

## Rural Tourism in the Petroșani Depression – Current Features and Outlooks for Future Development

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### Abstract

*The paper analyzes the main opportunities for development of rural tourism, focusing on the study of the tourist potential of rural localities in the Petroșani Depression, and on highlighting the main action underlying the future development of such an activity. The first efforts to develop rural tourism are recent and influenced by the creation of rural accommodation spaces and a significant number of secondary residences. The development of rural tourism is one of the means to diversify economy in the area and works an alternative to the subsistence farming used in the villages in the depression.*

**Key words:** rural tourism, Petroșani Depression, momârlan, touristic villages, rural cultural heritage, opportunities

**JEL Classification:** O12, O18, O15, L83

### Introduction

Numerous definitions of rural tourism have been drafted over time. The World Tourism Organization considers rural cultural heritage is a key feature of tourism products. The specific feature of rural tourist products consists in that tourists are offered customized contacts, they benefit from the human and geographical environment of the rural space and participate, as much as possible, in the activities, traditions and lifestyle of the local population<sup>1</sup>. Also, rural tourism has been identified as a vehicle for safeguarding the integrity of the countryside resource, enhancing the rural economy and maintaining rural ways of life<sup>2</sup>.

In Europe, the interest shown in the sustained development of the rural sector, overall, and ailing areas, in particular, has risen in the past few years, leading to the emergence of specific

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<sup>1</sup> \*\*\* World Tourism Organisation, Tourism 2020 Vision, apud Surugiu, C., *Dezvoltarea turismului rural din perspectiva formării și perfecționării profesionale a resurselor umane*, Editura Universitară, București, 2008, p. 12.

<sup>2</sup> Lane, 1994, Hall; Jenkins, 1998; Roberts, Hall, 2001, apud Garrod, B., Wornell, R., Youell, R., Re-conceptualising rural resources as countryside capital: the case of rural tourism, *Journal of Rural Studies*, no. 22, 2006, p. 118.

policies. Various strategies have been adopted whose goal is improving the locals' living standards by means of a multinational, holistic approach, that would originate in an analysis of all available resources and opportunities, and putting opportunities to best use<sup>3</sup>.

Countless studies focusing especially on approaching ailing rural areas perceived tourism as a means to solve existing dysfunctions and shortcomings. Therefore, declining economic activity, restructuring of the agricultural sector, dwindling rural industrialization and out-migration of higher educated youth, have all determined to use tourism as an alternative development strategy for the economic and social regeneration of rural areas<sup>4</sup>. It may even be argued that the tourism industry has now become the lynchpin of many rural communities, having effectively replaced agriculture in this role<sup>5</sup>. One can thus conclude that tourism in general is a growing and complex phenomenon which is becoming one of the world's largest economic activities<sup>6</sup>.

Romanian rural areas are a space that has accumulated multiple dysfunctions during the transition from centralized to market economy, whose resolution requires identifying viable solutions for matching local potential and at the same time preserving traditional specific features. The rural area in the Petroșani Depression is one such instance, as it has tourist potential, which might be properly used to cut down dependence on traditional economic activities in the area that fail to make the best use of resources. Such action will have to be supported by the involvement of local and national authorities and tourism organizations in order to ease the local population's efforts to make the best of the area's existing potential. The former half of this study acts as a diagnostic analysis of the tourist offer in the rural areas inside the Petroșani Depression; the latter half focuses on designing consistent ways to develop tourism as a vector to enhance the development of local rural economy.

## **The Specific Features of the Tourist Offer of Rural Settlements in the Petroșani Depression**

### **General Overview**

Humanization of the Petroșani Depression was centered on the neighboring mountain areas, shaped in the long run by the free flow of colonists coming from Țara Hațegului, Gorj and Mărginimea Sibiului. The current network of settlements crystallized as a result of migration of mountain area hamlets towards the depression; most villages developed on the border of mountain and depression. In the long run, humanization of the mountain areas consisted in mountain settlements growing into permanent villages, and the intensive use of pastoral farming, also highlighted by the high density of temporary human settlements (folding pens and huts). In terms of culture, the mountain area was the farthest reach of a local civilization, i.e. a mountain and timber civilization. Local culture has preserved its unique features almost intact, thanks to the isolation offered by the original birthplace of the culture and the social cohesion of its members, as reflected by the permanence of economic and social-cultural customs inherited from forefathers. Industrialization of the area, which also led to accelerated urbanization, failed to bring any structural changes to the local rural community level. Even in villages included

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<sup>3</sup> Mita, S., Stoica, I.V., Rolul activităților economice nonagricole în dezvoltarea așezărilor rurale subcarpatice situate între Buzău și Slănic (Subcarpații Buzăului), in *Comunicări de Geografie*, vol. 12, Editura Universității, București, 2008, p. 442.

<sup>4</sup> Pompl, Lavery (1993), William&Shaw, (1991), Hannigan, 1994, Deroi (1991), Wickens (1999), apud Briedenhann, J., Wichens, E., Tourism routes as a tool for the economic development of rural areas-vibrant hope or impossible dream?, *Tourism Management*, no. 25, 2004, p.73.

<sup>5</sup> Garrod, B., Wornell, R. Y, 2006, p.118.

<sup>6</sup> Bazini, E., Nedelea, Al., Impact of the tourism development on poverty reduction in Albania as a country in transition, *Journal of Tourism*, no.5, 2008, p. 24.

under the administrative authority of cities, the locals' lifestyle continued to be dominated by rural archaic customs. This was due to the local population's reluctance to the changes involved by the new social and economic facts imposed by the industrial functional structure, with a strong penchant to preserve their specific lifestyle features and use the communities' symbols as permanent landmarks.

Overall, the economy of the Petroșani Depression is characterized as undergoing a difficult time of transition, which led to declaring it an underprivileged area, due to the severe current negative effects of the Communist regime's irrational economic policies of coal exploitation. Economic reorganization has also involved several measures meant to limit the economic decline caused by the closing down of mines and the employees' layoff. The results of incentives granted when the depression was deemed an underprivileged area failed to live up to expectations concerning local development. One cause was the absence of norms for the enforcement of the Underprivileged Areas Law, which created confusion as far as granting incentives, access to funds, access to land and facilities in the area was concerned<sup>7</sup>.

The decline of mining activity has had a strong negative impact on the urban space, and a lesser one on rural settlements, where, after the majority of mines closed down, the population formerly employed as farmers returned to its traditional pastoral farming activity.

The result of socio-economical problems was tourists getting a negative view of the depression. Destination choice is greatly influenced by a perceived sense of empathy with the area and this itself is a function of the destination identity that is being projected. The role of destination imagery is becoming ever more critical. Buck (1993) argues that tourism is an industry of imagery: "its overriding concern is to construct, through multiple representations of paradise, an imagery that entices the outsider to place him or herself into the defined space"<sup>8</sup>. Usually, associating a tourist destination with a negative view is due to the occurrence of negative events or socio-economic problems<sup>9</sup>; this can also act as "a deterrent to tourist traffic and investments in tourism"<sup>10</sup>. The area under study falls into this category; its negative image originates in the not-too-distant past, due to acts of violence blamed on the community of miners, events that occurred in the context of social upheavals.

### **The Socio-Cultural Identity of the Momârlan Community – a Basic Factor for Rural Tourism Development**

The rural area under study is the result of influences from several historical, social, cultural and economic factors that left a specific cultural imprint. The socio-cultural identity of the rural areas in the Petroșani Depression is grounded in several symbolic features that make the local Momârlan community stand out as a unique society, and at the same time elevates it to a group of select rural communities in Romania (moți, sibieni, maramureșeni etc.). The community has preserved its socio-cultural identity over time due to a set of particular features that have grown by now into symbols and might serve as a backbone for tourism development. Identity imprints material and immaterial signs on the landscape<sup>11</sup>. The *momârlan household* is one of the most

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<sup>7</sup> Căndea, M., Simon, T., Tătaru, A., *Spațiu rural, turism rural și agroturism*, Editura Transversal, Târgoviște, 2007, p. 161.

<sup>8</sup> Buck (1993), apud Garrod, B., Wornell, R. Y., *op. cit.*, p. 124.

<sup>9</sup> Giordana, F., *La comunicazione del turismo tra immagine, immaginario, e immaginazione*, Editore Franco Angeli, Milano, 2004, p. 57.

<sup>10</sup> Hall, D. R., *Tourism as Sustainable Development? The Albanian Experience of Transition*, *International Journal of Tourism Research*, no. 2, 2000, p. 37.

<sup>11</sup> Dematteis, G., Ferlaino, F., *Il mondo e i luoghi: geografie delle identità e del cambiamento*, Istituto di ricerche economico-sociali del Piemonte, 2003, p. 5, available at <http://db.formez.it/>

prominent material signs. The traditional household in the upper Jiu valley is the wooden beam house; the beams are joined using corner bridle joint technique – carving square holes into the beams' outer sides for perfect fit; no nails are used to join the beams<sup>12</sup>. Usually dwellings are one-floor, but there are also some larger two-floored dwellings (garret house).

*Folk costumes* are one of the defining features for the momârlan community, first of all in terms of esthetics and ornamentation<sup>13</sup>. Nowadays, the momârlan continue to take pride in wearing their traditional costumes on special occasions (during the Easter *nedeia* celebrations or important saints' feast parades)<sup>14</sup>. The beauty of their folk costumes – the result of the patterns used - color blends and manufacturing techniques – allowed locals to turn their garb into an identifying feature of their folk culture<sup>15</sup> in the period of time when the depression saw waves of migrants coming from all the historic provinces of the country, attracted by jobs in the mining sector.

*An uninterrupted staple of sheep-breeding* is another defining element of momârlan civilization. Sheep-breeding is the main economic activity in the rural area analyzed; used since the earliest times, it is also a way to face and negate mining activities. Facing the danger of a changing socio-economic order, with industrial activities steadily gaining in importance and miners becoming the central figure of the economic landscape, the momârlan felt abandoning their basic trade might have risked the structure of collective identity; therefore, uninterrupted sheep-breeding emphasizes their utter identification with this field of work, passed down successive generations; they refer to themselves as shepherds<sup>16</sup>.

*Uninterrupted customs and habits* reflect the manifest socio-cultural side of momârlan civilization. Most traditions and customs originate in economic activities related to sheep-breeding and forest work, or are related to religious feasts. Traditional customs – especially the Easter *nedeia* celebration – are excellent opportunities for the community to come together as a social group. Easter *nedeia* celebrations are a current custom in the Bănița village during the springtime and mark the beginning of agricultural works; they also mark Easter festivities in the villages at the eastern end of the depression (Slătinoara, Cimpa, etc.).

*Preservation of traditional lifestyle*: rural offers the necessary space for all of the complex aspects of life (economic, socio-cultural and religious aspects); during the Communist regime, when the decision to level depression space by converting villages into urban habitations led to a division into the momârlan who could not conceive life other than in rural areas and colonists in the urban environment. The momârlan did not give up on living in their traditional dwellings in favor of blockhouses, although some of them used to – and still do – work as miners.

## Types of Tourist Villages

In the past few decades, several criteria have been used in Romania and abroad to distinguish among tourist villages; also, this allowed to select among potential customers and improve offer-and-demand mechanisms. There were identified in Romania several categories of tourism villages considering complex criteria (ethnographic value, traditional crafts, existing general and

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<sup>12</sup> Lascu, I., *Tradiții care dispar. Comunitatea momârlanilor din zona Petroșani*, Editura Vatra, Craiova, 2004, pp. 80-85.

<sup>13</sup> Ibidem, p. 92.

<sup>14</sup> Iancu, F.-C., Merciu, G.-L., Modelul cultural al identității sociale a așezărilor rurale din Depresiunea Petroșani, *Geis*, Referate și Comunicări de Geografie, vol. XIII, Editura Casei Corpului Didactic Deva, Deva, 2009, p. 267.

<sup>15</sup> Crăciun, M., Grecu, M., Stan, R., *Lumea Văii. Unitatea minei, diversitatea minerilor*, Editura Paideia, București, 2002, p.112.

<sup>16</sup> Ibidem, p. 114

civil infrastructure, tourist-attraction potential, geographical positioning and accessibility, environment quality)<sup>17</sup>. The nationally-acknowledged classification was adapted from the point of view of the structure of tourism and technical heritage of area under study; eight main types of tourist villages were identified:

1. **Sightseeing villages** include most villages in the depression, due to their positioning in a picturesque landscape, thanks to the proximity of the mountain ranges around the depression (the Crivadia and Merișor villages located on the slopes of the Șureanu Mountains). Villages situated on the border of the mountain region can be used as launching pads for mountain trips.
2. **Villages of ethnographic interest** are classified into several subcategories:
  - *villages with traditional architecture* include all rural settlements in the depression, where one can see traditional dwellings, some of them quite old (100 or even 150 years old); the reason for the dwellings' resilience and durability is the careful selection of the construction materials; traditional dwellings in the area are mostly made of wood; locals used to pay special attention to the time when they would cut down the trees – i.e. the time when trees were not in blossom; they would select exclusively dry timber which thus prevented the effect of the bacteria's long-term activity on wood, the architecture and organization of momârlan households have caught the interest of specialists in the field (the researchers with the Ethnography and Folklore Institute selected a house in the Câmpu lui Neag village as a model for traditional dwellings in Hunedoara county); the Astra Museum in Sibiu also has a model of a traditional dwelling with a reinforced pen, relocated there from the Câmpu lui Neag village.
  - *villages with outstanding folk traditions*: Jieț, Slătinoara and Livezeni villages stand out among these; wintertime customs in the respective villages include the so-called "colindatul pițărăilor" on Christmas, a folk custom thought to go back at least 250 years ago<sup>18</sup>.
3. **Cultural tourist villages**: they are better-known thanks to the presence of valuable historical artifacts (labeled as such by UNESCO or national authorities) and visited precisely for those unique cultural assets; the Bănița village has the ruins of a Dacian fort from the 1<sup>st</sup> century BC – 1<sup>st</sup> century AD interval on the Dealul Cetății hill<sup>19</sup>; the fort's strategic position made it an outpost whose goal was preventing roman armed intruders coming from the Jiu Pass to the complex of fortifications in Orăștie mountains. Bănița fort is included in the UNESCO list of assets due to the outstanding value of the Dacian fortifications' defense system; the fort is included in the Grădiștea de Munte-Cioclovina Dacian Complex Archeological Reserve, alongside 4 other Dacian fortresses: Costești, Blidaru, Luncani-Piatra Roșie, Fețele Albe).
4. **Tourist villages with outstanding historical and artistic monuments and architecture**: The Medieval Tower in Crivadia located close to the village of the same name was declared a national monument of outstanding value according to law no. 5/6 March/2006.
5. **Villages with assets of scientific interest**: several natural reserves have been created close to villages in the depression; the natural reserves' beauty, scientific value and novelty can attract numerous tourists: Retezat National Park/Biosphere Reserve, which can be reached from Câmpu lui Neag village on its southern border; Jieț river gorge; Peștera Bolii situated

<sup>17</sup> Căndea, M., Simon, T., Tătaru, A., *Spațiu rural, turism rural și agroturism*, Editura Transversal, Târgoviște, 2007, pp. 61-67.

<sup>18</sup> Gălățan-Jieț, D., *Momârlanii, ieri și azi*, Editura MJM, Craiova, 2007, p. 101-115.

<sup>19</sup> Macrea et al., *Cetăți dacice din sudul Transilvaniei*, Editura Meridiane, București, 1966, p. 24, Hadrian Daicoviciu, et al, *Cetățile și așezările dacice în sud-vestul Transilvaniei*, Editura Științifică și Enciclopedică, București, 1989, p. 211.

on Peștera village, Peștera Zeicului speology reserve (located close to Câmpu lui Neag village).

6. **Fishing and hunting villages** include or are located close to fish-rich waterways (in Câmpu lui Neag village, Valea de Pești reservoir was created by tapping into Jiul de Vest, Valea de Pești and Valea de Brazi rivers; several villages are located along rivers – the Jieș along the homonym river valley, the Bănița along the Bănița Valley, the Cîmpa along the river of the same name); there are also villages with hunting reserves (ex. Câmpușel – Câmpu lui Neag village); the mountain region presents opportunities for sports hunting, an activity in special demand from foreign tourists (the Buta settlement, part of the Câmpu lui Neag village); hunting is favored by the mountain cabins offering accommodation during the hunt (the Câmpușel in Retezat mountains, the Aușel in the Șureanu mountains, Valea de Pești motel in Vâlcan mountains).
7. **Sheep-grazing and farming tourist villages** are distributed all over the depression, as sheep-grazing is a traditional economic activity in the area, as shown above; a topic of interest is sheep pens, where tourists can spend one day to get acquainted with the specific lifestyle and dairy-processing methods; the most representative villages in this respect are Cîmpa, Jieș and the villages part of the Bănița commune (Jitoni, Arsuri, Boteni).
8. **Week-end tourist villages:** their position close to urban centers means they can become week-end reception centers for tourists who want to “flee” the city in search of quiet, relaxation and local food sampling: Peștera and Slătinoara villages part of the town of Petroșani, Bănița-Sat and Crivadia, close to Petroșani city, Cîmpa and Jieș villages part of the town of Petrița. Usually, these localities are favored by lower-income tourists, possibly including the inhabitants of the depression.

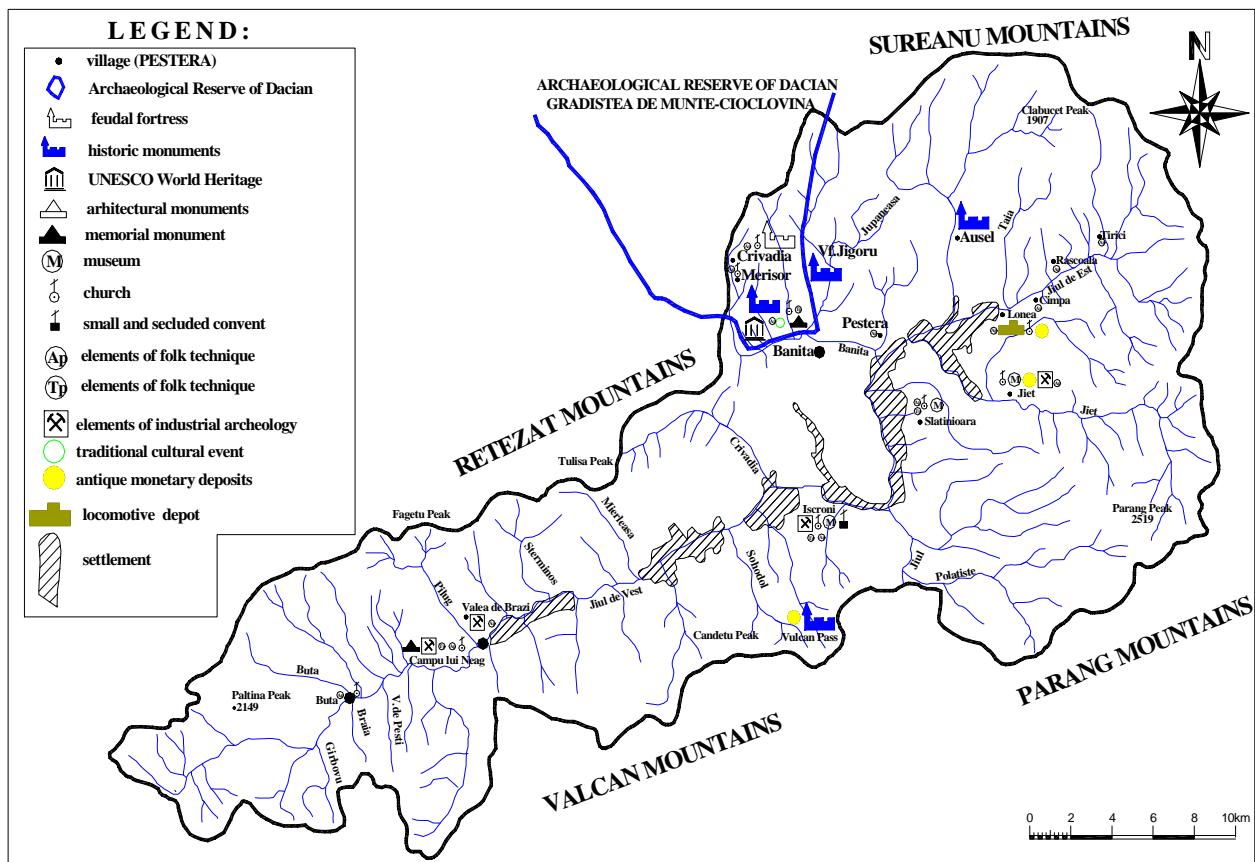


Fig. 1. Distribution of the tourist attractions in the rural space of Petroșani Depression

Source: authors' elaboration based on AutoCad

As Figure 1 highlights, several villages especially stand out in terms of wealth and variety of their natural, cultural and historical potential. Among them, the Bănița village is individualized, the novelty side being enhanced by the ruins of the Dacian fortress, whose inclusion in the world cultural heritage Unesco reflects the historic importance of the village as a strategic component of the Dacian defense system Grădiștea de Munte-Cioclovina, declared an archaeological reserve; Bănița is one of the few settlements which still preserve folk craft features (fieldwork identified an old water mill in a household's yard).

Another village with outstanding tourist importance is Câmpu lui Neag, a landmark ethnographic center for the area analyzed. Also in the village there are features of the area's industrial heritage, that is, in the villages where mines used to be in service or are still functional: the Lonea village, an important mining industry center in the depression because it is one of the few productive centers in the region and at the same time is crossed by the terminus of the industrial railway in the eastern part of the depression (Fig. 1).

A special category includes the Jieț, Slătinoara and Iscroni villages, which have a cultural function due to the presence of their ethnographic museums recently constructed.

### **The Material and Technical Premises of Tourism**

Tourist accommodation structures in rural areas of the depression are limited, but mention should be made of their concentration in areas with a high tourist potential. The trend to build accommodation units is in a mere incipient phase in certain villages (Bănița has serviceable accommodation facilities and along the Paroșeni valley in the Jiu-Paroșeni area 20 rural pensions are under construction), but the number of tourist accommodation facilities is expected to rise in the future. The rural pensions ensure accommodation space and a segment of the food for tourists from their own fresh produce. The rural accommodation spaces are mainly tourist structures with a low capacity of up to 5-8 rooms. None of the rural accommodation spaces are rated and therefore they are not included in the Hunedoara section of the Antrec catalogue.

In addition to rural pensions, there is an accommodation excess in certain households, which can be put to good use as rural tourism. There is also a recent trend to build secondary residences in the countryside, and the outlook of a tourism development will lead to the conversion of some of them into rural hostels. Some of the villages located close to the mountain region also feature public accommodation and food facilities, some of them being constructed during the communist period (such as the Valea de Pești motel) or after 1990 (the Cheile Buții tourist complex in Buta).

The rural pensions provide also a broad range of activities: walks, cultural tourism, fishing, sport activities. The current modest stage of the development of rural tourism is due to scarcity involvement of Antrec branch and the lack of legislative facilities until now.

With a view to the development of rural tourism, those households accommodation surplus have been identified, and so were secondary residences built in the past few years that borrowed elements of local architecture. Taking into account the quality of constructions, a minimal number of households that can accommodate tourists was selected in each village: Lonea (10), Cimpa (15), Jieț (5), Răscoala (5), Tirici (3), Bănița (15), Crivadia (5), Merișor (5), Câmpu lui Neag (10), Valea de Brazi (3), Slătinoara (5). The number of households was set in the wake of trips in the fieldwork; the criteria of selection were that the constructions should be recent buildings, but that they would preserve the architectural spirit of the area, and that their construction involved local construction materials (80-90% timber). When assessing the number of households fit for rural tourism, older buildings were also considered, but only those with a resilient frame or were recently renovated.

## The Foundations and the Opportunities for the Development of Rural Tourism in the Petroșani Depression

The current economy of the depression registers several important mutations that bring about a conversion from the mainly predominantly pastoral farming nature/profile to a functionally mixed profile, with trends towards the tertiary sector, as a result of intensified trade and tourist activities.

Trade is not on a very large scale, but it is a fact of economic life caused by the exploitation of the produce surplus generated by own households, especially in those villages where livestock breeding is extensive.

The rural spaces in the Petroșani Depression are characterized by the presence of a tourist infrastructure, which, although not very large, affords ensuring basic services such as accommodation and public replenishment.

In the long run, tourism can become a basic activity for the economy of the rural areas of the Petroșani Depression<sup>20</sup>. The premises for the development of rural tourism consist in the existence of access routes (road and rail), and in the recently-built tourist infrastructure. The discovery of coal resources and their exploitation led to the creation of transport routes which eased the depression coming into contact initially to areas to the north of it; the transport network was later expanded southwards, creating links to other parts of Romania, too.

An essential element in implementing and developing rural tourism is diversification of high-quality tourist services. This is a priority for the area under study, even more so as it is also a requirement made by European legislation. This target can be achieved by following three directions: in terms of legislation, Romanian tourism needs to comply with European legislation in the field of rural tourism (the term of “agro-tourist boarding house/pension” has been regulated since February 2008) which allows creating the legal framework for the development of genuine rural tourism. Access to and attracting European structural funds in the field of tourism would be an important financial support for the local population, which might support efforts to build and expand the tourist infrastructure in the rural area analyzed. This fact is even more favourable as a study by the Ministry of Agriculture, on the national rural space, identified the villages with a high tourist potential. By the end of this assessment, the village of Bănița had been include in the category of villages with very high tourist potential, scoring 10 out of 10 points maximum, alongside other villages such as Desești (Maramureș county), Orăștioara de Sus and Boșorod (Hunedoara county), Săsciori (Alba county)<sup>21</sup>. This classification is useful because it allows villages with high tourist potential to benefit from high scores when the local population files fund application projects, with a view to building tourist boarding houses. Boarding houses set up in localities whose potential was rated 7 to 10 points receive an additional 20 points for financial support applications for the creation and modernization of boarding houses and microenterprises in rural areas. Feasible projects are funded by County Bureaus for Rural Development and Fishing Payment as part of the project “Encouraging tourist activity”, included in Direction III “Improving living standards in rural areas and diversifying rural economy”; its general goal is developing tourist activities in rural areas,

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<sup>20</sup> Iancu, F.-C., Necesitatea diversificării economiei rurale ca premisă a dezvoltării așezărilor rurale din Depresiunea Petroșani, International Conference *The Competitiveness of Agrobusiness and Rural Economy in context of World Crisis*, București, 25-26 september 2009, CD Rom, Editura ASE, București, p. 356.

<sup>21</sup> \*\*\* Anexa\_10\_-\_Lista\_comunelor\_cu\_potențial\_turistic\_ M313.pdf, available at [www.apdrp.ro](http://www.apdrp.ro), retrieved on 11.01.2010.



which would contribute to raising the number of jobs and alternative sources of income, and raising the attractiveness of rural areas<sup>22</sup>.

Previously-mentioned actions need to culminate in the education and training of the rural population in terms of assuming responsibilities its new role as hits will involve. Courses are also required to train the local hosts for interacting with tourists and to instill the managerial abilities into accommodation facility owners. Implementing rural tourism will also request tourist planning, to draw a policy matching the local framework; it will also involve identifying the major tourist attractions, the existing tourist accommodation assets and the related tourist services/incentives, the global marketing and promotion strategy.

The development of rural tourism requires a promotion strategy, professionally done and concerned on market segments. Tourist promotion can use the symbolic imagery of the area, the result of the particular socio-cultural characteristic features of the local community: spatial contiguity, social cohesion and interaction reflexivity, a notion of shared aspirations and values. Momârlan village can serve as a scaled-down version of Romanian villages: the local agro-pastoral landscape preserves the features of the Carpathian landscape – the idyllic image of typical Romanian landscape animated by the presence of the shepherd and his ewes (hinting at the traditional craft of the local population). At the same time, intense and efficient promotion in the mass media is necessary – printing and distributing on a large scale – both in the main centers and locally – maps, booklets and guides that should serve to integrate “tourist villages” of depression in a functional, unified system of tourism development and exploitation.

Tourism could also contribute to the socio-economic stability of the rural settlements, by creating and diversifying jobs, which would also benefit unemployed miners and for women, with the extra benefit that the participation of local women in rural tourism development processes can help to shift the balance of economic power in rural households and communities, with often considerable domestic and wider cultural implications<sup>23</sup>. At the same time this could bring about a drop in the out-migration of the young population seeing jobs elsewhere, as tourism is particularly important when it comes to offering job opportunities to young people, who represent twice as much of the labour force in tourism than in the rest of the economy<sup>24</sup>.

Overall, rural tourism offers a foundation for the creation and support of enterprises, especially small-sized ones in rural areas: those directly involved in tourism (public accommodation and food facilities) and those indirectly involved in tourism (farms, food stores)<sup>25</sup>.

The indirect effects of tourism on rural areas include stimulating and developing leisure facilities that would be created with the support of local authorities by resorting to non-reimbursable European funds allocated for the tourism sector and *modernization and extension work on general infrastructure assets*: one such instance is the completion of the Câmpu lui Neag – Herculane route to allow easy access for tourists in-bound from Western Romania.

The strengths of rural tourism in the Petroșani Depression include the use of affordable tariffs for tourism packages that would comprise full-pension accommodation, thus becoming a feature stimulating the tourists' interest. Inclusion of the cultural and historical resources in the tourist circuit and charging admission fees would earn additional profits. In addition, due to the presence of a varied set of tourist resources, rural areas are available for visiting at all times of the year, not subject to seasonal fluctuations, and the enduring nature of customs and traditions

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<sup>22</sup>\*\*\*Agenția de Plăți pentru Dezvoltare Rurală și Pescuit Hunedoara, [http://www.apdrp.ro/content.aspx\\_item=1696&lang=RO](http://www.apdrp.ro/content.aspx_item=1696&lang=RO), retrieved on 11.01.2010.

<sup>23</sup> Kinnard, Hall, 1996, apud Hall, *op. cit.*, 2000, p.40.

<sup>24</sup> Frant, F., Agenda for a sustainable and competitive european tourism, *Journal of Tourism*, no.5, 2008, p. 49.

<sup>25</sup> Surugiu, C, *op. cit.*, pp. 32-33.

could make momârlan villages tourist attractions on important holidays, when tourists can be attracted by means of special packages.

The Petroşani Depression is an ethnographic area that stands out by means of the folk art elements that have turned the momârlan population into a timber civilization that link the work of craftsmen. The development of traditional crafts inside the local communities could lead to an invigoration of the settlements, as it allows for securing jobs for local youth, by creating and preserving small-scale businesses, media promotion of these traditional crafts turns the locality into a rural tourist attraction<sup>26</sup>.

Another side would be that of associating rural tourism with other types and forms of tourism (cultural tourism, eco-tourism, speo-tourism, industrial tourism) due to the diversity of the natural, cultural and historical tourist assets' potential. Among the area's cultural attractions, one can include industrial archeology sites (the coal mines that used to be exploited in certain rural settlements, most of them currently out of service). These might be converted into eco-museums and introduced in the tourist circuit by harnessing the cultural side of mining (mining installation for coal exploitation, transport system, visiting the mine shafts). The role of industrial heritage can draw together tourism, history and conservation in making a contribution to sustainable development<sup>27</sup>.

Developing cultural tourism is also supported by the presence of important historical assets and the ethnographic museums. The Slătinoara village museum is a more recent one and is to be homologated by a mixed team of auditors from the Ministries of Cults and Tourism.

The mountain region, whose varied geologic structure has generated a diversity of landscape types (karst and glacier), is the support space for types of tourism such as eco-tourism and speo-tourism. The environmental importance of the Romanian Carpathians places Romania at the same level as Europe's exotic destinations<sup>28</sup>.

With a view to the sustained development of rural tourism, several activities will be necessary, such as identifying and preparing villagers' households to make them compatible with offering tourist services and authorizing the households with accommodation excess selected to offer such services and the secondary residences. Technical assistance and consultancy from Cultural and Ecological Tourism Association (Antrec) and from other national and international tourism associations and organizations is needed, from this point of view. In order to ensure efficient planning, deciding on a rigorous methodology to identify the tourist resources that would reflect the tourists' expectations and current and future needs is necessary<sup>29</sup>.

## Conclusions

In the past few years, rural settlements in the Petroşani Depression have tended to have a functional profile specific of the tertiary sector, especially represented by tourism and trade activities. The variety and territorial distribution of tourism resources across the entire surface of the rural area of the depression are two defining features that can be best used to develop tourism and at the same time contribute to the preservation and protection of the resources. The development of rural tourism has to be grounded in a well-structured plan, which should allow

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<sup>26</sup> Nişoreanu et al., *Profesii tradiţionale - element al dezvoltării turistice integrate în spaţiul rural*, Amfiteatru Economic, no. 25, 2009, p.69.

<sup>27</sup> Hall, D. R., *Rural Tourism Development in Southeastern Europe: Transition and the Search for Sustainability*, *International Journal of Tourism Research*, Wiley InterScience, no. 6, 2004, p. 168.

<sup>28</sup> Ibidem, p.166.

<sup>29</sup> Mazilu, M., *Planificarea turistică - componentă a procesului de integrare europeană*, *Analele Universităţii din Oradea, Seria Geografie*, Tom XIV, Editura Universităţii din Oradea, 2004, p. 358.

for proper use of tourism resources, without endangering them, so as to prevent tourist activities from becoming a factor of pressure on the rural environment.

In the past few years, a trend has become visible, a rise in the number of rural accommodation; their construction should consider tourism refurbishing norms concerning the use of local architecture features.

The positive effects of rural tourism – from the perspective of the social (population stability), cultural (support and dissemination of local culture), economic (raising income, diversification of available jobs) – recommend it as the economic activity that could contribute to the sustained development of the rural space.

To conclude, the area studied has a distinctive ethno-cultural heritage that ought to be properly harnessed and promoted in order to include the area as an acknowledged component of the national tourism market.

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## Turismul rural în Depresiunea Petroșani – caracteristici actuale și perspective de dezvoltare

### Rezumat

*Acest articol analizează principalele oportunități de dezvoltare a turismului rural, axându-se pe studiul ofertei turistice a așezărilor rurale din Depresiunea Petroșani, precum și pe individualizarea principalelor acțiuni ce vor sta la baza dezvoltării ulterioare a unei astfel de activități. Primele acțiuni de dezvoltare a turismului rural sunt de dată recentă și sunt marcate de crearea unor pensiuni rurale și a unui număr însemnat de reședințe secundare. Dezvoltarea turismului rural reprezintă una dintre modalitățile de diversificare a economiei locale, constituindu-se într-o soluție alternativă a agriculturii de subsistență practică în așezările rurale din cadrul depresiunii.*