Conflicts in tourism and sustainable development in Moieciu de Sus Village, Moieciu Resort, Romania

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Abstract: Moeciu, a tourist resort of local interest, focused on agri-tourism, has become a favourite destination for weekend tourism, gaining mass tourism features. Situated between two large protected areas, the eastern part of the resort has developed slightly uncontrolled in comparison with the western side that has to undergo specific conservation management. Thus, in the eastern part, respectively in Moieciu de Sus Village, the accommodation structures boomed generating extremely high densities of the accommodation capacity in some areas, so that this informal development and the tourists' flows have led to the emergence of some conflicts. The study aims at identifying and assessing the causes and effects of the conflicts that occur within a part of resort. The research methodology includes field observations for mapping the locations with problems and introduction to GIS, semi-structured interviews. The results show that there are many spatial, environmental, socio-cultural and economic conflicts. For a sustainable development the area should solve some conflicts in order to improve the environmental quality, the agri-pastoral landscape conservation and to raise both local community quality of life and tourists satisfaction.

Key words: Conflict, tourism, environmental pollution, sustainable development, Moieciu de Sus, Romania.

1. Introduction

Tourism is perceived by its benefits, especially for the consumers (Cohen, 2013) and also for business stakeholders. In many regions of the world, aiming to get as much as possible gains to investors, tourism infrastructure was overdeveloped stimulating mass tourism which consumed very rapid the destinations (Buttler, 1997). The decline of destinations lead to the loss of tourists satisfaction and trigger many environmental (Young et al., 2016), economic, social (Yang et al., 2013) and cultural conflicts (Zeppel, 2010).

In recent times, new forms of sustainable tourism try to solve parts of these issues among them being the ecotourism, agri-tourism, responsible tourism etc. (Matei, 2016). The sustainable tourism development is geared towards acquiring benefits on

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four pillars: the environment, local communities, tourists and the tourism industry (Eagles, McCool, & Haynes, 2002; Lee, 2013). Despite this orientation, its long-term development is delicate and difficult, because until its realization, many aspects have to be solved that more or less contravene the attainment of the targets.

In Romania, which has undergone numerous transformations since 1990, when it has turned from the centralized economy to the market (Hartvigsen 2014), sustainable tourism in some areas can be quickly reached, such as protected areas, where from the start only certain forms of activity are allowed and possible conflicts are easily identified and managed, while in other tourist destinations the ad-hoc development with a chaotic landscape changes (Pătru-Stupariu et al., 2015) generates many conflicts.

Conflicts in tourism are not a new subject, but not many debates are to be found in Romania research literature. Internationally, there studies which refer to the conflicts arisen among planning policy and stakeholders (Alemida et al., 2017), in protected areas or about the social (Tzanelli et al., 2014; Yang et al., 2013) and culture conflicts in different context (Shen at al., 2016; Iverson, 2010, Zepperl, 2010).

The aim of the study is to analyze the effects of tourism conflicts upon the sustainable development in a Romanian resort of local interest. The objectives of this study aimed at the following aspects: i) identifying the main types of conflicts; ii) analysis their causes and effects; iii) delineate some directions of solving conflicts.

2. The study area

Moieciu commune, belonging to the Brašov County consists of six villages is declared as a resort of local interest (2008)(Figure1).

Moieciu is situated in the northern part of Bran-Rucăr Corridor, on Turcu River Valley which overlaps the western slopes of the Bucegi Mountains and eastern of Piatra Craiului Mounts (Pătru, 2011). Among the six villages, Măgura and Peștera overlap the Piatra Craiului National Park with strict rules of conservations, while Moieciu de Sus village, at the fringe of Bucegi Natural Park, is less affected by strict rules of protection. Between the two groups of villages, Drumul Carului, Moieciu de Jos, Cheia have the same legislative framework for development as any other resort in Romania. All these villages are favored by a remarkable landscape and rural traditions, which have attracted tourists for years.

In this area, sheep breeding has a very long tradition being less affected by the collectivization process during the communist regime, so that the population benefited from higher own incomes than in plain or hilly areas, which allowed for a faster transition to the market economy by tourism after 1990.
3. Methods and data

The study starts with a bibliographic search in order to make a brief literature review about conflicts in tourism and sustainable development. Then it uses some empirical observations done during 2013, 2017 and 2018, in spring and summer time, in Moieciu Commune.

The data were collected using GIS techniques for evaluation of spatial changes in the area based on Corine Land Cover (CLC) 1990, and CLC 2012. Other data came from the Romanian National Institute of Statistics-Tempo-Online (the number of households, tourist infrastructure).

The core of research relied on the survey method, semi-structured interview tools. The sample was extracted using a snowball techniques applied in 2017 on ten local owners of tourism or retail business in Moeciu de Sus Village. These interviews allow
us to identify some conflicts and to group them into four domains: spatial, environmental quality, socio-cultural and economic. At the same time, we undertook a global evaluation of their intensity, taking into consideration the time for their restoration, the costs and the number of components affected by their effects. In this respect, a 5-item scale was developed to measure the level of conflicts. For the time needed for restoration, the following scale was applied: 1 - hours; 2 - days; 3 - weeks; 4 - months; 5 - years). Costs needed for solving each conflict are measured with: 1 - very low; 2 - low; 3 - medium; 4 - much; 5 - very much), while the effects on natural environment, plus anthropic are appreciated with 1 point for each component.

The data, respectively the given marks were processed using Microsoft Xcel 2007.

4. Results and discussions

4.1. Spatial conflicts

At the macro scale, Moieciu faced land use changes. The most obvious is the discontinuous urban fabric, which enlarged by 45% over two decades to the detriment of the arable land on the everglade. The transition woodland-shrub was diminished probably for shepherding purposes (Figure 2, Figure 3).

The increase of discontinuous fabric area has been done firstly informally, when many buildings have been constructed, leading to overcrowding and vicinity conflicts. Thus, in 25 years in Moieciu almost 600 houses were added formally to the former 1600 in 1990, which means an increase of living space about 2.4 times (Figure 4).

However, by the enlargement of discontinuous fabric area, the houses density was slightly modified in 2017 (5 units per ha) in comparison with 1990 (4 houses/ha). If the authorizations for the construction of pensions and/or hotels are added, the number increases officially by 200 on the whole (Figure 5), thus the density is 25 buildings per ha. In the two resorts, the accommodation density is bigger in Moieciu de Sus, with 70 tourist units (0.5 units/ha), and lower (0.25 units/ha) in Moieciu de Jos, with 84 units. The pressure is expected to grow both in these resorts and also in other villages of the commune. Beyond this statistical indicator, in reality, the density of the pensions in particular is extremely high in some areas, generating a series of conflicts related to their location (lean walls, near roofs with problems for drainage of rainfall or snow, etc.).

A part of constructions represent secondary residences of people (predominantly from Bucharest, Craiova and Galați) very rarely used for friends or relatives hosting.

Even the endowment of the tourist units is at an average comfort, many of them focusing on accommodation services for middle-income families.
Figure 2. Land use in 1990. Processed after Corine Land Cover 1990.

Figure 3. Land use in 2012. Processed after Corine Land Cover 2012.
Figure 4. Number of houses built between 1992 and 2017 in Moieciu Commune. Processed after NIS data.

Figure 5. Number of accommodation units built between 1995 and 2017 in Moieciu Commune. Processed after NIS data.

The facilities for spending leisure time, though very diverse, almost consumed the space around the buildings. Many of them are not very safe, both in terms of quality and supervision.

The formal roads have been established, later than the houses. Thus they forced to fit in the remained space, being undersized, almost with one-way, without sidewalks. Over concentration of tourists during weekends, as well as during summer and spring, generates an intense traffic, between the vehicles coming from opposite directions and a noise pollution, contrary to a resting and relaxing environment.

Moreover, the adjacent infrastructure (sewerage, pipelines), which usually accompanies the roads, is difficult to build. It requires different solutions, some of them assuming negotiations with the locals to allow the crossing of properties. Moreover, the costs of connection to the communal gas, sewerage network are higher.
than people are expected. The rating of conflicts shows that two issues are very difficult: increasing of housing density and the lack of sewage system (Table 1).

**Table 1. Spatial conflicts rating**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Conflicts</th>
<th>Time of solving</th>
<th>Costs</th>
<th>Effects</th>
<th>Average</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Diminishing of arable land</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3,0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Water drainages</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3,3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overcrowding of houses</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4,3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Second home residence spreading</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3,7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overcrowding of leisure facilities</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2,3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>One-way roads</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3,3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of sidewalks</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3,3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sewerage system</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4,0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pipelines</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3,3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4.2. Environmental conflicts

Waste management is done unstructured within households. In 2018, there is a conflict between the provider of collecting waste and local communities, due to the high cost per household requested/forced by it.

However, the landscape is tainted with waste discarded by tourists on trails and roads, while locals store waste in riverbeds and their backyards. While tourists pollute with typical domestic waste, residents throw away construction waste or manure, which reach the riverbeds (Turcu, Popii) (Figure 6).

In Moieciu de Sus the lack of sewerage and poor functioning of septic tanks often leads to spills to the rivers in the area, causing olfactory pollution, but also contamination of soil, water, land and groundwater.

During weekend, in summer or during some events (Eco-Marathon) a high level of noise pollution is noted. Probably because of the fuels used by cars during these periods there is an exhaust gas pollution (benzene, VOC, etc.).

Another problem affecting agriculture and the landscape is the multiplication of invasive plants (*Impatiens glandulifera*, *Xanthium italicum*) or of those stimulated by the presence of nitrites and urea from sheep (*Urtica dioica*, *Arctium lappa*). These are spread in riparian area, on the roadsides, and on the sites with anthropogenic soils.

The most difficult problem is related to changing the heating system for homes, and hotels from wood to gas, and solar power. Also, the invasive plant species and river pollution with plastics are considered dangerous, and the fight against them is time or cost consuming (Table 2).
Other problems can be stopped quickly and at extremely low costs through programs and tourism management.

![Figure 6. River pollution with domestic waste. Source: Dorin Matei.](image)

**Table 2. Environmental conflicts rating.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Conflicts</th>
<th>Time of solving</th>
<th>Costs</th>
<th>Effects</th>
<th>Average</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Domestic waste in the landscape</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2,0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Animal waste</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2,7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Swage tanks accidents/discharge</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2,7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Noise pollution</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2,0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Air pollution by car traffic</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2,7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Air pollution by wood heating</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4,0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Invasive plants</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3,7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>River pollution with plastics</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3,3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**4.4. Socio-cultural conflicts**

Being a small community, where members know each other, social conflicts are unnoticeable, being probably intra-family, or rarely inside businesses. In the last years, people concern about ethnic conflicts related to gypsy families.

As far as the family is concerned, there is a remarkable retention of the united family, and many of the young people do not go away but continue their family
tradition. This can be linked with keeping the cultural identity, of mixture between rural tourism and shepherds.

Looking outward, tourism firms are focused on family businesses and few foreign workers are employed. There are no differences for non-local workers in comparison with local employment.

There are dangers of changes in local culture. One is related to the penetration of favorite “manele” (oriental songs of gypsies) by a large number of tourists, and the elimination of folk music and local rhapsodists. The second is the proliferation of foreign souvenirs in the kiosks of local people. All social conflicts are easily solvable (Table 3).

**Table 3. Socio-cultural conflicts rating**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Conflicts</th>
<th>Time of solving</th>
<th>Costs</th>
<th>Effects</th>
<th>Average</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ethnic-gypsy</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3,0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kitsch souvenirs</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2,7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Invasion of songs (manele)</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2,3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local workforce vs. outside workforce</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3,0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**4.4. Economic conflicts**

Tourism is more analyzed through positive impact or multiplier effects in the economy while the negative economic impact, which is the source of conflicts, is less studied.

Tourism makes prices elastic in a region by falls and rises, which put in conflict local people’s income and tourists’ expenditure ([Harcombe, 1999](#)). Prices refer to accommodation rates, restaurants, consumer goods up, leisure facilities, souvenirs to the real estate market.

In a globalized economy, rural tourism is geared towards marketing local products, being opposed to it first, but which is intended to be a way of developing the local economy and retaining community revenue as a principle of sustainable development. In these destinations, local products are perceived as an attraction, which is why local locals enter into confusion/conflict with conventional retailers (Table 4).

However, observing moral norms related to prices, sanitary quality, product quality, and originality can propel or reject it from the local economy and from the intention to be purchased by consumers/tourists.

The development of tourism in particular can produce the single-specialization of a destination, and the regression of some activities that actually condition it. In the case study, the agricultural activity of livestock and tourism is maintained. Thus,
there may be economic and social tensions because almost every family has to support both activities, as the tourist pensions are in the village hearth, and the animals grow at distances (more than 3 km) and multi-lot properties.

**Table 4. Economic conflicts rating**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Conflicts</th>
<th>Time of solving</th>
<th>Costs</th>
<th>Effects</th>
<th>Average</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Local product vs conventional products</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agriculture and tourism sustained by family</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mono-specialization</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sanitation of local products</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3.7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

5. Conclusions

After 1990, since the transition from the centralized, communist economy to the market one, Romania had many problems to solve. Some of them have gone out of control, taking forward legislation, policies, strategies, and management.

Tourism is only one of the areas facing this issue. The business abilities of the mountain population, less affected by the co-operative measures of agriculture during communism and the tourist demand caused an explosion of accommodation structures in the Bran-Rucăr corridor, some villages being transformed into real urban areas. Moeciu resort is one of the best examples of such tourism development.

However, the ad-hoc development and scale of tourism business in an area dedicated to preserving agri-pastoral control has generated many conflicts, more or less easy to settle. The study reveals that the biggest problem is the overcrowding of pensions, the pressure or competition of local products with the conventional ones, which can lead to the loss of traditions, mono specialization of regions and environmental pollution. These require measures that are congruent with the focus on sustainability, the resolving of easy conflicts (redeemable in time and with low costs) and finding solutions for those that require time and funding.

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**References**


