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Spatial Planning for Health Tourism Development in Belokurikha Resort

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Abstract:

The health tourism development is of the greatest interest for the business sector and regional authorities in Altai Krai. To a great extent, tourist attractions are maintained and operate year-round. It should be noted that it is essential for the region, located in Siberia. In fact, Belokurikha Resort is the largest recreational area in the Asian part of the Russian Federation. Development of the resort has been subjected to the limits imposed by its location in a small valley of a mountainous river. Therefore, the commercial enterprises, local government and scholars are working on projects for the development of medical tourism within neighbouring territories of the resort. The authors of this paper suggest applying the frame approach in spatial planning for the territorial tourist complex "Bolshaya Belokurikha" ("Big Belokurikha"), and the main elements that are significant for the successful implementation of tourist projects are identified within. The use of the integrated approach allows for the consideration of stakeholders' interests. To preserve the natural environment and further development of tourism, the natural park "Foothills of Altai" was established. This park is considered as a base of touristic operations. The concept and purpose of spatial development is to combine the development of medical tourism and rehabilitation into the natural environment. Currently, project proposals are being discussed by the working group of Altai Krai, and then they will be sent to the Ministry of Economic Development of the Government of the Russian Federation.

Keywords: spatial planning; resort; health tourism; Altai Mountains; Belokurikha.

JEL Classification: O10; O20; L83; Z32.

Introduction

In the present context of the domestic tourism industry, the primary purpose of tourism development in the Russian Federation is the creation of the territorial tourist complex (cluster). At the federal and regional levels, diverse programs and projects are being implemented to improve the territorial tourist complexes. For example, in Altai Krai, the State Program for the Altai Krai "Tourism Development in Altai Krai, is currently underway. This program specifies strategies and identifies the territorial tourist complexes in the region. However, the development of tourist areas would be impossible without the spatial planning of tourist complexes. The inclusion of the Belokurikha 2 Project in the Federal Target Program, "Development of Domestic and Inbound Tourism in the Russian Federation" resulted in intensified spatial planning of tourism development in Belokurikha Resort and its neighbouring territories. Its objective is to allow the area to compete in the global market for tourism activity by taking advantage of new

opportunities. In fact, Belokurikha is already a popular resort area that offers appealing services and facilities, which are continually being improved.

Tourism resources maintain the tourism industry and can be considered as one of the tools of the tourism development. The tourism resources that support the resort are determined by its location at the junction of Western Siberia and the Altai Mountains. The *climate* regionalization and thermal *comfort*, mineral springs, biological diversity and good infrastructure conditions attract many tourists to Belokurikha Resort.

The resort, the tourism resources and the infrastructure of the surrounding territories comprise a large tourist complex "Bolshaya Belokurikha", which specializes in medical and health tourism. Unique mineral springs, low mountainous areas, favorable climate and forest resources contribute to the appeal for tourists. The resort area of Belokurikha is an autonomous district of the city of Belokurikha, which stretches along the valley of the mountainous river Belokurikha.

Currently, the resort has 22 sanatoriums, and a total capacity of about 4.5 thousand beds. The largest organization, JSC "Resort Belokurikha", includes sanatoriums "Belokurikha", "Siberia", "Katun" and features additional tourist attractions. Currently, "Altai West", "Russia" and "Transsib" sanatoriums are being successfully developed. At present, there are several tourist facilities at the resort that attract tourists. There are picturesque views of mountainous slopes covered with forest and therapeutic walking routes (*terenkurs*). Tserkovka Mountain is a distinctive tourist attraction that has stone temples on the top of the mountain that resemble church domes. Another point of interest is an Orthodox cross that was built on the top of the mountain. In winter, tourists are drawn to the lengthy ski trails in Belokurikha. The length of the cableway is 2050 m, and the elevation is 500 m. The breathtaking scenery is visible from the mountain, where one can admire the Predaltai plain, the city, and the mountain ranges. Other tourist attractions include the old resort radonotherapy hospital, the spring "Glaznoy Kluch" ("Eye Key"), "Zmeiny Kolodets" ("Snake Well") and others. Additionally, there is a tourist and entertainment complex "Sibirskoe Podvorie" ("Siberian Inn") located near the resort.

It should be noted that diagnostic and treatment facilities staffed by qualified medical practitioners contribute to the development of Belokurikha Resort. Unfortunately, in recent years, Belokurikha Resort has lacked the land resources needed to develop surrounding infrastructure. To effectively address this barrier, it is necessary to develop the surrounding territories. Thus, one of the significant tasks is the spatial planning of the territorial tourist complex "Bolshaya Belokurikha" ("Big Belokurikha"). These efforts will ultimately attract investors and increase tourist flow.

1. Literature Review

Today medical care is one of the important functions in the healthcare industry. In fact, medical tourism provides medical-diagnostic, rehabilitation, preventive and recreational services. Different points of health tourism planning are described in the various studies (Vetitnev 2012, Lautier 2014, Sandberg 2017 *et al.*).

Studies in the field of tourism spatial development in Russia are traditionally associated with the concept of "territorial tourist complex" and involve an integrated approach. The territorial tourist complex includes a constellation of specialized enterprises (specialized infrastructure facilities, hotels etc.) that operate according to industrial, technological, natural and infrastructural components. The interaction among these components forms the foundation of tourist services (Bogomolova 2008).

In European countries, studies on the spatial development of resorts are considered on the basis of the tourism cluster (Gaman *et al.* 2017). Some scholars suggest that "Clusters are synonymous to competitiveness, given that they contribute to innovative processes, facilitate relations with other institutions, canalising knowledge and information need for technology development (Poter 2000).

The primary purpose of spatial planning in many countries is aimed at a balanced socio-economic development of the regions. It is worth noting that improvement the quality of life, natural resource management, environmental protection, rational use of territory should be taken into consideration. (Gozner *et al.* 2013).

Tourism planning in Russia is carried out at three levels: national, regional and local ones. The national level deals with the coordination and management of large tourist regions or at the national level. At the local level, the planning and development of certain tourist areas are carried out.

The effective development of territorial tourist complexes is related to the rational placement of tourism infrastructure and the systematic innovations of their structure. The sustainable planning and design of tourism facilities involves a complex territorial development process. Tourist activity results in formation of the network of facilities in the tourist industry (Zyryanov 2010). Since the onset of socio- economic changes in Russia, Altai Krai has been one of the most popular tourist destinations of the Soviet Union. To date, more than 50 thousand people have visited Belokurikha Resort for treatment and rehabilitation.

Historically, documents were sent to facilitate the area's development "On Measures to Further Improvement of the Tourist and Excursion Services for the Population in Altai Krai" (1983) and the Blueprint of Tourism Development in Altai Krai (1984). However, since the inception of reforms, the industry based on a trade union basis has essentially collapsed. Since the downfall, there have been attempts to restore the resort. In the early 1990' a concept for the development of the South Altai Ecological and Economic Region was developed in Altai Krai. This territory included the southern low-mountain and foothill areas of Altai Krai. The goal of this concept was to preserve the unique biodiversity of the foothills, to manufacture ecologically clean food products, and to develop tourism infrastructure. Belokurikha Resort assumed a significant role in promoting tourism (Revykin *et al.* 1997).

Since then, a program was developed to guide the development of medical-rehabilitation area that includes Belokurikha Resort and the surrounding areas: Altai, Smolensk, Soloneshensky districts. From 2006-2019, socio-economic development programs and territorial planning schemes proposed by Altai Krai and municipal districts were implemented. Planning documents identified Belokurikha Resort as a main tourist center. The development of tourism infrastructure was planned for the surrounding territories of the resort. New tourism facilities were designed to attract tourists to Belokurikha Resort. These projects were the integral to the concept development of the tourist-recreational complexes in Altai Krai in the 21st century. The activities and events included in the tourist cluster development were identified in the state program of "Tourism Development in the Altai Krai" for 2011–2016. Belokurikha Resort has been recognized as the most important tourist cluster in the Russian Federation.

2. Methodology

Tourism is the world's largest industry and it should be improved and managed in a sustainable way, based on effective spatial planning. The integration of tourism in relevant spatial planning process can significantly influence socio-economic, cultural and environmental dimensions of the region. Scholars have identified specific approaches to tourism planning: an economic and industry-oriented approach; a physical / spatial approach; a place-based approach; a modeling approach; a sustainable tourism approach and others (Hall 2008). In Russia, spatial tourism planning is based on distinct principles that were emphasized in city planning design during the Soviet Union period. B. Rodoman (2002) suggested the concept of a "polarized landscape" - a cultural landscape that encompasses a territorial structure and involves the harmonious coexistence of natural areas and human daily activities. The preservation of the natural environment and natural resources dictates the placement of tourist areas and hiking trails. The concept of spatial/ territorial planning encompasses an urban planning frame formation (Kudryavtsev 1985) and a natural framework (Vladimirov 1986). The territory framework concept was applied to spatial planning in the tourism industry (Kolbovsky 2006, Kruzhalin 2007, Dunets *et al.* 2009).

Spatial planning policy for tourism complexes should establish basic principles of planning and construction, the appropriate size and boundaries of territories, the structure and placement of tourism enterprises, a number of tourists and personnel, the structure and location of engineering infrastructure, investment in infrastructure development.

The implementation of spatial planning should take into account the landscape-adaptive principle for territories that have well-preserved natural resources. Spatial planning considers building construction, layout of tourist destinations and justifying the environmental impact of tourist loads on the territory.

Since the end of the 20th century, traditional territorial planning has changed. An integrated approach is used to analyze the development of the tourism industry, and territory planning for tourist activities is developed according to principles of sustainable development (Hall 2008). At the level of the spatial project, the problem solution of territorial planning of tourist destination is connected with the development of models for the optimal localization of the tourist flow and spatial structure of the tourist complex. The formation of tourist flows and their spatial distribution are essential (Kavalyauskas 1989). *Spatial* distribution of *tourist flows* could consider the possibility of using tourism service infrastructure.

Territorial tourist complexes planning must include functional zoning. The purposes of functional zoning are to ensure the quality of tourist resources and infrastructure and to preserve natural resources of the area. Tourist activities closely resemble human daily activities. Unlike industrial zones, tourist activities can be carried out within various territorial zones. It should be noted that there are territorial zones where recreational use can be predominant. While analyzing local territories, one can distinguish functional zones: a resource zone (territories and water); a residential zone (local population and staff); an economic zone (agriculture, industry and transport); nature conservation area; a tourist accommodation zone, and others. The objectives of planning of the integrated tourism development are to engage in short-term and long-term planning that focuses on the development of its main components (tourism enterprises), and to integrate participants' efforts to improve quality (Bogomolva 2008).

It is recognized that the planning of the territorial tourist complex is based on ideas related to the discrete-continental tourist space, as well as its linear-nodal territorial structure. It is advisable to use a frame approach/method for spatial planning of territorial tourist complexes. The tourist framework is a network or linear-nodal set of spatial tourist formations. This framework consists of the following formations: natural-ecological, historical-cultural and social-infrastructure. If the first and second frameworks determine the territorial attractiveness for tourists, the third characterizes the tourist and recreational development of the territory (Dunets *et al.* 2019). The tourism- recreation framework identifies and describes the following components:

- loci are elementary tourist and recreational objects (natural, historical and cultural monuments, tourist attractions, tourist facilities, etc.);
- linear formations are roads and railways, hiking trails and waterway routes;
- localities are territorial tourist complexes.

3. Results and Discussion

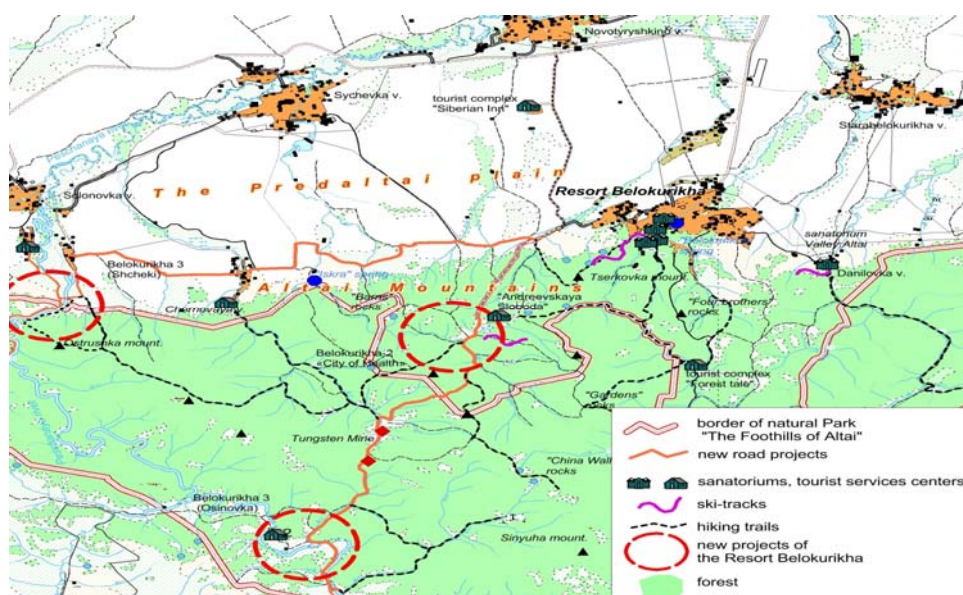
It should be noted that Belokurikha Resort is located in a small, narrow valley of Belokurikha river. Its transport accessibility has contributed to the development of the resort. Moreover, it does not take much time for residents of Siberian cities (Barnaul, Biysk, Tomsk, Novosibirsk, etc.) to travel to the Altai Mountains.

However, the underdevelopment of the linear-nodal framework, in particular, transport networks and tourist services, have impeded tourism development in the region. Further, for a long time, the resort was known as a place where only medical services were provided. The neighboring valleys of the mountainous rivers and the spurs of the Cherginsky mountain range have not been readily used by the tourism industry. Problems with spatial tourism development can be explained by the lack of viable transportation options and tourists' preferences for taking long hiking trips in the mountains.

According to the survey of Altai Krai Department of External Affairs, Tourism and Resort Business, in 2017, 57 entities provided services in Belokurikha. During that year, about 239000 of tourists visited the resort and there were 5,540 places that offered year-round accommodation.

Currently, the transport network and engineering infrastructure have been built in the mountainous part of Belokurikha. The new highway provides opportunities for the construction of tourist facilities and the use of routes. The territory of the sub-cluster Belokurikha 2 is located 10 km away from the resort at an altitude of more than 600 m above the sea level. The area is covered mostly with coniferous forest, located on the southern slope, and it has a mountainous terrain. The concept of the sub-cluster Belokurikha-2 is a project called "City of Health", which is built in the lowlands of Altai. The upper part of the sub-cluster is located on the hill, which gradually descends into the valley of the Malaya Sychevka River. The project features the main functional medical and health-enhancing facilities of Belokurikha 2: hydrotherapy clinic, radonotherapy clinic, mud bath therapy, SPA center, center of alternative medicine, speleo-halocryotherapy center, climatotherapy center, medical-diagnostic center, physiotherapy center, physical therapy and rehabilitation center ("Belokurikha-2 Resort" Investment Memorandum. JSC "Resort Belokurikha" 2013).

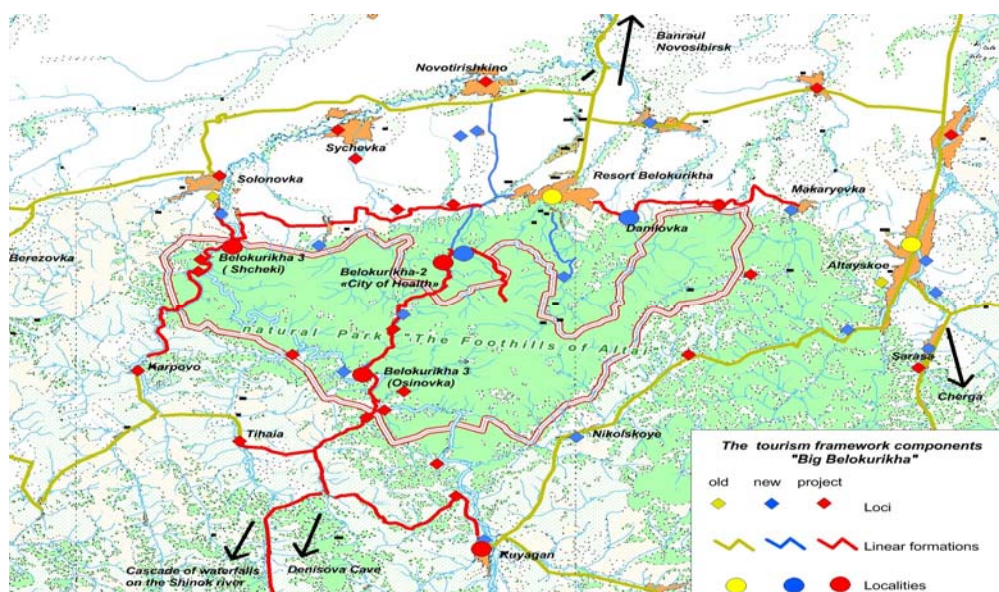
Figure 1. Natural Park "Foothills of Altai"



Currently, territory availability for the planning of tourist route system and small recreation centers are of particular importance. In order to preserve the natural environment while the planning of tourist complexes was underway in 2017, a natural park of regional-level significance "The Foothills of Altai" was created in the low mountain area, to the south of the resort. Its most important aim was tourism development in the region. The sub-cluster Belokurikha 2 is a health-oriented resort. Also, there are many landmarks of significance in the area: the granite remnants, located on tourist paths, fancy rocks "Ambarchiki" (Barns), "Ogorodchiki" (Gardens), and "Karavai" (Loaf). There are also dozens of small mineral springs located in the Belokurikha granite massif. Several art objects have been created, including "Andreevskaya Sloboda", "Center of Buddhism", and "Tungsten Mine". Finally, during the winter season, tourists can use a ski-biathlon complex and two ski-tracks.

In the frame of the study, we have created a diagram, which depicts the main elements of the tourist framework for the purpose of spatial development of the tourist complex, "Bolshaya Belokurikha" ("Big Belokurikha").

Figure 2. The tourism framework "Big Belokurikha"



Of particular importance to the development of the tourism framework is the transport infrastructure. Altai-Rossosh-Starobelokurikha-Novotiryshkino-Sychevka-Solonovka highway runs along the northern border of the mountains. In addition, alongside the mountains, one can drive on unpaved roads and improved roads: Red Town - Chernovaya - Iskra deposit - Belokurikha - Danilovka - Makaryevka. In the narrow valleys, tourist facilities have been created and Apiaries are also located in the narrow valleys. The Altayskoe-Nikolskoye-Kuyagan-Kuyacha motorway leads to the southern borders of the park. There is a popular road - Sarasa - Cherga (part of the old Chuisky tract) in the eastern part. The western conditional boundary of "Bolshaya Belokurikha" ("Big Belokurikha") has the Berezovka-Soloneshnoye-Tog-Altai-Denisov Cave Highway.

It should be emphasized that the main center for tourism services is Belokurikha Resort. Currently, the main transport network and tourist facilities are being constructed: Belokurikha 2, Belokurikha Mine - Belokurikha 3 (Osinovka) and Bulatovo - Kuyagan, and further in Altai or Soloneshensky areas. Important components of the project are a bridge construction over the Peschanya River and a road construction between the former villages Osinovka and Sosnovka. The new projects will make it possible to shorten the access routes to the important tourist attractions of the Soloneshensky District (Denisova Cave, Cascade of waterfalls on the Shinok River), the Altai Region (the Peschanaya River, natural and cultural assets of the old Chuya highway).

The road construction in the mountainous part to the south of Belokurikha Resort resulted in an increase in the number of tourists, and it contributed to the new project development, "Belokurikha 3." In 2017, the Tomsk Research Institute of Balneotherapy and Physiotherapy prepared a passport (document) of this territory and advertised it as a medical and recreational area. The creation of a new recreational tourist complex has been started. According to the project there are two main areas: the location "Shcheki" near the village "Krasny Gorodok" ("Red Town"), and the location "Osinovka" (a former settlement) (Bioclimatic Passport of Medical Rehabilitation Localities 2017). Also, the road reconstruction makes it possible to build a transport corridor as well as tourist service centers. The Peschanaya River and characteristics of its river system allow for the development of water

tourism in the region. In this case, the tourist network of Belokurikha can contribute to the formation of outdoor short-term recreation programs, and tourists can visit remote mountainous areas. The preservation of the natural environment and natural resources are considered as a major factor of the medical tourism organization in the region.

Moreover, the river system is beneficial for the Belokurikha 3 project. In the future, the Peschanaya River will be the axis of tourism and economic development. It will include two main centers: "Osinovka" and "Shcheki". The Peschanaya River runs in a narrow mountainous canyon and is of great interest for water tourism and hiking trips. Developing a tourist attraction on the slopes of the mountains, near the canyon, one can construct a number of recreational places. Another axis for the development of tourist areas could be "Face of Altai," a crossroad of mountains and plains (Dunets 2018). There are several valleys of small rivers, (Transverse, Bolshaya Sychevka, Chernovaya, Danilovka), that can be considered as a good opportunity for building tourist attractions and facilities. For example, there is a sanatorium "Dolina Altaya" ("Valley of Altai") in the village Danilovka, at the way out of the Danilovka River to the plain.

When planning recreational tourist facilities, the most important participants are the land owners. The project team can provide comments and recommendations at the regional or administrative levels. However, project development solutions are made at the local level. Depending on the legal status of a particular territory, a decision is made for planning and construction on the territory. The lands of different categories are transferred to the management of various public and private institutions that have their own plans on the use of the territory. Depending on their objectives, development of the territory may vary significantly. The land owners decide how to use land, primarily in terms of receiving economic benefits. However, there are some hidden aspects for small businesses that affect the change in the look and function of the area. For example, the desire to maintain family ownership or commitment to traditions may prevent or hinder tourism development.

Investors are the most important financial factor for project implementation. Financial institutions have their own policies and strategies for providing funding. Nevertheless, even significant and interesting projects are subject to lack of funding. Publically-funded projects (such as parks) that are socially-important recreational areas have great prospects and potential for obtaining good funding. Funding has a significant impact, which contributes to or limits the success of a project (Hall 2008).

Project execution for tourist area development requires public involvement. Some public organizations can affect tourism planning in the region. Also, environmental organizations provide some comments on the projects. It should be noted that they can also put political pressure on public and private project developers (Gunn 2002).

In recent years, the role of professional tourism associations has increased. Proposals on the projects have to be discussed by all members of the public. Local people have the right to know how the new project will affect them and their standard of living. Various methods and strategies can be used for public discussion of the project. The involvement of local people in the project planning process is very essential during the preparation of the project draft. For this purpose cooperation with the local people, such as town halls, and other forms of public interactions should be used (Harrill 2003, Veal 2002). Public hearings may lead to some delay in project implementation. At present, public involvement is a significant element of the tourism planning process in a region. In fact, protection for the natural environment is of great importance for the planning of tourist areas. A risk factor for the efficient operation of tourist complexes is a strong seasonal pattern of the demand for tourist services, which is mainly the result of periodic changes in climatic conditions, holiday seasons, traditions, etc. To reduce seasonality, it is necessary to provide tourist traffic and social tourism development.

Conclusion

Thus, tourism complexity requires the use of different approaches to study and examine tourist industry. The choice of particular methods in regional studies is associated with aims and objectives. A recreational complex for tourism is a universal concept, traditionally used in the economic issues of tourism and reflects all possible forms of territorial organization of tourism and recreational space. This concept characterizes the relationship and interaction of its components. Project planning will contribute to the implementation of tourism development programs. When developing projects, the specific plots of land are determined, a comprehensive analysis of the territory's future development is carried out, and the linking of promising tourist attractions with transport and engineering infrastructure is designed and created.

In order to develop tourist -recreational complexes, it is important to form working groups. Involving interested parties in the project will provide rational use of natural resources and efficient development of the tourism industry. All projects aimed at the development of tourist -recreational resources must comply with the principles of sustainable development.

To conclude, currently the formation of the tourist facility "Bolshaya Belokurikha" ("Big Belokurikha") is being established. Of particular importance for its development is the opportunity for the development of ring-shaped tourist routes and transit exits to neighbouring tourist areas. The Belokurikha 3 project will release the tourist potential of Belokurikha Resort and contribute to the healthy development of tourism in the region.

Acknowledgements

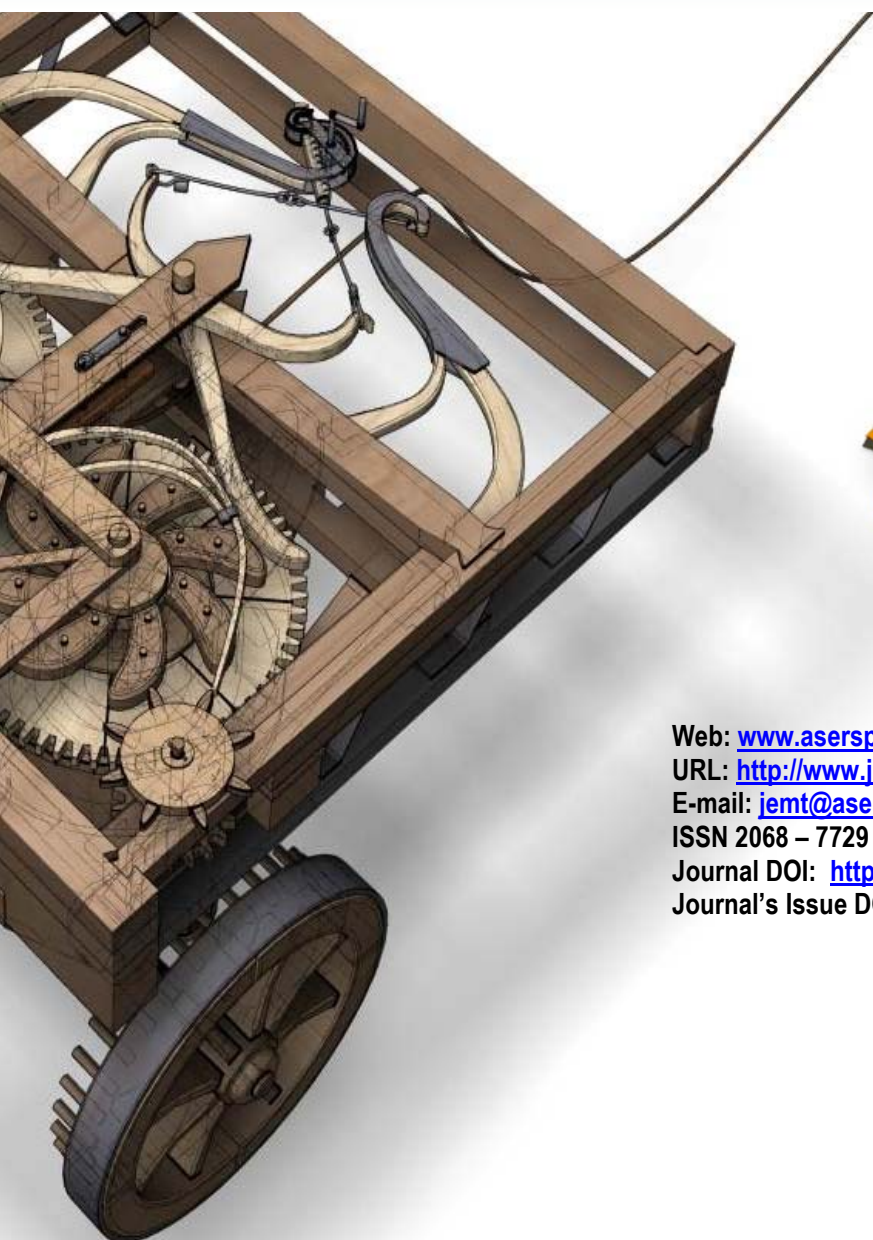
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