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Evaluation of Hopa's Rural Tourism Potential in the Context of European Union Tourism Policy

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Abstract

Today, rural tourism is supported in all EU countries due to its socio-cultural, economic, spatial and environmental functions and positive effect on developing vernacular building sector in rural area. In this study, conceptual framework will be drawn by putting forth the concept of rural tourism. Subsequently, EU tourism policy will be summarised. Then, the importance of rural tourism in EU countries and the reasons for a support of it at EU level will be explained. After that, Hopa will be examined to demonstrate its potential on rural tourism via pointing out its natural values of green landscape, agricultural economy and vernacular architecture.

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1. Introduction

According to European Commission, tourism is a major economic activity in EU with wide-ranging impact on economic growth, employment and social development. However, common tourism policy is newly developing (after Lisbon Treaty) in EU level.

As an alternative type of tourism, rural tourism is supported in all EU countries due to its positive effect on

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biodiversity, agricultural economy, vernacular building sector, protection of socio-cultural and environmental values in rural area. Today rural tourism is a quite important tool for rural development in EU countries. Rural tourism is supported in EU due to the fact that it encourages people to gain new skills, diminish depopulation, enforces in the rural landscape, rural architecture and create employment opportunities for women in rural areas.

In this study, conceptual framework of the topic will be drawn by putting forth the concept of rural tourism. Subsequently, EU tourism policy, its political framework and its priorities will be summarised. Then, the importance of rural tourism in EU countries, reasons and tools for supporting of its development at EU level will be explained.

In the next chapter, Hopa, which is a border district at Turkey's Georgia frontier, will be examined to demonstrate its potential on rural tourism. For this purpose, first natural values of green landscape, agricultural and economy of the Hopa will be pointed out. Then vernacular architecture of Hopa will be displayed. Subsequently, integration of the rural and vernacular architecture values in Hopa will be used as strong values for developing rural tourism.

2. Conceptual Framework: Rural Tourism and Rural Area

In this chapter, to draw a conceptual framework, concepts of rural area and rural tourism will be defined from the EU perspectives.

2.1. Rural Area

The classification of regions could be changed according to the different countries or international organisations. According to Vanslebrouck and Huylenbroek [1] the concept of rural is associated with transiency and remoteness. Typically rural areas have low population densities with small settlements. The dominant environment is natural and/or the farmed/forested areas. Here has presented some various definitions of the rural space's common features [2]

- 1- *Spaces where human settlement and infrastructure occupy only small patches of the landscape, most of which is dominated by fields and pastures, woods and forest, water, mountain and desert.*
- 2- *Places where most people spend most of their working time on farms*
- 3- *Abundance and relative cheapness of land*
- 4- *High transaction costs, associated with long distance and poor infrastructure*
- 5- *Geographical conditions that increase political transaction costs and magnify the possibility of elite capture or urban bias.*

Today there are different criteria to define rural areas in the world. Table 1 illustrates different countries' criteria to define the rural area based on the size of settlements in these areas. However, this paper prefers Eurostat's "Urban-Rural Typology" which based on a variation of the OECD methodology[†]. EU built on simple two-step approach to identify population in rural areas: 1) a population density limit is 300 inhabitants per km² applied to grid cells of 1 km²; 2) a maximum size threshold is 5.000 inhabitants applied to grouped grid cells above the density threshold. According to this classification, approximately 32% population of EU live in urban areas [3].

Table 1: The criteria's to define the rural area in different countries [4]

Country	The criteria's to define the rural area
Austria	Towns of fewer than 5 000 people
Australia	Population clusters of fewer than 1 000 people, excluding certain areas

[†] For OECD Regional Typology, look into "OECD Regional Typology" Directorate for Public Governance and Territorial Development, June 2011 (OECD, 2011). Retrieved 26.07.2016, from https://www.google.com.tr/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=1&cad=rja&uact=8&ved=0ahUKEwis_9b9qJHOAhUC2hoKHTNiBrQQFgghMAA&url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.oecd.org%2Fgov%2Fregional-policy%2FOECD_regional_typology_Nov2012.pdf&usg=AFQjCNGCjR50HVh8-6wqskREW53hozXC

Canada	Places of fewer than 1 000 people, with a population density of fewer than 400 per square kilometre
England and Wales	No definition -- but the Rural Development Commission excludes towns with more than 10 000 inhabitants
Denmark	Communities with fewer than 200 households
Ireland	The separation between total urban areas and rural area are determined 100 settlements
Italy	Settlements with fewer than 10.000 people
France	Towns containing an agglomeration of fewer than 2 000 people living in contiguous houses, or with not more than 200 meters between the houses
Norway	Communities with fewer than 200 households
Portugal	Settlements with fewer than 10.000 people
Scotland	The local authority areas less than 100 people per square kilometre
Spain	Settlements with fewer than 10.000 people
Switzerland	Settlements with fewer than 10.000 people
Turkey	Provincial and district centres outside settlements with fewer than 20.000 people

2.2. Rural Tourism

It is usually agreed that there is no definition of rural tourism that is generally accepted in literature [5]. According to Ratz and Puczko [6], rural tourism is an old and new phenomenon at the same time because of interest in countryside recreation that started and developed in the 19th century. During the tourism history, many different definitions have been represented for rural tourism. The differences between them occur by their focusing on a various specialized aspect as statistical, administrative, built-up area, functional regions, agricultural, and population density.

Many tourism experts believe that rural areas as with less than %10-20 of their land areas covered by the built environment. There are many important notions about the rural areas which have dominated by agrarian and forest-based economic activities. These areas consisted of vast lands, world natural sources and wild-life. For the visitor, they will give an impression of space and traditional non-urban, non-industrial economy. Rural areas economies strongly influenced by the market for farm and forest products. In recent years the labour forces for farming and forestry have declined rapidly [4].

Rural Tourism can be defined simply as “*tourism that takes place in the countryside*” [6], but this definition never includes the complexity of the activities in different forms and meanings developed in different countries. In a broader definition that is written by Gannon, (1988, in the Ratz and Puczko, 1998: 453) “*rural tourism includes a range of activities, services and amenities provided by farmers and rural people to attract tourists to their area in order to generate extra income for their businesses*” [6]. The problem of this definition is that it includes a very broad type of tourism including; agrotourism, special interest natural holidays, touring in rural areas and residential tourism, visiting villages, bicycle tours, small conventions and conferences in the countryside. Besides accommodation, services include; events, festivities, outdoor recreations in the countryside, production and sale of handicrafts and agricultural products, etc. [6], [7].

Based on the definition of the Government of Alberta, rural tourism can be defined as the country experience, which contains a wide range of attractions and activities that take place in agricultural or non-urban areas. The fundamental characteristics of this type of tourism include wide-open spaces, low levels of tourism development, and creation of the opportunities for agricultural and/or natural environments experience for visitors [8]. According to this definition rural tourism has consisted of these forms of tourism;

- 1- Located in rural areas with small scale in terms of buildings and settlements,
- 2- Functionally rural, built upon the rural world's special features of small-scale enterprise, open space, contact with nature and the natural world, heritage, traditional societies and traditional practices,
- 3- Traditional in character, growing slowly and organically, and connected with local families [8].

Nearly every country defines rural tourism differently from the others. On the one hand, in Cyprus rural tourism that defines the development of tourism based on traditional accommodation facilities in villages, in the rural and mountainous Troodos regions, is officially termed as agrotourism [9]. On the other hand, in Britain *“Rural tourism includes both those staying away from home for one night or more and those out for the day in the countryside - visiting attractions, walking, cycling or enjoying a wide range of countryside activities. They spend money in village shops, pubs and restaurants and in market towns. They provide a market for local produce and opportunities for local entrepreneurship. Those staying overnight will do so in hotels or inns, bed & breakfast establishments or self-catering accommodation, on the farm, on caravan parks or campsites, or with friends and relatives”* [10]. Nevertheless, the European Union prefers to use this term for every kind of tourism activities in rural areas [11].

The concept of rural tourism is multidimensional and alternative to mass tourism which is characterized by large numbers of people seeking culture holidays in popular resort destinations. Alternative tourism is sometimes referred to as special interest tourism or responsible tourism. Usually it is taken to mean alternative forms of tourism which gives emphasis on the contact and understanding of inhabitants' way of living and the local natural environment [8].

First major type of rural tourism consisted of the diversity of attractions of these area based on cultural heritage tourism, nature-based tourism/ecotourism, agrotourism which mention to scenic byways and heritage areas. A second major type of rural tourism activity is nature-based tourism/ecotourism which refers to the process of visiting natural areas for the purpose of enjoying the scenery, including plant and animal wildlife. A third major form of tourism is agrotourism, which refers to the act of visiting a working farm or any agricultural, horticultural or agribusiness operation for the purpose of enjoyment, education, or farm's activities. It consisted of taking part in a broad range of farm-based activities as farmers' markets, visiting agricultural festivals, museums, and other such attractions [8].

Rural tourism enables a complete tourism experience with representation of accommodation and attractions. On the other hand rural tourism creates spatial attachment on visitors and encourages them to allegiance. Rural tourism helps to product enlargement and innovation. Rural tourism can draw in new capital form for a regions and countries [12].

In this paper rural tourism will be used as a generic term which includes agrotourism, farm tourism and all tourism activities held in rural areas as EU defines.

3. European Union Tourism Policy

The area of EU has been one of the most important tourism markets since the second part of the 20th century. According to the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO), EU controlled the biggest part of the world tourism market in 2014. In that year, on the one hand EU shared %40.2 of international tourist arrivals market with 581.8 million visitors, on the other hand it gained 383.1 billion EUR from international tourism [13]. While tourism is an important driver of economic growth in EU, it had not been regulated widely in treaties until 2007. Tourism policy was clearly formulated first time in Lisbon Treaty [14]. However EU tourism policy had covered a broad range of topics such as internal market policy, competition policy, public health and consumer protection policies, regional development policy and the environmental policy and etc. [15]. European Commission set out a new strategy and action plan for EU Tourism after Lisbon Treaty and 2008 financial crisis in 2010 [16]. Today EU tourism policy focus on maintaining EU countries leader position in the global tourism market while maximising the industry's contribution to growth and employment and promoting cooperation between EU countries. EU tourism strategy focuses on four priorities for action. These are;

1. *To stimulate competitiveness in the European tourism sector*
2. *To promote the development of sustainable, responsible, and high-quality tourism*
3. *To consolidate Europe's image as a collection of sustainable, high-quality destinations*
4. *To maximise the potential of EU financial policies for developing tourism* [17].

As an alternative tourism type, rural tourism could make a significant contribution to improve integrated rural development in EU level in harmony with Union tourism policy. It will be displayed why and how EU support rural tourism in the next chapter.

4. Support Reasons and Tools of Rural Tourism in European Union

There are several impacts of rural tourism in the rural areas. The most important one is economic contribution to farmers and other people who live in rural areas [18]. EU focused on increasing food production and restructuring agriculture in the beginning of establishment of Common Agricultural Policy (CAP). Then it realized several reforms targeting stable supply of affordable and quality food for EU's citizens; substantial volume of exports; safeguarding the future of rural communities, villages and towns, biodiversity, the landscape and soil quality after achievement of its first priorities [19]. Whilst these reforms decreased the European farmer's income, EU and national authorities started support alternative economic activities in rural areas such as rural tourism.

Furthermore, rural tourism creates employment opportunities for women in areas once dominated by male employment. These new jobs help to decrease inequality between men and women. Additionally, rural tourism encourages people to gain new skills such as hospitality, customer relationship, marketing, IT, etc. Another important economic effect of rural tourism is stimulation or building sector in rural areas. Tourism activities create demand for reusing excessive farms for accommodation or different tourism related services [12].

In addition to, EU authorities support rural tourism to slow down of depopulation of rural areas which has been an important problem since nineteenth century [20]. Also rural tourism was seen a solution of maintaining essential health, retail, educational, transport and other services for smaller populations [12]. While it has been observed a growth in demand of rural tourism by urban populations seeks relaxation and leisure in rural areas since 1990's [21], rural tourism has created demand for re-using redundant farm and industrial properties for either overnight accommodation or for tourism linked retailing/workshop and food/beverage service purposes [12].

Finally, EU support rural tourism because of environmental and sociocultural benefits. Today many farmers realise more consciously the value of landscape and wildlife conservation due to rural tourism. It helps to maintain social life and traditional ways of life and transfer them to the next generations [12].

Economic and social cohesion, defined first time in the Single European Act, is about reducing disparities between regions in EU level. When it is analysed in EU level, it is observed that economic problems of rural areas are heavier than from the urban areas. EU transfers various funds to achieve convergence between countries and regions in EU due to it are one of the most important priorities of EU treaties. These funds will be summarized as follows.

Today, the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) is one of the five European Structural and Investment Funds, targets four thematic priorities. These are innovation and research; the digital agenda; support for small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs); and the low-carbon economy. On the other hand, the ERDF concentrates reducing economic, environmental and social problems in urban areas [22]. Therefore it could be useful to support rural tourism projects in EU [23]. Union has allocated 196.343.557.751 EUR for 2014-2020 periods [24].

Another European Structural and Investment Fund is the Cohesion Fund which is established for the purpose of strengthening the economic, social and territorial cohesion of the Union in the interests of promoting sustainable development. This fund allocated to member states whose Gross National Income (GNI) per inhabitant is less than 90 % of the EU average. Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Greece, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia are supported by this fund for the 2014-2020 periods. Cohesion Fund supports the projects related to trans-European transport networks, environment, energy and energy efficiency, renewable energy, developing rail transport, etc. [25] with 63.390.063.899 EUR. This fund could be evaluated a good support tool for rural tourism activities due to targeting to environment, energy efficiency and renewable energy. Rural tourism projects, integrated with these issues, utilize this fund.

European Social Fund (ESF) is other Structural and Investment Fund which focuses on improving employment, job quality, accessing to the labour market, supporting the geographical and occupational mobility of workers and facilitating their adaptation to industrial change and education opportunities in EU [25],[26]. EU allocated 86.405.015.067 EUR to ESF for 2014-2020 periods [24]. This fund could be useful for the people who want to improve their qualifications for rural tourism sector due to its support for education programs.

One of the main funds for rural development policy is the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD) has approximately 22 % of EU Budget with 99.346.387.365 EUR for 2014-2020 periods [24]. Depending on the need and choices of Member States and regions, this fund may be transferred for the projects targets *“the diversification of farmers into non-agricultural activities, the development of non-agricultural SMEs in rural areas*

and engaged in sustainable and responsible tourism, the restoration/upgrading of the cultural and natural heritage of villages and rural landscapes” [23].

Another European Structural and Investment fund is European Maritime and Fisheries Fund (EMFF) which is less effective than the above for supporting rural tourism projects. Main targets of EMFF are helping fishermen, supporting coastal communities in diversifying their economies, financing projects that create new jobs and improving quality of life along European coasts, and easier accessing to funds for applicants [27]. EU allocated 5.749.331.600 EUR for 2014-2020 period [24], however it could support very limitedly rural tourism. Rural tourism projects connected with fisheries and diversifying coastal economy benefit from EMFF.

Last fund will for member states is LIFE (the Financial Instrument for the Environment and Climate) which supports environmental, nature conservation and climate action projects throughout the EU [23]. The rural tourism projects connected/integrated environment and resource efficiency, nature and biodiversity may be supported by LIFE which has approximately 3.4 billion EUR budgets [28].

Finally, EU transfers some funds for candidate countries. The most important fund is IPA (Instrument Pre-accession Assistance). EU allocates 912.200.000 EUR for agriculture and rural development on Turkey for 2014-2020 periods [29]. Turkey will be able to use these funds to implement rural development programme modelled on EU rural development policies and improve rural tourism services in rural areas.

5. Vernacular Architecture in Rural Area and Tourism

Some international organization such as OECD and EU have emphasized that urban and rural areas are two important central concepts for making tourism policy. Due to different population density, culture, architectural and urban fabric and rural areas characteristics, these terms could be understood by people easily [30].

According to culture and cultural heritage, sustainability and rural tourism is one of the favourite and alternative tourism types in recent years. One of the sustainable life styles in rural areas is protecting agriculture in these areas that would help to conserve vernacular cultures, support rural economy and provide alternative sources of income such as rural tourism for local people [31].

One of the important ways for identifying cultural resources is vernacular architecture as intangible traits of heritage. Because this type of architecture is designed based on local needs, availability of construction materials and reflecting local traditions. It tends to evolve over time to reflect the environmental, cultural, technological, economic and historical context. One of the important things to receive a vibrant economy and sustainable rural tourism in rural area is conservation of rural cultural landscape and vernacular architecture to protect the natural and cultural values. Heath has emphasized [32] that the rural tourism policy would help to discover the natural and cultural resources of regions and economic growth.

In tourism sector vernacular architecture and traditional urban fabric could be defined as an industrial heritage and rural tourism. These types of tourism sectors define the value of the economic, environmental and socio-cultural terms. Consideration to the rural tourism and development as an issue on the agenda only could be expanded by the sustainability in natural and cultural benefits for their local communities. Developing this special tourism would be performed by responding to new markets, new lifestyles and new product development opportunities [12].

Therefore, rural tourism in rural areas was accomplished with a group of the elements in their natural landscape as water, vista, topography, vegetation, biodiversity, clean air and cultural landscape's elements.

Integration of the natural and cultural landscape values will figure a foundation for rural tourism. The important values are geographical location, micro-climatic conditions, water, natural beauties, natural vegetation, wildlife, surface features, geomorphologic structure, local food, festivals, traditional agricultural structure, local handicrafts, regional dress culture, historical events and people, heritage appeals, vernacular architectural variety, traditional music, folk dance and artistic activities.

6. Relations Between Rural Tourism and Hopa's Vernacular Architecture

The Hopa District in the province of Artvin was selected as the study field. Hopa is located in the Black Sea coastal area at $41^{\circ}24'28''$ northern latitudes and $41^{\circ}26'06''$ eastern longitudes. Hopa's district area is 212.55 km², population in the urban area 18,296 and in district are 33,129. Distance between city and Artvin is 65 km and 18 km from the Sarp border crossing on the Georgian border as cross sectional point between two countries (Figure 1).



Figure 1: The General Location of the Hopa District

The city settled between Black Sea coastal line and mountain area. The land climbs sharply from 10m above sea level in the coastal areas up into the Sultan Selim Mountains. The hillsides are well watered and green with alder, chestnuts, hornbeams and other deciduous trees. In the Hopa two different ecosystems have placed side by side; terrestrial biodiversity and inland biodiversity. The climate is mild and wet, although only July and August are warm enough to be called summer with annual snowfall in winter.

Table 2: Hopa agricultural crops in 2015 year (TÜİK 2015)

Year/ 2015	Mass of fruit area (acres)	Production (tons)
Tea	41.757	71.514
Olive and Other Nuts:		
Hazelnut	3.225	173
Walnut	60	83
Corn	3.090	963
Grapes (Table-seedless)	100	15
Citrus Fruits:		
Oranges	550	660
Mandarins	1.094	1.189
Lemon	30	27
Kiwi	400	415
FIG	0	58

This table is formed by authors from TÜİK data

The economy in the Hopa district especially in the villages area are based on the agriculture and fruit orchard. Especially vast farmlands of tea have covered large scale of suitable agricultural lands. Climatic, topographic forms of land and high density of humidity create suitable situation for tea production. Table 2 illustrated different agricultural production and the lands covered by km². The first row of table is allocated tea with annual production 71.514 tons and land coverage 41.757 acres. The other agricultural production settled in the next row of the table with a tremendous difference in area and production amount.

Annually every summer is performed different cultural festivals in Hopa. One of the most important festivals in Hopa is Art and Culture Festival that is prepared by Municipality of Hopa. The other is, and the other is Kemalpaşa Community Centers Folk Festival.

Beside the vast agricultural farmlands, Hopa owns rich flora and fauna natural biodiversity and natural resources. During annually migration season, birds of prey and migratory birds use the Coruh Valley and it is one of the Important Bird Areas. Camburnu Natural Conservation Area is settled in Hopa. This natural park is one of the natural origins for sub-species of pine "*Pinus sylvestris ssp*" and an important place for settlement of the migration birds.

By attention to the Hopa natural location and rural tourism values, Hopa has a strong potential for these types of rural tourism: marine values, mountain-tableland trips opportunities, landscape beauty and photo safari, natural and rural heritage trip.

According to "Artvin Natural Tourism Master Plan 2013-2023" [33] and Turkey Tourism Strategies (2023) [36], have considered Artvin Tourism Path or Green Path as tableland tourism that settled in this region. This path has expended between Samsun and Hopa for developing tableland tourism, make more attractive to tourists and combination with alternative types of tourism. But this plan has faced many opposition and disagreement by environmentalist and local people. For these groups opinion this master plan will be damaged the natural feature of rural landscape.

On the other hand the Hopa district accommodates vernacular architectural housing units surrounded by the green areas that are within the rural cultural landscapes. These types of vernacular architectural housing units are still in use by local people (Figure 2).



Figure 2: The Selected Vernacular Architectural Village houses (Original 2015)

This type of vernacular architectural elements in the Hopa district were analysed and evaluated in terms of their contribution to rural tourism. These vernacular housing units are surrounded by natural and agricultural lands. Many local people achieve their annual or daily food consumption from these agricultural lands.

The important approach about the rural tourism and vernacular architecture are maintenance and conservation of the cultural and rural values. Because existing of the vernacular structure in the Hopa's rural parts are used by local people. So by using architectural restoration and rehabilitation technics, these vernacular structures can be used for touristic needs in rural tourism sector. The vernacular housing units can be used for the visitors who prefer to experience local culture. Alongside the providing touristic needs, it is possible to conserve the vernacular architectural elements, which are abandoned and not in use any more in modern architecture. The main material in these vernacular housing units is local stone, wooden structure and brick as vernacular material. During history, local materials have been used in vernacular structures that are suitable with local climatic condition, and they are also economical and effective in energy consumption. These are key principles of sustainability.

Besides the importance of the vernacular architecture according to the Table 1 the rural areas definition in the world countries, Turkey's rural areas are settled in the provincial and district centres outside settlements with fewer than 20.000 people. By the notifying to the Hopa's population, city is placed between the cities by rural tourism potential.

On the other hand according to the classification of different rural tourism activities in rural areas agricultural tourism and farm tourism are settled in the subtitle of the rural tourism. As stated by table 2 in the vast

farm lands of tea in the region, planting and harvesting season of the tea own a strong potential to hold festivals as a touristic attraction in rural areas.

Integration of the vernacular architecture as historical tourism and agricultural/rural tourism will prepare a good foundation for using the same construction technique; vernacular materials provide permanence as sustainable architecture and sustainable rural tourism in rural areas. Receiving a permanent rural tourism without mentioning to the regional agriculture and vernacular architecture is very difficult. Obviously it is not possible to mention rural tourism in the absence of vernacular architecture and local agricultural production in rural landscape.

Although Hopa has high natural values and tourism potential, it is not successful to obtain funds for improving rural tourism. In investigating on Central Finance and Contracts Unit (CFCU) data, it becomes clear that IPA's agricultural and rural development funds have not been allocated to expanding agricultural and rural tourism in Hopa [34]. Unfortunately Hopa is not in the list of beneficiary cities which utilise the IPARD [35].

7. Conclusion

Tourism is one of the most important service sectors in the world and EU controls the biggest part of the world tourism market today. Because of the fact that tourism can be a powerful tool in fighting economic decline and employment especially after 2008 economic crisis, EU set out a new tourism policy and action plan in 2010. Rural tourism is an important component of tourism. Therefore, EU supports rural tourism due to;

- Increasing farm incomes via non-agricultural activities,
- Creating new employment opportunities for women,
- Encouraging people who live in rural area to gain new skills
- Stimulating building sector in rural area,
- Slowing down of depopulation of rural area,
- Maintaining essential health, retail, education, transport and other services for smaller population,
- Protection of landscape and wildlife conservation.

For these reasons, EU allocates different funds for member states and candidate countries. As mentioned in chapter 3, ERDF, Cohesion Fund, ESF, EAFRD, EMFF, and LIFE are the important funds to support rural tourism in member states. On the other hand, IPA and its agricultural and rural development component (IPARD) are critical EU supports for applicants.

However, Hopa, where the centre of this study is, does not benefit from these funds which come from EU and different national fund targeted developing rural tourism activities in Turkey. Regarding the EU rural tourism policies and their emphasis on the biodiversity, agricultural and rural areas values, building sector in rural areas and environmental and socio-culture, Hopa owns all of these natural, cultural and vernacular buildings values.

In this study vernacular architectural structures have been reviewed by evaluation in terms of contribution to the rural tourism. The vernacular architectural elements seem to be capable to making an important contribution to rural tourism.

Improvement and promotion of rural tourism is a tool that will contribute to protection of cultural landscapes as a whole. For the Hopa region has a significant potential of rural tourism, as an alternative to seaside tourism dominant, with its natural landscape, agricultural and traditional lifestyle and architectural elements.

Here vernacular houses can fulfil the need of touristic accommodation, exhibition, and a place for picking of the agricultural production with the festivals during the harvesting season.

One of the prominent issue in the maintenance and sustainability in rural landscape is protecting of the vernacular structure, local lifestyle, keeping the agriculture and vibrant economy by suggesting alternative income sources.

The main aim in this paper is to pay attention to;

- Vernacular architecture values and local lifestyle,
- Increasing the income level by expanding the agricultural and rural tourism,
- Developing the physical infrastructure facilities of the rural area,
- Protecting and developing the rural environment in order to ensure its sustainable use, based on rural development and sustainable usage of natural sources in rural areas,
- Protecting of the environment, biodiversity and natural wildlife, conservation areas,

- Mention to the socio-cultural values and identification of them by preparing various festivals as tea harvesting festival as a prevalent agricultural crops, folk dance and etc.

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