

# The Ethno-creativity in the Pilot Centers in Romania and their Role in the Development of Cultural Tourism and the Educational Process

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## Abstract

The study aims to assess the role of ethno-creativity in the development of the local economy. Ethno-creative tourism comes in the support of those who want to discover the cultural values of certain ethnic groups by the usage of practices and products that create the sensation of crossing beyond space and time, or new links with traditional ethno-cultural elements through effective participation and learning. The geographical space of Romania has been analyzed using two pilot centers, where ethnicities can be identified in points of space, together with their creative possibilities and values, in an attempt to develop an ethno-cultural tourism. The research has been based on economical data at the level of the NEAC code- Classification of the activities in the national economy, as well as on data obtained from having confronted some representative samples: creative artists, tourists and resident population, analyzed by statistical methods. The partial results obtained underline the impact of this type of development, which may contribute to the increase of the complexity of the functional territorial systems where this type of tourism might implement. Cultural tourism based on creativity and traditional values contributes to the appearance of the economic multiplication effects. The development of the ethno-creative tourism may mean creating jobs within a period of economic crisis and relative social crisis. It can also be considered as a factor of cultural identity popularization, which plays an important role in promoting cultural diversity.

**Keywords:** *tourism, creativity, ethnicity, culture, economy, cultural diversity*

## Etnocreativitatea în centrele pilot din România și rolul lor în dezvoltarea turismului cultural și în procesul educațional

**Rezumat.** Studiul își propune să evalueze rolul etno-creativității în dezvoltarea economiei locale. Turismul etno-creativ vine în sprijinul celor care doresc să descopere valorile culturale ale unui anumit grup etnic, experimentând și folosind produsele specifice, pentru a putea depăși anumite bariere de spațiu și timp, sau pentru a crea noi legături cu elementele etno-culturale tradiționale prin participare efectivă și învățare. Spațiul geografic românesc a fost analizat folosind două centre pilot, unde minoritățile etnice pot fi ușor identificate spațial, împreună cu posibilitățile și valorile lor culturale, în încercarea de a dezvolta turismul etno-cultural. Cercetarea s-a desfășurat ținând cont de datele economice la nivelul clasificării codurilor CAEN, precum și de cele obținute în urma analizării unor eșantioane reprezentative, formate din artiști, turiști și populația locală, utilizând metode statistice. Rezultatele parțiale obținute subliniază impactul acestei direcții de dezvoltare, care ar putea duce la creșterea complexității funcționale a sistemului teritorial unde ar putea fi implementat acest tip de turism. Turismul cultural bazat pe creativitate și valori tradiționale contribuie la apariția unor efecte economice multiplicatoare. Dezvoltarea turismului etnocreativ poate însemna crearea unor locuri de muncă într-o perioadă de criză economică și relativă criză socială. Ar putea fi, de asemenea, considerat un factor de popularizare a identității culturale, ce are un rol important în promovarea diversității culturale.

**Cuvinte-cheie:** *turism, creativitate, etnie, cultură, economie, diversitate culturală*

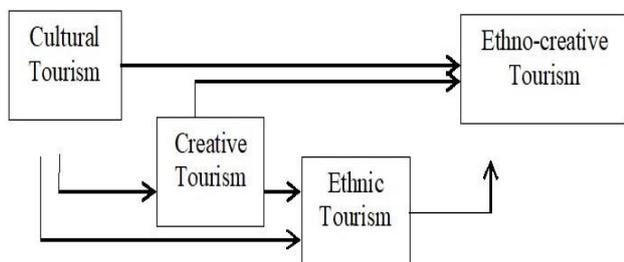
## Introduction

Tourism activity is recorded with a slight growth from one year to another, and incomes from tourism have an oscillating evolution, with slightly increasing tendency. In terms of profits from tourism activity in Romania, it is barely profiled and with noticeable oscillations of upward and downward evolution. The competitiveness of tourism is clearly questionable. Along the last century and, especially in recent decades, urbanization and especially globalization trend have mainly "alienated" man from the local traditions. Tourism has provided the population the recreative form needed at any moment, in all its forms. Cultural tourism has

participated in a great measure to the satisfaction of knowledge, but in the form of monitoring and visualization or visioning (Peptenatu et al., 2012; Pintilii et al., 2011; Young, 2017, Bădiță et al., 2015, Popescu et al., 2014, Popescu and Bădiță, 2011). Many authors consider creative economies as generating functional complexity and, implicitly, growth of local economies. The creative resident artists can positively or negatively perceive the tourist flow oriented in this sense (Teodorescu et al., 2016). Their attitude is often influenced by the creative orientation of the artists.

The creative experience relies on a number of reasons and motivations; some might be inner reflections while others could be external interactions of tourists. It is important to identify

and distinguish groups of creative tourists in order to differently provide what they want to discover, by themselves. Thus, the tourism activity is enabled to bring an added value (Ory and Pazos, 2008) in a particular geographic area. Creative tourism can be more attractive and interesting if it can provide the elements specific for an ethnicity, and as a consequence, the educative tourism (Vargas del Río, 2015; Loghin et al., 2017) is one of the forms which you might find here quite well, as well as an openness to other forms of tourism (Vargas del Río, 2013). In a geographical space where many ethnicities have been living for centuries, it is necessary to know their cultural traditions and values (Fig. 1). The culture of each ethnic group must be understood as a symbolic web (Geertz, 1989), in a process of change and intermingling with those ones it has interacted with (Canclini, 2008).



**Fig. 1: Ethno-creative tourism Scheme**

It can provide traditional and folkloric events, gastronomy, popular festivities and celebrations, music, dance, myths, topical stories, crafts and beliefs, in a direct form (Sales et al., 2014), so that anyone could understand the lifestyle and culture specific to each ethnic group.

## Methods

This study proposes the analysis of two Gypsies communities from Romania for 4 years, between 2013-2016, within the project: "REVEALING THE IDENTITY OF CULTURAL LANDSCAPES SPECIFIC TO ROMANIA IN RELATION TO EUROPEAN IDENTITY" by which aims, on the first hand - to facilitate access to the cultural values of the ethnic groups existing within the Romanian territory, and on the other hand, to provide opportunities or alternative work, and consequently the material earnings of these ethnic communities, as well as of other categories (Wu, 2014) in specific conditions and under economic crisis circumstances. Thus, for this study there can be monitored the partial results of the implementation of tourist activities in two communities belonging to the Gypsy ethnicity, each one with a cultural landscape particularized by specific activities: one consisting of the basic activity of woodworking, and the other dealing with pottery clay processing and ceramic vessels manufacture for

household usage, as well as the production of ceramic bricks or blocks. Besides these basic activities, specific cuisine art and traditional music get full attention of this study.

- Community of Gypsies from Sirineasa - woodworking
- Community of Gypsies from Oboga - pottery clay processing and manufacture of ceramic vessels and blocks.

As working method, the Scout method was mainly used. Participation in Scout groups is given by the desire of social interaction in addition to learning by playing. In this context, training courses are part of an educational project, mainly oriented towards character development, social-, cultural-, historical consciousness and environmental awareness of young people (Costa H. et al., 2014).

This method has been applied in each of the four years proposed, for the same sample, and for a new sample, the groups being children aged between 10-14 years, by watching the behavior and the results, each aiming at pursuing school curriculum topics and analyzing the attitudes of the groups and the involvement of the local Gypsy community in the process. In this way, the results could have two directions: getting acquainted directly with the theoretical and practical concepts acquired during the courses, and discovering the cultural values), in this case of the Gypsy ethnic group, for which there is quite a big reluctance in terms of communication and possibilities of participating in the educational process. One can see the results from one group to another, with their clear desire to "learn by playing" by the interaction with the community and the wish to see new places and people. Considering the profile of the group of young people, it is quite easy to track the attitudinal changes in terms of the Gypsy culture and their crafts, so the method has perfect applicability. The shortcomings of having applied the method consist of the medium and long term interacting possibilities. The educational tourism in this case is a tool for stimulating creativity and interpersonal relationship, while the segment selected for analysis – the creative culture of an ethnicity, is very adequate.

The data can be obtained through a questionnaire, which hyphens some of the aspects that could lead to difference of opinions related to the cultural values of Gypsies, on the one hand, and to any incomes generated by their activities, on the other hand. Those interested in the development of such tourism, as business or way of working, are the ethnical local people. In order to track their activity, their perception regarding their involvement in the productive activity and their responsiveness in terms of inter- social relationship, it is necessary the application of direct investigations. The development of this economical branch has been conceived as a

real way to get material earnings, to involve in the local economy, the Gypsy population which is either unemployed, or lacks an educational level that might enable them to work in other domains. In this way, they can work, earn their existence, without being necessarily conditioned by an extra- education. They should emphasize what they know, through their culture. By the administrative and legislative functioning measures, it leads to the involvement of the entire local community, regardless of ethnicity.

**Table 1. All economical assets existing in the territorial system of Șirineasa and Oboga at NEAC code-level (National Classification of Economic Activities)**

NEAC Code	SIRINEASA	NEAC Code	OBOGA
130	Growing seed	124	Growing of Pome fruits and stone
141	Raising of dairy cattle	149	Raising of other animals
161	Support activities for crop production	210	Silviculture and other forestry activities
220	Forest exploitation	4120	Construction works of residential and non-residential
1399	Manufacture of other textiles	4339	Other finishing works
1412	Manufacture of workwear	4663	Wholesale of machinery for mining and construction
1621	Manufacture of veneer sheets and wood panels	4673	Wholesale of wood and construction materials and plumbing and heating equipment
2030	Manufacture of paints, varnishes, printing ink and mastics	4711	Retail in non-specialized stores with predominant sale of food, beverages and tobacco
2593	Manufacture of wire; production chain and springs	4719	Retail in non-specialized stores with non-food predominating sale
4120	Construction works of residential and non-residential	4730	Retail sale of automotive fuel in specialized stores
4332	Joinery and carpentry	4941	Road transport
4621	Wholesale of grain, seeds, feeds and unmanufactured tobacco	5630	Nightlife and beverage serving activities
4677	Wholesale of waste and scrap	6619	Activities auxiliary to financial intermediation except insurance and pension funding
4711	Retail in non-specialized stores with predominating sale of food, beverages and	Data source: UB1375 / BorgDesign project	

	tobacco	
4719	Retail in non-specialized stores with non-food	
4719	Retail in non-specialized stores with non-food predominating sale	

It is necessary to analyze each community taken as a pilot- locality; Șirineasa settlement is situated approximately in the central area of Vâlcea county, at 27 Km distance from the city of Râmnicu Vâlcea and around 30 Km from the municipalities of Drăgășani and Horezu, with a rich history and with monuments and traditions that enter the local tourist circuits, the most important of which being the Oromului Church, which is a UNESCO monument, and the school of Șirineasa, dating since 1890, which has been moved to the Village Museum in Bujoreni. These attractions, as well as the creative values of ethnic Gypsies, may create a new tourist destination on the map of Oltenia region and Romania.

Oboga locality is positioned in the west of Olt County, at a distance of 32 km from the town of Slatina, and at 7 km distance from Balș, the nearest town. The settlement has a long history, dating from medieval times, according to the documentary evidence. An ancient settlement of potters, Oboga is present in historical documents dating since 1590, while the villages it contains date from the twelfth century. There are few local pottery artisans nowadays who continue practicing pottery crafting art. Working the clay is taken since the nineteenth century, initially being used for bricks, then ceramic blocks, and nowadays also for vessels used in household by the ethnic Gypsies who have settled here since the fifteenth century. Gypsies here are known mainly as popular musicians, while less as potters, but after 1989, many of them have dwelt themselves upon this activity considered by them as economically advantageous.

### **CREATIVE ETHNICITIES AND THEIR VALUES**

#### ***The history of the Gypsy ethnicity in Romania and cultural involvement***

In the context of analyzing the cultural values of the Gypsy ethnicity in the two communities, Șirineasa and Oboga, both centers where cultural values continue to exist unaltered and, that can be presented as authentic cultural property. To be properly understood, traditions and occupations of different population groups need to be analyzed in every historical period, in order to track the social

and cultural changes occurred. Romania has passed through such historical periods in which the political regimes have had major impacts on the cultural values characteristic of all ethnic groups, including periods when a cultural leveling, a cultural identity nullification was attempted. This only reinforces the desire of maintaining, preserving the cultural values and presentation them nowadays, into a more visible form to those interested in discovering them, displaying during the presentation all the stages by which they underwent major mutations, on the purpose of persuading by the "willingness to preserve culture".

Thus, the Gypsies' culture within the Romanian space is related to the first document proof dating from the late 14<sup>th</sup> century. Since the 15<sup>th</sup> century, the Gypsies are mentioned in the historical documents, when referring to the churches and monasteries which used to have "Gypsy slaves", whom we find specified as such. Dating from the same century, there are also written proofs of the existence of the Gypsies in the other provinces of Romania as well, while the most frequently mentioned in the historical documents are in Transylvania between the years 1390 and 1406, and in Moldova between 1410 and 1435. The presence of Gypsies within Romanian space is clear since the period of direct links with the Byzantine world. During the communist era, Gypsies suffer major social and demographic processes. After the political events that Romania has passed since 1989, there were recorded at each ethnic group level, including Gypsies', important social mobility phenomena; yet, no cultural changes of this group have been registered.

The territorial distribution of this ethnic group is quite uniform, and there are small concentration points near large cities or in medium-sized urban centers. The most important communities are those located in relatively isolated spaces, where they could maintain themselves as cultural entity.

The need for material earnings enables the implementation of pilot projects which seeks to valorize their specific culture, that can produce incomes, but may also improve the social position of those people who still have a marginal social status caused by the lack of employment and education, in a quite high proportion.

Cultural aspects are separated, most often by symbolic boundaries that are present in the same geographic area. There is also a sense of identity that maintains over time, from generation to generation, regardless of external factors and their influences (Ferreira and Catão, 2013). There can be affirmed that there is an impermeability of outside cultural elements penetrating the inside cultural life of some local communities.

Implementing creative activities and planning economic activities

The implementation of such activities is not at all simple. The difficulty arises from at least two directions: on one hand, the lack of a local involvement by the those who could offer with a minimum effort, the minimum components of organizational infrastructure, and on the other hand, the lack of education and the existence of a slightly rigid mentality of this ethnicity should also be considered. Their marginalization for a quite long time has formed a mentality of the type "we do not know" or "we simply cannot".

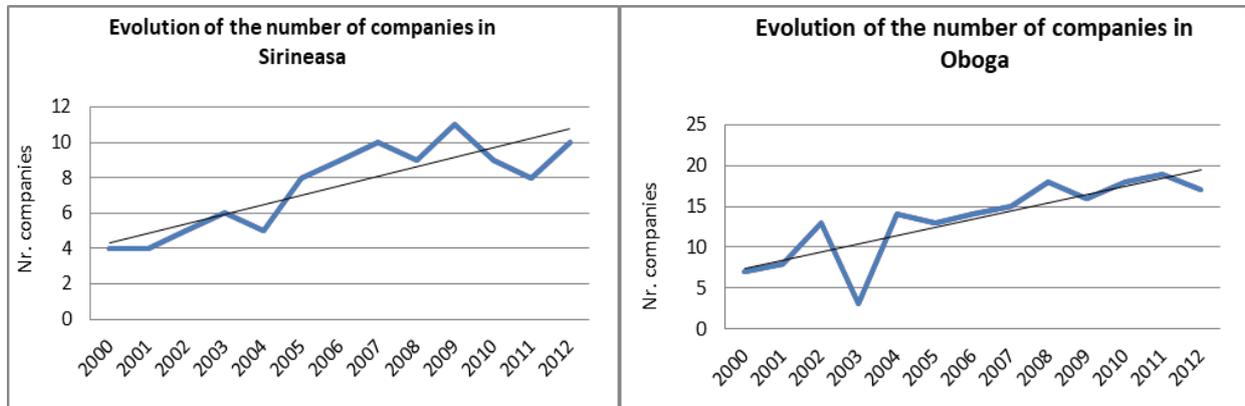
Still, these drawbacks can be overcome, by ensuring – on the first place– human resources with knowledge about the Gypsy cultural values that would be emphasized and, by educating them on the presentation of the work stages, the materials used, the representative models, the colours used and related to the origin and the activity age.

The need for implementing such activities has started from the analysis of the values that could represent tourism sources and resources. From the data UB1375 / BorgDesign project, it results that in both localities the evolution of the number of companies has an upward trend (Fig. 2), without holding tourist activity (Table 1). Lack of tourism activities in geographical areas with existing potential, creates ideas of implementation of projects that can use these resources (Dincă and Teodorescu, 2015). In case of Sirineasa, the analysis of the number of employees (Fig. 3) reveals a downward trend evolution, which means that implementing such projects could improve the situation of the employees. Regarding Oboga, the situation is slightly different. The geographical position is a little more advantageous, as it is situated at a distance of only 10 km away from Bals town and 35 km from the city of Craiova, both offering jobs for part of the population. Although important, the statistical data do not offer clear information about the level of education of the working people. That is why, regardless of the trend of employees number (Fig. 3), it is necessary to implement such a project.

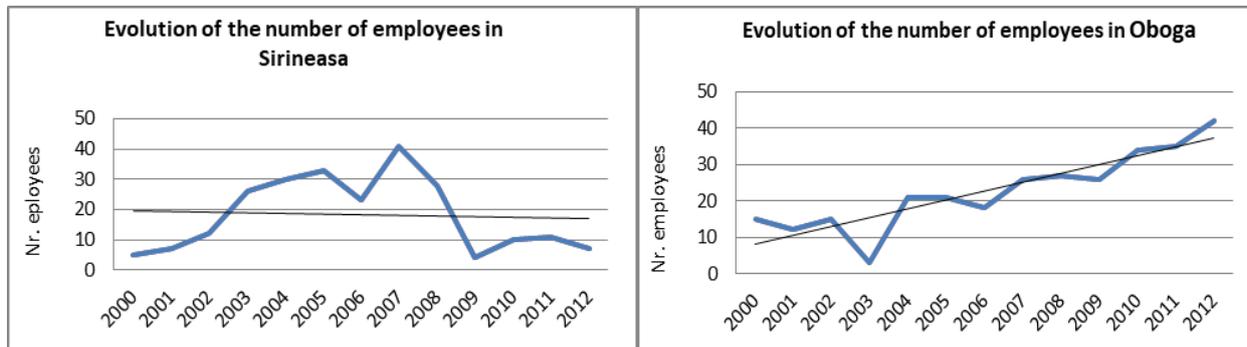
From the economic point of view, the project provides for the opening of a unit working in every community where there are four working cell. Within each cell, three employees are necessary: one who knows the technique of processing and who permanently produces traditional objects, the second has to offer tourists the necessary guidelines in order to involve themselves into the creative process, who should know as well the stages of the work required, and the third who has the duty of guiding those who pursue creative work. In this way, in the first stage, 12 people are expected to be employed in each locality. It is a first step towards

improving (rather insufficient, if reported to the population number of the locality) the local way of life, especially that of the Gypsy community, that does not include (in the two localities) a high

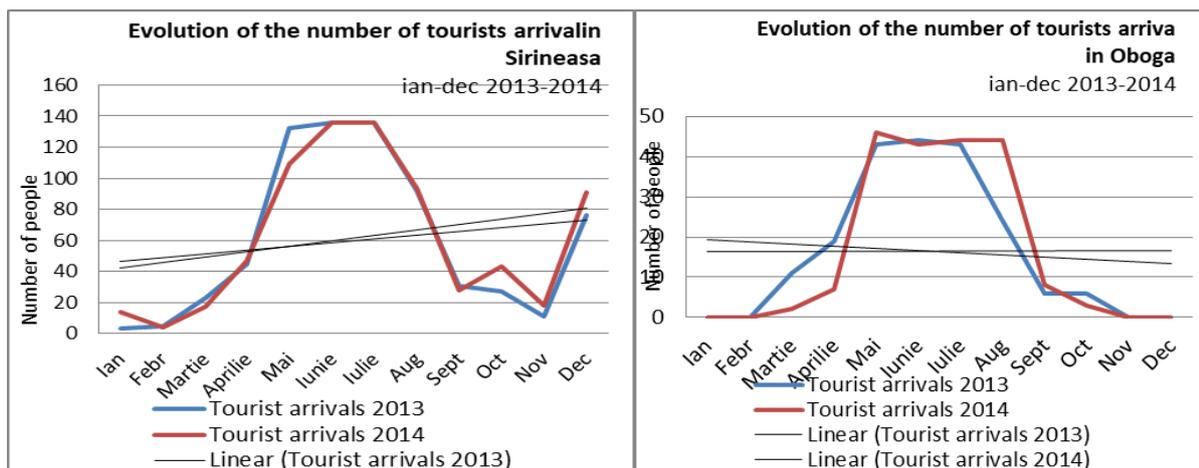
percentage of members with employee status. The second source of income is represented by the amounts of money charged for the activity itself, which may represent the main source of income.



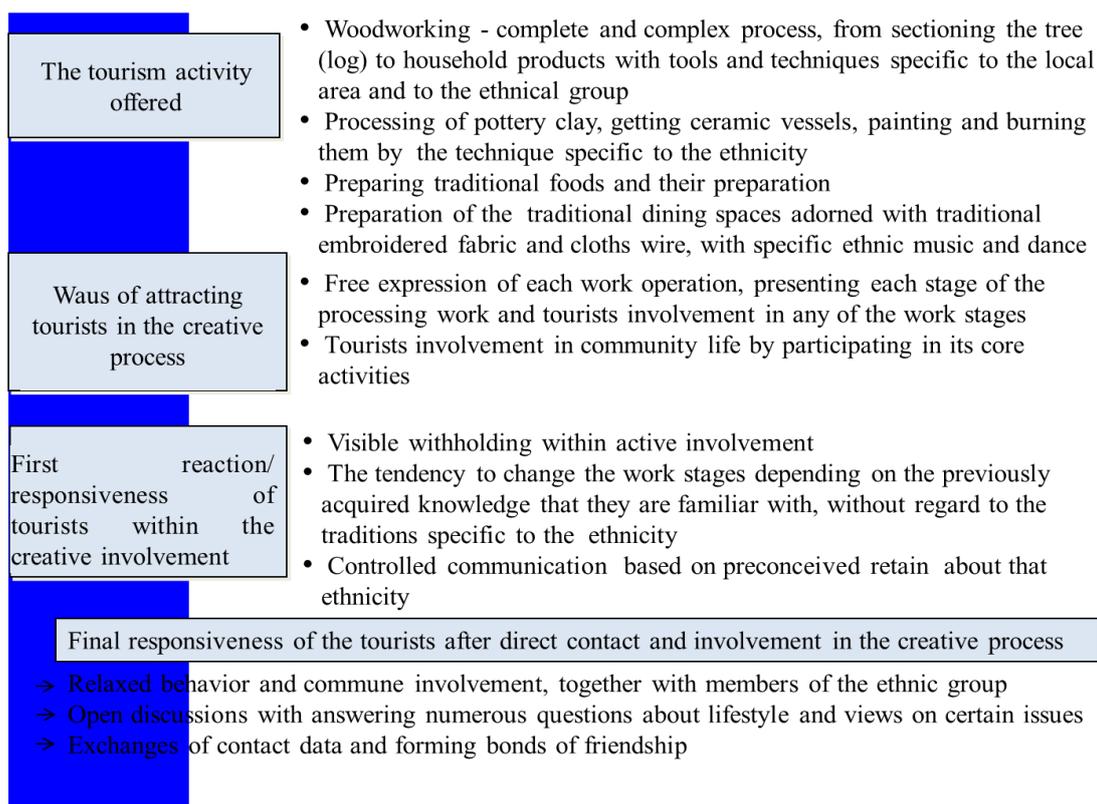
**Fig. 2: Evolution of the number of companies in Şirineasa and Oboga (Data source: UB1375/BorgDesign project)**



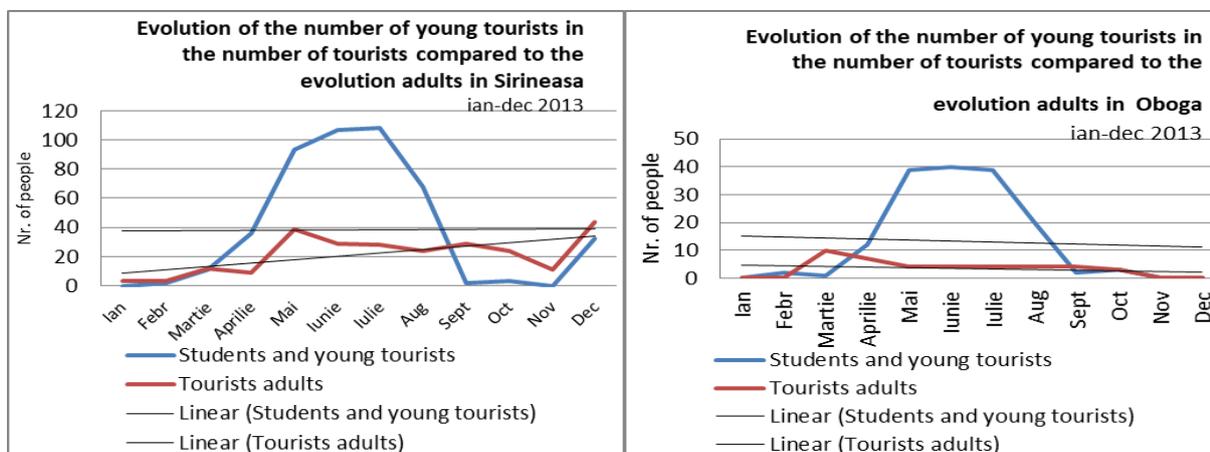
**Fig. 3: Evolution of the number of employees in Sirineasa and Oboga (Data source: UB1375/BorgDesign project)**



**Fig. 4: Evolution of the number of tourists in the pilot centers in Sirineasa and Oboga (Source: Project 8/2013)**



**Fig. 5: The tourism activity offered and final responsiveness of the tourists after direct contact and involvement in the creative process**



**Fig. 6: Evolution of the number of young tourists in relation to the evolution of the number of adult tourists in Sirineasa and Oboga (Source: Project 8/2013)**

To put into practice the requirements of the project, we turned to collaboration with "Petrache Poienaru" High-School teachers and students, of Balcesti town, Valcea county. Their response was positive, knowing mainly the analyzed geographical area and with general notions about the ethnicity that must be analyzed. Thus, Scout method was possible, and the results are slightly different in the two pilot centers (Fig. 5).

Comparing the two centers and, based on our survey results favored by the method which we have applied, the situation seems to be different. These

differences are based on several elements: firstly, it is the type of activity; in the case of Sirineasa, the activity is ECEEA woodworking, and in the case of Oboga, it is clay processing in order to obtain ceramics (bricks, tiles and pottery).

Another factor contributing to differences in trends is the working environment, where people can get dirty. In the case of woodworking center at Sirineasa, the environment is quite clean and wood is attractive for both children and adults. The natural environment also has a quite big influence, the center of Sirineasa being located in a geographic

area with quite a lot of sights in the vicinity, unlike the center Oboga where Bals town does not come with a fun and rich tourist offer.

Having analyzed the situation for the two years in terms of young tourists and students, there is an initial request to know the culture of woodworking by the Gypsy culture from Sirineasa, higher than that of processing and obtaining the Oboga bricks. Student participation was high-levelled in the holiday months. As for adults, they have a participation with permanent upward trend (Fig. 6), here being found both adults accompanying students (teachers), and those who participate individually. May and December appear to be the months with a greater number of adults than the rest of the year for the pilot center Sirineasa. In this case, participation in other events (most frequently religious events at the nearby monasteries) make it possible to increase visitor number in this pilot center, too. In case of Oboga, the relatively high participation in March was recorded after the religious celebration as specific to the Calui Monastery, positioned at about 20 Km distance and as a result of the interest of acquisition of materials for "spring cleaning". In the rest of the year, it registered very low values and a downward trend.

Taken separately, the two basic groups, young tourists and students- on the one hand, and on the other hand- the adult tourists, can highlight the rather high percentage of young people. This is gratifying in at least two respects; on the one hand, there is the formation, in time, of a new mentality by Roma ethnic group and their traditional culture, on the other hand, it favors the formation of a generous general culture, this being considered as a

first starting point in analyzing cultural values of the ethnicities living in the Romanian space. Young people who discover the cultural values of a certain ethnic groups, will want to know increasingly more. Young people spend time with visiting in the pilot centers during the summer months and when they are on holiday, few are those who, together with their parents or other accompanying adults, take some time for such an activity (Fig. 7). In the pilot center of Sirineasa, adults are in a constant number during the summer and have an upward numerical tendency during the months of the end of the year, here appearing as the desire of knowledge, the habits of winter and traditional meals (being recorded cuisine features, where adults have more pleasure of discovery and consumption). The specific of the basic activity in Oboga pilot center did not attract as many tourists compared to other cultural and parallel creativity extra-activities (gastronomy and traditional Gypsy music).

The youth are oriented towards discovery and knowledge, in both pilot centers, despite the differentiated slope. This allows, and even compels orientation of the activities regarding certain remedies and improvements of the offers existing so far. In the case of the pilot center of Sirineasa, there is the need of a slight modification (deliberately avoiding the "modernization" in order not to spoil the authenticity of the activity) in the network of cultural activities and parallel cultural activity and creativity network. Children, by their nature, do not have as much patience, wanting to get involved immediately. If they have to wait before working, they tend to give up.

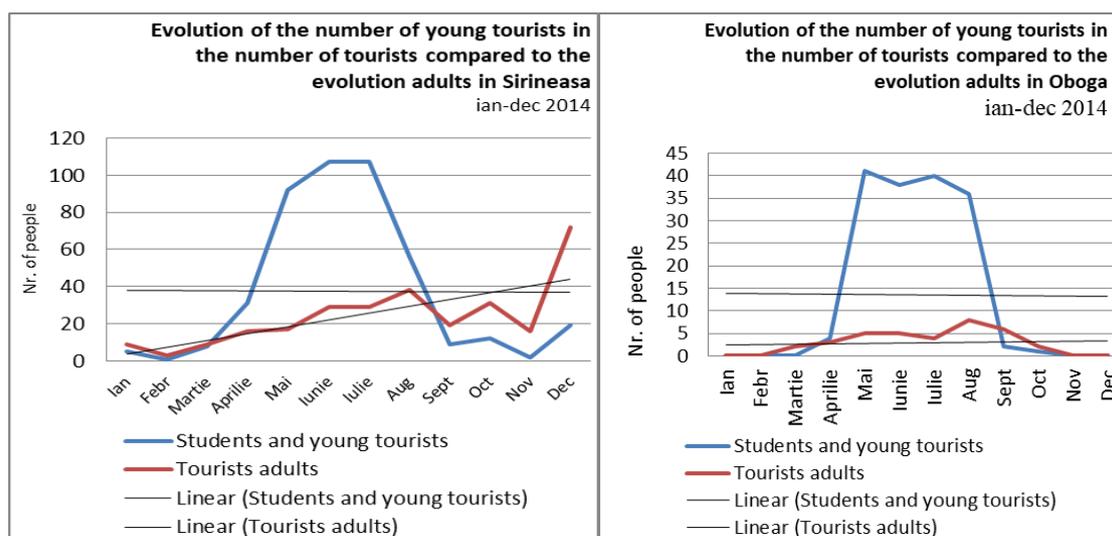
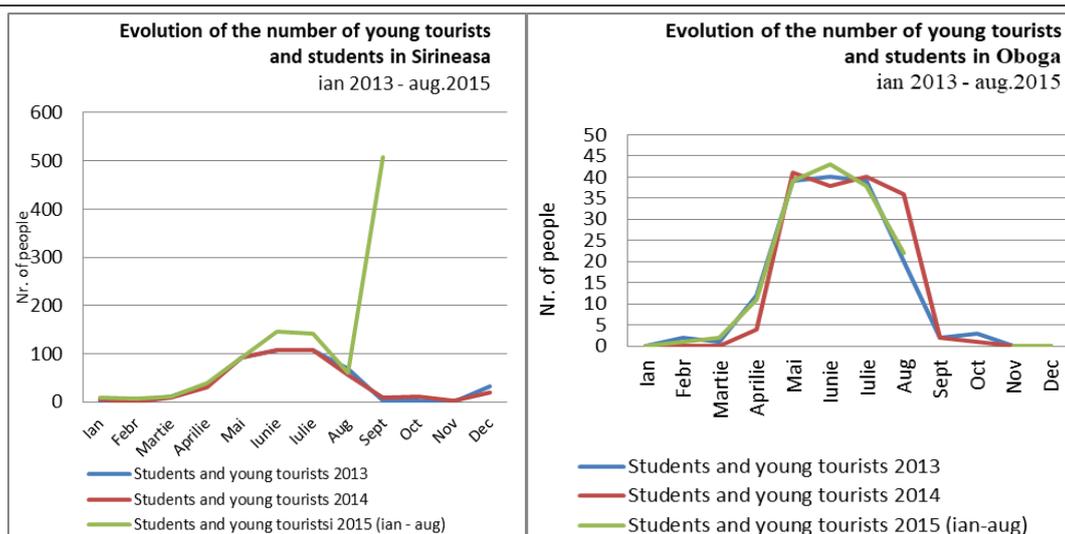
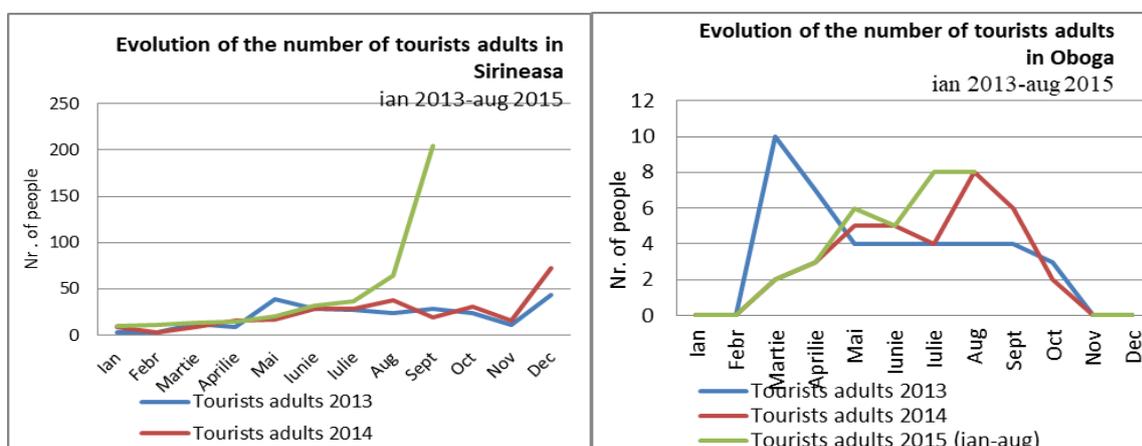


Fig. 7: Evolution of the number of young tourists in relation to the evolution of the number of tourists Sirineasa adults and Oboga (Source:Project 8/2013)



**Fig. 8: Evolution of the number of young tourists in pilot centers in Sirineasa and Oboga (January 2013-August 2015) (Source:Project 8/2013)**



**Fig. 9: Evolution of the number of adult tourists from Sirineasa and Oboga pilot centers. (January 2013-August 2015) (Source:Project 8/2013)**

By giving up, their curiosity and implicitly the desire of knowledge vanish. In this case, additional measures of organization are needed (initially, they have not been aware of the dimension of the creative desire, limiting it to the existing household space). Woodworking, in this case, is very attractive to children. The finished product (in the case of spoons and other kitchen items) can be obtained relatively quickly, another attractive element for children. Gypsy music has attracted them quite little, but gastronomic products had a real success, especially after working for hours.

There are differences in attitudes between the first visit and subsequent visits. Evaluations have been conducted on a sample of 39 students, which can be found in the developments of each year, the rest being newly appeared. With the first, they have worked more difficultly in the first day, because of their reluctant attitude towards Roma ethnicity and

towards directly working with wood chisel (Teodorescu et al., 2011).

Determination has come from the children who participated in the creative process. Working together for a day was like a playground in a new world with rules and very attractive new elements

Adult behavior is not very different from that of children. Most times they engage in this "creative show", moved by the desire for discovery and knowledge. Unlike the children, they are more attracted to music and some gastronomic products. They have the task of being a behavioral example to younger people. They were recorded in quite a high number together with the young people (Fig. 9), with an upward trend throughout all the periods for the pilot center of Sirineasa, where December is becoming increasingly attractive (especially for those who were initially in months of summer).

## CONCLUSIONS

These activities have a double impact upon society in general and upon the Gypsy communities in particular (Dincă et al., 2011; Maskiell et al., 2001). Revenues from these tourist services are very important to these communities (Teodorescu and Porojan, 2013). On the other hand, it is necessary to implement programs that encourage knowledge of the traditions and cultural values of the populations co-inhabiting the Romanian space.

Regardless of the age and social status, the creative tourists are active co-creators; at the same time, co-producers have subjective opinions, wanting to imprint from their culture and from everything they know better, on the products obtained. It thus creates a strong relationship between the two participants in the creative process, which is quite powerful. What is very important is that they have learned something for a long time, and it is made by playing, especially in the case of young people, but not only.

Each geographic region has areas where incomes of the population are below the national average. The completion of economic activities with such activities that can come both in support of the communities, as well as in the support of the population interested in that respect, could have an important economic role (Terzić et al., 2014). Tourism, whatever form it may take, as well as agriculture, remains an important source of income (Istudor et al., 2014). In support of these projects there can occur public-private partnerships that could support such communities and ideas.

Knowing and valuing cultural landscape would be a long term investment. Romanian cultural values and ethnicities with whom we may live aside, are important tourism and educational sources and resources. Education and culture are areas that must go along together, and economy must come in their support with the sustaining mechanisms they need, getting the due benefits after the correct and capable management.

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