

THE CITY OF WATER AND ETERNAL PLAIN

Aspirations of a project

When the historian and archeologist Marian Neagu, manager of the Lower Danube Museum suggested that I should join the team of Calarasi for the project *Spirit of Danube in Port Communities*, initiated by the Art Museum of Constanta in partnership with the Art Gallery of Ruse – Bulgaria and the Lower Danube Museum of Calarasi, I was open and delighted to participate, attracted by the exciting title and the challenging and generous objectives which it aims to reach throughout its implementation. However, I believe that my acceptance was also motivated by the confidence gained from the remarkable cooperation with the *Elias Canetti International Society of Ruse*. Two years ago, under the sign of the same *Spirit of Danube*, the prestigious cultural institution from Bulgaria has translated and published one of my short stories book, fully inspired by the fantastic and fabulous magic of this river on the banks of which I have spent my childhood and teenage years. In his argument, the publisher expressed his wish to include the book in the series *The New Europe* and to enrich his translations portfolio with contemporary authors, to promote mutual knowledge of memorial cultures. “Your book – he wrote – is to us extremely interesting because it exhibits the mythology of Danube, a subject which would also be interesting for the Bulgarian reader.”

In essence, this ongoing project does not have other aspirations, except to create bridges of knowledge and communication between individuals and cultural communities in Romania-Bulgaria cross-border region, to emphasize the potential of artistic circles, in this case that of fine artists, who can influence the multiple development of life in the port-cities involved – Constanta, Ruse and Calarasi through the message of their creation, first of all aimed at the fields of economics, commerce, culture and tourism.

Such as it was conceived and as the three partners wish to implement it, the project is bold, exciting, attractive and interesting, it sets in motion intellectual energies in the port-cities taking part in its implementation. On the other hand, it removes linguistic barriers, tears down prejudice, creates emulation, a state of wellbeing, cultivates friendship, facilitates contact between people who live in similar geographical areas and conditions, propagates advantageous connections, ideas of the new concept of coexistence in the common European area and favors a more convincing perception, from different angles, of the life of the communities in question. On a wider scale, as far as the national culture and creation in Romania and Bulgaria are concerned, it instates and imposes a system of long-term relations, based on respect, recognition and creativity. At the same time, the project configures the common dimensions of river settlements on the Danube, but also the difference, specificity and characteristic features of each, which confers their touch of uniqueness. Their unifying vector is the Danube, a mysterious and subtle geographical entity. With the force and beauty of its entire universe, with the majestic movement in its lifelike flowing, it determines them, shapes them and influences their emergence, their rhythm of existence and their way under the sky of this South-Eastern part of Europe.

Today, in the common context created by Romania and Bulgaria joining the European Union, the Danube no longer separates the two nations, neighbors and friends for

thousands of years. This river destined both to Romanians and Bulgarians, passionately endeared by both, is no longer an obstacle. From both banks, bridges are built for a better proximity between their residents, but also to allow connection between the central European and the Balkan, Mediterranean and Oriental worlds. Under these bridges, as impressive rainbows, built by people for people, bridges uniting their hearts under the chords of the same vibration lay its pulsating heart, generating vitality, light and security of the great river and its watchful, beneficial and eternal spirit.

Spiritus Loci

In order to implement this project, Calarasi naturally brings its particular and unmistakable imprint of port-city located on the left bank of the Danube, on the Borcea Branch, on the South-Eastern Coast of the Romanian Plain, under its endless horizons and a generous sky.

Calarasi has always had a special status in the area of the Baragan and the Lower Danube. The geographical and historic component, the way of life of its people, their characters have shaped a "local spirit" and its defining elements.

The first distinct element of this area which conveys it a clear specificity is the appearance of nature and its topography. Indeed, the traveler who reaches Calarasi after the tiresome monotony and endless plain has the primordial feeling of surprise, of encountering a miraculous realm, full of freshness and color, of amplitude, which opens up to marshes, isles, meadows and forests. The image is breathtaking and you cannot have enough of it.

The formidable impact which it leaves on your retina and in your soul will haunt you a long time thereafter, as will the image of Borcea as well. This branch, as a prolonged and silky egret wing, splits from the Greater Danube, downstream from Chiciu – ferry crossing towards the Dobrudja and Silistra - , streams fast towards Calarasi, passes by the city and fades away towards Fetesti up to Giurgeni-Vadul Oii where, after the Ialomita flows into it, rejoins its original valley. Such was the destiny of Borcea, to break away from its valley and wash the sunny, serene and fertile bank of the Ialomita plain, to forge a luxuriant and fairytale land with islands, afforested spits and isles, with marshes, coves and channels full of fish, to gather on its banks a stream of villages, large and small, to find its way in the yards, homes and souls of people with its seductive spirit and forge them in its image and especially, to shape the legendary Baltalalomitei or Balta Tarii as the Dicians (TN – native residents of Dobrudja) call it.

Since we mentioned earlier the people of this land, we must agree that at the same time, the people of Ialomita and the people of Calarasi implicitly are people of the Danube and the plain, bearing the imprint of them on their face and in their heart. Who does not know them; hard working, dynamic, intelligent, industrious, proud of their origin, they follow through tenaciously, ambitious, balanced in thought and deed, occasionally hot tempered, but the fire of their anger and passion is quickly put out, they love justice, they are wise, good householders, sensitive, God-fearing, their faith being proven by keeping the ancestral traditions, the cult of the dead and honoring the Church and clergy.

History, with all it represented, played a major part in shaping the forging the image of the Calarasi spirit at the same time with the geographical factor and more than that.

Let us remember. At first, there was an old village called Lichirestiului Licherie (TN – Lichiresti of Licherie) from the times of Michael the Brave. They say that Alexander the Great himself passed by, crossing the Danube at Siliistra in search of loot on the land of the Goths. Being an easy crossing point over the river towards the Balkan Peninsula, it attracted Goths, Ostrogoths, Visigoths, the Carpi, the Bastarnae and Sarmatians. But in the XVIIIth century courier horsemen, bearing sealed letters between Sultans and the people of the Czar began wandering through Lichiresti, connecting Bucharest and Iasi to Siliistra and Constantinople. Thus, in time, the name of Lichiresti would be lost and totally forgotten and the new name of Calarasi (TN – Romanian for horsemen) took its place, being imposed as final toponym of the locality on the Borcea.

In 1828, the settlement was the size of a small town, with a few tens of houses, gathered around St. Nicholas Church, forming its center and other tens of households scattered along the Borcea, winding up the slum. After the Turkish-Russian war of 1829 and the plague epidemic at the time was contained, Bulgarians, Serbs, but especially Jews from Siliistra, most of them traders and businessmen, who brought a new spirit and a new mentality in the life and development of the settlement, began to come to Calarasi. Only in 1853, the ruler Barbu Stirbeihas freed the town. Since its modernization we can well and truly speak of the biography of Calarasi.

Located at a crossroad of land and water, more and more people, not only Romanians – Transylvanian shepherds from the area of Fagaras and Sibiu, lowlanders from the area of Buzau, but also other ethnic groups, especially from the Balkan region: Bulgarians, Turks, Macedo-Romanians, Armenians and Greeks began coming and settling in the new town, brought by the waves of history. Thus, a contact was formed within the town limits, between races and traditions with the multitude of social relations and the process of adjustment, blending and stability of ways of life, as in a melting pot. This small ethnic mosaic brought more picturesque and diversity to the town, contributing to the reconfiguration and enrichment of its particular stylistic. This phenomenon was possible because the majority Romanians, as natives, have never known intolerance and proved very strong in shaping and integrating the new comers.

Since that period of the early years of town life consolidation and up to the end of the XIXth century, the entire XXth century and present time, Calarasi has known moments of thriving and setbacks, economic prosperity and decline, depending on the historical events and changes which took place in the Romanian and European geopolitical area.

The Port-City

As a child, seen from the Dobrudja from the Ostrov Hill, in my mind, Calarasi was constantly foreshadowed over the huge branches of the Danube and the empire of Canadian poplar forests on islands and marshes as a white, immaculate and blinding mirage of tall houses, ignited by the heat of the sun; huge mirrors, eternally trembling in the blue, remote horizon of the plain. For the people of the villages in South-West Dobrudja, Calarasi was, a long time, the only city they knew and traveled to in a lifetime. All the other cities were far away, it was the only city close at hand therefore they all saw it as a fundamental landmark of their existence and cherished and revered it like a precious gift from God. For the Dobrudjans of this remote border land, Calarasi was their hope and deliverance. To them Calarasi meant: going to the market for poultry,

fruit, grapes, wine and plum brandy, shopping of important household items, to doctors and hospitals, pharmacies, high-schools and trade schools; train rides to the country, the movie theater, the famous county fair of September 08, to the relatives who had crossed the Danube and moved to the city, to its weekly markets and cattle fairs and many more.

A white steam boat, the *Ungheni*, a gem, built at the turn of the century in an Austrian shipyard was connecting Ostrov to Calarasi. It floated nearly in silence, as a ghost, connecting the two Romanian lands, Dobrudja and Muntenia for decades. There were first and second class, the ride was cheap and it was delightful to make the twenty kilometers ride with it, ten upstream on the Ostrov Branch up to Silistra and the other ten downstream on the Greater Danube and the Borcea Branch. Like many others, I too have discovered Calarasi, not on its roads in the field or near the water, not by train from Ciulnita, but on the powderless path of the river, on our one of a kind boat. You grew anxious when that fragile floating device left the Dobrudjan branch and entered the powerful surge of the Greater Danube. You did not even have the time to recover from this spectacular event, when the siren of the *Ungheni* made its deafening sound. That moment, you would be given a decent fright and you would turn white as a sheet. Relaxed, you would know on the spot that this was how the boat sounded its way into the Mouth of Borcea. Once entered through the branch channel, the *Ungheni* floated with its engine turned low, seemingly adrift. It was morning and your eye wondered towards the splendors on the shores and deceiving play of the whirlpools. As you stood motionless, your eyes and mind wondered on them in a pleasant absent mindedness and when you were the least expected, the much awaited miracle took place. The clear, high and astonishing skyline of the city emerges after an afforested turn of thick and old willows which was no prelude to spectacular landscape and then the water works, the wooden bridge over the Jirlau and its rippling stream joining the Borcea, Pescarus restaurant with terrace and pastry shop, all painted blue, the vintage building of Dunarea Hotel, the park with its classic statues and monuments, Victoria movie theater, the white building of the harbor master, the wharf and its gigantic silos, the maroon cars of the freight trains stopped at the river terminal, tens of barges and ferries loaded with cereal, sand, gravel and stacks of wood, a multitude of boats and power boats, the pier and its yellow pontoon and navy blue bridge, fastened at one end by the dizzyingly steep wharf and the gigs, carts and taxis on the asphalted platform near the park stone fence, awaiting their customers to take them wherever they needed, would stream before your eyes in quick and cinematic succession, rendering you speechless. The boat would haste its mooring maneuvers and slowly, dazzled and enchanted, you would find yourself climbing the bridge and walking on land and all the hustle and bustle of passengers and city folk coming to greet them or simply out of curiosity to see the boat arriving or to check the river levels written in huge letters on the board near the pontoon, absorbed in a few moments by the clean and serene streets of town. You would go about your business and at five o'clock in the afternoon you went back to port where the tireless *Ungheni*, with its boiler under pressure and Captain Verman and sailors were ready to take you home to Ostrov where the boat and crew were spending the night.

Since the port early years up to the First World War, but especially in the interwar period and thereafter in the first half of the XXth century, the port life was never interrupted and it developed in every era, being a beneficial influence on the town life. For some people

of Calarasi, the port was an attraction, a place of recreation where the town Cosmopolitanism was more visible and they went for a stroll, to relax and feast their eyes on relaxing scenery. For other town dwellers it was their workplace.

In its park or boardwalk, especially during holidays, there was a hustle and bustle of youngsters, students, damsels, soldiers, but also chic ladies accompanied by classy gentlemen, of officers in their sumptuous and dazzling uniforms, arm in arm with young and charming women, Russian coachmen snoozing on their coach boxes and taxi drivers leaning with their elbows and head on the wheel, looking forward to take you downtown or to the train station. The port was an area of permanent human and commercial circulation and an area of constant movement. Who did not know of the Greek and Armenian traders in it, with their sweets and colonial goods and their various wholesale shops! Who did not hear of Osman's coffee shop, leaning on the cereal warehouses by the pier! This was the gathering place for all kind folks with whom you became friends as soon as you met them. In the port coffee shop, worldly passions, ambitions, envies and interests were boiling, national and town but also world politics was turned upside down, small talk, discussions and chitchat were fervently consumed and opponents in the debate remembered to take a bite of a piece of Turkish delight or pumpkin pie and a sip of sparkling or foamed ice-cold lemonades.

There were pompous swimming contests in the port, during which the participants demonstrated their various traditional styles: free, dog, frog and sailor.

In the port, Aziz the Christian, the town ship owner had an actual commercial fleet anchored in its roadstead, stretching near the Volna slum in the north up to the slum of the people of Magura in the south, consisting of tugboats, barges, ferries and boats, served him to make transports down the Danube to Tulcea and Sulina and upstream to Budapest and Vienna.

Closer to the modern times, the railroad on which tens of cars of cereal from the Baragan used as export to Austria, Czechoslovakia and Germany ended in the port as well and with a mooring wharf more than a kilometer long, equipped with huge cranes, apart from cereal, there were also construction materials – sand and gravel from the Danube.

"Well, good times and good people!", you can hear some of the elders of Calarasi being rightfully nostalgic and regretful.

A Port-City With Cultural Vocation

Despite its provincial aura, with ordinary neighborhoods and houses, with clean sidewalks and yards where the smell of flowering tobacco and perfume of lime tree was intoxicating, although it gathered not too spectacular people and despite its total lacking of fame and historical pump in the past, Calarasi, the only port-city in the true sense of the word, located on the Borcea Branch was a classy town in spirit and elegance.

The people of Calarasi had two major hobbies in the first half of the XXth century – *brass band*, playing in the Central Park during the summer and the *fare* in the beginning of fall. Apart from those hobbies, there were also the *school* and *army*, since Calarasi had in the interwar period an infantry, artillery and a cavalry regiment, four all-boys and two all-girls high-schools, the art and trade school and agriculture schools.

Beside the vocation of agriculture and commerce and later on that of industry, Calarasi also had the vocation of culture. "I shall not write any random compliments, nor overreacted praises, but I have to admit that in Calarasi I have encountered people and cultural deeds I never knew existed" – said Mircea Eliade in a note published in "Pamantul" newspaper after his visit here in 1934. This statement is confirmed by the cultural centers, cultural leagues, literary and artistic festivals, meetings with writers and personalities of the time, sold out conferences, theater in the park, newspapers, magazines, print shops, book shops, libraries and others, existing at the time, which were diving and coagulating the creating and intellectual forces for the noble purpose of spiritual thriving of the community on the Borcea. Calarasi was proud to have given Romania ministers, illustrious politicians, professors, generals, prestigious magistrates, famous traders, but also scientists, important physicians and first rate writers and artists. Ultimately, this was a well-deserved recognition, a prominent coat-of-arms on the national level and a victory of the province in the face of disdain and ignorance from the Metropolis, which, we should admit in all objectivity that this was no small thing for a town of traders, farmers, sailors and fishermen, isolated on the Danube edge of the Baragan.

Contemporary Aspects

After going through the unfortunate utopias of the totalitarian Communism which only brought it a random urban portfolio, lacking a rigorous and daring vision but also plenty of unhealed wounds, cured of the delusions which planned a grand future in the national metallurgy of iron and steel, Calarasi is stoically readjusting its existential tracks to the new demands of democracy and market economy by counting on its tested instinct of preservation. By closing many of the industrial and economic facilities within the city limits in the recent two decades, some people were resigned to return to their native villages, while others to change their professions or leave en masse abroad to work in the Western countries. Commerce, light industry – that of food and textiles, paper, wood and prefabricated products – various businesses, hotel industry and that of private and urban building, etc., are in full revival.

The city is located on a widely open and important route, reaching the sea and coast, outstandingly picturesque and somewhat unknown: Bucharest – Calarasi – Silistra – Constanta, which opens some of the most lucrative perspectives to its travel agencies. The Danube crossing point at Chiciu, the border crossing at Ostrov-Regie – Silistra, Silistra with the Roman fort of Durostorum, the Turkish fort on the Medgitabia hill, the Museum of History and Archeology, Ostrov and its lovely surroundings, the Dervent Monastery, the Byzantine fort at Pacuiul lui Soare, Saint Apostle Andrew Cave Monastery, the Roman fort and Adamclisi Museum, the Chalk Cave Churches of Murfatlar and Constanta with all its museums and landmarks are the attractions with deep historical and spiritual echoes of this route which the tourism from Calarasi visits.

In all those years of restlessness and economic hardship in our extended transition, the culture and education institutions maintain in high regard the tradition of its vocation of cultural city with incredible effort. The Lower Danube Museum – with its history, archeology and art sections, the Municipal House of Culture, the People's Theater, Trade Unions House, House of Science and Technique, County Library and County

Culture Center, they all cherish and provide amplitude to the cultural and artistic act performed here. The “Hora Mare” International Folklore Festival, choir recitals, exhibitions of archeological pieces and works of painting and sculpture, cultural fairs, contests, literature and theater recitals and festivals, the twinning ceremonies of Calarasi with other cities in the world and complex actions of participation to various cross-border projects under the aegis of the European Union, are but a few of the multiple forms of expression whereby the port-city of Calarasi is making its mark in the spiritual geography of Baragan and the Danube where it takes a distinct place.

The *New Europe* Bridge between Calafat and Vidin/Giurgiu – Ruse Friendship Bridge/Borcea Branch at Calarasi – yesterday/The ruler Barbu Stirbei/Calarasi and its port of yesteryears/Image of the port of yesteryears/Town Hall and Central Casino, 1920's/Administration Palace, prewar period/panoramic view, early 20th century/The Park Theater, 1920's/The Danube crossing point at Chiciu seen from Silistra/Silistra seen from Chiciu/Images of the Byzantine fort from Pacuiul lui Soare/House of Culture/Ana and Marinache Popescu House. Architecture monument, end of 19th century. Currently housing the County Culture Department/Calarasi, Communal Pavilion, interwar period.

Questions generated by a project

The *Lower Danube Museum* of Calarasi and the *Art Museum* of Constanta in Romania and the *Art Galleries* of Ruse in Bulgaria continue and develop a previous project, this time under the name *Spirit of Danube in Port Communities*.

At first, this type of project does not seem to be far reaching. Through the dimensions, objectives and resources which it involves, our project could not generate wide-scale events; at least as far as media coverage is concerned. It could not move worlds but it could strengthen it better. So well in fact, that it will serve as an example for other projects and wider communities.

The pragmatic agenda of this project is to achieve multiple cross-border understanding and cooperation between the port communities of Constanta, Calarasi and Ruse.

The visual arts: painting and small sculpture are the means of expression in this project. The historical background of the cooperation between the parties involved is given by the very...spirit of the Danube.

Genuine projects are born out of necessary and authentic questions. To implement such a project is to find the most suitable answer for each question which it generated. However, at the end of the project, this way, all the questions having found an answer and the players returning home and going about their business, is there a risk that the project, with all its questions and answers, might be forgotten? Who might still be interested in the forgotten questions and answers of the soon completed project?

We would like to believe that the *Spirit of Danube in Port Communities* is a different kind of project. Since it was necessary to continue the project *Spirit of Danube – generating factor of cross-border synergies (2006)* by a new project, it means that the first project failed to cover all the questions; therefore, it failed to provide all the answers.

That being said, the experience of these two projects gives us the next question: what is in it for us from a project?

Of course, there are projects where the very realization of objectives is important because individual lives or the life of a whole community depend on the realization of those objectives. However, there are other projects, which, once completed, leave open

questions, preoccupations or aspirations which other social players, other generations and other communities are invited to fulfill, to find answers to or follow them through.

Therefore, at the end of our project, how many aspirations and questions will enrich us, the people of this side of the Danube and the others, our friends from across the Danube? Will the questions generated by the project implementation deepen the understanding and cooperation within and between the communities involved?

The projects such as *Spirit of Danube in Port Communities* have an open character. They are not meant to solve, be it on emergency basis, case-by-case issues – economic contracts, local political exchanges and immediate cultural and educational actions. In this project, no matter how Balkan we are or just because we are Balkan as well, both we and the Bulgarian side have a relatively different history, not without mutual roughness and suspicion. But because of this reason, one of the long term targets of our project, beyond the creation of a *serene and good-willed cross-border atmosphere* is to create a climate of mutual trust, of friendly experiences and practice in various fields.

The plough of economic and media globalization brings about the despiritualization of the particular and private worlds. Our local meetings, such as this one, can they bring back the spirituality in the life of our communities? How? By formal mutual practices? Isn't this term, falsely used under the slogan "good practices", one of the very thinning techniques of local identities, of annihilation of the *spiritus loci*?

The life of traditional societies and communities was, as we know, strongly spiritualized and respiritualized with every ritual ceremony! Any significant place in the life of the community was ruled by a ghost, a form of divinity, a certain spirit – *spiritus loci*, meant to protect that place and provide cohesion to the community to which that place belonged. A spring, vital for people or their animals, a statue on a certain street, a desert altar, a square, a temple or why not, a coffee shop – inside or in the proximity of such an area a god watched and a spirit dwelled. Modern or postmodern as we are, we might believe that the sacralization, i.e. the spiritualization of each significant place for a community just divides and atomizes that community.

Therefore, the traditional ways of life may not have had the vocation of the universal and universality? On the contrary. With Ernest Cassirer, Mircea Eliade, Sergiu Al. George, we admit the concept of connection between the archaic and universal, between the universality of archaic experiences and ways of life.

Then again, do modern ways of life, otherwise tending to become a single, global entity, lose any capacity to coagulate into a "local" identity?

Our project might help us define more adequately: what type of identity is still possible in a – modern or postmodern – world which seems to annihilate all forms of identity?

To a community, *spiritus loci* which we were discussing earlier, is the spirit of a sacred place. How could we still attract the sanctity of a place, so that in doing so, we, the people of a wide, globalized world, may cultivate and maintain our personal, collective and community identities, considering the ethnic-spiritual, architectural and musical identities which we can share with our fellow men, our neighbors near or far?

For our project, we have chosen the photographic art as means of emphasizing the significant on both banks of the Danube. This type of art, seen by some as minor, has two huge virtues in a time dominated by the cult of the image: on the one hand, the

image of photographic art has something magical, immediately fascinating; on the other hand, it has the vocation of any universal language.

Our fine artists taking part in the realization of a floating exhibition still have to face plenty of obstacles. The entire project revolves around their works and the travelling exhibition from Constanta, to Calarasi and Ruse. Therefore, how will so many visitors receive these works, but also the project in its entirety? Besides, will the images be capable to capture the moment of grace when a certain place belonging to the Danube and port communities shows its concealed side?

We will be happy to discover that our artists will have captured facets of the great river and aspects of the port communities which *any beholder can understand*, that is beyond words and feel them as his own!

With our modern and desacralized thought and way of life, few places are sacred to us. For our sensitivity, molded in a culture primarily of the image, the sacred appears to us most often under the form of amazement. We, therefore, wait for our artists to amaze us and to tell us that every place captured and included in an image can become universal asset, at least for one hour.

Intelligent media coverage of the project results and experiences undoubtedly provides a more than media impact, a truly educational one, because we like to believe that *Spirit of Danube in Port Communities* is a project which is integrated in a culture of understanding. After all, the bonds between future generations will decisively depend on the spirit in which we raise our children today. Each of us, with his/her distinct identity, will be able to build citadels.

We live in an open world. Today, we cross borders as easy as we cross the street to visit our neighbors. *Spirit of Danube in Port Communities* allows us to cross the river and borders, Romanian and Bulgarian to go visit our neighbors. Each of us could have gone, as simple tourists, in a personal project. But there is a huge difference between being a neighbor and being a tourist.

The tourist is a key character in the consumerist society because tourism is a business, an industry, a way of life. The tourist watches, but not contemplates. If he/she walks in an art gallery or a cathedral, the tourist consumes them in haste; he/she does not merely inhabit them, much less allows himself/herself be inhabited by the visited item or work. Mostly, the tourist takes pictures or films, only to see them again, not to remember. That is why most tourists have no memories because they do not take home memories, but pictures and films and consumer goods. Tourists are always on the move, always rushing towards something. But they are not athletes of the spirit! True enough, tourists are well organized: schedule, departure time, arrival time, breakfast, lunch, dinner, even the celebration of their rush – the festive dinner – is scheduled ahead, from home. There is always a technical means of transportation at their disposal: coach, train, power boat, ship and airplane; that is to say that the tourist is also lacking the thought and gift of lingering. The tourist is a “holidaymaker”, he/she has no time to linger. As we said before, he/she watches at the most, he/she does not contemplate. Therefore, his/her “work” or “holidaymaking” is no spiritualization work. In a spiritual work, lingering is a must because the spirit works exactly this way – by lingering. Not the case of the tourist. Most often, the tourist encounters things which he/she visits by stopping. These things, sometimes works, other times masterpieces, landscapes, people, human communities because they are fixed and that is, in other

words, their natural state, demand the beholder to stop and therefore linger, until his/her spirit begins to take the shape of the viewed thing. Then, thinking of the viewed thing, the beholder begins to have memories. As we were saying, unfortunately, the tourist makes home movies!

That is the way things are when we talk about neighbors and not about tourists. Tourists visit as well, but they never visit anybody!

When we visit our neighbors, they invite us to take a load off, to stay for a spell, not just take a seat, but to stay! The world of our neighbors becomes for an hour or two our world as well. Being in a visit, we are actually neighboring each other, we really live in our proximity, not just any proximity. We do not share something we have in common, we each share some of each other's difference, experiences, efforts and projects, different from our own, but which, by sharing, we perceive and experience as if they were our own. In a word, we understand each other, we understand.

If *Spirit of Danube in Port Communities* is able to increase the neighboring, so if we visit each other as neighbors, not as mere tourists, some in the community and country of the others, our work fulfills a European request: it sows the seeds of understanding.

However close they are, neighbors are different but they can come from the same world. Our world that of the Romanians and Bulgarians, is European but also Balkan. Given our older or newer historical background (the former Yugoslavia), as Balkan people some Europeans look upon us with suspicion, as a possible source of conflict. On the other hand, many Europeans look upon us with suspicion for a different reason: we joined Europe from a defeated world, from a failed social and economic system – Communism. More than they fear that we might infest them with Communist ideas and mentalities, even more than twenty years since the fall of Communism, we should be afraid ourselves that we are yet to rid ourselves of Communistic practices, mentalities and patterns.

Therefore, how can all of us rid ourselves of the prejudices of our recent history?

First of all, by admitting that we are still possessed of identity prejudices and delusions and indoctrinations for which we are not to blame.

Second of all, by learning how to free ourselves from them. Breaking the habit cannot succeed except through a constant critical exercise of embracing the historical truth. And finally, by relearning self respect, too much altered by diabolical techniques of collectivization/communization of personality.

We are convinced that our project can also play the role of regaining self respect by respecting the other, of our neighbor, even of our foreigner.

Thinkers who have contributed to the modern shaping of Europe have taught us that through respect we experience a double feeling: on the one hand, that of aspiration and rising towards something or somebody and on the other hand, that of fear and bashful retreat from the "thing" which attracts and uplifts us.

We believe that the most adequate area to show respect for the other as experience of self respect is that person's scale of values of rituals, traditions and ceremonies. All this can uplift you so that you might be afraid you might alter or destroy them somehow. When somebody else's values bring me to respect him/her, they set in motion and increase the self respect.

We will create and organize an exhibition of painting and small sculpture. We have no doubt that its values will not account for the value of things and people of the Danube.

We have no doubt that the exhibition areas will not become areas of self respect, of the aspiration to understand the other, of our other and the fear of disrespecting him/her. Invoking values of self respect and for the other through values is here not an intellectual or elitist whim. Values, even those of a tribe, have the vocation of the universal. According to a Romanian thinker, they are not as material goods which are already lessened when shared. Values are distributed, not shared. They do not lessen those who share them, on the contrary, multiply them. Friendship brings us closer together as friends; humanity makes us more human and dignity makes us more dignified. Therefore, it is up to our common action, in the spirit of the places we visit in both our countries and in the spirit of the Danube itself to be better friends, better people, some more dignified for others.

We reiterate that the spirit of the Danube is manifested in the spirit of the people on the Danube. The city of Calarasi is flanked on one side by the Danube, once full of fish and on the other by the huge Baragan Plain, wrapped from late autumn until early summer in endless wheat fields. The old town coat-of-arms held at the Lower Danube Museum captures, on the one hand, the link of its residents with an entire mythology of fishing and on the other hand, the quick and cold autumn rains, harsh winters, concerned springs and torrid summers for growing wheat. In its intended ambiguity, we do not know if the city coat-of-arms depicts a fish or rather a wheat ear.

The city is crossed by a single avenue – CaleaBucurestilor. Walking on the “main street”, as it was called once, you risk ending up either in Bucharest or in Constanta. In the city geography, CaleaBucurestilor looks like a spinal cord. The streets or lanes spreading to the left or right from it, inevitably lead you either to a branch of the great river or to the Great Plain. The locals are like the places: both smooth talkers or men of action, as the fishes in the Danube or melancholic and contemplating as a wheat field.

On both sides of Bucuresti Street you would expect to see the old architecture of the city but it went through two merciless historical waves. One of them was the Sovietization, which, if it did not destroy, it banned new constructions and the keeping of forms of architectural continuity and traditional urban planning. The other wave is more recent, post-revolutionary. Too soon, condominiums or business buildings emerged, lacking in esthetics. Here and there, a few gorgeous buildings and Orthodox churches reminding of the Byzantine style, by which we resemble our Bulgarian neighbors were saved of the fury and arrogance of history. Both we and our Bulgarian friends should focus our efforts and care on these architectural gems. Not so much to preserve the past, but to remind ourselves of who we are every time we look at them. In a civilization of image in which we have the fortune (or misfortune) to live, we also are what we look at. Moreover, we cannot truly move forward unless we are accompanied by the past which liberated and enriched us as beings, communities and homelands. City architecture, urban civility, non-dogmatic education, free circulation of values, all these can provide the standard for future meetings.

Education is a concern for the city of Calarasi. It is located relatively close to the main university center in the country, Bucharest, but also to another university center, which in recent years went from strength to strength. This is one of the reasons why the initiatives, otherwise enthusiastic and commendable, of the authorities and locals to found a local university have failed. Therefore, the educational efforts are focused on the secondary education. Thus, the city has quality elementary and high-schools,

comparable in terms of knowledge with the finest in the country. Above all, students and parents, as well as schools, are constantly preoccupied to raise the level of education and culture.

The debates concerning the issue of education bring up two complementary tendencies: the training of young people with most chances on the national and European labor market, but also real people. Especially the high-schools of Calarasi try to adjust to those tendencies.

The issue of “general knowledge” takes a distinct place in the debate, but also in the daily life of the schools. Today, this term can no longer cover the Illuminist demands invested in it. To transform the entire specialized education system without a carefully considered openness towards universal and humanist values is the same as forming the “one-dimensional man” (Herbert Marcuse).

We are convinced that we are not alone in trying to ask the most adequate questions regarding the education of current and future generations and to find the best situations but also our Bulgarian friends. We are also convinced that the Danube spirit of tomorrow and the future spirituality of our communities depend on the way in which we think, foreshadow and begin to build that tomorrow within this project today.

Constantin Mitra, Professor, PhD

PORT SURVEY AND PORT COMMUNITIES

Within the project “Spirit of Danube in Port Communities”, implemented through the Romania-Bulgaria Cross-border Cooperation Program 2007-2013, financed by the European Union, a field research with questionnaire was conducted in order to study the perception of Romanian and Bulgarian urban and port communities involved in the project.

Based on the involvement in the research on Constanta residents that is subsequent to the conducted survey, the following conclusions are emphasized:

-the residents of Constanta are convinced that the presence of the port has an influence on the social, cultural and economic life of the city;

Consequently, major events, emphasizing the above mentioned aspects are considered to be those organized on Navy Day, around August 15, every year.

In this context, it is believed that a higher degree of involvement from the port authority is needed because the expectations are much higher. Regardless of their field (tourism, culture, economics, military, port or education), the interviewed persons considered that the port authority should increase its presence, both from material and organizational standpoint within various multicultural activities. There is a conviction that this way there will be a better communication between the urban community and its port.

- the respondents have stated that the presence of the port has influenced urban architecture and planning, but the extent of the perception is moderate because there are many city areas which developed independently of the port activity;
- there was appreciation for a port education system correlated with the port specificity of the city in which high-schools, universities, maritime state and private training centers were identified;
- the degree of representativeness of cultural institutions (museums, theaters, libraries, less that of cultural centers) was acknowledged, which proves the cultural dynamism of Constanta;
- there is an absolute awareness regarding the port influence on the other economic fields such as: transport, infrastructure, building, fishing and fisheries, tourism (especially cruise ship tourism), catering and recreation, etc.

With regards to the cruise ship tourism from Romania, we noticed its development in recent years by the increase in the number of passengers on ships berthed in the Constanta Port. It is worth mentioning that maritime cruises originating from Constanta Port are to be launched as of the end of September 2013. Concerning the river cruises along the Danube-Black Sea Canal, although planned for this year that is announced as season novelty in 2013, they were cancelled for lack of funding. Danube cruises still have no port of call in Constanta through the Danube-Black Sea Canal. Tourists are brought by coach from other smaller ports to visit certain cultural and historical objectives, museums, wine tasting with folkloric program and Romanian cuisine. It is estimated that in the future tourists will enjoy this type of cruise because there are projects of the local administrative units and port authorities, supported by the Association for Danube Delta – Seaside Tourism Promotion and Development. In the future, there will be an interest for the absorption of funds and negotiation for interested private operators.

Certainly, due to this project and the results gained by involving Romanian and Bulgarian artists that is by organizing the exhibition and printing the promotion materials, a new impulse is to be created and the invitation to develop the tourism in the Danube's cross-border area is to be reiterated. The project will emphasize the beauty of Danube and Danube ports which are a major tourism potential to be capitalized.

The steps taken and the artistic communication forms will have a positive impact and raise awareness both in urban and port communities for the cross-border cooperation. Thus, cross-border tourism will also be supported which can be beneficial to the Danube port and urban communities. The lasting development of cruise tourism, but also of other forms of tourism (environment, cultural, historical, events) will influence economic cooperation between ports and increase the export of tourist services by attracting foreign tourists. The partner Danube ports hold the required tourist infrastructure and "benefit" from unique tourist attractions (Danube Delta) which can shape elements to create cross-border tourist products inspired by the Spirit of Danube. In order to gain finality and to capitalize them it is vital that local and port authorities, companies, cross-border cooperation that is identifying and attracting European funds to develop regional cruise tourism on the Danube be involved.

- the existence of certain connections between the 3 partner cities is appreciated, but these connections can be ascribed to Danube ports because certain elements are deemed common in terms of lifestyle, architecture, population structure, diversity of customs and cultural and gastronomical traditions but they are not perceived as very strong.

Generally speaking, the residents in port communities are convinced that there are specific features and events which define port cities. The persons involved in the research have assumed that in all three partner port cities there are events inspired by the sea or the Danube, such as Navy Day in Constanta.

Events such as Open Doors Day are already a permanent fixture in Constanta Port, with everything that such initiative involves: visits onboard ships, knowing the port activity and some seafaring activities. In addition, the intention is to organize such events more frequently.

- Most residents have deemed the free access to port as necessary.

Still, there are people who gave a negative answer to this question, because practically, there were concerns with regards to maintaining security of goods and merchandise in transit and port crowding which shall rise difficulties to the access of coaches visiting the port.

Following the research there is awareness for a spirit of the Danube, however at a moderate level which is worth strengthening that is on a level whereby the project can contribute through communication by emphasizing the Danube as a river uniting port and urban communities on cross-border level. Art and artists can be a positive influence and be aware of the Spirit of Danube, thus becoming a tourism motivation to create and capitalize cross-border tourism products.

Through its consistent involvement in support of the business community, the Chamber of Commerce, Industry, Navigation and Agriculture of Constanta can contribute to the increase of communication between the urban and port community, by promoting the results of the project Spirit of Danube in Port Communities.

Suggested possibilities: project presentation and distribution of materials at the head office of the Chamber of Commerce, Industry, Navigation and Agriculture of Constanta or at the Tourism Fair of Constanta, organized by the Chamber of Commerce, Industry, Navigation and Agriculture of Constanta and National Association of Tour-Operators of Romania in partnership with the Association for Danube Delta – Seaside Tourism Promotion and Development, but also by supporting any marketing projects and promotion in this sense.

The development of cross-border cooperation is deemed convenient in all fields (culture, art, economy and especially tourism) and the cross-border cooperation is imperative for the lasting development of Danube ports.

CONSTANTA – BETWEEN MYTH AND HISTORY

According to the legend of the Argonauts, Jason, son of the King of Thessaly, was left without a throne. Hearing that Aeetes, a very rich king at the foot of the Caucasus possessed the Golden Fleece, he set out to steal it. In that place, Jason fell in love with Medea, daughter of Aeetes, who revealed him the secret to take the Golden Fleece. After he got what he wanted, he ran away and took Medea with him.

Enraged, King Aeetes took his son, Absyrtos and left in search of the fugitives. They almost caught them near the town of Tomis. Extremely cruel, Medea cut her brother in pieces which she threw overboard. Aeetes picked up the pieces and thus the two were saved, hence the name of Tomis – “cut in pieces”.

Founded by the Greeks in the VIth century B.C., the fort of Tomis became an economic and commercial center due to the trade between the Greek settlers and chieftains of the Getae (local population).

Tomis has had the highest level of development under the Roman Empire. We can still contemplate a section of the city wall and a genuine open air gallery of supply receptacles (jars) and columns in the Archeological Park on Ferdinand Avenue.

In 8 A.D., Emperor Augustus exiled the Latin poet **Publius Ovidius Naso** from the court of Rome. The city has cherished the memory of this poet, once the darling of Rome. The poet's statue, erected in 1887 by the sculptor Ettore Ferrari is the city's tribute to the poet of the sea.

In the centuries IV-VI A.D., the city becomes a metropolitan see, which is confirmed by the lists of participants to the Ecumenical Councils, numerous inscriptions (which tell us the names of six Tomis metropolitan bishops) and Christian monuments. As of the VIth century up to early VIIth century, Tomis was often attacked by barbaric peoples – Slavs and Avars. After the Xth century, the city's ecclesiastical reorganization took place under the dominance of the Byzantine Empire. Legend has it that Emperor Constantine the Great renamed the city of Tomis **Constantia** in honor of his sister.

During the period when the Italian, especially Genoese traders dominated the Black Sea basin, the city was mentioned in portolans as an important port of call, under the name of Constantia, Constans, etc., and during the Ottoman rule the city called Kustendje declined.

After the War of Independence (1877-1878) Constanta shook its Ottoman rule, regained its name and became the center of Dobrudja region. Thus, an intense modernization of the city began: the building of Cernavoda-Constanta railroad (1860-1862), modernization of the old maritime port (1896-1909) and building of the cereal silo (1899-1909), building of the bridge over the Danube (1890-1895) – outstanding technical achievements of the engineer Anghel Saligny and the building of Danube-Black Sea canal opened in 1984.

All this has turned Constanta into an important commercial center and European port that is one of the important cities in Romania in terms of population which is 283,900 residents.

The 10 Most Important Markets in the County Economy During 2008-2011

Business Environment Analysis in the County of Constanta in 2011 and Its Evolution During 2008-2011 – Competition Council

- 10.00 – Manufacture of oil processed products;
- 10.00-20.00 – Shipbuilding and floating structures;
- 20.00-30.00 – Wholesale of raw cereal, seeds, fodder and tobacco;
- 30.00-40.00 – Building works for residential and non-residential buildings;
- 40.00-50.00 – Auxiliary services of water transports;
- 60.00 – Non-specialized wholesale;
- 60.00-70.00 – Manufacture of plastic materials in raw form;
- 70.00-80.00 – Wholesale of wood, building materials and sanitary equipment;
- 90.00 – 100.00 – Other markets;

TOURIST LANDMARKS IN THE CITY OF CONSTANTA

The Roman Mosaics – discovered in 1959, located in Ovid Square, a vast complex which connected the old city and the port in ancient times. Erected in the IVth century B.C., it was a majestic edifice, stretching on 2,000 square meters (currently only 700 square meters are preserved). A valuable archeological part of the edifice is the **mosaic pavement**, with ornaments of unique artistic value, decorations of white and colored marble, as well as archeological testimonies of the trading habits of the time.

The Roman Thermae–(Marinarilor Avenue – on the western boardwalk in the Peninsula area, towards Gate 1 of Constanta Port) were erected at the same time as the Roman Mosaics with only 300 square meters of the public baths of Ancient Tomis being brought to light.

The Tomis City Wall–discovered by the archeologist Vasile Parvan, connected the eastern and western boardwalk, furnished with towers and bastions. A part of the wall is still visible from **Ferdinand Avenue** where the **Archeological Park** is also located. Here, there is a display of archeological pieces reminding of the flourishing period of Roman occupation. On the park entrance there is a ceramic map of Dobrudja with all the citadels from Roman times.

St. Peter & Paul Orthodox Cathedral (Arhiepiscopiei St., in the Peninsula area) – designed in typical Romanian style, erected during 1883-1885; the Cathedral blueprint is signed by the great architect Ion Mincu and the inner murals are exceptionally beautiful. The archeological complex in the Cathedral Park depicts the reconstruction of a quarter of Ancient Tomis (IVth – VIth centuries B.C.)

The “Metamorphosis” Greek Church (26 Mirceael Batran St) – erected during the Ottoman rule in 1865-1867 at the request of the Greek community. The church was

erected of brick, white marble, cedar wood and fir. The icons, paintings and most cult items come from Constantinople, brought by the Greek traders.

The “St. Anthony” Roman-Catholic Church (11 Titulescu St) – erected during 1935-1937 modeled after the churches of Northern Italy. It is built of facing brick in Romanesque style, typical of the XIIth century; the rose window is harmoniously integrated with this style. The interior is also built of facing brick, therefore it does not require plastering. Saint Anthony of Padua is the patron of the church.

The “St. Mary” Armenian Orthodox Church (1 Callatis St, near Sutu Villa)– erected in 1880 and operated as Armenian school until 1940. The bell tower and interior alterations convey the building the typical appearance of Armenian traditional architecture.

The Great Mosque (Crangului St., towards the Tomis Marina) – erected in early XXth century, the edifice is the main place of worship for the Muslim population in Dobrudja with a unique architectural style. The mosque is home to the largest Oriental carpet in Romania which belonged to Sultan Abdul Hamid. From the top of the 47 m-high minaret one can contemplate a wonderful panorama of the old city.

Hünkâr Mosque (Tomis Ave., in the Peninsula area) – erected during 1867-1868 under the reign of Sultan Abdul Azis, the edifice stands out through the originality of its Moorish style, observing the traditional form of Muslim places of worship. Its minaret is 24 m high and inside there are still traces of typical Oriental decorations.

The bust of Mihai Eminescu–work of the sculptor Oscar Han, located on the Casino boardwalk and inaugurated on August 15, 1934 in memory of the Romanian national poet. Mihai Eminescu came to Constanta in 1882 and his visit was recorded also by the unveiling of a memorial plate on the wall of Intim Hotel where the poet stayed.

The Genoese Lighthouse (Regina Elisabeta Ave., on the Casino boardwalk) – erected by the company “Danubius and Black Sea” during 1858-1860. Its name is a memento of the Genoese traders who came to our region in the XIIIth century. 8 meters high, the lighthouse footing is hexagonal and there is a metal dome on top.

Sutu Villa (Marc Aureliu St., in the Peninsula area) – located on the sea coast, the villa which belonged to the coin collector Mihail Sutu is impressive through the beauty of its style.

The Casino – built in early XXth century (1910) by French architects in Secession style the building remained a landmark of Constanta.

In time, the Casino maintained its destination, being famous in Europe for its gambling. In the First World War the building was bombed and turned into a field hospital. Currently, the building is to be restored.

Walking through the **Peninsula area**, we can see other buildings which convey the city a picturesque charm, buildings which bear the imprint of Art Nouveau or modern Romanian styles, with Arab and Turkish decorative influences. As illustrative examples, there are the buildings on Elisabeta Ave., on the boardwalk, such as the Consulate of China, the Elpis Theater – currently Puppet Theater, the old Prefecture and former royal residence – currently the County Law Court.

In this period, the entire Peninsula area is undergoing rehabilitation and restoration of Ovid Square and the streets, financed through European projects and implemented by Constanta City Hall.

An interesting tour can be made in the Old Port of Constanta where the **Maritime Exchange**, built during 1910-1915, cereal silos, built during 1899 and 1909 or the **Maritime Passenger Terminal** on Pier 11, also built at the turn of the century, can be admired. Last, but not least, there is the majestic **lighthouse** within the Constanta Port, installed in a stone tower, of 21.75 m above sea level. The lighthouse is decorated with the bas-relief of King Carol I, who inaugurated the port on September 27, 1909, as well as a plate with the inscription:

“The Constanta Port enlarged and protected from the sea waves under the reign of King Carol I”.

The new lighthouse, built in 1965 in the port entrance area (Gate 4) is worth a special reference.

Museums of Constanta

As one of the oldest cities in Romania, Constanta has preserved its history in its museums, be it ancient treasures, Dobrudjan art or the history of the Romanian Navy.

The Museum of National History and Archeology (located in Ovid Square, in the Peninsula area)

With a surprising range of subjects, the museum is home to archeological documents, from the oldest traces of human life in Dobrudja up to our time. The museum halls carry us through centuries among testimonies about the old inhabitants of this land, their occupations, customs and beliefs. We encounter objects, pots and tools specific to various historical periods; the famous statuettes “**The Thinker of Cernavoda**” and “**Woman Sitting**” (**Hamangia Culture**), ceramic pottery of **Gumelnita and Boian Culture**, evidence of the Greek settlement (Greek amphorae, inscriptions, architectural fragments and coins), next to Dacian-Getae exhibits (pots and farming tools). One should remember the statue “**The Mythical Snake Glykon**” of the IIIrd century B.C., as well as the statues of the protector gods of Tomis – **goddess Fortuna and the god Pontos** and coin and pipe collections.

The Art Museum (84 Tomis Ave) – founded in 1961, it is home to exhibitions of painting and sculpture of famous Romanian artists: Theodor Aman, Nicolae Grigorescu, Ion Andreescu, Stefan Luchian, Ion Jalea, Oscar Han, Octav Bancila and Nicolae Tonitza.

The Folk Art Museum (32 Tomis Ave) – includes more than 16,000 folk art exhibits from the whole country – especially icons, embroidery, ceramics, folk costumes, decorations and household utensils.

The Romanian Navy Museum (53 Traian St) was inaugurated in 1969. It is unique in the museum landscape by its 37,665 exhibits in 18 specific collections, illustrating the

history of the Romanian navigation, the development of naval technique, as well as the history of commercial and military relations of the Romanian Navy. The museum open air exhibition which includes battle ships, cannons and the Seafarers Triptych can also be visited.

The Ion Jalea Museum (13 Arhiepiscopiei St) – an exhibition of more than 100 works of sculpture and graphics, mostly of the fine artist Ion Jalea. A Dobrudjan native, Ion Jalea was influenced by biblical, historical and mythological motifs.

The Dolphinarium (255 Mamaia Ave)–located on the banks of Lake Tabacarie, the Dolphinarium is home to the three species of Black Sea dolphins and a sea water pool. Next to the Dolphinarium, there is an **exotic bird exhibition** and **animal micro-reservation** hosting species of the Danube Delta.

The exhibition “Of the Riches and Beauties of World Ocean” (255 Mamaia Ave) is host to a collection of marine fauna and flora, both from the Black Sea and other seas in the world. A special place is reserved for aquatic curiosities: the largest shell on earth, the skeleton of a killer whale, giant lobsters, sea spiders and exotic crabs.

The Planetarium (255 Mamaia Ave) – located near the Dolphinarium, it is equipped with an astronomical observatory and a solar observation station.

The Aquarium (2 Elisabeta Ave, on the Peninsula boardwalk, opposite the Casino) includes fish families from the Dobrudja network of waters, the Danube Delta, the Black Sea and species from coastal lakes.

In Constanta, tourists can also enjoy the modern facilities of hotels – **4 stars: Boulevard, Carol, Zodiac, Royal; 3 stars: Oxford, Maria, Guci, Capri, Millenium** and a variety of elegant restaurants, shops and malls. The Mamaia resort is an administrative quarter of Constanta with more than 85 accommodation structures, accounting for over 17% of the existing total in the County of Constanta. Some of its hotels – **5 stars: Vega, Palm Beach; 4 stars: Iaki, Golden Tulip, Richmond, Comandor, Amiral, Bavaria Blu, Malibu, Parc and Modern; 3 stars: Dorna, Central, Dacia Sud, Majestic, Victoria, etc.** Actually, over 34% of the entire accommodation capacity of Romania is concentrated on the Romanian coast.

The **Tomis Marina** is a memorable place for tourists, with **sea cruises near the coast or between the Tomis Marina and the new footbridge opened in 2012 near Victoria Hotel**. Gastronomy buffs can taste specific dishes in sea food restaurants on the boardwalk. In the summer, this is the place where Navy Day celebrations take place and for a few days the port area is truly a place of feasting.

Every year on August 15, the day commemorating the death of the Mother of Christ, chosen as the protector of the Romanian seafarers, therefore the Navy patron saint is celebrated with pomp in port cities. Prayers go to Saint Mary, asking her to bless the ships and crews, being not only the protector of seafarers but also of waters – rivers, seas and oceans.

On August 15, the military ceremony and parade, demonstration drills, seafaring games and contests, air demonstrations take place in the presence of high dignitaries and numerous public.

In Constanta, **Navy Day** has a long tradition, being celebrated for the first time in 1902 at the initiative of Mayor CristeaGeorgescu and in the same perimeter, of course, with different configuration at the time. The first celebrations took place onboard the cruiser *Elisabeta*(the boardwalk of today was built in the years thereafter on a land area extracted from the sea), in the presence of the Sea Division officers.

Our people has an old cult for water, the Danube being their natural barrier for centuries, but also their link to Europe and the maritime ports have had generally a flourishing commerce.

On August 15, the dignitaries and many spectators taking part in the event can admire the military ceremony and parade – taking place on the beautiful esplanade in front of the Admiralty – demonstration drills, seafaring games and contests and the seafarers receiving congratulations from everywhere, wishing them wellbeing in their life dedicated to the river and maritime navigation.

The celebration became richer and lasted longer, at least three days in all the country's maritime or river ports, culminating on August 15.

In the first days there are brass band concerts, open doors day in military ports and at the Romanian Navy Museum of Constanta, laying reefs on seafarers' monuments in port cities and other maritime events.

During the last day of celebration, there are the following festivities: gun salutes, hoisting the great pavilion, the speech of the Navy Commander or his representative, the sounding of the National Anthem, water and land forces parade, throwing a flower anchor in memory of the heroic sailors who died in battle, seafaring games, boating contests and fire works; at nightfall the electric pavilion is lit on ships and the festivities are closed by the torches retreat.

For a complete show, the seafarers are joined by the air force, so that the spectators are in for the evolution of a helicopter squadron performing various aerobatics of various degrees of difficulty, as well as some jet fighters flying over the crowd.

The culture institutions of Constanta, especially the Romanian Navy Museum organize art and history exhibitions but also music and theater shows to bring joy to the audience and introduce it to the specific life and activity of some port settlements.

According to the annual report 2012 of the National Company Maritime Ports Administration S.A., 52 cruise, of which 11 river and the rest maritime ships docked in the specialized terminal of Constanta Port. They brought 34,000 tourists who have

opted to visit landmarks in the County of Constanta, Bucharest or the Danube Delta throughout their stay. In the 2012 season, the largest cruise ship was the Azura, with 2,987 tourists onboard, 2,756 of them participating in the excursions organized in Constanta. The number of passengers booked in 2012 is about 43% higher than last year and the growth trend will continue in 2013 as well, consolidating the position of Constanta Port in the top Black Sea ports. In 2013, the company Costa Crociere has already announced the increase of its dockings in Constanta Port, from 5 to 9. The ship Costa Deliziosa will arrive at the cruise terminal for the first time.

Year	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
Passengers	24,088	30,948	15,891	21,286	23,878	34,010
Cruise Ships	75	82	46	58	43	52

Source: Annual Report of the National Company Maritime Ports Administration S.A. (www.portofconstantza.com)

In 2013, Constanta became operating port for the European cruise line MS Cruises, one of the most important European cruise lines which have chosen Constanta as operating port for its cruise ships. Thus, Constanta became a boarding hub, not merely a visit port of call on the itinerary of cruise ships.

As of this autumn the first cruises are to be operated and the travel packages can be purchased through the agencies of Aerotravel, the only Romanian tour operator which will embark the passengers on MSC cruise ships in Romania.

On September 27, the first travelers embarked directly in Romania will climb onboard MSC Musica on a 11-night cruise with the itinerary: Constanta-Gythion-Venice-Katakolon-Istanbul-Yalta-Odessa-Constanta. Other 3 MSC Musica cruises depart from Constanta Port this autumn.

The vessel MSC Musica was launched in June 2006, it is 294 m long, it has 1,275 cabins (3,013 passengers at full capacity), 13 elevators, 4 restaurants, 15 bars, casino, theater, Internet café, tennis court, 3 swimming pools, 4 spas and 1,160 square meters of spa. More than 85% of the cabins provide sea view and more than half are provided with balconies.

MSC Cruises is the cruise line which embarks the most Romanian tourists each year, according to its statistics. In 2012, the Aerotravel tour operator, sales representative for MSC Cruises in Romania, has sold about 3,000 travel packages on MSC ships and estimates a growth of 50% in passenger number in 2013.

Until this year, the embarking was made only in ports such as Civitavecchia, Genoa, Venice, Bari and Naples in Italy, Copenhagen in Denmark, Kiel in Germany, Marseille in France or Barcelona in Spain.

Constanta Port and the Danube-Black Sea Canal

The construction of Danube-Black Sea Canal began in 1975 and took eight years to complete, being officially opened on May 26, 1984. According to the standards of EEC-UNO, the Danube-Black Sea Canal is ranked in the sixth category of interior canals, the highest ranking for such construction.

95.6 km long, the Canal consists of a main branch between the ports of Cernavoda and Constanta and the northern branch (known as Poarta Alba-Midia-Navodari Canal).

It is the third longest navigable canal, after the Suez and Panama canals, with its main branch of 64.4 km. The canal crosses the localities Cernavoda, Saligny, MirceaVoda, SatuNou, Medgidia, Castelu and Poarta Alba where it splits. The main southern branch crosses the town of Murfatlar and the Commune of Agigea. The northern branch, known as Poarta Alba-Midia-Navodari Canal, 31.2 km long, 5.5 meters deep and 50-66 meters wide, crosses the localities Nazarcea, Mamaia, Ovidiu and Navodari.

The canal construction required the excavation of 294 milion cubic meters, the main branch additional 87 milion cubic meters, the northern branch, Poarta Alba-Midia-Navodari (by 25 milion more than the Suez Canal and 140 milion more than the Panama Canal) and the pouring of five million cubic meters of concrete.

The Navigable Canals Administration, owner of the canal, formerly known as the Danube-Black Sea Canal Administration, was the general investor in 1975, supplying the technical-economic documentation, quality and price control.

Finally, a system of navigable canals, including the main branch, ending in the Constanta Port and the northern branch, Poarta Alba-Midia-Navodari, connecting the main branch and Lake Tasaulwas built between the Danube River and the Black Sea.

A specially created company, the Danube-Black Sea Construction Department, was charged with the canal construction. This company executed construction works during 1976-1984 through its own enterprises.

The northern branch Poarta Alba-Midia-Navodari was built during 1984-1987 by the Hydro-technical Construction Company of Constanta. In 1998, the Navigable Canals Administration became a national company.

Before the beginning of this season, the press informed of a new attraction on the Romanian coast that is the one-day cruises on the Danube-Black Sea Canal, between the Mamaia pier and Murfatlar Port.

After 29 years since its inauguration, the aim was to provide the canal with its tourist, beside its navigation and hydrological functions for agriculture. Departing from Mamaia, the cruises would have had an intermediary embarking port of call in the Tomis Marina and entrance in the canal through AgigeaLock.

In spite of all these efforts and negotiations, no cruises were organized in 2013.

Currently, the river cruises on the Danube are operated only by foreign companies, but they are listed in the offers of Romanian tour operators.

In conclusion, as we can observe in this offer, Constanta is visited after disembarking in smaller ports in the area (Cernavoda). The tourists are brought by coach to visit certain cultural and historical objectives, museums, wine tasting with folkloric program and Romanian cuisine.

By implementing and disseminating the results of the Project "Spirit of Danube in Port Communités", with the participation of Romanian and Bulgarian experts and artists that is by organizing the exhibition and publishing the promotion materials, the development of river cruises in the Danube cross-border region can be stimulated.

Consequently, the initiative to develop cross-border tourism which can be beneficial to port and urban communities on the Danube will be supported. The lasting development of river cruise tourism, but also of other forms of tourism (environment, cultural, historical, events) will influence economic cooperation between ports that is bring about increase of services export by attracting foreign tourists, which will generate income for the urban and port community (the charging of port fees, etc).

The partner Danube ports hold the natural and entropical tourist potential with exceptional landscapes. This can be the base to create cross-border tourist products inspired by the Spirit of Danube and the Danube Delta has a major contribution as unique attraction of those packages. In order to gain finality and to capitalize them we need communication, involvement of local and port authorities as well of private economic operators that is cross-border cooperation and attraction of European funding to develop the cruise tourism on the Danube.

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