at local level have been studied.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Rural development is one of the priorities of EU regional policy. In recent years, Bulgarian villages face many demographic challenges: progressive population decline, negative natural growth, low birth rates, high mortality, deteriorating age structure, increased migration, depopulation and more.

The village - the causes of the crisis

The reasons for the existing and deepening crisis in the village are multifaceted. The systematization of some of them is necessary if we want to reverse the trend, because in addition to the gloomy picture, these areas have a certain natural, human, economic and cultural potential, whose development and full use is the desired basic resource for sustainability in their development.

The crisis in the village has its roots:

First, the bad conditions for our agriculture, agreed before Bulgaria's accession to the European Union. Based on these agreements, the Bulgarian agricultural producer receives and will receive for many years to come many times lower subsidies compared to its counterparts from other EU countries for the same productions and products.

Second, cumbersome and slow procedures for accepting and approving proposals to support farmers who want to develop their farm, as well as the long length of time for the payment of subsidies. For some productions this turns out to be fatal.

Third, nearly 90 percent of the funds coming from EU programs to support the agricultural sector go to the coffers of 10 percent of all our farmers and these are the modern Bulgarian "latifundists" - large tenants-producers of cereals, which is detrimental to other sectors.

Fourth, in the course of most analyses in recent years, the shift in focus from "rural" to "rural" is logically justified. This casting is not accidental and hides various messages. On the one hand, the attention is discretely directed to a wider territorial level - the district, and on the other - the agony of the village as a territorial unit is silently concealed. Of course, not all villages can be placed under one denominator, but this trend is obvious [9].

Fifth, the main threats to the future development of Bulgaria's rural areas are related to depopulation and population aging, high risk of poverty and social exclusion. The devastation is obvious in different parts of our country - schools are closing, depopulated ghostly buildings of cultural institutions (community centres, libraries, clubs) are deserted. The financial resources for rehabilitation and maintenance of the municipalities are minimal.

Opportunities and perspectives

Overcoming some of these problems and ensuring sustainable dynamism in rural communities require the identification and implementation of appropriate economic models to turn untapped resource potential into added value. In this sense, two of the possible solutions for a positive outlook for rural areas are outlined in the following directions:

First, cultural heritage, insofar as it is preserved, in symbiosis with the history of each region, has the potential to become a successful tool for the social and economic development of rural communities. They are the platform for the development of tourism in rural areas (rural, eco, green, culture and

heritage, wine, hunting and the like), and as a type of economic activity, provides opportunities to create direct and indirect benefits for local development.

Second, the investment in the creation, maintenance and development of training facilities - serving the interests of various educational institutions (schools, colleges, universities) is a meaningful and promising initiative, which on the one hand is necessary and supports the practical training of students, professionals, and on the other hand there is a chance for the revival of rural areas as authentic terrains for cultural and educational purposes.

Methodology for assessing the cultural-historical and educational potential of rural areas

In this analysis, we will propose a methodological framework that can support the analysis and assessment of the cultural, historical and educational potential of rural areas. This model can be used by rural municipalities to assess the resources they have, especially if they are oriented towards cultural and historical heritage [1].

Although we focus our attention mainly on cultural and historical resources, it is necessary to specify that they are in one with many of the other available resources in the respective area, because they are located in one territory. Very often some of them (natural, anthropogenic, material, financial, etc.) contribute to the greater attractiveness of the formed tourist product.

Cultural and historical resources can be further classified into: historical (archaeological excavations, fortresses and towers, palaces, monuments, sunken ships, native places, etc.); architectural (fountains, bridges, buildings, aqueducts, etc.); religious (churches, monasteries, sanctuaries, tombs, holidays, etc.); ethnographic (customs, household items, crafts, folklore, cooking, etc.); cultural and cognitive (museums, exhibitions, galleries, treasuries, universities and research centres, libraries, etc.

The main criteria by which the potential of cultural and historical resources in a given rural area should be assessed are the following:

- Requirements that must be met in order to be classified as tourist;

- Properties they possess;

- Characteristics;

If we approach in particular, the requirements [6] that cultural and historical resources must meet in order to be transformed into tourist resources are the following:

(a) accessibility: both in terms of transport and financially, in order to provide opportunities for their use, regardless of their uniqueness or significance;

(b) complexity: single resources (with some exceptions and other things being equal) are more difficult to become attractive for visits compared to a group of resources, and their complex location helps to attract tourists and stimulates long-term development of the territory through the system of tourist activities in it;

(c) attractiveness for tourists: they can attract with their beauty and exoticism or with their uniqueness (size, unusualness, rare resource, etc.), but without complying with the requirement of attractiveness it is practically impossible to refer to the category of tourist resources;

(d) safety: the degree of their preservation is important in this case - the higher it is, other things being equal, the more attractive the resources will be (the ruins of a medieval castle in a non-preserved form attract less visitors than well.

preserved building);

(e) good geographical location: the location of a rural area in combination with a diverse landscape, natural and cultural-historical characteristics is favorably defined;

The **main properties** of tourist resources include: [6] attractiveness, accessibility, degree of study; significance (spectacle); socio-demographic characteristics; potential stock and method of use.

Their specific properties are defined as:

- integrity (indivisibility) of the elements and their existence in interrelation;

- capacity (carrying capacity) - number of tourists that can accept the territory on which the cultural, historical and tourist regions (CHTR) is located;

- reliability - determined by all social, economic and political conditions within the tourist territory;
- uniqueness (rarity, exclusivity) or probability of encountering uniqueness;
- cognitive value - is associated with specific historical facts, personalities, life and work of famous people;
- fame - popularity among tourists;
- exoticism - degree of contrast of the site in relation to the conditions of the permanent residence of the tourists, through which the so-called unusualness of the tourist site is studied;
- expressiveness - degree of interaction with the environment, infrastructure and nature;
- Preservation - readiness for organized reception of tourists;
- safety - absence of possible negative consequences from the use of CHTR by tourists and the local population.

The more important characteristics of cultural and historical resources include [6]:

- volume of opportunities - to determine the potential capacity of tourist sites (resorts, hotels, etc.), the level of utilization and optimized load of the resource: area of tourist territory, visitor potential of a tourist attraction, etc.;
- distribution - determines the potential tourist territory, the circle of sanitary protection, etc.;
- period of possible operation - determines the seasonality of the visits and their rhythmicity, the duration of the favorable climatic season for effective tourist operation, etc.;
- possibility for multiple use - in compliance with norms and carrying out activities for restoration and improvement of the resource.

In order to assess the diversity and quantity of cultural and historical resources in rural areas, it is first necessary to register, characterize and typologize them. The general information about the cultural-historical site includes its name, location, marking, type of ownership, literary and other information sources about the site, scheme of disposal. The typology of the site follows, taking as its basis: the information essence of the cultural-historical site, its uniqueness, the typical environment for its type, its cognitive and educational significance, the attractiveness of the site.

The following basic principles are used in the analysis of cultural and historical resources in rural areas:

Chronological - typical of such studies. With it, the objects are grouped and studied depending on the historical period to which they belong. In its application the question arises about the periodization of the monuments - it is more correct to refer them to the period (event) in connection with which they were built, and not to the period of their construction.

Typological - based on different classifications of cultural and historical resources, their characteristics by species; The main goal is to establish the common features specific to each species (for example, many times the same resources are the subject of cultural, rural and ecotourism).

Functional - the resources are studied in connection with their function and in particular in connection with the types of tourism that develop on their basis and the parameters of the facilities serving them and the attracted visitors;

Spatial - emphasizes the peculiarities of the territorial distribution of tourist resources, their zoning, determining their combinations of different hierarchical rank, their integration (supplementation) with other tourist resources, etc.

The main goal in assessing the potential of the selected cultural and historical resources in rural areas is to establish their attractiveness, opportunities for their inclusion in tourist routes, features and problems related to their use and protection.

The selection of parameters for description and analysis is determined by the type of object, but some of them are mandatory for all.

For cultural and historical monuments and places it is necessary to indicate:

- name and type;
- location and transport accessibility;
- historical period or the specific event or person with whom it is associated;
- physical condition and adjacent space;
- organization of visits (if the site is used);
- availability of service personnel;

national origin of tourists visiting tourist sites (real and potential);

- types of routes in which the site is included or may be included;
- existence of a special security status;
- literary sources for the site, etc.

The tools (means) for measuring the quantitative and qualitative characteristics of cultural and historical resources are distinguished, and the choice of indicators for evaluation of these resources in rural areas is as usually subjective. The guidelines illustrate in a practical and concrete way the individual stages that a local community must follow in order to start discovering, preserving and, above all, exploiting its cultural values for the development of the region and in the interest of future consumers.

Rural tourism

Tourism is the most dynamic branch of the world economy with a deep impact on the development of other economic branches [13].

Usually, rural tourism develops in rural areas. It is often defined as "provincial", "local", "agro", "recreational", "alternative", different from the mass. It is "tourism in rural areas, which satisfies the interests of tourists to traditions, life, culture, agricultural and other specific activities, as well as to the natural, historical and cultural resources of the region in peace and casual human relationships" [2].

In its development, the interests of the local population should take precedence over those of tourists and the tourism industry, and supply should be based primarily on local resources. Rural tourism:

- provides opportunities for economic and social development of the regions;
- maintains and creates local revenues, jobs and population growth;
- assists in raising funds for the economic and social infrastructure;
- helps to protect the environment and cultural resources;
- provides an opportunity to acquire agricultural and culinary skills, enriches the knowledge about the way of life and culture of the region.

These benefits for rural areas as a result of the development of rural tourism in Bulgaria are fully in line with the "National Strategy for Sustainable Tourism Development in Bulgaria (2014-2030)", which provides for tourism in our country to develop as a prosperous sector contributing to the implementation of the principles of sustainable development in all its aspects - environmental protection, prosperity of local communities and economic growth.

With its natural landscape, rural areas undoubtedly offer the best prospects for the development of sustainable tourism. They guarantee visitors not only a different experience, but also create in them a sense of authenticity and belonging. In recent years, rural tourism has become a preferred form of leisure. There are numerous attempts in the literature to define rural tourism as a type of tourist product. The diversity of activities and the diverse nature of rural areas are the reason for the kaleidoscope of definitions of the nature of rural tourism [12].

Many authors tend to assume that the concept of rural tourism arises from the definition of ecotourism. This is a special type of tourist market that is not fully included in the concept of ecotourism. The main reason for this is that ecotourism refers to tourist activities in green spaces located not only in rural areas but also in urban areas.

The difference between ecotourism (green tourism) and rural tourism is based on the definition of the term "rural areas", defined by the European Union in one of the first rural development programs within the OECD member countries (Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development). According to this definition, "a rural area is an area that includes villages or small towns with the following economic activities:

- agriculture, forestry, water management and fish farming;
- other economic and cultural activities of the local community (arts, crafts, tourism, etc.);
- destinations for leisure activities" [8].

When considering the different definitions of rural tourism, three main aspects are revealed, which can be classified as cultural (local arts and crafts, music and dance, festivals, local dialect, cooking methods and traditional

recipes, production of local food products). natural (eco-tourism, hunting and fishing, environment, rural landscape, climbing, horseback riding, etc.) and historical (folklore, architecture, historical heritage).

In order to define tourism as rural, it must reflect the characteristics typical of rural areas. For the development of rural tourism it is necessary to have a good understanding of the peculiarities of the rural environment and its demography, as well as to study the socio-cultural, economic and political origins of the place. The above proposed model for assessing the resources possessed by a given area aims to support precisely this classification and characterization of the places that are potentially possible to become centers for rural tourism.

For European countries, and in particular for EU Member States, rural tourism is not a new phenomenon. In recent years, as a result of the world-critical pandemic of COVID-19, it has seen a great expansion and development of its potential. The targeted policy of the institutions towards the development of this sector will still generate many advantages. The two most significant at this stage are:

- development and rehabilitation of the rural sector;
- development of this type of tourism as an alternative to traditional mass tourism;

The process of rural tourism development must first of all comply with certain requirements such as: identification of suitable rural areas on the basis of the available resources they have; investments in tourism activities with potential for development; development of transport and housing infrastructure. At a later stage it will be possible to take into account the benefits of the development of rural tourism. The positive consequences can be - economic, social and cultural. The following are worth mentioning here:

- creation of new jobs for all categories of the population;
- development of many activities, including agriculture and handicrafts, the main goal of which is to eliminate as much as possible the seasonal nature;
- additional revenues for local budgets;

- maximum reduction of internal and external migration by stabilizing the population;
- improvement of local services related to tourism (trade, transport, telecommunications, etc.);
- restoration and protection of real estate by inheritance;
- preservation and promotion of local traditions, customs and crafts;
- cultural exchange;
- attracting new local or foreign private investors, etc.

- environmental protection;

Rural areas are an integral part of the modern tourist experience. However, they also need understanding in order to provide appropriate forms of tourism, based on the available resources of the region. Only in this way can they help achieve national, regional and / or local goals. The responsibility for assessing the effects of tourism with a lasting impact on rural areas is inalienable; to distinguish between development benefits and costs [7].

Education

If we perceive training as a complete and structured process, it makes sense to analyse the methods of training in this process. Researchers have repeatedly proven that people learn the most through their own experience - in situations involving thinking, experiencing and acting. If we want to expand the opportunities for learning, leaving the classrooms and classrooms, we must look for new methods that will create an opportunity to make sense of theoretical training through practical means and in a real work environment. In the modern educational platforms, purposeful tendencies for linking the classical education with the practice are very clearly distinguished. Due to the heterogeneous nature of the subjects in schools and universities, finding a field for extracurricular learning is a complex process. In this sense, it is the rural areas that prove to be a potentially suitable environment for practical training and development of future professionals with a specific professional orientation. For future zoo engineers, veterinarians, agronomists, foresters, agricultural specialists, livestock breeders, ecologists, etc., rural areas are the basis for

upgrading knowledge and competencies. The revival of natural production is in line with modern trends for the consumption of organic products. Through the rehabilitation of the old crafts and practices the traditions are preserved and it is an attempt to return the young Bulgarians to their roots. The social-normative culture passed down through the generations is the essence that outlines the peculiarities of the Bulgarian national character.

The good examples

The examples that illustrate the multifaceted cultural, historical and educational resources of rural areas in Bulgaria are numerous. Here are just a few that focus on our main focus in the study:

Every year in the village of Karpachevo - Lovech region is organized practices of students who restore houses in depopulated villages in the area. Their goal is for people not to leave their homes in search of a better life, and young people seek inspiration there in the authentic rural atmosphere. The number of inhabitants is no more than 80, mostly elderly people. There is only one child. "There is great potential in the village. Architects and restorers are eager to come here. This work is interesting, and it is important to preserve the cultural heritage of this area "- share the young people. A specially organized exhibition of authentic objects from everyday life and the dying life of the village - promotes their idea [10].

We can mention a number of projects (such as "Grandma's Residence"), which see the village as a reserve. Dozens of young people go and live for a month in different, depopulated villages in Bulgaria, in households that need support and help, there they learn various crafts, specific practices of traditional culture; identify the needs and resources of the village through methods such as design thinking, ethnology and anthropology; together with the local people they come up with and implement ideas that can be useful to the village. The results of such projects are: a restored old oven in one of the villages, which has not produced bread for a long time, recordings on a disc with the

disappearing songs of the grandmothers, marking of routes for eco-trails [14, 4].

The Borrowed Village project in the Danube villages is similar, giving young people the opportunity to learn what a seat is and how to make porridge. It turns out that the village is a very serious source of activities, which we can call, for example, an ethnographic-architectural reserve; for today's young people, who grew up with computers and the Internet, it turns out to be interesting to learn something about the contemporary customs in the village [11].

CONCLUSIONS

The analysis of the cultural-historical and educational resources of the rural areas, as well as the proposed model for assessing their potential are based on a real assessment of all factors that are important for creating a positive trend related to the socio-economic development goals of the regions. whole. Achieving these goals requires the provision of the following conditions:

- Development of the road infrastructure and superstructure - improvement of the condition of the intercity transport network, installation of information boards, provision of access for people with disabilities, increase of the places for accommodation, construction of tourist information centers.

- Training of specialized staff, which as professionals will contribute to raising the level of service and attracting more visitors and tourists. The local population must acquire skills and habits related to the offered tourist services. It must cultivate qualities such as hospitality, responsiveness, positivism.

- Creating a variety of tourist services and products that are complex in nature. Apart from the existing cultural landmarks (museum, monasteries, monuments, architectural samples, parks) the interest of the tourists is provoked by the various attractions, events, additional routes, which provide them with more experiences during their stay. Tourism has both direct and indirect effects on a country's economy [3].

- Development of specialized types of tourism for which there is a resource potential. After their evaluation it is possible to make the right choice of the leading sites (natural, architectural, archaeological, ethnological, historical, cultural), which will form the proposed route and services.

- Development of integrated products and networks based on existing and known tourist routes, but with a thematic focus. The provocations in this direction can be different - the so-called "wine tourism" is associated with the interests of tourists to the wine regions. On the same principle, "religious tourism" can be realized, associated with a tour of monasteries and holy places, "argar tourism", very popular in recent years, associated with the production and consumption of traditional food and organic products in specific rural areas.

- The organization of festivals, holidays and other thematic events, in addition to the mentioned "Wine Roads", "Cycling Routes" and "Eco-tours" are a prerequisite for the development of tourism in rural municipalities, preserving cultural and environmental resources.

- The establishment of the rural municipality as a tourist location puts at the center the implementation of a targeted policy in support of tourism with several points of reference: attracting investment, promoting the destination through promotion and advertising at home and abroad, digitalization of the tourist product [5].

Returning to the village and assessing it as a potentially important sector is a strategic priority not only of the EU, but also of any country that values its past but also thinks about its future.

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