

Cultural Impacts in Soveja Landscape

Alexandru Paul LAZĂR-BĂRA¹⁾

¹⁾Faculty of Horticulture, University of Agronomic Sciences and Veterinary Medicine Bucharest, 59 Mărăști bd., Bucharest, Romania; alexandru.lazarbara@gmail.com

Abstract. Soveja depression, the northernmost compartment of the Land of Vrancea from Romania, has its touristic pole in Soveja mountain resort. Its importance is relevant in the context of the Oriental Carpathians – because of the small number of formal resorts – as well as at national level – considering its historic and cultural character. This study presents local landscape as the resort's representative asset, aiming its sustainable valuation for local communities, tourism, national and regional development purposes. Landscape typologies were identified based on GIS and field observation material: environmental characters, cultural impacts and landscape perception opportunities analysis results, on various time and space scales, were presented on maps as well as in SWOT format, thus identifying conflicts and opportunities of cultural, ambient and environmental concern. Tourists' preferences change affected landscape assessment map. The criteria aimed site identity parameters – such as historic references, cultural relevance and environment charisma. Generic proposals were made, aimed to ensure sustainability of the mountain resort's landscape patrimony. In Soveja, cultural and biologic diversity connect on landscape level, providing a complex pack of environmental services and products of regional impact. The site's cultural identity, organically connected with its environmental features, is a national land-mark.

Keywords: landscape typologies; traditional land-use; ecumenic landscape; *mioritic* landscape

Introduction. Soveja resort is touristic pole of the northernmost compartment of the Land of Vrancea – the Soveja depression, an isolated agro-sylvo-pastoral system in the Oriental Carpathians – since the beginning of the 20th century (Mureșan, 2012). Regional poverty affects cultural integration of the natural landscapes, although they are the most valuable local resource.

Aims and objectives This study presents local cultural landscape as Soveja mountain resort's representative asset, aiming its original sustainable valuation through the integration of ecosystem services in local communities, tourism, national and regional development processes.

Materials and methods The approached site is defined by the superposition of the cultural landscape typologies and the hiking isochrones around the mountain resort: topography, land-use map, road and foot-paths according to difficulty levels (slope and surface) were integrated in GIS (1); previously identified cultural landscape typologies (Lazăr-Băra, 2012) were assigned perimeters based on terrain analysis – comparisons between land-use, topography, traditional occupations and historic traces – and field observations (2).

The prevailing cultural landscape typology identified was *mioritic landscape* (idem). Its features are briefly presented in SWOT format (Tab. 1).

A more recent cultural landscape typology is of Christian nature. Church-centered settlement pattern is justified by the historic role of the institution in local development policy and administration. Three concepts define the relationship between the inner resort and the surrounding landscape. *The doors* (architectural) mark the distinct characters of the landscapes before and after a passage. *Windows* relate landscapes and outer landmarks, while *the reminders* provide heritage references. Site identity valuation connects Soveja

environmental charisma to national cultural and social context through tourism; environmental culture is approached also on local community scale, revising environmental responsibility and economy for heritage landscape conservation.

Tab. 1.

Mioritic cultural landscape SWOT analysis relies on ecosystem services

	Strengths (ecosystem services)	Weaknesses (vulnerability, conflicts)	Opportunities	Threats
Physical features (environmental characters)	Erosion control; Climate regulation; Air quality (O ₃ provision)	Drinking water limited resources; land-use change (agriculture,	Water purification; carbon sequestration; biodiversity	Climate change; Earthquakes; forest fires
Traditional land-use	Livestock services; Timber services;	Freshwater provision	Healthy agriculture; agro tourism	modern transport; fragmentation
Perception	Aesthetic amenities	Inadequate urbanism	Landscape identity	new architecture
Cultural features	occupational continuity; national representativeness history (time span, events, landscape strategic role); folklore – cultural amenity – profound landscape semiotics; local pride	Corruption; local identity loss; spiritual decay (inadequate church management); low environmental culture; consumerism; painful lack of political culture; manipulation;	Cultural identity on local, regional and national level; historical heritage	Under-regulated mass tourism; economy prevalence over tradition preservation
Ecology	Traditional sheep-breeding supports biodiversity;	Poaching; mis-regulated logging, development, tourism	Putna Vrancea natural park adjacency	Invasive species; pollution

Result and Discussion. *Mioritic landscape* typology derives mainly from the traditional land use of pastoral communities. Its preservation until present times was facilitated by the natural isolation and by the low fragmentation of the landscape. These facts are changing under contemporary social and economic pressures. Integrated development, a key of sustainability, must approach local agro-sylvo-pastoral features as a whole.

Conclusion. Soveja landscapes provide essential environmental services not only to local community but also to the whole country. Cultural and biologic diversity recommend the site conservation according to IUCN 6th category sites (Moş, 2011); cultural, aesthetic and recreational ecosystem services (Maes *et al.*, 2011) provide essential tourism resources.

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