

Sense of a place: Liveability and tourism quality in territories

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Abstract

The paper will approach the relation rural-urban because over the next decade urban agglomerations will benefit from current economic and demographic trends whereas many remote rural areas face increasing difficulties and needs to better capitalize their territorial potential which is visible in the tourism development. At the same time more remote rural areas with low population density and a difficult economic development are facing an increasing dichotomy between rural and urban areas. This is the fragility of the limits between the rural tourism and the urban tourism which comes with its dangers over the authentic rural. Our questions are:

How the rural areas may benefit from an increased interaction with the urban areas close by and/or from an increasingly diversified tourism base?

How they also face the challenges of not losing their rural characteristics and identity versus urban tourism development?

Keywords: urban, rural, impact, limits

Introduction

The social and cultural forces associated with globalization have overwritten local social and cultural practices and globalization has generate a world of restless landscapes in which the more places change the more they seem to look alike and the less they are able to retain a distinctive sense of place. The connection between rapid industrialization, the acceleration of everyday life, and the decline in the quality of collective life that were first noted by Walter Benjamin¹ have been intensified as post-industrial society and become fragmented and reorganized by the acceleration powers of information technology and transmission. These pressures are closely connected with the materialism of post-industrial society and as a result, a work spend cycle has become fundamental to the economic and social dynamics of contemporary society. Speed has become a hallmark of many aspects of consumption, as reflected – and indeed, prompted – by advertising. In advertisements, the pace of people’s consumption is often linked to the pleasure they appear to be experiencing, speed and busy-ness of schedules are transformed from negative into symptoms of laudable, well-adjusted and fulfilling lifestyles, but is not the good way. This emphasis is the fast world: speed of delivery, of service, of consumption, of leisure, of relaxation, of tourism.

In our country, we are facing with the increasing degradation processes that an excessive amount of societies generates, carrying dangers and disadvantages to many areas, territories with cultural, historical and identity values – touriscapes². Our territories are rooted in a geographic location while also possessing the mobility to transverse physical and social boundaries, created in the space where fluid categories of identity and various perspectives overlap to produce an insider/outsider perspective, which

integrates these various positions and social locations, integrates the visions of the past, present, and future.

Theoretical framework

Tourism development in the current context

In the last decades, tourism was one of the world's fastest growing industries and has been identified as a means of generating national income in less industrialized economies. Tourism has had some destructive effects, not only at a national but also at a local level and having suffered being uncontrolled tourism. In this context, professionals had already drawn attention to the destructive force of tourism, while others sought to draw together the various contexts of the impact of tourism in a range of geographical settings.

Now, the intention is to search for less destructive approaches which are now part of the nation's sustainable development, to develop the tourism industry by turning to nature and authentic cultural values, spending a holiday or a vacation in a natural environment and man-made original, in the presence of special objectives.

The tourism industry has adopted the concept of sustainable development with the term sustainable tourism formulated in one of the WTO's (World Tourism Organization) publication in 1993, 'Tourism 2010' and develops the idea of 'serving the needs of present tourists and tourist industry and, meanwhile, to protect the environment and future opportunities'. However, the current ideas surrounding sustainable tourism have tended to evolve from two main strands. One is a concern linked with the increased awareness of the general environmental consequences of economic development as highlighted in the Brundthland Report (1987), the other source, by contrast, was much more specific, relating to perspectives of the impact of mass tourism on the physical, socio-cultural and economic environment as of tourist areas. According of the Journal of Sustainable Tourism (1993), sustainable tourism is 'a positive approach intended to reduce the tension and frictions created by the complex interactions between the tourism industry, visitors, environment, and communities which are host to holidaymakers'. Also, implicit in this definition that the tourism will continue to grow as a global activity, but that there are some limits to growth and, more important, that these can be managed, is now part of the world culture and international economy being on the first position in the financial terms. Furthermore, this definition is not time – specific or place – specific and as such can be applied to all forms of sustainable tourism.

Sustainable tourism and Romanian background

Sustainable tourism development is complex in terms of territorial preparation, planning and management. Tourism and environment are closely linked, the first may be positive or negative consequences in relation to planning, recovery and management activities. Management and sustainability of tourism require the control of environmental effects and socio – economic, development and use of media and also to maintain the quality indicators of tourist resources and tourist markets.

Planning regulations and architectural design are registered in the concept of local sustainable tourism and tourism planning. In Romanian legislation, these regulations of visitor facilities are Law 350/2001 concerning zoning and urban planning, HG nr.525/1996 for approval of the General Urban Planning, Law no. 137/1995 on environmental protection.

In Romania, the most part of the tourism is in protected areas and is based on declared areas, but without reporting statistical plans. According to data compiled by researchers in forestry, Romania is the only country in Europe which has 5 of the 11 areas of natural vegetation.

In 1991, Mr. H. Weinzierl, President of the German Federation for Environmental Protection, said: "... legal recognition of national parks proposed by Romania is the greatest achievement in surrounding environmental protection in the area between the Atlantic and the Urals." But, 1994 is a decline time for national parks, the areas of protected forest is reduced significant. Now, legal conditions are ensured in Romania regarding ecotourism development, economic integration and social condition in the EU structures, recovery of protected areas, tourism and should be related on ecological principles in the context of sustainable economic development. Law no. 5 / 2000, PATN - Section III – Preserved Areas, (Figure1, Figure 2) have been highlighted the natural protected areas and natural monuments of national interest and national cultural heritage values: 17 biosphere reserves, national parks or natural reserves and 827 nature monuments and 681 heritage values of national interest.

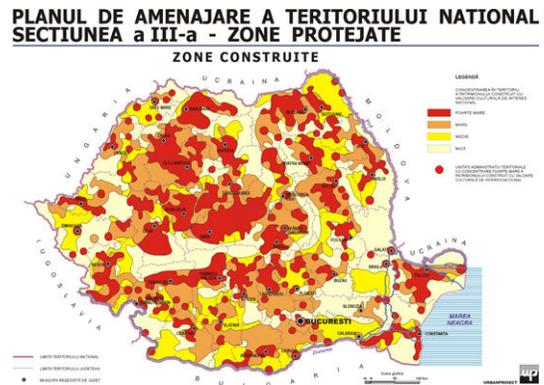


Figure1. PATN, Preserved Areas – Natural Areas

Figure 2. PATN, Preserved Areas – Build Areas

The value of tourism resources in each territorial administrative units located within or in proximity to major preserved areas can be rendered on the basis of the documentation which formed the basis of Law no. 190/2009 for approving O.U.G. no. 142 / 2008 concerning the approval of PATN - Section VI - Tourist Resources Areas. The Tourism Section VI (Figure 3. PATN, Tourist Resources Areas) is intended to ensure the best use of permanent balance between existing and potential socio-economic sustainable development of the whole territory and settlements. On the other hand, this section provides a comprehensive framework and consistent documentation on the space tourism organization and sustainable development of the country. The development of tourism areas is a major component of the national territory and it must be addressed in a global concept of spatial planning in correlation with population evolution and changes, the network of settlements and technical infrastructure in terms of sustainable development.

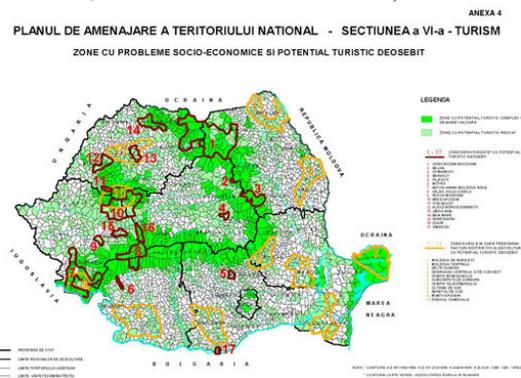


Figure 3. PATN, Tourist Resources Areas

Why rural tourism?

In the concept of sustainable tourism in Romania, the position of rural tourism is very well defined, both as preserved natural environment, traditions, customs, culture, in general, and as well as satisfaction for tourism tired of classic tourism products³. The reason? According the spatial planning of Romania "Carta Verde, Rural space zoning, Rural Development" (Figure 4), the rural space is 40% of the country.

Overlapping the tourism development over rural zoning means to find a strategy who improves the life quality and strengthening the identity of rural areas, the shift from subsistence economy to an efficient economy based on fundamental principles of market economy in a state of law and to connect the rural community to macro-economic mechanisms. More than that is generating a form of tourism that showcases the rural life, art, culture and heritage at rural locations, thereby benefiting the local community economically and socially as well as enabling interaction between the tourists and the locals for a more enriching tourism experience can be termed as rural tourism. As against conventional tourism, rural tourism has certain typical characteristics like; it is experience oriented, the locations are sparsely populated, it is predominantly in natural environment, it meshes with seasonality and local events and is based on preservation of culture, heritage and traditions.

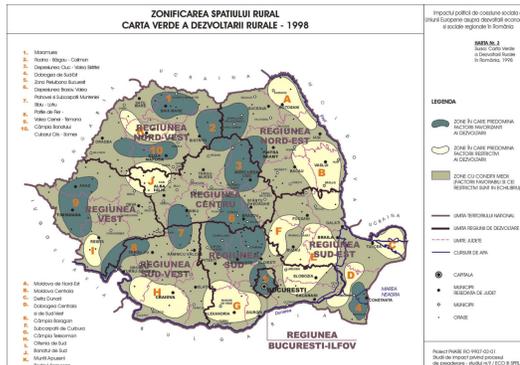


Figure 4. Rural space zoning, Rural Development

Rural development is affected by many factors, including economic development, humanitarian attitudes, environment, social values and knowledge (Poostchi 1986). Thus, while the global condition has become steadily more urban, most professionals have stressed the importance of retaining key differences between urbanization and the rural realm.

In part, the predatory consumption of land by the urbanization process – that is to say, the transformation of non – urban land into urban land – in the result of a drastic difference between what is city and what is country; between what is urban and what is rural. The absence of the transitional space between the city and the country mean there is a great pressure on the space adjacent to those cities in need of the land to grow on. Rurbanizing means the inhabiting of a rural space with a urban activity, but without adopting a traditional form of a city, a space of transition between the city and the country which need to be conserved for a certain landscape value and environmental reasons.

Rural – urban relationship

Dynamic components and land use

Urbanism defined also the processes by which a rural (or natural) space is transformed into an urban space capable of accommodating all the functions of the city and organizing the social interaction between citizens. Urbanizing means literally burying, both physically and conceptually, the agricultural land (in the actual context is part of the rural space) in order to implant the functional system needed to provide mass mobility, the space for the commerce and high-density housing while also creating public spaces for encounter and exchange.

In this case, there is a fragility of the boundary between urban and rural areas at territorial approach, and in the relationship of urban – rural tourism is leading to new relationships in rural areas under urban pressure. This report is an issue for discussion and an academic perspective, continued development of models, but also in terms of development policy making. Both activities are ongoing processes that require a query to the dynamic of the increasingly high rate of change in society. The society is the most important and it is difficult to define the exact characteristics of rural society.

In his article, ‘Communities and their Relationships to Agrarian Values’⁴, Flinn noted three very different types of traditional life styles within the rural space: (a) Small town society, closely knit, strongly believing in democracy, but often not in close contact with nature; (b) Agrarian society, based on family

farming, farm life and the calendar of the seasons; (c) Ruralists, living outside towns, but not farming: independents who value open space, nature, and ‘a natural order’.

The rural sociologists have struggled hard to identify the varying characteristics of rural societies. Frankenberg’s urban/rural contrasts⁵, dating from 1966, remains a valuable check list:

Table 1. The Characteristics of ‘Rural’ and ‘Urban’ Societies

Rural	Urban
Community	Association
Social fields involving few but multiple role relationships	Social fields involving many overlapping role relationships
Different social roles played by same person	Different social roles played by different people
Simple economies	Diverse economies
Little division of labour	Great specialization in labour force
Ascribed status	Achieved status
Education according to status	Status derived from education
Role embracement	Role commitment
Close-knit networks	Loose-knit networks
Locals	Cosmopolitans
Economic class is one of several divisions	Economic class is the major division
Conjunction	Segregation
Integration with work environment	Separation of work environment

Source: Frankenberg (1966). Tourism Strategies And Rural Development, *Organisation For Economic Co - Operation And Development, Paris 1994*, 11-12.

Technical and cultural modernity provides a degree increasingly higher diffusion values in urban and rural society, consequently, causes important changes in its lifestyle. These mutations are not confined only to issues of organization of specific economic activities, the increasingly integrated areas becoming wider, encompassing both rural areas and urban agglomerations. They also include the scope of mentalities, perceptions, with major impact in terms of artistic production, lifestyle and ultimately their understanding of complex living environment.

There are still present several distinctive features of rural areas compared to that of the urban human settlement even that the urban living is a diffuse model. Relationships between rural and urban areas could be studied primarily through focusing on flows. However, comparative data on flows between different areas, or areas of different types, are hardly available. Within the discussion about the meaning of rural and urban, two main approaches can be distinguished. First, objective approaches are mainly based on morphological and functional characteristics. Second, in subjective or constructivist approaches the perspective and meaning of rural and urban actors form the point of departure. In exploring promising rural-urban relationships that may contribute to the sustainability of rural landscapes, both distinguished

rural-urban relationships may play a role. Rural areas, directly related to natural cycles, to the succession of the seasons, to the primary economic resource represented by natural elements (land use, the forestry, water resources), to the vegetation cover of rural human settlement more much higher than urban seelements, highlights a much higher inertia in the basic principles underlying the origin of processing technology resources and the extent of mentalities, but also those relating to the visual / symbolic and not least manifestations of artistic character.

This game of relationships rural / urban continuously produce a new structure of anthropic environment, expressed through the landscape as an expression of new economic structures (ratio of agriculture/ industry / services, in which the last become dominant - travel, insurance, banking, specialized education , cultural services). Mentioned influences and changes are not limited to endogenous relations, are also present in relation to the big territory, at the macro scale landscape, infrastructure. In this relationship could occur dynamics under urban pressure on the rural land for housing, transport infrastructure, economic and tourist activities. Ideally, land use planning could act as a tool to deal with the various, often conflicting, demands for rural space.

Rural tourism: integration, development and conservation

The European Commission regards ‘rural areas’ as a spatial phenomenon – rurality – that extends across regions, landscapes, natural areas, agricultural land, villages and other larger urban centers, pockets of industrialization and regional centers. It encompasses a diverse and complex economic and social fabric. It is the home of a great wealth of natural and cultural resources and traditions. It is becoming more important as a place for relaxation and leisure activities. This definition illustrates the breadth of the issue, but is not useful from an analytical point of view.

The debate to define rurality have made extensive use of the concept of the rural/urban continuum to deal with many different types of area, exhibiting different characteristics, and areas undergoing active change: (a) population density and size of settlements; (b) land use, and its dominance by agriculture and forestry; (c) ‘traditional’ social structures and issues of community (Figure 5. Figure 6.). A similar continuum concept can be useful for those seeking to define rural tourism.

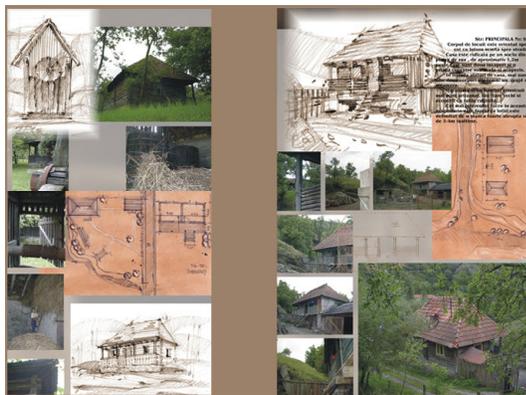


Figure 5. Traditional structure.
Densus Village, Hateg Country Dinosaurs
Geopark, Romania
Source: Research project: Strategy and Identity on Rural Settlements, Hateg County, Geopark, Romania, 2004-2006



Figure 6. Traditional structure.
Sacel Village, Hateg Country Dinosaurs
Geopark, Romania

The differences between rural society and urban society are the base of the characteristic of the tourism. So, a list of contrasting features ⁶ (Frankenberg, 1966) between urban/resort tourism and rural tourism could include the following (and it is an open list):

Table 2. The features Characteristics of ‘Rural’ and ‘Urban’ Tourism

Rural Tourism	Urban Tourism
Much open space	Little open space
Settlements under 10 000	Settlements over 10 000
Sparsely populated	Densely populated
Natural environment	Built environment
Many outdoor activities	Many indoor activities
Infrastructure - weak	Infrastructure - intensive
Strong individual activity base	Strong entertainment/retail base
Small establishments	Large establishments
Locally owned businesses	Nationally/Internationally owned firms
Much part-time involvement in tourism	Much full time involvement in tourism
Some farm/forestry involvement	No farm/forestry involvement
Tourism supports other interests	Tourism interests self supporting
Workers often live close to workplace	Workers may live far from workplace
Often influenced by seasonal factors	Rarely influenced by seasonal factors
Few guests	Many guests
Guest relationships personal	Guest relationships anonymous
Amateur management	Professional management
Local in atmosphere	Cosmopolitan in atmosphere
Many older buildings	Many modern buildings
Conservation/limits to growth ethic	Development/growth ethic
Specialist appeal	General in appeal
Niche marketing	Broad marketing operation

Source: Frankenberg (1966). *Tourism Strategies And Rural Development, Organization For Economic Co - Operation And Development, Paris 1994*, 14-15.

Many will display some ‘urban’ characteristics. Some will be in the process of change and development towards becoming large, urban tourist. The use of the continuum concept allows planners to recognize this trend, and to take steps either to regulate it, or to make infrastructural provision for it. It can be strongly argued that management strategies in rural tourism should aim to conserve rurality as an important resource. But, in some cases it may be valuable to allow or even encourage some change to take place.

These changes are reflected in rural areas by copying an urban lifestyle (farm worker appears, as an individual dedicated to operations conducted in an institutional and organizational framework different

from that traditionally, which was marked by a strong structural and functional self-sufficient) but, without benefit of all network resources functional areas. Environmental equilibrium and territorial efficiency depend both on the success of “urban production”, and therefore the existence of agglomeration advantages, and on the ability of the rural habitat to produce the income necessary for the social and demographic stabilisation of local communities. As a result, the rural landscape in particular meanings and is anonymous, and the physical plane uniformly. It is very important in this case to find a good balance that can make contribution to sustainable development of rural tourism: to stimulate and help to development the positive effects and controlling and reducing the negative effects.

Table 3. The negative and positive effects of Rural Tourism

Realities of rural tourism with negative effects	Realities of rural tourism with positive effects
Imbalance factor of local tradition	Promoting factor of culture
Changing factor change of the social structure of settlements	Touristic village, the main element (more than 207 settlements)
Physical pollution factor of the land, of the environment and food	Local resource users
Moral pollution factor	Development factor of activities
Great efforts, small incomes	Creator of new professions and jobs
Tourism only in the summer	Safety valve in the summer tourism
Periods of rising and falling	Periods of rising and falling
	The relative economic efficiency
	Development Factor
	Spontaneous
	Electrifying energy factor of the local connection

However, rural tourism is one of the most intriguing sustainable tourism themes, which has been lately become very popular in less industrialized countries. Its future has been controversially discussed, with questions as to whether it is "rhetoric or reality" (Cater 1991).

Research focused on identifying the motivations of tourists has found the answer to their search for authenticity. In particular, rural tourism is explained as an escape from the superficiality of modern life and alienation of modern man, who, is trying to find the least developed places, where he maintained a simple lifestyle. Countless studies have focused on the issue of authenticity versus real or fake seen through the eyes of tourists and locals. Bruner (after Stronza, 2001, 266) shows that tourists and people have the motivation to know the world. As they go to visit a museum, just like this they are visiting different places, collecting photographs, souvenirs and stories which they then share among themselves.

There are studies that show views of tourists, that the main attraction is the cultural landscape of many areas, citing geographical areas as the ancient ruins, the geological sites, characteristic of buildings and settlements in Hateg Country Dinosaurs Geopark, Romania. (Figure 7. Figure 8.) Cultural landscape is the combination of cultural and natural landscape, is that both forms showing natural geographical and cultural elements from the people who live or have lived there. In terms of tourism, cultural landscape is an attraction, but is not yet time to be used as such by tourist marketing (Buckley, Ollenburg and Zhong, 2007, 47).

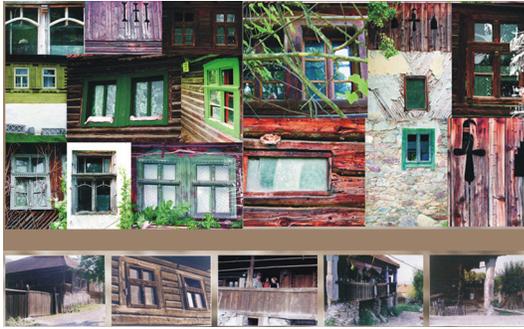


Figure 7. Traditional elements
Clopotiva Village, Hateg Country Dinosaur Geopark, Romania
Source: Research project: Strategy and Identity on Rural Settlements, Hateg County, Geopark, Romania, 2004-2006



Figure 8. Santamaria Orlea administrative structure. Hateg Country Dinosaur Geopark, Romania
Source: Research project: Strategy and Identity on Rural Settlements, Hateg County, Geopark, Romania, 2004-2006

On the other hand, the option to place the traditional elements has two components: the demand for tourism and the nostalgia of childhood past, the latter being intensified by the first. So, in new pensions were also inserted and traditional elements. In other words, here the urban seen superior to the rural areas like a course of evolution from the past to the future than on a course of evolution from poverty to wealth. Urban and contemporary are considered as belonging to the present and future, but rurality is almost always seen as an important condition, possessing very valuable characteristics worthy of preservation. (Characterics of Hateg Country Dinosaur Geopark, Romania: Figure 9. Figure 10)

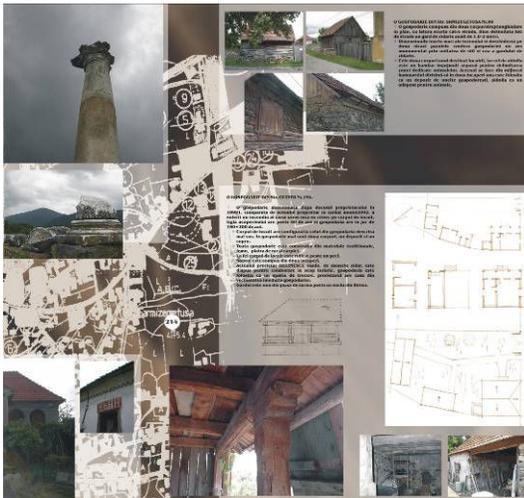


Figure 9. Cultural heritage
Sarmisegetusa Village,
Hateg Country Dinosaur Geopark, Romania
Source: Research project: Strategy and Identity on Rural Settlements, Hateg County, Geopark, Romania, 2004-2006



Figure 10. Traditional and contemporary elements. Vadu Village, Hateg Country Dinosaur Geopark, Romania
Source: Research project: Strategy and Identity on Rural Settlements, Hateg County, Geopark, Romania, 2004-2006

Regarding this appreciation of rural tourism characteristic configuration is possible through its systematic study, conducted for a number of areas of multidisciplinary analysis. Thematic study of rural tourism is related to the cultural landscape of rural settlement and includes a wide range of analytical approaches that relate to: (a) Topographic, and hydrographic micro – topographic; (b) Vegetation cover (plant structure, species, spatial and temporal configurations); (c) Fauna; (d) History site; (e) cultural heritage; (e) Major landscape represented by farms; (f) the presence of subsistence activities (agricultural,

territorial fragmentation); (g) Characteristics of built space (scale, functions and architecture of rural household, construction materials), leading to the problem of rural development models; (h) Impact of external environment; (i) Differences between regions sensitive to different territorial scales (based, for the Romanian territory, the differences between intra-and extra-spaces).

Conclusion

There is a clear renewal of interest in rural areas. Webster (1975) defines rural development as a process which leads to a rise in the capacity of rural people to control their environment, resulting from more extensive use of the benefits which ensure such control. Over time, it could well become a privileged area where beside their work environment, different social groups apply their own system of values, in other words, their tastes in leisure activity, styles of consumption, cultural preferences.

Identifying the elements (including the relations between elements) that give personality to the rural landscape is the basis for valuing (classification and hierarchy) of rural tourism, but it could become also operational as a basis for decisions on development policies, based on specific methodologies related to the value system of the local population (rural), and at the outside (urban).

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¹ Benjamin, Walter. *The World of Art in the Age o Mechanical Reproduction*, 217-252.

² Touriscapes are defined as places where perspectives overlap and identities intersect to produce spaces of serious cultural and historical significance as well as recreation and fun. King, Paula Nicole. (2008) *Sombreros and Motorcycles: Place Studies on Tourism and Identity in Modern South Carolina*.

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⁶ Frankenberg (1966). Tourism Strategies And Rural Development, *Organisation For Economic Co - Operation And Development, Paris 1994*, 14-15.