Industrial Tourism as Activity Support for the Development of Roşia Montană Area (Alba County, Romania)

I. Gavrilă-Paven, A.C. Muntean

Abstract—In this study the authors want to analyze the possibility of combining in Roşia Montană’s area the classic forms of tourism activity with a new form that is being drawn lately, respectively the industrial tourism. Therefore, this way, the human potential with cultural value as well as the natural potential, unaffected by the mining exploitation, can be valorized through the classic forms of tourism, while the old mining exploitation as well as the areas affected by the unsustainable exploitation of the subsoil riches in the area, instead of being avoided can be rehabilitated and opened to the tourists by unifying the efforts of all responsible economic agents for this area. Also, from the article results that the industrial tourism can be successfully combine with the youth tourism due to the didactical purpose of this tourism form.

Keywords—Touristic activity, natural touristic potential, industrial tourism, unsustainable mining exploitation, sustainable economic development, corporate social responsibility.

I. INTRODUCTION

In this study we want to analyze the possibility that at a certain time, tourism becomes a base activity for a community well-known through its mining exploitations, such as Roşia Montană (Alba County, Romania). We will analyze the possibility that such a community with a rich natural and human hand-made potential insufficiently valorized to be included in the national touristic circuit of Romania and to offer its inhabitants viable alternatives.

At first sight, associating a mining area with the touristic activity seems to have no economic value, but if we analyze all the aspects of the relation between tourism and local community’s values, we will be able to identify a series of opportunities for pointing out both the positive and negative aspects of the studied area, which will be given as example of unsustainable economic activity developed in this area.

Presently, the development of Roşia Montană area has two main directions, each of them with its own adepts. Thus, being an area with mining activity tradition, the first direction is focused on sustaining the Roşia Montană Gold Corporation project which focuses on developing a responsible mining activity in this area, without affecting the environment. The second direction refers to rejecting the development of mining activity in this area with the community focusing on the development other activities, one of them being tourism.

This study aim at pointing out that the two directions described above do not exclude each other but they can be developed together, the mining activity giving the right value to the touristic potential of the area. In sustaining this idea we will analyze a similar region, respectively the Andalusia region from southern Spain, in which the mining activity was a tradition until the end of the 20th century, after which the efforts were concentrated on developing the touristic activity for sustaining the local community.

Methodologically, we will expand the analysis upon the concepts of cultural identity and community, which although are immaterial concepts, their manifestation involves a series of tangible effects in territorial development. Therefore we will try, considering this framework, to see how the touristic activity, respectively the promotion of a new form of tourism – industrial tourism – fits in this community and in its identity.

Analyzing the touristic activity in this area, we must consider the fact that every tourist needs a minimum infrastructure for his comfort as well as the natural and human hand-made touristic potential that gives the impetus for the touristic activity.

II. PROBLEM

A. The Presentation of Roşia Montană Commune

The commune of Roşia Montană is localized in the northeastern part of the Metaliferi Mountains and of the golden area that lies between Caraci (Hunedoara County) and Baia de Arieş and Zlatna (Alba County), nearby the towns of Abrud and Câmpeni.

In its structure there are 16 villages and small villages spread on a surface of 5168 hectares: Corna, Bunta, Dăroaia, Gura Roşia, Coasta Henţii, Curâţuri, Cârpiniş, Soal, Vârtope, Gârda Bărbuleşti, Iacobesti, Ighenesti, Bălnoştie, Tărina, Bildeşti and Roşia Montană – administrative center. Its population is about 5000 inhabitants, their main occupation (which is related to the main source of population’s incomes)
being at one moment in time the mining activity. In 2006, the mining enterprise from Roșia Montană (RoșiaMin) was shut down and the majority of its employees were unemployed [15].

The root of the mining activity in Roșia Montană is placed dates back from the Iron Age, with a significant intensification during the roman occupation (2nd and 3rd century). The most impressive archeological discoveries were made between 1786 and 1855 when there were found in the golden mine of Roșia Montană the waxed tablets, with highly significant evidence for knowing the daily life and social and juridical organization of the miners in antiquity. The discoveries of roman vestiges continued especially through the works of Alburnus Maior Project, coordinated by the National Museum of Romanian History, financially supported by Roșia Montană Gold Corporation after the year 2000 [4] [9]. After the Roman retreat from Dacia (271-275), the mining activity continued, but starting with the 16th-17th centuries there were realized a series of important innovations at the ore extraction installations. Until the beginning of the 18th century, the mining activity in Roșia Montană was practiced only by the private associations, after which the state gets involved and this involvement intensifies in the 19th century. The parallel extraction of the ore both by the state and private associations continues until 1948 when the subsoil riches now belong to the state; the Roșia Montană Mining Enterprise was founded which, as we shown above, activated until 2006.

In 1981, inside the mining exploitation was established The Mining Museum [20]. Recently, this museum was restored with the financial resources of the Roșia Montană Gold Corporation.

In 1899, the mining from Roșia Montană was presented at the World Exhibit in Paris, with 12 drawings showing the state mine and a beautiful collection of mining golden flowers that impressed the visitors. This was, if we can call it so, the first major act of touristic promotion of the area.

Regarding the habitation, the ethnologists observed that the typological repertoire of the houses includes traditional houses for the Apuseni Mountains’ area and specific shapes for the fair architecture (mainly in the Roșia Montană village). The buildings from the historical center in Roșia Montană are proposed for conservation, being already a touristic attraction.

Based on the ethnological investigations made in Roșia Montană, specialists consider that many of the existing buildings are architectonic monuments of special value, being also unique proofs of unmistakable rural life and civilization. Thus, among other things, the authors of the ethological study suggest the following: (1) in situ preservation of the Roșia Montană’s market and of some of the monuments located on Brazilor street and in Berg neighborhood because in this areas there is best preserved the specific of a prosper location where the golden ore exploitation was practiced; (2) the relocation of valuable monuments from the area affected by the future mining exploitation in another area suitable for relocation; (3) the organization of a campaign for preserving the architectural elements (poles, ironware, carpentry and others), the furniture firms, the specific lightmining elements, the old claims and other artifacts with cultural value [26] [27].
2002 and 2006, the feasibility studies, including the studies of the initial conditions needed for the Environment Impact Evaluation Study were elaborated. In April 2002, was finished the General Urban Plan for the Roşia Montană commune, which also includes the mining project proposed by Roşia Montană Gold Corporation. This is also the moment when is finalized the Zonal Urban Plan for the industrial area of Roşia Montană. During the period of June 2002 – May 2004 and October 2006 – February 2008, Roşia Montană Gold Corporation buys properties in the project’s area, based on an Action Plan for Relocation and Resettlement according to the standards of World Bank and IFC. In May 2004, as a result of the permanent consultations with the community, Roşia Montană Gold Corporation is reviewing the Local Plan for relocation and resettlement; also, the technical project is improved so that it will reflect the recommendations of the community and civil society. In December 2004, Roşia Montană Gold Corporation begins the procedure for obtaining the environment agreement through the request submitter to the Alba Environment Protection Agency in December 14th 2004. In May 2006, Roşia Montană Gold Corporation sends to the Ministry of Environment the Environmental Impact Study carried out by an extended team of Romanian and foreign experts. During the next period, July – August 2006, there are held 16 public consultations (14 in Romania and 2 in Hungary) for evaluating the environmental impact, for presenting to the public opinion the mining project and for responding to the questions addressed by the people; a result of the information stage and public debate, 5600 questions were sent to Roşia Montană Gold Corporation by the Ministry of Environment in January 2007. The answers to all 5600 questions were sent to the Environment Ministry in May 2007, in a document that has 12.600 pages representing an annex to the Evaluation of the Environmental Impact Report, this way resulted a final document of over 17.000 pages. During June and August 2007, begins the analysis of the evaluation of the Environmental Impact Report with 4 meetings of the Technical Analyzing Commission. In July 2007, Roşia Montană Gold Corporation begins the construction of a new neighborhood in Alba Iulia, called Recea, for the families from the project developing area that chose to be relocated in the town. In September 2007, after only 4 meetings of the Technical Analyzing Commission, the Ministry of Environment suspended the evaluation procedure of the Environmental Impact Report. Roşia Montană Gold Corporation legally requested the resuming of the Technical Analyzing Commission’s activity; the juridical procedure is still on the role. In May 2009, Recea neighborhood from Alba Iulia is officially opened; 125 families are moving to Alba Iulia in a new house. In September 2009, Roşia Montană community is officially recorded in Guinness Book as being the first locality in the world with the largest number of people that simultaneously sought gold with the buddle. The record, homologated by the famous organization Guinness World Records, was recorded during the celebration of the Miner Day, in August 30th 2009. The main organizer of the event was Roşia Montană City Hall and Roşia Montană Gold Corporation assured the financial and logistic support. In October 2009, were recorded 1000 employment demands from the inhabitants of the local community; this aspect has to be pointed out considering the fact that almost 80% of the community’s inhabitants do not have a job.

Due to the results of the mining exploitations from the past and also due to the natural environment degradation, the mining activity in the area has opponents that plead for finding other alternatives to the mining activity that will contribute to the development of the area [19].

Roşia Montană Gold Corporation project’s opponents argue that the alternatives for Roşia Montană and the region are agriculture and tourism. Regarding the chances for developing a profitable agriculture numerous studies were made starting the year 2000, proving that the land is not suitable for an intensive agriculture and the subsistence agriculture is not a sustainable alternative. Furthermore, the interest for association of the agriculturalists from the region is blocked by the negative representations upon the agriculture from the communist period [2] [14].

In these conditions, the tourism and particularly the entrepreneurship in tourism have to be seen as an opportune and interesting social innovation [18], together with the modern surface mining through the Roşia Montană Gold Corporation project.

Roşia Montană Gold Corporation’s project will have a significant economic impact, which has to be consider, which operates in a small community.

According to the company’s management the economic impact means more than just being capable to generate profit. It includes the value generated by the activities that the company realized every day, together with their partners and contractors. Thus, the company desires to encourage the creation of development opportunities at the local level, through what it can do. The company is committed to support the sustainable development of the local business environment and of social projects by resorting as much as possible to local suppliers. Thus, purchases from local suppliers are a priority, followed, in order, by regional and national ones.

According to the company’s experts the mining project proposed is not in contradiction with the other economic development projects in the area – on the contrary, it may attract other projects. The direct economic and social impact of the project will be recorded in the communes of Roşia Montană and Bucium, as well as in the town of Abrud, which is the neighborhood. These locations and others from the Roşia Montană project area (Baia de Arieş, Bistra, Ciureuleasa, Câmpeni, Sohodol, Zlatna, Lupşa) have a long-lasting mining tradition, and are strongly affected by the current situation. In fact, mining disappeared with the closure of the two state exploitations, RoşiaMin and Cupru Min, leaving over 1200 people from the area unemployed. As a result of the acute lack of jobs, people – especially the young ones – are leaving the area for developed urban areas in the country or abroad. Consequently, the area is going through a continuous depopulation and demographic ageing process.

According to the company’s experts, at the community level, the Roşia Montană project will generate the following benefits: (1) jobs – the mining project will create over 2.300
We have four main towns: Linares, Alquife, Serón and Villanueva del Río y Minas in which the mining activity was the heart of the economic and social life during the 20th century and where this industrial branch was abandoned and generated a series of economic and social effects upon the local community, as well as it happened in other localities depending on mining activity around the world.

We chose this example because in this region and in its towns we still can find characteristic landscapes for the mining activity (surface mining exploitation, galleries, ponds, buildings specific for the mining activity, workshops, specific mining transportation infrastructure and others) as well a series of intangible elements (mining traditions, rituals, memories and others) [7]. Another factor that contributed to choosing this example is the fact that the industrial tourism is almost inexistent despite of the efforts and the activities that were made for its development.

This region with the towns given as reference point represents a good example for Roşia Montană due to the fact that all touristic sights were persevered and included in the touristic circuit and the manner in which all these objectives were arranged for tourists beginning with the mining galleries, trains for mining materials transportation and finishing with the local miners traditions.

Although, based on studies performed in the Andalusian region we have to take into consideration the inhabitants’ ‘reticence’ in accepting this new form of tourism. Thus, according to the carried studies, the inhabitants still do not accept these objectives as being representative for their community although efforts were made for promoting tourism.

This rejection of the mining activity’s symbols as being representative for the communities in the Andalusian region can also be the result of the fact that due to the disappearance of the mining activity, the inhabitants had to find alternatives to replace the old traditional activity. Thus, due to the negative effects generated by the shutting down of the old mines, the inhabitants rejected the symbols of the old activity as being representative for their community strongly affected.

As a consequence, in order to develop the Roşia Montană Gold Corporation project, also this aspect has to be considered, respectively the attitude of the local community. Nevertheless, the great advantage in accepting the tourism as a complementary activity that can contribute to developing the entire region is the fact that the traditional activity will not disappear, but, on the contrary, it will developed in a responsible manner towards the community and environment according to the Roşia Montană Gold Corporation project.

B. Current situation of the tourism activity in Roşia Montană

For analyzing the development of the touristic activity at the level of a community and its surroundings we must have the main objective for this activity, respectively the material or immaterial symbols that incite the tourists. From this point of view, the touristic potential of Roşia Montană is huge, including a various touristic objectives specific to various forms of tourism: (1) archeological vestiges from which the roman galleries stand out; (2) architecture of the historical...
center of Roşia Montană; (3) proofs of the preindustrial mining activity such as the galleries, ponds; (4) old mines from the industrial exploitation period through the state company Roşia Min; (5) cultural thesaurus including traditions, customs, festivals (Miner Day, Miners’ Theatre, competitions, traditional music competitions and others).

Thus, considering the touristic potential, the analyzed area has many advantages that are not valorized.

This rich touristic potential has to be accompanied by a well developed infrastructure that will allow tourism to develop properly. So, analyzing the data related to the accommodation and public alimentation infrastructure specific for this activity, between 2002 and 2009, we notice that the touristic activity is underdeveloped. Analyzing the official information regarding the evolution of the accommodation structures and of the public alimentation points needed for the touristic activity, we can see that between 2002 and 2007, although it only one unit from this category was registered, it recorded no incomes from the base activity. Data referring to the touristic activity have been recorded only for 2008 and 2009, the number increasing each year. Still, the contribution to the Gross Domestic Product of the area remains insignificant, increasing from 4,500 to 5,000 Euros.

Of course, in promoting the tourism as an alternative activity for sustaining the local community, the accommodation places offered by the inhabitants who want to provide these services must also be considered. But, for practicing a professional touristic activity we have to consider a previous training of the inhabitants, the possibility that they could benefit of minimum information that could help them promote in an efficient way their offer as well as to improve and diversify the services that can be offered (starting with the accommodation in traditional spaces, participating in a series of traditional activities specific for the local community, gastronomic products specific for the area, including also trips by carriage or sledge).

C. Correlated development of the mining with the tourism activity in Roşia Montană

Touristic activity has to be seen as an opportunity for developing the local community in Roşia Montană and its surroundings, considering the perspective of developing the Roşia Montană Gold Corporation. In this sense we have to analyze the efforts made by Roşia Montană Gold Corporation until present, as well as future plans, its involvement in the life of the local community, the support offered by the company for the discovery and preservation the main touristic objectives of this area, as well as the promise of rehabilitating the areas affected by the old mining exploitation and practice of a responsible and sustainable mining activity that could be given as example for similar communities.

Thus, we consider that the industrial tourism, having in this area extracting industry objectives, it is a suitable mean for revitalizing the economic activity and supporting the local community. The critical situation of the mining areas in our country, the shutting down of the mining exploitations and all the negative aspects which accompany these processes, increase the importance of finding economic alternatives for sustaining these areas. In these conditions, the tourism development gives a real opportunity that has demonstrated its economic viability and local community development in various locations [5] [25]. In the same time, the negative economic phenomenon affecting these areas, such as
unemployment, emigration, economic inactivity, amplify the interest for trying to symbolically redefine these communities and seek alternatives that can sustain the development of the mining activity, where it is possible in a responsible manner [4] [21].

Together with the development of the touristic activity, respectively promoting and developing the industrial tourism, and pointing out a series of touristic objectives that in the past had a special economic value for those areas and finding alternatives for using them furthermore. Thus, we have to see the industrial tourism as an economic and social chance for developing the old mining communities, either replacing the old technologies with new ones that do not affect the environment and the community, or finding new constructions and equipments (some of them being unique in the branch) through opening thematic museums, parks that will valorize the old equipments and installations, different exhibitions and others.

The solution that we give is referring to the correlated development of both mining exploitation and tourism activity as a whole that in a first analysis seemed to exclude each other. So, the mining activity represents in fact the central objective of the touristic activity for this area.

D. Community involvement: identity and industrial tourism

Identity and community are concepts rather intangible than tangible, because they do not suppose an explicit materialization or involvement of a series of classical constructions that will have material effects.

Therefore, considering the future development of the touristic activity for Roşia Montană, every tourist will be curious to discover (and the inhabitants will be glad to present): (1) archeological vestiges that offer first information related to Alburnus Maior, the old name of Roşia Montană, dated 131 AD and which includes: waxed tablets, roman public buildings, traces of the antique miners, almost 40 votive altars, over 1,400 cremation graves, over 10,000 artifacts, roman galleries, galleries from the Middle Ages, Modern Age and from the present activity; (2) historical center of Roşia Montană village, characterized by the presence of the big stone house, old and new massive buildings of the mining exploitation and of the local authorities, also the old churches give the impression to all visitors that they are in a mountain village; (3) proofs of the preindustrial mining such as Cătălina-Moluneşti, Păru Carpeni and Piaţa Corbului galleries, ponds, accumulating lakes built a few hundred years ago for recreation and fishing (Găuri, Brazi, Anghel, Mare); (4) old mines from the industrial exploitation by the state company Roşia Min, the old enterprise buildings complex, original installations and equipments – some of them properly rehabilitated being able to demonstrate their purpose, etc.; (5) cultural heritage of the Roşia Montană community which has developed during the last centuries as a mono-industrial area, mining activity being the base activity. The other occupations – agriculture, traditional crafts, wood processing, etc. – had been complementarily and had never replaced the mining activity. On the other hand, the social life of the Roşia Montană community remained strongly related to the mining activity: from the reopening of the stamps’ activity and “Open Pasture” in spring, until Saint Varvara, the miners’ protector in December, the inhabitants of the Roşia Montană community had a lot of occasions to celebrate (Jocul Făşingarilor, Bolbotele, Easter, Miner Day, Mining Community Festival, „Mărie, dragă Mărie” Festival, etc.).

In the same time, considering the Roşia Montană Gold Corporation’s involvement, we have to recognize also the efforts made by this company in preserving the cultural patrimony of the community and valorize it in a proper way as well as the activities planned for the future after the project’s beginning. The mining project of Roşia Montană Gold Corporation also includes the rehabilitation and preservation of the Roşia Montană Historical Center, opening a modern mining museum, introduction in the touristic circuit of the Cătălina-Monuleşti, Păru Carpeni and Piaţa Corbului galleries, restoration of the funerary monument from the Găuri Pond, in situ preservation of the roman vestiges discovered in Carpeni area, as well as the organization of the integrated touristic circuits of all protected areas and their inclusion in the national and international touristic circuit. Also, most of the industrial equipments used in the past were included in an inventory and some of them will be rehabilitated and organized for museum presentation and touristic visiting [6] [8] [16] [23].

The close relation that exists between the touristic activities development and the strengthening of the local community identity will contribute to the development of responsible and aware tourists and visitors regarding the effects that an unsustainable exploitation of the subsoil riches can have. Furthermore, considering the situation in which Roşia Montană Gold Corporation project will demonstrate practically its viability considering the economic, social and environmental responsibility, this area could be a point of reference for mining exploitation and their effects. The way in which touristic activity can influence the tourists and visitors’ behavior was analyzed by well-known specialists in the field [3] [12] [13], starting with the behavior and cultural changes of the hosts [22], that can finally contribute to forming and consolidating a new image and identity [24].

IV. CONCLUSIONS

Roşia Montană can be and deserves to be a unique touristic destination. Here, the tourists will be able to discover new people, specific traditions and the base activity of this community – mining. Tourists will be able to see and understood the reality of this destination, whose existence is strongly related to the mining activity. Roşia Montană was and will be a mining location, but the valorization of its entire cultural patrimony can transform it in a special destination for Romanian and foreign tourists.

After the Roşia Montană Gold Corporation project will be closed, in Roşia Montană will be a lot of history to be seen and understood, there will be more galleries accessible to visitors and there will be a Miner Museum specific to the 21st century.

Certainly, for accomplishing such an objective there is needed a better knowledge of the area’s realities. The area’s
complexity in which the tourism activity will be developed in Roșia Montană, the administration capacity, stakeholders or interests’ diversity (in which is combined the local and global), imply great, interdisciplinary and even participative research as a methodology [14]. A rethinking of the governance in the terms of stimulating the participation in the decision making process regarding the community, together with the elimination of the psycho-sociological barriers that are opposing in front of a good territory governance is needed [17].

Considering all the aspects analyzed we can draw the conclusion that the industrial tourism could be one of the solution for developing the youth tourism in our country, due to the fact that there is the possibility of including such industrial objectives into touristic sights that are shown for didactical purposes [1] [10]. These purposes can refer to the aspects of the of the economic activity developed without considering the medium impact, the search for finding solution for solving the medium problems of this area or of the local community, or for historical purposes as an example of evolution of the activity.

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She is PhD LECTOR at “I Decembrie 1918” University of Alba Iulia, Romania and member in the Quality Management Department of the same institution. Since 2010 she is REGIONAL MANAGER at “I Decembrie 1918” University of Alba Iulia for the project “Training and assistance in managerial – entrepreneurial area for small and future entrepreneurs, managers and employees from the small and medium enterprises from the North-East, North-West, Central and South-East Regions”. During 2005 and 2009 she was the FINANCIAL RESPONSIBLE for the projects with international and national financing implemented by the Filantropia Orthodox Association, Alba Iulia, Romania. Books: Investiţiile în economia contemorâna (Investments in Contemporary Economy), Cluj-Napoca, Romania, Casa Cartii de Știință Publishing House, 2010; Microeconomie – Îndrumar practic (Microeconomics – Practical Notebook) Cluj-Napoca, Romania, Risoprint Publishing House, 2007. She is focused on research upon the economic development and the current theme is referring to the tourism’s development in Roșia Montană Area (Alba County, Romania). The author’s research will continue with an analyzed based on a questionnaire applied to the local people from the Roșia Montană and also to the potential tourists for this area.
PhD Ionela Gavrilă-Paven is a member of the General Association of the Economists Romania, Alba Branch since 2009 and a member of Balkan Environmental Association for the years 2007 and 2009.


The author is PhD LECTURER at “1 Decembrie 1918” University of Alba Iulia, Romania and The ERASMUS Institutional Coordinator. She worked as team member in projects like “A Marketing Study for Alba Iulia Fortress” financed by Local Council of Alba Iulia (2008), “The socio-economic impact of Roşia Montană Project on Local Community” (2007), “Training and assistance in managerial – entrepreneurial area for small and future entrepreneurs, managers and employees from the small and medium enterprises from the North-East, North-West, Central and South-East Regions” (2009).

PhD Ionela Gavrilă-Paven is a member of the General Association of the Economists Romania, Alba Branch since 2009 and a member of Balkan Environmental Association for 2009.