

Residents' Perception regarding to the Possibilities of Leisure and their Influence on the Quality of Life

Case study: The Human Communities in Zlatna Depression, Romania

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Abstract *In the present analysis we will adopt the perspective of leisure time as time segment with a relative autonomy, with an important role in the quality of life. Leisure time is equally a result of the processing of other segments of life and a determining factor of transformation of the concept about life, once this segment was "discovered" and began to be consumed according to the preferences and needs of everyone, after the release of any commitment.*

The role of leisure in the quality of life is subordinate to the importance given to it in the relation to the nature, to the size and difficulty of the professional obligations, to the way in which the individuals deal with them and with the need felt more or less intensely to have leisure time. But the role in quality of life depends on the system of general and individual values, which set up life styles in different social contexts.

Key words Leisure, Quality Of Life, Residents' Perception, Human Communities, Zlatna

DOI: 10.6007/IJAREG/v1-i2/1446

URL: <http://dx.doi.org/10.6007/IJAREG/v1-i2/1446>

Introduction

The standards of living and lifestyle are tied inextricably to the level and quality of life. The standard of living presents a full index, which characterizes the use of the population of the material and spiritual goods and the degree of satisfaction of the needs of these goods at a certain time of development of the society. This reflects the society status in general, and to each individual. Right now the notion of a "standard of living" is included in a wider notion called "quality of life". Through the concept of quality of life is understood "the totality of the individual possibilities afforded by the society to make a living, to dispose of the products themselves and to use the services to organize an individual's existence depending on the needs, requirements and wishes of his own" (Bertrand de Jouvenel and Kaal, 1961) or "all natural and cultural threats, the variety, quantity and quality of goods and services available to all members of a society" (Baier, 1974). The definitions found in the literature intend to highlight the complex character of the quality of life

Thus, in one of the first major works dedicated to the social and quality indicators there are outlined both the pragmatic character of the approach of purchasing information to know when things are going good or bad, from the social point of view, of the population lives, but also the multitude of elements that must be taken into account: participation, affection, status, respect, power, security, freedom, self-realization, beauty, creativity (Bauer, 1966). The research of the quality of life is important, as part of its contribution to enhancing the quality of life itself (Lever, 2000). The quality of life of the people in the urban area is the result of human interaction with the urban environment (Das, 2008).

In research about quality of life in urban area, quality of life dimension relates to environment factors which has been considered in a broader sense, they are physical, social and economic environment (Das, 2008). One important element in an urban environment is the public open space (Shirvani, 1985). The public open space can be seen in various forms, but all have important functions, such as conservation, recreation, relationship with nature, mental and social health maintenance (Lynch, 1965/1990). A study conducted by Marans (1988) states that the quality of place, such as public open space, is a subjective phenomenon, everyone has a different perception.

This study will use the definition of Dumazédier about leisure time: "that time segment in which each individual has certain concerns which it enshrines willingly after they issued the professional, social and family obligations. These concerns have three functions: rest (rebound), fun and personality development" (Dumazédier, 1971).

The size of leisure time in Romania after 1989 was influenced by changes in the occupational and professional structure, changes in the ownership structure, with many implications in terms of work and leisure time, changes in ways of thinking. Although reducing the working week has led to generally increasing size of leisure time, in reality the changes that have occurred sometimes have produced an increase in leisure time, sometimes a drop of it. For business people, entrepreneurs of all kinds, employers, merchants etc., the "professional duties" drastically reduced leisure time, especially the daily life. For more occupations and professions, the work time is extended throughout the day, which reduces the daily leisure time and the one at the end of the week (Marginean et. all, 2005).

The current situation on the labor market, as a result of the shortage of jobs, caused that many people to consume more time with "professional obligations", hoping that in this way they can keep their job and, thus, have less leisure time and are less keen to have free time. Also, the possibility offered since 1989 to be employed in several jobs diminishes the leisure time. In the studied area, are also population segments which have more free time, time wasted that could acquire the features and functions of leisure time, as a result of unemployment.

The culture of society in terms of leisure time determines a certain mentality about the leisure as segment of life with relative autonomy and influences the ways of spending leisure time. It is the result and the determinant of an industry of leisure that offers leisure options and leisure facilities for a wide range of preferences. The Romanian society transformations after 1989 have influenced the culture of leisure time sometimes positive, sometimes negative, and in some way insufficient. Awareness of leisure and awareness of the idea of leisure pleasure marks the completion of another stage in the process of urbanization and modernization. The awareness of the existence of the leisure time came close by itself due to the nature and duration of the "professional duties" (8 hours daily) and due to the new way of living in urban areas, namely in the apartment in the block, which restricts the area of extraprofessional activities, especially for males (Marginean et. all, 2005).

The deterioration of the economic situation, the continuous process of impoverishment of the population has strengthened these mentalities and has hindered the process of developing a culture of leisure time and the industry of this.

Leisure Satisfaction, as the degree of satisfaction of individuals at leisure experiences and contexts, is regarded as positive perception when individuals participating in leisure activities (Beard and Ragheb, 1980). Leisure Satisfaction is considered as the degree of satisfaction at expected demands when participating in leisure activities (Siegenthaler and O'Dell, 2000).

Case study: the human communities in Zlatna Depression

Zlatna depression, located in the Carpathian Mountains, Romania, is a morphological unit which is shaping up as a typical intramontane area, representing the low relief unit developed along the Ampoi River over a length of about 15 km, and the maximum width of the basin is about 8 km in the central area, with a generally East-West direction (fig. 1).

This area includes a population of 8.562, in 2013, where the female population owns 51,2%. The human settlements located in the area of depression belong to two administrative units: Zlatna (city of Zlatna, and 13 villages: Dealu Roatei , Dumbrava, Feneș, Izvoru Ampoiului, Galati, Pătrângenii, Parau Gruifului, Pirita, Podu lui Paul, Suseni, Valea Mică, Trâmpoiele, Valea Mica, Vâltori) and Metes (with a single village named Presaca Ampoiului, located within the depression). The economic activities in the geographical area of the Zlatna Depression unfold mostly in the secondary and tertiary economic sectors, the basic occupations being represented by wood processing activities, small industry, transport, trade and services, and in a lesser extent agriculture practiced especially for needs of residents, and there is no favorable climate and nor arable surfaces very large, the emphasis falling on animal husbandry.

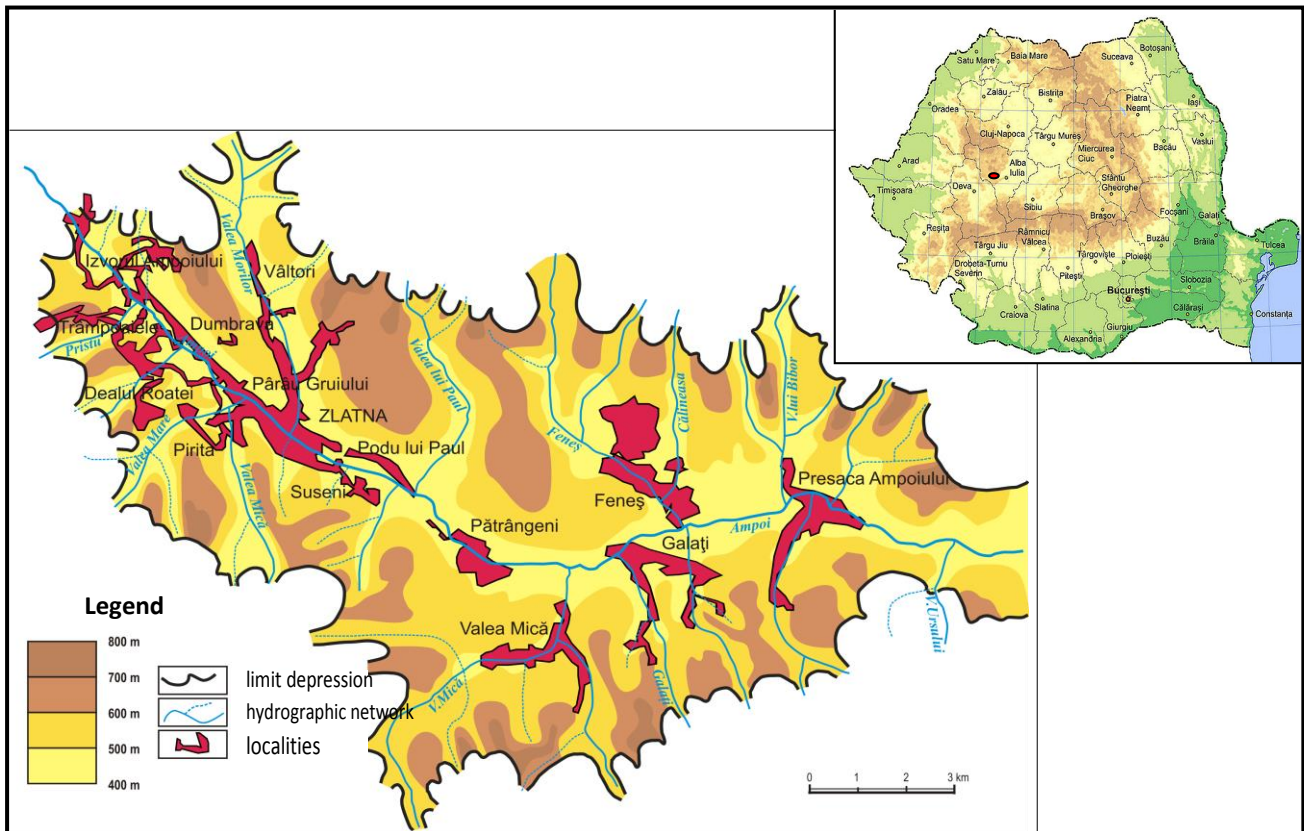


Figure 1. The distribution of localities within the Zlatna Depression

Methodology

For a complete picture of the "phenomenon of leisure time" in the society of communities of Zlatna Depression, it was necessary to draw on the research field concerning the practical arrangements for leisure, to the way in which people perceive possibilities for leisure and to the satisfaction of the way of leisure. This research included questions related to these issues; the complexity of such research has not allowed the approach of leisure in detail.

At the filling out the applied questionnaire participated a number of 328 people, of which there has been a validated a number of 316 questionnaires, covering 15 towns located in the Zlatna Depression. In terms of age and sex (164 male, 152 female), the share of respondents was relatively balanced, in the sense that the age groups concerned were represented approximately equal between the participants in the questionnaire and from occupational point of view, their weights were as follows: 10% students, 12% pensioners, unemployed 28%, assisted social, 18% household or person without occupying, 32% people having an occupation in various fields. On average, their share was 53% urban, 47% rural. The application was made in the year 2013, in two stages: May (urban) and July (rural).

Diagnosis of recreational activities and their influence on quality of life

The perception of possibilities for recreation varies according to the socio-demographic characteristics of people, to the size of the available leisure time and is influenced by its own economic resources and existing facilities and possibilities for leisure.

Naturally, the leisure satisfaction in urban areas is higher, due, firstly, to the existing possibilities and at very low levels of schooling, the satisfaction is low because these levels of schooling involve both low income and limited access to various ways of spending free time, generated by low educational and cultural level, in terms of age influence, the research results showed that over 35 years, the satisfaction decreases: there are negative influences of family responsibilities that reduce the size of leisure and increase the household expenses, the growth and education of children; and the reduced offer of services aimed at leisure of this people and some thinking about the life styles.

This analysis showed some inconsistent results concerning the influence of income on the perception of opportunities for leisure; Thus, the correlation with its own estimated revenue didn't show the negative feedback of the possibilities of leisure-time higher at people with low estimated income, as would have been expected, especially comparing them with the analyses of other authors carried out at the national level, a possible explanation for the results presented in table 1, being that, the more those polled consider their own revenue as being smaller, the better they would rather consider that the real recreation possibilities are sufficient, this view being characteristic to the populations in difficult economic situations, but devoid of perspective, like in the case of this geographical space.

Table 1 – Perception of the access to recreational facilities depending on the current income estimation

The current income estimation	Facilities of leisure		
	Very bad and bad	Neither good nor bad	Good and very good
I do not get any for bare necessities	28,3%	20,5%	51,2%
I get to the absolute minimum	39,6%	32,9%	27,5%
I reach for a decent living	56,7%	23,4%	19,9%
I get everything I need	76,9%	17,2%	5,9%

Of all the people surveyed about the importance they give to the access to recreational facilities, 68,4% of respondents answered positively, considering that the various ways of recreational leisure have a very important role for quality of life.

The possibilities for spending free time in the residence area were valued, after the application of the questionnaire, by 91% of respondents as being very bad and bad, 4% as neither good nor bad and 5% of interviewees consider to be good and very good (fig. 2).

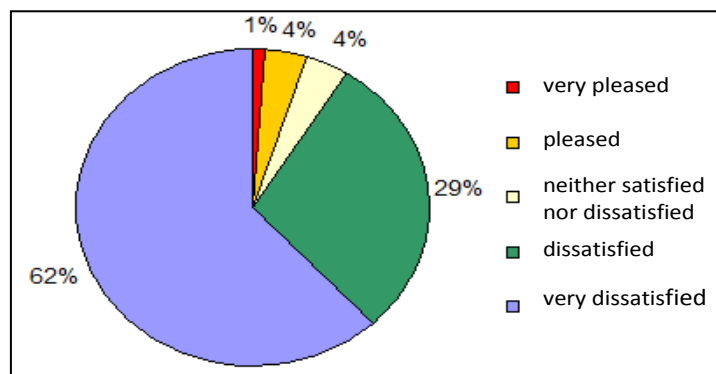


Figure 2. How satisfied are you compared to recreational facilities of the area where you live?

From the perspective of the recreation pursuits in leisure time (fig. 3), there are three large hierarchical groups of concerns (from those considered):

- I. -home, watching TV, reading newspapers and magazines, reading (literature);
 -walks, sporting pursuits;
- II. -very active persons, who do not have free time;
 -excursions outside of the village;
- III. -house of culture, performances (there are no cultural sights like theatre, cinema).

Before an in-depth analysis of each concern, we remind you that the formulation of leisure time concerns taken into account refer to the fact that the research has not proposed nor is able to exhaust the ways of spending the free time; consequently, there may be no general considerations regarding the behavior patterns of leisure of local communities.

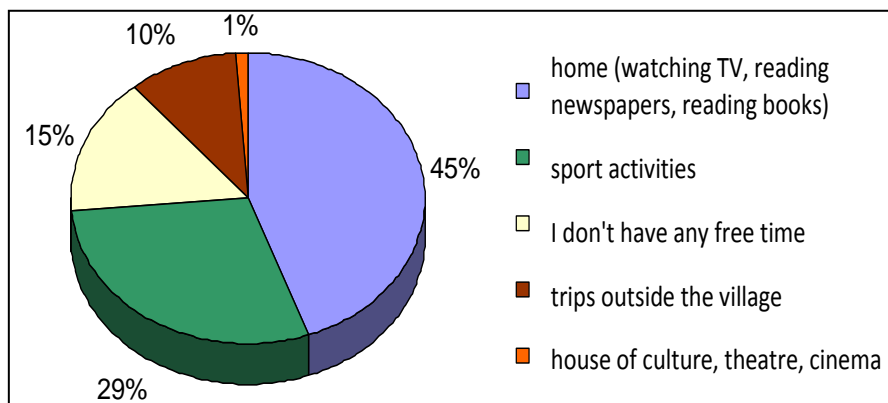


Figure 3. How do you spend your leisure time in the usual way?

Watching television is the main concern of leisure for the residents of Zlatna Depression, especially for the fact that it can be done at home without extra expense and effort, but also due to the increase in the number of programs, diversity and attractiveness of broadcasts aired by satellite or CATV television, to which they are connected most of their homes.

At the same time, it is the main source of information and, as you can see in figure 4. The correlation with the responding residents, with their gender and their level of capacities indicates that in urban areas more people watch TV and men watch more often than women and as the level of schooling is more lower, the less they watch.

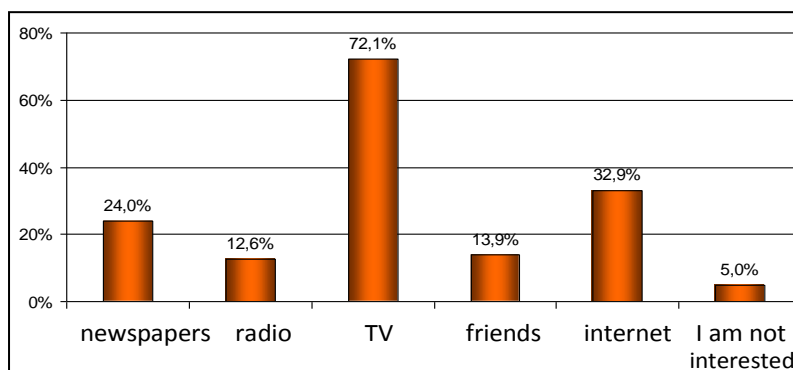


Figure 4. Which sources get daily information?

Reading newspapers and magazines is another favored way of spending free time. Reading the press occupies a secondary place in obtaining the information, after television, 24 % of those questioned preferring this information asset. The consideration together of newspapers and magazines without listing their favorite titles coerce to a general analysis, as well as the one related to watching television broadcasts and as it will be the one related to the literature. At the level at which it is possible the analyze, from the data of the field research showed that information obtained by reading the press (newspapers and magazines) is read more in urban areas men, the concern grows with the level of schooling and begins to decline after the age of 60 years old.

In the general context of decline of the concern for reading, it's note the large decline of the interest of people with higher education for reading , as well as the young, that is precisely where this concern was more widespread.

If we keep in mind that until the age of 20 years, many young people are still in the period of studies and hence closer to the reading, it appears that they formed a layer of slightly differed from the proportion of the population within each category (14-18%) who has concerns frequently for reading; young people no longer highlights by this concern.

Concerning interest for reading in general, and to young people, in particular, it's necessary an analysis of the Romanian society transformations. The impoverishment of population was often invoked as

the main cause of the decline in interest for reading, along with the rising price of books, although very different books were printed, that were inaccessible before 1990, but in smaller prints. The relationship between the preoccupation for reading and the income was supposed to leave on the premise that for reading you must have, first of all both a private library and money to buy books. Unfortunately there is not available data about the relationship between the concern for reading, buying books, library loan and the loan from knowledge.

It's noted that the concern for the reading is present the most to those people whose incomes are reaching for a decent living (in his own perception), behind the income level there is a level of capacities, certain occupations/professions, different size of leisure, different leisure pursuits in the context of differentiated lifestyles. The money is needed to buy books, but not enough for the concern to read. We don't intend to diminish the role of income in its concern for reading, but only not to enlarge this role and put it in relation to other factors.

Television is the only concern involving individual watching for most of the time in a private setting, with or without the presence of other persons; reading newspapers and magazines, as well as reading (literature) are purely individual acts (even if not always practiced at home); walks and sporting concerns involve the consumption of leisure in group.

The results of the analysis show more young people aged up to 35 years old (33%) go on trips outside the village and that, in general, after this age the number of those who go on trips is drastically reduced.

Without having a cultural content, the number of people who go on trips outside of the village grows with the level of schooling: 10-18% of persons with no more than vocational school, 31-33% of people with high school and post-high school studies and 41% of persons with higher education. Undoubtedly the income influences the movement proceeds on trips outside the village, but the large revenues do not necessarily move often in tours.

Any concerns of cultural and entertainment outside the home (tab. 2) and cultural house, the cinema, the theatre and the shows are not frequented than in a very small degree: the proportion of those who go to the cinema less often or more often is 34 %; performances and theatre were frequented by 34%(16% of respondents); 3% went home and often shows (1% of the people surveyed).

Table 2 – How often do you attend the following recreational attractions?

	once a week or more often	a few times a month	a few times a year	once a year or less often	at all	I don't know/I do not answer
1. Cultural house	3%	5%	11%	15%	63%	3%
2. Theatre	0%	3%	9%	4%	83%	1%
3. Cinema	0%	1%	15%	8%	75%	1%
4. Shows	1%	8%	31%	21%	39%	0%
5. Exhibitions, museums	4%	1%	14%	29%	51%	1%
6. Restaurant	20%	20%	26%	12%	22%	0%
7. Clubs/Bars	23%	27%	22%	5%	23%	0%
8. Gym	36%	23%	9%	4%	27%	0%
9. Internet café	3%	5%	11%	3%	77%	1%

These concerns are influenced first of all by the presence of cinemas, theatres and concert halls in place of domicile; it is known that in rural areas and small towns they do not exist. Otherwise in larger urban areas, their numbers have considerably dropped for reasons of economic efficiency in line with the increasingly low interests of the public. The closest cultural sights of this kind can be found at Alba Iulia.

The analysis showed that going to the cinema, especially young people with at least high school education and who have sufficient incomes for a decent living or anything more than a decent living. Other results show that the people with high school and secondary-school studies (25% of them) from Zlatna go to the performances but mainly people with higher education (46%) and young people between the ages of 20 and 35 years of age (28% of them). The revenue has a larger role in attending performances compared

to the cinema, because of the cost of the tickets is sometimes inaccessible to many aficionados of the genre.

For the correct assessment of the custom of going to shows and its frequency, it should be noted that in the questionnaire which was called "shows" (cultural activities that are organized and takes place within the House of culture in Zlatna), theatre, cinema, brings together heterogeneous performances in terms of content, the playback mode, and the cultural level; from this perspective, a symphonic concert, which provides for hearing a minimum level of musical culture, is less accessible than a rock concert or a folk music. For theatre, the separation is more difficult to do, here being light comedy shows, for example, and symbolic performances of complex analysis, which remain accessible only to a cultural elite. As can be seen from the table above, the attendance at restaurants, bars/clubs, sport halls and internet cafes are the most common ways of spending leisure time.

Conclusions

The complacency over how to spend leisure time at the respondents, through present research, is mainly at the level of "unsatisfactory". To be able to understand the existing dissatisfaction it must be borne in mind the level of the individual aspirations in relation to the characteristics of the persons interviewed (the residence, gender, age, educational level, occupation), but also the aspirations in general in a society with great economic difficulties, with a culture of leisure time too little developed. This is how we can interpret the higher dissatisfaction existing to the people with higher education, but also the smaller dissatisfaction existing to the people with lower cultural and poor social conditions or to those aged over 60 years. In the latter case we are at the segment for which professional duties has decreased or no longer exists due to retirement (hence lowering the need for rest of them), the income are generally insufficient, and leisure offer of third age doesn't exist; in the context of the Romanian mentality, at the third age prevailing are the household chores, raising grandchildren and in rest giving up all; at such a level of aspirations and with economic issues, the leisure satisfaction is higher.

Passing in review the concerns of leisure time taken into account, it appears a failure of majority of them and the predominance of passive concerns at home. It is difficult to say if we have to do with the impoverishment of the leisure content, because we don't know through research and systematic systematization if other concerns have found their place in leisure time and who they are.

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