

WINE TOURISM IN WESTERN MOLDOVA - TO A FUTURE ALSACE?

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Abstract:

Wine tourism has emerge as a form of redinamization, recovery of wine products. It was necessary such a tourism form for the wine-growing regions to assert in this tourist industry through landscapes as well as the products offered. Countries like France, Italy and Spain are already among the most definitive statement in this area, being basically those that outline the so-called Old World of the wine tourism domain. This is due to a long history of viticulture, terroir, winemaking method and cultural heritage. Romania is also on the wine countries list being part of the top ten countries according to the hierarchy made by OIV. Wine tourism started to come also in Romania, increasingly more wineries adopting wine recovery forms through tourism. It is adopting foreign models of wine tourism but keeping the local specific. Thus Moldova, the largest wine region began to adapt some wine tourism development models and this article will demonstrate whether this model is beneficial for Moldova.

Keywords: wine tourism, wine region, viticulture, wine, Moldova, Alsace

1. Introduction

Subtended by a constructive, pragmatic and strategic purpose, the article seeks to identify, evaluate and use wine tourism resources of the wine region of Western Moldova, taking as a model the alsacian way to exploit this form of tourism. Research topic aims to offer a new formula for recovery of moldovan vineyards, a development of the wine potential, illuminating both the phenomenon wine tourism and tourism resources for this space.

It can say that wine tourism has appeared with the designation of the wine routes. A first wine route, the *grands crus route*, was inaugurated in 1934, through the Côte de Nuits and the hautes Côtes Burgundy. In 1935, the Deutsche Weinstraße, first german wine route, was designed to help the wine growers of the Palatinate. It took a small twenty years that are designed in 1953, on the same model, new routes of wine, Champagne and Alsace. At that time, no one spoke of wine tourism because

a wine route is not sufficient to develop such an activity. It was to help agricultural sectors in crisis, by encouraging visitors stop in farms to buy the products and the wine makers to develop the direct sale of the local wine. The wine roads of California or South Africa appeared later and they have been designed as completed tourist routes. The wine tourism that they engendered has been recognized as a harmonious alliance between the wine activity and a specific tourist offer. The french wine tourism is suitable for an older, more diverse wine-making culture. Thus, wine tourism has affected more and more territories by generating competition between traditional countries and those in which it is more recently developed, leading to a realization and a more precise delimitation of its attributes and its challenges. Initiatives have multiplied in recent years, more in addition to the countries in adopting development

strategies and developing wine regions in a different way.

The French school is one of the promoters of the discussions on this topic and which has produced a large number of studies in the specialty journals. It explained by the fact that France is not only the most important tourist destination but the largest producer of wine.

In addition, conferences have been held on wine tourism, the first conference was held in Australia in 1998, marked by an emphasis on descriptive and comparative studies to justify and to explore the dimensions of this new form of tourism, then the International Salon of Wine Tourism supported in Lyon, in 2009 (<http://www.vinomedia.fr>) the International Wine Travel Market backed in Bordeaux in 2009 (<http://www.bordeaux-info.com>), Bacchus wine conference in Dijon, the first edition took place in 2002 (<http://www.bacchuswineconference.eu/>), Annual International Wine Tourism Conference (<http://www.iwinetc.com/>), First European Conference on Wine and Food Tourism in Pisa (<http://www.terredelvino.net>). It is good to note that the mediterranean countries are those that have developed the sense and taste to promote wine tourism.

With regard to the work focused on the field of wine tourism, there are many articles and books that deal with this subject. These derive particularly from *francophone* and *anglophone* literature.

Many countries have given a particular value to the wine tourism contributing with different research to increase the volume of the work of specialty. This is the case of Australia (Dowling and Carlsen, 1999), of Canada (Telfer, 2001; Williams and Kelly, 2001), Chile (Sharples, 2002) of France (Lignon-Darmaillac, 2008; 2011; Lespinasse-Taraba, 2011; Meynie, 2011), of the Hungary (Szivas, 1999, Aubert et al., 2009), for the Portugal

(Bras et al. 2010), New Zealand (Beverland, 1998), from the South Africa (Bruwer, J.,2003), United States (Vignaud, 2011). There are also other works on wine tourism globally dealing with aspects related to the development of the wine destination and demand (Hall et al. 2000). A recent study, very well developed on the wine tourism in France was undertaken by Sophie Lignon-Darmaillac (2009). It introduced a new way of enhancement of the French vineyards in the wine tourism. In her work, Sophie Lignon-Darmaillac presents a typology of the wine routes, essential for the development of this form of tourism, as well as the unequal interest of the authorities for the defense of wine tourism.

Several publications have emerged about the Wine Road aimed to consolidate or to build a reputation for quality in the wine regions: Bruwer (2003) treats the roads of wines of South Africa; Choukroun (2011) the Alsace wine route; Telfel (2001) with the wine road in Niagara, Vandecandelaere (2002) made a comparative study of the wine routes in the regions of Languedoc - Roussillon, Mendoza and Western Cape, Constantinescu (1977) examines "roads of the vines and wine in Romania.

2. Methodology

The main method used for this article was the comparative method. Why this method? To see which are favorable and limiting factors for applying the alsacian wine tourism model in Moldova. How will it work? By comparing the wine region of Western Moldova and Alsace regarding the wine potential of the regions (vineyards, wine, grape varieties, terroir, history) and the tourism potential of the vineyards (the wine route, wine culture, tourism heritage - wine museum, wine festivals, exhibitions), the tourism infrastructure - accessibility, the tourist flow capacity. The objective is to demonstrate whether Moldova has the

The region of Moldova is located in the Central-South-East part of Europe and in the northeast of the Romania and the Alsace is located in the eastern part of the France located in the heart of the European Megalopolis (blue banana) (thanks to the city of Strasbourg - the largest of the five major cities of the region) and in the heart of the Pentagon's European cities obtained by the lines linking the cities: London-Paris-Milan-Munich-Hamburg, which is considered as the center of Europe. This fact represents an asset for economic development, tourism, social, political of the Alsace region, occupying a strategic position, being a binder between the major European urban centers. Of course its positioning promotes the marketing of wine circuit. Thus Alsace sells its wines to Netherlands, to Germany, Great Britain, and also there are purchases of households for their consumption at home to Belgium or Denmark. The situation of Moldova presents itself differently, the peripheral position in the context of the European Union representing not only a weak point because of its position far from the international decision-making centers or even national but also it can be seen as a force/benefit because Moldova could play the role of bridge in relations between the EU and Europe. Thus the simple geographical and geopolitical position, gives to the two regions taken into consideration a different economic character which feels in all sectors of the economy.

Vineyard potential-a Moldavia wealth like in Alsace -the beginnings of vines

In Moldova as in Alsace, the vines are grown for a long time. At the time of the conquest of Dacia by the Romans in the year 106, the viticulture was in this territory well introduced. Under the influence of the Romans, which had a more advanced experience, vine and

wine techniques developed. The first documents on the vines of Moldavia dates from 1407 when by a document issued by the Chancellery of Moldova, Metropolitan Joseph saves the riches of the Neamț monastery, among which he tidies the "two vines". Many other documents from the reign of Alexandru cel Bun (who established the function of «paharnic» for Cotnari wines) and Stephen the Great, prove the existence of the viticulture in Moldova and its development.

Placed, due to its geographical location, at the crossroads of both Germanic and Romans influences, Alsace also tells a story: that of a culture brought from the beginning of our era by the Romans, and then revived by the Merovingians and Carolingians which are large consumption of this wine. Before the end of the first Millennium, 160 alsacian towns cultivate the vine, and in the middle ages, alsacian wines are already among the most prestigious in Europe. The alsacian wine reached its peak in the 16th century. This period of prosperity was brutally interrupted by the 30 years' war that leaves the region looting, the plagues and the decline of demography and all market activities. The alsacian vineyard reborn truly in the aftermath of the first World War when growers commit in a quality policy by choosing to produce wines made from local varieties (Nonn, 2008). In Alsace, the production of quality wine was indeed an imperative, from 1918, when the alsacian vineyard is found before the competition of french wines. In 1945, this policy is extended by the delimitation of areas of the vineyard and the definition of strict rules of production and vinification. The small property is present both in Alsace in Moldova. Moldovan viticulture has an insular character of vineyards scattered throughout the country. The territory is well fragmented, in Alsace is due to the Revolution when the sale of the

ecclesiastical and seigniorial contributed to the fragmentation of some areas and the strengthening of small property.

The fragmentation of culture has gone also in Moldova, after the Revolution, the liberalization of the economy has led to a series of changes in the wine industry. Thus, vineyards belonging to cooperatistes farms were reassigned to the former owners. In Moldova, after the early 2000s began to appear small producers who adopt foreign models, (they use advanced technology, they produce premium wines, they are open to develop wine tourism, to make the science of the production of wine, the cultural landscape of vineyards and even tasting in the attention of tourists). Thus the development of quality viticulture is seen each year, when a new producer wants to assert itself on this never saturated market. But at the same time, in addition to small producers, there are in Moldova a few giants in the wine industry which took the tradition of the old IAS of the Communist regime, as Cotnari, Vincon, Bucium, Veritas Panciu.

Moldova must adopt an organization that deals with contractors as Alsace where there's CIVA (Council Interprofessionnel des Vins d'Alsace) which has the role to bring together producers and traders to compete together in the alsacian wines radiation in the world.

The landscape - a brief comparison

The materiality of the vineyards is based on delimited lands. Agricultural activity produces these landscapes and structures strongly rural and tourist region both appreciated. At the level of France, regions that have always had a national and international symbol were Bordeaux, Burgundy, Champagne and Cognac. Alsace has experienced a happy development for several decades. Its winegrowers have improved, both in terms of agriculture

and viticulture, and in terms of winemaking and the marketing techniques.

In Alsace the surface occurs continuously. It is the geographical situation of belonging to the 'vosgiennes Hills' which offers topographical, climatic and edaphic environment conducive to this culture. Compared to Moldova, where the Moldovan vineyards present itself as a mosaic of 'small vineyards' spatially discontinuous. In Moldova there are twelve vineyards in comparison with Alsace that has a single expanded longitudinally vineyard.

In Moldova there is the advantage of a more diverse and broader wine surface. However, as we know, this is not the quantity that counts but the quality. And quality in this sector is due especially to technology and of course to the *terroir*. In Alsace the largest viticultural area of a commune is 573 ha and in Moldova is almost five times greater, namely 2403 ha. Moldova has the chance with such a vineyard surface but lacks a well-organized structure like in Alsace.

The vine is established in two regions as an ancient and rich resource, which has created landscapes, giving personality to the places and an agricultural and tourist function to villages or even cities. The realization of the unity in diversity (as is the case of the Alsace vineyard) is necessary especially in the problem of the landscape, it is the general principle of aesthetic harmony developed by the architecture of the landscape, thus ensuring the expressiveness of the aesthetically views. The vines plantings are artistically sculpted landscapes, to a first order, is noting the linear plantations, and then on a deeper analysis of other aspects, that offer to them the expressiveness.

The grapes varieties

The two wine regions of Moldova and Alsace are divided by climatic conditions and soil characteristics. This

division has given to each region an own landscape. Compared to Moldova, Alsace has several types of regions defined by pedoclimatic conditions, for example the AOC Alsace, the AOC Alsace Grand Crus and the AOC Crémant d'Alsace. Moldova region

knows only one, it's the DOC vineyards. Alsace wines are produced from seven main varieties, but Moldova grows a variety of grapes used to make wine. The grapes that are found in both regions can be seen in the tables below.

Table 1.

Local and foreign varieties wines in West Moldova

The grape varieties and the local white wines	<i>Fetească albă, Fetească regală, Grasă de Cotnari, Galbenă d'Odobești, Frâncușă, Zghihara de Huși, Plăvaie</i>
The grape varieties and the local red wines	<i>Fetească neagră, Băbească neagră</i>
The grape varieties and the local aromatic wines	<i>Tămâioasă românească, Busuioacă de Bohotin, Șarbă</i>
Varietals and foreign white wines	<i>Riesling italien, Riesling de Rhin, Sauvignon, Pinot gris, Chardonnay, Traminer roz, Traminer aromatique, Aligoté</i>
Varietals and foreign red wines	<i>Cabernet Sauvignon, Pinot noir, Merlot</i>
Varietals and foreign aromatic wines	<i>Muscat Ottonel</i>

Table 2.

Local and foreign varieties wines in Alsace

The grape varieties and the local white wines	<i>Le Riesling, le Pinot blanc, le Pinot gris, le Gewurztraminer, le Chardonnay, le Klevener de Heiligenstein (Sauvignon rose)</i>
The grape varieties and local aromatic wine	<i>le Muscat Ottonel</i>
The grape varieties and the foreign white wines of region	<i>l'Auxerrois – originary from Lorraine, Sylvaner – originary from Austria</i>
Varietals and foreign red wines	<i>Le Pinot noir (from Burgundy)</i>

Tasting art. Restaurants and wine cellars where are wine tastings

The tasting is like a ritual of good manners, is a form of symbolic mediation of culture.

Seen in recent years an interest increased for rituals related to gastronomy, to the friendliness, good manners, as well as the recurrence, as noted by anthropologist Vintilă Mihăilescu, for the concern and even the cult of wine (Mihăilescu, V, 2009).

The practice of wine-tasting made its place in this new context of consumption in stores of wine. This is the information age, where expertise is sought - good wines now within his reach, the consumer would like to better understand what he consumes, to be better informed in its purchases for his personal culture and increase his pleasure.

In France, consumers begin to be interested in tasting in the 1980s - Jacky Rigaux notes that "a fundamental cultural challenge today is to reduce the

number of consumers in favour of the increase of lovers [...] able to rejoice in the geo-sensory tasting initiated by gourmets"(Rigaux, J., 2010).

In Alsace the visits to wine cellars are for long time and systematically the opportunity of tasting. The independent winegrowers and their families invite home customers, friends and all those who want to discover their profession. More rarely are visited the winery and bottling room. The tasting is the most requested wine tourism offer.

In Alsace the tasting rooms are family, so that tourists can feel more comfortable, it is a more intimate atmosphere. The tasting is as well as a ritual, a form of usability in the true sense. In Moldova, as the number of producers is smaller, the number of wineries offering tasting is also lower than in Alsace, but the number is growing and tasting became the most important method of promoting quality wines producers. There are also shops that, in addition to the sale of wine and related products, offer tastings. This is the case for example of the shop called Good Point in the city of Iași where weekly special events held around wine are organized (Mănilă, Bărhălescu, 2013).

Moldovian wine tourism – to a complete tourist offer

To determine the tourism value of the administrative units located throughout the vineyards, it resorted to a classification based on the quantitative evaluation of the tourism potential used by PATN. This classification had the criteria for analysing tourist natural resources, human, technical and tourist infrastructure. Thus was made a typology that highlights the locations of tourist resources and tourist infrastructure, communities with resources tourist but lacking infrastructure and communities without tourist resources (fig. 2). The typology of the tourist areas highlights the

existence of 5 localities - Hârlău, Iași, Husi, Dumbrăveni, Tecuci that have developed tourism benefiting of natural tourism resources and the necessary infrastructure. We note that of these 5 locations 4 are urban spaces, which demonstrates that urban areas are more developed from the tourism point of view than rural areas. There are also locations with natural and anthropogenic resources but without technical or tourist infrastructure (without accessibility). These include most of the wine-growing localities of the Department of Galați, where the center of the Department is not marked by a national or European highway; there are also a few localities of the Vrancea county, Fitionești, Străoane, Bordești which are not located close to the cities of Focșani and Odobești, Panciu, and the villages of Iași, Cucuteni, Barnova.

Then follow the localities with anthropogenic resources and technical infrastructure as is the case of the cities of Odobești and Panciu, Cotnari or Răducăneni locality. They are important locations for wine tourism of Moldova but they lack of tourism infrastructure to properly develop this kind of activity. Note the class represented by the pink color that creates communities with technical infrastructure and a bit of tourist infrastructure. These are the locations traversed by channels of communication: Buciumeni, Nicorești (of Galați), Tomești, Miroslava (of Iași), Duda-Epureni, Cotești, Fălciu, Banca, Roșiești (from Vaslui). There is also a large number of localities that do not have the resources or infrastructure. There is a balance in the territory between all kinds of combinations, but it is a very small number of the wine-growing localities that have all the conditions for the development of wine tourism. It gives some examples of the wine-growing localities without the minimum necessary for tourism but with potential wine and which need a strong strategy: Țifești, Jariște, Carligele,

Vârteșcoiu Păunești, Movilița, Bolotești (the Department of Vrancea) and also Epureni (Vaslui), Ivești (Galați).

In the category of the offer for the national tourism there are the localities which have all necessary resources and infrastructure and it can be seen that there is a number of 5 localities, but also the localities which have mainly anthropogenic tourist resources, utilities and infrastructure, but their current state cannot provide an internationally competitive (for example, cities of Odobești, Panciu). For these communities, but also for those with a low representation of resources and

infrastructure, development and tourism, proposals must take into account, in principal:

- the improvement of the access to the main attractions;
- development and diversification of the accommodation structures;
- the development of recreation with emphasis on the development of wine-sector products;
- growth of degree of quality of the services offered;
- the implementation of a program of tourism promotion at the national and international levels.

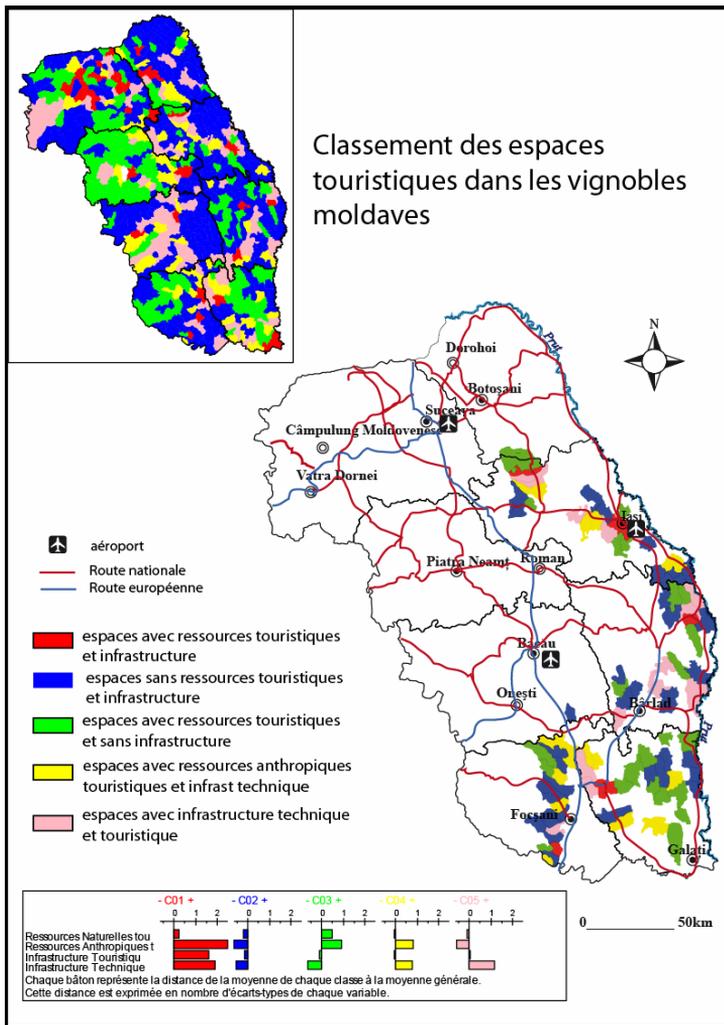


Figure 2. Classification of tourist areas in Moldovan vineyards

The accommodation

When talking about wine tourism, it should automatically take into account the hosting offer. The system of accommodation structures is similar for the two regions, both from the functional point of view than from the perspective of the classification. Hotels, campsites, hostels for young people exist in all two regions under more or less similar titles, as far as the pensions could be compared to rural pensions, even though there are many structures of this kind in the urban environment.

The mapping of the accommodation capacity was chosen because it has the advantage of being closer to the reality. Thus, for the region of Moldova, we chose the representation of the most important accommodation units approved by tourists, hotels, motels, rural and urban pensionst (fig.3). The uniform distribution of the units in part of West of Moldova, the mountainous part dominated by hotels and rural pensions through the high attractiveness potential is easily observed. The departments of Suceava and Neamț occupy the top positions on the common units, one of the causes of the high number of places of accommodation being the existence of favorable conditions they have, but also the presence of the cultural and religious heritage. Areas with vineyards are destined for a class of tourists who find a large degree of attractiveness in the wine-growing landscapes and in all activities that can be undertaken: tastings, visits to wine cellars, grapes etc. And since these wine-growing landscapes lie in hilly areas, accommodation in this area is insufficient. Note the dominance of the hotels in the East part that is an East-West delineation of accommodation capacity, the city of Iasi in being one that keeps the balance. For the area that interests us, the cities are those that hold the largest percentage of capacity, in other words these are also the main transmitters centers of tourists

interested in wine tourism. Since the wine tourism is in a low stage of development, the capacity in the vineyards is underdeveloped, those who want to visit the vineyards and taste the wines being dependent on urban centers. This form of tourism should be correlated with other tourism activities that may be undertaken in the context of the vineyards or their proximity for have a completed offer to lead to the satisfaction of the client. Should clarify that there are a few wineries that have begun to expand their tourism offer, also offering accommodation. Their number is really small, only 10 cellars have this offer of which 9 are located in the Vrancea county and one is in the vineyard of Buciumeni, Galați county.

But in any case, each vineyard of Vrancea county benefits of accommodation under the cellars, but the offer is only at the beginning. Thus the Panciu vineyard enjoys the Natura Cave in the village of Țifești, with a capacity of 16 beds and it develops near the cave a hotel. Even if the Panciu vineyard is served by the town of Panciu, it offers no accommodation, thus it is imperiously necessary to develop such kind of structures. There are cellars with possibility of accommodation in villages as is Jariștea (Odobești vineyard), Cotești and Urechești (Cotești vineyards) the city of Focșani that represents a pole of attraction for accommodations for the vineyards of the county. It should be noted the important role played by cities in the development of wine tourism in Moldova: the cities of Focșani and Iași seen as cultural wine towns. If this is the situation of Moldova, it is otherwise for the Alsace. Here, the concentration of accommodation (and refers to the hotels) is well represented in the alsacian vineyards. Of course, as is happening in Moldova, the cities are those that attract the investment in the accommodation (Strasbourg, Mulhouse), while having the advantage of being close to the vineyard or even

inside (Colmar) (fig.4,5). Since Alsace has a greater offer of accommodation, we put the question what tourists prefer? When compared with Moldova where we have seen that there are only 10 cellars that offer accommodation, in Alsace the number with the same offer is 187, so almost twenty times larger. The offer being thus quite varied and balanced in terms of both hotels, tourists have the choice. The wine tourists always choose the cellars because they benefit not only of accommodation but also all activities that can be found around the wine.

It is seen the importance of having accommodation in vineyards, in the cellars. There is also a reluctance on the part of the winegrowers to develop this offer, for example the cellar Olteanu (vineyard of Iași) that enjoys modern technology and that receives each week groups of tourists, for tastings, the owner is not a reliable solution to develop because the city of Iasi already holds a sufficient technical-material basis. But the cellar of Copou wishes to expand the offer with a restaurant and accommodation.

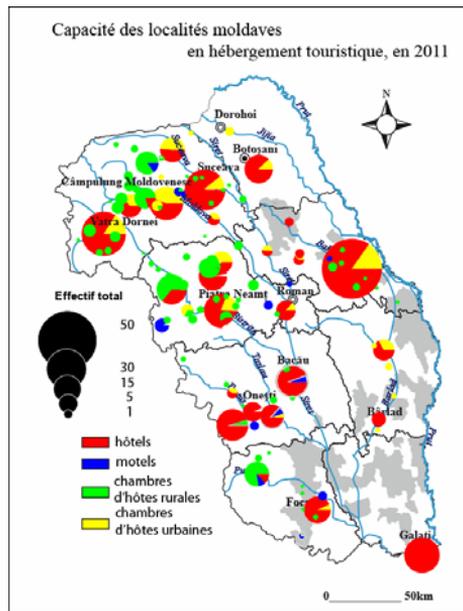


Figure 3. Capacity of moldovan localities in tourism accommodation

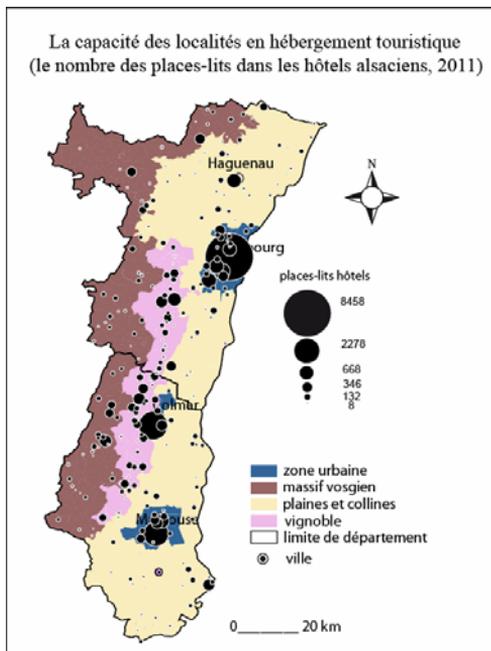


Figure 4. Capacity of alsacian localities in tourism accommodation (the number of beds in alsaciens hotels, 2011)

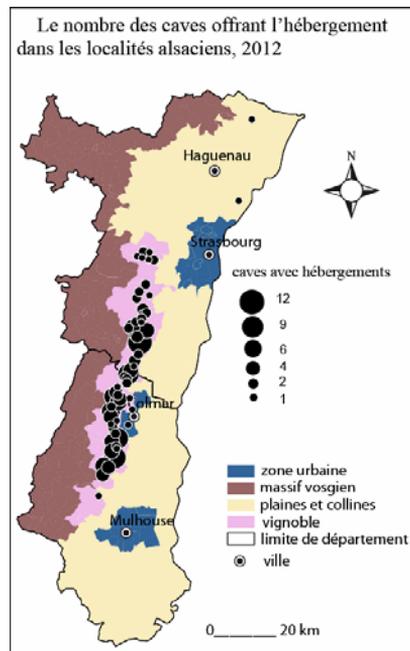


Figure 5. The number of cellars offering accommodation in alsacian localities, 2012

4. Conclusions

Wine tourism is growing and developing well, given the circumstances of any kind. There are differences in the level of development of Alsace and Moldovan winemakers, between their perceptions on the development of wine tourism, but these differences can be overcome, we can mitigate for a compact region, to give a unit in the region of Moldavia. The development of wine tourism is important for both the transmission of wine culture and the development of the entire wine region.

We tried to find out what is the position of Moldova compared to a well-developed area of tourism perspective. We saw why we chose to compare the two regions. On the one hand, it is of Alsace wines which create the image of

the entire region, the wine tourism is one of the foundations of tourism. On the other hand, we stopped on Moldova because it is the region that has benefited from a more consistent and aggressive marketing for its wines. As shown by historical attestations. After weighing the strengths and weaknesses of Moldavia, we realized that this region is on track to development. All movements related to the cultural part of the wine with feasts, festivals, meetings have shown increased interest on the part of Romanian citizens to highlight this heritage. The weak point that needs improvement is the lack of accommodation in the wine areas. We need a real tourism and technical infrastructure as we have seen in the case of Alsace where wine tourism works because there is a synergy

between all the components of these industries. The rise of moldovan wine tourism must keep the same direction to

attract the satisfactory level for both internal and foreign tourists.

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