

OPPORTUNITIES OF LOCAL DEVELOPMENT USING NATURAL AND ANTHROPOGENIC RESOURCES IN TOURISM ACTIVITIES. CASE STUDY: ULMENI, MARAMUREȘ

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Abstract: Ulmeni locality, that became town less than a decade ago, still shows, to a high degree, the general aspects of a rural locality, where agriculture is the main economic component. As capital city of the administrative-territorial division with the same name, Ulmeni town directs the activities of the entire territory. Possessing natural resources marked by the presence of Someș River and the existence of well-wooded areas, as well as anthropogenic resources embodied in values of the national heritage: museums, monuments, religious structures, folk activities, there is the possibility of providing the impulse of local development by means of tourism activities and the awareness of the need to revitalize the entire community.

Key words: fishing, tourism potential, tourism types, ATU (Administrativ Territorial Units)

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INTRODUCTION

The analyzed territory, the territorial and administrative division Ulmeni, is located in the south part of Maramures County, neighboring Mireșu Mare and Valea Chioarului communes in the east, Sălsig, in the north, Ariniș and Băsești in the west, while in the south, it is bordered by Salaj county, (namely the administrative-territorial units Benesat and Cehu Silvaniei). Being located on the border between counties, the approximate distance between the town and Baia Mare county capital city is 45 km, to Sălaj County capital city, namely Zalău, 50 km, to Satu Mare about 70 km (figure 1), considering a privileged position in this regard, favoring more accessible flows between localities. Regarded as a territorial system where a number of changes, inputs and outputs are produced, ATU Ulmeni is in a transition period both at administrative level as well as at human resources level.

From a historical perspective, Ulmeni locality dates back as early as 1405, while its dependent localities date as back as similar periods (Someș – Uileac – 1282, Mânău – 1327, Arduzel – 1334, Vicea – 1387, Chelița – 1423, Tohat – 1424, Țicău – 1543)¹; their ownership over time left its obvious mark on their names. As commune capital city until 2004, Ulmeni village is declared town, by publication in the Official Gazette 310 of 7 April

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¹ <http://www.primaria-ulmeni.ro/ulmeni/istoric/istoric1.html>

2004, under Law 83/2004², keeping the composition of the former commune, excepting Tohat village, considered component locality (neighborhood). The transition from the commune status to that of town attracts social, political and economic changes, each of them presenting advantages and disadvantages.

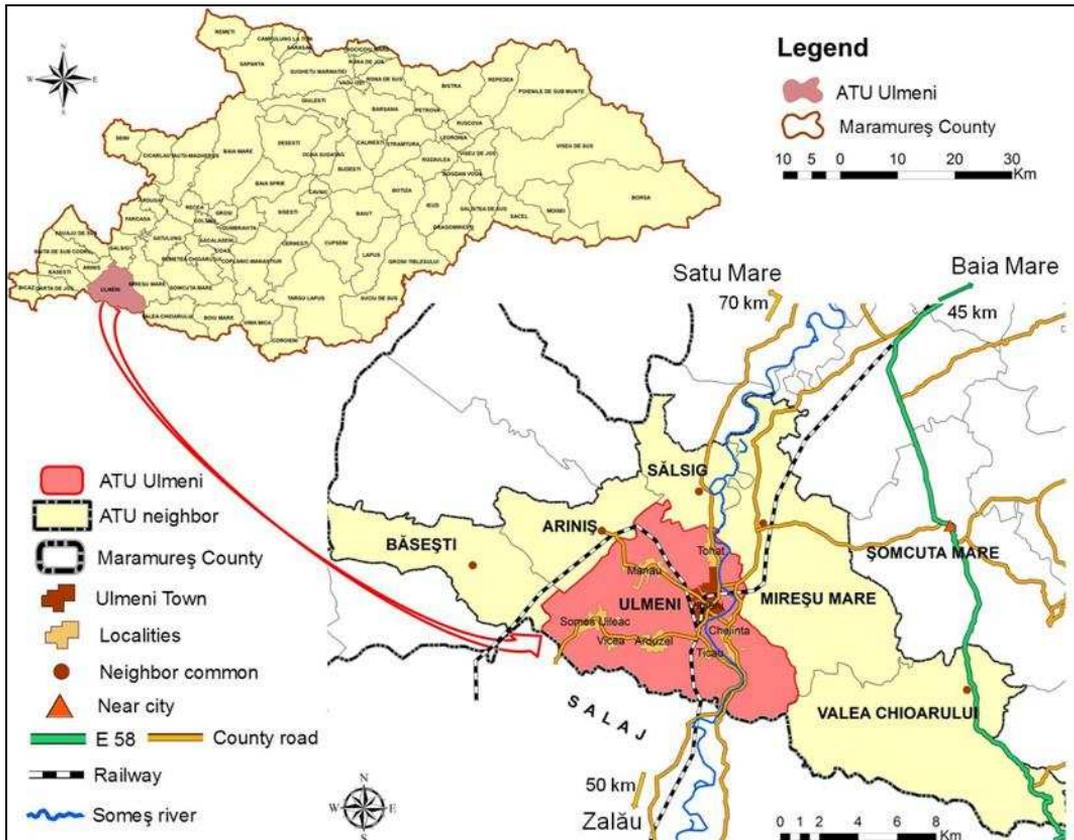


Figure 1. Location of the administrative - territorial division within Maramureș County and the approximate distance between Ulmeni town and nearby major cities

Ulmeni is a small town, based on rural economic activities (agriculture), with an underdeveloped industry; therefore the exploitation of natural resources and of those with heritage value, can lead to economic recovery. According to the Tourism Law, tourism heritage consists of „all natural, anthropogenic, cultural and historical resources, which together with infrastructure, constitute the tourist offer of a destination”.³

METHODS AND METHODOLOGY

Based on the information obtained from various sources, this study presents an analysis of the natural and anthropogenic tourism potential at the level of the territorial and administrative division and the possibility of its recovery in tourism activities, inducing the need to establish development goals that will add value to the area. Given the natural elements of the area, as well as the social and anthropogenic elements we will determine „the opportunities for choosing the most appropriate strategies capable to exploit existing resources on the market or to correct,

2 <http://www.lege-online.ro/r-LEGE-83-2004-%2851035%29.html>

3 http://www.mdrt.ro/userfiles/consultari_interministeriale/21_12_10/lege.pdf

amend and rehabilitate the weaknesses, taking into account the whole range of benefits, opportunities, limitations and risks that define the current conditions of the tourism assertion” (Dezsi, 2006, p. 684), at the territorial level. As documentary sources for analyzing the territory the following have been accessed: Romanian and foreign literature, as well as direct observations obtained on the spot, based on the principles and methods of geography as a science (Mojolic, 2012; Prașca, 2012). In addition, the following were helpful for this study: General Urban Planning of Ulmeni town, PATJ Maramureș, and different types of maps studied (topographic 1:50 000, DEM, thematic maps from ArcGIS Online), which were finally concentrated and represented, resulting GIS maps, which express the value of the analyzed territory.

DISCUSSIONS AND RESULTS

Tourism activity is promoted conditioned and influenced by the environmental conditions in each region and can be affected by their modifications or alterations. Tourism can be the most appropriate and satisfactory way to use natural resources in a region, sustainably, with a view to regeneration. The management and use of natural resources used in tourism must be properly regulated so as to ensure their renewal and persistence (Narasaiah, 2005).

The natural environment provides the potential for each form of tourism activity, both through material support and environment, and through the landscape value, potential of attractiveness generating tourist flows. In terms of relief, the territorial administrative division Ulmeni is located in the north subdivision of the Western Hills, its exact division and classification differing according to the authors: Silvano-Someșene Hills (Pop, 2005; Trif, 2010; Marian, 2013) or Baia Mare Hills and Depression (Ielenicz & Pătru, 2005).

Characterized by heights varying from 170 m in Somes meadow (figure 4) and approximately 600 m in Prisaca Hill (figure 3) - crystalline massif emerging to the surface in the Quaternary - (Ielenicz & Pătru, 2005), the landscape is not spectacular, nevertheless, in terms of tourism, there are off-road routes (Breslau Rally, 2011) and cycling trails.⁴

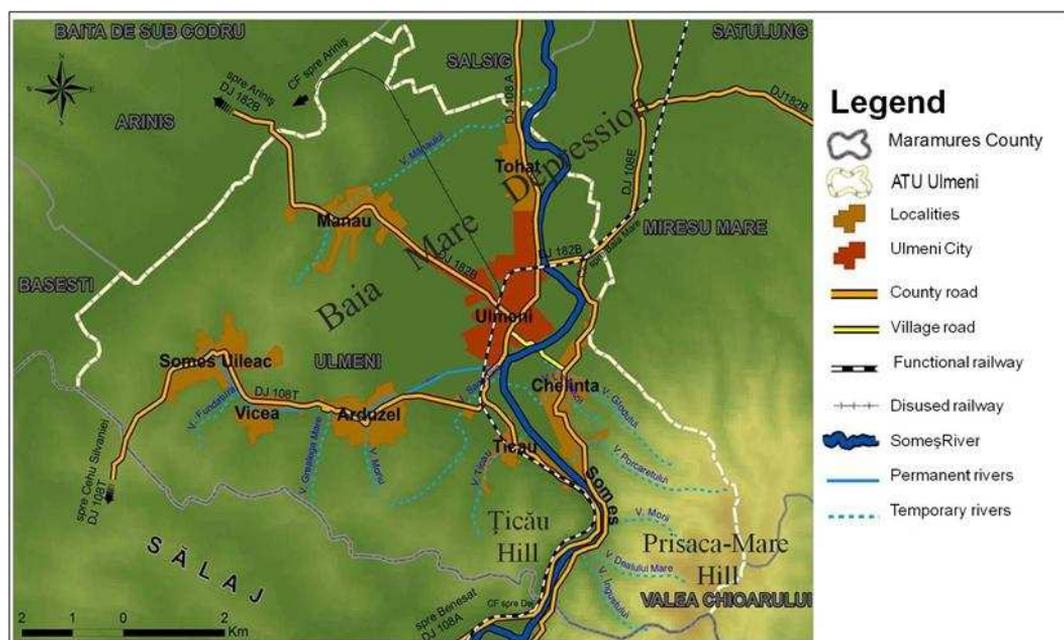


Figure 2. ATU Ulmeni – geographical aspects

⁴www.emaramures.ro/Stiri/55051/RALIU_4x4



Figure 3. View to Ticău Hill (in front) and Prisaca Hill-Dealul Mare (behind)



Figure 4. Some Meadow



Figure 5. Someș River on entering Ticău Gorges



Figure 6. Summer mornings on Someș River in Ulmeni



Figure 7. Someș River - spring high floods

ATU Ulmeni hydrography is marked by the middle stream of Someș which collects all the waters in the region, having more numerous tributaries, but with variable flows depending on the season, to the right. On its way to the mouth, Someș passes through its last gorge between Ticău

Hill and Prisaca Hill, (between the last localities within Sălaj and the first localities within Maramureş for each part), place called by the locals „Pe Strâmtori”, with a fascinating and attractive landscape (figure 5). Somes River, (figure 6), has an annual average flow of $88 \text{ m}^3/\text{s}$ at Ulmeni hydrometric station, the richest flow resulting from high waters during spring (figure 7). However, it does not threaten the villages located near its banks, due to land development works made for this purpose. Its course is considered on a length of 12 km, between Țicău and Sâlsig, fishery subordinated to AJVPS (County Association of Hunters and Anglers) of Maramureş (figure 8), thus developing tourism and recreational activities in the region. Stagnant waters are poorly represented and are materialized in artificial reservoirs for aquaculture and implicitly for fishing in Chelița, Țicău, Mânău localities (figure 9). From biogeographic point of view, the area is largely covered by forest, specific for the hills, oak tree (*Quercus robur*), mixed with holm-oak (*Quercus petraea*), beech (*Fagus sylvatica*), birch (*Betula pendula*) and grass vegetation, with specific animals and birds: fox, hare, deer, lynx, pheasant etc.



Figure 8. Information panel on the fishery



Figure 9. Fishing Pond at Ticau, „Festival” Pension (Source: „Festival” Pension)

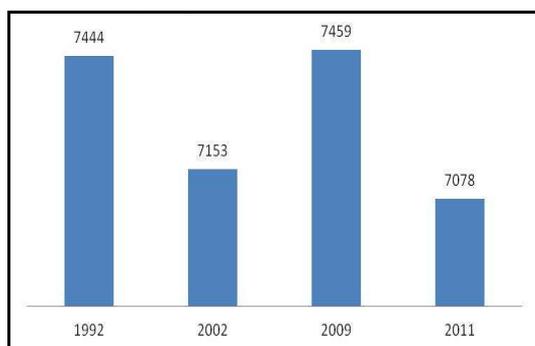


Figure 10. Total population at the level of the administrative and territorial division (Source: according to DJS 1992, 2002, 2011 and Ulmeni PUG, 2009)

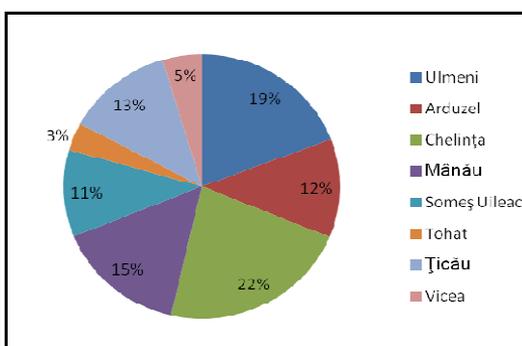


Figure 11. Population of localities expressed as percentage⁵

The dynamic component of ATU Ulmeni is represented by the population and its activities. An analysis of the population in terms of number at the level of the administrative and territorial division from data obtained from censuses in 1992, 2002 and 2011, highlights the fluctuations

⁵ <http://www.primaria-ulmeni.ro/ulmeni/populatie/populatie.html>

occurred due to the inflows and outflows of the territory. Thus, the number of population increased by 1992 reaching 7444 inhabitants, gradually decreasing, 7153 inhabitants in 2002, as well as in 2011 (7078 inhabitants), when the migration of Romanians in Western countries, mainly France, Italy, Spain, England, Portugal, but also Hungary started and took place on a large scale (figure 10). Year 2009 is characterized by an increase in the number of inhabitants due to the increased standard of living, as well as due to the number of Chinese immigrants in the labor force of textile industry, at „*Working Blue*”, a foreign-capital factory (Stolnicu, 2013).

Regarding the population of the localities in 2011, it can be noticed (figure 11) that the largest number of inhabitants in ATU Ulmeni is in Chelița (22%), not in the capital city (19%). This is due to the rate of natural increase that is higher for the Romani minority exceeding by far that of the Romanians and the Hungarians. The lowest number of inhabitants is assigned to the village Tohat, which is a neighborhood of Ulmeni town. Analyzing employment by sectors (table 1) for the territory studied, it is obvious that most people work in the traditional field of agriculture, and there are no skills in tourism; a small percentage of 0.7% is involved in the public administration and trade, considering that the state educational institution in this town has technical profile with mechanical and textile majors. In recent years a particular educational institution has developed, that also includes a specialization for training personnel for rural lodges. Involvement in tourism and staff training can be also achieved by accessing European funds enabling professional reorientation in the two units of the local tourism.

Table 1. Employed population at the level of the territorial and administrative division Ulmeni
(Data source: General urban planning of Ulmeni town, Maramureș county, 2009, p. 8)

Field of activity	No. of persons	Percentage
Agriculture- Forestry	4,612	61.20%
Education-Culture	123	1.60%
Health-Social Work	13	0.20%
Cults	11	0.10%
Administration - Social Insurance	13	0.20%
Provision of services	34	0.50%
Trade - Public food service	49	0.70%
Finance	21	0.30%
Production	341	4.50%

The anthropogenic heritage which can be used in tourism activity is varied, encompassing resources of the intangible cultural heritage (manifestations of literary and folk creation interpreted vocally or in writing) and tangible assets with historical and religious value. The territorial and administrative division Ulmeni enjoys some personalities of culture, literature and folklore in this part of the country. Tohat village is the birthplace of the poet Petre Dulfu, who was born in 1856, mainly known for his literary creation of reference for Romanian literature (Păcală's Achievements-1894, Gruia Novac -1913, The story of Prince Charming -1919); there is a monument in his homage dating as back as 1930 when the writer turned 75 years (Sălăjan, 2000). This monument appears as a historical monument in 2010, and it is important for the national heritage, because there is no memorial house of the writer; his house was demolished and replaced by the office of the company. The second prominent figure for ATU Ulmeni is Emil Gavriș, a folk music interpreter, born in Chelița commune, in 1915 (Botiș & Botiș, 2011). Known for folklore and rhapsodies gathered from his native village, but also from other areas, for his own creations as well as remakes, the singer was commemorated in 2009 on the 20th anniversary of his departure from this life; the local Community Centre bears his name. Tangible assets which can be capitalized in tourism belong to the heritage built of wood represented by the religious buildings included in The List of Historical Monuments, 2010. The wooden church „*Holy Archangels*” in

Arduzel, built around 1650 of oak (Botiș, Botis, 2011), is characterized by the specific character of *Codru ethnographic area*: small, well proportioned, with a short and simple tower (figure 12), extended towards the base and porch decorated with the cross symbol (figure 13); it has a side entrance under the tower. Interior painting is degraded, just some marks of the paintings on the iconostasis can be hardly distinguished; rehabilitation works are necessary here.

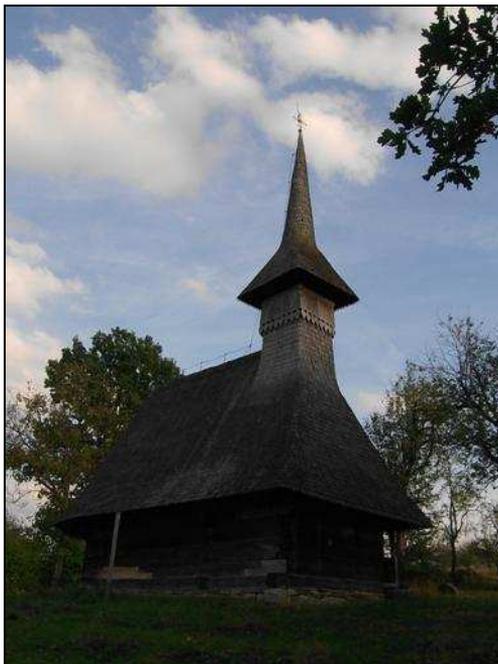


Figure 12. Overview of the Wooden church, Arduzel



Figure 13. Church porch



Figure 14. Holy Archangels Church, Ulmeni: the entrance, gate, belfry

The „*Holy Archangels Michael and Gabriel*” Church in Ulmeni, dates from 1720; it was built in Șomcuta Mare and then moved to the locality in 1895, (Botiș & Botis, 2011). Made of wood, the church was plastered both outside and inside, finding itself in a state of preservation that requires rehabilitation (figure 14). It is characterized by a simple tower covered with shingle, under which there is the porch and the entrance to the church, a door decorated with religious motifs. The painting is well preserved; its gilded iconostasis, beautifully worked, enframes figures of saints. At the entrance to the yard there is a wooden door adorned with the rope motif and the wooden belfry, including religious motifs, in front of the church.

Other religious buildings are: the Reformed Church Ensemble in Arduzel composed of the Reformed Church, that dates as far back as the 15th century and its belfry (1726), the wooden

Reformed Church in Someș – Uileac (1699). Other elements with local cultural value of the built heritage are represented by triptychs and crosses erected in memory of heroes in Someș-Uileac (1946) and Ulmeni (1933-1946), as well as Curia in Țicău (19th century) that was neglected and today is a ruin. In terms of the transport network, ATU Ulmeni is mainly crossed by county roads (figure 2): DJ 108A (figure 15), that links two counties passing through Ulmeni, DJ128B to the neighboring commune Ariniș, passing through Mânău, DJ 108T to Cehu Silvaniei, and 108 E through Chelița towards Baia Mare.



Figure 15. DJ 108A



Figure 16. The fourth main railway line



Figure 17. Crossing Someș River by ferry



Figure 18. Pedestrian bridge, view to Ulmeni



Figure 19. Pedestrian bridge over Someș, view to Chelița



Figure 20. „Riviera Someșana” Pension



Figure 21. Swimming pool
(Source: „Riviera Someșana” Pension)

Also, the fourth main railway line (figure 16) crosses the territory, making the connection between Baia Mare and Cluj Napoca; Someș River is crossed by ferry (figure 17), since there is no bridge built. There is a deck suspended by cables between Chelița and Ulmeni localities for pedestrians (figure 18 and 19).

Tourism infrastructure is represented by two units providing accommodation and meals: „*Riviera Someșana*” Pension since 2009, (figure 20) labeled with three daisies, located at the exit of Ulmeni town towards Baia Mare, on the left bank of Someș. As accommodation unit, it provides accommodation for 28 persons, with double rooms, matrimonial rooms and an apartment, equipped with all amenities - separate bathroom, cable television, internet, room service. The guesthouse has a restaurant and a bar, spacious parking, and its swimming pool offers moments of relaxation during the summer (figure 21).

„*Festivall*” Pension (figure 22), is a new accommodation facility, located in a quiet space in the midst of nature, on the way out from Țicău. The pension has 10 double rooms for accommodation, even if it is under construction at the time of study, with individual bathrooms, providing a natural relaxation away from the city traffic. It also has a restaurant, a bar and a lake for fishing. The number of tourists staying in pensions is not high, being marked mainly by seasonal workers, young people passionate about nature and eager for novelty, invited to certain events that take place in the restaurants of the pensions, as well as by delegates from the Ministry of Education in the region. One of the food and beverage retail establishments in this area is Romantica Restaurant - Pizza house located in downtown Ulmeni.



Figure 22. Festivall Pension, Țicău; Fishing Lake

Following the analysis of the natural and anthropogenic resources, as well as of the technical and tourism infrastructure, it can be seen that the region has tourism potential that requires to be capitalized. Thus, there are opportunities to develop several types of tourism in the region (figure 23), and some of them exist but they are not acknowledged by the population.

- weekend tourism, the simplest form of tourism that is done on weekends (Gozner & Zarilli, 2012) and allows some recreational tourism activities;
- *trip-making*, that can be done in higher units on the hills covered by forests, Dealul Mare, Prisaca, Dealul Morii, in the village Chelița, as well as within the territory of Mânău locality;
- the right bank of Someș, before entering Strâmtori, has an open space that could facilitate the setting of *campsites*, tents or caravans, spaces for firewood and barbecue;
- *fishing*, as a leisure activity dates as back as ancient times, being carried out throughout the Someș; in 2011 the fishery between Țicău and Sălsig was officially demarcated. As a form of leisure belonging to tourism, fishing grows increasingly more in private reservoirs built in Chelița, Mânău and Țicău villages;

- *rafting* is an activity included in adventure tourism and can be carried out on Somes River in the gorges sector. Given the low degree of difficulty of the river⁶, easy rafting trips can be carried out mainly in May - June – July;

- *swimming*, is primarily done in the swimming pool owned by the pension located in Ulmeni locality, as well as in Somes River; however, in some parts due to the works performed in the river bed there are dangers and risk of drowning;

- *off-road*, as part of niche tourism, for a smaller category of population, can be done mainly on forest roads, built lately, as well as in the gorge and valley of Somes, the more so as in 2011, ATU Ulmeni area was included in a rally route with international participation made in Maramures;

- *cyclotourism*, as tourism activity, as well as sports activity is beneficial for the human body and allows for occasional and short trips. It can be done on roads, on country roads and forest roads within the territorial and administrative division.

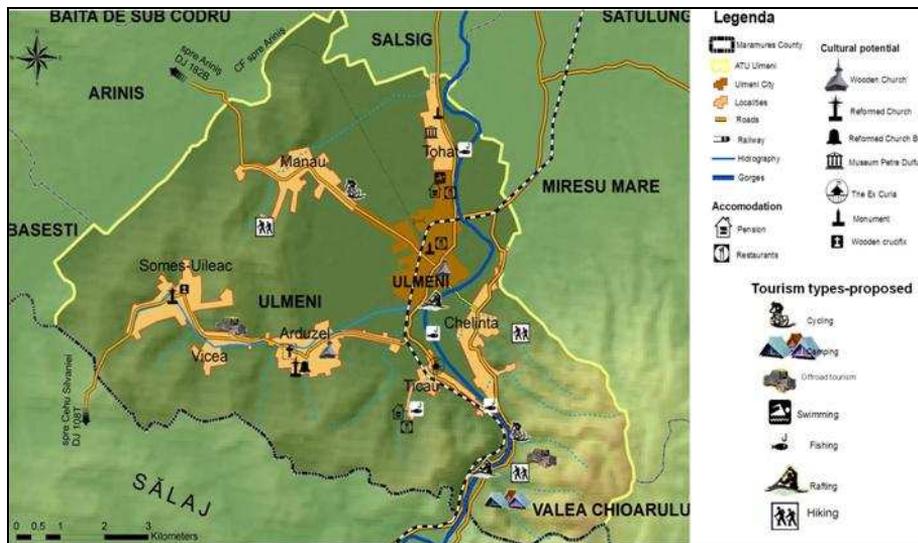


Figure 23. Opportunities to develop some types of tourism activities – proposal

- cultural and religious tourism is linked to the existence of anthropogenic resources with religious character, marked by the presence of buildings of national interest, belonging to two cults, orthodox (The wooden church „*Holy Archangels*” in Ulmeni and Arduzel) and reformed (the Reformed Church Ensemble, Arduzel and the wooden reformed church, Someș-Uileac), as well as with cultural character, such as the museum dedicated to the poet Petre Dulfu in his home village, currently under reorganization.

Given the existing potential there are opportunities that can be exploited by local authorities, by accessing funds to tackle the problem of technical infrastructure, as well as that of tourism that is completely absent. The existence of a road bridge to link Ulmeni town and Chelinta locality would be beneficial for tourism activities too; for example, it would facilitate a cycling circuit that would connect several localities within ATU Ulmeni and would exploit the anthropogenic resources. It will also provide greater accessibility for a bigger flow of tourists in the place for camping in Țicău Gorges. We also suggest an information panel in Țicău locality, in the area of Curia ruins to remember this stage in the Romanian history. The exploitation of existing resources in tourism activities as well as the offers of the pensions and of other units providing accommodation and meals can contribute to local development of economy.

⁶ <http://www.whitewater.ro/ro/rafting/rafting-in-romania.html>

CONCLUSIONS

In Ulmeni locality, that recently became town, agriculture is still the main economic activity. Without industry that characterized it in communism, economy has gradually experienced a decline. Small companies that have appeared in various sectors fail to contribute significantly to the economic development of the administrative-territorial division. Located in the southern part of Maramureş County, at the contact between two ethnographic areas (Chioar and Codru), the exploitation and capitalization of some natural and anthropogenic resources of national interest can contribute to the revitalization of the region. The middle stream of Somes crosses ATU Ulmeni from south to north and provides opportunities for tourism activities such as rafting, fishing and swimming, in certain portions that require marking to warn tourists, and the gorge it digs in Dealul Mare crystalline massif gives a higher value. Cultural heritage marked by the existence of buildings of cultural and religious value, as well as of some important figures of folklore and literature, nationally representative, annual organisation of ethno-folk activities contribute to the resources that can be exploited in tourism. Even if the situation of specific infrastructure does not have the best conditions, local authorities can intervene with the community to solve this situation by accessing European funds. In conclusion we can say that ATU Ulmeni has a tourism heritage that can be exploited so as to develop local economy and to avoid the status of dormitory town for the centre of the administrative division.

Aknowlegments

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