

TOURISM POTENTIAL IN HISTORIC TOWNS: ROMANIAN CASE STUDIES

Iuliana Bucureescu

**“Ion Mincu” University of Architecture and Urbanism,
Romania**

ABSTRACT: As one of the most important activities in historic towns, cultural tourism started to be well-known in Romanian areas, especially after joining the European Union in 2007. An explosion of regional projects has taken place under the umbrella of both European and local funds, with tourism being a main direction of development, while restoration and enhancement of cultural heritage are subordinated to it. In many cases, rehabilitation projects in historic centers begin with the unmistakable desire to refocus the whole economy if possible, towards the great promises made by the tourism profits. Although it may seem a very profitable affair, contradictory aspects do not wait too long to appear in this relationship between the increasing tourism activity and the cultural values of historic towns. First steps in this direction are often made right from the beginning, their origin consisting mainly in the erroneous assessment of the tourism potential of a destination. A correct assessment is therefore necessary for planning a correct and balanced development. Tourism potential in historic towns means more than creating and promoting a large database of ‘must see’ objectives, but it should also mean assessing their capacity to cope with the negative impacts of the tourism. Two case studies for historic towns from Romania will be used to illustrate why tourism potential should be set from the very beginning in a well-balanced manner, taking into account the idea that an overdeveloped tourism activity cannot be supported by the destination, both built heritage and community lifestyle. **Keywords:** cultural tourism, historic centers, rehabilitation, tourism potential, Romania, architecture.

RESUMEN: Como una de las actividades más importantes en las ciudades históricas, el turismo cultural empezó siendo bien conocido en las zonas Rumanas después de la adhesión a la Unión Europea en 2007. Una explosión de proyectos regionales ocurrió debajo la égida de fondos europeos y locales, siendo el turismo la principal dirección de desarrollo en cuanto el restauro y la valorización del patrimonio cultural se subordinan a él. En muchos casos, los proyectos de rehabilitación en los centros históricos empiezan con el deseo inequívoco de reorientar toda la economía, si posible, para las grandes promesas hechas por los lucros del turismo. Aunque pueda parecer una conjugación muy rentable, no llevan mucho tiempo a aparecer aspectos contradictorios en esta relación entre el aumento de la actividad turística y los valores culturales de las ciudades históricas. Los primeros pasos en ese sentido son muchas veces hechos desde el inicio, consistiendo su origen principalmente en la apreciación errónea del potencial de un destino turístico. Una evaluación verdadera es, por lo tanto, necesaria para planear un desarrollo correcto y equilibrado. El potencial turístico en las ciudades históricas significa más que crear y promover una gran base de datos de locales de visita obligatoria; también debe de significar evaluar sus capacidades para trabajar los impactos negativos del turismo. Serán usados dos estudios de caso de ciudades históricas de Romania para ilustrar porque el

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potencial turístico debe de ser definido desde el inicio de forma bien equilibrada, teniendo en cuenta la idea de que una actividad turística sobre desarrollada puede no ser suportada por el destino, tanto el patrimonio construido como el estilo de vida de la comunidad. **Palabras clave:** arquitetura, centros históricos, potencial turístico, rehabilitación, Romania, turismo cultural.

RESUMO: Como uma das atividades mais importantes nas cidades históricas, o turismo cultural começou a ser bem conhecido nas zonas Romenas depois da adesão à União Europeia em 2007. Uma explosão de projetos regionais ocorreu sob a égide de fundos europeus e locais, sendo o turismo a principal direção de desenvolvimento enquanto o restauro e a valorização do património cultural se subordinam a ele. Em muitos casos, os projetos de reabilitação nos centros históricos começam com o desejo inequívoco de reorientar toda a economia, se possível, para as grandes promessas feitas pelos lucros do turismo. Embora possa parecer uma conjugação muito rentável, não demoram muito tempo a aparecer aspetos contraditórios nesta relação entre o aumento da atividade turística e os valores culturais das cidades históricas. Os primeiros passos nesse sentido são muitas vezes feitos desde o início, consistindo a sua origem principalmente na apreciação errónea do potencial de um destino turístico. Uma avaliação certa é, portanto, necessária para planear um desenvolvimento correto e equilibrado. O potencial turístico nas cidades históricas significa mais do que criar e promover uma grande base de dados de locais de visita obrigatória; também deve significar avaliar as suas capacidades para lidar com os impactos negativos do turismo. Serão usados dois estudos de caso de cidades históricas da Roménia para ilustrar porque é que o potencial turístico deve ser definido desde o início de forma bem equilibrada, tendo em conta a ideia de que uma atividade turística sobredesenvolvida pode não ser suportada pelo destino, tanto o património construído como o estilo de vida da comunidade. **Palavras-chave:** Arquitetura, centros históricos, potencial turístico, reabilitação, Roménia, turismo cultural.

INTRODUCTION

During the second half of the XXth century, with the improvements in technology, mass tourism developed, becoming a very popular global leisure activity. Niche tourism markets arose (among which cultural tourism too) trying to offer a solution to the negative effects of mass tourism. The cultural tourism may be a less destructive and more sustainable form of tourism, but nevertheless it is not a universal remedy to all negative impacts of mass tourism, at least not when developed unilaterally, having in mind economic profits.

As tourism generally has to do with the consumption of products, cultural tourism implies too a consumption of cultural products, thus culture becoming commercialized. So, there is a basic difference between a cultural heritage asset and a cultural tourism attraction, although their core is the same: the culture is being transformed for tourism purposes, through a certain commodification process, into products that can be consumed by tourists. This concept introduces a separation between the two domains (tourism and culture), because of conflicting objectives, often manifested in a contradiction that has a negative impact on the cultural values. Although both use the same cultural heritage assets, their views are different: the tourism activity regards them just as cultural products. At this moment, it is important to understand this point of view of tourism, because the tourism activity is determined by the tourism attractions (which are the reason and the central theme of the tourist visits) and without them

no destination has appeal for tourists. Therefore, it is essential first to identify these attractions and then assess the tourism potential of a cultural heritage place.

Therefore, because the relationship between heritage and tourism assets is inseparable, to resolve conflicting issues arising from it, it is essential to understand first the point of view of tourism, the meanings of cultural tourism products and how the tourism potential at a heritage place can be assessed.

GENERAL CONTEXT

Generally, the capacity of towns to cope with the tourism activity is rather high for the big cities, but low for the smaller towns (Jamieson, 1993). Most often, the town authorities welcome the increase of the tourist numbers, due to the economic benefits and the media visibility, and only rarely consider the possible negative effects and the capacity of the town to absorb them or its *carrying capacity* (Richards, 2005). Nevertheless, in the desire of quick profits, assessment of the tourism potential in historic towns is being limited, in many cases, to a large database of tourist sights (the '*must see*' objectives), their image and promotion being considered as most important, while the assessment of their robusticity (or their capacity to resist and absorb the negative impacts from tourism) is considered a secondary issue that can be solved afterwards, if some problems appear.

The development of the cultural tourism in general, and that of the urban cultural tourism in particular, has a positive economic effect as it also provides the means to maintain the character of the place (Feilden, 1993). Cultural tourism itself has become an increasing opportunity for people to travel and discover more and more, with curious tourists spreading all over heritage places, leading to, e.g. mass crowds and overdeveloped tourism infrastructure at heritage places as indirect risks. Thus, the possible negative effects of the large numbers of tourists and of an excessive development are not always taken into consideration, although it is predicted that the tourism in Europe will continuously increase, and therefore the towns will be confronted with an increasing number of visitors (Lagroup & Interarts, 2005). There are examples of negative effects, sometimes very obvious, which constitute an alarm worth taking into consideration: too many tourists may lead to monoculture, and may cause the disappearance of certain functions from the area (over)populated by tourists; at the same time, an imbalance between the numbers of tourists and locals may lead to a decrease of the hospitality level, a very important factor for the quality of tourism activity; also, too many tourists may have a negative physical effect on the cultural heritage of a town and can lead to an overcrowding of the

cultural attractions. These are not threats only for the heritage itself, which is often vulnerable, but also for the quality of the life of the local people and for certain economic activities (Moulin, 1993), as well as for the tourism itself (problems of overcrowding, pollution, feeling of non-authenticity, etc), finally giving less satisfaction for tourists, thus contributing to the decrease of the quality and appeal of the destinations (Shemdin-Simison, 1993). In this context, the World Heritage List, developed by UNESCO with the intention to define and conserve world heritage places, may have an opposite effect due to the increase in popularity of the places. Thus, cultural tourism can be considered as a human induced hazard, while its activity is already producing 'un-specific' disasters, with threat for the cultural heritage. Contradictory aspects appear in the relationship between the intense cultural tourism and the cultural values of historic towns.

In conclusion, from the very beginning, an erroneous assessment of the tourism potential at a destination can influence the whole process of development following it, with conflict situations appearing from this imbalance. For this reason, each town must develop a clear strategy concerning the way that tourism will be developed, especially the towns with historic centers and UNESCO tourism objectives, because there is often a considerable gap between the real tourism potential and the ongoing cultural tourism in terms of marketing. Having a correct image of the tourism potential of a historic town means first of all an assessment of its tourism market appeal, that is, what can be promoted (e.g., cultural and ethnical diversity, gastronomy, architecture, festivals and cultural events, etc), as well as, in the long term, assessing how much tourism the town can support so that its own resources for tourism are not affected. This correct assessment of the tourism potential at a destination, especially in heritage places, is necessary from the very beginning as a solution for planning sustainable tourism activity and appropriate rehabilitation operations that ensure a long time protection of the heritage. This type of assessment is the first step to be taken into account, because it can reduce the risk that the historic towns suffer from tourism. Further, in this work, two case studies of Romanian historic towns will be presented (Curinschi Vorona, 1967), which will illustrate a possible approach along these lines.

METHODOLOGY OF ASSESSMENT OF THE TOURISM POTENTIAL AT A DESTINATION

Different tourism destinations compete on the international market with the purpose of increasing the number of visitors. The competitiveness and sustainability in tourism is warranted if the necessities of all groups of interest (tourists, tourism professionals and local popu-

lation) are achieved (Tzsér, 2009): the tourist's satisfaction (the request - the choice of a destination as a result of its attractiveness and of its services), economic and professional profits for the tourism specialists, as well as positive impacts of the tourism on the local community (protection of the valuable heritage and improvement of the living standards of the local population). But only some of the factors that significantly affect both the tourism and the competitiveness of a tourism destination are determinant for a correct assessment of the tourism potential at a destination. Thus, the basis for a destination to be considered attractive is given, first of all, by what it offers (its market appeal) and by the tourism infrastructure built around this offer, but also by the ability of that location to cope with the possible negative effects of tourism development (its robusticity). Because tourism and cultural heritage management often function independently and in parallel, although they share the same cultural assets, it is important to achieve products that are attractive for visitors, and, at the same time, protect and conserve the cultural and heritage values.

The assessment matrix of the market appeal vs. the robusticity of a destination (McKercher & Du Cros, 2009):

For the correct assessment of the tourism potential at a destination, one has to identify the key factors to be considered and combine them within a model that can be easily used to assess the information gathered on an 'asset-by-asset' basis (for a region, area or ensemble). The integrated results are the basis of the future process of planning the development. Such an assessment model concerns the way that gathered information is systematically processed, so that one can draw valuable conclusions about the tourism potential of the considered assets - the basis of suitable management actions: the identification of the assets that are appropriate for the development of cultural tourism, the assets where tourism may constitute an option and the assets where (intense) tourism is not recommended, etc.

In order to achieve a real sustainability, both tourism use and heritage conservation are properly treated in the management activities, so that the market appeal of a destination must be correlated with its ability to cope with an increased level of visitation, or to be modified in a way that does not compromise its cultural values. Thus, determining the tourism potential means more than an assessment of the market appeal, that is, also the assessment of the ability to absorb possible negative impacts of the tourism (the robusticity of the considered tourism destination). The relationship between these two analyzed dimensions, that can be both estimated to be low, moderate, or high, can be represented in the so-called Market Appeal – Robusticity Matrix.

A simple look at the place where the asset is located in this matrix can suggest what kind of actions are more recommended for the future planning of the management activities.

**Market Appeal – Robusticity Matrix for the assessment of the
Tourism Potential (The Potential Matrix)**

| | | | | |
|---------------|----|------|----|------|
| Robusticity | D1 | C1 | A1 | HIGH |
| | D2 | C2 | A2 | |
| | D3 | B2 | B1 | LOW |
| LOW | | HIGH | | |
| Market Appeal | | | | |

The assets with grade “A”: have a moderate to high market appeal and high (A1) to moderate (A2) robusticity. They are appropriate for a significant tourism activity, because of their characteristics that attract tourists and, at the same time, because of their high capacity to be used for tourism purposes. In this case, only minimal to moderate conservation activities should be recommended in order to protect the cultural values from the impacts of a high visitation level.

The assets with grade “B”: have a market appeal from moderate (B2) to high (B1), but a low robusticity. Tourists may be highly interested to visit these places, but their physical state is very fragile, or their cultural values are very sensitive to high visitation levels. Such locations have a limited ability to cope with an intensive use, or an excessive tourism development. Independent of the management activity, it is possible that some tourism activity will appear; therefore, the main challenge of the management will be to ensure that the visitation does not harm the cultural values of the asset (actions of both conservation and management of the visitors).

The assets with grade “C”: have a moderate tourism attraction and a high (C1) to moderate (C2) robusticity. They can therefore resist visiting levels even higher than suggested by their tourism market appeal. Therefore, although the number of tourists will be limited, one can approach a management oriented towards a significant development of the assets, which will enhance its market appeal.

The assets with grade “D”: have a small or limited market appeal, therefore it is likely that they will not attract a significant level of visits, except when they are so heavily commodified that their intrinsic values are almost fully sacrificed. In such cases, it is advisable to accept the idea of their limited or lack of tourism appeal, and suggest managing their development for other reasons.

An assessment database of the tourism potential at a destination (McKercher & Du Cros, 2009):

A long list of factors were identified that must be considered when it is desired to assess how to combine tourism with the management of the cultural heritage. An analysis of all these factors is not easy to handle in a practical manner, which should lead to the location of a particular asset in the Potential Matrix. Ideally, each monument, ensemble, or historic zone should be separately analyzed and placed in the matrix, such as to highlight the dominating tendency and suggest the appropriate actions. But in the case of a historic center, this task is very complex and would take a long time of investigation. Therefore, a global assessment of all the valuable built heritage and town planning features is more accessible and preferable. Thus, a simplified assessment procedure focuses on the most significant elements, namely:¹⁰ the status of symbol, uniqueness, historic value, state of degradation/repair, as well as the environment, location, access, tourism activity, aesthetical values, types of impacts, etc. Within the analysis of all these variables, a certain score (grade) is assigned to each investigated aspect, separately for tourism and cultural heritage management. The grades may be qualitative, if based on a binary basis (yes/no), or more detailed, if based on a graded scale of values (for which we adopt the following: 0 – not existent, 1 – very low, 2 – low, 3 – medium, 4 – high, 5 – very high, 6 – exceptional). As most of the variables have a qualitative nature, the grading process has a subjective character, so that the variables considered more critical in the assessment process may be given a more important role. Finally, the efficiency of the assessment depends on the ability of the assessor (or auditor) to place himself in the situation of a detached, non-biased tourist.

Further on, for both Tourism and Cultural Heritage Management, the grades assigned to the chosen indicators are summed giving a “Total” grade. In the end, we shall transform this number into a “Score”, which is calculated as the percentage represented by the “Total” number from the maximum possible value (for example, in the case of “Tourism”, where we examine 14 subindicators, the maximum total grade is $14 \times 6 = 84$). This way, the final “Scores” for both types of activities have values that vary between 0 and 100. Finally, the position in the Potential Matrix is obtained at the intersection of the two scores represented on the horizontal axis (corresponding to the market appeal) and on the vertical axis (characterizing the robusticity). The resulting position indicates a certain stature of the assessed item, which may suggest certain recommendations for the future evolution and tourism interventions. Below is given the list of the main factors considered for grading, proposed by Bob McKercher & Hilary Du Cros, in their well-known book on *Tourism and cultural heritage management* (mentioned at Ref. no. 9 in the current article):

CULTURAL HERITAGE TOURISM SUBINDICATORS

TOURISM

Market Appeal

- Ambience and setting
- Well-known outside local area
- National icon or symbol
- Can tell a “good story” - evocative place
- Has some aspect to distinguish it from nearby attractions
- Appeals to special needs or uses (e.g., pilgrimages, festivals, sports)
- Complements other tourism products in area/region/destination
- Tourism activity in the region
- Destination associated with culture or heritage
- Political support

Product Design Needs

- Access to asset's features
- Good transport/access to asset from population centers
- Proximity to other heritage attractions
- Amenities (toilets, parking, pathways, refreshments, availability of information)

CULTURAL HERITAGE MANAGEMENT

Cultural Significance

- Aesthetic value (including architectural value)
- Historical value
- Educational value
- Social value
- Scientific value
- Rare or common (locally, regionally, nationally)
- Representativeness (locally, regionally, nationally)

Robusticity

- Fragility of the asset
- State of repair
- Management plan or policy in place
- Regular monitoring and maintenance

- Potential for ongoing involvement and consultation of key stakeholders
- Potential for negative impacts of high visitation on:
 - fabric of the asset(s) and lifestyle and cultural traditions of local community(ies)
- Potential for modifications (as part of product development) to have negative impacts on:
 - fabric of the asset(s) and lifestyle and cultural traditions of local community(ies)

III. CASE STUDY NUMBER 1: SULINA HISTORIC TOWN

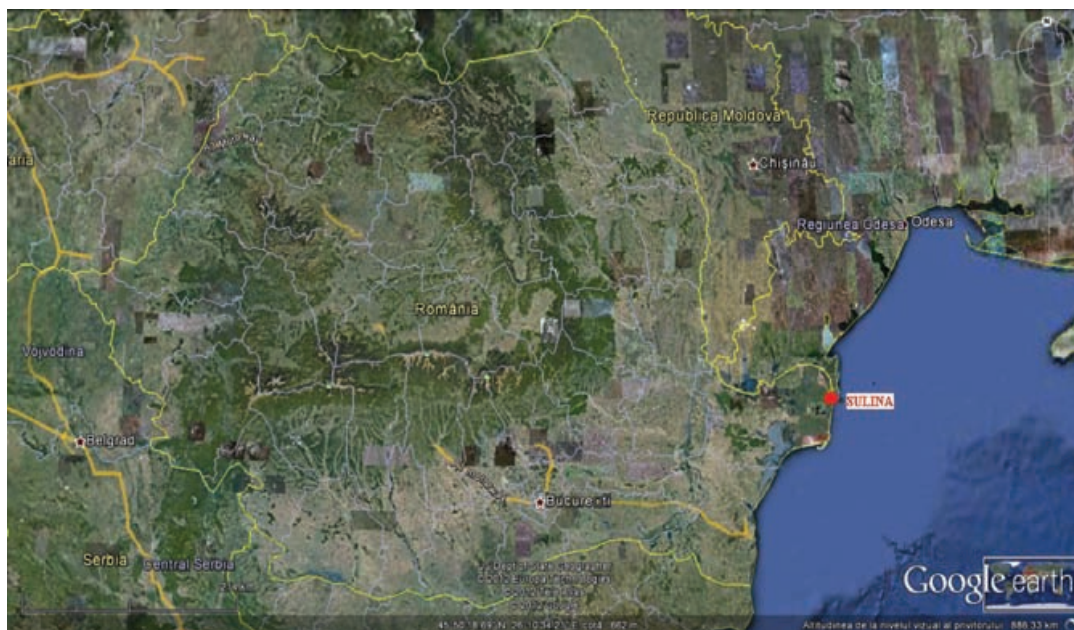


Fig. 1 – Sulina: geographic location on the map of Romania

CULTURAL HERITAGE TOURISM SUBINDICATORS

Tourism – total: 50; score: 59.5

A) Market appeal - partial total: 45

1. Ambience and setting (exceptional - 6): Sulina belongs to the Biosphere Reserve of the Danube Delta, being located close to the flowing of the Sulina branch of the Danube River into the Black Sea. As it is well known, the Danube Delta, with an outstanding biodiversity, is part of the UNESCO World Heritage List, actually being a combined heritage (a cultural landscape): both natural and anthropogenic (Brătuleanu, 2006). The geographic isolation of the town favored in time the conservation of the regional features (Meiță, 2010): unique

ecosystem (landscape, flora, fauna), a favorable climate (a pleasant, temperate-continental climate, with sea influences), sandy beach (36 km of coastal strip, up to Saint George little town), built heritage that is specific to a harbor at both Danube and the Black Sea (a remarkable synthesis between the vernacular and colonial architectural styles).

2. **Well-known outside local area (high - 4):** Sulina is the only Romanian harbor both fluvial (at Danube) and maritime (at Black Sea), a strategic port of historical importance. Nowadays, it is the terminal fluvial-maritime harbor on the pan-European corridor VII of transport and tourism traffic (a portal-town for the Danube Delta as an object of tourism interest).

3. **National icon or symbol (exceptional - 6):** The Danube Delta Biosphere Reserve (also comprising the town of Sulina), holds a triple statute of international protection, as Biosphere Reserve, Wet Zone of International Interest (one of the largest in Europe), and Site of the Universal Natural Heritage. At the national level, the Sulina town and its surroundings are classified as Site Natura 2000 (a Romanian government program) and an objective of national importance (natural and cultural heritage). It also has a statute of Free Harbor (*Porto Franco*).

4. **Can tell a “good story” - evocative place (medium - 3):** It is told that Saint Nicholas, traveling on the sea, stopped the tempest with his prayers, thus becoming the spiritual patron of the sailors and travelers.

5. **Has some aspect to distinguish it from nearby attractions (very high - 5):** Sulina is the only historic town situated at the same time at the Danube, Black Sea, and within the Danube Delta Biosphere Reserve, thus synthesizing an exceptional landscape with a wide cultural diversity, such that sightseeing through the historic center of Sulina is different from a boat trip on the Delta channels or on the beach.

6. **Appeals to special needs or uses, e.g. pilgrimages, festivals, sports (high - 4):** The cultural life of Sulina was a blooming one in the pre-war period, especially with traditions and customs of the many local minorities: for example, the Minorities Festival “*Serbările Deltei*” (Lipovan Russians, Ukrainians, Germans, Turks, Gypsies, Magyars, Greeks). The tradition of fishing and of gastronomy based on fish from the area is also a well-known feature, while fishing gives a specific tint to the socio-economic and cultural profile of the town.

7. **Tourism activity in the region (high - 4):** Diversification on the tourism market, within the frame of seasonal activities (Bucurescu, 2011), like: balneary tourism, or helio-marine cure (small prices in

comparison with the rest of the seaside), sport tourism (fishing and hunting, but also ski-jets and motor boats with a negative impact on the environment), eco-tourism (observing and understanding the natural and built heritage resources of the Danube Delta), cruising tourism (due to the favorable geographic position, the cruising ships stop for visits at the important objectives of the town), overflight tourism (visiting the Delta space by flying devices or balloons).

8. Complements other tourism products in area/region/destination (very high - 5): Cultural tourism in the historic town of Sulina goes along with other types of tourism, providing resources that are different from the natural ones of the Danube Delta.

9. Destination associated with culture or heritage (high - 4): In the List of Historical Monuments of Romania (updated in 2010) there are declared two XIXth century urban sites, historical monuments in the “A” category (5), as well as in the “B” category (19).

10. Political support (high - 4): The Sulina town and its surroundings are declared objectives of national importance (Government Ordinance Nr. 125/2000 and Law Nr. 345/2001), which favor the development of the agrotourism and cultural tourism (rehabilitation of the tourism assets and their introduction in the touristic routes, commissioning of an airport or a heliport for emergencies, rehabilitation of equipments and infrastructure – asphaltting the access routes, water networks, sewerage, electricity, telephone).

B) Product design needs – tourism infrastructure - partial total: 5

11. Good transport/access to asset from population centers (very low - 1): Sulina is connected to the Tulcea town (county residence) only by navigation (on the Sulina branch of Danube). As a major impediment, in the winter, the freezing of Danube is the major factor that diminishes the accessibility of the localities from the Danube Delta by the Delta channels; at the same time, on short distance, communal roads connect Sulina to other localities (Sf. Gheorghe, Rosetti, Cardon, Letea, etc).

12. Access to asset's features (very low - 1): The town is characterized by an exclusive dependency on the naval transport and thus a reduced accessibility during the extra-summer period, absence of road and air transportation: it is the only town in Romania without access by road. In summertime, there is public transportation between town and beach, and moving in the neighborhood by private boats.

13. Proximity to other heritage attractions (not existent - 0):

Farther away there are a few important archaeological sites (e.g., the Roman fortress Halmyris in the South of the Danube Delta), and the closest urban center is the city of Tulcea (the most important port at Danube, at about 50 km).

14. Amenities - toilets, parking, pathways, refreshments, availability of information (medium - 3):

The infrastructure for tourism is poor, underdeveloped, non-diversified, but with some recent developments of viable economic activities (small ship navigation, building and hospitality-related activities – restaurants, pensions, trade). New professions are still weakly practiced: computer services (publicity and sites on Internet, tourism managers and operators, in the housing and catering industry, gastronomy, etc). It is proposed, still at a low level, to develop telecommunications (radio-TV, telephone and Internet), a river taxi service, a system of tourism information and promotion, beach services and specific tourism products (miniature ships, uniforms, coat of arms, albums, DVD's, etc).

Cultural heritage management - total: 32; score: 33.3

A) Cultural significance - partial total: 20

- **architecture of rural type:** proportions, materials (especially the thatched roofs) and the colors of the vernacular architecture from the Danube Delta, plating of the facades with wooden covering strap and the wider eaves as specific elements adapted to the conditions of the saline atmosphere of Sulina.

- **architecture of the pantiled roofs:** in the central area of the town, as a transition from the rural to the urban architecture, with dwelling at both stories, rarely with shops at the ground floor, bowindows and wooden covering strap plating one of the levels being specific elements for Sulina.

- **architecture of urban type:** specific to the I-st and II-nd streets (the area along the Danube, with very narrow plots, commercially attractive and therefore more expensive), an almost continuous front of joined buildings, with two-slope roofs, usually with shop at the ground floor and dwelling at the first storey, classic decorations of the facades, pantiled roofs, bowindows as a contact element of the house with the street.



Figures 2, 3, 4: Examples of architecture from Sulina: rural, pantiled roof architecture and urban type.



Fig. 5 – Palace of the European Commission of Danube – ECD (1860-1868): neoclassical two-story building, with main facade to the Street I, headquarters of the ECD until 1921.



Fig. 6 – Lighthouse of the ECD (1869-1870): ensemble comprising the lighthouse itself (with an internal system of mirrors with a special technique), then rooms disposed around an inner courtyard.



Fig. 7 – The Old Lighthouse (1887): on the right-hand side of the Danube branch, representative of the naval architecture.



Fig. 8 - The Saint Nicholas old orthodox church (1868): classical architectural vocabulary combined with a dome with Russian bulb.



Fig. 9 – The Saint Nicholas Greek orthodox church (1866-67): classical architectural vocabulary and a wooden veranda.



Fig. 10 – The cemetery of the ECD (middle of XIXth century): proof of multiethnic community, different religious confessions (old rite and new orthodox, Muslim, Catholic and Jewish).

1. **Educational value (medium - 3):** of interest for the cultural diversity (architectural – town planning and multiethnic character of Sulina within the frame of the Biodiversity of Danube Delta).
2. **Social value (low - 2):** Although a multiethnic and cosmopolitan town some time ago, the statistics show a relatively constant demographic decline, but the multiethnic character of the town can still be perceived (specific architecture and customs of minorities still present).

3. **Scientific value (not existent - 0):** The cultural values of Sulina have no scientific value, but the neighborhood of the Danube Delta provides innumerable such values (rare fauna and flora).
4. **Rare or common locally, regionally, nationally (high - 4):** Sulina has a value of rarity, by its very varied architecture, in a specific and unique context created by the Danube Delta.
5. **Representativeness locally, regionally, nationally (high - 4):** Sulina is the only historic town located in the area of the Danube Delta Biosphere Reserve, with a valuable historic site, while other towns from Dobrogea region, outside the Danube Delta (e.g., Tulcea, Constanța and Mangalia) don't have monuments of similar value.

B) Robusticity - partial total: 12

6. **State of repair (very low - 1):** Very fragile state of the buildings with historic value (abandoned buildings, rural type houses with very low comfort).
7. **Fragility of the asset (very low - 1):** The demographic decline has led to a loss of the multiethnic character of the local population, having as a consequence the abandonment of the dwellings and of the traditional customs. The reduced accessibility of the town (apparently a disadvantage) has also a special value, the travel on water being an essential part of the life of this town, and a curiosity for tourists.
8. **Management plan or policy in place (low - 2):** Weak concern of the local authorities for stimulating and support of the development of the local business environment, and for using development programs, European funds, etc.
9. **Regular monitoring and maintenance (low - 2):** It is desired to include Sulina in different thematic routes or European cultural routes (terminus point or polarization point).
10. **Potential for ongoing involvement and consultation of key stakeholders (low - 2):** Attempts to direct the mentality of the local people towards the principles of sustainable development and of environmental protection (e.g., by seminars, citizen education, awareness of the community on the heritage values and on the tourism as a solution to avoid the disappearance of the town by depopulation).

Potential for negative impacts of high visitation on:

11. **Fabric of the asset(s) (very low - 1):** An intense visitation of the town would produce agglomeration in the Danube Delta (very fragile ecosystem) and in the historic center of Sulina (an area concentrated on

CULTURAL HERITAGE TOURISM SUBINDICATORS:

Tourism - total: 50; score: 59.5

A) Market appeal - total partial: 35

1.Ambience and setting (very high - 5): The county of Maramureș, an ethnographic entity - part of the Romanian civilization, has partially conserved the lifestyle and traditions of the peasants from the past, as well as their culture (e.g., the Maramureș wooden gates – with decorative motifs with symbols and significance). As a living proof of the creative genius, the locals built the famous wooden churches with painted interior as a reaction to the interdiction, by the past authorities, of building churches of resistant materials (about 100 such churches, 8 of them belonging to the UNESCO international heritage). Baia Mare is located in the western-central part of the county, on the Săsar river, in a depression with predominantly mountainous relief, which also holds Romania's largest wooded area with edible chestnut trees (the Baia Mare Reservation of edible chestnut stands, about 500 hectares, declared site NATURA 2000). The deposits of non-ferrous ores from the area favored the mining industry, which was the main activity in the past, but recent accidents led to the closing of the mines, and the town now faces the challenges of a post-industrial economy.

2.Well-known outside local area (medium - 3): Baia Mare is the most important town of the county, well-known for its past mining activity and the partially conserved culture of the area.

3.National icon or symbol (absent - 0): it is not the case.

4.Can tell a “good story”- evocative place (low - 2): one tells that Pinteia the Brave (Pinteia Viteazul), a famous outlaw from this region during the XVIIIth century, was killed by a bullet in the area of the Butchers tower (the only tower left from the fortified precincts of the medieval town).

5.Has some aspect to distinguish it from nearby attractions (high - 4): Baia Mare, as a mining town, has a remarkable history, providing both an architecture and a culture that are different from those of the rest of the Maramureș county (especially well-known for its wooden churches and gates).

6.Appeals to special needs or uses - e.g. pilgrimages, festivals, sports (medium - 3): the traditional annual Feast of the Chestnuts, the establishing of museums and libraries for large numbers

of visitors, but a low level of participation at cultural events (e.g. theatre, cinema).

7. Tourism activity in the region (very high - 5): The Maramureș county has a high tourism potential (attractive mountain relief, historic monuments, religious objectives, ethnographic events): rural tourism - agrotourism (the Maramureș villages with customs, traditions, handicrafts and local gastronomy), eco-tourism (it comprises 38 protected natural areas), sports tourism (mountain hiking, climbing, paragliding, fishing, hunting, rafting-canoe, kayak, ski, riding, cyclo-tourism and mountain-bike), cultural tourism (the towns Baia Sprie, Cavnic and Sighetul Marmăției, The Merry Cemetery from Săpânța, the wooden churches), religious/pilgrimage tourism (wooden churches, but also monasteries like Săpânța Peri and Bârsana), business and event tourism (workshops, conferences and other events in hotels and institutions from Baia Mare, the Millennium Business Center recently restored within a complex rehabilitation project, etc).

8. Complements other tourism products in area/region/destination (high - 4): the cultural tourism (with potential in Baia Mare) joins the other types of tourism practiced in Maramureș, completing what is offered by the rural and natural environment.

9. Destination associated with culture or heritage (high - 4): In the List of Historic Monuments of Romania (updated in 2010) are declared the historic center of the Baia Mare town (the medieval town *Rivulus Dominarum*, XV–XIXth centuries), historical monuments in the “A” category (16), as well as in the “B” category (46).

10. Political support (very high - 5): a very wide legislation framework favors Baia Mare as an urban pole of development, also having an influence on the historic center of the town (Baia Mare is a settlement of inter-county importance, a center of regional polarization, pole of urban development with a singular position, but is also declared a *disfavored area* by the Government Ordinance (G.O.) Nr. 203/1999, while by the G.O. Nr. 399/2001 it is declared an *area of industrial restructuring*; later, Agenda 21 set up the Urban Observatory on districts).

B) Product design needs –tourism infrastructure- partial total: 15

1. Good transport/access to asset from population centers (medium - 3): favorable location, close to the borders with Hun-

gary and Ukraine, but reduced access, by old roads and railways, and thus reduced access to the pan-European corridors and the rest of the country. Also, bad traffic with the surroundings due to the lack of a town road ring. The Baia Mare airport presently has connection only with Bucharest.

2. Access to asset's features (medium - 3): access problems in the area of the historic center – lack of fluency in traffic, lack of parking places, lack of tracks for bicycles and pedestrians.

3. Proximity to other heritage attractions (excellent - 6): throughout the county, the wooden churches (8 of them enlisted in the UNESCO International Heritage List), The Merry Cemetery of Săpânța, other urban centers with historic areas (the towns of Baia Sprie, Cavnic, Sighetul Marmăției).

4. Amenities - toilets, parking, pathways, refreshments, availability of information (medium - 3): The economic profile of Maramureș was concentrated for a long time on mining and metallurgy, and it is facing now difficulties in the restructuring of the economy (post-industrial economy after the closing of the mines, with just a weak increase in the services area). Consequently, the infrastructure for the transport towards the tourism areas in Maramureș is rather poor. The accommodation capacity in Baia Mare is insufficient, there is a poor specialization of the tourism workforce, and a poor offer of training and re-qualification after the closing of the mines, to all these adding an exodus of the working population towards other areas. However, it is desired to create a tourism brand for Baia Mare (based, e.g. on traditional handicraft products, a revitalization of the industrial heritage through the industrial archaeology initiative), by advertising, sometimes too much, the tourism potential (e.g., by tourism packages or partnerships, points of tourism information).

Cultural heritage management - total: 58; score: 60.4

A) Cultural significance - partial total: 20

1. Historical value (high - 4): Baia Mare followed the specific steps for the occurrence and development of the towns with mining industry: the medieval town was founded in an area of older mining, dated before the Roman Dacia. It is attested as having an urban statute in 1329, in an act of the Chancellery of King Carol Robert (*Civitatis Rivulus Dominarum*). The subsequent rulers sup-

ported the mining, the town becoming one of the most developed and richest mining centers from the Transylvania of the middle ages. The commander of the Baia Mare and Baia Sprie towns colonized the area with Germans to boost the mining, the colonists getting certain privileges (the rights of a *king's town*), thus making up an autonomous urban settlement. In 1469, King Matei Corvin allowed the fortification of the town. During the XVIIth century, the town extends outside the fortification walls, which gradually lost their utility. The population increases, during the XVIII-XIXth centuries, the main activities being mining, processing of the non-ferrous and gold ores, appearing new administrative buildings, modernizations in transport and mining, and mining-related industries.

2. Aesthetic value, including architectural and urban value (high - 4) (Mitru, I. & Paskucz, 2005): The medieval town had a quasi-circular fortified precinct, adapted to the relief. Its structure is distinguished by the geometric regularity of the center (two rectangular squares – the marketplace and the religious one), integrated into a quasi-rectangular street network, around which one still conserves the plotting of the medieval system (similar to the Cluj town, the most cartesian formula met in both medieval Transylvania and other Central-European cases). In time, churches of different religions were placed in the neighborhood of the central square, thus marking the importance of this area. The specific architecture of the historic center is the medieval one, with different later interventions: the buildings on the perimeter of the central square (The Liberty Square - Piața Libertății) date since the Gothic period of the XIV- XVth centuries, the facades making a continuous front, sometimes interrupted by narrow streets, with later interventions of Baroque style. The typical plotting of the German settlers has narrow and deep plots, with the smaller side perpendicular to the square, the houses looking to the street/square. The buildings have basement, ground floor, and a first floor, with access to the inner courtyard by a gateway corridor on the main façade. During the communist times, the old center was abandoned, and a new civic center was built, in the neighborhood of the historic one; also, parts of the old town were demolished. After 2000, the medieval central square and some buildings from its perimeter were restored within the urban rehabilitation project Millennium III.



Figures 12, 13, 14: The Liberty Square: the continuous front of the houses from the XIV- XVIIth centuries



Fig. 15: The Ensemble Stephan's Tower (XIVth century): comprising the foundations of the Gothic church (dismantled ruins) and the Stephan's Tower – the Gothic bell-tower of the church.



Fig. 16: The Iancu de Hunedoara House, or Elisabeta House (1446-68): a part of the former medieval castle built by the voivode for his wife, having nowadays many owners.



Fig. 17: The Black Eagle Old Inn ("Hanul La Vulturul Negru") (XVIIIth century): U-shaped Baroque building, initially an inn, then City Hall, Courthouse, and Land Ownership Office, rehabilitated in 2000 through the Millennium project.



Fig. 18: The Butchers Tower (“Turnul M celarilor”) (XIV–XVth century):
The Butchers bastion or the Ammunition tower, the only tower left from the medieval town fortifications, recently rehabilitated as an exhibition place.



Fig. 19: Building of the former mint and of the mines administration (1734-1739): had an important role for the town, being part of the fortification wall, today hosting the Museum of Archaeology and History.



Fig. 20: The hotel-restaurant complex The Miner (“Minerul”), former Saint Stephan (1911): representative for the secessionist style of the time, the most luxurious hotel of the town during the interwar period.



Fig. 21: Roman Catholic Church of The Holy Trinity (1717-1719):
Baroque church of the Jesuit monks.



Fig. 22: Minorite Church of Saint Anton (1402): built by the Minorites order in the Peace square.



Fig. 23: Reformed Church (1792): neoclassic church with a tower dominating the old town.

Other museums of the town: The county's arts museum (arranged in a Baroque building of the XVIIIth century - former office of the salines and salt deposit, then residence of a judge, and a bank), The Ensemble of Popular Architecture and Technique located on the Flower Hill (the county museum of ethnography and folk art and the open air village museum), The Museum of Mineralogy (with outstanding samples of mine flowers from the Baia Mare region), The Planetarium.

3.Educational value (medium - 3): interest for the cultural diversity (the architectural-urbanistic values and the mining character of the town in relationship with the wooden churches).

4. Social value (medium - 3): the mining cluster, constituted since 1329, gave a special character to both Baia Mare town and its area (industrial character based on mining and metallurgy). Though the town population decreased, the historic center recorded an increase, by attracting a relatively wealthy social layer, its real estate value being now one of the highest in the town.

5.Scientific value (very low - 1): a valuable scientific component would exist if the former mining galleries would be open for visits (*in situ* presentation of the techniques of extraction, processing, transport, etc), completing the cultural component of the town.

6.Rare or common - locally, regionally, nationally (low - 2): Baia Mare presents common elements in the context of the mining settlements from the area and of the medieval towns from Transylvania.

7. Representativeness - locally, regionally, nationally (medium - 3): Baia Mare is the most representative town with mining character and existing historic resources, county capital at present.

B) Robusticity - partial total: 38

8. State of repair (medium - 3): good state of conservation in the areas of urban regeneration (the buildings restored through the Millennium project), but, as for the rest, there is a risk of degradation of the historic monuments (e.g., *the ghettos* for the disfavored communities from the center of the town). Also, there is the risk of the collapse of the former mines before they are introduced in the tourism development.

9. Fragility of the asset (medium - 3): the quality of the historic center is endangered by the environmental factors, the intense traffic and the proximity of industrial facilities (missing the protection by a green belt). However, the real estate value in the historic center is increasing, favoring the possibilities of conservation and protection of the area.

10. Management plan or policy in place (high - 4): Examples of projects or programs with impact on the historic center – the realized project of urban regeneration of the historic center - Millennium III, the ongoing rehabilitation in the Fortress Square – The Stephan's Tower area (Piața Cetății - Turnul Ștefan), the general urban plan of the Baia Mare city, the plan of sustainable development of the Maramureș county 2007-2013, a master plan of integrated urban regeneration Phoenix (2008), the trans-border operational program Hungary-Slovakia-Romania-Ukraine 2007-2013, the CIVIC urban observatory.

11. Regular monitoring and maintenance (medium - 3): future targets are increasing the attractiveness of the Săsar river and of the old town, by including them within an urban route, regulation of the traffic, closing of the industrial facilities from proximity, and the rehabilitation of the industrial sites.

12. Potential for ongoing involvement and consultation of key stakeholders (medium - 3): information, communication and transparency for the activities aiming at an optimal coordination, and public consultation such as to involve locals in decision making. Following an investigation it was established that the built heritage has a clear position in the perception of the local people, who want its protection and capitalization.

Potential for negative impacts of high visitation on:

13. **Fabric of the asset(s) (very high - 5):** an intense tourism may produce an agglomeration of the historic center, but this aspect is already present today due to the heavy traffic. As a solution, the mass crowds due to many tourists may be balanced by the visit of museums outside this area or by a diversified tourism offer in the neighborhood of the town.

14. **Lifestyle and cultural traditions of local community(ies) (excellent - 6):** the massive layoffs from the mining sector have already changed the lifestyle of the local communities, the development of the tourism being a desirable option.

Potential for modifications (as part of product development) to have negative impacts on:

1. **Fabric of the asset(s) (very high - 5):** the economy re-oriented towards tourism requires new accommodation facilities, balanced interventions being a source of income for the future rehabilitation, conservation and restoration works of the historic monuments (e.g., 14 Liberty Place - the Diafan hotel).

2. **Lifestyle and cultural traditions of local community(ies) (excellent - 6):** closing of the mines and the local economic reshaping of the last 10 years led to a post-industrial economic profile of Baia Mare (increased unemployment and migration towards economically more attractive locations), such that the development of the tourism may balance the labor market (training, formation and involvement of the unemployed).

CONCLUSIONS

In this work is presented an application of the model proposed by McKercher and Du Cross (mentioned at *Ref. no. 9* in the current article) for the assessment of the tourism potential in two Romanian historic towns. The method is based on the examination of a number of indicators of both market appeal and robusticity (the capacity to cope with the negative effects of tourism), their grading allowed placement of the investigated case within a "Potential Matrix" (or Market Appeal versus Robusticity Matrix). Each of the two cases is located at a certain position in this matrix, and, on the basis of this type of classification, one can make specific recommendations aiming at an efficient and balanced development of the tourism at that location, in close re-

lation with the politics of cultural heritage management. This way, one hopes to be able to choose the right conservation measures such as to reduce the negative impacts of the tourism visits.

Sulina: Position on the market appeal – Robusticity Matrix

| | | | | | | |
|--|----|----|------|------|-------------|---|
| D1 | C1 | A1 | 6 | 100 | exceptional | ROBUSTICITY |
| | | | 5 | | very high | |
| | | | 4 | 66.6 | high | |
| D2 | C2 | A2 | 4 | | | |
| | | | 3 | | moderate | |
| | | | 2 | 33.3 | | |
| D3 | B2 | B1 | 2 | | low | |
| | | | 1 | | very low | |
| | | | 0 | 0 | inexistent | |
| 0 | 1 | 2 | 2 | 3 | 4 | |
| 0 | | | 33.3 | | 66.6 | 100 |
| <div>inexistent</div> <div>very low</div> <div>low</div> <div>moderate</div> <div>high</div> <div>very high</div> <div>exceptional</div> | | | | | | OBSERVATIONS: SULINA is placed within the B2/C2 area – moderate to high market appeal = final score 59.5 (values: unique geographic position, within an exceptional, natural context; impediments: tourism infrastructure and politics weakly developed, difficult access to the location – only by water) + moderate to low robusticity = final score 33.3 (values: unique architectural and urban character, in an outstanding multiethnic and multicultural historical context; impediments: fragility and degradation of the existing built heritage, especially the one based on wood, poor management, as well as the specific of the local traditional life, based on fishing). |
| MARKET APPEAL | | | | | | |

In the two case studies that were analyzed, the two historic towns – Sulina and Baia Mare - are rather different from many points of view (geographic position, access, history, evolution, architecture, town planning, environment, etc). The step-by-step analysis, performed on the basis of the chosen set of indicators provides very interesting results. From the Market Appeal point of view, the two cases have similar scores, indicating a clear potential for tourism activities.

Baia Mare: Position on the market appeal – Robusticity Matrix

| | | | | | | | |
|---------------|-----------------|-----|----------|------|-------------|--|--|
| D1 | C1 | A1 | 6 | 100 | exceptional | ROBUSTICITY | |
| | | | 5 | | very high | | |
| | | | 4 | 66.6 | high | | |
| D2 | <u>BM</u> C2 | A2 | 4 | | | | |
| | | | 3 | | moderate | | |
| | | | 2 | 33.3 | | | |
| D3 | B2 | B1 | 2 | | low | | |
| | | | 1 | | very low | | |
| | | | 0 | 0 | inexistent | | |
| 0 | 1 | 2 | 2 | 3 | 4 | OBSERVATIONS: BAIA MARE is placed in the C2 area: moderate to high market appeal = final score 59.5 (values: urban center of Maramureş – location of 8 wooden churches with interior paintings from the UNESCO international heritage. impediments: tourism infrastructure in development and rather difficult access to the location) + moderate to high robusticity = final score 60.4 (values: medieval architecture typical for a mining historic town; reshaping of the economy and of the working places in favor of tourism; impediments: partial fragility due to the degradation of the existing built heritage). | |
| 0 | | | 33.3 | | 66.6 | 100 | |
| inexistent | very low | low | moderate | high | very high | exceptional | |
| MARKET APPEAL | | | | | | | |

However, from the point of view of their robusticity (their capacity to cope with increasing tourism), the two historic towns differ substantially. This can be illustrated in the following figure, where the scores obtained for their robusticity are represented in relation with the continuum of the management options, ranging from very strong conservation measures (for cases of very low robusticity, occupying the left-hand side) to the possibility of developments adapted for high visitation levels (for very robust cases, at the right-hand side of the axis) (Barry, 1993). As one can see, the two historic towns occupy different, intermediate positions between the two extreme cases, the Sulina historic town presenting a greater fragility than the Baia Mare historic town.

The continuum of the management options
Management policy



Based on these results, the recommendations that can be made for the future tourism development in the two case studies will be different, and they will be based on those weak points revealed by the low grades assigned. Thus, one can recommend the following management options:

Historic town of Sulina:

It has many special and valuable features that may attract tourists, and in the classification it is assigned with a moderate to high market appeal. At the same time, the analysis of its robusticity shows that it has a relatively low capacity to cope with levels of tourism use that exceed certain limits. Due to this low robusticity, careful conservation measures must be taken in order to protect its cultural values from the negative effects of an intense tourism activity. During the recent years, especially after 1990 (the inclusion of the Danube Delta Biosphere Reserve in the UNESCO international heritage), a rather intense tourism activity occurred independently of a management activity. For example, during 2000-2009 most of the indicators of the tourism activity in the Danube Delta area doubled their values (Bucurescu, 2011). Unfortunately, its effects until now have been the occurrence of an inadequate tourism architecture (from the volumetric, architectural and stylistic points of view), and the lack of conservation and enhancement of the value of the historic center (a frail tendency in this direction can be seen during the recent years, but marked by lack of funds, unfortunately). Thus, the challenges for the heritage management are: to ensure that the visitors' management is under control and does not endanger the cultural values, to concentrate on the conservation of the already existing built heritage and on keeping their authenticity, on conservation of the customs and traditions of the ethnic minorities, to keep under control the visitors at the place. Due to the geographic position, a visitors management to control the number of tourists, both in the Danube Delta and Sulina, is relatively easy and natural to achieve, due to the access that is made only by navigation: a more careful conservation of both, the natural and built heritage, can be made by simple methods of controlling the access into the Danube Delta Bio-

sphere Reserve (within the limits of the accommodation capacity, by a filter in Tulcea, the main locality of access in the Danube Delta). At the same time, one should make that the difficulty of the travel to the location becomes a pleasant part of the experience for tourists. Concerning the tourism accommodation infrastructure, the management should recommend an orientation towards agrotourism, a tourism niche that is most adequate in this case, because it highlights the features of the local architecture and traditions; in spite of the less sophisticated tourism services, it addresses to a target group which is eager for new experiences, less pretentious, more oriented towards cultural and rural tourism, searching authenticity, traditional handicrafts, local customs and gastronomy, etc.

Historic town of Baia Mare:

It also has a moderate to high market appeal but, unlike Sulina, has a moderate to high robusticity that allows visitation levels higher than those suggested by the real present tourism attraction. The Millennium project of urban regeneration increased the tourism potential by an integral restoration of some historic monuments and of the medieval central square. The only tower left from the medieval precinct was also restored, and, at present, there are works at the Fortress Square (Piata Cetății) with the Stephan's Tower. Even if the number of tourists will not be very high, and their visit in Baia Mare will mostly be related to the fact that it is the main urban center and the starting point to the wooden churches of Maramures (UNESCO monuments), an adequate management may highlight more the potential of the historic center, in order to increase its market appeal. As an example, the disposed mining areas may be transformed into tourism attractions, by making possible safe visits of certain parts of the former mining galleries, as an element of novelty that complements the other tourism offers of the city and its surroundings. As concerning the tourism infrastructure, the management should be oriented towards adaptation, with an accent on the conservation of the important historic buildings, enhancement of the historic monuments and change of their destination with functions that are compatible with the existing historic structure (e.g., commercial spaces at the ground floor, service units with extensions towards the squares of the historic center, accommodation places in old buildings, where one can ensure increased comfort, for all types of tourists). As examples of central locations, one can mention the Miner Complex, already under important functional rehabilitation (which had, in the past, this accommodation function), as well as the rehabilitation of the building at no. 14, Liberty Square, into a modest hotel.

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