

## **SÂNNICOLAU ROMÂN (BIHOR COUNTY, ROMANIA) - MODEL OF CAPITALIZATION THROUGH TOURISM OF THE ROMANIAN AUTHENTIC AND TRADITIONAL HERITAGE**

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**Abstract:** The goal of our scientific approach is to create a model of tourism capitalization of the Romanian traditional authentic heritage. Based on field work and representative bibliographic references, we managed through identification, assessment, quantification and integration of the traditional authentic heritage, to shape a village representative for the plain area. Among the group of villages taken into consideration, Sânnicolau Român in Bihor county has been chosen to be the subject of this scientific approach considered case study. By the logic of scientific approach, strongly based on the data collected from the field work, we can assert that this model of pilot-village has an architectural (households, houses, extensions) and cultural (traditions, customs etc.) heritage characterized by a high degree of authenticity, distinctiveness and preservation. These elements can form the foundation of a strategy of development of the Romanian tourism by capitalization of a unique resource in Europe: the “alive” archaic and traditional village.

**Key words:** Sannicolau Român, rural space, sustainable development, traditional heritage

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### **INTRODUCTION**

The idea of capitalization through tourism of the Romanian traditional village, in order to maintain the regional distinctiveness has appeared as a necessity, within globalization, being well-known that the Romanian village is characterized by a high degree of distinctiveness and authenticity.

The village of Sânnicolau Român, included in the category of “pilot villages” in this scientific approach, belongs administratively to the homonym commune in Bihor county, north-

western Romania (figure 1). Being a commune seat village, with approximately 1200 inhabitants (2010), it is considered one of the numerous Romanian plain villages which preserves priceless and at the same time perishable heritage assets.

The history of this village is a long one, dating long time ago and it is first mentioned in 1332 (Suciu, 1966-1968).

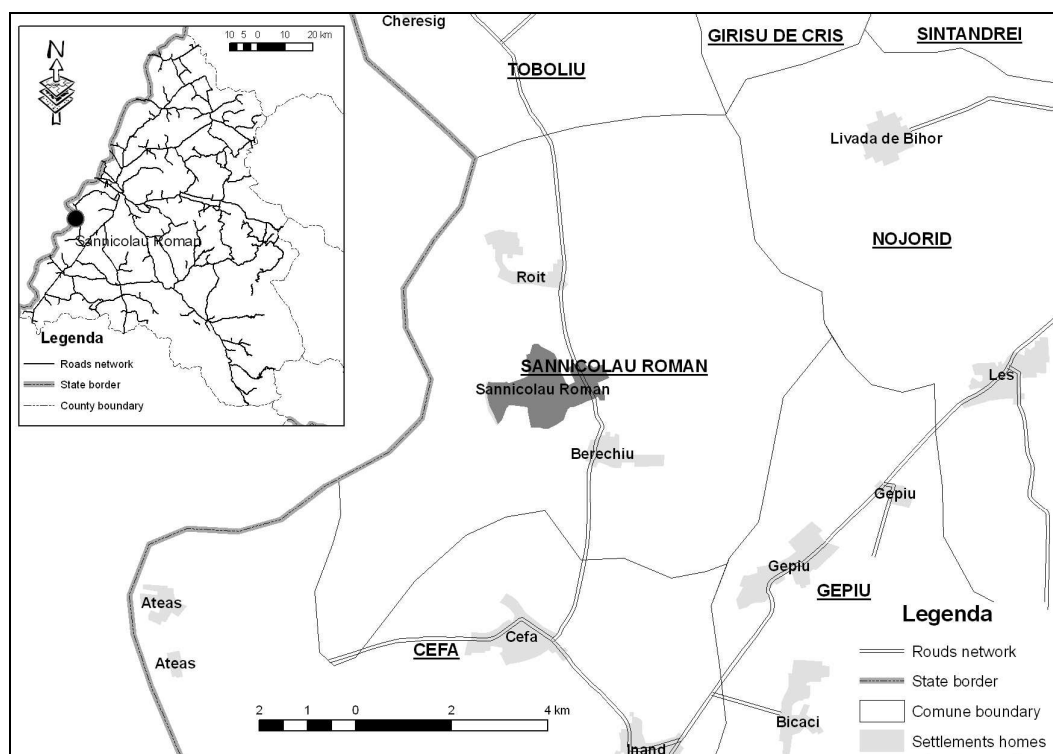


Figure 1. Geographic location of the village Sânnicolau Român

## METODOLOGY

The use of tools and methods already applied with success in other similar approaches is the foundation of an action built on the logic given by the answers raised by a set of questions: where? why? and how? The natural framework is at the foundation of the environment design with major implications in generating the elements and mechanisms used to “turistify” a territory (Cazalais et al.,). In parallel, the politic framework specific to the 20<sup>th</sup> century generated a certain space order (Forster, 2000, 11) with substantial changes especially in the last twenty years (Ilieş et al, 2009), an aspect visible in the approaches to reconstruct the rural environment in the Crişurilor Plain (Staşac, 2005). Based on a simple reasoning ie “man sanctifies the place” supported by the idea that the set of ethnic folkloric assetst are a mere expression of human cohabitation in a specific environment, we produced a riguroust analysis of the human resource and of elements and mechanisms which support the functionality of a territorial system (Cunha, 1998; Ianoş, 2000; Muntele and Iaţu, 2003) of the kind. As a result of landslides, we analyzed 389 households of which 255 show the features of a traditional household. The next step was to prospect the tourist resources (natural and anthropic) in Sânnicolau Român as component elements of a some mechanisms which can generate tourist activities. The use of patterns already applied in other areas (Hall and Lew, 1998; William, 1998; Ianoş, 2000, Timothy and Boyd, 2003; Cocean 2005; Veal, 2006; Hall, 2008;, Ilieş et al, 2008, 2009; Olaru and Ancuţa, 2010 etc) supports th scientific reason for our approach by highlighting good examples. Thus, starting from the definition of a

functional territorial system (Ianoș, 2000), and by an approach of a regional kind (Cocean, 2005) we finally set the best parameters of the functionality of such a system subject to fitting (Gunn and Var, 2002; Erdeli and Gheorghilaș, 2006; Ciangă and Dezsi, 2007; Ilieș M, 2007).

In the same analytic context, another important aspect is that of economic efficiency in parallel with long term preservation of the environment (Butler, 1998; Murphy, 1998; Timothy and Boyd, 2003; Ilieș and Josan, 2009; Ilieș M, 2009) and good uses which support the sustainable development of tourism (Bramwell and Lane, 1993, 2; Timothy and Boyd, 2003; Castaldini, 2008) based on principles such as: ecological integrity, efficiency, equity and integration-balance-harmony (Wall, 1993; Timothy and Boyd, 2003).

Our scientific step is finalized by analyzing the indices of distinctiveness and by creating a conceptual model of the traditional household in the locality under study. This is justified by the fact that the household, with everything it represents, is the location itself and final result of the anthropic manifestations. All theoretic approaches were permanently supported by field investigation and rigorous authenticity.

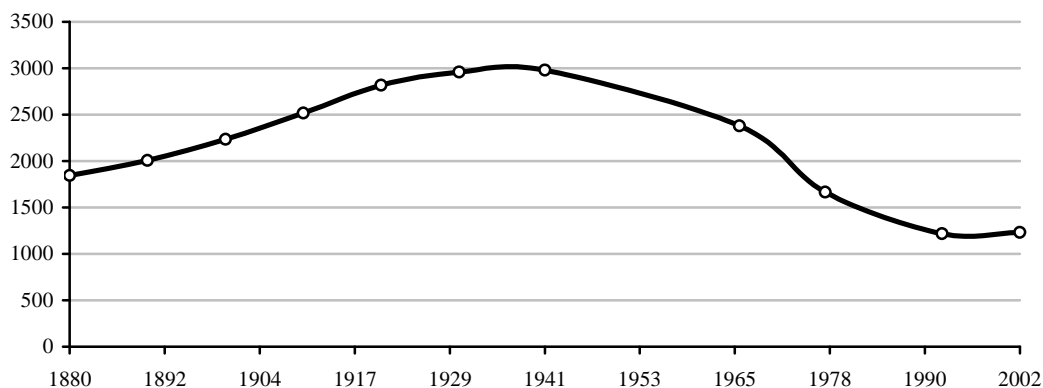
## THE ANALYSIS-DIAGNOSIS

### Demographic resource

Population, among other factors (environmental and social economic ones) represents one of the determinative components with a major role in the occurrence, development and perpetuation of the traditional households.

The households were mainly determined by the number of population, ethnic and religious structure.

In order to highlight the numeric evolution of the population of Sânnicolau Român, we used the data from the census starting with 1880 up to 2002 (figure 2).



**Figure 2.** Numeric evolution of the population in Sânnicolau Român  
(Data source: <http://www.kia.hu/konyvtar/erdely/erd2002.htm>)

Through data analysis, we noticed a progressive growth of the population up to 1941. After this year, the events that followed (World War II and collectivization) led to a decrease of population number from 2,979 inhabitants in 1941 to 1,233 in 2002, which represents a drop of over 50 %.

The analysis of the ethnic structure of highlights the fact that, both in the past and in present days, Romanians have been the majority, followed by Hungarians and Germans (figure 3).

Like in most of the communes in Bihor county, starting with 1977, citizens Rroma ethnic group established themselves on the territory of the village Sânnicolau Român. If in 1992 they were 137, in 2002 they disappeared completely. It seems that all the Rroma people moved to Gepiu where their number grew rapidly from 15 in 1992 to 190 in 2002.

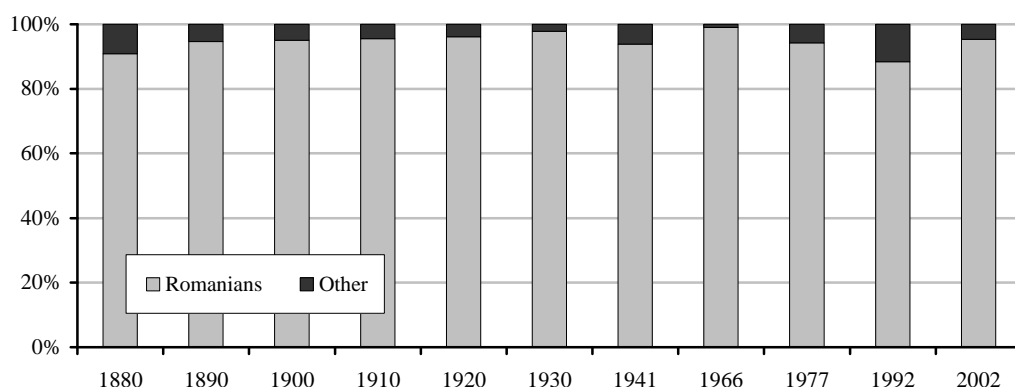


Fig. 3. Ethnic structure of the population in Sânnicolau Român  
(Data source: <http://www.kia.hu/konyvtar/erdely/erd2002.htm>)

Following the analysis of the confessional structure, it results that the majority is represented by Romanians. The religion which they declared at the census is Orthodox. This religion maintained itself as the confession of the majority in the village throughout the years. Among other confessions of reduced importance (numerically speaking), we mention: Greek-Catholics, Roman Catholics, Reformed, and lately, more precisely starting with 1930, the Baptists (figure 4).

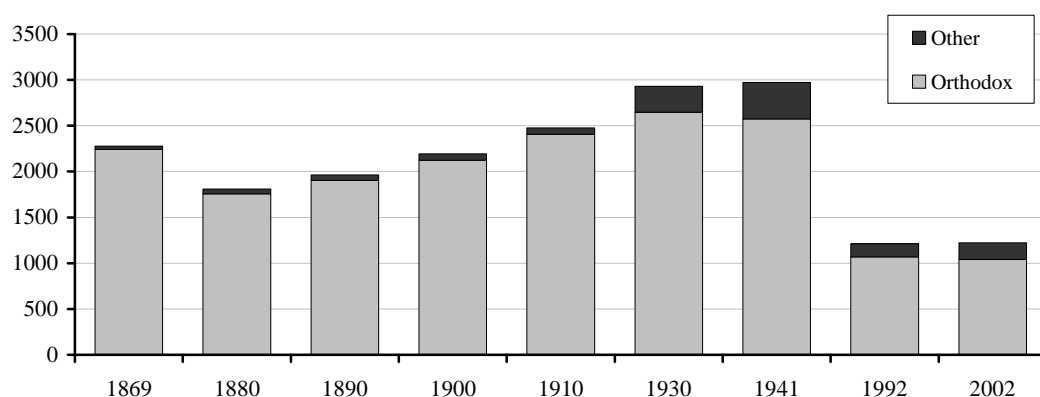


Figure 4. Confessional structure of the population in Sânnicolau Român  
(Data source: <http://www.kia.hu/konyvtar/erdely/erd2002.htm>)

### Elements of functionality

For a possible capitalization through tourism of the elements of identity which identify Sânnicolau Român it was necessary a short analysis of its infrastructure. This focused mainly on the technic facilities (running water, electricity, sewage, sewage-treatment plant etc.) to be found in the locality under study.

As a result of field work we noticed that the village benefits from running water supply as a result of drillings of 350 m in depth of anthropic type. Beside this source of water, here we have the traditional source of water for the peasants, the village shadoof wells in almost every household.

At present, there is a project to rehabilitate the existing network of running water as well as the construction of a sewage network and of a sewage-treatment plant. Moreover, in order to cope with the growing water necessity it is necessary to do yet another drilling operation in the near future.

As regards the power supply, starting with 2005 in Sânnicolau Român there have been installed new and economic every 4 pylons for street lighting.

The main source of heating in the households in wintertime is represented by firewood. The firewood is converted into thermic energy in various stoves, tiled stoves or heating stations based on firewood.

Sânnicolau Român benefits from stationary phone and internet services. As regards the road infrastructure all the roads have been paved over a length of 12,2 km, while the asphalt layer covers only 2,5 km, a surface which links the locality with Oradea through the county road DJ 797 to the north. The pavements have been modernized over a length of 2 km.

By analyzing the elements of functionality in Sânnicolau Român, we draw two conclusions:

1. the lack of specific tourist infrastructure, accommodation and public food service, as well as spa and treatment (wellness)

2. even though the technic infrastructure has been much improved lately, there are still other disfunctions which theoretically can be fixed.

### **Tourist resources**

Following the prospectation of tourist resources in the area of Sânnicolau Român (figure 5 - 7) we noticed that there are mainly anthropic resources as opposed to the natural ones. In the category of natural resources we have the plain relief, the Collecting Canal (located west of locality), vegetation and fauna specific to the West Plain.

All the aforementioned resources together with anthropic interventions have produced, in this area, an extremely interesting typical plain landscape characterized by a relatively flat relief, a regular hydrographic network, the alternation of natural vegetation (meadows and natural pastures) with anthropic vegetation (cereals and vegetables).

The tourist attraction of the landscape is represented by the composition and the alternation of the vegetation, by the rhythms of the vegetation cycles, the fringe and island effect imposed by it. As regards the composition of the vegetal associations, by studying the speciality literature, one can notice that tourists are mainly interested in the forest vegetation, followed by pastures and crops. Tourists are mainly interested in the pasture vegetation especially in spring when it blooms and in the crops especially in fall, when they are ready for the harvesting (Cocean P. 2005, Dincă, 2006).

The fringe and island effect is induced to the tourists by the way of land use, the territory alternation of the cereal crops and of pastures. According to the law of contrast, the alternation of the crops produces positive changes on the tourists.

The anthropic tourist resources in Sânnicolau Român are given by the existence of architectural, historical and religious remnants. Of the religious remnants there are three places of worship (the Orthodox Church "St. Nicolae", the Baptist Church "Betleem", the Catholic Church) whose history is closely linked to the history of the inhabitants (figure 5).



**Figure 5.** Tourist attractions in Sânnicolau Român

In the category of tourist attractions of historic type we mention the “Wooden Cross of the Deported” (figure 6), the bust of Nicolae Jiga (figure 7), born in Sânnicolau Român and the three archeological sites within the locality: “Coștei”, “Ier” și “Bereac”.



**Figure 6.** The “Wooden Cross of the Deported”



**Figure 7.** Bust – Nicolae Jiga

The site of “Coștei”, situated 500 m north of commune limits, between Sânnicolau și Roit, to the left of the Crișurilor Channel, 250 m away from it. Over a surface of two hectares, the civilian settlement of Coștei dates back to the Medieval Ages, between 11<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> centuries.

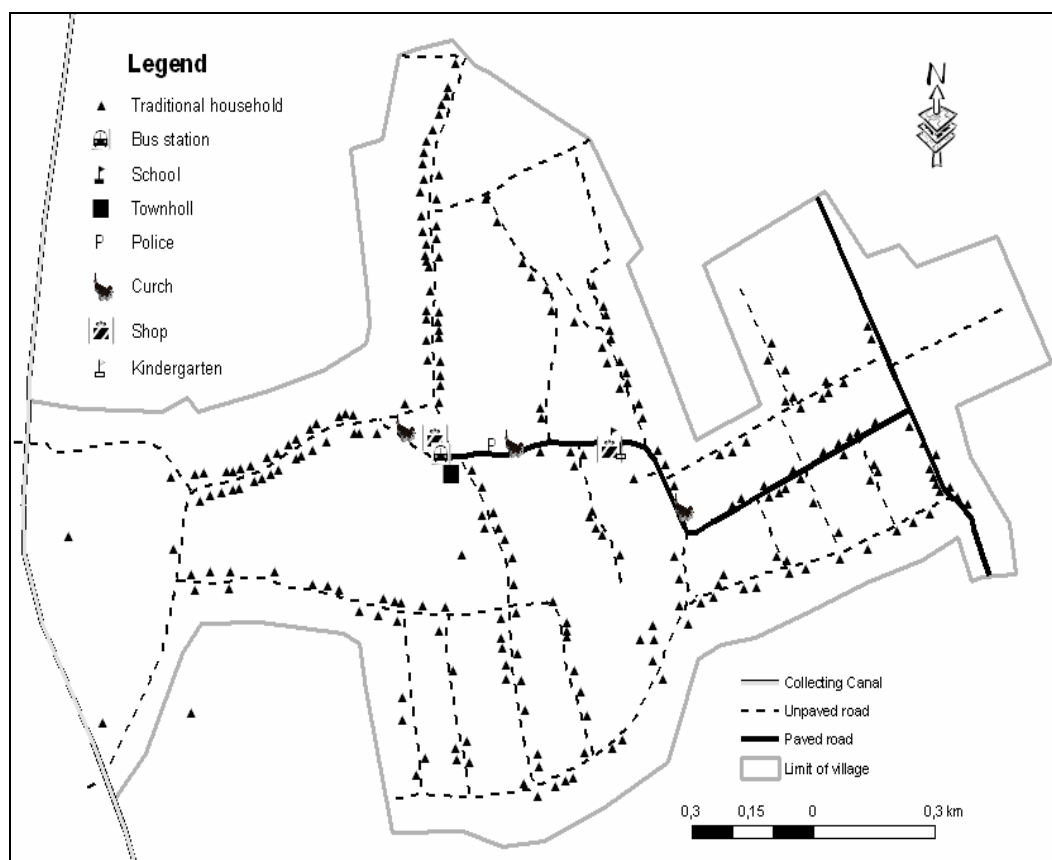
The archeological site “Ier”, situated south-east of the locality, on both sides of the county road DJ 797, houses a civilian settlement whose existence dates back to the Iron Age, the Latène period up to the 10<sup>th</sup> century. It stretches over a surface of 30 hectares, is privately owned and it is in a real bad shape as regards its conservation.

The last archeological site with a remarkable tourist potential is “Bereac”, located at 1 km distance away from the western locality limits, near the border with Hungary. It is also a former civilian settlement which dates back to the Roman Age up to 11<sup>th</sup> century. The architectural attractions are represented by the 255 households which are characterized by a certain degree of distinctiveness and authenticity.

In conclusion, the aforementioned anthropic tourist resources are not fully made the most of from touristic point of view. In order to reach this goal, a certain period of time is necessary in which a series of steps should be taken towards it.

### **THE VILLAGE OF SÂNNICOLAU ROMÂN – POSSIBLE MODEL OF ROMANIAN TRADITIONAL AUTHENTIC VILLAGE IN PLAIN AREA**

From the type of settlement point of view, all the villages belonging to the commune of Sânnicolau Român are congregated villages. It seems that, through history, each village had a street or two, disposed around a center of locality. At present, the localities of the commune are in a relatively compact shape, slightly tentacular, specific to the plain villages. This arrangement is clearly visible in Sânnicolau Român where the old part of the village keeps a tentacular shape, relatively irregular, while the new part is characterized by parallel streets which intersects in a right angle (figure 8).



**Figure 8.** Map of tourist resources in Sânnicolau Român

As a result of the bibliographical research and the field work related to Sânnicolau Român, the household – a representative part of the village social life and the core of its economic and spiritual activities – has been identified as being the most representative element of local identity.

The interpretation of the term “authentic and traditional household” has split the scientific world into two.

The term “authentic and traditional household” has split the scientific world into two sides. The first group admits only the very old households constructed from local materials in the 19<sup>th</sup> century as being authentic and traditional. Basically, in this case, they identify the authentic and the traditional by age. The second one understands as being authentic and traditional those households which are defined by a set of features and indicators specific to that place in particular. In their opinion, some newer households can also be authentic and traditional if they fit into the architectural line and follow the local features. The reason is a simple one mainly because the traditional households appeared as a necessity and are a mere expression of human adaptation to a specific environment. If a component of the environment in which the respective households evolved is changed, it is obvious that they will be subject to smaller or bigger changes depending on the inputs of the system.

As a result of landslides, we analyzed 389 households of which 255 show features of traditional households, mainly given by traditional economic activities (agriculture, stock raising, and less by apiculture, fishing, hunting and weaving).

The traditional household type is in the shape of a quadrangle, developed on the horizontal, on one level, with the courtyard in the center (figure 8).





Figure 8. Conceptual model of traditional household in Sânnicolau Român



The living space is disposed alongside the main courtyard, most times on its right, starting from the gate, perpendicular to the street, continuing with the cattle house (or “iștalăul”) with three entrances. The first two compartments of the iștalăul are the same height with the living space and the third one is usually slightly lower (figure 9).

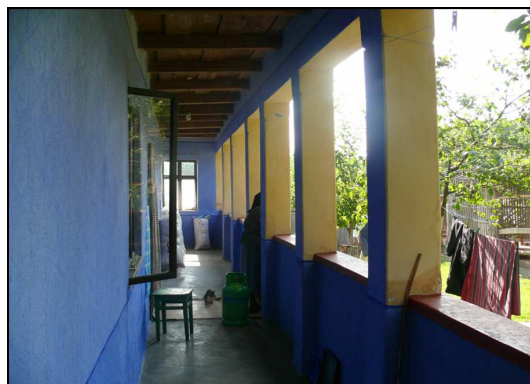
The traditional house type is characterized by an elongated construction with the platform on poles which outflank the house on its length. The houses have one entrance from the porch, with access to the street-oriented room (to the right) or the clean room, most of the times used as front room or guestroom, and the room overlooking the garden or the sitting room (to the left, next to the cattle house) (figure 10).



**Figure 9.** Iștalăul in Sânnicolau Român



**Figure 10.** Traditional house in Sânnicolau



**Figure 11.** Platform in front of the house



**Figure 12.** Traditional houses in Sânnicolau

The porch is a passing room, housing the stove, also used as kitchen. In some houses, in the porch are deposited household tools and some supplies. The porch is sometimes used as living space, but it lacks beds. In old houses the floor of the porch is made of beaten and then pasted soil, making a smooth floor which was pasted every week to ensure its good functioning. In present days, the floor is made of wood.

The main feature of the traditional Romanian house in Sânnicolau Român is the platform in front of the house. The platform is a living, but also a working place. It plays an important role in the design of the house being nicely ornated (figure 11).

In the structure of the peasant house, the clean room, also known as the street-oriented room, plays an important part here being kept the most beautiful furniture and woven fabrics. It was occasionally used on holidays or for the guests. Its holiday role is highlighted by the lack of any heating system and therefore the inexistence of smoke.

The traditional roof is disposed in two waves of tiles, underneath which the attic is hidden with two right-angled ventilation holes facing the street (figure 12).

To the left of the courtyard, opposite the house one can notice the shadoof well close to the gate, facing the street and the bread-baking stove. The household extensions especially for the grain storage, the closed courtyard for the poultry and the pig houses are placed at the far end of the courtyard on the side opposite the gate. The households are outflanked by a relatively high brick fence (1.70 – 1.90 m) which protects them from any intruder.

## CONCLUSIONS

Based on bibliographical research and field work we can conclude that Sânnicolau Român benefits from a great tourist potential, not enough capitalized because of various reasons: precarious technic infrastructure, lack of specific tourist infrastructure and lack of strategy of sustainable development of the locality based on local specific resources etc.

The use of concept of sustainable development represents a mandatory stipulation for the natural and cultural resources to be used for a longer period of time (Butler, 1998; Timothy and Boyd, 2003). This generates systems of integrational type, with mechanisms, tools and resources capable to fast self-adjustment in the case of disturbant factors (of legislative type) whose effect on the territory is immediate and a high degree of outage. It is important to mention that the enthusiasm to promote such an approach is extremely low, especially where the population is focused on survival (Norton, 1989), an extremely obvious phenomenon in the Romanian rural area.

Among the measures ought to be taken in order to develop the locality through tourism we can mention: the implication of the people and local authorities in protecting and promoting the traditional authentic heritage, the implication of the local authorities in accessing the funds for the development of the infrastructure etc.

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