

Development of Tourism in the Transalpine Area. Premises and Possibilities

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Abstract

The paper highlights the premises of the revitalization process of tourism: the significance of the "Transalpine" area, its intersection with routes of intense mobility of the population, the numerous natural and anthropogenic elements and their outstanding tourist value, the high rate of anthropization and insertions in the mountainous area caused by a diverse economy specific to mountainous areas, the tourist accessibility to the area, etc. The extremely favorable natural premises, the anthropogenic, ethnographic and ethno-folkloric potential, as well as the development of the north-south and east-west routes facilitate development of tourism in the Transalpine mountainous area. We have highlighted some distinct features of certain tourist models. Thus, there are two ethno-folkloric areas, two main tourist axes (a transversal one and a longitudinal one) and secondary tourist axes (along the mountains summits) as well as two urban areas (Sebeș in the north and Novaci in the south) which attract and guide the tourist flow. The purpose of this approach is aimed at diminishing the transit tourism, as well as diminishing seasonal tourism through the diversification of tourism. This requires coherent national development strategy integrated in the regional context, inter-county joint projects, the involvement of local authorities and tourist agencies as well as substantial funding.

Keywords: *Transalpina, developing models, tourism axes, tourism areas*

Rezumat. Dezvoltarea turistică a spațiului aferent Transalpinei. Premise și posibilități.

Lucrarea evidențiază premisele relansării turismului: importanța "Transalpinei", intersectarea ei cu trasee de intensă mobilitate pendu-latorie a populației, cumulul de elemente naturale și antropice cu valoare turistică deosebită, gradul ridicat de antropizare la periferia nordică și sudică prin așezările străvechi de tip "mărginime", inserțiile antropice în spațiul montan generate de o economie montană diversificată, accesibilitatea fără dificultate pe văi și pe interfluvii domoale care facilitează circulația turistică. Premisele naturale deosebit de favorabile, cumulul de potențial antropic prin plusvaloarea etnografică și etnofolklorică, precum și modernizarea rutelor de legătură pe direcția nord-sud și est-vest susțin dezvoltarea turismului în spațiul montan aferent Transalpinei. Am evidențiat particula-ritățile distincte ale unor modele turistice. Se disting două zone turistice etnofolklorice, două axe turistice principale (una transversală față de masa montană în lungul Transalpinei și alta longitudinală în lungul Văii Lotrului și Jiului de Est), axe turistice secundare (urmăresc culmile montane) precum și două arii urbane la extremități (Sebeș la nord și Novaci la sud) cu rol de atracție și de dirijare a fluxului turistic. Finalitatea acestui demers este aceea a diminuării turismului de tranzit și a dezvoltării turismului de sejur, precum și diminuarea sezonality prin diversificarea formelor de turism. Acestea necesită o strategie coerentă de dezvoltare la nivel național și o integrare în contextul regional, proiecte comune interjudețene, implicarea responsabilă a autorităților locale și a operatorilor în turism și eforturi financiare susținute.

Cuvinte cheie: *Transalpina, modele de dezvoltare, axe turistice, arii turistice*

INTRODUCTION

Known as a historical road linking the provinces of Transylvania and Oltenia, "Transalpina", the Transalpine or national road DN 67 C runs across the width of the Parâng Mountains (fig. 1). The "Transalpine", also known as, the "Kings Road" has always had a crucial strategic, military, socio-cultural and economic importance. It was modernized on the northern sector (Sebeș – Oașa) during the hydro-energetic development of the town of Sebeș (in the 1970s), being an important road of

access toward workers' colonies, toward dams, and hydroelectric power plants (Costea, 2009).

The road entered a rehabilitation project in 2009 which involves several counties, such as Sibiu, Alba, Gorj and Vâlcea, on the whole length between Sebeș and Novaci, and the development and modernization of the most difficult sector Obârșia Lotrului – Cășărie – Pasul Urdele (2145 m) – Rânca has also started. This is a great opportunity for the economic, social and tourism development of the area around this transcarpathian road. The tourism development and revival strategy we recommend for this area is based on the Transalpine's location

potential, on the location of this area, and its territorial integration in the regional and national context, on the evaluation of its natural and anthropogenic potential and tourism infrastructure.

The development of tourism is part of the tourism development policy of the Transalpine and must involve endowment with exploitable and functional facilities (Săgeată, 2008), which could ensure an efficient and durable capitalization of the extant potential, the protection of environment quality and natural resources with a touristic value. Tourist development and zoning of the area is based

on the diversity of and specificity of the touristic potential, the accumulation of touristic potential, the adjustment of tourism forms to the specificity of the area and the need to preserve the natural, cultural, spiritual values and traditions. Thus strategic objectives should be developed to support the tourist optimization and development of the area in conformity with the zonal/ regional strategy. Moreover, a coherent and functional spatial system should be developed with a positive feedback and stability (Cocean et al., 2009).

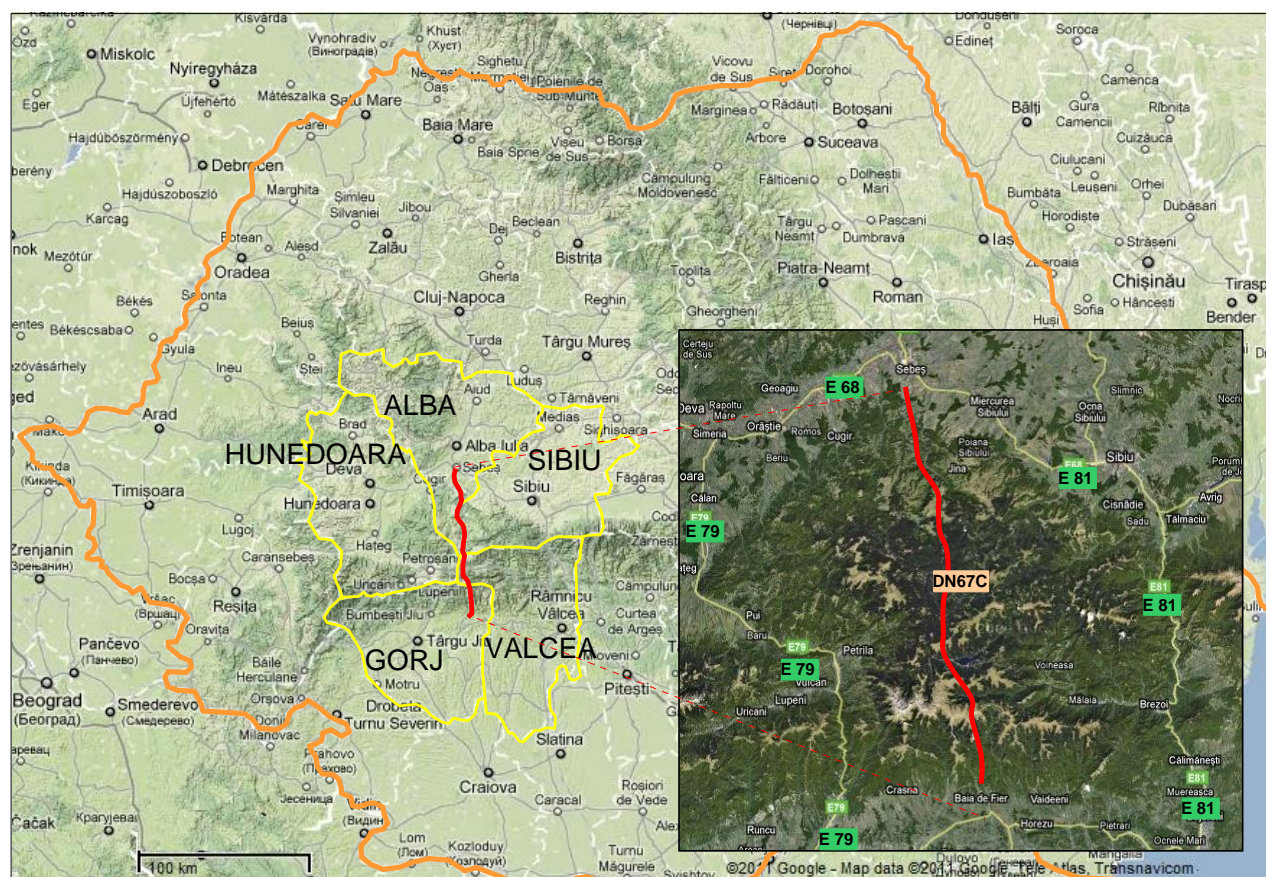


Fig. 1. Geographical position of Transalpine (DN 67 C) in Romania, in the counties of Sibiu, Alba, Vâlcea and Gorj, and in Parâng Mountain Group

DATA AND METHODS

Research methodology was based on two fundamental ideas. On the one hand, the need to emphasize the touristic function of the Transalpine road and to analyze the natural and anthropogenic potential in the relief units crossed by this road and the spatial distribution of attractive elements. On the other hand, the need to develop this touristic space (Erdeli and Istrate, 1996) taking into account the conditioning factors, touristic zoning in relation to attractive elements, types and forms of tourism, connectivity with attraction poles neighboring the

Transalpine, which also direct the tourist flow toward the Transalpine (Ciangă, 1998; 2002).

For the differentiation of the areas of interest and explanation of their different properties we used models as synthetic representations based on concrete terrain observations and logical deduction (Zotic, 2005). These constitute a simplified expression of the territorial situation (Stachoviak, 1973, cited by Mac, 2008) and the many relationships that are established between the elements with tourism potential and making it possible exploitation of space. The models presented are particularly useful compared to the areas of interest and provide significant evidence for this

approach but for the individualization of the analyzed tourist space (Ianoș, 2000). Applying these models to other similar Trans - Carpathian axes, the synthesis of the geographic information at large-scale of analysis and the abstraction allows the development of conceptual models and theorizing (Beaujeu-Garnier and Chabot, 1971; Cocean, 2002) in the tourist organization of geographical space (Berbecaru and Botez, 1977). In this context, Mac (2008) stated that in addition to the cognitive, constructive, logical and systematic functions, the models also have a function in the organization of space (spatial models with a predictive connotation, p. 316).

This study was based on the information collected on site, the analysis of the climatic-tourist potential, the analysis of the distribution of forestry real estate and protected areas; the main aim of the in site collection of data was to record the information related to extant accommodation and tourist facilities; sectorial analysis of spatial distribution and density of human settlements, isolated households and shelters; computer-aided design of tourist potential and zoning maps through topographic map digitization 1:100 000 and GIS spatial analysis; bibliographic research, processing and interpretation of statistic data collected on site and from the county offices of statistics.

DISCUSSIONS

The Transalpine's Tourist Function - Arguments for an Active Transcarpathian Tourist Axis

Built as a military-strategic and trade road the "Transalpine" gradually came to play a significant tourist role. Its attractiveness as tourist anthropogenic objective originates in several attributes (Mac, 1995; Cocean, 1996): *uniqueness* – the highest transcarpathian road (2,145 m in the Urdele Pass); *originality* – as an expression of its geographic position and the number of tourist natural and anthropogenic elements; *age* - the oldest road (101 AD) referred to in maps as part of the "IV Roman strategic corridor"; *size* – it is 148 km long between Sebeș and Novaci and *function* – highly significant from a historical point of view the "Transalpine" has always played an important role in people's mobility and mountainous pastoral economy (Buza, 2000).

In spite of the many qualities mentioned above, the tourist phenomenon is not highly developed along the Transalpine. The main cause is the good accessibility at the periphery of the Parâng Mountains on the valleys of the Olt or Jiu Rivers' tributaries directly from the national roads DN

7/E81 (București- Nădlac through Râmnicu Vâlcea and Sibiu) and DN 66/E79 (Simeria – Hațeg – Petroșani – Filiași). Moreover, the decline of the "Transalpine" as tourist destination was also caused by the opening of the "Transfăgărășan", which turned it into a secondary road for the crossing of the Southern Carpathians.

These drawbacks along with the bad condition of the actual road and the lack of advertisement campaigns made the tourist natural and anthropogenic potential of the area rather insufficiently capitalized. The seasonal character imposed by the mountain climate conditions, tourist infrastructure and its quality, as well as tourists' preferences for destinations directly accessible from the valleys of the Sebeș, the Lotru and the Eastern Jiu have determined the emergence of certain tourist polarization areas (Defert, 1966; Zotic, 2005; Surd et al., 2005):

- polarization areas with peripheral localization - rural settlements in Mărginimea Sibiului (the Outskirts of Sibiu) and the Subcarpathian Oltenia;
- linear polarization areas along the Carpathian valleys - settlements, local-interest resorts and tourist facilities on the valleys of the Sebeș and the Lotru – the Oașa tourist complex, Vidra - Obârșia Lotrului;
- terminal polarization areas – represented by the local resort of Râncea and tourist facilities at Șureanu, Prigoana and Frumoasa.

The extremely favorable natural premises, the anthropogenic potential, the ethnographic and ethnic-folklore value, as well as the modernization of the north-south (Sebeș – Novaci on DN67C) and east-west (Brezoi-Petroșani on DN7A) routes could support the sustainable development of the mountain area of the Transalpine. The accessibility to the mountain area is better than in the case of the Transfăgărășan, due to more accessible slopes and the development of the leveling surfaces. The degree of difficulty is variable. Access is easier on the Sebeș Valley, through the Tărtărau Pass (1,678 m) to Obârșia Lotrului and on the low, large and round interflaves of the Corneșul Mare (1,800 m) – Muntele Măgurii (1,161 m). The most difficult sector is the one on the eastern versant of the Lotrului Valley – La Cășărie, on Ștefanu – Cărbunele summit at the Obârșiile Latoriței toward the Urdele Pass.

The hardness of the rocks, thickness of the alteration crust in the alpine storey and the morphometry of the relief facilitate the development and the modernization of DN 67C at a standard height so that traffic conditions might be optimal.

Nevertheless, the climatic conditions, during the cold season, restrict the access in the high sector and impose a seasonal character to the touristic activities.

Tourism Development Models

The entire geographical area of the Transalpine has a remarkable touristic potential. There are however several possible types of tourist exploitation required by the geographic location, environmental conditions, the value of natural and anthropogenic resources (Ielenicz and Comănescu, 2006), accessibility and distance issues, tourism facilities and tourism demand. Depending on the characteristics of each area, (Carpathian and northern sub-mountainous areas) and the specific features of tourism resources, but also on the connection this road makes between them and the possible common features of these areas, we propose for the Transalpine area a set of tourism development models (Costea, 2002) specific to mountain peaks, mountain depressions and valley corridors, to the area between the mountain and depression and the urban and peri-urban areas.

The Mountain-Peak Model is based on tourism development in a natural environment with an outstanding tourism value (glacial relief, leveling surfaces, mild summits, sightseeing points, panoramas, rare flora and fauna elements). Climate conditions are favorable to hiking tourism in the warm season. If the entire road network is rehabilitated and cleared during the cold season, the mountain area may be developed for winter sports on the southern sector in Râncea, where there are certain insignificant winter sports facilities, and in the northern sector of the Transalpine. Tourism development through this model must be integrated, harmonized with the specific of the temporary human settlements (shelters, folds) in the superior mountain sector or permanent settlements in the northern sector on the erosion surface of Gornovița (Jina, Țonea, Arți, Jidoștina, Loman) and traditional economy. Planning tourism development should support local communities and focus on the conservation of natural heritage, and the ethnic-folkloristic potential related to occupations such as foresting and grazing flocks. The various folklore festivals held in the area each year must be mentioned here as they cause a great mobility in the area and they provide the premises for the development of eco-tourism and rural tourism with pastoral and cultural influences. Climate conditions, geomorphological risks, low accessibility to higher areas and the seasonal character imposed by these factors that cause the dispersion of tourism

activities in time and space, in general exerting a reduced pressure upon natural ecosystems (Buza, 2000, Costea, 2005).

This model facilitates the exploitation of the natural tourism potential of the protected areas around the Transalpine: the Cindrel natural park, the complex nature reserves Iezerele Cindrelului, Iezerul Șureanu, Luncile Prigoanei. Those are not exploited to full capacity, being of great value to scientific tourism only; tourism activities (group tourism, individual tourism, hiking) in such areas cannot be monitored and thus they sometimes have a negative impact. Their tourist exploitation requires involvement of the tourists, local authorities and administrators of the area through management and permanent monitoring measures focused on tourism activities, the development and modernization of tourism infrastructure.

There are already amenities and facilities of interest for tourists in the Râncea area. Here, the peak topoclimatic complex, invigorating fresh air urges to rest and recreation, mountain hiking and winter sports. The duration and the depth of the snow cover (snow even falls in September and remains until May) recommend this area for winter sports. Currently, there are three ski slopes of small and medium difficulty, equipped with lift facilities, one of them equipped with a lighting system (M1). The total length of the slopes is about 1.5 km and the total ski-lift transport capacity is over 1,500 tourists/hr (INCDT, 2003, 2009). Râncea is also a support point for the Parang mountain trails, toward the Obârșia Lotrului. Even though the potential is favorable, the way in which tourist structures are implanted, the chaotic development of the resort and pollution will adversely affect tourism activity (Erdeli and Istrate, 1996). There are forms of aggression and negative impact on the mountain environment both through the type of development and the influx of tourists. Among these we mention issues related to the construction standards for the vacation homes and guest houses (height, position, alignment, distance between buildings, building materials and architectural style), approval of the slopes, water supply, sewerage, waste disposal.

The model of intra-mountainous depression and valley corridors envisages tourism planning based on multiple tourism valences and on older tourism facilities. This is specific to the northern section of the Transalpine on the Sebeș Valley and Obârșia Lotrului where landscape elements (narrow valleys, canyons, depression basins, the Nedeiu, Tau-Bistra, Oașa and Vidra reservoirs, the forest landscape, grassland landscape, etc.) is complemented by the cultural-religious one (holiday homes of Mihail

Sadoveanu, Ionel Pop, the Oașa Monastery, the Monastery of Tetu). The tourism development of the mountain area must consider the development of rural settlements the area belongs to, a functional reorganization and development of related activities to support sustainable mountain tourism and preserve the structure of settlements. Tourism planning and development must also focus on the development of the old resorts in Oașa and Obârșia Lotrului, unsuitable in terms of quality tourism facilities and services and their integration in mountain landscape depression, with minimal impact on the natural environment.

There is a national concern for tourism development in mountain areas *The National Program for Tourism Development "Ski in Romania"*, which provides for the development of ski areas and winter sports in the area called "Poarta Raiului" on the Prigoana, left tributary to the Sebeș and in the Obârșia Lotrului sector (according to Appendix no. 1, Law No 418 /2006).

The attractive natural environment of the Sebeș basin, the clean environment and land ownership resulted in spontaneous development of tourism through private or public initiatives in recent years in areas such as Luncile Prigoanei, Oașa, Luncile Frumoasei. The area "Poarta Raiului" – Șureanu offers potential for developing tourism and tourism planning. The total length of the ski slopes to be opened for tourists is 15.12 km, of which 10.82 km mild slopes and 4.3 km average slopes in the Cugir Valley, the Aușel and the Pătru Peaks, Plaiul Mare. The total area of proposed slopes will be 71.50 ha. Over 70% of their area will be in the alpine area of the Șureanu Mountains at elevations over 1,700 m. The ski slopes will address to amateur tourists, their average slope being 15.1%, i.e. mild slopes. Transport facilities include a gondola system for Plaiul Mare and Valea Cugirului with a capacity of approximate 1,000 people per hour and lift for the Aușelu and the Pătru Peak with an hourly capacity of 900-2,800 people (P.A.T Alba, 2006).

The development of tourism at the old core Obârșia Lotrului will be performed through the development and qualitative improvement of the existing accommodation units, catering units, recreational spaces and creating new ones. In this mountain area, the plans drawn up by INCDT Bucharest (2001, 2003, 2009) provide for development and facilities for winter sports tourism. Across the county, skiing slope has been planned along the junction of DN 7A and Lotru-Tărtăraș and 7 ski slopes located in Mieruțu de Sus, Stâna lui Ștefan, Culmea Cărbunele, which will total about 14 km with a capacity of 10,500 skiers per season.

Tourist transport facilities provided to serve the slopes are 5 lift routes, 2 fixed chairlifts and 3 removable chairlifts, totaling about 9 km in length and a large transport capacity per hour (over 10,000 people) (Simon, 2009).

The development of tourism in the valley corridors is supported by the rural settlements in the Sebeș Valley: Șugag, Dobra, Mărtinie, Tău Bistra, Laz which enjoy an unaltered tourism potential, with historical (Dacian and peasants' fortresses - Căpâlna, Laz, Săsciori), folkloristic valences, traditional crafts and arts (painting on glass in Laz, wooden carving in Șugag, fulling mills and whirlpools on the Dobra and the Mărtinie valleys). They allow the development of leisure tourism, returning to nature and traditions and ensure the preservation of natural and traditional values, and the diversification of recreational activities through combining winter sports holidays with schools of painting, sculpture, traditional arts. Valley settlements are also the starting points for mountain tourism and points of support for healthcare, supply, communication for holiday homes and mountain chalets located in the area.

The contact-area model overlaps the two alignments of settlements at the extremities of the Transalpine which are also representative of our country folk regions: in the north – "Marginimea Sibiului" (Cocean, 2009), and in the south "Oltenia Subcarpatica". There is a joint tourism profile arising from the economic profile of these settlements: agro-tourism, pastoral (Poiana, Jina, Vaideeni, Poienari, Hirișești), fruit, crops, cultural-historical and religious (Săliște, Horezu, Crasna, Polovragi), crafts (Horezu, Baia de Fier, Șugag, Dobra, Răchita) and folk art (Săsciori, Horezu, Săliște etc.). Traditional architecture, customs, traditions were preserved almost unaltered here and natural potential adds value.

We should also mention the natural potential of the landscape: hilly peaks easily accessible, depressions, canyons (Cheile Galbenului, Cheile Oltețului), caves (Polovragi, Peștera Muierii) and climatic potential for tourism (sedative-neutral climate), offering ambiance, thermal comfort, air-therapy, heliotherapy that can strengthen the body. This is also the main reason for locating in this area and development of land-school camps, guesthouses and agro-tourism farms and programs of the National Association for Rural, Ecological and Cultural Tourism with direct involvement of local communities and government support.

This model allows the conservation of the natural, cultural and traditional values and is based on functional complementarity of rural settlements

and retraining of rural residents by developing rural tourism, agro-tourism, eco-tourism and religious tourism. Rural settlements in the area of the Sub-Carpathian Oltenia, and even those in Mărginimea Sibiului are facing problems related to internal migration to urban areas, with depopulation of villages and lay-offs and unemployment. The development of tourism can provide a viable alternative to the local population, economic and professional reorientation, so that people remain in their communities of origin, and income from which tourism activities may contribute directly to the development of the local community.

The model allows the development of long-term and short-term organized tourism given the proximity of tourist accommodation structures: motels, inns, private houses, accommodation in the monasteries (Horezu, Polovragi), guesthouses, or even the existence of a second home for the population residing in urban areas. These settlements also support transit toward to the high the Parâng Mountains either on the Transalpine or the valleys which fragment the mountain units. These settlements are located on heavy traffic routes or near tourist transit axes that accompany national roads DN 7 (Sibiu - Sebeş - Deva), DN 67 (Rm. Vâlcea – Tg. Jiu), DN 67 C (Sebeş – Novaci).

The urban and peri-urban model overlaps polarizing urban nuclei in the depression mountainous area in the north (the town of Sebeş and its surrounding settlements Petreşti and Lancrăm) and the south depression area (the town of Novaci and the settlements Berceşti, Pociovaliştea, Siteşti, Hiriseşti, Baia de Fier, Cernădia). They have cultural and historical value, architectural monuments (Sebeş octagonal tower) and art, churches (Evangelical Lutheran Gothic Church in Sebeş), museums (Sebeş Municipal Museum in the Zapolya's House), memorial houses (Franz Binder in Sebeş, the "Lucian Blaga" memorial house in Lancrăm).

Tourist services in Sebeş are more complex than along the Transalpine, the accommodation infrastructure and catering are dominated by hotels (Sebeş), motels (Dacia) and restaurants. Tourist facilities address tourists yearning for an active holiday. Cultural tourism is predominant, but also tourism leisure developed on the basis of attractive spare-time offers: walks in the parks, skating, bowling, tennis.

The settlements enjoy a diversified economy to support and stimulate the development of tourism activities: Sebeş - wood processing industry, textile industry, leather, Petreşti - paper processing

industry, Lancrăm - crops, Novaci și Baia de Fier - wood processing, animal husbandry, Cernădia - orchards. Although the Novaci settlement became a city in 1968, its cultural profile remains rural, a fact that can be seen in the settlement structure and architecture, especially in the villages falling within the city administration.

Specific architecture and traditional technique of countryside households in mountain areas, artistic wood processing plants, dairy or wool coexist with modern buildings. The character and tradition of this area supported the preservation of local crafts such as hand-woven (clothes, towels), artistic woodwork. They also constitute important nodes in the flow of tourists through their position on national and international transit corridors. At the same time they are also areas of support and management of tourist flows to the Parâng Mountains.

Tourism development zones and axes - development goals

Planning and development of mountain tourism in the mountain area along DN67 C cannot be achieved without a coherent and integrated national development strategy. Items detailed above facilitate the spatial differentiation of tourist areas and tourist traffic axes relative to the natural, social, economic factors and infrastructure communication routes. Thus, there are:

- two areas of ethnic-folklorist interest "Mărginimea Sibiului" in the north and "Subcarpathian Oltenia" in the south (Fig. 2);
- two main tourist axes: a transversal one to the mountain mass along the Transalpine and a longitudinal axis to the mountain along the Lotru and the Eastern Jiu Valley;
- secondary axes following the mountain peaks linking the main axes and ski resorts defined as terminal nuclei (Păltiniș, Parâng);
- two urban areas (Sebeş in the north and Novaci in the south) which play the role of attraction and management of tourist flows.

The aim of this approach is to reduce transit tourism and develop holiday tourism and reduce seasonality through diversification. This is possible but only through a coherent tourism development strategy based on objectives and targets, the phasing of their implementation. Particularly important is the institutional cooperation and developing joint regional / local / inter-county projects, responsible involvement of local authorities and tour operators and financial support for these projects.

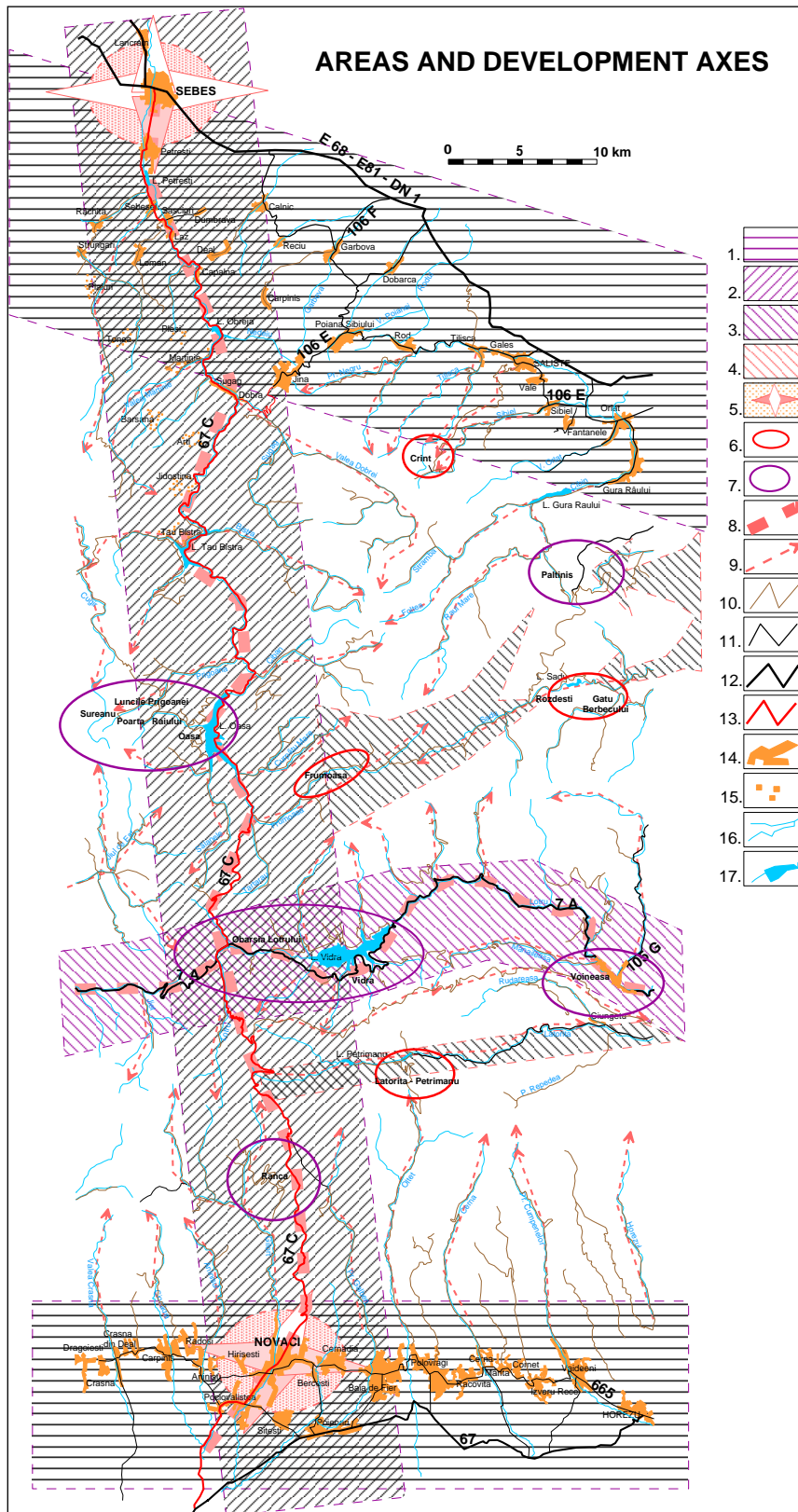


Fig. 2 Areas and development axes of Transalpina

1. Tourist areas;
2. Main transverse tourist axis (N-S);
3. Main longitudinal tourist axis (E-V);
4. Secondary tourist axes;
5. Tourist-flow attraction and dispersion of urban areas;
6. Mountain resorts to be established;
7. New mountain resorts to set;
8. Existing mountain resorts to be extended and modernized;
9. Tourist transit corridor;
10. Mountain tourism support corridor;
11. Local and forest roads;
12. County roads and National roads;
13. DN 67 C national road, the "Transalpine";
14. Human settlements;
15. Scattered villages;
16. Hydro-graphic network;
17. Reservoirs

The tourism development strategy should be based on the requirements for sustainable development of the Transalpine area and should include specific objectives, which could ensure tourism functionality and optimize the human - environment relationship, namely tourist - tourism

potential - leverage - tourist satisfaction - support capacity.

In this respect we developed some objectives:
 – *Connectivity with neighboring territorial systems and intraterritorial connectivity*

The development of tourism in an area depends on the technical infrastructure, i.e. road and rail

access routes. Geographical location of urban centers, of Mărginimea Sibiului and the Subcarpathian Oltenian Region in the area closest to the national and international ways of communication are premises for the development of tourism. Yet, there are differences between the two ends of the Transalpine. Sebeș is connected directly on a distance of 15-65 km to polarizing urban centers (Sibiu, Alba Iulia, Deva) or of the same category (Săliște, Orăștie), and areas of southern Transylvania through the infrastructure for access to the trans-European IV corridor, through railway (segment of Bucharest - Curtici railway line) and by air through the airport near Sibiu.

Mărginimea Sibiului is better connected than the Sub-Carpathian Oltenia given its position at a distance of 10 to 20 km from these ways of communication and a dense network of county roads which reduce the distance between the centers and destination settlements in Mărginimea Sibiului. The connectivity of the urban center and Sub-Carpathian Oltenia at the southern extremity of the Transalpine with superior (on a distance of 45 - 75 km from Târgu Jiu and Râmnicu Vâlcea) or similar territorial systems (a distance of 20 - 40 km from Horezu and Bumbești-Jiu) is done indirectly through DN 67 and through a network of county roads which are in poor condition and poorly modernized.

Connectivity is ensured on DN 67C recently modernized on almost its entire length, on DN 7A and local access roads which are in poor condition, not modernized stopping at the limit of the built-up areas. From here, access to the mountain areas of the Transalpine is on forest roads, tourist routes and pastoral roads. The decongestion of the tourist traffic flow and improving the connectivity of peri-Carpathian and trans-Carpathian require infrastructure development, rehabilitation and upgrading of national roads to European and international standards. Optimizing internal connectivity requires the development, rehabilitation and upgrading of county (Dobra – Poiana Sibiului, Cindrel – Valea Frumoasei – Oașa, Petrimanu – Curmătura Oltețului – Cheile Oltețului) and communal roads (linking the Sebeș Valley to Păltiniș through Valea Dobrei or Valea Bistrei toward Strâmba – Foltea - Păltiniș) and their connection to the national network represented by the DN 67C and DN 7A.

– *Sustainable Reevaluation of Natural Heritage and the Conservation of Biodiversity and Landscape.*

Tourism reevaluation of a region must take into account the variety of natural and human resources

and their valences esthetic, recreational, educational, scientific valences and uniqueness of certain resources. Tourist facilities and activities along the Transalpine have a differential impact on the natural environment, which stems from the degree of development and size of tourist flow.

Tourism in Protected Areas - The Cindrel Natural Park, wildlife reserves Iezerle Cindrelului, La Grumaji, Prigoanei Meadows (the Sebeș basin), geological monuments (Pinteni from the Coasta Jinei, Masa Jidovului, Oul Arșiței etc.) requires harmonization of the conservation and protection activities with economic and social actions. Natural protected areas constitute an offer whose complexity and diversity arises from the interaction of natural factors that have contributed to their establishment and the share of each natural element.

Tourism facilities in these areas are just forest huts, shelters (Cindrel), tourist routes on paths precisely to avoid strong impact. Uncontrolled access, the influx of tourists in summer, ignoring laws in force and signs warning against activities prohibited in such area (if any) and failure to enforce penalties for violation of operating rules cause great damage to the natural condition of these sites. Evidence of damage are hearths of fire found in the Cindrel natural park or mountain area along the Transalpine, garbage scattered around and vegetation damage by tearing or cutting. Such events are also found in natural areas with difficult access, such as those in the Cindrel, the Lotrului and the Latorița Mountains, where within the glacier or along tourist trails there are fire hearths, shelters of cut off vegetation, waste (bags, cans, bottles, paper) dropped around by tourists.

Protection and conservation of environmental quality can be ensured by proper fitting of the territory with tourist facilities to be integrated into the landscape, un-pollution (visually, acoustically, chemically, etc.). Legal regulations for construction/development and environmental protection are required, as well as taking concrete measures to collect, store and manage the waste, construction and verification by authorized institutions.

Tourism planning must consider compliance with natural landscapes, conservation of flora and fauna and natural habitats. In this respect several measures are required: to develop forest management plans and protected areas management and monitoring of steps taken, establish effective measures for reevaluation and protection, harmonization of planning and tourism activities with functional zoning of protected areas, identification and delineation of other areas in terms of valuable natural resources and landscape. We

refer in particular to new tourist facilities which are to be built in the Frumoasa – Cindrel and the Șureanu – Plaiul Mare requiring control measures in terms of land use changes, deforestation, changing slope configuration, architecture, constructions to minimize human impact (Costea, 2005).

– *Sustainable Reevaluation of Anthropogenic Tourism Heritage and Preservation of Cultural and Traditional Values*

Both ethnographic and ethnic-folkloristic area in the northern and southern part of the Transalpine, Mărginimea Sibiului and Sub-Carpathian Oltenia, are famous not only for their rich tradition of folk crafts, especially pottery, painting on glass, woodworking, furrier's trade, milk and wool processing, but also for its specific costumes (black and white, smoothness of ornamental elements) and folk architecture, household organization, decorating houses. Traditional events related to pastoral activities and seasons have always taken place there, since ancient times. Their calendar was particularly rich and varied, including meetings, group work, evenings, *nedei* and festivals. The *nedei*, which appeared due to the need of transhumance shepherds meeting one another, were trade fairs, in which the "cheese sharing" took place as well as other folklore events common to both areas. Although modernization and urbanization of rural space (Surd et al., 2005; Cocean, 2009) are processes that affect to some extent rural settlements, villages, however, this culture and tradition of craftsmanship still exist in Mărginimea Sibiului. The two areas have a significant history and archaeological sites revealed historical monuments from the 2nd, 3rd, 13th to 19th centuries, as well as religious and cultural monuments. All these are priceless values that help define the regional identity of the inhabitants, bring them together and shape a strong sense of belonging to the community.

In these circumstances, there are several top priorities which should be considered: protection and sustainable exploitation of historical monuments, religious monuments, traditional architectural elements, the memorial houses, techniques and crafts and popular events. We recommend the development of thematic tourism routes (religious, pastoral - "Sheep Road", historical - Dacian, peasant fortresses and fortifications, rural and urban households and ensembles), organizing exhibitions, setting up new museums, cultural festivals (the "Lucian Blaga" festival in Sebeș) and traditional art, conferences on these issues and joint projects involving local authorities, the Ministry of

Culture, Ministry of Tourism and Regional Development.

– *Increasing Competitiveness in Tourism by Increasing the Quality of Tourist Facilities and Services*

Tourist reception is the technical and material support of activities of interest. Size, distribution in space and their quality directly affects the movement of tourists and tourists' satisfaction level. Accommodation is a basic tourism facility and indicates the degree of response of that area to tourism demand (Săgeată, 2008). The quality of tourist services should be as important as attractiveness. Although the geographic area along the Transalpine, especially the mountain area was developed as a result of the development of mountain tourism, hiking and winter sports, accommodation facilities have not been developed to match the extant potential. Old structures on the Sebeș Valley and the Obârșia Lotrului are largely obsolete and have no ability or the status to ensure reevaluation of tourism potential and meet the tourists' requirements. The research undertaken in site and the inventory of the accommodation facilities (Table 1) indicate the fact that there are about 224 accommodation units with a total of 3,460 beds, unevenly distributed in the area and of different types and equipment. In the mountain area tourist guesthouses and mountain chalets prevail. Many units are still not classified (1,084) of which over 30% are places in unclassified guesthouses in Săsciori, Șugag, Petresti and Râncea (331 places).

Human settlements in the northern sector of the Transalpine are better equipped unlike the Carpathian area facilities, their accommodation capacity exceeding 146 units totaling more than 2,125 places. 224 of them are beds in hotels and motels, and 1,089 places in guesthouses. In the southern part of the Transalpine, the number of accommodation places is lower (1,300 seats), of which 60.3% represent the accommodation capacity of the Râncea resort.

The area is considered poor in terms of catering services and has no leisure facilities exclusively dedicated to tourism, with the exception of the urban settlements and the Râncea resort. Most facilities are made for the purpose of recreation for locals, but could be used by tourists.

Recreational opportunities representative in the analyzed area are: tourist trips on marked and unmarked trails dedicated to mountain hiking, recreational boating and sport fishing in the reservoirs of Oașa, Tău Bistra, Nedeiu, Petrești, Canciu, Vidra, and organizing sporting events in

facilities (sports grounds, stadiums), development of picnic places along the Transalpine.

Table 1 Accommodation capacity along the Transalpine

| No | Administrative-territorial unit | Hotel/ places | Motel/ places | Guesthouses /places | Chalets/ places | Camps/ Places | Other units/places | Total units/ total places |
|-----|---------------------------------|---------------|---------------|---------------------|-----------------|---------------|--------------------|---------------------------|
| 1. | Sebeş | 4/164 | 1/50 | 1/20 | | | 1/23 | 7/257 |
| 2. | Sălişte | - | 2 | 42/598 | 2/ ? | 2/360 | | 48/> 1000 |
| 3. | Miercurea Sibiului | 1/30 | 1/20 | - | - | | | 2/50 |
| 4. | Cugir | 1 | - | 3/34 | 2/58 | | | 6/> 100 |
| 5. | Gura Râului | 1/30 | - | 18/260 | 35/- | - | 1/4 | 61/>300 |
| 6. | Orlat | - | - | 5/56 | - | - | | 5/56 |
| 7. | Jina | - | - | 1/14 | 1 | - | | 2/>14 |
| 8. | Poiana Sibiului | - | - | 1/10 | - | - | | 1/10 |
| 9. | Tilişca | - | - | 3/36 | - | - | | 3/36 |
| 10. | Şugag | - | - | 1/31 | 4/144 | 1/60 | 1/20 | 7/255 |
| 11. | Săsciori | | | 2/20 | | | | 2/20 |
| 12. | Petreşti | | | 1/10 | | | 1/17 | 2/27 |
| 13. | Novaci | - | - | 6/66 | | | 1/8 | 7/74 |
| 14. | Horezu | 1/54 | | 12/168 | | | | 13/222 |
| 15. | Rânca | 2/61 | | 18/307 | 11/160 | | 18/256 | 49/784 |
| 16. | Baia de Fier | | | 6/96 | 1/12 | | 4/48 | 11/156 |
| 17. | Crasna | | | 1/24 | | | | 1/24 |
| 18. | Polovragi | | | 2/40 | | | | 2/40 |
| 19. | Obârşia Lotrului | | | | 1/35 | | | 1/35 |
| 20. | Total | 10/339 | 4/70 | 123/1846 | 57/409 | 3/420 | 27/376 | 224/3460 |

Source: Data collected on site in 2008

Tourism potential value of this transcarpathian road can be reevaluated by modernizing and rehabilitating the existing structures and bringing them to national and international standards (Şureanu, Oaşa, Obârşia Lotrului – Vidra), setting up new resorts (Frumoasa, Prigoana – Plaiul Mare) and supplement the existing ones (Rânca, Şureanu), integrating holiday homes in themed tours, functional reorganization of hunting cottages, the forest cantons and forest lodges, rehabilitation and modernization of existing camps and establishment of new camps and their integration in formative tours (sculpture, painting, traditional activities, tourist orientation, winter sports camps, etc.).

One should consider planning new motels and camping sites at both ends of the Transalpine, increasing the number of tourist guesthouses, the establishment of private (pastoral) farms, integrating sheepfolds and shelters into agro-tourism activities and tours. Particular emphasis should be given to the integration of buildings into the landscape, promotion of traditional construction styles and interior design specific to Mărginimea Sibiului. It is also necessary to diversify tourism services and promotion of traditional gastronomic products of the region.

- *Consistent and diversified promotion* aims to create an image of the natural and human potential along the Transalpine and its reevaluation possibilities. Currently there are no large-scale marketing campaigns promoting the area, save for individual advertisements made by private entrepreneurs and owners of guesthouses. In this respect, a joint effort is required inter-institutional collaboration involving communities and local administrations on whose territory the Transalpine unfolds, educational and research institutions working in the field of environmental tourism, travel agencies etc. Joint actions of these institutions should have a priority focus on defining the Transalpine as a regional brand and on networking activities to support it (Stăncioiu et al., 2009). Promotional materials must be consistent and of high quality, both in Romanian and other international languages (posters, brochures, information, catalogs of products and services, maps, calendars of events, etc.).

The dissemination of promotional materials can be performed mainly through local and national tourist information centers, tourism offices, and in the foreign cities that are twinned with the settlements along the Transalpine. Improving the quality of accommodation facilities and the

diversification of offers facilitate integration of tourist packages and county tourist tours in national promotion programs and participation in national tourism fairs. Mountain tours could be organized for national tour operators, travel agencies and journalists. An important role in supporting advertising activities is played by the media and the Internet by creating new sites and establishing links among existing web sites.

CONCLUSION

The extremely valuable tourism potential is a strong argument for the development of the Transalpine area. Tourism reevaluation of this area requires first the rehabilitation of the road infrastructure between Sebeș and Novaci. Planning and development of tourism must be in compliance with a set of principles of organization and operation, which harmonize tourism activity with the natural conditions in the mountain areas in particular with the management and zoning of protected areas, consistent with socio-economic and cultural conditions of the human settlements and traditional features of local communities concerned.

The inclusion in national and even international travel circuit, however, requires meeting requirements for approval of resorts, expanding and equipping to meet the international standards of accommodation establishments in mountain resorts, modernization and inclusion of additional tourism structures, and extending the tourist routes properly marked and refurbishment of existing markings, warning signs, etc.

Developing and equipping tourist facilities with functional equipment would support extending the tourist season, the diversification of tourism and development of holiday tourism. Mobilizing local resources, initiating strategic planning processes, involving local communities are necessary for successful and durable tourism development. Reevaluation of the landscape and traditional and cultural potential in the mountain and piedmont area along the Transalpine may bring benefits to local communities and the region and may support local economic recovery. The applicability, importance, and effectiveness of tourism planning and exploitation in the mountain area along the Transalpine require considerable financial effort and depend on the connection of this area to the larger context and integration into national development plans and programs. Tourism development can be achieved through private investment, with state capital and European funds, but the most important support is stability and adhering to international norms and quality

standards as well as the enforcement of legislation which facilitates economic development.

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