

A STUDY ON RURAL TOURISM AS A RURAL DEVELOPMENT BREAKING POINT IN THE HUNGARIAN MINORITY INHABITED AREAS IN SLOVAKIA¹ AND UKRAINE

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Abstract

The article, after a short historical presentation of those Slovakian (the Highland) and Ukrainian (Transcarpathia) regions where Hungarians still play a major role in the population, focuses on the perspectives of rural tourism development in the mentioned areas. The research was conducted in several phases: 1) review of the relevant literature and search for eligible hosts; 2) evaluation of the questionnaires distributed among the hosts involved in rural tourism in Transcarpathia and in the Highland; 3) evaluation of the collected data, their comparison and analysis with the help of SPSS and Microsoft Excel software.

The main aim of this empirical research was to compare the Highland questionnaire survey findings with the Transcarpathian data to identify the similarities and differences in rural tourism of these areas that have been developing at different pace and under different socioeconomic conditions in the two countries. (*Keywords: rural tourism, guest houses, breaking point, Transcarpathia, Highland.*)

1. Introduction

After the Treaty of Trianon, the territories taken away from Hungary (Transylvania, Transcarpathia, Highland, Voivodina, Prekmurje, Croatia, and Burgenland) came under the rule of different countries. For the present research, the development of Transcarpathia³ and Highland⁴ is important as far as in many cases they have similar history: both territories belonged to Czechoslovakia from 1920, to Hungary from 1938/1939, to the Soviet Union and Czechoslovakia from 1945, then Transcarpathia became part of Ukraine from 1991, while Highland came under the rule of Slovakia from 1992.

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³ While the Hungarian name of *Kárpátalja* translates as *Subcarpathia*, following the Hungarian language logic "feet of the mountains", naming a territory after its geographic location at the lower section of a mountain range, the name *Transcarpathia* is a translation of the Ukrainian version of the name (*Закарпатська область/Zakarpats'ka oblast'(province)*) (URL10). In this work we will use the name *Transcarpathia*.

⁴ The Hungarian *Felvidék* (literally: *Upper Country, Upland, Highland*, or perhaps more accurately *Upper Landscape* or *Upper Countryside*; Slovak: *Horná zem*) has had several informal meanings (URL11). In this work we will use the name *Highland*.

No matter to what country Transcarpathia and Highland belonged to, despite their nature's beauty, richness in minerals, Hungarian architecture and cultural legacy, these territories were always on the particular country's periphery. Neither Hungary before the Treaty of Trianon, nor Czechoslovakia between the two world wars, nor the Soviet Union, nor Ukraine or Slovakia considered it important to develop these territories.

After the change of the regime, when the borders became easier to cross, Hungary's interest towards the detached territories grew. The start of the development of tourism could bring economic possibility for the Hungarian population living there. In the process of the research I tried to find out the role rural tourism plays/played in the life of the Hungarian minority in Ukraine and Slovakia living mostly in rural areas (*Lanstyák 2000; URL1, 2017; Molnár, Molnár D. 2005*).

2. Objectives and research methods

The research was carried out in several stages: 1) study of specialized literature on the theme of the study as well as search of Hungarian rural inns in the target areas; 2) drawing up and filling in the questionnaires to analyse the inns functioning in the sphere of rural tourism; 3) evaluation, comparison and analysis of the collected data with the help of SPSS and Microsoft Excel software. The main aims of the empirical research include:

- to reveal the similarities and differences of the territories' rural tourism on the basis of Highland and Transcarpathian questionnaire surveys;
- to elucidate how much does the level of development of rural tourism in the target areas of this research depend on the country the area presently belongs to and to shed light on the support the particular country gives to this tourist branch;
- to describe the two territories' strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats in the field of rural tourism with the help of SWAT analysis;
- to determine whether rural tourism was a breakout point for the Hungarian minority in Highland and Transcarpathia in the difficult years after the change of the regime and what it means nowadays.

3. Analysis of the target countries

The two detached territories (*Transcarpathia and Highland*) have similar past, but different present. The main reason for the discrepancies of the two territories is the country they are part of.

Ukraine became independent in 1991, while Slovakia did so in 1992. Slovakia, unlike Ukraine, managed to join the EU quite quickly, within 12 years. The countries wishing to join the EU need to meet certain economic and

political requirements, and Slovakia managed to do that in 2004. It joined the Eurozone on 1 January 2009. However, Ukraine is only at the beginning of the process of becoming a member state. Mykola Azarov, Ukraine's former Prime Minister, announced on 21 November 2013 that his government would stop the process of Ukraine's Eurointegration, and this gave rise to demonstrations and riots in the country. Its direct or indirect result was that an armed conflict broke out in the country's eastern part, then Russia annexed (on 21 March 2014) part of Ukraine – the Crimean Autonomous Republic. Since then, Ukraine is in a deep economic crisis.

Both Ukraine and Slovakia have Eastern-, Eastern-Central European, post-socialist characteristics and they have the problems of the newly formed and pieced-together countries. However, the two countries have significant differences in size and economic development (*Table 1*).

Table 1: some important quantitative data on Ukraine and Slovakia

	Ukraine	Slovakia
Area (km ²)	603,700	49,036
Population (millions) (2015)	42.6	5.4
GDP (US\$ billions) (2015)	90.9	87.3
GDP per capita (US\$) (2015)	2 135.18	16 105.13

Source: World Economic Forum (WEF) (URL5, 2017), own edition

Ukraine's territory is 12.3 times, while its population is 7.8 times larger than that of Slovakia. However, the two countries' GDP is about the same. It should also be mentioned that Ukraine's GDP dropped from 177.8 to 90.9 billion US\$ in the period from 2013 to 2015. GDP per capita is 7.5 times smaller in Ukraine than in Slovakia. The latter number means, in simplified form, that the average standard of living is lower in Ukraine than in Slovakia.

What concerns the countries' competitiveness, Slovakia left Ukraine far behind, for according to World Economic Forum's data (WEF) (*URL5, 2017*) on global competitiveness in 2015-2016 among 140 countries Slovakia was 67th, while Ukraine was 79th. Figure 1 shows Slovakia and Ukraine's results in the target areas under research.

From the point of view of competitiveness, one can clearly feel the level of development of the two countries in the two target areas (Highland and Transcarpathia) for these are two peripheral territories where numerous representatives of another nationality form an autochthonal minority. No country aims at economic development of the territories of this kind. Transcarpathia's peripheral character is evident due to a number of reasons. While the Schengen border moved east and brought Hungary "closer" in 2004 to some detached territories, for instance, Highland, other territories, like Transcarpathia became

more isolated. Despite all these factors, both Highland and Transcarpathia have some kind of tourist potential, which could be used with a proper, determined planning and marketing.

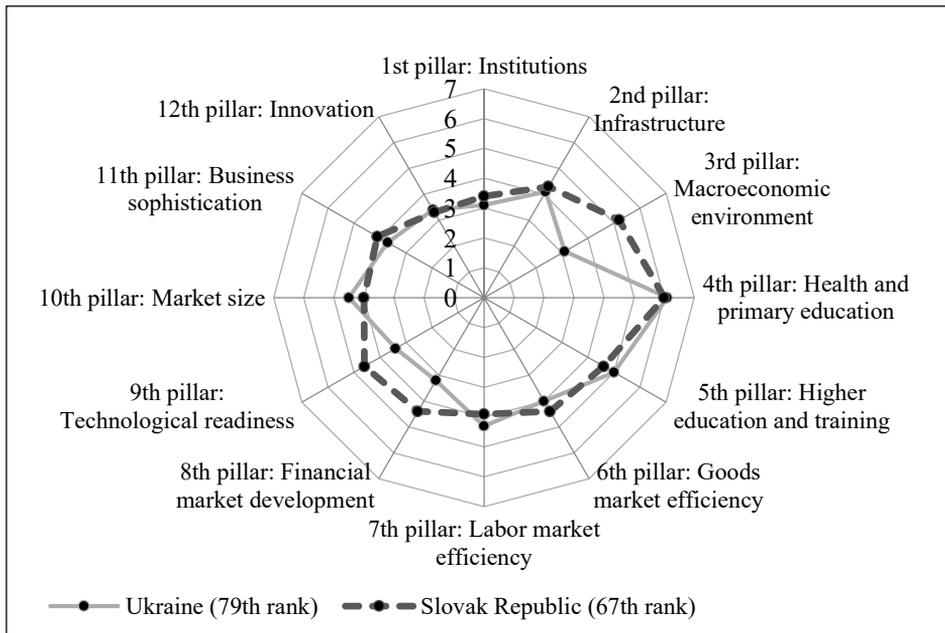


Figure 1: Global Competitiveness Index 1-7 (best): Slovak Republic-Ukraine (2015-2016)

Source: World Economic Forum (WEF) (URL5, 2017), own edition

4. The notion of rural tourism, its functioning in Transcarpathia and Highland

4.1 Rural tourism in Transcarpathia

In Transcarpathia, rural tourism means receiving guests in the village as an income supplement, i.e. accommodation of tourists in private houses and providing meals, in most cases also providing tourist guidance, and sometimes organizing programs. The bases of all these were created, among others, by the numerous memorials of Hungarian history that can be connected to this territory, lack of language barrier, the natural and cultural values, and not least the closeness of Hungary. Thus, the Transcarpathian Hungarian settlements engaged in rural tourism are more popular among tourists from Hungary who visit Transcarpathia’s historical places and view nature’s magnificent scenery. In the settlements developing rural tourism accommodation and catering are mostly made use of (Szilágyi et al. 2006; Sass et al. 2007, Berghauer 2009).

Rural tourism was intensified in Transcarpathia in the economically difficult years after the change of the regime. Due to difficult economic conditions, first of all mostly pedagogues, saw the opportunities offered by rural tourism, thus giving rise to the development of this branch as a kind of income supplement mainly in Transcarpathian rural Hungarian settlements. Moreover, Transcarpathia's valuable natural and cultural landmarks were highly attractive for tourists.

A characteristic feature of Transcarpathian rural tourism is that each Hungarian settlement working in the field of rural tourism has one (or more) tourist centre whose task is to control the level of services rendered to tourists, to accommodate the tourists with host families, to organize programs, as well as to keep in touch with those interested in the settlement's rural tourism (Sass 2012). Nowadays, the hosts created their own civil organizations in almost all the settlements engaged in rural tourism. They can ensure their participation via these organizations and associations in various competitions, mainly in the ones announced by the Hungarian government. The majority of local organizations coalesce in a district umbrella organization in Berehove and District Rural Tourism Association. In 2014 Transcarpathian Hungarian Tourist Committee was formed. It has numerous work groups including a rural tourism one. They aim at unified market appearance, organization of common programmes and common representation of interests.

Rural tourism has no state support in Ukraine and Transcarpathia likewise. The 2005 bill on "*Rural green tourism*" (URL6, 2016) has not yet been passed by the Supreme Council of Ukraine. Thus, rural tourism in Ukraine is regulated by the country's Constitution, the law "*On tourism*", the law "*On farming*", as well as other laws and enactments of Ukraine (Izsák 2016). This does not help the development of rural tourism in Ukraine for it is not regulated by a concrete law. However, there is a step forward – the bill aimed at the development of rural green tourism and modifying the law "*On farming*" was passed in its first reading by the Supreme Council of Ukraine at its sitting on 23 May 2017. Thus, rural tourism is defined as a private enterprise with its own assets, corresponding to local tourist traditions, with the number of guests accommodated in an inn not exceeding 10 people, providing accommodation, catering, as well as organizing the tourists' free time. The amendment proposal secures the duties of the executive authorities and self-government bodies concerning the professional training of rural farmers in the field of rural green tourism (URL3, 2017).

4.2 Rural tourism in Highland

In Slovakia, rural tourism and agricultural tourism are a significant sector of Slovakian tourism, supported by the Ministry of Agriculture in order to expand the employment opportunities in the country and to utilize the Slovakian natural and regional resources (Tardos 1996).

In recent years, there have been numerous researches, scientific articles, case studies on Slovakia's rural and agrarian tourism (Clarke *et al.* 2001; Chobotova – Kluvankova-Oravska 2006; Otepka–Habán 2007; Habán *et al.* 2012). Most works highlight the opportunities behind agricultural tourism, like reduction of unemployment in the region, direct realization of local produce, population retaining influence, etc. It is considered an especially significant tourist branch in Slovakia that has to be supported, developed, and qualitatively improved (URL4, 2016).

Despite state and EU support, there are less farms, ranches, and inns used by tourists compared to neighbouring countries (Habán *et al.* 2012). The problem is clearly seen even in determining the categories of Slovak accommodation, for according to the law (*Zbierka zákonov č. 277/2008: 2208, URL7, 2016*) private accommodation does not specifically include rooms in rural houses, rural guesthouses, rather rooms for rent in family houses or a special building, family houses, cottages, weekend cottages, and lodges. The rooms for rent, premises (in Slovak “objekt”) and apartments are qualified by 1 to 3 stars. It is also specified how many people can be accommodated in a room according to which qualification and what equipment the room is to have. However, it is not determined how many persons the guesthouse can accommodate in this way. It is also not clear whether this category and qualification system can be used for village accommodation or not.

5. Introduction of Transcarpathian and Highland research areas

The questionnaire to study the range of hosts in Transcarpathia was filled in 2008–2009 and in autumn of 2011 in Berehove district that includes the majority of the Hungarian population engaged in rural tourism.

In Berehove district in 11 settlements 135 families rendered the services of organized rural tourism as of 2011. Figure 2 shows that we performed 7 questionnaire surveys in these settlements (Bene/Bene (17), Chetfalva/Csetfalva (10), Hecha/Mezőgecse (11), Koson'/Mezőkaszony(10), Vary/Mezővári (29), Vel. Bakta/Nagybakta (2), Borzhava/Nagyborzsóva (10) The questionnaire to study the range of hosts working in the field of rural tourism in the given period in Berehove district covered 66% of the settlements' inns.

I collected the Transcarpathian inns over the Internet (*URL8*, 2009) and with the help of Berehove and District Rural Tourism Association. The hosts filled in 95 questionnaires, only 89 of which met the criteria of the research.

The research was performed between 2015 and 2016 in Slovakia's Hungarian-speaking settlements (Highland). The Hungarians in Slovakia are divided into three larger parts, and the area along the Duna River is the largest. This covers the territory of the former Pozsony, Komárom, Esztergom, Nyitra and Bars regions. The Slovak Hungarian minority forms two thirds of the population, thus it can rightly be called the territory of the Highland Hungarian majority (*Horváth* 2004).

The Slovak research was based on the Transcarpathian one and was mainly carried out in South Slovakia's Hungarian settlements (*figure 2*) (Bajč/Bajcs (1), Búč/Búcs (3), Moča/Dunamocs (2), Radvaň nad Dunajom / Dunaradvány (1), Salka/Ipolyzalka (1), Chľaba/Helemba (1), Palárikovo/Tótmegyer (1), Pohronský Ruskov/Oroszka (1), Szazdice/Százd (1), Dolný Štál/Alistál (2), Báč/Bacsfa (1), Ohrady/Csallóközkürt (1), Kostolné Kračany/Egyházkarcsa (1), Okoč/Ekecs (1), Rohovce/Nagyszarva (1), Veľký Sek/Nagyszegmajor (1), Vydrany/Nemeshódos (1), Topoľníky/Nyárasd (1), Vrakúň/Nyékvárkony (1), Opatovská Nová Ves/Apátújfalu (1), Nová Bašta/Újbást (1), Veľké Raškovce/Nagyráska (1)).

Researching Highland's Hungarian inns was not an easy task. According to the Transcarpathian sample, I started searching on the Internet. My primary source was the site *travelguide.sk* (*URL9*, 2015). The number of search results was little, there was not a single Hungarian settlement that would "massively" advertise their inns as it is done in Transcarpathia. The second biggest problem was that though accommodation was characterized as "rural tourism", in most cases it was an apartment or a guesthouse with over 20 rooms. After a long internet search, I asked Nitra University students majoring in tourism to help look for possible informants among rural hosts. As a result, 42 questionnaires were filled in, however, only 26 questionnaires met the criteria of the research. The biggest problem that led to the exclusion of 16 questionnaires from the survey was the high number of rooms (20–70) that is not typical of rural tourism. Though all the questionnaires were filled in rural surroundings, the number of rooms, the equipment and the services rendered testified to the fact that they were hotels, guesthouses, rather than rural private accommodation.

The 89 Transcarpathian and 26 Highland questionnaire were put through a case number-rate analysis which served the basis for the comparison of the two target areas.

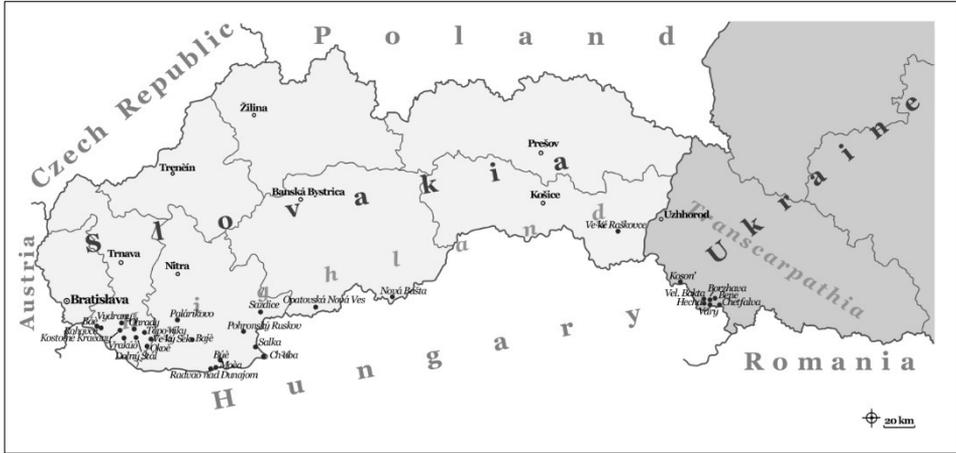


Figure 2: the target areas in Highland (Slovakia) and Transcarpathia (Ukraine)
 Source: own edition

6. Results of the empirical research

6.1 Introduction of social demographic data

According to the social demographic data 95.5% of Transcarpathian respondents are women, 41.6% of whom belong to the 40–49 age group. Highland has a similar situation, however, there is less difference between the sexes (57.7% females), age (30.8% 40–49 year-olds) compared to other categories. The hosts mostly have secondary education in both target areas ($H^5=57.7\%$, $T^6=69.7\%$), however, the number of those with higher education is higher in Highland (42.3%) than in Transcarpathia (21.3%).

In the sphere of employment, entrepreneurs prevail in Highland (61.5%) and the number of intellectual employees is high (19.2%). In Transcarpathia the number of housewives (34.8%) and intellectual employees (32.6%) is the highest, while the number of entrepreneurs is low (5.6%). The high rate of entrepreneurs in Highland can be explained by the restriction of rural tourism to private entrepreneur certificate. Transcarpathian authorities also tried to run rural tourism on official grounds; however, it has not yet been realized. On both territories the majority of respondents are married and have a family ($H=76.9\%$ and $T=92.1\%$). The majority of Transcarpathian respondents refer their households to average profit category (80.9%) unlike Highland respondents who consider their profit to be above average (50.0%).

⁵ H= Highland

⁶ T= Transcarpathia

89 of Transcarpathian hosts (87.6%) and 26 Highland hosts (88.5%) claim they speak a foreign language. The respondents' mother tongue in both countries is Hungarian and they regard the state language foreign. The Transcarpathians speak mainly Russian (74.4%) and Ukrainian (71.8%), other languages make up less than 10%. 60.9% of respondents in Highland speak Slovak, and 30.4% speak Czech. Unlike the Transcarpathian ones, more Highland informants speak other foreign languages: English 56.5%, German 39.1%, Russian 21.7%, Polish 13.0%, etc. What strikes one most in the field of language proficiency is the fact that only 12.5% of Transcarpathian Hungarians speak Ukrainian at an advanced level, while 85.7% of Highland Hungarians speak Slovak at an advanced level.

6.2 Characterization of guesthouses and services

The host respondents on both territories say they have been working in the field of rural tourism for 10 years on average. In Highland, separate houses without the hosts present dominate (60.0%), while in Transcarpathia accommodation is provided in a preconceived part of the hosts' house with a distinct entrance (62.9%). Among the 26 guest houses in Highland and 89 guest houses in Transcarpathia there are in general 10.1 rooms per house in both cases. Among these the number of rooms in Highland is 5.2, and in Transcarpathia – 4.8. Of these 4.5 (H) and 3.0 (T) rooms are used to accommodate tourists. While in Highland each house has 12.7 rooms in general, in Transcarpathia the average number is only 5.3. The same is the situation with extra beds: 2,8 (H) and 0,5 (T).

In Highland 77% of guest houses are only used by tourists, the landlord does not live in the same house, thus it is not surprising that sanitation facilities (bathroom, WC) were built for the guests only. 65.4% of guesthouses in Highland have a separate bathroom and a WC to each room. 80.8% of guesthouses have a kitchen for the visitors.

In Transcarpathia, the host and/or his family live in the same house as the guests. In most cases, tourists share the kitchen (78.7%), the bathroom and the WC (46.4%) with the hosts. About half of the guesthouses have a bathroom and a WC that are common for all the guests. Summarizing the above-mentioned facts, we can come to the conclusion that the guesthouses in Transcarpathia are firstly dwelling houses and only secondly guesthouses.

On both territories, the hosts claim their houses have all modern conveniences. A reliable quality guarantee for the tourists would be a quality system, which is absent in both target areas. It can be testified by the fact that

73.7% of the asked guesthouse landlords in Highland⁷ and 62.9% in Transcarpathia told their house has not yet been qualified.

In Highland, most guesthouses have no catering (61.5%), or if they have, then it is full board (27.0%) or only breakfast (11.5%). Half of the Transcarpathian hosts (51.7%) offer half board to tourists. 27.0% side by side with half board offer some snacks, others offer full board (13.5%).

Taking into account the availability of programs, there is little time in Transcarpathia to discover the local sights or to participate in rural programmes, like pig slaughter, horse riding or animal care. The tourists arrive in groups, the region's nature and cultural sights are presented in the form of tours, and only accommodation and catering are on the rural tourism site. That is the reason why tourists visit Transcarpathia, not because they want to see rural lifestyle. In Highland, guests are offered more programmes in the guesthouse and in the yard (pool, grilling, sauna, fitness, and sport facilities), however, they cannot be identified as typical rural programmes.

The people engaged in rural tourism gain profit not only from accommodation, catering and programme organization, they also realize their home-grown produce. Over half of the hosts in Highland (53.8%) and only 4.5% of the Transcarpathian ones have no home-made products. The Transcarpathians produce almost every product asked in the questionnaire, realize it, thus surpassing the hosts from Highland. They mostly sell jam (37.1%), home-made wine (33.7%), pálinka (24.7%), various meat products (18.0%), home-made custard and sour cream (16.9%), fresh fruit and vegetables (13.5%), as well as their preserved and pickled (12.4%) variants.

30.3% of the Transcarpathian respondents and 19.2% of the Highland ones produce folk art and hand-made products. In the first case, the hosts produce and sell mostly strip rug/strip carpets (14.6%), homespun (7.9%), embroidered tablecloths, kerchiefs (5.6%), while in the latter case no folklore or handicraft object stood out among the others, both were produced and sold at a similar rate (3.8%).

7. SWOT-analysis

STRONG POINTS		WEAK POINTS	
<i>Highland</i>	<i>Transcarpathia</i>	<i>Highland</i>	<i>Transcarpathia</i>
– favourable conditions for rural tourism (beautiful nature, quiet calm environment, true	– the region's geographical position, accessibility (there are many border crossing points	– uncommu- nicative, averse, distrustful people, – few admini- strative bodies	– borders that are difficult to cross – crossing borders with an international passport instead of

⁷Among Highland respondents seven people did not answer the question on qualification, thus, the rate in percentage was counted on the basis of 19 respondents' answers.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> rural idyll), – orderly settlements, – Hungarian traditions, folk costumes and nursing culture – developed wine-growing – an area rich in medicinal water sources – the quality of rural guest houses – festivals, events, open wine cellar days – as a member of the EU a wide range of tenders 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> here) – virgin nature scenery – hospitality, sincerity, openness, simplicity, – tasty, home-made meals, – the hosts can use locally grown produce – well-organized tours with rural accommodation and catering 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> striving to set up rural tourism – few people deal with rural tourism in the area, and those who do, do not maintain direct contact with the guest 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> the internal one – public roads, almost complete lack of public lighting, – poor public security, – negative country image – East-Ukrainian conflict – underdeveloped services in the settlements – a scarce number of tender applications in the field of rural tourism – lack of collaboration among people, settlements and organizations/non-viability
OPPORTUNITIES		THREATS	
<i>Highland</i>	<i>Transcarpathia</i>	<i>Highland</i>	<i>Transcarpathia</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – to create organized rural tourism, – attraction of active participants, – formation/functioning of local farmers' markets in the settlements by means of using the possibilities offered by the Ister-Granum region, – using the possibilities related to folk traditions, grapes, and wine, – enlivening of farmers' houses 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – from the point of view of thermal water sites the region is unique in Ukraine, esp. the Hungarian settlements, – development of unused thermal water sources, – support of the winery culture of the vine-growing region – increasing number of sources for development, economic support from Hungary 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – low support of local authorities – lack of interest on the side of governmental institutions (<i>Habán et al. 2012</i>) – lack of territorial collaboration 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – complete lack of state support – the main establishments in the territory are in foreign hands – Hungarian landlords lack capital – migration of the Hungarian population – Hungarian folk legacy, traditions, culture, exploitation of folk buildings – the armed conflict has a negative influence on the region's tourism

8. Summary, suggestions for the future

In 2014 both regions elaborated a plan of economic development: the Baross Gábor Plan (Southern Slovakia/Highland) (*Farkas et al.* 2014) and the Egán Ede-Plan (Transcarpathia) (*URL2*, 2016.) The Baross Gábor Plan clearly formulates that tourism can be a breakout point for Highland. The development plan mentions rural tourism several times. In most cases, it says that many districts have excellent opportunities, proper conditions for rural tourism. Rural and agricultural tourism are considered to be important directions of developing the countryside.

The Egán Ede-Plan in Transcarpathia also emphasizes tourism as one of the significant breakout points for the countryside. The importance of rural tourism is emphasized, and it is characterized as one of the best organized, live, functioning tourist activity, that first and foremost means village accommodation. With an eye to the future, rural tourism as a tourist product must be further developed.

In the process of researching rural tourism, as I analysed and compared data, moved on with my study, it became more and more evident that rural tourism in the two target areas functions in two different forms. One can even say that in its classical sense we cannot speak here of “true” rural tourism. Though accommodation is in rural environment, it is not based on agricultural activity, there are no rich agricultural programs offered in any of the target areas, catering also leaves much to be desired. Szabó Bernadett (2009) claims rural tourism is only complete when it offers accommodation, catering, and programs for tourists.

The obtained results show a picture of the two territories under research. We cannot say that the way rural tourism functions in a particular territory is excellent or unsatisfactory. Rather, it is specific, unique, formed under the influence of everyday routine and the areas’ characteristics. It also undergoes continuous modifications to satisfy the ever-changing needs. It may not have all the typical features of rural tourism, however, the Transcarpathian Hungarian families, for example, feel its positive influence, which finds its expression mainly in the following:

- families get along in the village, it urges them to stay, supports them by means of extra profit from rural hosting;
- the hosts can use the produce grown on the family’s farmland to cater tourists and can even sell some home-made products (jam, pálinka, etc.);
- rural guest turnover fosters wine culture in the villages, handicraft goods are produced, sold, Hungarian folk traditions and customs are revived and preserved;
- due to the good organization of rural tourism some settlements extend the nights by means of festivals based on the peculiarities of rural life.

Taking into account all these positive influences, rural tourism means a breakout point for the Transcarpathian Hungarian hosts.

In Highland, the picture is different. Rural tourism does not play a decisive role for Highland, the analysed Hungarian settlements and their catchment areas. Although the positive influence of rural or agrotourist use of the countryside has been continuously mentioned for many years, few Hungarian families try to make use of the possibilities offered by the natural environment. It should also be mentioned that Slovakia, unlike Ukraine, offers a relatively stable economic background for its population including the Highland Hungarians. However, one can say that the people who participated in the questionnaire survey do their job well and render high level services.

On the basis of the research results one can offer the following suggestions for the future:

- As far as in Highland rural and agricultural tourism is much more supported by various EU and state tenders than in Transcarpathia, more Hungarian settlements and families should be involved in rural tourism. It would be plausible to adopt and apply the successful Transcarpathian method –one organizer per one settlement.
- The population of Highland settlements earned their living from agriculture, mainly growing vegetables. After joining the EU due to cheap foreign goods and various legal regulations, they lost their catchment area and gradually quit their activity. Now, however, thanks to Ister-Granum Local Products Network more and more local producers' markets, fairs are organized, some settlements even have successful festivals. The territory has good conditions for growing grapes and wine culture is rising to a new level. Open wine-cellar days and festivals attract visitors. Thermal waters, other natural sights, rich cultural legacy of the territory along the Danube, the Garam and the Ipoly rivers offer numerous possibilities for the realization of rural tourism. The settlement leaders have numerous plans on how to make use of their settlements' capacities and to improve employment. To my mind, the main problem is lack of organization, cooperation, as well as uncommunicative character of people.
- Families should be organized into rural tourism, opportunity should be given to complete tourism courses.
- One should elaborate a wide range of programs for the area, they should be promoted and sold as a tourist package; however, this cannot be done without the local population's resolution and will.
- Transcarpathia needs more qualitative, not quantitative development, i.e. to improve the quality of accommodation, increase comfort level, and intensify competitiveness;

- the available program opportunities should be supplemented, the roads planned on paper ought to be built, guest nights have to be increased by enlarging the settlements' tourist offers; one-sidedness of the range of tourists ought to be reduced;
- easier border crossing would make travelling more attractive for the foreigners;
- maintenance of monuments, historical pilgrimage places, protection of nature, determinate planning, implementation of maintainable tourist development are indispensable for the future;
- lack of building the infrastructure network of Transcarpathian settlements, unsatisfactory condition of public roads can hinder the development of not only rural tourism, but also that of Transcarpathia.
- The marketing of Transcarpathian tourism is rather elementary. One needs common market appearance and a marketing plan for the territory covering rural tourism and other tourist products.

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