Geotourism assessment in the Csopak area of the Bakony–Balaton UNESCO Global Geopark, Hungary

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In the past few decades, geotourism has developed rapidly. It is a relatively modern sector of tourism that focuses on geologic and scenic values of a location. With the help of geotourism, these values can be preserved and popularized easier. Geosites are the visible physical elements that this field of tourism concentrates on. UNESCO Global Geoparks are responsible for gathering, protecting and fostering these natural assets. As the presence of spectacular geosites generates interest among tourists, more and more communities try to reveal (geo)tourism attractions.

The goal of our project is to determine the geotourism potential in the surroundings of Csopak. This area of great geodiversity is part of the Bakony–Balaton UNESCO Global Geopark (moreover, its headquarters is located in this village). There is a large importance of this work, as no one has applied assessment models here yet.

We designated potential geosites with the help of geological and topographic maps. The fieldwork included 75 sites, and it was followed by the application of the Geosite Assessment Model (GAM, VUJIČIĆ ET AL. (2011) and the Modified Geosite Assessment Model (M-GAM, TOMIĆ&BOŽIĆ (2014)). The GAM has been applied in Hungary several times with good results. As the M-GAM involves tourists into the process, it may give a more realistic aspect of view, and the comparison of the results in the two models gives hints about the potential of the sites. The assessment process included GIS work, examining geological formations and infrastructure.

The final score of a geosite is the composition of main (scientific and educational) and additional (scenic and infrastructural) values. With analysing the proportion of these values, plotted on matrix diagrams, the geotourism potential and the improvable features of each geosite were calculated and 24 locations were selected as suitable for geotourism.

Local communities and the management organization of Bakony–Balaton UNESCO Global Geopark have to put effort into maintaining and developing natural attractions. Applying the results of the assessment, the geosites could be treated in the way the visitors expect it. The first geological hiking map of the area, which helps to disseminate the results of the present study, will also help geotourists discover natural treasures (ALBERT, PÁL & SCHWARCZ, in prep.).

ALBERT, G., PÁL, M. & SCHWARCZ, GY. (in prep.). Geological hiking map of the surroundings of Csopak.

TOMIĆ, N., & BOŽIĆ, S. (2014). A modified Geosite Assessment Model (M-GAM) and its Application on the Lazar Canyon area (Serbia). International Journal of Environmental Research, 8(4), 1041-1052.

VUJIČIĆ, M., VASILJEVIĆ, D., MARKOVIĆ, S., HOSE, T., LUKIĆ, T., HADŽIĆ, O., & JANIĆEVIĆ, S. (2011). Preliminary geosite assessment model (GAM) and its application on Fruška Gora Mountain, potential geotourism destination of Serbia. Acta Geographica Slovenica, 51(2), 361-377.