

## REGIONAL PLANNING FOR RODNA AS A TOURIST DESTINATION

ADELINE-CRISTINA COZMA<sup>1</sup>, MONICA-MARIA COROȘ<sup>2</sup>

**ABSTRACT.** This paper continues previous researches dedicated to highlighting the importance of planning from a managerial point of view and to discussing the regional dimension of planning, to which it adds up the current topic, that of rural tourism planning – features, particularities, approaches, multi-functionality of land use, collaboration and partnerships, negative planning, green economy, and case-studies. Bearing the theory in mind, a radiography of Rodna commune was briefly made, taking into consideration the following aspects: economy, locals, tourist flows, accommodation, tourists' profile, food services, accessibility and transportation, travel agents, attractions and heritage, types of tourism, IT & C, sustainability, and traditions. The reason for the description of the commune is to properly understand the context and the particularities of the analyzed destination. Further, the steps of regional planning are revealed, and each of them is separately discussed and analyzed, from both a theoretical and a practical point of view. The outcome is a strategy the community can adopt, with a vision, three directions, and several SMART objectives. This strategy is reflected in a document that aims to engage each stakeholder in the process, as well as to establish in a clear, comprehensive way the common framework. Also, there are several proposals for every community and destination that understands the importance of planning and its implications: collaboration, win-win approach, partnerships, the involvement of the community, sustainability in every dimension, and so on.

**Keywords:** *Regional planning, Mountain tourism, Rural tourism, Community, Planning stages, Objectives, Collaboration, Strategy, Destination management.*

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<sup>1</sup> *Master student, Department of Hospitality Services, Faculty of Business, Babeș-Bolyai University of Cluj-Napoca, ade.cozma@gmail.com.*

<sup>2</sup> *Associate Professor, PhD, Department of Hospitality Services, Faculty of Business, Babeș-Bolyai University of Cluj-Napoca, monica.coros@tbs.ubbcluj.ro, monica.coros@gmail.com.*

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## Introduction and Literature Review

The paper aims to create an example for rural tourism planning, focusing on creating a strategy for Rodna Commune. In 2018, a previous research discussed the potential and opportunities the area has and identified the need for creating a Destination Management Organization (DMO). Two years later, another research paper provides the framework for the creation of the DMO, by presenting a comprehensive guide with all the steps that should be made and the need for a proper website. But one important role of this DMO is to develop an integrative strategy for tourism development, and that is what this paper is about: the description of a regional planning process in a rural, mountain area, which focuses on sustainability and durable growth.

Rural tourism presents some particularities worth mentioning:

- the level of physical plant transformation;
- issues of authenticity;
- maintenance of traditional lifestyles;
- community values, etc. (Gartner, 2000).

Fan & Yang (2011) also highlight some features of rural tourism:

- the uniqueness of the resources;
- the diversity of space-time;
- the richness of cultural heritage;
- the self-experience and the self-participation in the main activities.

If market awareness is what rural communities strive for, there are several approaches they can undertake. Lew (1989) resumed these approaches, splitting them into 3 big categories: *unplanned*, *thematic*, and *historic preservation*. The highest level of economic impact results

from the *unplanned* option. This is because the *unplanned* option refers to attracting customers from the surrounding communities because of the presence of large retailers. But the long-term socio-cultural impacts can turn out to be extremely high because there is no sense of place for residents. In this case, tourism is not viewed as a vital component for local community development, because tourists are only attracted to the area for the same reason as rural residents are – to purchase needed goods.

In the opposed pole, the tourism centred type is the orientation towards *thematic* development. This means, it uses a central theme to organize its' community look. Of course, for this to happen, communities need to impose some design standards on local businesses. The socio-cultural impacts can be also high if the theme is not authentic (e.g. a Northern woods location which uses an alpine theme). But the economic impact can counter that. If the *thematic* development attracts many tourists in the area, it will increase the economic returns of the community. But the economic impact would still be lower than that generated by the *unplanned* orientation.

The last development orientation is *historic preservation*. If the community has some historic past which can be attractive for tourists, the socio-cultural impacts can be lower. By using what already exists, such as architecture or important sites, a strong sense of place and community pride can be achieved. However, the economic impact is lower than that resulted in the previous cases.

The importance of choosing the development orientation is given by the fact that “the nature of physical development is such that once mistakes are made, they will pose problems for the years to come. Development is often unidirectional with costs of re-development so high that they generally only occur when markets have eroded. Much more work on the development orientation and its consequences is required to guide future rural community tourism development” (Gartner, 2000).

Another important aspect in rural development planning is the multi-functionality of the land use. The rural space can be perceived as the area where residents live in and depend on. Rural farmers depend very much on the land, as this has direct impacts on the production capacity. Studies have shown that rural land, infrastructure construction, transportation, and public services positively impact farmers' quality of life. That is because when farmers benefit from higher quality land resources, they receive grater benefits. The concept of agricultural multi-functionality

was proposed by international organizations in 2001. Research studies on this topic have spread from the field of agriculture to various others. We discuss about multi-functionality of land use when we consider the interaction between all the types of land use. But it is not only about that, but also about the products (goods and services) that the land provides for the residents. Therefore, we can talk about land use versatility and interdependency. (Wan, et al., 2020). It is essential to establish the optimal balance between the tourism field and the agricultural fields, as they can represent threats for each other if they are not developed in a coordinated and sustainable way. The combination between agriculture and tourism can give the community really high benefits and the two fields can sustain one another, or it can result in severely affecting the quality of life and the living standards by destroying the agriculture if the tourism development reaches a certain unsustainable level, and therefore important touristic resources are destroyed, so the tourism activities will decrease considerably.

Land use planning is part of the public planning made by the local governments. Of course, the national government's plans and actions have a considerable impact on such areas. But there are some significant differences between these two levels of governance. "Clearly, a great deal of deliberate preparation for decision-making in government is done informally and without the direct aid of any planning personnel so-called. Many decisions by legislative bodies and administrative agencies in the smaller local units are naturally made based on immediate knowledge and perhaps intimate understanding possessed by local board members and line officials' themselves" (Clarenbach, 1952). This is important to understand the mechanism of rural planning.

But rural tourism also plays an important role in green economy. Mukhambetova, et. al (2019) define this concept as being "a system of economic activities related to the production, distribution and consumption of goods and services that lead to increased human well-being in the long run, while not exposing future generations to significant environmental risks or environmental deficits". Practically, the definition is based on the sustainability concept: maximizing the benefits, while minimizing the negative impacts. The principles for green tourism are:

- make optimal use of environmental resources, the key element for tourism development;

- support the main environmental processes;
- promote the conservation of natural resources and biodiversity;
- respect the socio-cultural identity of local communities;
- help preserve their cultural heritage and traditional values;
- ensure viable long-term economic activity that provides social and economic equitable benefits for all parties involved, including tourist satisfaction, stable employment, and opportunities for receiving incomes and social services for host communities.

It can be deduced that collaboration and partnerships are so much needed. “Rural tourism partnerships (RTPs) are characterised by vertical and horizontal cooperation, reciprocal investments and exchanges of human, social and economic capital among two or more tourism stakeholders to solve a problem or create an opportunity that they cannot address on their own” (Saxena, 2013). RTPs need to be seen through the mobility concept, as a fundamental component of the everyday life, in order to better understand the context within RTPs operate and the influence that a range of mobility perspectives have on the actors’ engagement or disengagement with this kind of partnerships.

One major actor is the local community. Souca (2019) ran a research on the rural communities in Romania. The author finds that Romanian villages have not achieved their full potential in terms of rural tourism offer, because of the poor involvement of the local community in the strategic tourism planning, and because of the changes in the tourists’ behaviour. In urban areas, in response to these changes in the tourists’ behaviour, a better form of cultural tourism has appeared: creative tourism. The study shows that not only the urban areas, but also the Romanian rural areas have residents that have the abilities necessary in developing creative tourism. The main conclusion is that to revitalize the Romanian rural tourism, the entire local community needs to be involved in the tourism planning process, not just the ones with direct ties to it.

Another study, authored by Gusmanov et.al (2020), focuses on the foresight methodology applied in the strategic planning of rural development. They say that it “will improve the quality of a decision-making process at the municipal and regional levels of government. It will become possible to develop in time measures aimed at reducing imbalance between different layers of rural residents, to reduce rural society stratification and to make odds even in the rural areas’ society.

The use of modern foresight technologies together with the system analysis not only helps to quickly diagnose the current state of rural areas but also contributes to spot bottlenecks and to reveal problems in the system of strategic management of material resources, to model the adoption of optimal management decisions". Therefore, the results of the study can be applied in the strategic planning process for the rural development.

Fan & Yang (2011) discuss in their paper about negative planning. This means that when it comes to planning the land use, the land is perceived and considered as non-construction land, opposed to the traditional planning, which considers the land for construction. This shift and change in the paradigm strive for ecological environment construction and sustainability. To better understand the concept, they put together a table that shows the differences between traditional and negative planning:

**Table 1.** Comparison Between the Two Types of Planning

<b>Comparison object</b>	<b>Traditional Tourism Planning</b>	<b>Negative Planning</b>
<b>Purpose</b>	Using the rural tourism resources to delimit of construction land and meet the needs of developers and tourists.	With ecological value maximization for the purpose
<b>Order</b>	First planning construction land and then carry on ecological protection.	Priority was the planning of ecological infrastructure, the construction of landscape security patterns, construction land planning at the last.
<b>Form</b>	Each special planning is according to the project independently.	Make various special planning integration, delimit non-construction land for ecological zones control.
<b>Function</b>	Meet the developers and tourists' need, but not enough to protect the ecological landscape, causing damage.	Better protection of the tourism resources, make the ecological landscape resources sustainable development.

Source: Fan & Yang (2011) p. 907

The main conclusion of the same study (Fan & Yang, 2011) was that negative planning in rural tourism development is the key to harmonize the social economy and the eco-environment, so the sustainable development will take place.

Three remarkable case-studies on rural tourism planning highlight the way in which it is done in different countries: Ireland, Malaysia, and India. In Ireland, “at national level, rural tourism planning involves the coordination and management of large tourist regions, usually through the development of policy national standards and institutions. These plans will include national level implementation techniques, development staging, with both short term development strategies and project planning” (Robinson & O'Connor, 2013). In India, in the rural areas that have tourism potential, the government develops the necessary infrastructure and they also benefit from the support of the Ministry of Tourism. The strategies for rural development aim at showcasing the rural life, art, culture, and heritage, in order to benefit the local community in an economic and social way, and also to support the interaction between the locals and the tourists. If Ireland is focusing on funding, and in India the public authorities take a lot of responsibility for the rural tourism development, Malaysia is counting on the local community to be proactive: “without the fluent and eager participation of the local people, it is quite a tough job for the government agencies, NGO’s or other local-international organizations to carry out the project effectively and successfully. With the dynamic concept of inclusive rural tourism and ecotourism, Malaysia can successfully conserve the natural heritages, environment and biodiversity” (Majid & Zaman, 2018). The conclusion here would be that depending on a very wide range of factors (resources, political regime, culture, history, etc.) and on the macro- and micro- context of the destination, the way in which the rural tourism planning is done and the paradigms and methods applied should be fully adapted to its specificity.

Therefore, some essential information about the destination should be mentioned before presenting the developed strategy of the commune.

## **Material and Method**

The paper aims to create an example for rural tourism planning, focusing on creating a strategy for Rodna Commune. In 2018, we have shown the potential and opportunities the area has, and we identified the need for creating a Destination Management Organization. This year, we have shown how to create that DMO, by making a comprehensive guide with all the steps that should be made as well as explaining the need for

a proper website. But one important role of this DMO is to develop an integrative strategy for tourism development, and that is what this paper is about: the description of a regional planning process in a rural, mountain area, which focuses on sustainability and durable growth.

Some results of the previous research are discussed here, mainly in presenting the actual socio-economic context of the commune. The methods used were:

- the analysis of secondary data by consulting different statistics, brochures, guides, specialized sites, comparisons, syntheses and analogies, and also reaching to local authorities, managers of lodging units in the commune, participation in different conferences on rural tourism issues and the elaboration of questionnaires that aim to identify the reasons for the tourists to visit Rodna Mountains National Park;
- combining quantitative research, based on questionnaires with qualitative research, based on interviews.

The methods used in order to develop this plan are secondary data analysis (synthesizing information, processing different statistics, etc.), and induction and deduction, which contribute to the interpretation of the actual situation, and also to the identification of possible future results if the developed plan would be implemented.

## **Results and Discussions**

This section will detail the sustainable development plan for Rodna commune, which takes into consideration everything discussed before: the need for planning, how the planning is done depending on the object of planning, why rural planning is important and vital for a durable development of the area, the history of Rodna commune, the actual social-cultural-economic context of the commune, and, of course, the results of the previous research that lead to drawing up this plan.

### ***1. Destination Management***

The second bachelor thesis (Cozma, 2020) discusses the need for a Destination Management Organization, (DMO) it was showing the way in which this type of entity works and how it contributes to a better,



healthier development. The identified structures that should be involved in the activity of the DMO are:

- the Town Hall;
- County Council;
- Police, Firefighters, Mountain Rescuers. Health Services;
- Accommodation units' owners;
- Restaurants and bars owners;
- Local producers;
- Artisans, dancers, etc.

The main activity of a DMO is to promote the destination by re-joining the forces of all the stakeholders. But to do so, a strategic plan ought to be drawn.

## ***2. Regional Planning Process***

Such a process must respond to certain questions:

- What are the factors that led to the actual situation?
- Which is the desired direction?
- What are the parameters of success?
- What are the risks and limitations?
- What actions must be taken to achieve the goals?

To do so, the process of regional planning needs to follow several steps:

- Vision setting & preparation;
- Formulation of planning objectives;
- Data gathering;
- Analysis and interpretation;
- Generation of alternatives for the preliminary plan;
- Consultation and formulation of the plan;
- Implementation;
- Monitoring & assessment of outcomes.

Each of these steps will be further presented and discussed.

*Data Gathering* refers to the collection of relevant data that could be used as a reference for the destination analysis and planning. This step was completed in the previous research when the radiography of the

tourism activity in Rodna commune was done. From analysing data offered by local authorities, to interviewing the entrepreneurs of the lodging units, the locals, and public authorities (the mayor, the Rodna Mountains National Park administrator), to capture the opinion of the mountain tourists by applying a questioner, and to search, read and synthesize other valuable researches and data (books, articles, statistics, etc.), all of these led to a proper data gathering which enabled the research to go further.

Worth mentioning here are the regional and national strategic visions, because all the efforts should be aligned with the actions taken at macro-level.

Bistrița-Năsăud established 4 directions for future development:

- Pillar 1 – Increasing the economic competitiveness of the region and stimulating research and innovation;
- Pillar 2 – Increase the region's accessibility, mobility of inhabitants, goods, and information;
- Pillar 3 – Increasing the quality of life of the inhabitants of the region;
- Pillar 4 – Protection of the natural and anthropic environment, efficient use of resources and reduction of polluting emissions.

For tourism, the strategy includes only a presentation of the actual context and some ambiguous phrases: "The challenges for 2020 are in the sustainable development of spa, cultural, and mountain tourism". The fact that mountain tourism is mentioned can bring some hope.

The vision at national level is: "Turn Romania into a quality tourism destination based on its natural and cultural heritage that meets European Union standards on the delivery of products and services and to achieve environmentally sustainable development of the tourism sector at a pace development of other tourist destinations in Europe". Sustainability and European standards are the key concepts that link the vision at the national level, to the one of the destinations.

The scope of the next phase, *Analyses and Interpretations*, is to analyse the data collected before and to provide guidance and reference to assist the planning process. It represents a meaningful interpretation of information and data gathered in the decision-making process.

The collected data should be brought together, and some considerations need to be made, in order to establish the relations between the elements, to understand the views from different stakeholders engaged and the assessments of carrying capacity, and to provide internal and

external analysis, in the form of PESTEL or SWOT analysis; the latter was chosen for the paper. This should result in determining the future position on the market.

The SWOT analysis concludes and synthesises the considerations made in previous research or earlier in the present paper (see table no. 2).

If the results from the analysis suggested that there are inappropriate or unachievable objectives for the destination, they should be reviewed, and a return to the second stage need to me made, to formulate a new set of planning objectives. But this is not the case, because the data gathering, and part of the analysis and interpretation were chronologically done before setting up the objectives.

**Table 2.** SWOT Matrix Analysis and Interpretation

		<b>Strengths</b>	<b>Weaknesses</b>
		-the possibility of rehabilitation of parental homes -high quantity of land available for tourism -proximity to the Rodna Mountains National Park -attractive tourist attractions (catacombs, fortified church, etc.) -diversity of tourism activities (winter sports)	-resources have started to degrade; they are not properly maintained -the ability of locals to individually attract funding is extremely low -poor infrastructure (road, trails, accommodation units) -non-existing marketing
<b>Opportunities</b>	-tourist demand development -starting the infrastructure improvement works -the opening of a skiing area (22 km) -awareness of the tourist potential of the area by the regional authorities and launching projects to support the promotion of tourism in the area (currently the road infrastructure and the ski area)	<i>Agreement – SO Strategies – transformation of the resources:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• attraction of investments in tourism facilities (because of the rising demand, the improvement of the infrastructure and the available resources)</li> </ul>	<i>Constraints – WO Strategies – redirecting resources:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• focus on improving the infrastructure (especially trails)</li> <li>• development of a marketing plan</li> <li>• proper maintenance of the resources (motivating factor: raising demand)</li> </ul>

		<b>Strengths</b>	<b>Weaknesses</b>
<b>Threats</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-unstable legislative framework</li> <li>-difficult access to regional and European funds</li> <li>-illegal deformations that can lead to damage to the Rodna Mountains National Park ecosystem</li> <li>-high risk of avalanches, fires, floods</li> </ul>	<p><i>Vulnerabilities – ST Strategies – diversification of activities:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• stricter regulations (and higher sanctions) to protect and conserve the Rodna Mountains National Park</li> <li>• efficient risk management plans</li> </ul>	<p><i>Problems – WT Strategies - avoiding the conditions in which the weaknesses are preponderant:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• training and consultancy for those who want to attract funds</li> <li>• incentives for those who want to invest to compensate the unstable legislative framework</li> </ul>

Source: Authors' own data processing

The *Development of the Strategic Vision* results in an initial picture of the general physical environment and the current development of tourism at the destination. The vision must take into consideration options and scenarios of tourism development based on relevant economic-environmental-social-cultural-institutional elements and it has to provide continuity and consistency to the process.

For this first step, it is necessary to analyse the existing tourism attractions, as well as the touristic offer.

As previously discussed, the list of touristic attractions includes:

- Rodna Mountains National Park;
- The Ethnographic and Mining Museum;
- The ruins of the medieval fortified church, the Romanesque basilica dating from the beginning of the 13<sup>th</sup> Century;
- The catacombs that cross the whole Rodna village, in which hundreds of people died during the Tatar invasion in 1241;
- Old mines in Valea Vinului village;
- Valea Vinului Writers' House where Lucian Blaga, Mihail Sadoveanu, Liviu Rebreanu, George Coșbuc (Romanian writers) and many others used to spend their holidays;
- Someș River crosses Rodna village, while Valea Băilor crosses Valea Vinului village.

The supply side comprises the following:

- Accessibility: by car (17D route) or by bus from Bistrița or Cluj-Napoca;

- Accommodation: 4 functional lodging units (a hotel and a boarding house are not in the business anymore; one boarding house functions only with closed circuit – property of Romsilva); 72 bed places in total;
- Leisure activities and entertainment (according to the interviews with the entrepreneurs): hiking, birdwatching, off-track cycling, a little bit of haunting, as well as carriage rides in winter.

The general aspect is of a destination characterized by: poor economic development, mostly exploiting forests activities (cutting trees), with no accredited public food unit, beautiful landscapes, and pure air.

After analysing these two essential, fundamental aspects, the vision can be establish: **to develop the commune in such a way that it will be seen by tourists as a place where they feel like going back in time, but without compromising the modern quality standards for all the touristic factors, and respecting all the sustainability principles in order to obtain a durable long-term development.**

*Formulation of Planning Objectives* is the next logical step; it considers the more specific objectives of the plan, which are central to developing the strategy, as they state the desired results. They need to be comprehensive and specific, supporting the vision. Also, they do not need to focus only on the tourism sector, but to consider how tourism could link with other sectors and contribute to the wider goals of sustainability.

The objectives are divided into 3 categories: infrastructure, marketing, and rehabilitation. These three directions address the three major problems: poor touristic infrastructure, lack of awareness, and heritage degradation (and therefore the degradation of touristic resources, as well as of some nice pieces of history). Then, each of the three objectives are divided into other tactical objectives. They respect the principle of SMART (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic, Timebound) objectives.

### **Objective 1: Infrastructure**

- Improving the road accessibility and infrastructure (by forming IDAs - Intercommunity Developing Association to consolidate the roads Maieru-Anieș-Rodna – 17D, Rodna-Măgura Ilvei – 172 J, and Ronda – Cârlibaba – 17 D) – deadline: 2022; responsible entities: County Council, Town Hall, and Local Councils of the involved communities;

- Developing incentives and efficient programs for the companies that activate in the tourism industry (eg. free concession of the Townhall's lands, free business trainings focused on hospitality, etc.) – deadline: 2021; responsible entity: Town Hall;
- Build a touristic centre in Valea Vinului village – deadline: 2021; responsible entity: Town Hall;
- Help the Administration of Rodna Mountains National Park to properly mark the hiking trails (more signs, better positioning) – deadline: 2020; responsible entities: Mountain Rescuers, ARMNP;
- Help the ARMNP to create and homologate new and interesting routes (a rise of minimum 5% from the 405 km of the 22 existing routes) – deadline: 2020; responsible entities: Mountain Rescuers, ARMNP;
- Collaboration with Natura2000 for creating cyclo-tourism paths – deadline: 2021; responsible entities: ARMNP, Mountain Rescuers, Natura2000;
- Create and co-fund with ARMNP a project for building infrastructure for equestrian tourism and attract one or multiple investors – deadline: 2022; responsible entities: ARMNP, Town Hall.

## **Objective 2: Marketing**

- Create a budgeted marketing campaign – deadline: 2020; responsible entities: ARMNP, Town Hall.  
And only after that:
- Create a website for tourists with excellent SEO (like VisitCluj or VisitAlba) – deadline: 2020; responsible entities: all stakeholders;
- Social Media Channels presence (e.g. Facebook, Instagram, TripAdvisor, etc.) – deadline: 2020 and then create meaningful content; responsible entities: all stakeholders;
- Media appearances (e.g. invite journalists to promote the beauty of the place) - as soon as possible and continuous; responsible entities: all stakeholders;
- Online presence of the Ethnographic and Mining Museum – deadline: 2020; responsible entities: Town Hall, the Museum;
- Online Ad Campaigns (e.g. Google Adwords, Facebook Ads, etc.) – as soon as possible and continuous; responsible entities: all stakeholders.

### **Objective 3: Rehabilitation**

- of the old church in Rodna village – deadline: 2022; responsible entities: Town Hall, the local parish;
- of the catacombs in Rodna village – deadline: 2023; responsible entity: Town Hall.
- of the mine openings in Valea Vinului village – deadline: 2022; responsible entities: Town Hall, EM Rodna;
- of the Valea Vinului Writers’ House – deadline: 2021; responsible entities: Town Hall, the Writers’ Association of Bistrița-Năsăud;
- of Baia lui Schneider (Schneider’s Bath) Cave, and development of a path from this cave to Poiana cu Narcise (The Meadow with Daffodils) – deadline: 2021; responsible entities: ARMNP, Mountain Rescuers.

*Generation of Alternatives for the Preliminary Plan* covers the next stage. It is exceedingly rare to have only one scenario that could meet the development objectives for a destination. The best approach is to prepare and evaluate alternative development scenarios. The factors when outlining and selecting alternatives are:

- The potential economic benefits generated by each alternative;
- Whether there is appropriate community involvement;
- Whether each alternative promotes a balanced development at the destination.

Special attention must be paid to physical solutions, development scale, legal requirement, specific actions, timescale, and financial plans for each objective. The result should be the selection of the preferred scenario and formulation of the preliminary plan.

In the case of Rodna, there is a high potential for primary livestock production (wool, meat, milk), and a moderate potential for primary food (fruits, berries, vegetables). This can help the economy of the commune. The opportunity here is an association that would help in distribution, but also in acquisitions, for a bigger purchasing power. All these represent great assets for agro-tourism, responsible tourism, community-based tourism, and sustainable development of the tourism.

In the *Consultation and Formulation of the Plan* step, the preliminary plan should be drawn and a wide public consultation about it should be organized, if it was not organized before. The most valuable benefits of

this consultation are the opinions and the feedback from the groups not involved before. When reaching the point where there are no significant contradictions, the final plan should be made. It must include definitions of technical terms, land use (zoning policy), infrastructure and facilities, timetable, and estimations of costs for the development. After that, the final plan should be approved, and legal basis must be established.

The outcome should include physical spatial definitions and plans, the responsibilities of stakeholders, the distribution of benefits from tourism.

In the present case-study, only theoretical aspects can be discussed, because there is no possibility of organizing the consultation, neither to make professional and technical plans for the land use and other aspects that need the work of an expert.

Anyway, the event can take place at Rodna Cultural Centre, as it has a decent event hall and the participants should include:

- members of the Town-Hall (including the Mayor);
- members of ARMNP (including the president of the administration);
- entrepreneurs (from hospitality, wood, agriculture, primary livestock, and other industries);
- locals (doctors, teachers, priests, students, youth, employees, retired people, persons with disabilities, etc.);
- local authorities (police, health services, firefighters, mountain rescue department) – for risk analysis;
- regional authorities (including the president of the County Council);
- specialists and experts (in tourism and regional planning).

After the event, the feedback and the opinions of the participants must be included in the final plan and a report containing all the pieces of information should be drawn up.

The *Implementation* techniques should be specified in the approved plan and, obviously, applied. Anyway, the implementation should not be considered only at the 7<sup>th</sup> stage, but through the whole planning process.

For Rodna, the implementation refers to:

- Evaluating financing options and choosing viable ones;
- Creating a DMO (Destination Management Organization) to coordinate the entire plan and to keep all stakeholders together (better communication, centralized information, etc.);



- Celebrating the results (events, galas, etc.);
- Permanent brainstorming for new sustainable ideas;
- Continuous actualization of the strategic plan.

*Monitoring*, the final stage of the regional planning process is monitoring, and it refers to the mechanism of monitoring, which provides feedback, which can be used in the evaluation of actual results from implementation.

The practical outcome of this stage consists of periodic reports that aim to provide a record of implementation by working with the stakeholders. It results in improving the actual outcomes and determining the objectives for the next planning period.

Practically, this will resume in:

- Quarterly meetings to evaluate the actual stage and to propose improvements or solutions if necessary, as well as making reports after each meeting (written by the DMO) regarding the outcomes of the meeting;
- Results presented every year by the DMO in a public, local conference, correlated with the initial objectives from the plan and with the quarterly reports.

After considering this entire process, with all its steps, their importance and their scope, and also the practical aspect of each of them for the sustainable development of tourism in Rodna, the most valuable and conclusive part is the final document, which represents the outcome of the whole process.

## **Conclusions**

The first part of the article explained the crucial importance of planning and showed its benefits for the tourism development, especially when sustainability is desired. The case-study presented the situation of an undervalued community, where mining was the primary source of income, and where another industry must grow, to at least maintain the living standards. In a previous research, the radiography of the commune from demographic, economic, social, cultural, environmental points of view was done and it was shown why tourism is the best alternative for the growth of the commune, as well as its implications and benefits.

The value of this paper comes from sketching a plan for Rodna commune, which brings a vision, three development directions, and several SMART objectives into discussion. Stakeholders and partnerships, collaboration, focus-groups, and meetings play an essential role in the success of the plan. Moreover, implementation, monitoring and control are considered.

The outcome of this process is represented by the final plan, which analyses, discusses, summarises, and concludes on each step in the process. Its purpose is to make each stakeholder, regardless of one's interest or level of education, which is the common vision and which are the directions and objectives everyone should assume and keep in mind when taking individual or common decisions. It can also determine the players in the industry to collaborate more, than to compete against each other in an aggressive way, and understand that having a bigger slice of a smaller cake is not as good as having a big slice of a much larger cake. In a nutshell, having a common framework can make everyone understand that by collaborating, and by applying a win-win strategy, the benefits for every individual party will be higher. But without this common framework, collaboration is at least extremely hard to be obtained, if not impossible.

In terms of proposals, the main one is to address the issue of destination management in the meeting of the Town Hall, to fund, and to point someone to do the work. Of course, a Destination Management Organization represents the most efficient solution, because: it has a direct interest in the results of the planning process; it can implement, monitor and control the process; the funding is split between the public and the private sectors; the collaboration between public and private sectors brings synergetic benefits to the whole community. The subjectivism can represent a limitation, but it fades away in the light of all the benefits stated before, and the fact that the stakeholders have the most valuable knowledge about the particularities and specificities of the place.

The second one is to always consult with the community. No plan that includes multiple players and affects a wide mass of people should be approved without consulting them first. The vulnerable categories should be included: people with disabilities, elderlies, etc. The feedback from them should always be taken into consideration with maximum seriousness and integrated into the final plan. Also, they should always be informed about the stages and results of the actions in the plan. Celebrating the results and all the people involved in the process can represent a major motivator and a key for success.

The final proposal regards the concepts that should always be in everyone's mind when taking actions and making decisions. Besides collaboration and the win-win approach, sustainability is mainly about the environment, but there are also other important dimensions: economic, cultural, social, policy, managerial, and political, that should not be overlooked.

That is why *today* should also be about ... planning for a brighter *tomorrow*!

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