

The adventurous life of the man who brought enduro tourism to Romania. After 15 years in Peru he dared to return to Banat

by [Stefan Both](#) – in [Adevarul](#)



Sergio Morariu, the story of a true Timisoara native PHOTO personal archive

He was born in Budapest, lived in Timișoara until the age of 26, emigrated to Germany, but spent 15 years in Peru. In 1991 he returned to his home town as a German citizen. This is the story of a human life.

Sergio Morariu is one of Timisoara's picturesque characters. Although he is 73 years old, his preoccupations make him look much younger. He can be seen on the streets of the city, at events, festivals and more or less official gatherings, with a camera around his neck. It is one of his passions. Sergio Morariu has had an adventurous life. He was born in Budapest, lived in Timișoara for the first 26 years, then emigrated to Germany. He would live in Peru for 15 years, discover the beauties of South America. But life's unexpected paths brought him back to Timișoara...

He is the founder of EnduRoMania, the foundation that brings mountain biking enthusiasts from all over Europe to Banat. More specifically, he is the man behind the concept of enduro tourism in Romania. He is also the person behind the International Graffiti/StreetArt festival in Timisoara - where graffiti artists from all over the world meet. But he is also the man behind the emergence of the first regional devolution agency. Sergio Morariu has German citizenship but considers himself a Timisoara native with roots in many places.

His story begins, as I said, in Budapest in 1943. **"My grandfather was mayor of Caransebeș until 1918. His name was Bordan Octavian. He was one of the longest-serving mayors in**

Caransebeș, for 12 years. My grandmother was a German born in Moscow. After 1918, my grandfather became the president of the Community of Gardener's Estates. He stayed there for a year and then decided to move permanently to Budapest with my grandmother. They didn't like the Byzantine-Latin-Balkan style that was established in Banat. So they left. He retired from political life. My mother was also born in Budapest, but she lived in Timișoara. But when she was pregnant, she got on the Orient Express and went to Budapest. There were much better hospitals, just like now. My sister was born there too, in 1936, me in 1943. I didn't stay there, after I was born they went back to Timișoara," says Sergio Morariu.

At that time, the Morariu family lived on Republicii Street. His father, together with an uncle, owned the Mehadia Forestry Industry until the arrival of the communists.

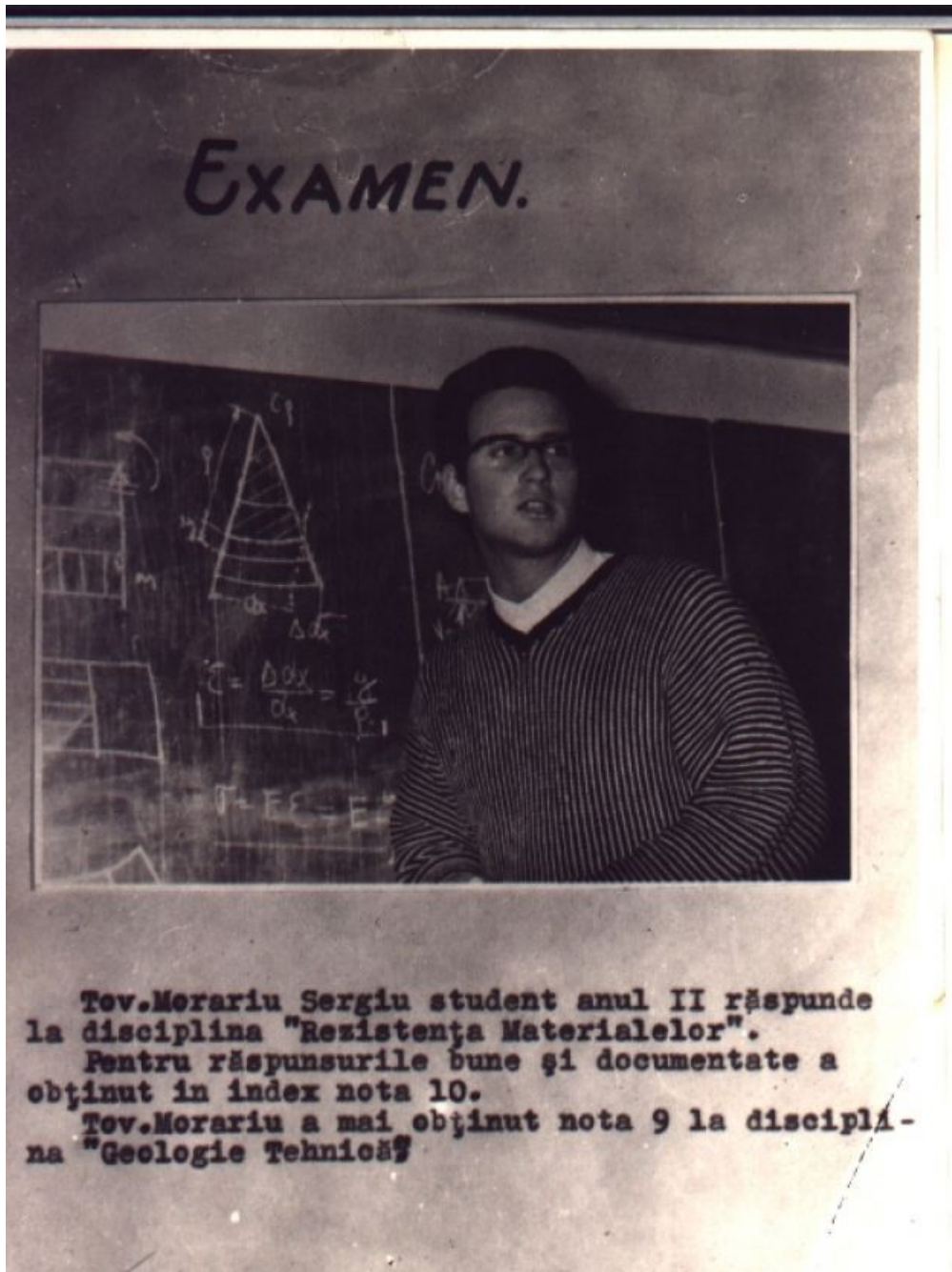


A photo from 1956

Little Sergiu initially studied at a middle school in Lahovary Square, but he went to high school at the Lyceum No.1. He majored in Hydro Engineering.

"The Banat High School, which was called Liceul nr.1, was the biggest high school in the whole Banat. It was a very interesting high school, where they taught in Romanian, German, Hungarian and Serbian. There were many world-famous athletes. The year older than me was

Hans Gunther Smith, who was Germany's best handball player. I went to construction college. I ended up in Hydrotechnics and I have no regrets. If I had to choose again, I would still choose hydrotechnical engineering," said Sergio Morariu.



National judo team

He was a member of the gang of Phoenix. His classmate was Claudiu Rotaru, the Phoenix harmonist, but he was also friends with Bela Kamocsa, Nicu Covaci and Moni Bordeianu. "We used to go to the seaside together, to Reșița. My best friend was Pilu Stefanovici, the drummer," Morariu added.

The first three years after graduating, he worked at the Department of Systematization, Architecture and Constructions, which later became IPROTIM. "I worked on the development of water supply and sewage systems in Timișoara and several towns in Banat. I already had computer skills. They looked a bit different. A tiny computer, which had a millionth of the capacity of today's

smart-phone, was as many cabinets. It was a room full. I programmed for many years," Morariu said.



Morariu in " The Bega river, near the Water Tower in the Iosefin area

In those days, one of the few joys of youth was sport. Sergiu did plenty of it. **"We did sports not only because we liked it, but we also got some equipment, some supercharging, and we went to Bucharest. I started with kayaking, then swimming, I played water polo at ILSA, I took up basketball, skiing, handball. But I probably did judo best. I was in Romania's first national Olympic team. It was the beginning of Romanian judo. I watched the Olympics as a spectator, because I left Romania"**, says Morariu.



Sergio Morariu on the tatami mat. He was a talented judoka

Escape to Germany

In 1970, with judo, he traveled to Czechoslovakia for a competition in Prague. It was the right time to escape communism. So he decided to escape. He ended up in Germany. At 26, he was practically starting a new life.

"It was a big change in my life. All of a sudden I had everything I wanted. After three weeks I got my citizenship, my mother was German. I met my wife at Muntele Mic in Romania. She was a German woman who came to Banat on vacation. We met again in Germany and very quickly got married. My father-in-law was the director of the School of Engineers in Frankfurt", said Sergio Morariu.



Sergio Morariu and his German wife Brigitte at the beginning of their marriage

He got a job at a hydroelectric engineering firm, so he was able to work in the same field he trained in Timisoara.

"When I joined the firm there were 50 people, when I left there were over 1,000. I was fascinated by the idea of traveling the world. So I asked to be sent wherever there was work. I didn't leave Romania to stay in Germany. My first long-distance flight was to Manila in the Philippines. In 1973, I was offered the opportunity to go to Peru. I could work as a programmer analyst engineer in Lima", Morariu added.



Life in Peru

He left for six months, but would live there for 15 years. So Sergiu became Sergio.

"It was an extraordinary experience. South Americans are somewhat similar to us. It was extremely interesting. Lima is by the sea, but in an hour and a half by car you're almost 5,000 meters. Although Peru is about six times the size of Romania. I liked the desert best. The driest desert in the world is in Peru, Atacama. I took part in an international cooperation project where Germany was helping Peru to set up its power planning system, then I worked on optimizing the expansion of the national electricity system. I spent a year and a half in Guatemala," added Morariu.



Happy life in Peru

He says that thanks to his job, he got to know Peru better than Romania or Germany. **"Their river system is extremely complex. On the west side is desert, very quickly you get to the Andes, at 7,000 meters, they have mountains with glaciers, you descend into the Amazon, the longest tributary of the Amazon flows into Peru, then you exit to the Pacific Ocean,"**said the man from Timișoara.



Motoring through South America

Return to Europe

He never thought he would return to Europe. Fate had something else in store. He left Peru because of insecurity in the region and returned to Germany in 1988.

"I built a beautiful house, I lived outside Lima, the climate was much better, I learned Spanish very quickly. My daughter was born in Frankfurt but grew up in Peru, she went to high school in Lima. If asked, she says she's Peruvian. She worked 12 years in London, two years in Rome, but for eight years she's been in Miami. She's 46 years old and an executive at a German hotel group. But to come back, I decided to leave Peru because of security concerns. There were terrorist groups kidnapping, killing. It was very strange. We had people kidnapped among our friends. I didn't want to grow old there. Now I regret the climate there very much, Europe is a disaster from that point of view," Morariu added.



Return to Romania

A year after returning to Germany, communism was about to fall in Eastern Europe. It was a chance to return to Romania, his home town.

"I was in Romania again in 1987 for the 20th anniversary of my graduation, and in 1991 I took a job as a project manager for the German government, and went to vocational schools in Timișoara, Arad and Sibiu. Then I became the first integrated expert and advisor of the German Government for local government. I managed German projects in the western area, from the Timis County Council," said Morariu.



Sergio Moraru with his daughter Tanja

The first regional development agency

One of Sergio Morariu's most intentional activities was to fight centralism. Germany, which functions on the basis of Länder, was willing to support decentralization in Romania. In Timișoara they were calling for regionalization as a point in the Timișoara Proclamation, but at that time, just after the Revolution, it was impossible. Sergio Morariu helped set up the country's first regional devolution agency.

"As chance would have it, a delegation from North Rhine-Westphalia came here to see how a regional economic development agency could be set up. The President of North Rhine-Westphalia was Johannes Rau, who later became President of Germany. They made Germany's biggest economic and humanitarian assistance. By 1999, they spent over 60 million marks in Banat alone. It's a matter of unknown. The county councils of Arad and Timiș, the town halls of Arad and Timișoara, the chambers of commerce, got together and initiated the first regional economic development agency in Romania. But Bucharest banned us! In 1994-95, they could not have imagined that Romania would join the European Community, NATO. The organization RDA-West, through which European projects are implemented today, was set up only in 1999," said Sergio Moraru.

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The birth of EnduRoMania

In 1995 EnduRoMania appeared: a project through which Sergio Morariu wanted to develop the rural economy through enduro tourism with motorcyclists. It was a first for Romania. Since then, thousands of motorcyclists from all over Europe have come to the Banat Mountains. EnduRoMania is headquartered in Brebu Nou, in Caras-Severin, where Morariu has also opened a stylish guesthouse.



"Most come from Germany, then Austria, the Czech Republic, Poland, the Netherlands, Switzerland, France, the UK. Some say that tourism is not possible because we don't have infrastructure. Well, there are tourists who come precisely because of the lack of infrastructure. Many people say that they come here because they are not allowed. If they weren't allowed, they wouldn't have motorbikes. There's nowhere else because everything's paved, everything's set up. This potential that we have doesn't cost a penny," explained Morariu, who discovered enduro in Peru, where he was even national champion in this branch of motorcycling.



Last but not least, Sergio Morariu is behind the Timișoara International StreetArt Festival, which started in 2011, also from a hobby of his, namely photographing drawings on walls. The festival is organized together with Corina Nani and the Faculty of Arts in Timișoara, and for the past few years the city's bare, grey and sad walls have been brought to life with the help of spray-paints by artists from all over the world.

