

## EDITORIAL

# ONE HUNDRED, ONE HUNDRED THOUSAND, ONE BILLION, ONE THOUSAND BILLIONS

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A few years ago, not many, for 2012, the well-known statistics published by the World Tourism Organisation consecrated two values in stunning numbers:

- the number of international tourists on the Globe exceeded for the first time in history one *billion* and
- the receipts exceeded a *thousand billion* dollars.

The „champagne tourism era” of the beginning of the twentieth century had ended, when the idea of leisure tourism was a privilege, a luxury, and the „coca-cola tourism era” had begun... Tourism was no longer a mere economic activity, be it even tertiary, but it became a social phenomenon: a tide of over one billion people was flowing every year, unceasingly throughout the globe.

The competition for tourists developed on the entire planet. These „small investors” in the pleasure of seeing a place and, moreover, listening to the story of a place, to feel on their skin the climate of a destination and to pass through all their cells the semantic load of a geographic or...cosmic space (since we are in the dawn of the space tourism era) have turned tourism forever into a local/regional/global development tool. Former industrial or transport areas, that had become relict, have been converted into tourist areas: who has not visited the administrative spaces of a former coal mine, now a museum, such as Zollverein – into translation, „customs union” (around which Bismarck’s Germany and the more recent European Union have been formed) – or who was not delighted by the famous paintings hanging on the walls of a former train station, on the banks of the Seine (simply called, Musée d’Orsay) or did not hear a concert in a former gas tank or on a field, in some village, which would otherwise have never been seen by tourists... And how many examples are not in this respect?

But people do not just come to see something, they come to feel, live an experience, be characters in the story of the place. The process of branding the destination has become the new foundry of authorities, the flagship concept of researchers and academics. Every tourist forgets what he has seen in time, but he will never forget the way the place he visited has made him feel. As Georges Duhamel said (1884-1966): „Every time I see Finland, I feel younger, lively, make great projects for the future, love more and more things and people, and, no less important, I love myself a little more”!

The story of a place first opens the soul, and then opens the mind.

Who can remember today the first man on the planet, and probably the last one, who went around the globe...by foot! The Romanian Dumitru Dan! Studying the geography at the Sorbonne, he engaged – together with three other Romanian comrades, all young people aged between 20 and 23, namely Gheorghe Negreanu (geography, Sorbonne), Paul Pârnu and Alexandru Pascu (students at the Conservatory, also in Paris) –, no more, and no less, than to walk a *hundred thousand* kilometres by foot. The initiative belonged to the French company Touring Club de France, which in 1910 wanted to spread in the world the idea of tourism through a globe-trotter contest, rewarding the 200 participants enrolled, at the end of the trip, with one franc for every kilometre travelled (totalling one hundred thousand francs). The trip was finished only by Dumitru Dan, in... 1923 (a delay caused by the war), who, along with the other three Romanians (all passing away along the route under different circumstances), broke 497 pairs of peasant’s sandals and 28 folk costumes, crossing 76 countries (and obtaining different documents).

And, as well, who else could realize today that the story of the place began *a hundred years ago*, on one hand, by founding modern Romania (1918), and, on the other hand, by Simion Mehedinți, the last great Romanian erudite, the founder, among others, of Romanian geography, which ranged from scientific geography to picturesque geography, to geographic painting, through a story, not colours, setting the basis for the first trips with students (the future practical applications)? And to translate into the present the idea of picturesque geography, the reader (internaut, blogger, vlogger), amazed at the geographical description of a place, is not a future tourist? Is not this what happens to Internet-born tourists, who want to step in the spot that was revealed in the little filmed story, to follow the footsteps of the character that impressed them so much, just by viewing a video on Youtube?

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And because Simion Mehedinți was a witness and participant in the 1918 territorial reunion, „The Great Union”, as recognized in the Romanian historiography, whose centenary we celebrate this year (2018), we conclude the present editorial with the testamentary words of the great scholar:

*„I lived with the thought of my people, whom I saw developing as a work of art, and of Romania, round as a medal”.*

Happy Birthday, Romania!