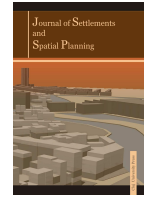




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# The Inside Story: The Construction of an Assessment Instrument of Cultural Specificity, Preservation and Suitability for Cultural Thematic Tourism

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## ABSTRACT

This paper aims to describe the basic methodological difficulties of constructing an assessment instrument of cultural specificity, level of cultural heritage preservation and the suitability of an itinerary for tourism practices in order to propose it as a cultural thematic tourism trail, creating a new tourism product in a traditional rural area with a considerable cultural heritage. These methodological considerations are the result of a more general objective of assessing potentially suitable cultural heritage trails in the Northern Oltenia between Olt and Jiu rivers. This attempt differs in purpose by the ambitious aim of constructing a cultural thematic heritage's assessment instrument leading to a hierarchy of potentially suitable itineraries acknowledged and accepted by all the stakeholders, the communities with low score in the cultural specificity classification and the academics researching cultural tourism suitability, cultural heritage, ethnography etc. In our opinion, this aim must be accomplished before implementing a new cultural thematic route as a tourism product because several previous Romanian examples of tourism management demonstrate that injustice perceived in choosing the culturally representative tourist attractions bring local communities in a competitive representation and tourism behaviours with malpractice examples that undermine the regional tourism phenomenon in general.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Maybe not more than five years ago during a conference, at the end of a scientific communication of some young researchers about the evaluation of possible tourism development of an area based on its cultural inheritance, as usual there was a question addressed (or recommendations were made) of this kind: *"Very interesting and well substantiated from a theoretical-methodological point of view but have you ever tried to propose the implementation of such a model of planning/tourism product, put it into practice, to convince the local authorities, etc.?"* After more than five years of rushed and forced absorption of European funds here and there, the situation practically reversed. At the same kind of scientific manifestations we find ourselves facing some communications or some

publications compulsory in terms of outputs/project results, which communicate the practical results of tourism products design or of some tourism planning, for whose realization considerable sums were allotted. However, done under the pressure of discount deadlines of some project stages or under the imperative of late release of some funds, they do not only prove poor methodological support or modest underpinning of the decisions, but rather that their groundwork is unclear, even opaque for part of stakeholders, thus leaving a confuse feeling (in the optimistic scenario) sometimes mingled with inequity and injustice to the rural communities involved in the development and accomplishment of the activities.

The final outcome of a series of projects (most of them financed with European funds) involves the implementation of some tourist routes or promotion

and implementation of some tourist attractions as the most representatives in terms of cultural particularities, etc. yet without a clear evaluation of the cultural heritage, a transparent prioritization of values unanimously recognized, accepted and socially shared by the local communities in the respective areas (both the ones in question and the ones outside such routes). Why would it be necessary (if not compulsory) for such an evaluation and prioritization be both transparent and understandable for all members of the rural community involved in tourism activities regardless of their particularity? Because for the long term, the lack of transparency, lack of a recognized prioritization and of heritage values, lack of authenticity and cultural value and particularity preservation, accepted and socially shared as much as possible at regional level by the members of these rural communities consciously but most of times unconsciously contribute to the undermining of the general common interest and of the tourism development in the region. This article intends to render the motivation and the methodological dilemmas that are behind the construction of such an evaluation tool, to answer the question why “*Why?*” and “*What for?*” would have been necessary to make up an evaluation tool, reasonable and transparent of the peculiarity and cultural representativeness for a certain thematic aspect? (in the case of Northern Oltenia, the traditional activities for subsistence and crafts – the pastoral trail of transhumance, the potters trails, salt road etc.). Much of this tool can be adapted or if necessary can be built once again in the case of any cultural road. Also, the article wants to provide an answer to the questions “*How?*” and “*Why this way?*”

Such an instrument is practically meant to supply the necessary information for the decision making to trace a certain tourist route through the most representative points or localities in terms of culture, but, at the same time the most challenging in terms of tourism infrastructure. Out of more alternatives available in the area such a tool would allow the choice of the best option of tourist route – the results of such an evaluation being as transparent as possible, clear and highly unanimously recognized and shared both by the communities that «compete» (most of times) for being shown on the map of such a tourism thematic cultural trail and by other stakeholders or specialists belonging to the academic community.

The previous experience (including the Unitwin UNESCO meeting in June) has led us to the conclusion that meetings such as the present conference can be valued more fruitfully discussing such methodological dilemmas rather than choosing to communicate the results of some researches (which we could do by means of a published article in which the reader has the only option to take things as such). Many times we try to adapt or apply a methodological tool conceived by another author in the field as it is.

Sometimes we have the hardest time in our office trying to answer the question “*Why for goodness’ sake did he conceptualize things this way and not ... (differently)?*” Regarding this evaluation instrument, a scientific manifestation such as this one allowed us to discuss and solve such issues in advance in order to avoid this moments.

The main methodological dilemmas tackled in this article refer to weighing some criteria as compared to others (i.e. *cultural specificity* versus *potentiality for developing tourism activities*; *refreshment of some disappeared traditions* versus *protecting the ones still existing and endangered as a priority*, etc.), ensuring the transparency for the simple citizens simultaneously with the recognition from the academic community of accuracy and suitability for practical initiatives. There are also added: the insurance of the equity of value evaluation and representativeness of recognized cultural heritage so as to be *operational* (thus, after evaluation, to allow the distinction between routes with weaker potential and others with stronger potential in territorial reality); the creation of a unique tool – nationally representative for a craft versus the creation of a tool that ensures the operationalisation of regional specificity, etc.

## 2. THEORY AND METHODOLOGY

In order to fully understand the practicalities of the construction of this assessment instrument a short description of the empirical framework is required. The evaluation grid in question was thought for analyzing and choosing the best route out of many possible and for evaluating their representativeness but also the suitability for tourism activities. The aim is to value by means of tourism products labeled as such the multiple routes of crafts or those allowing the valuing of cultural inheritance resulted from some subsistence activities in North Oltenia, such as shepherding. As to the traditional roads related to practicing some crafts or some subsistence activities and which can be valued in the form of thematic cultural trails, there is a comprehensive documentation in the works of Iordache (1985), Cărăbiș (1974), Mocioi and Vasilescu (1974), Stoica (1968), Vulcănescu (1968), Todeci et al. (2007), Morariu and Oancea (1976), Dumitrescu (1968) etc. (for a synthesis and a graphical representation of the routes of potters, salt trail, the main transhumance routes, pottery centers and the shepherds communities in North Oltenia between Olt and Jiu and the transmountain trails, see [10] and [11, p. 99]). Implementing such roads as tourist routes allows the complex capitalization of the cultural heritage resulted from the life style, the practicing of other subsistence activities and traditional resulted as well as the hill cellars [12], [11], the use of traditional rustic installations (for a synthesis see [11, p. 111]) as some of these elements still

remained outside the initiatives of tourism exploitation and promotion already implemented.

In the case of pottery trail in North Oltenia we cannot speak about competition between more main possible routes, but only about the choice of best out of many endings [11, p.99]. Therefore, a cultural thematic route should unite the main pottery centers that were maintained or strongly shaped over time, from these centers secondary roads for trades on different valleys being issued. Things would be the same for the salt trade trail that united Ocnele Mari, crossing sub-mountains Oltenia, over Godeanu massive towards Banat [2, p. 142-143], [10, p. 41]. For a potential route of transhumance, there is a great number of possible routes (for a main trails map see [11, p. 99] or the previously quoted sources), both regarding the sub-Carpathians and the mountainous sector, because shepherding in *North Oltenia* and *Mărginime* (Sibiu) can be possible separated only artificially. To this aspect, the mental rivalry between the shepherds community should be worth taking into account, especially among the *Ungureni* social communities, each of them being proud of their own cultural heritage, considering it a flagship of cultural representativeness for this subsistence activity or craft. The substantial experience researching this communities in the field (2005-2008) as well as the study of social relationship between different social groups in this sector of North Oltenia indicate the fact that equity, transparency and recognition of an authenticity hierarchy, of representativeness and preservation level of cultural inheritance when evaluating, ranking and choosing a single route as being «*the cultural thematic route of shepherding*» in this (or through this) area becomes an *imperative* not an *optional desideratum* if successful implementation of tourism activities labeled with this name of tourism product.

The structure of the evaluation tool<sup>1</sup> of the cultural tourism potential and the cultural representativeness specific to a certain craft/traditional activity or subsistence activity (the assessment tool of cultural relevance) of a possible tourist route reflects not only the proposed goals. The structure is also dictated by the already existent problems in the tourism practices in Romania (and the UNESCO Unitwin meeting held in Quebec proved that not only in Romania) which this attempt proposed to avoid or to solve according to the case. Thus the evaluation grid of cultural potentiality (of the cultural heritage) of some routes was thought in such a manner so that it can be adapted from a craft or subsistence activity to another. As consequence, the evaluation grid was divided into more sections, as the practical decisions for whose

substantiation this tool is to provide information, the final scores got by an evaluated route will be taken into account as well as the partial results on certain sections.

The most important section of the grid (A) namely *Representativeness for craft/subsistence activity* evaluates the consistency of the cultural heritage and the cultural specificity of a certain traditional craft or of the elements found along a route suggested to candidate for becoming a cultural thematic trail. This section contains criteria related to the still presence (or absence) in the route under evaluation, of the specific constructions of a certain craft, of the traditional specific installations/tools, of (all) techniques specific to that craft existent over time in that region in such a manner so that, after evaluation, the best score should be obtained by the route that meets the most consistent and the most representative cultural elements for practising that activity in the region where it will be certified/proposed.

The most difficult task is exactly the finding of the most relevant criteria and the giving of a score for each criterion and element so that, used in the field for evaluating some portion of possible route, the grid would manage to highlight a real value hierarchy between the possible candidate routes. In terms of accuracy such a hierarchy should meet the unanimous accept of the ethnographers (as much as possible), tourism specialists, other members of the academic community, local communities and of the descendants of those who intensely practiced that traditional/subsistence activity. But, most important is that the grid should be *operational*, to have *content* and *construct validity*, but also *reliability*, to be enough refined for getting such a hierarchy. To achieve these desiderata, the suggested criteria for section A - *Representativeness for craft/subsistence activity* (in our opinion, the most important for achieving capitalisation) are represented for the grid for evaluating the tourist route for pottery by: A1. *The number of potter's centres along the route*; A2. *The number and the variety of development periods represented along the route* (adapted from [5, p. 246 quoted in 9, p. 27]); A3. *Pottery centres in that period existent in the localities situated along the evaluated route* (adapted from [4] and [5]); A4. *Traditional pottery types existent in the region represented along the route*; A5. *Specific technologies for obtaining and decorating pottery in the pottery localities situated along the route* (A4-5 adapted from [4]); A6. *Popular manifestations (events) with themes drawn from practising and trading the pottery products*.

In the assessment of representativeness of a route for the case of transhumant shepherding grid the Section A criteria were represented by: A1. *The number of shepherd's localities still existent along the part of variety under evaluation*; A2. *Shepherding practices' variety still preserved along the route under evaluation*

<sup>1</sup> An earlier version of this assessment instrument was previously presented in the UNESCO Unitwin June 2012' Meeting held in Quebec (Colocvium *Routes touristiques et itinéraires culturels, entre mémoire et développement*) with co-author Popescu Carina Antoaneta. This version beneficiate from the input of Gabriela Cocean (2011)'s work.

(adapted from [4, pp. 16-17]); A3. *Constructions related to shepherding activities' variety* still preserved along the tourist route; A4. *The number of types of tools used for preparing the cheese* (adapted from [14, p.201], (considered by us a diagnosis for end products obtained after the shepherding activity); A5. *The number of types of products obtained at the sheepfold* (adapted from [15, pp. 193-195]); A6. *The variety of activities specific to shepherding* (adapted from [16, p. 203]); A7. *The number of mountain feasts* (popular events) held in locations situated along the segment of possible evaluated tourist route and considered the most representative cultural traditional events organised in different important moments in shepherd's life calendar.

The criteria of *Section A* were illustrated in identifiable and measurable elements. For example, for the evaluation grid for shepherding, the criterion A2 unites all types of shepherding practised not only in the area, but also even representative for shepherding over the entire territory of Romania, although, the compulsory requirement to be met was only regional representativeness. Following a careful analysis of more ethnographic sources describing the pastoral practices on Romania's territory (Iordache, 1985; Todeci et al., 2007; Vulcănescu, 1968 etc.), we decide over the taxonomy of shepherding types (see Appendix 1) created by Iordache (1985, p. 16-17) due to his preoccupations focused on the region for which these tourist routes are suggested for implementation. For A2 criterion the evaluation of a route is done by assigning one point for each type and subtype of shepherding provided in the grid that is still present as a current practice in shepherds' life, met or practised in the localities situated along the tourist route under evaluation. In this case, the highest score on this criterion in representativeness of specificity in the case of transhumant shepherding has the route along which there are still practised most of shepherding types out of the ones practised in this region over time. As there is the question of disappearance over time of many of these practices due to modernization, simplification or modification of propriety systems or manner of sheep breeding, one question arises: whether the non-existence of these types as active practices at the time being *makes them less valuable in terms of cultural inheritance* and of material and non-material elements preserved in the collective memory and passed on forward to present days? Our answer, and, at the same time, our recommendation in applying the grid is: the grid should evaluate how representative is the route in relation with the variety of good practices existent along time within the region, even if not all of them still exist nowadays. Of course, it would be natural that a higher score should be obtained by the routes where there are more active practices as more valuable is a practice that can still be observed by tourists, rather than one revived

or recalled by the autochthonous population. However, this criterion is meant to discriminate among the potential tourism routes that do not have too many specific elements and the ones ensuring a variety of them, so a higher representativeness for the craft (in our case – transhumant shepherding) in order to logically and honestly decide the implementation of the tourist route.

### 3. THE EMPIRICAL CRITICAL INPUT

In case of other criteria, the scoring operation was done differently; according to the importance or the weight we considered it to have in order to influence the decision. Thus, if in case of active shepherding centres and pastoral localities it is obvious that the presence of more centres or pastoral localities along the route increases the consistence of the tourism resource, and therefore of cultural representativeness for tourism exploitation, then each pottery centre or pastoral locality gets a 5p. score. In the case of sheepfolds, however representative we could consider those, the fact that a locality has up to 200 sheepfolds (for example Jina from *Mărginime*) would imbalance to its favour if the sheepfolds would be scored the same without using a certain methodological artifice for compensating this kind of possible unbalances. In the particular case of sheepfolds, unbalances in ranking were avoided scoring to the maximum of 10 sheepfolds belonging to each pastoral locality along the route.

In case of the criterion A3 the occurrence of each first type of construction on the route under evaluation was scored 1p, each present element beginning with the second, getting another 0.25p each (until the number of occurrences reaches 10).

In order to complete the evaluation of the cultural representativeness of the cultural heritage inherited by the settlements situated along the possible tourist route we added other categories: *B. Elements with cultural heritage relevance* capitalised by B1. *Level of complexity in the cultural and commercial exchanges* [10], [11], [9], B2. *Ethno – folkloric areas and sub-areas* etc. (see Appendix 1). Maybe the most important criterion, in terms of cultural inheritance preservation by means of tourism interest is B7. *Imminent degradation/Impact on conservation*. In our opinion, this criterion must gain supplementary importance in the decision of implementing some cultural thematic tourist routes, because, in the analysis of the separate scores, this highlights how much the implementation of such an objective would contribute to the preservation of certain customs and practices in danger of imminent extinction. This perspective of imminence salvation from extinction of some practices should have a greater importance in the decisions of choosing the localities which will be crossed by the route, more important than some other potential

elements, but not more important than the ones relevant for the craft giving the central theme of the tourist trail (Section A).

For a better comprehension of the aspects evaluated by this section it is necessary to point out the classification by subcategories: the localities/points situated along the routes, which fit the criterion: *Cultural heritage elements in imminent degradation phase* get the lowest score per criterion (2p.). Cultural attractions under the incidence of *Cultural heritage elements found in an early stage of degradation or disappearing* category get scores of 5p. as a normal preservation function is fulfilled in report to the tourism exploitation.

The following two categories *Preservation and rehabilitation of degraded heritage* and *Preservation of cultural heritage elements in imminent danger of extinction* proportionally get the highest scores in this criterion (i.e. 10p. and 15p.) once for the entire trail under evaluation. We appreciate that if a certain cultural practice is in danger of extinction and its tourism resource's potential value can prevent the process of extinction or oblivion, and/or if a thematic tourist route would cross its area of manifestation, avoiding such imminent cultural losses it is only natural to gain a certain importance in influencing this type of decisions.

Sections A-B evaluate the cultural heritage consistency and representativeness with more elevated grades' values by comparing with the following sections assessing the non-cultural tourism potential which inevitably completes the tourism attractiveness value of such an itinerary. The most important criterion for evaluation beside the cultural relevancy and tourism resources is the suitability of the itinerary for implementing tourism activities. This section (D. *Tourism development suitability*) assesses classical aspects for tourism literature, common to the tourism development suitability assessment action, from accessibility and accommodation, tourist information and other support services (adapted from [13]) to human capital assessment available for implementing and developing suitable tourism activities.

This latest criterion is particularly relevant because the most promising settlements in terms of traditional cultural heritage preservation are the most isolated localities, not in contact with modern services and utilities and have the lowest level of human capital suitable for entrepreneurship [18]. Consequently, it is crucial to assess the available human capital of an elevated cultural heritage tourism potential itinerary for sustaining the development of tourism activities before proposing a tourism thematic product.

In this respect the elements under evaluation are represented in the sub-criteria D3. *Human capital by Young resident population ratio* (aged 20-30), with a minimum cutting point of 10% in order to get the

criterion score, *Mature resident population ratio* (aged over 60) as the principal vehicle and reservoir of the immaterial cultural heritage and *Resident population ratio owning a bachelor degree* which also must accomplish a minimum cutting point of 10% in order to get this criterion score.

The last relevant sub-criterion to be assessed in section D is D4. *Previous Tourism experience in tourism activities* of the rural settlements situated along the proposed itinerary. Due to the tourism culture created in the case of previous tourism activities' long experience, hence the facility in implementing new tourism activities, in this case, is just natural to evaluate the previous experience as an add-on where present, in acknowledging the implemented itinerary.

Section B-C (see Appendix 1) regarding the tourism potential assessment (other than the specific craft or occupation's cultural heritage that labels the thematic route) and the suitability for tourism activities development are common to any assessment instrument of a potential tourism thematic itinerary regardless of the craft or the occupation's nature which gives the trail's theme. Section A however presents specific criteria and must be adapted considering the specific nature of the craft or occupation under evaluation.

In elaborating certain culturally relevant elements of Section A criteria, in order to use the most prestigious and widely acknowledged and respected reference for formulating the ethnographically elements to be identified and assess in territorial reality we have also used, when required, the second volume of the *Romanian Ethnographic Atlas* (Ro. AER) (coordinated by Ghinoiu, 2005).

The adequacy is increased by the fact that localities from Northern Oltenia were part to both pilot surveys studies (prior to 1976) in order to instrument elaboration dedicated to the traditional occupations, considering this reference as the viewpoint agreed and published by the Romanian Academy, hence unanimously recognised and respected theoretical reference. However, even if this comprehensive research was published in 2005, it is based on field data obtained by surveys undertaken during 1972-1982. Nowadays, no matter which zone we researched (Northern Oltenia or other relevant shepherding zone with which Oltenia communicates during centuries such as *Mărginime*) some terms or names did not survived from 1972-1982 in the living shepherding practices or the collective memory about this occupation. On the other hand, some new designating terms not mentioned in *ERA* appeared in practice. This situations concerns terms designating constructions, dairy products, vernacular practices and installations or obtaining tools. The differences between empirical data collected from living practices on the research field in 2012 and previous ethnographic works are emphasized in table 1.

Table 1. Summative table of terminology differentiations for designating terms in sheep breeding activity between theoretical knowledge and empirical regional sheep breeding practices.

Construction type terms (according to [1]) (Ro/Engl.) <sup>1</sup>	Construction type term used locally (not contained in [1] or AER <sup>2</sup> ) (Ro/Engl., geogr. prov.)	Tool names contained in AER [14, p.201] and still in use <sup>3</sup> (Ro/Engl.)	Equivalent terms for tools still in use not contained in AER (Ro/Engl., geogr. prov.)	Tool names contained in AER not empirically found in use (Ro/Engl.)
Stâna (Sheep fold)	Coliba (Hut) <sup>4</sup>	Strecurătoare (Colander)	Hurdoi/putinei (Churn, Novaci, Jina)	Hârzob (Churn)
Țarc, Staul (Sheep pen)	Stau (Sheep pen, Vaideeni)	Colander in linen, hemp	Crestău (Cheese smashing tool, Jina)	Cuțitoaie ( <sup>5</sup> )
Saivan (Winter shelter)	Saie (Vaideeni)	Wooden spoon for filtering	Uluc (Cheese depositor, multiple source)	-
Strungă (Sheep lathe)	-	Shove for mixing	Caic (Cream spoon, Novaci)	-
Ocol (Sheep courtyard)	Târlă/perdea ( <sup>6</sup> )	Wood Stick with carved branches for mixing	Mestecău (Mixing tool)	-
Odaie, Sălaș (Sheep pen in settlement's administrative area)	Toță/Bușcă ( <sup>7</sup> )	Putinei (Churn)	Crinta (Cheese Brine, multiple source)	-
-	-	-	Ciubăr (Kit, Novaci)	-
-	-	-	Burduf (Truckle, multiple source)	-
-	-	-	Ceaun (Caldron, multiple source)	-
-	-	-	Căldare de aramă (Copper pall)	-

<sup>1</sup> Due to the fact that the Romanian vernacular name is the central issue of the discussion, in this table we give the Romanian term followed by (between parenthesis) the English proximate term; followed, when required, by the geographical origin of the term in question (as we collected from the research field – then marked by “research field information” specification).

<sup>2</sup> AER - Atlasul etnografic român, [Romanian Ethnographic Atlas], vol. II (Ocupațiile [Occupations]); Academia Română.

<sup>3</sup> AER (terms for) instruments used to obtain the cheese which we also found in use during the field research, even sometimes, under another vernacular name than in the AER [14, p.201].

<sup>4</sup> Term designating the sheep fold used only for the higher altitude spring grazing area.

<sup>5</sup> Term designating cheese cutting big knives not used and which was not conserved in the collective memory as ever used in cheese production in the settlements from Oltenia or from Marginime we have researched. Moreover, the term was used as a tool in carpentry (Research field Inf. from Jina).

<sup>6</sup> Name for roofed over sheep courtyard, with gates for sheep night sleeping (Ro. noaptea oile) (field inf. from Vaideeni-Vâlcea).

<sup>7</sup> Pl. (Ro. buști) – Term designating shepherd's sleeping room/construction in Gorj and Mărginime. This could be built even outside the sheep fold (Research filed inf. from Ștefanu Fold and Gura Râului).

Since terms designating cultural elements (constructions, tools, practices) could vary considerably along the Romanian territory (even shepherding practices could differ from one region to another) no matter how intense or for how long shepherds from different regions were in contact (see [17] for a comprehensive work on the topic), if in the current research endeavour we aimed to accomplish the ambitious objective of creating an assessment instrument in order to obtain national representativeness for a craft instead of a regional one, at least two major inconvenient would result. On the one hand, the operational character of the instrument would reduce in the case of region in which the tourist route is implemented, as a secondary effect of the numerous other resulting sub-criteria and elements to assess in field research. At the same time, the overall scores obtained by all itineraries under evaluation would drop comparing to the maximum score obtained on such a grid, no matter how representative and rich in regional cultural heritage the candidate itineraries would be. This methodological desideratum was taken under consideration and the methodological

complications argued against multiplying the sub-criteria in order to get national representativeness. On the other hand, when we aim to choose between several itineraries proposed for a region already notorious and acknowledged as such for their cultural representativeness in practicing a certain occupational tradition or crafting, the itineraries under evaluation have to be assessed on their regional crafting or occupation representativeness and not according to their national representativeness.

The fact that several type of practices or specific constructions to be found in other traditional provinces of Romania are (naturally) missing in the region where the evaluation is undertaken, it should have no impact on the general grading of a regional tourism itinerary, because no positive outcome could result. In case of an itinerary, since there is no doubt that the region in which it is proposed to be implemented is notorious and representative for the traditional practices that give the central theme, it has to only obtain the maximum score in regional cultural heritage representativeness in order for the route to be implemented.

Moreover, the adjustment of the assessment grid for the evaluation of other itineraries in other acknowledged traditional regions of Romania for the same occupation or craft is a very simple procedure, and it is not affecting the grid's construct reliability: a simple change of the vernacular terms designating constructions, instruments, practices or products is (sometimes, not always) in order. The negative impact in implementing tourism activities will be considerable more important in the eventuality of proposing and assessing of a cultural thematic tourism itinerary with a regional representative grid in a region with no cultural occupational representativeness for that specific craft or traditional occupation, or no more than subsistent activities practiced everywhere in Romania. In this particular case it is obvious that the hierarchy established between several competing itineraries, all of them with reduced cultural heritage and representativeness for the craft, brings no valuable decision information. However, there is enough reason to think that we are protected from instrumental errors like that by the fact that no community authority will follow the initiative of proposing a tourist thematic route in a modest specific cultural heritage region.

Regarding the central section of the assessment instrument, (Section A) a concern related to the content validity of the grid was raised during elaboration. It is obvious that the criteria in Section A are relevant for the construct to be assessed - cultural richness and representativeness (for the craft) of the cultural heritage preserved - but are they covering the whole content area of representativeness for the shepherding activities or the pottery, for example, in the region where the tourism product will be implemented? The rational (logic) validation we have ruled reassured us that as long as the main chapters of material cultural heritage (constructions, tools, installations etc.) and the non-material cultural heritage (practices, beliefs, recipes, artistic manifestations etc.) are to be assessed, the underpinning support for this sort of decision making is solid. Also it gives hope that without any previous similar assessment instrument to check the construct validity, a higher score on the grid on *Section A* will be comforting us that tourists will find on the winning itinerary a consistent (more consistent than the row one we assessed initially) cultural thematic heritage. Sub-criteria A2, B6 and B7 also raise issues of inter-evaluator reliability, but the overall great reliability of the grid due to its specific cultural elements to assess, ensures a good decision making underpinning tourism activities and cultural heritage preserving mission.

#### 4. CONCLUSION

The rivalry issue, hence the issue of the transparent assessment and hierarchy of the cultural

thematic heritage is not specific to Northern Oltenia. It was manifested in the case of the wooden UNESCO churches in Maramureş, where the question «*Why the wooden church from the next village was considered more representative to be an UNESCO site and not the one from our village?*» is still arisen. Also in the UNESCO fortified churches' case it is manifested: The tour-guide's speech from Hărman fortified church (11 km distance from Prejmer) often ends with the question: «*Well, did you also previously visit Prejmer fortified church (e.g. included in the UNESCO heritage)? Yes, than what do you think now, which is the most worthy of being an UNESCO protected site?*» Sowing in the tourists' mind the idea of the doubtful plenty representativeness or specificity for a cultural prototype we consider worthy of being among world's cultural heritage treasures by the tour-guides, boarding houses' owners, simple inhabitants etc. is undermining everyone's interest and tourism reputation without bringing a favour to the (allegedly) left out communities. The manifestation of local cultural pride in the interactions with tourists during provided services is praiseworthy to the point of being detrimental to other competing rural tourism renowned localities. The likelihood of incidence of such a negative effects is lower in the situation of a cultural representativeness and heritage potential's value hierarchy transparent and (as close as possible to be) acknowledged by all the local and regional stakeholders or simple inhabitants. The rivalry issue is not even an autochthonous one, the Canadian experience in resolving such issues, brought to our knowledge during the discussion in Quebec, the eventually dead-end of the solution of including a large number of communities in the itinerary of a cultural thematic route in order to extinguish the discontentment of the communities was eventually left out from such an initiative. The Canadian experience conducts to the eventuality of a result consisting in "diluting" the central tourism resource and tourists flowing and all the stakeholders have to suffer on the long term.

Back to the empirical testing on the Northern Oltenia context, the almost overwhelming importance a decent auto axis plays (which, in our opinion, cannot be rectified artificially by methodological means in assessing the tourism activities suitability of an itinerary's segment) in the trans-mountainous context of Romania, any other itinerary available for city vehicles traffic can't possible compete with the new reconditioned road *Transalpina* (part of 67C) on the trans-mountainous segment. In the summer seasons of 2011 and 2012 *Transalpina* became an on-the-spot tailored tourism product in itself, a form of the new mountain-driving tourism' "must" acknowledged by all at least at the anecdotic level<sup>2</sup>. In addition to this

<sup>2</sup> Since no official traffic data were available, out of curiosity we have registered and counted the number of vehicles passing through the

tourism emulation, the fact that only the sheepfolds on the *Transalpina* road have already developed dairy sheepfold products meal-serving for tourists, this represents a start ahead difficult to compensate. Another recent mountainous reconditioned road (106E through Dobra) linking *Transalpina* with the most renowned shepherding settlement in *Mărginime* with which the Northern Oltenia shepherds had close relationships – Jina – make this itinerary even difficult to compete in evaluations. In this moment the Novaci – Rânca – Șugag – Dobra – Jina - Poiana Sibiului – Săliște – Sibiel - Gura Râului (fig. 1) itinerary cumulates the richest and well preserved shepherding cultural heritage and the most suitable infrastructure for tourism activities. However, a trans-mountainous cultural thematic *green trail* could cross the alpine upper sheepfolds' zone of Parâng Massif – a competitive itinerary right across the heart of summer sheep breeding activities and the alpine short-distance transhumant activities starting from Vaideeni (Vâlcea) to Jina or Rășinari (Sibiu) (the last one being the shortest itinerary, through Vidra). This trail could be designated for trekking or for mountain biking activities, and could be coupled with other already implemented mountain biking trail in the *Mărginime* area (especially from Sibiel and Rășinari). Another option seems to be already informally implemented: An off-road practicable itinerary is already used by tourists to get from Vaideeni to Jina (for attending the August 5<sup>th</sup> shepherding feast of *Sus pe muntele din Jina* for example) and starts from Vaideeni to Oașa Lake<sup>3</sup> and near Tărtăraș sheepfold could take Frumoasa Valley to Ștefănești sheepfold (passing by the barren sheep's sheepfold of Piatra Albă), than to Sadu Valley from Șteflești Sheepfold, and continuing with Conțu and Bătrâna Sheepfold (Bătrâna is a Gura Râului sheep-owners' sheepfold<sup>4</sup>) and Grădina Oncești Sheepfold to Păltiniș where, after a few kilometres of asphalted road and another 5 of non-asphalted road (to Gura Râului), could continue eventually, to Jina by Sibiel, Săliște and Poiana Sibiului. In the Northern end this potential tourist shepherding route could start from three different points: Rășinari, Gura Râului or Jina and it could end in Vaideeni, Polovragi or Baia de Fier on the Southern side. The existence of another second *green trail* would bring a welcomed “peace” in the shepherding communities left out by the first itinerary, with the best scoring. At the moment this paper will be published the segment from Novaci (end of *Transalpina*) to Vaideeni, through Baia

de Fier and Polovragi still accumulates a low score, two factors counting in explaining that outcome. On the one hand, the poor quality of the asphalt coverage of the road in the sector administrated by Vâlcea, this situation being about to change in the next 2-3 years<sup>5</sup>. On the other hand (and the most relevant shortcoming for a shepherding cultural heritage trail), is the shrinking to the non-existence of the shepherding activity in the past years (even from the last data situation published in 2009 [11 quoting several previous sources]), in Vaideeni and Băbeni, too. Shepherds do not come back with the flocks in the locality's administrative area, not even once a year. In this respect, local authorities are also optimistic about the enhancement of the alpine zone sheepfolds' activities, the comeback of the flocks from plains regions<sup>6</sup> as a consequence of domestic animal breeding legislation's renewal and the animal breeding subsidised system conditioning that is about to change in the next year. This is supposed to indirectly reinvigorate the shepherding practices in these renowned settlements and their administrative mountainous areas. If both those conditions are met in the future, the segment Novaci - Baia de Fier – Polovragi – Vaideeni - Băbeni will represent the most relevant ending itinerary segment of a shepherding cultural heritage trail. In this eventuality the only renowned shepherding locality „left-out” would be Crasna. On the other hand Crasna would be the favoured locality in the eventuality that the touristic trail would continue from Novaci towards South-Est, for final end in the Olteniei Plain. Melinești (northern part of Olteniei Plain) seems to be the only locality we identified during field research towards which shepherds (e.g. from Novaci, Ștefanu Sheepfold) travel each winter from Parâng Massive. This aspect is also the reason for which a tourism product with the label „*the transhumant (shepherding) heritage trail*” is not adequate or better realistic, because the transhumant mobility of sheep flocks nowadays is extremely reduced comparing to a century ago. Moreover, in the areas where it is still practiced, the itinerary towards those destination points gets visible lower score in the assessment process. To include those final segments to transhumance destinations in a tourist route represent decisions to double the number of kilometres tourist have to travel, for a half or a third quota of tourism resources comparing to the trans-mountainous and sub-Charpatian sectors. So, the whole shepherding cultural heritage we urge to touristically exploit and we value enough to preserve and appreciate in the form that is less affected by modernism, can be proposed under the more appropriate label of „*shepherding/shepherds' cultural heritage trail*”.

Urdele (2145m) section of *Transalpina* during one hour interval (11.30 to 12.30 a.m. on August 3, 2012) on a week day. If on a lunch time week day hour a total of 102 vehicles where crossing this most difficult road section, we can only imagine the total flow on a weekend morning or evening in this (close to the finish) section.

<sup>3</sup> Field information from Jina. The most appropriate itinerary seems to be by Vidra Lake zone, so the possibility that the informant could confound the two lakes in his discourse is still in question.

<sup>4</sup> Field information from Gura Râului.

<sup>5</sup> Field information from Vaideeni Mayor (Aug. 2012).

<sup>6</sup> Where after 1990 they gradually established to stay, not taking the transhumant trip every year anymore.



In a following phase after implementing an off-road tourist route or a *green trail* mountain biking trail one should consider the natural extension of the

opportunity for coupling those tourism itineraries with new or old cultural corridors such as the *Western- and Eastern Trans-Balkan Road*.

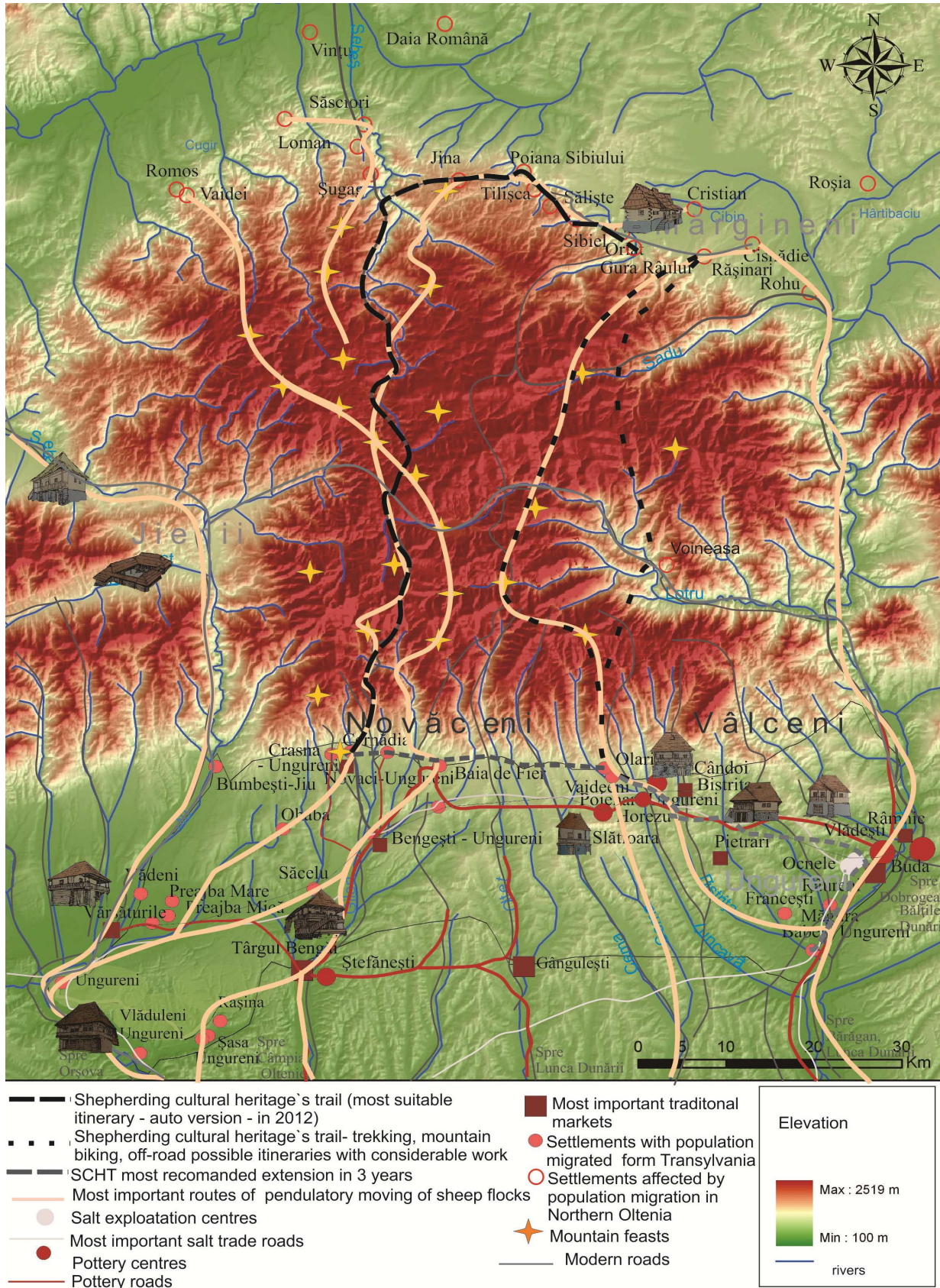


Fig. 1. Shepherding transhumant trails and trade routes in the 18<sup>th</sup> – 19<sup>th</sup> century' Northern Oltenia (adapted from [11, p.99] data sources: [1-4], [6-8], [21-24]).

Table 2. The assessment grid of cultural representativeness, cultural heritage preservation level and the suitability for tourism activity of a candidate itinerary for cultural thematic (craft) route.

A. Representativeness for craft/subsistence activity	A1. The number of shepherds localities still existent along the part of route under evaluation		(1 locality - 5p)
	A2. The variety of types of shepherding practiced [1, pp.16-17] (2p for each type present along the segment under evaluation)	Oscillation shepherding	Simple oscillation Double oscillation or bi-oscillation
		Sedentary shepherding	Local farming shepherding Local – regional shepherding
		Transhumant shepherding	Limited transhumance Ample transhumance
	A3. The number and variety of types of shepherding - related constructions		sheep fold, sheep pen, winter shed, sheep lathe, sheep courtyard (1p for the presence of the first element, 0.25 for each of the next ones until a maximum of 10)
	A4. The number of types of tools used for preparing the cheese (adapted from [14, p.201] (1p for each object type present)		Dish used for obtaining butter, colander, colander in linen or hemp, wooden spoon for filtering, shove for mixing, wood stick with cut branches for mixing, big knives
	A5. Types of products manufactured at the sheepfold (adapted from [15, pp. 193-195]; (1p for each product type found)		Cheese, Old Cheese, Smoked cheese, Dry old Cheese, Butter, Truckle Cheese Pressed cheese, Soft cheese, Cream, Milk, Whey, Whey mixed up with soft cheese
A6. The variety of activities specific to shepherding (adapted from [16, p.203])		Milk measuring, Sheep driving to sheep lathe, Sheep measuring, Milk produces manufacturing (1p for each present)	
A7. Number of mountain feasts (popular events) (1p for each feast present along the route)			
B. Elements with cultural heritage relevance	B1. Level of complexity in the cultural and commercial exchanges		Number of social and ethnographical groups that were in contact along the trail (2p for 1 group)
	B2. Ethno – folkloric areas and sub-areas (2p for 1 ethno-folkloric areas and sub-areas group)		
	B3. Architectural landscapes	House Architecture	One room house with clay and adobe, One room wood house , One room house with clay and netted twigs, Double room wood House, Double room house with rock basement, Double or three rooms wood and rock houses, Double or three rooms' house with cellar (adapted from [1] and [17]) ] (1p for each type present)
		Hill cellars	1 hill cellar – 1p.
		Fold, flock shelter	1 point for the first apparition of the landscape present
	B4. Folk industrial installations	Sawmill, Dip mills, Turbine mills, Vertical wheel mill, Floating mills, Pressing Installations with rustic washing machines (adapted from [19]) (1p for each type present)	
	B5. Other cultural heritage attractions	UNESCO sites (1 Unesco site – 5p),	
Churches and Convents ( Age – more than 2 centuries-1p., Unique value-1p. , Architectural value-1p.)			
Open Air Ethnographic Museum (1 OAM-5p)			
B6. Cultural Representativeness		International (5p.), National (3p.), Regional (2p.) (adapted from [13])	
B7. Imminent degradation/Impact on conservation		Cultural heritage elements in imminent degradation phase (2p.), Cultural heritage elements found in an early stage of degradation or disappearing (5p.), Preservation and rehabilitation of degraded heritage (10p.), Preservation of cultural heritage elements in imminent danger of extinction (15p.)	
C. Secondary tourism potential	Geomorphologic (1 site – 1 p) Hydrographical (1 obj. – 1p), Natural habitat preservation (1 site/park/reservation – 1p) Landscapes (2p.) (adapted from [13])		
D. Tourism development suitability	D1. Tourism infrastructure: connectivity (under 5 km from European roads (3p), under 5 km from National roads (2p), Regional roads (1p), Local roads (0.5p)); Ancillary services: Gas Stations (2p.); Service (3p), (adapted from [13])		
	D2. Accommodation facilities: Hotels (3p), Motel, (2p) Hostel (2p), Camping (1p), Boarding Houses, Villas (1p)		
	D3. Human Capital: Residential population (20-30 years age - a minimum of 10%) (5p); Population over 70 years old (a minimum of 10%) (5p); Population between 30 and 50 years old (min 10%) (5p); a minimum of 10% of Bachelor degree owners (5p)		
	D4. Previous tourism experience (5p)		

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