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# From Peasant Workers to Amenity Migrants. Socialist Heritage and the Future of Mountain Rurality in Romania

Andrea Membretti and Bogdan Iancu

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## From the Alps to the Carpathians: Population inflows and tourism as transformative vectors of mountain regions

- 1 This study aims to analyse the ways in which the phenomenon of *amenity migration* manifests itself in a specific area of the Carpathian Mountains, namely in Transylvania, with respect to the diffuse rurality that characterises this region 25 years after the dissolution of state socialism. With the help of concepts from the growing literature on the process of neo-populating in the Alpine regions, we highlight the peculiar feature of this phenomenon in an area that, despite its significant economic and cultural differentiation from the Alps, is nevertheless integrated into a common European frame of development. We approach the post-socialist transition of Romania's mountain regions by paying special attention to the growing number of new inhabitants in these areas. Specifically, we consider the pivotal role of "amenity migrants" (Moss, 1996; Moss and Glorioso, 2008) – people who migrate to dwell and work permanently or to stay long-term in places that are environmentally and culturally different from their places of origin (Moss, 2006; Moss *et al.*, 2008).
- 2 Our inquiry hinges on socio-demographic research undertaken over the past five years (Corrado, Dematteis and Di Gioia, 2014; DEMOCHANGE, 2012; Bender and Kanitscheider, 2012) into the ways in which depopulation and economic recession have impacted the western Italian and the eastern Austrian Alpine regions. Our work focuses on the potential role these "new highlanders" – who, despite their criticism of local ways,

maintain a creative relationship with locals – play in triggering economic, social and architectural reconfigurations of the Alpine mountain areas (Dematteis, 2011; Varotto and Castiglioni, 2008).

- 3 Young urbanites who seek to embrace new lifestyles and work away from the city, foreign immigrants keen on taking up agriculture and husbandry, elder retirees who return to their home villages and tourism-minded residents who turn their cottages into guesthouses are the primary agents of these innovative symbolic transformations (Membretti, 2015a; 2015b). The presence of such diverse populations that can be subsumed by the larger category of lifestyle migrants (McIntyre, 2009) also raises questions pertaining to their impact on pre-existing local identities, the architectural heritage of these mountain areas, and traditional ways of land use (Viazzo, 2012; Steinicke *et al.*, 2010).
- 4 As the legal framework of the Alpine Convention (AlpConv, 2011; 2015) states, such socio-demographic matters pertain directly to the broader theme of tourism, specifically of the “rural” and “sustainable” kind. Indeed, tourism becomes the main economic activity or frame that binds together the activities of those seeking to live in the mountains and of those already living there who wish to continue doing so (Corrado *et al.*, 2013). Inflows of tourists seem to not only represent the foundations of novel local development but also assure a market for local products and thus a source of income for local artisans (Varotto, 2013).
- 5 This article emerges at the interdisciplinary confluence of sociological research in Alpine areas and anthropological inquiries into Romania’s mountain regions. The latter direction focuses on the phenomenon of ruralism in relation to the process of modernisation the country underwent during state socialism (Mihăilescu, 2011) and, more recently, in relation to incipient forms of rural tourism in mountain areas (Merciu *et al.*, 2011). The emergence of mountain tourism in Romania must be analysed in conjunction with recent EU policies that aim to preserve the Carpathian culturescape in a logic of sustainable development, as stated in the Carpathian Convention (2011; 2003), a treaty inspired by the Alpine Convention.
- 6 In terms of methodology, the authors analysed secondary sources pertaining to state and EU-sponsored policies of development and undertook ethnographic fieldwork in the summer of 2015. After discussions in Bucharest with Romanian scholars who specialise in environmental studies, sociology and geography,<sup>1</sup> we went to research the impact of amenity migrants on the local development of a village that deals with tourism from urban areas while remaining profoundly rural.

## State-socialist agrarian policies and the adaptive strategies of mountain dwellers

- 7 State-socialist policies for mountain regions featured several particular characteristics within the broader policy framework that targeted the national “agrarian question”. At the broadest level, the main objective of the regime was to bring about social modernity through urbanisation and industrialisation in one of the most rural European countries at the time (Micu, 2012). The government moved towards this goal both ideologically and pragmatically. On the one hand, it launched comprehensive plans against the traditional practices of village communities, which it deemed to be incompatible with the forging of the “New Socialist Man”. On the other hand, it

targeted small properties through a process of collectivisation. By the mid-1980s, 90% of the land was already cultivated or used for grazing, either through various types of collective organisation or through state-owned collective farms (Serbescu, 2008), as was the case with regions earmarked for planned systematisation with the aim of turning peasants into urbanites by pushing villagers towards urban centres.

- 8 In this context of state-sponsored collectivisation, it is particularly relevant that these efforts largely overlooked most mountainous areas, as such plans were hindered by the extreme dispersion of mountain settlements and the lack of easy access that rendered high-altitude agricultural lands and pastures unfit for large-scale exploitation. More than 2,800 mountain villages where dwellers held communal property over grasslands remained uncollectivised. Villagers retained possession of their land, yet they were initially required to hand over a substantial proportion of their produce to the state on the basis of a mandatory quota system put in place in 1949 to cover war reparations owed to the Soviet Union and to stimulate urban and industrial development. This model was later converted into a contract-based system aimed at stimulating the productivity of peasant families for the benefit of the national market: The state would pay a fixed price for products and provide stock farmers with discounted fodder (Beck, 1976).
- 9 Socialist policies in mountainous areas worked through both direct and indirect mechanisms that favoured the continuity of the autochthonous mountain communities (Stan and Stewart, 2005). First, men who were fit for daily commuting benefitted from the possibility to supplement their agricultural income by industrial wages afforded by the establishment of industrial enterprises in foothill towns, which formed part of state efforts to incentivise the diversification of local economies (Randall, 1976). Moreover, state involvement ensured the constant absorption of the local workforce into the forestry and mining sectors. Second, roads were built, means of public transportation were provided in order to connect even the remotest villages with urban centres, and medical and cultural infrastructures (schools, dispensaries and village community centres) were put up. By maintaining the minimum number of facilities, which were often poorly constructed and understaffed, the state rendered continuous mountainous dwelling possible. Finally, some features of the centrally planned economy furnished mountain dwellers with the much-needed stability and predictability of everyday life; we will later discuss the state-sponsored purchase of wool and artisan products crafted by women during the winter using looms that the state often provided free of charge.
- 10 In the 1960s and 1970s, these features were supplemented by the effects of state-promoted tourism (Ștefan, 2014). For instance, half of the 14 villages that the Ministry of Tourism designated in 1973 offer foreign tourists the experience of recreational contact with the so-called “traditional Romanian lifestyle” of the mountain regions (i.e. Transylvania, Maramureș, Dobrogea). Thus, the government was aware of the Carpathians’ potential for tourism, which turned the mountains into vehicles for propaganda (i.e. tourism as a means of national identification) aimed at attracting hard currency from abroad at a time when Romania, bereft of Soviet economic support, was suffering a deep economic crisis (Light, 2013).

## The impact of socialism's collapse on the mountain areas

- 11 The dissolution of the socialist system had a dramatic impact on Romania's mountain areas. Economically, the protracted closure of state-owned factories and mines (Muică and Turnock, 2000) and the general contraction of the public sector greatly diminished the availability of non-agricultural revenues. At the same time, mountain villagers lost the guaranteed markets for their products as the state loosened and eventually dropped the socialist-era policy of the preferential purchase of farmers' produce altogether. In terms of welfare, the weakening of the state debilitated the public services and infrastructures that had rendered the mountain areas liveable during socialism. Finally, in terms of agrarian property, the post-socialist privatisation of the commons, which often led to large swaths of cultivable land being abandoned, polarised the tenure on large and small properties. On the one hand, new private estates emerged, often owned by urbanites involved in illicit activities that curtailed the pasturage of local communities. On the other hand, the property claims of private actors, seldom over the same plot of land, enabled by the so-called "restitution" policies based on pre-socialist cadastral registers, led to the atomisation of the lands previously owned by state collectives – often into ineffectively small parcels.
- 12 Several socio-demographic effects ensued in the aftermath of the economic downturn that hit mountain socio-economic systems (Kideckel, 1993). One apparent consequence was the significant depopulation of these areas at the intersection of outward migration and the continuous decline in the birth rate resulted from the steadily aging population and the tendency of young families to postpone having children in a context of uncertainty and dwindling economic resources. A second consequence was the severe increase in subsistence agriculture linked to factors as diverse as limited access to urban markets under conditions of shrinking state support, the reduced dimension of farmers' allotments, hyperbureaucracy (both at state and EU levels) that impacts small agricultural entrepreneurs disproportionately and, finally, the advanced aging of the resident population comprised of elder families who combine self-sufficient food production with their retired pensions and local bartering. Finally, the mountain areas face growing physical, socio-cultural and economic isolation because they are poorly connected to urban areas due to reduced employment and commercial opportunities and the severe deterioration of roads and transportation systems.

## Romania's mountains today: the peasant question, socio-demographic dynamics and rural tourism

- 13 In the 1990s, rural dwellers cherished some hope that post-socialist transformations would improve their lives, following post-industrial developments in the West that led to a progressive modernisation of the countryside and counterbalanced the reduction in the national economy's reliance on agricultural production and peasant labour. However, more than 25 years after the collapse of Nicolae Ceaușescu's regime, Romania remains predominantly agrarian, with more than 65% of the territory used for agriculture or pasture economy. Around 800,000 peasant families still live in the Romanian Carpathians and own extremely small land tenures (averaging 2.15 hectares per household) and a correspondingly small amount of livestock that averages between two and four heads of cattle and 10 to 12 sheep per household (Huband and McCracken,

2011). These households manifest a growing reliance on subsistence agriculture and husbandry: 81.3% of these farmers rely on their household production for more than 50% of their foodstuff consumption (Micu, 2012). Agriculture policies at both the state and European levels have favoured the perpetuation of this type of practice, given that peasant households have long received – and some of them continue to receive – subsidies for landscape maintenance works (i.e. for haymaking through traditional unmechanised means). These subsidies became a major source of income for rural households, but, as a side-effect, they rendered mountain peasants growingly dependent on outside institutions instead of incentivising them towards entrepreneurship (Stroe, 2015).

- 14 The traditional system of social and economic relations that make up the local moral economy (Cash, 2014) also constrained agricultural entrepreneurship in mountain regions. In these areas, land primarily functions as a means of subsistence and, given the strength of kinship and the communal use of pastures, as a local social connector rather than a capitalist commodity or a means of production. In this context, the private ownership of land, a type of property legislated after 1989 based on Western models of property, proved inconsistent with local peasants' traditional agrarian practices (Dorondel and şerban, 2014).
- 15 Furthermore, the “peasant question”<sup>2</sup> with regard to Romania's mountain areas appears strongly correlated with demographic dynamics. Between 1992 and 2012, Romania lost 3 million people to outmigration and lower birth rates. Initially, this tendency impacted urban areas more than the countryside (ITA, 2012). This phenomenon, which scholars describe as an “expansion of the rural world” (Mihăilescu, 2011; André Crous, 2017-03-09T14:32:00; André CroAutore sconosciuto, 2017-03-09T14:32:00; Autore sc), saw a part of the economically struck urban population moving away from cities and seeking agricultural work and lower costs of living in the countryside. A large proportion of these migrants to the countryside were actually moving back with their families to their places of origin in urban areas where they were attracted by industrial employment. This reverse migration triggered certain agrarian adjustments. Subsistence agriculture could not integrate the inflow of new peasants, especially in a territory bereft of functional public services and infrastructure. While the demographic situation has stabilised in some mountain areas, others have recorded the opposite phenomena, namely population decline and aging. In the aftermath of Romania's accession to the EU, a second wave of migration redirected the majority of these returnees abroad (especially to Italy), where they would often practise the traditional mountain occupations that had ceased being lucrative in Romania (Membretti, 2015b).
- 16 Among these transformations that have influenced the Romanian Carpathians, the impact of tourism, linked with the migration dynamics of these new inhabitants, especially of the so-called amenity migrants, is of particular relevance. Whereas the political and economic instability of the first decade of post-socialism led to the downfall of state-sponsored tourism and the ruining of the infrastructures underpinning it (Light and Dumbrăveanu, 1999), a new type of tourism, which tour operators and researchers both define as “rural”, is growing steadily. Mountain tourists go up into the mountains especially over weekends, travel by car, primarily seek recreation and relaxation and are accommodated at guesthouses and small hotels that offer outdoor patios, barbeque grills, sport facilities and opportunities for short

sightseeing walking trips. This new type of tourist includes urban families with children, as well as young people attracted by various alpine sport opportunities.

- 17 The promoters of this type of mountain experience or leisure, which is radically different from the ideologically driven model of the former socialist state-managed tourism, come primarily from the capital city, Bucharest. Some of them are urbanised former mountain dwellers who use the capital they accumulated by working in the city or abroad to open and live off a business during tourist seasons. An even larger proportion of these promoters are themselves former tourists who decided to invest their own capital in the places they used to visit as tourists and choose to live there either permanently or temporarily.

## **Fundata: Post-socialist transition in the highest-altitude village in Romania**

- 18 In the following section, we illustrate some of the transformations that we have analysed to date on a macro level with the ethnographic case of Fundata, a Transylvanian parish located in Romania's Inner Eastern Carpathians, relatively close to the Bucegi mountain range. Situated at 1,360 metres above sea level, Fundata is the highest-altitude permanently inhabited locality in Romania. The data that inform this study were obtained during ethnographic field work that the authors undertook in the summer of 2015 and by means of archival research.

### **Methodology and field research**

- 19 We focused our fieldwork endeavours on Fundata, the central village of the eponymous parish, because it proved emblematic for the type of dynamics we describe in this study, particularly with regard to rural tourism. Contacts established with locals in the summer of 2014 through an exploratory study undertaken in the Fundata parish<sup>3</sup> proved particularly valuable in facilitating access to a larger pool of informants in the field.
- 20 In terms of methodology, the 2015 field research consisted of two interrelated components. On the one hand, we undertook a set of direct observations with respect to territorial and landscape organisation and to forms of human presence in this environment (practices of land use and management by tourists and residents, local modes of production, types of available services). These observations materialised in substantial field notes that have informed the contextualisation of the subject at hand and our analytical descriptions.
- 21 We supplemented our observations with 14 semi-structured interviews with open questions that elicited narrative responses. The purpose of this was to investigate local forms of tourism entrepreneurship and to illuminate cultural and traditional forms, socio-economic and demographic aspects, historical dynamics of the socialist past and the relationship between tourism and rurality. We constructed our interviewee sample to mirror the diversity of actors and stakeholders necessary to fathom the topics mentioned above. This was initially based on already established local contacts and further helped by brokering interviews with other locals. The interviewees comprise

local administrators, heads of local history museums, tourism entrepreneurs and mountain lodging managers, small-scale farmers and tourists.<sup>4</sup>

### Case analysis<sup>5</sup>

- 22 During the period of state socialism, Fundata retained much of its interwar population, despite the attractiveness of urban industry in the neighbouring city of Braşov (some 48 kilometres away). According to the 1966 population census, 300 of the parish's total 1,903 inhabitants held industrial jobs in nearby towns, commuting every day between the workplace and their village that usually enabled them to supplement household consumption through small-scale farming (Pepene and Popovici, 2012). The social type of the peasant worker has been analysed in depth by scholars who have taken an interest in this region (Beck, 1976; Randall, 1976, Kideckel, 1993) because of its potential for socio-economic and cultural bridging between urban and rural environments. This feature is one of the main reasons why the village remained a locus of meaningful social relations, where, for instance, one could invest wages from factory work in a new house built in accordance with traditional local architecture. Illustrating this trend, statistical data highlight a construction boom in the mountain areas during the 1970s (Pepene and Popovici, 2012). The village remained central even for those who had decided to move their permanent residence to Braşov, as the permanent exchange of social relations and resources between urban and village dwellers led to the development of the dispersed household (Mihăilescu, 2011), the main domestic adaptive strategy to socialist transformations (Randall, 1976).
- 23 By 1970, a time when foothills André Crous2017-03-09T14:32:00André CroAutore sconosciuto2017-03-09T14:32:00Autore scindustrial developments peaked, Fundata benefitted from functional services and was animated by numerous socio-economic initiatives. According to our interview data, the parish hosted two cultural centres, two cinemas, a public library, several shops carrying groceries and hardware, a dispensary staffed by two medics who also worked as midwives, several schools and a museum of local traditions. A handicraft cooperative that specialised in carpet weaving employed local women, while other artisans worked independently. At the same time, a substantial proportion of villagers worked in agriculture, forestry or husbandry, either on private allotments or on communal lands. Back in 1962, the first tourist village in Romania was set up in şirnea (one of the villages in the Fundata parish) as part of a national programme of mountain tourism development. This experiment, which turned out to be a key project for the area, was set up under the supervision of a local schoolteacher who identified mountain footpaths with tourism potential. Later, a local office for tourist accommodation and a cross-country skiing trail maintained by members of the skiing club of the "Tractorul" machine factory in Braşov completed şirnea's offer for tourists. By 1973, when the project was in full throttle, lodging amenities consisted of 150 beds, distributed among 60 houses. Some villagers established pure tourist accommodation while others were taking in lodgers in their households. Roughly 2,000 tourists, many of them from abroad, visited the village each year. Tourism peaked during festal periods in the village, as tourists were attracted by local traditions and national skiing competitions.
- 24 Since 1989, in the context of post-socialist deindustrialisation, Romania has witnessed a process of population decline and aging complemented by the exodus of young people

towards Bucharest or abroad. By 2002, only 1,008 people lived in Fundata, and by 2011, the population had dropped to 839, less than half the town's size in the early 1980s (Pepene and Popovici, 2012).

- 25 The peasant worker type declined with the deindustrialisation processes and was largely replaced by the seasonal worker type, who works most of the year abroad and returns to the the village of origin for household chores in the summer. Dwellers who maintain their residence in the village seek to obtain EU-provided agri-environmental subsidies, but they are often put off by the bureaucratic apparatus, which they claim acts in a more hostile fashion than during socialist times. In general, Romania's agricultural policy, largely guided in recent years by European directives, tends to privilege farmers who own at least 50 sheep and 10 cattle, effectively excluding most Fundata villagers who, bereft of subsidies, cannot turn themselves into agricultural entrepreneurs (Micu, 2012; Mihăilescu, 2007).
- 26 Furthermore, the disappearance or breakdown of much of the socialist-era infrastructure has become painfully apparent in our ethnographic observations. With respect to the socio-economic and cultural infrastructure, it is only the gymnasium that survived the onslaught of post-socialism that in the 1990s led to the closing of the cinemas, cultural centres, the dispensary, the library and the dairy collection centre. The same happened with the physical infrastructure (roads are in utter disrepair, most public buildings are abandoned) and the tourist infrastructure (only three of the accommodation spaces built in the 1970s still function).
- 27 A new type of tourism emerges as a vector of change in the context of the socio-economic crisis that threatens to dissolve traditional rural life in the mountain areas. As our interlocutors emphasised, this phenomenon emerged in the late 1990s, when three Bucharest-based tourists who used to come to Fundata before 1989 decided to build a holiday home used by their families, benefitting from the deflation of land value linked to property restitutions. Later, they turned their holiday home into a guesthouse with funding from national and European programmes that support tourism-oriented constructions in mountain areas. Shortly afterwards, other tourism entrepreneurs erected guesthouses in the vicinity, and thus emerged a nucleus of tourist lodging that comprises about half of the 20 guesthouses in the entire parish. The bulk of the other constructions, almost all of which were built with EU funding, are also owned by non-locals from Bucharest or Constanța who live here with their families on a seasonal basis. It seems that the phenomenon is far from having peaked, as several construction sites are currently under way – both in Fundata proper and in the neighbouring villages.
- 28 These new family-managed guesthouse have 10 to 20 beds and have nothing in common with the houses erected for tourism in the 1970s. Whereas the latter have wooden structures built in accordance with traditional local architecture and are part of folklore-inspired tourism, the former set themselves apart from the traditional land- and culturesscape. Their architectural style emerges as the eclectic result of the aesthetic bricolage of elements from rustic lodges and from the model of standard housing of Western suburbia. Wide paved courtyards, large garages for guests' cars, tennis and football courts and children's playgrounds are some of the most salient features of these newly built guesthouses in Fundata.
- 29 In many cases, the guesthouses' owners and managers maintain a close relationship with Fundata villagers, either because they employ local youth or because they buy

dairy products from local producers to provide to their guests. Many locals nonetheless notice that this is an asymmetrical relationship. They see new residents and tourists alike as fluctuating economic resources that offer no long-term guarantees for a local development. It is revealing that locals refer to the area where the guesthouses are concentrated as “outlanders’ [place]” (“la străini” in Romanian). “Outlander” refers here to both tourists and amenity migrants as a manifestation of diversity towards which Fundata dwellers show a form of diffuse indifference rather than outright hostility.

## The future of the Romanian Carpathians between rural tradition and urban creativity

- 30 The purpose of this article was to explain how phenomena such as amenity migration and rural tourism work in a peculiar region of the Carpathians that retains a substantial peasant influence 25 years after the collapse of state socialism. Borrowing notions of new populations and migration in the Alps, we sought to understand to what extent these conceptual apparatuses provide analytical purchase when applied to the Carpathian context, and simultaneously how the specificities of the latter are different from those of the Western Alpine regions.
- 31 A slew of socio-anthropological works have warned about the risks that population inflows and growing tourist presence present to Alpine cultural heritage. The fact that most amenity migrants and tourists have an urban origin or come from abroad can pose a threat to locals to the extent that “outlanders” might present as authentic local lifestyles André Crous2017-03-09T14:32:00André CroAutore sconosciuto2017-03-09T14:32:00Autore scand values those that are actually extraneous to the local traditional context (Bender and Kanitscheider, 2012; Steinicke *et al.*, 2011).
- 32 The penetration of urban lifestyles and the commodification of locality need not end up anyhow destroying local traditions and cultures. On the contrary, the local culturescape might be rejuvenated through mutually creative processes that bring together local old-timers, new residents and tourists alike (Viazzo and Zanini, 2014). The heterogeneous “outlanders”, with their professional and existential projects, emerge as promoters of territorial and socio-cultural transformations that might overcome local tendencies of self-referential isolation.
- 33 Our analysis confirms the relevance of inward migrant flows linked with the rise of rural tourism as main transformative vectors in highland settings and with respect to Romania writ large. Amenity migrants stand for both a potentially destabilising influence and an important resource for the preservation of mountain culturescapes and, perhaps most importantly, of a modicum of peasant lifestyles. In a mountain agrarian context lacking in endogenous entrepreneurship, the intervention of urbanites interested in investing their economic and social capital in tourism development might ease the transition of peasant worlds to a form of modernity in the production of which they have to be engaged as active players rather than be cast as passively marginal.
- 34 New residents and tourists, acting as cultural brokers, can contribute to reconnecting the mountain with the city and to rejuvenating local economic dynamics that might reorient some mountain dwellers out of small-scale subsistence farming and into

multifunctional agriculture (Iorio and Corsale, 2010; Muică and Turnock, 2000). This would be similar to some parts of the Alps, where an innovative integration of tourism with local systems of production takes place by combining a special focus on tourism offers with measures meant to stimulate the relocation of residents and economic activities in mountain areas.

- 35 Important caveats regarding cultural impoverishment, land grabbing and peasants' dependency on urban models of consumption must be taken into account. Nevertheless, Romania's highland peasantry, if left to itself without external support, is unlikely to be capable of actively moving beyond the shockwave of the end of an era.

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## NOTES

1. Our interlocutors were Maria Stoian, president of the Romanian National Association for Rural, Ecological, and Cultural Tourism, Vintilă Mihăilescu, professor of anthropology at the National School of Political and Administrative Sciences in Bucharest, an expert in Romanian rural life and the former director of The National Museum of the Romanian Peasant, and Cristina Merciu, professor of geography at the University of Bucharest, who specialises in rural tourism.
2. There is a wealth of literature concerning the “peasant question” in Romania, but an analysis of this body of work is beyond the purpose of this article. It should suffice to offer here only a brief overview: Dobrinu D., Iordachi C., 2009, *Transforming Peasants, Property and Power: The Collectivization of Agriculture in Romania 1949-1962*, CEU Press, Budapest and New York; Dell’Erba N., 2006, *Socialismo e questione contadina in Romania (1821-1921)*, Unicopli, Milan; Sabates R., 2005, *Co-operation in the Romanian Countryside: An Insight into Post-Soviet Agriculture*. New York: Lexington Books; Verdery K., 2003, *The Vanishing Hectare: Property and Value in Postsocialist Transylvania*, Cornell University Press, Ithaca; Valota Cavallotti B., 1979, *Questione agraria e vita politica in Romania (1907-1922): tra democrazia contadina e liberalismo autoritario*, Cisalpino-Goliardice, Milan.
3. This exploratory research was undertaken with the participation of students enrolled in Dr. Bogdan Iancu’s anthropological research seminar at the Department of Sociology, National School of Political and Administrative Sciences, Bucharest.
4. We interviewed 14 individuals: five women and nine men. In terms of institutional affiliation, Marian Pâtea is the incumbent mayor of the Fundata parish and manages a tourist guesthouse

with his wife, Nicolae Pepene, who heads the Museum of History in Braşov. Radu Frunteş is the director of the Ethnographic Museum in şirnea (Fundata parish). The bulk of residents and amenity migrants consisted of: five elder local peasants from Fundata (three women and two men), three tourists (one man and two women, part of young families with children from Bucharest), two tourist guesthouse managers (all middle-aged men, originally from Bucharest) and a young man from Fundata who works for one of the guesthouses.

5. The case study description relies heavily on interviews and on direct observations. However, owing to space constraints, we decided to present a synthesis of our findings rather than quoting individual respondents.

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## ABSTRACTS

This article investigates the legacy of state socialism and the post-socialist transformation inside the Romanian Carpathians by reviewing sociological literature on new inhabitants of the Alps and anthropological literature on ruralism in Romania. Today, after a period spent adapting to socialist agricultural and industrial policies, several rural communities of the Carpathians are facing growing waves of amenity migrants and urban tourists. In 2015, in order to investigate the potential role of these dynamics relative to the resilience of mountain dwellers, we collected qualitative data by means of in-depth ethnographic interviews with Romanian academics, tourist entrepreneurs, residents of and immigrants to the mountain village of Fundata in Transylvania. We recognise amenity migration and rural tourism as important but also ambivalent and as driving change with respect to the interrelated socio-demographic local change. Whereas the Carpathians have been losing population dramatically since the 1990s, and the remaining population has aged, rural tourism has brought new permanent and temporary inhabitants (often young people) and significant economic resources. Together with accommodation infrastructure, tourism has transformed several mountain villages' physical and cultural landscape. As cultural brokers and economic resource bearers, amenity migrants and tourists represent both a threat to and an opportunity for post-socialist territories, which are facing long-term socio-economic and demographic crises. As we will discuss in the conclusions of the paper, also with regard to ongoing transformations in the Alpine regions, it seems clear that one cannot ignore the relevance of these urban actors (nor of the renewed urban-rural connection) to the revitalisation of mountain areas.

## INDEX

**Keywords:** amenity migrants, rural tourism, demographic change, post-socialist Romania, Carpathians

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