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Sociological perspectives regarding the effects in tourism in the southern area of the Romanian coast, considering the sociological and economical changes of the area: Olimp Resort

Oprescu Georgiana

The University of Bucharest, Doctoral School of Sociology, Pandurii Street no. 90, Sector 5, 050663, Bucharest

Georgiana.oprescu91@yahoo.com

Abstract. The article is an analysis of the Phoenixian tourism concept in the South of the Romanian coast, respectively the parallel generation-gentrification given the changes that have taken place over the years, with different generational, political, and social imprints and last but not least with different economic imprint over time. Thus, the zonal social elements, respectively the inhabitants and investors, participated directly and indirectly in the evolution and involution of the area and that of tourism. Currently, the area enjoys a social, touristic, and economic rise, and the main factor is the influence given by the development and rebirth of zonal tourism as an effect of the Romanian Phoenixian tourism concept. The present study highlights the connection between tourism, the gentrification of Olimp Resort, and the imprint of generations in the reconstruction of a current social episteme.

Keywords. Romanian Phoenixian tourism, generation, gentrification, sociology of Romanian tourism, Olimp Resort, the rebirth of tourism

Introduction

This paper is an analysis of gentrification and the process of generations in the South of the Romanian coast, more precisely Olimp Resort, based on the comparative analysis between the Biographical Research on Generations written by prof. univ. dr. Ana Rodica Stăiculescu on the one hand, and *Strada Mozaic- partial gentrification in Bucharest* written by prof. Raluca Popescu, on the other hand, in which I identify the effects in tourism in Olimp resort considering the sociological and economic changes in the area, the similarities and the sociological framing of the southern area of the Romanian coast in the generation-gentrification relationship.

I set out to investigate whether and to what extent the concepts and methods used in generational biographical research are complementary and could be applied in gentrification research with the mention of the fact that between these two pieces of research there are many similarities of content and form according to which these concepts were applied on the tourism area in Olimp Resort, Mangalia municipality, respectively the South of the Romanian coast.

‘Any interpretation in science is never exact or true, it is the reflection of an epoch, a culture, an ideology’ (Robert Fondi et Giovanni Monastra, 1986).

1.1. Description of Olimp Resort, Constanța, Romania



(source: https://ro.wikipedia.org/wiki/Olimp,_Constan%C8%9Ba)

Olimp Resort is part of Mangalia Municipality, Constanța County, Dobrogea, Romania. It entered the tourist circuit in 1972, being visited especially at that time for the treatment of rheumatic, gynaecological, respiratory, and even dermatological diseases.

It is well known that during the communist period (1965-1989) this resort was very expensive, being considered the Pearl of the Romanian coast that led to it being reserved for the guests of honour of the country's leader. In the post-communist period, the area declined a lot and now the concept of Phoenician tourism is present once again and proves the rebirth of Romanian tourism the area becoming the Pearl of the Romanian coast preferred by Romania's elite people¹.

2. Materials and methods

The data used for analysis are based on participatory observation and empirical research based on empirical evidence gained through direct observation and experience of Olimp resort along time, including during my childhood and adolescence, given that I had lived in this area. Moreover, I had applied a questionnaire to people living in this area. Thus, I wanted to individualize the conclusions of this piece of research on the southern part of the Romanian

¹ https://ro.wikipedia.org/wiki/Olimp,_Constan%C8%9Ba

coast given that both the concept of gentrification and biography have in common the most important dynamic factor, namely life, which is a continuously active process of integration of unpredictability, hazards, social discontinuities, which gives life its own internal and external coherence.

The concepts underlying this research are the social and temporal episteme, generation, age, and their effects on people, environment, culture, and society.

Therefore, I consider it necessary to define the concepts of gentrification and generation to correctly understand the sociological notions that form the starting point of this study.

Gentrification is a complex physical, economic, social, and cultural process, which has the effect of occupying areas inhabited by a socially disadvantaged population by the wealthy population, with a high social status (Hammett, 1984) so that the entire social character of the area changes.

Generation represents the distance in time corresponding to the interval that separates each of the degrees of a lineage having as social dimensions the collective memory, the consciousness of a generation, and time.

Both in the process of gentrification and the concept of generation, ideas, values, and behavior change when a generation gives place to the next one, over the emergence of new participants in social life and the continuous departures - over time - of inhabitants that were initially established there, either since they are no longer found in the new social, aesthetic and functional model of the area, or because they wanted to move to the outskirts of the city to avoid congestion and noise, not being able to find themselves in the changes made by the new generations, or even because they have moved to other regions for professional or family reasons.

The link between gentrification as an effect of social change and the concept of generation is based on access to the culture that developed the social system but also the desire for social affirmation and economic gain of new generations.

There is a close link between the process of GENTRIFICATION and GENERATION so that gentrification is the effect of generations linked to the passage of time in parallel with the change of fundamental values. In short, the CAUSE is represented by generation and by the changes that have occurred over time (economical, social, cultural changes), and the EFFECT is represented by gentrification and the social evolution towards modernism².

3. Results

The research conducted on the subject of gentrification and regarding the socio-economic effect of tourism in Olimp resort was largely based on ethnographic research that studied life histories, residents' perceptions regarding the factors that led to street transformation, the way in which it was made, aesthetics, functions and the local businesses existing overtime in the blocks of flats and in the hotels of this resort, having understudy both the aesthetic, physical, functional and cultural change from the empirical perspective of a resort in the southeast of the Romanian coast but also the evolution of the Romanian landscape and tourism, to what extent they have changed over the years, the factors and effects of these changes.

Consequently, from the questionnaire applied on 31 subjects, it resulted that a part of the inhabitants of the street resort have average social and professional status, as a profession being in the percentage of 7.1% economists, students 20%, teachers 6.7 %, 13.3% students, they

²Preference for everything that is new, modern.

still want to live in the resort 90%, even if only 10% of respondents believe that the resort has changed a lot from a social, economic point of view, cultural, compared to the period before the revival of zonal tourism.

In this sense, I notice a very close link between the duration of residence in the area in the percentage of 6.3% of respondents living over 33 years and thus participating in all the transformations of the resort, with the desire to socialize and confidence that the area will be reborn 66,7% considering the fact that nowadays people have become more eager to evolve and socialize, a proof of this fact being given by the 40% of respondents who believe that the purchase of a home by new locals has led to the evolution and high socialization level in the area.

Regarding the resort of Olimp during the communism era, 35.7% of people consider that then the area was more economically and socially developed, and the strengths of the resort were parks, entertainment facilities, clubs, green spaces being very well maintained and beaches very clean, the concerts that attracted tourists being numerous each summer. On the other hand, 7.1% of the respondents consider that the area was not economically and socially developed at that time.

The research is concerned with the interactions of the issues of generation, age and tourism, analyzing the shaping of generations in relation to each other throughout the zonal evolution. The research has a longitudinal perspective, because the concept of generation and the changes between generations, from many points of view such as those regarding families or the social, economical, functional, professional, political, religious and cultural perspective have a major impact both in tourism and in the evolution of society.

This research embraces the point of view of C. Attias-Donfut (1988: p. 143) who says that the stages of life must be considered in correspondence with the relations between the generations they express. The process of social ageing gives rise to the succession of stages of life, belonging to successive generations, thus interacting in the form of conflict or cooperation and gradually being replaced in different areas of social life (Ana Rodica Staiculescu, p. 33).

The biographical research conducted by Ana Maria Stăiculescu, PhD emphasizes the fact that the longitudinal approach reveals the collective memory in action, addressing entire generations and analyzing the magnitude and diversity of changes from one generation to another given mainly by political and legislative changes that have affected each generation differently, but also, by economical, cultural and industrial changes that, of course, had effects on zonal tourism. (Ana Rodica Staiculescu, p. 45).

Regarding the research results, I notice that the main role in society and its evolution is played by the individual and his actions, to the extent that one represents an entity in transformation so that it changes and individualizes according to his thinking and the environment in which he lives.

The analysis has a longitudinal character, extremely complex to approach due to the methodological obstacles related to the constraints implied by the duration of observation.

I also used the biographical method, which, according to Dilthey's expression (1942, pp. 127-129), represents the melody of life.

The longitudinal analysis shows how an action can influence the becoming of an individual and how he manages his aesthetics and the function of his own home. We can say that the house becomes the extension of the individual, adapting it to his liking and spending most of his time in it with his family. In this way, we can observe through a longitudinal analysis even which room of the house or outbuilding were customized during the different generations depending on the possibilities they had and social influences present.

In the pre-communist period, the living room was the main focus of the customization process, in the communist period the kitchen was the meeting place of the family, and in the current period, the living room is the meeting place of the family which is generally transformed into an office or an open area, a space build for socialization.

The Post-Truth period is the period when the truth no longer matters, but the interpretation does (until now the truth was essential but now people are connected to the interpretation).

Gentrification used a well-structured but limited sample of people in the researched area as opposed to the study of generations that worked on samples with common but different structure over time.

Thus, 41.2% of the inhabitants of Olimp resort are considered to be traditional inhabitants, while 58.8% are considered to be modern. Thus, the longitudinal analysis shows how an action can influence the becoming of an individual and how it shapes its aesthetics and the functions desired for its own home. We can say that the house becomes the extension of the individual, adapting it to his liking and spending most of his time in it with his family. In this way, we can observe through a longitudinal analysis even which room of the house or outbuilding were customized during the different generations depending on the possibilities they had and social influences present.

Surprisingly and wonderfully for me, because I consider that tourism is reborn from its ashes, according to the Romanian Phoenixian tourism concept inspired by the myth of the Phoenix bird reborn from its ashes!

4. Discussion

The social impact proved after this research long with the stories of the inhabitants from several generations reveal the fact that they prefer in a percentage of 47.1% not to change the specifics of the buildings over time turning into modern buildings for tourism, restaurants, commercial spaces and office buildings but only to be kept as they were designed, while 52.9% prefer to build new, taller and more spacious blocks.

There are a part of the current 78.9% inhabitants living in this area for at least two generations ago and who despite the aesthetic, functional and social change has not been determined to choose another residential area, even if the current economic value is much higher than the initial purchase price of the property, for them the sentimental and spiritual value of the area being a priority.

On the other hand, there were 10% of residents who chose to move to another area arguing that they want more social and economical opportunities.

The social impact proved by the biographical research on generations established by data analysis the fact that generations close in time lived different experiences in all fields (childhood environment, professional opportunities, living standards, family history) seeing their lives differently from one generation to another depending on economical, political, cultural, familial factors.

5. Conclusion

This study is based on situational observation and analysis as the main tool.

The zonal changes are given by the imprint of all the generations that lived in the Olimp area. Therefore, considering the magnitude and diversity of changes from one generation to another given mainly by political and legislative changes that affected each generation differently, but also, secondarily by economical, cultural and industrial changes, the area during

communism rule was the most developed and important one on the Romanian coast, later becoming a wasteland only to become now an area of interest for both residents and investors and tourists.

The importance of the area I have chosen for this study consists in the fact that it significantly reveals the generational apprehension influenced by social, economical, political, cultural factors but also the phenomenon of the gentrification of the area south of the Romanian coast, that is the process of renovating and reinvigorating the damaged resort - in time - through the influx of wealthier residents, which leads to an increase in the value of the property and the relocation of low-income families and small businesses, thus contributing to enhancing the status of the area.

Before communism, it was a wild area, with wild beaches and during communism, the Olimp area was considered the Pearl of the Romanian coast where the members of the Communist Party and the luxury social blanket of Romania from that time came, for generations.

After the communist period, the Olimp area became desolate due to the lack of investors, the disinterest of the current generations, the disappearance and impoverishment of the former generation but also due to high economic interests, leaving the area in disrepair to reduce the value of hotels and buildings.

Currently, the area has become the Pearl of the seaside again, through massive investments and the desire to recover the lost years. Also, Olimp Resort is the greenest resort thanks to its very generous green spaces. Previous generations have returned by combining the spirit of the generations that participated in the birth of the area with the current spirit.

The sociological key to this return is that the reconstructor of the area is an exponent of the generation that fully lived both moments so that he wanted to revive the spirit of yesteryear.

During this period in Olimp Resort, we can find tourist complexes, SPAs, spa complexes, casinos, bowling facilities, fish restaurants, pharmacies, clubs, shops, antique fairs, an area of inhabitant built in the pre-communist period with which the process gentrification makes its mark, by the fact that many families of high social class have purchased homes in the area, all those elements leading to the construction of a residential area with new apartments for those wishing to live seasonally or permanently in Olimp Resort, emblem of the coast Romanian.

Today, Olimp Resort flourishes uniquely, bringing back the spirit of yesteryear through the imprint of the new generations who want to feel the nomenclatural air of yesteryear but also nature and green space that this resort has, unlike other resorts on the Black Sea coast, which are overcrowded with buildings - for example, there is no green space (Mamaia Nord, Constanța).

The results show that the methods used can only work complementary to get a clear picture of some studies, to interpret and understand them correctly.

The value of the research does not stop on the general way used in sociology and not only on the monographic method used in the research of social reality but analyzes in detail the various tools of investigation, without trying to absolute one of them, they complement each other, each filling a gap that can be found in another one. Their successive and concomitant use can help the sociologist to highlight the qualitative and quantitative structure of social phenomena, social causality, relationships established between different phenomena, and last but not least, social life in all its sociological complexity.

Regarding the perceptions of the inhabitants about Olimp resort, interviews were conducted with the inhabitants so that they made me divide them into two categories: the traditionalists and the modernists.

The traditionalists are the inhabitants of several generations who have always known the resort, have been living there permanently, both during winter and during summer, they can best explain the social and economic changes in the area since they have experienced them. These are those with a high aversion to change and towards new elements, the overcrowding of the resort and the changes in infrastructure, parking, new constructions. Their speech is largely critical in terms of the congestion created during the summer and the construction work carried out in the area.

They are also bothered by the negligence and the indifference of the authorities towards the resorts, the lack of involvement in the infrastructure and its development on the part of the local authorities. Despite these aspects, they do not see themselves living elsewhere, claiming that the area is an "oasis of peace, unlike the crowded Mangalia." (Head of the technical department, 29 years old)

They prefer to keep the old blocks of flats, not agreeing to demolish them to build taller, more spacious ones.

The modernists are not interested in the appearance and history of the past, they have a different perception from that of their parents and the former inhabitants of Olimp resort, the modernists largely participating in the expansion and rebirth of zonal tourism. They want the construction of new living spaces, the economic development of the area in the off-season, to create a social climate and not to opt for going to the capital city or another country for a better income or a better life: "In winter, no supermarket or cafe is open, we gather on the scale of the block, I consider that we have evolved and I want to create an area for diversification and socialization, both for young people and adults. This area has potential, there are land areas, forests, the Black Sea, we have all the resources, what are we waiting for? What are the local authorities waiting for?" (Student, 20 years old)

The modernists, on the other hand, want new, imposing and spacious constructions, considering that in this way the area will be more populated and the resort will develop in winter as well.

The motivation of some inhabitants to move from Mangalia to Olimp resort was the peace and social heterogeneity of the inhabitants during the summer season: "We are like a family in this residential area, we know each other - by large - and this fact gives you a state of confidence and silence. But, I admit, it would not hurt to build new homes that attract new people, we need new perspectives, new types of culture, it is a wonderful area, perhaps the richest in resources (human, natural, touristic) than any other area from Romania" (teacher, 40 years old).

The evolution of Olimp resort shows traits of several concepts, like continuity and not regret of the past. The transformation and evolution of Olimp Resort did not involve the replacement of one population with a new one but changes in socio-demographic composition, due, of course, mainly to political changes but also to historical evolution (communist period and after). In general, this evolution is considered a natural process, the locals remembering the past and the bohemian life that was provided by the tourists who frequented luxury hotels during communism.

The zonal gentrification was given by the economic capital of the new owners, tenants or investors, together with the generational imprint that gradually led to modernity but also the main factors that transformed the area, economical ones, political, administrative or even socio-cultural factors make this resort an enigma of the Romanian coast, a proof regarding the existence of the concept of Phoenixian tourism, which was reborn every time from its ashes, like the mythology of the Phoenix bird.

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