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Geodiversity and geotourism for the local people - a study of the Western Carpathians.

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Study of the geodiversity in last decade was very popular in scientific literature. Also the Western Carpathians was the study area for geodiversity and geotourist assessment many times. As part of this study, an attempt was made to answer several questions regarding geodiversity and geotourism in relation to the local inhabitants of the area: 1/Is geodiversity and geotourism in the Western Carpathians able to attract wider crowds of tourists, not only interested specialists? 2/Do people living near a geotourist attraction realize its potential? In addition the authors want to show the summarizing geodiversity map of the Western Carpathians and how much time does the whole procedure of creating a geodiversity map for such a large area as the Western Carpathians take and how much work is required to prepare a study for that region. Important question is also a coherence of the study in a case of the region covering many countries and therefore various character of data available. Secondly, the authors have compared the geodiversity map with the distribution of geosites available in databases of Polish, Slovak and Czech Geological Surveys. This comparison shows that not always the largest number of geosites are located in places with the highest geodiversity index, as it might seem. Finally, the authors present a pilot study of the perception of inanimate nature by local residents that have been carried out in Podtatrze area (Southern Poland/Northern Slovakia). The results show that assumption that local people know their region very well is not entirely true. Most of the inhabitants do not know the basic forms of the relief that occur in the vicinity of their place of residence, cannot correctly recognize the type of rocks that are around them, or are unable to name the peaks that they look at from the window of their house. What could be the reason of it? Perhaps the lack of knowledge about their "little homeland" which they should acquire in primary school; or the simple lack of interest in inanimate nature resulting from the economic lack of profitability vision; or the lack of promotion of the most interesting geotouristic elements in the region. Summing up, the area of the Western Carpathians has areas with a very high and high geodiversity index, which may increase their (geo)tourism potential and constitute a source of additional profit for local residents, but requires access and promotion.