TOURISM, AN OPPORTUNITY FOR THE INTEGRATION OF THE CROSS-BORDER REGION “STRUG-GOLLLOBORD”

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Abstract: Cross-border regions make a real opportunity for the creation of connections and reinforcement of interstate relations. Positive examples of these regions like the one between Germany and Poland and Czech Republic are a testimony of their transformation into connectors for the reinforcement of the relations between the people of these regions. In this way, our analysis aims to show a real opportunity for the development of the cross-borders region above mentioned, focusing mainly towards tourism. On the other hand, this will serve to the approaching and the European integration of the cross-border region Strug-Golllobord, giving new perspectives to it. Even though the population of this region forces many difficulties, there are mutual aims like their integration in the big European family leaving behind old political division. It’s geographical position as a connector between the Adriatic Sea and the Balkans, the favorable natural conditions, the great archeological and historical assets make a real opportunity to give it the focus of the touristic region. All these resources of the natural, cultural or spiritual kind, connected to the cohabitation of some ethnicities within it, offer a great interest in the human studies field. The orientation towards tourism would urge the stable development and would also greatly satisfy the touristic chain Prespa-Galicicë-Jabllanicë. This new economical orientation, offers new opportunities to the development of these region and even further. It will urge the governments of both countries into the composition of regional strategies for the interstate cooperation and European integration. The infrastructure investments, especially on the west side of it, the reopening of the Stebleva border crossing point would serve this aim perfectly.

Keywords: cross-border, region, tourism, integration, stable development, cooperative.

1. GEOGRAPHIC AND NATURAL POSITION AND IMPACT ON THE ECONOMY OF THE REGION

The cross-border region of Golllobord-Struga lies in the eastern part of Albania, including the highland with the same name, and continues in the Republic of Macedonia, which includes the territory extending from the village of Vellesht (Struga municipality) to the south and continues northward with the territory of the municipality called Vefcani, Struga, to Konjara village, near Dibër e Madhe. The region in question is distinguished for many common or nearly identical geographic features, especially natural, cultural and spiritual conditions. But nearly one-year life divided into two countries with uneven developmental paths has also determined changes in social and economic features, which, however, do not violate the whole of this ethno-geographic regional unity. From the point of view of the administrative organization, the region has its own distinctive features, because Albania and Macedonia have uneven territorial administrative organization systems. The role of the many features of this geographic position is not fixed and of the same value for all times. It is also linked to many other factors, among which special values are: internal-political changes, but also regional and socio-political developments and beyond. To underline is the fact that, despite their historical periods and their characteristics, the region has played the role of a link between the territory of Albania and other Balkan and wider areas. The region, on both sides of the state border, has played the role of a connecting bridge between the internal territories of the Albanian territory and, especially, the Adriatic coast with other Albanian territories, which are today in the Republic of Macedonia or other Balkan countries, proceeding further, toward the east.

1.1 Why is Golllobord-Struga cross-border region?

First, the cross-border region of Golllobord-Struga lies on both sides of the Albanian and Macedonian state borders, and over the long periods of time until 1949 it has functioned as a single one resuming its function after the year 1990. Secondly, she is located between the three early economic and social centers, such as Dibër e Madhe, Elbasan, and Ohrid and all her activity gravitates around them. Thirdly: The region has had the same continuity of the economic development, where agricultural activity and construction dominated in both parts, which continue to be preserved today despite the changes that occurred with the closure of the state border in 1949. Fourth: traditions, customs, common ethnography elements and the preservation of the tradition in the marriage ties within it, strengthen the view of its functioning as a whole. The existence of the Slavic population on both sides of the region did not constitute an obstacle to increasing co-operation between the two peoples. On the contrary, it has known to place it as a bridge of rapprochement and cooperation not only for Golllobord and Struga but also beyond.
Since ancient times the Durrës-Fusha of Tirana-Dibër, which connected the coast with the interior of the Illyrian territories, with the eastern part of the Roman Empire, passing through the region concerned. In the early and middle ages (VII to XV), the ancient antiquity road, mentioned above, continued to function with greater intensity. The cross-border region functioned as a whole with many common sides, both physically, socially and economically, and its role as connecting knot and transit was very sensitive. This is evidenced by the fact that such villages, such as Stebleva and Llabunishta, were the first places to host commercial caravans started from Greater Debar or Struga and Ohrid with the direction of Elbasan and Durrës. In the period 1913-1938, the Golloborda cross-border region played its role as a tie, but now with a smaller intensity and importance. This is related to the establishment of borders which, however, hampered the loose movement of goods and people on both sides. The period between 1949-1990 is characterized by a complete depletion of this role played by the region, as well as its complete isolation due to the self-assertive politics that the Albanian state pursued of this era. We think that three are the main factors that affect today's slow process of development and regaining the role of the geographical position of the Gollobord cross-border region as a link. Firstly, natural difficulties associated with the region's isolated character in relation to the other developed countries in Albania and Macedonia and with a very rugged and quite high relief. Secondly, its dysfunction more and more as a single region. This is, of course, coming to be reduced. But, again, there are difficulties of a political-administrative character with bureaucratic features in the two states where it extends. Third: lack of infrastructure at the levels required by today's economic and social development emphasizing this in particular in the Albanian part. The political factor is undoubtedly the most important aspect affecting the cross-border region. As it is well known, in recent years, the political relations between the Albanian and Macedonian states have seen positive developments, but more mutual cooperation is required. The region concerned is a natural spatial unity, with almost common geological, morphological, climatic, plant and animal features. This best meets its naturalness as a cross-border region as a whole, because of the geographic position. From the natural point of view: the high morphometric values of the relief and the dominant mountain character make the nature of the area more varied, which undoubtedly constitutes one not a small value of its offer in terms of mountain tourism and ecotourism.

1.2 Climate resources and their impact on human activity

- The cross-border region is distinguished by large climatic changes, which are reflected in the great diversity of cultivated and natural vegetation, a major economic opportunity.
- Considerable amount and types of rainfall: rain and snow create opportunities for water resources used during the dry season of the year and for water supply of artificial reservoirs built in the region.
- Numerous snow precipitation and the enormous stretch of the stratum offer great potential for the development of white tourism. Big rain precipitation, favored by natural slopes for ski sports such as Dragan or Llabunishtë, are the best offer for the offer natural for the development of winter sports. Also, this large amount of snow and rain streams is a potential and not a small opportunity for electricity generation through hydropower plants, but also in the fishing economy.

2. HISTORICAL AND CULTURAL HERITAGE OF GREAT POTENTIAL FOR TOURISM, AND SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH

Fig 1 Map of the geographical position of the cross-border region Gollobord-Strug
The cross-border region represents an area with an early residence. The highly concise historical developments and events in and around it have been accompanied by many changes, especially in the number, structure and characteristics of the population of this area. This area has a rich cultural and historical heritage, beginning in the earliest periods, exactly in those of its Illyrian civilization. Settlements and fortifications, which are distinguished for a particular architecture, have been built in the most strategic sectors of the area, mainly in its most dominant points and protected by foreign invaders. Among them special interest are the towns of Borovo, Gradishte of Trebisht and Kojavec. These traces of early civilization make up a destination of great interest for both historical and cultural tourism. Among the most prominent fortifications we can mention the castle of Ladomirica, the archaeological town of Borova, the fortified town of Labinnenisht, which belongs to the Middle Ages, about 3 km north of the village along the Struga-Dibër e Madhe road. In many villages of this region, on both sides of the border, such as Stebleva, Ostren or Llabunishtë, Velestë and Podgorc, we have to do with an early tradition of stone work, which is almost unlike the other surrounding areas. Most of the time, these stonework associated with wood, engrave with many ornamental elements of copper or silver.

2.1 Human Resources are a good opportunity for development.

The cross-border region of Gollobord-Struga is generally characterized by positive trade patterns in the demographic perspective. This taking into account the general tendency of the population across the Balkan Peninsula to move towards Western European countries. Also for the fertility indicator or the weight of the age group which are considered as important indicators for the supply of active forces for the future, again compared to the other areas we are dealing with positive indicators. The natural reach until 2015 for the whole region amounts to 3.8 ‰, in the days of today reaches 3.5 ‰, the working age population across the region in 2001-2002 was 36%. In 2015 we have official data only for the Albanian part, where according to the latest population census, this age reaches 27%. The working age group, from 6.3% in the year 01, has increased by 9% in 2015 but this does not diminish the fact that the region is characterized by a positive percentage of the active age group and especially those up to 18 years of age.

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<th>Natural growth</th>
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<td>10</td>
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3. THE LEVEL OF TOURISM DEVELOPMENT IN THE REGION TODAY

The ever-growing demand of the population for a better life and recreation has made tourism nowadays one of the most lucrative sectors in a country's economy. The cross-border region of Gollobord = Struga offers great opportunities, especially in terms of mountain-winter tourism, but also in cultural and historic tourism. Today there are great differences between the two parts of the region in the field of tourism. Thus, in the western part of the region, with all the great opportunities it offers, this sector is at its beginnings. In 2012, only one hotel is located in the area, which is set up in the center of the Fushë-Studena village, with a capacity of seven rooms and beds of 24. The first steps towards sustainable investments in this area have been thrown into Stäbleva village. It is about to finish a winter camping of six "alpine" homes, with funding from residents of this village. Today, tourism in this part of the region is more concentrated in the Stäbleva commune due to climate, large forest areas and archeological objects located in the village of Borovo. However, more is the day-to-day tourism, and less of tourism with longer stay days. According to data from this municipality, the largest flows are in the summer and autumn seasons. According to data from this municipality, the number of tourists in 2013 reached over 7,500, out of which about 70% were daily. In 2016 we have a 50% increase compared to 2013. The eastern part of the region stands out for its sustainability and development. Two are its main directions: first, in the establishment of hotels with a welcoming comfort, according to today's demands, and secondly, in the construction of summer houses on the plateaus of the Jabllaniçë and Visharica Mountains. In addition to their own use, in recent years they are also used by tourists coming from Macedonia, or from the surrounding border areas like Librazhd and Pogradec. In this part of the region, the hotel "Diplomat", which is located along the Struga-Dibër e Madhe road in the area called "Veleshta e Re", is worthily competing. This hotel is category B, has 30 rooms and 13...
apartments, with a total capacity of 90 seats, and two halls with a total capacity of 900 persons. The distinctive feature lies in the fact that this hotel runs its activity throughout the year, especially during the summer season, due to its proximity to the city of Struga and Lake Ohrid. Likewise, in this village develop their activity two other hotels: "Joni" and "Arberia". Other factors contributing to the development of tourism in the region include: The appropriate geotouristic position, along the road to the oldest links connecting the Balkans to the Adriatic, offers great chances for increasing tourist flows. The existence of the road connecting Dibër e Madhe with the interior of the country has made this area gravitate to the old culture and history. Passing through it, the road linking Librazhd to Peshkopi, constitutes an important communication artery between the areas of central Albania and its northeastern and northern areas.

- The new and emancipated population poses another chance with special values for the development of tourism, when it is known that this area requires younger ages to serve and satisfy tourists, requires people with education and culture who know languages foreign. This area offers such chances.

- Quality and biological products are a very tempting offer for all tourists or casual passers. Adding here the extraordinary and traditional menu of the area, the guests would be very happy and willing to return.

- The forests of the region with over 17,000 ha, and their inclusion within the National Park of Shebenik-Jabllanicë, open up great opportunities for this area.

- The location of the region between such economic and urban centers, such as Elbasan, Struga, Ohrid or Librazhd, and the proximity to them, guarantee a continuous tourist attendance.

Its proximity to the Struga airport and the seaside tourist centers, such as Struga and Ohrid, offers tourists the opportunity to use mountain tourism in a very close geographic area, in addition to lake and historical tourism. The reopening of the point the Stebleva border crossing, in addition to Vernice, would facilitate their circulation and would best complement the continuity of the Prespa-Pelister-Ohrid-Struga-Jabllanicë-Stëbleva tourist sites, ending at the Mavrovo tourist spot. This would create a "tourism chain" around the Albania-Macedonia border area. Undoubtedly, this will increase as economic development, as well as closer integration of the population on both sides of the border.

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