

Spatial planning and local development. Beius Land (Romania) as project territory

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Abstract—Romania has 18 territorial entities known as “lands” within its territory, with series of specific features making the difference between them and the surrounding areas. These are not artificially created territories, but ones with a regional coherence expressed in the objective reality, both on territorial and especially mental aspect of the respective area’s inhabitants. Because of their territorial reality, spatial planning could make the most of the quality of “land” by imposing them as project territories. The present study suggests an association of three major concepts as endogenous development, local development and project territory, in order to propose Beius Land as project territory, trying thus to promote a different spatial planning approach. This would eventually serve to the local implementation of sustainable development strategies, with practical applicability and utility, as tools for spatial planning professionals and local decision makers. The main reason for proposing Beius Land as project territory is to keep the traditional identity marks of this area, fully developed during the 19th century. The more recent socio-economic transformations, related to the Communist Regime, the difficult transition to the market economy, the admission into the European Union and the globalisation, contributed to the fading of some of this identity marks. Nowadays there are still being maintained elements related to the traditional Professions and crafts. Within an adequate strategic planning process, this new untapped side of Beius Land identity (which is a general asset of the land-type spaces) could be capitalized in order to map out a sustainable evolution direction which would conserve the authenticity, and offer alternative economic development anchored into the territorial reality.

Keywords—Endogenous development, Local development, Project territory, Spatial planning

I. INTRODUCTION

LANDS are geographical regions with deep authenticity specific to Romania, where the Romanian spirit has remained unaltered throughout history [1]. Lands’ originality relies on both their natural mode of formation and on the current features and valences of their distinct cultural entity, arising from the individual’s ancestral links with its habitat embodied in their specific regional coherence. This territorial coherence lead to the birth of a sense of belonging to a specific space and community. This special feeling is then transformed into a collective consciousness and becomes a way of living.

Romania’s “land” type regional spaces have a number of common features: they have common historical background, according to the old local autonomy of the Middle Age

Romanian Countries, the same sink-like morphological character, whether they are located inside or outside the Carpathian Arch or the peripheral hills, they present ethnic uniformity, they have a deeply rural character and finally, they have a strong regional coherence.

Until now, one have identified 18 such regional entities [2] (P. Cocean, 1997) (Fig. 1.). It should be noted that only some of them have been referred to as “terra” in old documents (Hateg Land, Maramures Land, Severin Land, Fagaras Land, Barsa Land, Lovistei Land etc.). Others instead were denominated later, according to regional geography studies which have identified common features within a given space, although they were not referred to as “lands” in the written sources, such as Beius Land, Zarand Land, Lapus Land, Nasaud Land.

We are currently witnessing a rebirth of land concept, both in Romania and in other European countries, such as France. The explanation of this fact relies on the new valences that lands received nowadays by approaching them differently as specific Romanian geographical regions [2], [3], [4]. This fact gives them a special place between regional areas. In recent regional geography, this kind of spaces has been studied by authors such as Cocean P. (1997, 2000, 2002, 2004), Deszi S. et al. (2001), Ilies Gabriela (1999), Ilies M. (1999), Ilies M. and Ilies A. (1999), Puscas Angelica (2006), Surd V. (1993), Ilovan Oana (2008), Botan C. (2008), David Nicoleta (2009), Josan Ioana (2009), Filimon Luminita (2007) etc., altogether contributing to a true revival of “lands” as specific Romanian geographical regions.

II. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

THIS section presents different author’s description of the three major concepts the paper uses: endogenous development, local development and project territory.

A. Local development

Within an ever growing European decentralizing process, *local development* has been imposed lately in Romania too. The concept urges the local actors to take into account the ensemble of economic, social, and cultural factors of a certain territory. The brand – mark of local development idea and local development projects is the attempt of eliminating the existing breakthrough between economic, social and cultural environments, by mobilizing all potential actors in the

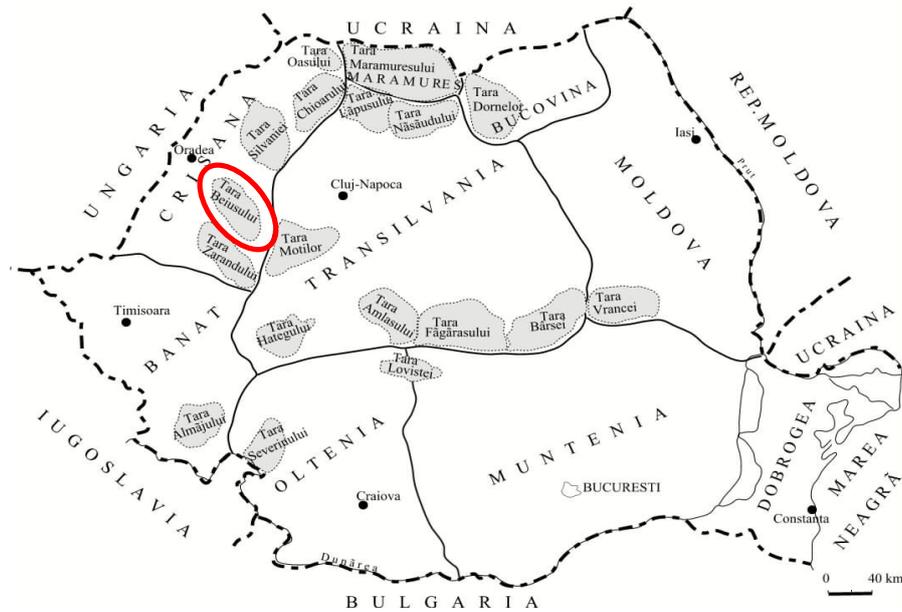


Fig.1 Beius Land and Romanian land-type spaces
(source: Cocean, P.1997) [2]

territory. As a general principle, there is no economic development where there are social tensions, there is no social equilibrium where there is an anaemic economy, and there is neither of the two, outside culture developed during historic time in the respective territory [5].

Coming to strengthen the local development concept, the new academic literature is proposing the concept of mosaic ecodevelopment [6]. The concept involves a bottom-up implementation of the concept of sustainable development, starting from local governments, aiming to cover the entire national territory later. We consider that the concept allows greater compatibility with the local particularities, which allows the direct assimilation of the concept of sustainable development in local initiatives. This sometimes avoids improper implementation of general objectives to local problems. The concept encourages action programs such as Local Agenda 21, but with a greater emphasis on land cover and land use changes. However, local initiative must not neglect the specific requirements of the current orientation acts such as the EU Strategy for Sustainable Development and the National Sustainable Development Strategy Horizon 2013-2020-2030 Romania.

B. Endogenous development

The theory of *endogenous development* has its roots in the works of Italian economists who describe the development of "the Third Italy" through forms of competition / cooperation and economic relations based on trust and bonds between local actors, attached to the territory. It is based on internal attraction, built on networking of the inhabitants of a territory, starting with an untapped local resource – material or immaterial.

In a broader sense, by stimulating local natural resources capitalization, the concept of endogenous development promotes the improvement of quality human capital, which is a fundamental condition for a balanced development. Cesario and de Norhona Vaz [7] are highlighting the important role that SMEs play in this respect. The authors have noticed a close relationship between SMEs and the territory where they operate, considering the social and geographic proximity as their main source of information, which eventually helps them to determine their perspectives and strategic choices. However, encouraging the development of SMEs should not be done without incorporating the principle of social responsibility within the company's growth strategy. Brown, quoted by Jucan and Jucan [8], claims that corporate social responsibility must become a company's permanent liability for environment, for examples of best management practices, for their involvement in its own community development. According to the author, their brand recognition depends not only on product quality, price and uniqueness, but in the way the company interacts with its workers, local community and environment too. Thus, corporate social responsibility is economy's contribution to sustainable development, ensuring both long-term business success, and prosperity for society [8]. An increasingly common practice, required by both the decision-making bodies but also by the civil society is public participation in decision making. Loures and Crawford [9] noted an increased awareness of governments of the necessity of consulting and involving locals in the decision making process. The authors consider the involvement of the population is crucial for sustainable development of the territory.

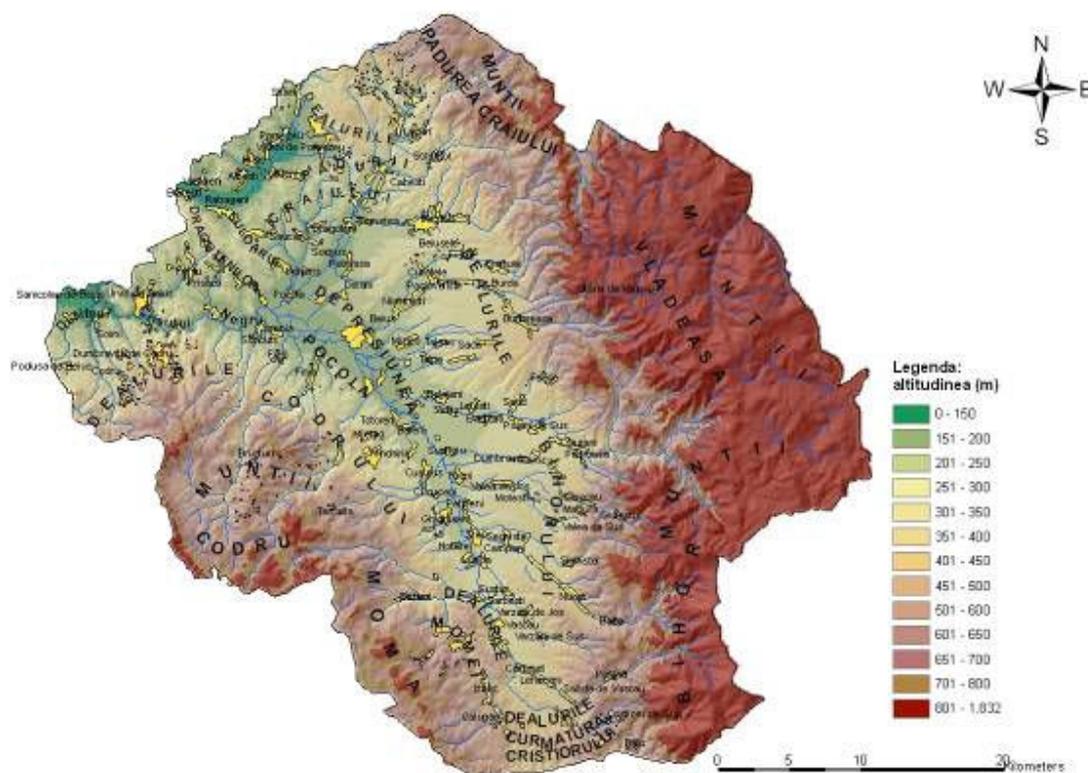


Fig.3 Beius Land. Geographical features
(source: Filimon, L., 2007) [11]

remarkable tourist potential of this area and its poor capitalization due to the lack of a development strategy. Tourism resources are virtually untapped, although they present a great authenticity, just because the land-like space. In tourism, a land-like space means better preservation of traditions and customs, and quality ethnography, in general. The Beius ethnographic area makes no exception, its main features coming from a combination of natural and human components. This combination gave birth to spiritual values embodied in the unique folk art: wooden churches, traditional crafts and rural technical installations, folk costumes, traditional rural architecture, traditional customs, etc. Although many of them have been lost along the way, it is important that Beius Land still retains the rural world of the eighteenth century within its unaltered way of living [11], compared to other areas, which have lost their specificity. The regional bond of this space is given by the Beius Land's landmarks. The individuality the land's ethnography is based on a number of specific features: music - this place resonates with the sounds of the trumpet violin, locally called "higheghe", playing the popular dances the "wheel", the "sus" etc.; the specific popular costumes, the specific houses, like of countryside fortress, the wooden churches – as a strong Beius Land identity element, testifying the troubled history of this land and the belonging to the Transylvanian area. Finally, Beius Land is famous for the once thriving traditional crafts. Some of this crafts are still practiced, but adapted to contemporary society, others have vanished. The most known

are related to woodworking tools and household tools like forks and rakes for gathering hay, grain measures, ladders, dowry chests, etc. Other crafts that made this land famous were interweaving of tissues, limestone burning for lime production and pottery. The traditional customs, an element of individuality were lost over time in some of the villages in the land, but they are still present in other villages [11].

IV. BEIUS LAND AS PROJECT TERRITORY

LANDS are, par excellence, mental spaces with a regional coherence untapped within Romania's territorial planning. As a "land", it can be exploited through territorial planning as it is not an artificially articulated territory but has a regional coherence, expressed in the objective reality, both in territorial and especially in mental plan. One of the essential features of a land type entity is that of behavioral solidarity, of unity and belonging, born over time by relationships created between man and his living space. These interpretations come from the idea that the land is always a cultural space and to define it, the physiognomic homogeneity and the functional criterion are insufficient. Territories with a strong coherence like lands or mental spaces are most favorable for constituting project territories. The same aspects are noticed in France where there's a revival of the "pays", specific geographical regions similar to the Romanian "lands". The Law for guide planning and development (LOADT), issued on February 4th 1995, is a new vision of territorial planning based on the idea that "pays" type spaces adapt best the actual local development

policies to the reality and future sustainable development. [14]. In fact, the “pays” reflect the coherence of a “espace vécu” like Romanian lands. Initially, 42 structures of this kind have been created as a test. The reactions to the initiative are various but the number of such projects taken into discussion already exceeds 200.

Its regulation as an inferior territorial planning level of the Bihor County, as European inter-communal cooperation level structure NUTS 4, as a “project territory”, could be adequate due to the regional coherence of this space which we think would maximize the result of any planning measure approached at this scale. The upper levels of the hierarchy are represented by the County of Bihor (NUTS 3), The North-West Development Region (NUTS 2) and Romania as a national state (NUTS 1).

Viewed through those already mentioned, the territorial development strategy for Beius Land must build the evolution projection of the space on short, medium and long term, according to endogenous development theory model, but capitalizing the local resources of each municipality, so that a SME network can be created between the inhabitants to support each other.

In fact, the image of Beius Land as a project territory brings us to the past of popular crafts the specialty of the 18th Century villages, as a starting point of our proposal. Although the ethnographic facet of the identity of Beius Land manifested fully during the last century, the recent socio-economical transformations and the “globalization” roller made its contribution to its dilution and now only a few elements are preserved but they are altered.

Although once they were very common all over this space with villages specialized in certain crafts, some were lost when the need for the products disappeared (e.g. specific clothing) etc. Yet, due to the preservation of some close ones, the recovery of the old craft with the purpose of tourist capitalization wouldn't be that difficult. Weaving, ladder making, pottery, dowry chests, weaver's reeds and lime making, all true treasures for the rural tourism development, foreign tourists oriented. We must not neglect the tourist capitalization of peasant occupations first and foremost agricultural ones like working in the field, less mechanized and with great capitalization possibilities on rural tourism. *Traditional popular medicine*, transmitted from father to son, is an occupation with important tourist valences even for the development of the curative tourism. Around the year 1900 more than a hundred families in the Poenii de Jos dealt, for a long period of the year, with picking, preparing and selling herbs [15]. Today their number is lower, but whoever has this occupation has certificates and authorizations and their products are sold on the markets all over the country, especially in summer at the seaside. The efficiency of the treatments made them known countryside but their activity isn't exploited from the tourism point of view. [16].

The examples that we think would sustain this type of development and the view of Beius Land as a project territory

are *traditional peasant occupations and crafts*, probably the most important ethnographic resource in the whole area.

Pottery, known ever since the 6th Century B.C. (Thracians in the Carpathian Basin used the potter's wheel [17]), was widespread in Beius Land, with well known potters in Cristioru de Jos, Saliste de Vascau, Leheceeni, Carpinet, Lelesti, with ceramics that differ from one village to another both in terms of objects and of ornaments. Nowadays pottery barely exists as there are only two potters left in Leheceeni (one of them just returned from Bistrita area). The need to adapt to modern times made the craftsman Crisan Bocse open a handicrafts shop whereas until then pottery objects were sold in the markets all over the country, directly from carts or in exchange for grains. Obviously his pieces had to adapt to the current needs (e.g. apparently “elders at counsel” is in great request), but anyway, he keeps on creating the famous “dishes of Leheceeni”. His son Raul Bocse (29) is one of the few young men who chose to carry on the tradition of Beius pottery. Passionate of his craft, he went on working and studying this field, graduating the Faculty of Visual Arts of the University of Oradea. He makes first of all traditional objects but also has his own creations, inspired by the popular art. He uses features specific to the region and especially to the Leheceeni village (claspers, spiral and cockscomb) [18].

Dowry chests making is maybe the most known traditional craft in Beius Land as the dowry chests of Budureasa are a kind of a “trademark” of this space, known nationwide. Their role in the life of the community was once very important, girls' dowry was kept in them, so they had to be large (in the traditional peasant interiors they served as benches as well) and richly patterned and they were an actual indicator of the family's economic status and of the future wife's mastery when it was carried at the groom's house, during the wedding. An element of specificity for this craft is the smoking of the boards to make them more resistant. This craft has been preserved in Budureasa, although domestic function in Bihor families is entirely lost, and the craftsman Oancea Ioan initiates but a few apprentices in this popular art.

Ladder making is one of the most impressive traditional crafts still practiced in the Beiusului Land, in the ancient manner in which the ladder makers in Cresuia carry on the daily rhythms of their ancestors with the serenity that characterizes the authentic rural world, more and more rare and which gives us the hope that maybe, still our countryside didn't “die on a Sunday”, contrary to what the reputable historian S. Dumitrascu thinks [19]. About 15 families in Cresuia practice this craft. A very hard work is finding the wood needed for making the ladders and preparing it. When some 20 ladders are made, the ladder makers from Cresuia put them in carts and head for Banat or northwards for Satu-Mare and for Tara Oasului to sell them. The journey lasts about a month and the ladder makers sleep in the carts all this time. The actual price of one ladder is about 20 euro. There is a question regarding the future of this profession on the European integration as there is no legal status for the popular

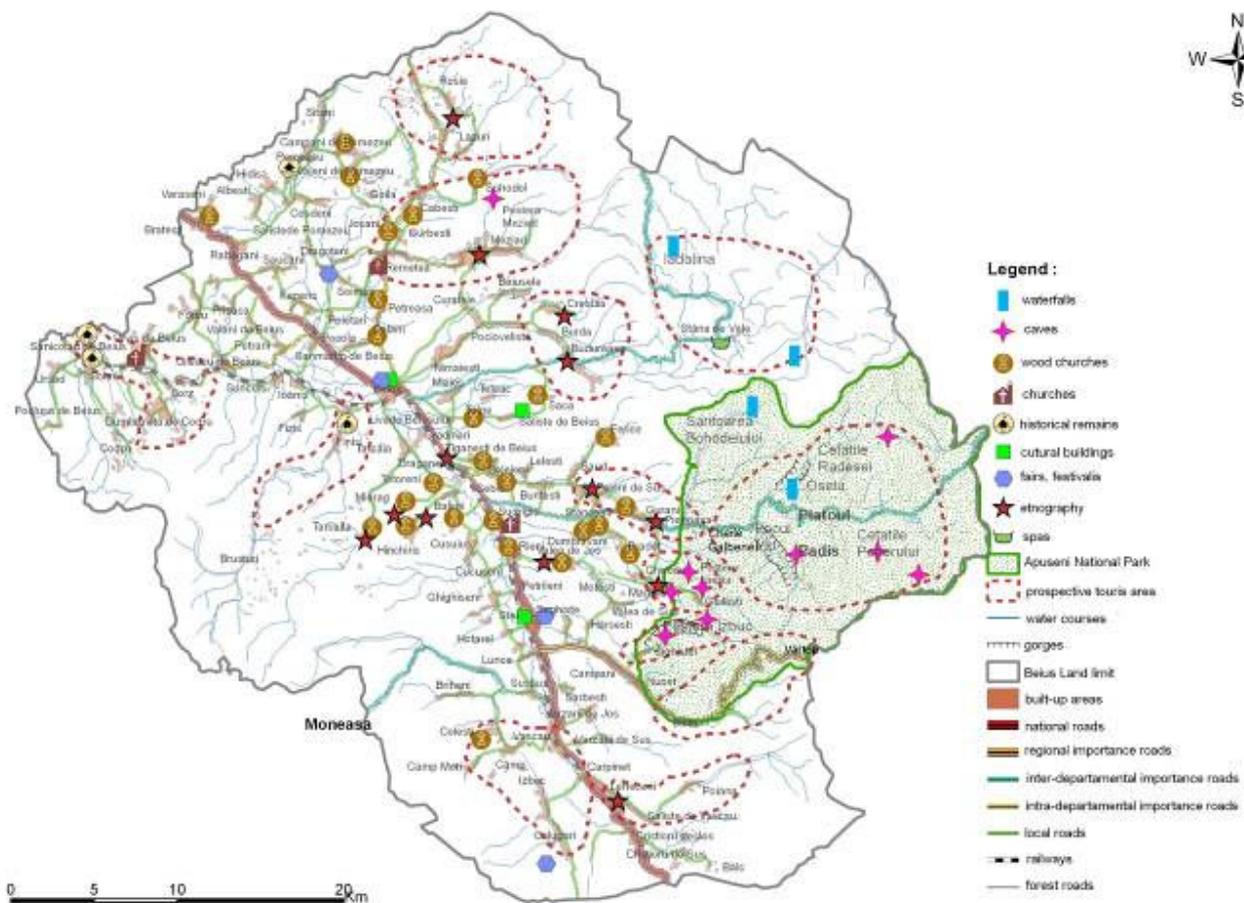


Fig.4 Beius Land. Tourist sights
(source: Filimon, L., 2007) [11]

craftsmen which to allow them to keep the ancestral rhythm of their ancestors' life, in a sustainable manner. A serious concern for them is the new law that forbids carts to circulate on public roads. A possible solution could be to identify some adequate routes as to ensure the mobility of this community and the perpetuation of their craft.

Woodworking is present in Beius Land for agricultural tools needed around the household (pitchforks, rakes, scythe and hammer shafts etc.), at Mierag, Tarcaita and Hinchiris. We must mention that wooden forks and rakes are specific to Beius Land while most other Romanian regions use metal forks and rakes in working with hay.

Weaving has become more and more an occupation for the conservation of this tradition with certain tourist valences as the reason for which it once was widely spread doesn't exist anymore, and the looms can be rarely found nowadays. Weavers known for their artistry lived in the entire space of Beius Land, as weaving was women's main occupation especially in winter when working in the fields was not necessary. The custom was well kept until 15-20 years ago for purely decorative purposes of the finite product but we can still find a weaver in each of the villages of Pantasesti,

Draganesti and Gurani and probably in other villages in Beius Land, an activity that can be easily perpetuated to young generations.

Other crafts directly linked to clothes manufacturing were traditional sheepskin clothes, which disappeared once with textiles produced industrially on large scale. Traditional handmade footwear is included in the same category.

Weaver's reeds making is in close relationship with weaving as the reeds were used to "warping" the threads. Craftsmen well known for the quality of the reeds they made were in Cusuis, Dumbravani, Valea de Jos (there's only one reed maker left here).

Lime making is another traditional activity, linked to the existing raw material (limestone and wood), lime is produced in the villages located on the Vascau karst plateau and Padurea Craiului Mountains or their immediate vicinity. A few decades ago lime was made in the villages of Camp, Camp-Moti, Cristioru de Jos, Meziad, Sohodol, Lazuri, Ponoarele, Izbuca, Briheni and Sustiu. In many of these villages the lime kilns still exist in different conservation stages, but in few of them lime is still produced. We could find functional lime kilns in the area, at Izbuca and Meziad where, an adapting

process of limestone combustion took place, as the people in Meziad are using now used tires (from financial reasons) so lime quality is poorer and less appreciated (it is also an air pollutant). Lime making activity seemed intense at Izbuc although the locals say production has diminished in the last years. We found that two or three families associate in order to fill a lime kiln while, in the past years, one lime maker used to fill about four kilns a year. The reasons for the regression of this activity are cheap lime, more expensive and hard to find wood and last but not least, difficulties in selling the lime. The lime produced in Izbuc provides for the entire Transylvanian region, to Brasov or Banat (to the Serbian border).

Besides the classic marketing methods, alternative tools like internet websites could be used. Internet has now passed the experimental phase and stepped into the real marketing area [20]. Following the example of the herbalists in Poieni de Jos, the craftsmen could try to expose and sell their work on virtual stores.

It is very important that even though many of these traditional activities were lost in time, compared to other spaces, Beius Land still conserves the rural world of the 18th Century with its unaltered originality, turning into a real exhibition space that could be capitalized by applying the concepts mentioned above [11].

V. EUROPEAN STRUCTURAL FUNDS – STRONG, YET UNDEVELOPED FINANCIAL TOOLS

IN order to achieve the proposed objectives in the pre-adherence strategy of Romania to the European Union, the European Council gave assistance to Romania through structural funds and operational programs (PHARE, ISPA, SAPARD, SAMPTID, SPP, etc). From these, a major role on rural communities' development had SAPARD Programme that helped the infrastructure improvement for rural development and agriculture and also the development of economy in rural area [21].

However, in Beius Land it is seen a limited absorption of these funds, especially in the domain of tourism. The most financings are directed to infrastructure, some Halls signed agreements for communal roads modernisation (Carpinet Commune Hall), forestry roads (Pietroasa Commune Hall), running-water systems (Draganesti and Budureasa Communes Halls), and public access of information through a centre of computers connected to internet (Budureasa Commune Hall). With SAPARD Funds also were built a few touristic pensions in Beius, Vartop, Baita (Nucet), and Boga Holiday Village. Through PHARE Funds took placed the rehabilitation of drinking water network for Nucet town (Baita Quarter), and rehabilitation and modernisation of communal roads (Campani Commune). For social inclusion promotion was developed programmes for Roma communities (Cabesti, Rabagani, Budureasa, Beius, Soimi). Nucet Local Council in partnership to Bihor County Council had requested PHARE Funds for a project referring at winter tourism in Apuseni Mountains – Vartop ski slope.

After Romania's adherence at EU these programmes were replaced with other tools financed within NRPD (National Rural Development Programme 2007 – 2013), POS CCE (Sector Operational Programme on Economic Competitiveness), ROP (Regional Operational Programme), SOPonHRD (Sector Operational Programme on Human Resources Development), SOPonE (Sector Operational Programme on Environment), SOPonAD (Sector Operational Programme on Administration Development), SOPonT (Sector Operational Programme on Transportation) that have considerable budgets. Beius rural communities still have difficulties in exploiting these development opportunities. For example, for Regional Operational Programme 2007 – 2013 (ROP), even if it has some priority axis with major domains of intervention of special interest (through that of environment, health, tourism, urban development, or sustainable development of structures in order to support businesses of regional and local importance, etc) for the vast area of Beius Land were contracted only two projects. We consider that the intervention domain regarding sustainable development of structures in order to support businesses of regional and local importance could be the main financial tool of transposition in territory the local know-how. According to Nord – West Regional Development Agency, through ROP, in Beius Land are under implementation two projects: one of Buntesti Commune, referring at the raising quality of educational system - the premise of a competitive education on European level, the other one becoming to Pietroasa Commune, and has as aim the rehabilitation and modernisation of county road DJ 763 Sudrigiu – Pietroasa – Padis Hut. Regarding this project, we mention that through it was restored, to tourist circulation a degraded road, the only one that assure auto access from Beius part to Apuseni Natural Park, respectively Padis area, very well known in our country and the neighbouring states for its exceptional natural touristic potential. Through this programme also is completed the project ``Beius – through a competitive economy``.

A higher applicability rate is seen at projects financed through NRPD (National Programme for Rural Development), within Beius Land being contracted 10 projects: 2 projects in Lazuri de Beius Commune, 4 projects in Draganesti Commune, 1 project in Rieni Commune, 1 project in Pietroasa Commune, 1 project in Campani Commune, and 1 project in Buntesti Commune. From these, eight projects fit to Priority Axis 1 (Improvement of competitiveness for agricultural and forestry sectors) through 112 measures (Installation of young farmers) 112 (Modernisation of agricultural holdings) and 141 (Supporting the semi-subsistence agricultural farms), and two projects fit to Priority Axis 3 (Improvement the quality of live in rural zone and rural economy diversification), through 312 measures (Support for micro Companies creating and development), and 313 (Encouragement of tourist activities). We consider that is important to mention that the remembered axes are through the less that allow submission proposal by physic persons. For

Priority Axis 1 (Improvement of competitiveness for agricultural and forestry sectors are opened lines referring at the support of semi-subsistence farms and producers groups foundation, Axis 2 (Improvement of rural environment and area) with lines referring at support for disadvantaged mountain area, support for disadvantaged areas, others than mountain ones, agro-environmental payments, the first forestation of agricultural terrains) was not released, Axis 3(Improvement the quality of life in rural zone and rural economy diversification) is closed, and Leader Axis referring at the implementation of local development strategies, the implementation of cooperation projects and functioning local activity groups, the acquisition of competences and territorial animation was not released. According to general objective this axis is oriented to implication of local actors in the development of their own territories, using a bottom – up approaching for developing some integrated strategies in order to lead at the diversification and development of local economy for the use of rural communities [22]. Taking into consideration that until this moment the financings for this axis are not opened, we consider the approach thematic of this present study as being appropriate that underlines the adoption's necessity of a development integrated strategy in order to offer scientific support for local deciders and territorial planning practitioners.

Another operational programme of interest for the analysed territory is SOP ECR (Sector Operational Programme Economic Competitiveness Raising) through Priority Axis 2 – Research, technological development and innovation for competitiveness (with lines Research projects in partnership between universities/research-development institutions and companies, and companies' access at CDI activities, especially of SMEs), and through Priority Axis 4 – Raising of energetic efficacy and supply safeness regarding the control of climate changing (with the line Supporting investments of installations and equipments for industry's companies that would lead at energy saving for improving energy efficacy). Within this programme, through Beius Town – Hall, is running the project ``Beius – geothermal town`` financed from Axis 4, major domain of intervention 2 (The use of renewable energy to green energy).

VI. CONCLUSIONS

FROM the analyses done it is shown the fact that even well emphasised and approached in specialised geographic literature by a series of PhD's thesis, Romania's lands do not get all the attention from professionals and local actors for sustainable exploitation of the relative strengths of these types of areas. Once again, it became obvious the necessity to develop an integrated development strategy, to express the optimal and sustainable recovery potential of these territories' specificity.

The application of project territory idea at Romania's lands level should permit the preservation of their authenticity and should offer a viable economic alternative of local

communities by boosting folk artisans to create a small companies network according to the endogenous development concept.

The paper's proposal for Beius Land as project territory could become a pilot project in order to serve as model for the development of other Romanian land type spaces.

Another pro for sustaining these ideas is given by the objectives of LEADER Axis and NPofRD (National Programme of Rural Development) that support the construction of public – private partnerships, and the layout of local development strategies and local development plan.

We consider that projects supported by European funds, which currently are only a bunch of shy local attempts should come all together into an territorial development integrated strategy on medium and long term, valuing the opportunity to obtain financing from EU funds, noticing that some financing lines are already closed. Bringing into this strategy the bottom – up imposing concepts of endogenous development, local development, and project territory and integrated social responsibility would eventually preserve local know-how and promote it as a land – mark, capitalizing thus the maximum potential of these land type areas.

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