

The Reinvention of Architectural Tradition: The Case of a Transylvanian Saxon Community

Gyöngyi Pásztor

*Babeş-Bolyai University, Dept. of Sociology, Cluj
gyongyipasztor@gmail.com*

Izabella Buzogány

*Babeş-Bolyai University, Dept. of Sociology, Cluj
IB@mail.com*

The average Transylvanian Saxon village is a forgotten one. Having lost their Saxon populations, most of them have disappeared from the tourist map. However, there are a few successful cases where specific local features and German identity have been rediscovered, and the architectural heritage is well-marketed as a backbone for new, post-modern forms of tourism. An iconic case is that of Viscri (Weisskirch/Szászfehéregyháza), a globally famous site, due to the efforts of the Prince of Wales. The village is proud to have a UNESCO-listed fortified church built in the 13th century, along with dozens of local Saxon peasant houses and guild mansions (some of which now belong to Prince Charles of Wales). All these and the history built around the heritage of stone combined with the natural environment makes Viscri a very attractive rural tourist venue.

This study focuses on the role of architectural heritage in the development of local tourism, based on the practice of reinventing traditions. Thanks to tourism, not only have several guesthouses been started, old types of craftsmanship have reappeared, and the social ties between the Roma and ethnic Romanian populations have even been tightened, but some abandoned – otherwise valuable – houses have been renovated and connected to the branded housing stock.

Keywords: tourism, architectural heritage, story, Saxon village, Transylvania, history

Introduction

The phenomenon of cultural heritage tourism cannot be considered to be new, since cultural heritage in different parts of the world long ago reached the attention of travellers (Weiler & Hall, 1993). It is enough to recall the travels of young aristocrats in the 16th century with the aim of learning, known later as the »Grand Tour«; but the European tours of 18th century American travellers can also be considered. Although according to some authors (see Richards, 1996) traditional culture ceased to be the objective of tourism in the era of modernity, currently the prac-

tice and activity of tourism itself has become a stand-alone culture. Nevertheless, in addition to experiences, »cultural places of interest« play an important role in shaping tourism.

The most important questions of the sociology of tourism at the end of 20th and the beginning of the 21st centuries are connected to cultural heritage tourism. According to Hollinshead (2004), the character of increasing mass tourism is changing, becoming increasingly complex. One of the important features of the changes is laid on cultural and heritage tourism, which is becoming the most rapidly grow-

ing segment. The process obviously has both positive and negative effects. According to Richards (1996), positive effects can be observed in economic growth and the strengthening of local identity, cultural characteristics and values. The negative effects are often the conflicts (of interests) developing amongst various stakeholders (Porter & Salazar 2005), as well as the standardisation, commodification and value changes of culture (see MacCarnell, 1973; Richards, 2014; Shepherd, 2002).

In this study, the character and consequences of tourism shaped by Saxon cultural and architectural heritage are presented in the case of the village of Viscri. Although we are aware of the fact that this example shows rather specific than general features as compared to other Saxon villages in Transylvania, we believe that the positive effects of the situation formed here are cases of best practices, i.e. examples to follow, whereas its negative effects can be considered warning signs. Viscri, for such a remote and small village, is one of the most famous tourist destinations of Romania. Today, there is almost no travel book, brochure or advertisement that would not present the image of this town frozen in time.

The first part of this study presents the cultural and historical characteristics of the Transylvanian Saxon community and Viscri within it, while the second part details the changes currently occurring here, followed by the effects of the formation of tourist supply and tourism. All of these are presented in the mirror of local people's interpretation.

Saxon's in Transylvania. Short History

The first wave of Saxon settlers arrived in Transylvania around 1150, when the Hungarian King Géza II started to settle them in larger numbers in the eastern part of the country. His aim was to fortify a defence line of castles on the south eastern boundaries of the Hungarian Kingdom; he decided to bring in north-western settlers good at castle building and craftsmanship. The people originating from the regions along the Rhein and Mosel rivers in Flanders and Luxembourg were partly common peasants, and partly knights. They came with better developed cultivating techniques and strong armies. In exchange for this the king offered the settlers outstanding privileges: in addition to the free use of waters and forests, they enjoyed exemption from duty, they paid

their taxes in a single amount, and they were entitled to choose their own parish priests (Wagner, 2000).

The year 1486 was of a vital importance in the forming of Saxon autonomy. King Matthias of Hungary extended the privileges of the Diploma Andrea-num throughout the entire territory of the so-called Königsboden (Crown Lands), thus establishing the self-governing body of the Saxons, called the Sächsische Nationsuniversität (Entirety of Transylvanian Saxons, Universitas Saxonum), which defined the framework of Saxon society for centuries (Vogel, 2001).

The 15th and 16th centuries were an era of strong economic growth in Transylvanian Saxon towns: craftsmanship and trade flourished behind the strengthened walls of the towns. Sibiu (Hermannstadt) and Braşov (Kronstadt) became the centres of gunsmiths, where firearms were also made from the mid-15th century onward. In the age of King Matthias, the goldsmith's craft reached the peak of its prosperity, with the royal court among its customers. At this time, towns were not only well-developed from an economic point of view, but also architecturally (Vogel, 2001). Large towns were fully strengthened, and villages were centred around fortified churches. Written documents attest the existence of approximately 250 Saxon villages with fortresses from this period (Wagner, 2000). Church buildings were surrounded with thick walls, fitted with loop holes, brattices and other defensive elements according to the level of the art of war of the period. In case of danger, the entire population of the village moved within the walls. In the corner bastions and defending walls of the fortress church, the grain and bacon supplies of the families were stored, as well as the hope chests of the village's maidens. However, fortified churches only provided provisional defence against raids; therefore, in cases of predictable danger, the population of villages fled to the nearest fortified towns (Éltető, 1980).

The rapid expansion of cities populated by the Saxons led to Transylvania being known in German as Siebenbürgen, deriving from the seven biggest fortified towns: Bistritz–Bistriţa, Hermannstadt–Sibiu, Klausenburg–Cluj, Kronstadt–Braşov, Mediasch–Mediaş, Mühlbach–Sebeş, and Schässburg–Sighişoara (Vogel, 2001).

The second wave of German-speaking immigrants joining the Transylvanian Saxons arrived during the 16th century Western European Counter-Reformation; as they were also granted religious freedom in the Transylvanian Principality. The Transylvanian acceptance and spreading of the ideas of the Reformation had started among the Saxons, who (thanks to their connections with the spiritual life of Germany, mainly due to their studies in Wittenberg) quickly spread Luther's teachings in Braşov and Sibiu. In this process, Johannes Honterus and Gáspár Heltai had a great role, the latter becoming a defining personality of not only the Saxon, but also of Transylvanian Romanian and Hungarian book printing (Vogel, 2001).

The 18th century represented the beginning of the community's decline. In 1785, Emperor Joseph II abrogated the privileges granted by Andrew II; thus the centuries-old autonomy of Saxons ceased to exist, and they became a national minority. After the Austro-Hungarian Compromise of 1867, the Hungarian State took several measures aiming at the Magyarisation of the minorities living on its territory. Transylvanian Saxons attempted to resist through their various social, cultural and religious associations. Although Transylvanian Saxons (and Roman Catholic Transylvanian Swabians) supported Transylvania's union with Romania in 1918, the new Romanian governments continued the minority assimilation policies of the period of Hungarian rule. Due to the progressive Romanianisation of Transylvania, the Saxons lost even more of their significance (Wagner, 2000).

In World War II, Romania joined Nazi Germany. Transylvanian Saxons also joined the nationalist movements of the German Empire. When, in 1944, towards the end of the war, Romania changed sides and joined the allied forces, part of the Saxon community escaped to Austria and Germany. Many of the Saxons remaining in Romania were deported to work camps in the Soviet Union. The survivors were transported to Germany, from where they returned home. Family relations with Germany and the minority policy of the Romanian communist regime led to the gradual emigration of the Saxons. Of the population of 248,000 in 1941, 91,000 people had emigrated or died by 1948. By 1989, only 95,000 Saxons remained in Romania. The last blow to the Saxon na-

tion was given by the communist regime of Nicolae Ceauşescu, which made an agreement with the German government, thus permitting the emigration of 10–11,000 German people each year, in exchange for 10–12,000 German Marks per person. The increasingly worsening economic, political and ethnic oppression made the Saxons' resistance all the weaker, with more and more people choosing the path of emigration. In 1990 and 1991, when they could easily obtain a passport, another 15,000 people emigrated. During the 1992 census, 119,436 ethnic Germans were registered, of which around 40,000 were Saxons (Pozsony, 1997). Due to the emigration of congregation members, fortified churches not only lost their protective roles but also their religious and community roles. Most of the churches are monuments, either ruined or renovated, without a function today.

Viscri: The Site

Viscri (Deutsch-Weisskirch in German, Szászfehéregyháza in Hungarian) is a village in the north-western part of Braşov County, somewhat off the Braşov-Sighişoara main road, belonging to the municipality of Buneşti (Szászbuda, Bodendorf). It can be approached from two directions: coming from Buneşti on a 7-km long road, or from Rupea (Reps, Kóhalom) on another 14-km long paved road. At first sight, Viscri appears like any other Transylvanian Saxon village from where a large number of Saxons had emigrated, and the Romanian, Hungarian or Gypsy population moving in their places gave it a new life. However, upon closer examination, the characteristics that distinguish it from most of the other Transylvanian Saxon villages become more apparent. Viscri is a silent, simple village, as its inhabitants keep saying, yet it is exactly this simplicity that makes it original.

The settlement is mentioned for the first time in 1231 as *villa Albae*, the name's etymological equivalents are the German Weisskirch and the Hungarian Szászfehéregyháza. Its first inhabitants were Szeklers;¹ Saxons were settled in their places in the be-

¹ The Szeklers are a subgroup of Hungarians, who live in the valleys and hills of the Eastern Carpathian Mountains. The Szekler seats were the traditional self-governing territorial units in Transylvania during medieval times. The seats were not part of the traditional Hungarian county system, and their inhabitants enjoyed a higher level of freedom than those living in the counties.

ginning of the 12th century. Its 15th century fortified church sits on a small hill, built around a little chapel inherited from the Szeklers. Seven towers emerge from the white wall ring, among which the church steeple is the oldest one; its 2.3-meter thick walls were built in the 13th century. The increasing population made the extension, as well as the fortification of the church necessary in the 16th century; the other towers were added at that time. In the 18th century, another outer defence wall and a grain storage corridor were also added. This can only partly be seen today, because in the 19th century (when the castle lost its protective function) further reconstruction was made. The painted boards of the chancel, the corselet tables of the benches under the chancel, and the

painted ornaments of the pulpit are probably additions from 1724 (Schnell & Steiner, 2009).

The village lying around the fortified church has preserved its mediaeval atmosphere and, due to its difficult accessibility, even its integrity. Its characteristic Saxon houses stand on both parts of the wide main road, most of them inhabited by new (non-Saxon) inhabitants, while just a few buildings are empty.

Until the 18th century, the inhabitants of the village were exclusively of Saxon origin, when a group of Romanian-speaking shepherds settled down here. By the end of the 20th century, the ethnic structure of the village had radically changed: the inhabitants of the settlement changed completely. The Saxon population left the village in several waves. Some emigrat-

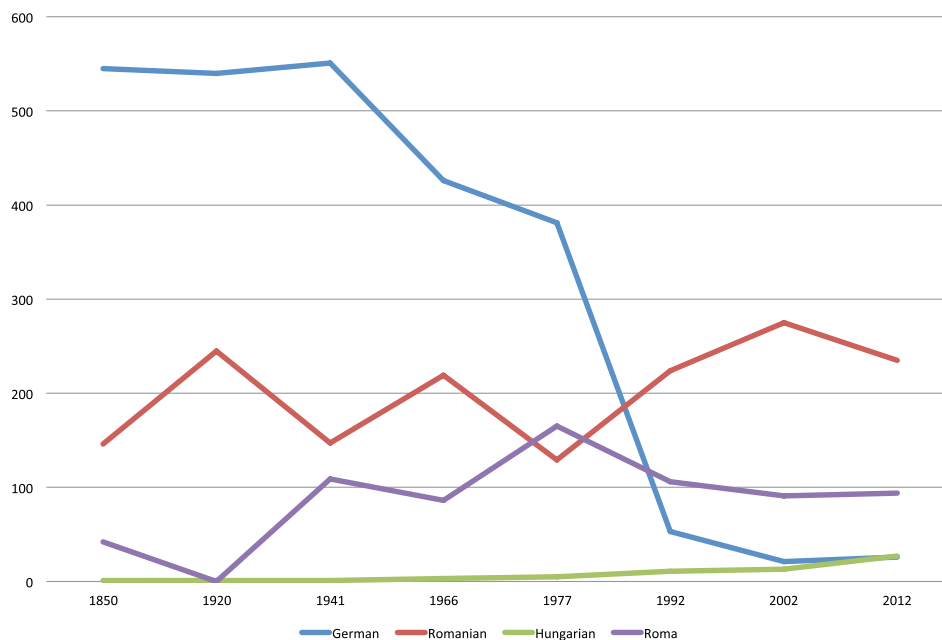


Figure 1 The Evolution of the Ethnic Structure of Viscri between 1850 and 2012

ed to Austria and Germany after World War II, while others moved to the industrial centres during communist period, mainly to Sighișoara and Sibiu. Finally, in the final years of communism, they departed for Germany as a result of the population policy of the Romanian State. The process was finalised by the last migration wave after the change of the political system (Fabini & Fabini, 1991).

Consequently, the size and the ethnic structure of the inhabitants of the village radically changed between 1850 and 2012. As can be seen in the figure below, until 1977 the proportion of the German (Saxon) population clearly exceeded the number of other ethnic groups, albeit following a decreasing trend. A significant drop appears after that, when the Saxon inhabitants left the village *en masse*. Between 2002 and 2012, a slight increase of the German population

can be observed, due to the fact that several ethnic Germans came back or settled down in Viscri. Regarding the number of Romanians and Roma, it can be observed that their population has been increasing over the years but, with the exception of 1977, the number of Roma is always smaller than that of the Romanians. Until 1992 the number of Hungarians changes between 1 and 5, in 1992 it reaches 11 and 27 in 2012. According to the 2012 census, the number of the inhabitants in Viscri was 382, of which more than half (61.5 per cent) were Romanians, a quarter (24.6%) Roma, while 7.1% Hungarian and 6.81% of German nationality.

Tourism in Viscri

In order to study the history and effects of tourism in Viscri, interviews were conducting in the village in addition to fieldwork observation. Attention was given to include the widest possible categories of the local community. Interviews were made with leaders, the most important organisers of local tourism, the directors of the foundations functioning in the village, with the owners and employees of guesthouses, as well as the inhabitants of the village, including Saxons, Hungarians, Romanians and Roma.

The early indications of tourism appear in Viscri as early as the beginning of the 1990s. Those leaving the village and moving to Germany did not sell their houses, but passed them instead to the remaining families. These empty, but furnished houses in good condition formed the structural basis for the reception of guests, as the buildings could easily be transformed into accommodation. Arriving tourists (only small in number at that time) constituted a small but increasing demand for tourist services.

So the strangers came asking »Could we sleep somewhere here?« Yes, I said, »You can, but... there is no bathroom, there is no.... and the toilet is outside in the back of the yard [...] I took care of the house, I paid the taxes and I said... as long as the house is empty, at least it should be self-sufficient. So this is how I started, with two rooms in the beginning. I built a bathroom in the former larder or at the place where the bacon had been smoked, and I also made a simple sewage system. And it started... (W.F., a Saxon man remaining in the village)

Although there is no exact data about the number of tourists visiting the village (which is not registered by the authorities), the sole indicator is the number of tickets sold at the fortified church. One can presume that the majority of the tourists coming here also pay a visit to the church; therefore, it can be considered a relatively good indicator. Accordingly, it can be said that the number of tourists visiting Viscri has been increasing over the years, and their annual number today greatly exceeds 10,000 people.

Last year we had more than 12,000 tourists. We know it because here (at the fortress) we give them tickets at the entrance, and the tickets are numbered. This is how we count them. (S.G., a 76-year old Saxon woman)

According to the caretaker of the fortified church that is functioning today as a museum, at the beginning of the 1990s only a very small number of tourists arrived from Germany, France or Great Britain, and sporadically from Romania; today tourists not only come from European countries but also from America, Asia and Australia.

There were several important moments in this process of increasing the number of tourists and of countries of origin. The first such event occurred in the end of the 1990s when the village was listed in the Guide du Routard,² which helped to increase the number of tourists coming from France. Following that, in 1999, Viscri was included into the UNESCO World Heritage list, together with six other Saxon settlements, which launched another wave of tourists. As an effect, the circle of tourists is definitely widening; they not only come from Romania and the rest of Europe, but also from other continents. The beginning of the activity of the British-founded Mihai Eminescu Trust Association was decisive (2000). Due to this, the number of tourists arriving from the UK is increasing, and Viscri thus has finally appeared on the global »tourist map«.

The Mihai Eminescu Trust (MET) was established in London in 1987. The original goal of the

² Guide de Routard is a prominent French tourist guide founded in April 1973 by Michel Duval and Philippe Gloaguen. In 40 years (1972–2012), more than 40 million copies were published. The online version Routard.com hosts as the largest Francophone traveller community nicknamed »routarnautes«.

foundation was to morally support Romanian émigré intellectuals (mainly writers, artists, and philosophers). This was thought to be possible mainly by maintaining contacts with Western universities and personalities, and by smuggling in and out books and periodicals. The foundation's first essential program and important appearance in the international public was its marked stance against the village systematisation plan of the communist regime³ during which several media and cultural events, and protest actions were organised. The foundation was also supported by Prince Charles, whose spoke several times in public about the disturbing situation and prospects of Romanian villages. After 1990, the MET devoted its activity to saving Transylvanian (mainly rural) architectural heritage; therefore, in 2000 the foundation's Romanian branch was registered; it functions with the direct patronage of HRH the

3 »Systematisation« refers to an urban planning programme of the national-communist regime of Romania, according to which rural and urban settlements were supposed to be reorganised according to the ideological and economic expectations of the regime. The measures were based on the directives of the 10th Communist Party Congress in 1972, as well as Law 58/1974, according to which »the rational and balanced distribution of the production forces [...] aiming to ensure the organisation and arrangement of the towns and villages according to a plan, in accordance with general economic and social progress, the tightening of the perimeters of construction areas in settlements to the strictly necessary and the optimal utilisation of their territory, the transformation of certain rural settlements with a perspective to develop into economic and social centres with an urban character«. As the first stage of the process mainly concerned the towns, the systematisation of villages never came about, but the degree to which it was planned is well-known from documents. In accordance with a report prepared for the Central Committee of the Romanian Communist Party in 1986, of the 13,123 villages in Romania 9,192 were considered »viable«, while the rest of 3,931 were supposed to be torn down, with their population moved into the remaining settlements. However, the remaining villages were not planned to remain »untouched« either, in their case the lodging areas were supposed to be reduced from 625,258 ha to 285,839 ha, thus tearing down 1,863,417 households, moving their dwellers in order to maximise agricultural areas. In the case of the remaining villages, for the sake of the best possible use of the land, blocks of flats were planned to be constructed for the former inhabitants (Tiu, 2014:14).

Prince of Wales. The strategic location of the foundation's activity is Viscri, a place subsequently regularly visited by the Prince of Wales, the village where he bought a house for himself and later on other estates in Transylvania.

The house he bought is one of the oldest buildings in the village; according to the inscription above the gate, it was built in 1758. Curious tourists cannot distinguish any feature of the house from the other houses of the village. The villagers got used to direct those inquiring about the prince's house towards the big blue building standing near the intersection. They respect and recognise the merits of the prince, and are happy to speak about him. Although his frequent appearance is becoming more and more regular, his modesty and informality is remains a great experience for local people.

He is a man like everyone else, just like us. There is no big difference! He is a human being, just like us. He walks this direction, here he goes up to the fortress... He waves his hand and even stops at our gate! (Roma woman selling socks at her gate)

He is the spiritual patron of the association... When he came here, he wanted to buy a house, the association wanted to give him a house as a gift, but he did not allow that. No! That blue house over there is his! (W.F., a Saxon man who remained in the village)

He promised us then to come here. We did not believe it... But he came indeed, and since then he has been visiting us every year.«(S.G., 78-year old Saxon woman)

His physical and spiritual presence continuously reminds the local community that the heritage they own is a valuable and exceptional one. They talk about it willingly and proudly, just as about Prince Charles' presence. The environment, considered natural and often underestimated in the past, has now become a value worth being preserved and shown to others.

He tells us every time he is visiting us: »You don't even know what a valuable treasure you own! There is no treasure like this in the whole world!« (S.G., 78-year old Saxon woman)

The »treasure« mentioned means the architectural, natural and cultural environments. The word »authenticity«⁴ refers to the material environment characteristics of the village and to the cultural heritage from which it originates. While the architectural environment remained there due to a fortunate combination of factors, the cultural contents have changed significantly. A way of living close to nature, gardening and animal husbandry is still characteristic for the inhabitants of the village today, and some of them engage in traditional crafts such as bricklaying. However, the cultural contents connected to the everyday life of the Saxon community and to their feasts are mere memories today. The Saxon community itself is simply missing, due to their emigration.

Prince Charles' regular presence not only strengthened the self-esteem of local people, but significantly contributed to the increase of tourist traffic. His interest in the village, his royal support of the cultural values is considered to be an engaging attraction by itself: the tourists arriving here due to his interest want to see and experience the values of Viscri and its surroundings, which are considered to be valuable by the prince.

They want to see, get to know the things Prince Charles was attracted by. They are curious about the culture or the environment. What did Prince Charles see in this place [...] That's what they want to know! (W.F., Saxon man in the village)

And Prince Charles [...] We are grateful to him, because it is thanks to him that tourists come here and thus we can get by! For if this did not exist, we could hardly make a living! We could hardly make a living... (Roma woman selling socks at her gate)

4 Ever since MacCannell (1973) first emphasized the key role of authenticity in tourism, it has been an important topic in sociological studies, resulting in various theories attempting to explain the term in the context of tourism. The trend is most evident when a huge number of destinations are branded as authentic (Terziyska, 2012). Being focused in the process of tourism development and its consequences for local communities, we consider authentic to be what local people and tourists consider it to be. Although we are aware that authenticity is a socially constructed, negotiated concept and is not a permanent property of the toured object. (Cohen, 1988)

Several of the families in the village run guest houses today. Among them there are Saxons consist of those have never left this place and those who came back, families moved here from abroad or from larger towns, people living in two places, and entrepreneurs. The Saxon families remaining here can be considered the most active members of the local community and of hosting tourists. Among the families moving here, there are two categories. The first are retired couples from abroad who came to Viscri looking for a simple way of living, and they host tourists mostly as a hobby. The second category consists of young couples arriving here to find a relaxed life closer to nature, finding an excellent work opportunity in tourism instead of the loud and rapid life in big towns.

We had been working in an office and got bored of it. We got bored and bought a house in Viscri. We came to Viscri because we liked the village very much, but we did not want to get involved in tourism. We bought the house just like that. For a long time we came here only for holidays on our free days. But then we thought that we could in fact ... move here! (R.G., woman to village from Bucharest)

The owners of some of the guesthouses are families with roots from the village but with their permanent dwelling-places and workplaces mostly in Braşov or Sighişoara. They use the house inherited from their parents or grandparents for hosting guests. Hospitality for them is mainly a summer-time activity. They take advantage of the opportunity to earn some extra money, as a consequence of the increasing numbers of visitors.

There are a total of 16 guesthouses in the village, with approximately 90 to 100 rentable beds, half of them functioning only periodically. Guesthouses generally have two or three bedrooms, mostly renovated, with bathrooms. In some guesthouses, former larders or smoke chambers were renovated into bathrooms or even bedrooms. An important element of authenticity is the character of the furniture of the guesthouses, although often with modified settings and ornaments, yet with their old design, reflecting tradition. Flower-modelled, handmade carved furniture and beds with drawers are the most important

elements of the houses; these are completed by the handmade textiles and tile vessels.

We always tell tourists that here they cannot find too much comfort. That they are probably going to sleep in a drawer, smaller than a normal bed. But most of them, mainly those coming from abroad highly appreciate it (W.F., Saxon man remaining in the village)

By 2011, 105 buildings had been renovated in Viscri with the support of the MET. A significant part of these are dwelling houses and farmhouses, a part of the fortified church as well as the local school. In many cases, the foundation supported and provided professional assistance in the process of the transformation of these buildings into guesthouses.

Here we tried to give back the buildings their original colour, with the help of the foundation, to lime-wash the houses with their former original colours. We took off the newer strata of paint from the walls and had a look at the original colour of the house. Then we worked only with lime and sand, without cement, so we use traditional materials. Of course, it does not last for a long time. Cement lasts longer but we do everything again as the old people did, with lime and sand. (G.G., 46-year-old Saxon woman)

Based on their expectations, motivation and destinations, the owners of the guesthouses in Viscri differentiate tourists coming from abroad and from Romania. In their opinion, Romanian tourists are mainly attracted by the Prince's house; this can be experienced mostly when Prince Charles' visits are covered in the media. At the same time, some guesthouse owners think that, unlike foreign tourists, Romanians lay a greater emphasis on comfort and food.

Romanians come here because of the Prince's house, and a few of them because of the fortress, I think. Still, most of them because of the Prince's house. And because here there is silence, it is a village, and here they can find good food. (R.G., woman who moved to the village from Bucharest)

I think Romanians lay an emphasis on food, more than those coming from abroad. [...] But

they appreciate the environment, the castle, everything... as well. [...] But we know that in Romania people eat a lot, mainly meat. So they consider that food is important. In the case of foreigners, this is not so much the case... When they go somewhere, food is at the second place. I think this is a small difference – Romanians pay more attention to comfort and food. (G.G., 46-year old Saxon woman)

While Romanian tourists are rather attracted by Prince Charles' house, comfort and home tastes, foreigners appreciate the cultural and architectural heritage, the landscape and the values of authentic rural life. They include the silence, the cows finding their ways home by themselves, animals walking freely on the streets, and the architecture of the village. Albeit in a significantly smaller number, younger tourists mainly attracted by adventure and active leisure have also appeared in the village. They characteristically take hiking tours and ride their bicycle.

They [those coming from abroad] come because they consider the village interesting, because here things happen just like they had happened in their countries a long time ago [...] and they cannot find that in the Western world any more. So they appreciate that here cows can be seen on the streets, or hens or I don't know what... and that there are people here who use a hoe and plough with animals (R.G., woman moved to the village from Bucharest).

For those tourists who spend more than three days in the village, local people organise special programmes to present the atmosphere and the authenticity of the place. Guests can participate in everyday activities like dealing with the animals, feeding them, gardening, baking bread, making cheese, so that they can get a living experience about the special features of the regions. Riding horse carriages is popular; the carriage starts from the village and the tourists can get actively involved in the activities at »stations« like the blacksmith's workshop or the charcoal burner's near the village. After that, they can have a picnic at the edge of the forest. The last station is at the local brickmaker's. Curious tourists can look at and directly try out the process of forging horseshoes, making coal at the charcoal burner's, or making bricks and tiles at the brickmaker's. The

shepherds pasturing at the edge of the village welcome the guests who can be the witnesses of milking, and making different dairy products, and they can also be the first tasters of the freshly made products. Moreover, Viscri and its surrounding preserve several fortresses and fortified churches that can be visited by tourists. Towns like Sighișoara, the Făgăraș Mountains and the not-so-known volcano crater in Racoș are also nearby.

They can go with the carriages to the place where the sheep are, there can see how the sheep are milked, and how cheese is made. There was a charcoal-burner's place but that does not exist any more... [...] There is a blacksmith in the village, so one can go there, too. It is a very beautiful place, one can see how he is working with the windbag, the anvil, and he can even make a little horseshoe for the children. We have also got a brick maker... He can speak about his work, show the kiln and how the bricks are made, and tourists can even try it out... And they can also go truffle-hunting. (R.G., woman moved to the village from Bucharest)

Social Consequences of Tourism in Viscri

The increasing tourist traffic has brought about significant changes. Compared to the size of the population, it can be seen that the level of accommodations and the annual number of visiting tourists is significant: a village of hardly 400 inhabitants includes almost 100 accommodation facilities and approximately 10,000 tourists come here annually. In a short time, hosting guests has become the most important source of income, besides animal husbandry and agriculture, in which almost every inhabitant of the village participates directly or indirectly.

The owners of guesthouses are the most important, directly involved, but not the sole actors of the tourist industry. Their services are completed by guides and traditional craftsmen, which provide become commodified (sold) products, mainly targeted at tourists.

The advantage is that we can do things. It is a possibility by which many of us can make our daily bread directly or indirectly – either by opening a guesthouse or working at one. (R.G.,

woman moved here from Bucharest, owner of a guesthouse)

We have no time now for ourselves any more, we cannot sit and talk to each other in the evenings as we used to. Our summers are quite stressful. We have to work from dawn till late at night! (G.G., 46-year old Saxon woman)

Well, for me the biggest advantage is that this is how I can make a living. (W.F. guesthouse owner, one of the remaining Saxon men in the village)

Tourism is a source of living for the locals, especially for those with little education, who are unlikely find a job elsewhere. Almost all guesthouses have one or two permanent employees, occasionally supporting people to help with the work in the garden. Agriculture today is almost solely focussed on household animal husbandry and gardening, which are important parts of tourism, as the guests are looking for local flavours and products.

When the guests arrive, we have to show them the kitchen garden. They want to see where the tomatoes or bell peppers they are served on the table are grown. Often they pick them themselves, which is real fun for them (S.G., 76-year old Saxon woman)

Among the (re)invented and sold traditional activities emerges the production of woollen socks and felt slippers, closely connected to the traditions of the place and its authenticity: it symbolically reproduces them. Producing clothing items made of wool has been one of the traditional crafts performed by the women of Viscri, just as in many other Transylvanian villages. The most important winter activities of young women and girls had been spinning, weaving, knitting, and felting. Simultaneously with industrialisation, these activities gradually disappeared from everyday routines, as industrially produced materials and cloth became readily available.

During the 1990s, traditional and agricultural activities again became more widespread in the village; not so much as a bare necessity, rather than as a »marketable« activity performed in the spirit of authenticity and tradition, which can be showcased as a local specialty. The reviving of the traditions in this manner is linked to a local inhabitant return-

ing home from Germany. He used his connections to build a network for the sale of the products, in other words, he succeeded in finding a market for woolen socks and felt slippers. In the beginning, he relied on his connections and relatives in Germany; later, he formally established a foundation and made still more business connections. Today, felt slippers and knitted socks made by the women in the village are an important trademark of the settlement, and an integral part of its brand.

This is how the employee of the Viscri Începe Foundation recalls the establishment of the foundation:

In 1999, a family from Germany bought a pair of socks from a poor woman, offering her some food in exchange. The second day, the woman came with another pair. After that the thing gained ground and other women also started to produce socks. Now we have an association called »Viscri incepe« (Viscri begins), with 95 women; 80 of them are permanent ones. But at one point we even had as many as 140 female contributors« (CB, 43-year old woman, works at the Viscri Începe Foundation)

Knitting socks and making slippers are just the final stage of a more complex series of tasks, which provides work for almost every woman. This organic system of labour division is inclusive, democratic and horizontally integrates all the activities. It is a sort of social enterprise, which makes use of the local resources producing not only a marketable product, but also community capital: mutual trust, cooperation, and social status. The chain of production starts with the collection of local wool, which is bought by the foundation from local shepherds. This is followed by the careful cleaning and drying of the wool, jointly done by the women in the yard of the local spinning factory. The next step is spinning but, because the local spinning factory closed many years ago, the production of wool is outsourced to a spinning factory in Braşov. Once the wool comes back from the spinning factory, women start their work based on orders. The work carried out within the foundation is divided into two parts: knitting socks and the preparing of felt slippers. Knitting socks »...is different! It is a clean work!« (G.K., Roma woman working for the Foundation), and is much simpler. The produc-

tion of felt slippers necessitates much more strength, care and time.

Most of the prepared products are sent to Germany, while the rest can be bought in the local shop of the foundation. Sometimes, the producers sell their products in front of the gates of their own houses.

Obviously, increasing tourist traffic also has its drawbacks, which is perceived by the locals mainly in the change of the undisturbed atmosphere.

There are too many cars. The village had been more serene before, with more green areas. Now, as there are more and more cars coming, there are even fewer birds in the streets, because cars often hit them. [...] Then the green areas were more extensive. It was much more enchanting before. (G.G., 46-year old Saxon woman)

Summary

Most of the current studies investigating the local effects of tourism warn of its negative consequences. These usually point out the effects on the environment (see UNEP, 2005), the standardization and commodification of culture (Shepherd, 2002; Kneafsey, 2001), as the well as the loss of authenticity (MacCarnell, 1973) and the adaptation to tourist demands (Hall & Lew, 2009). We think that in this respect Viscri is somewhat different, as the tourism that is taking shape there is not only the engine of a successful sustainable development, but also a tool by which old and almost forgotten cultural values and crumbling architectural heritage are rediscovered. Traditional Transylvanian Saxon culture is not threatened by its commodification or staged authenticity, because it is (in fact) only living in memories. Tourism contributes to the sustaining and preserving of this memory. Moreover, all this is happening with the interests of the present village community being primarily kept in mind.

Our study reveals that the two very important characteristics of evolving tourism in Viscri are its effects of social integration and the respect for the specific features of the environment and landscape. The emergence and development of tourism in Viscri is not merely a consequence of the commodification of traditional architecture and culture but also an innovative social initiative. The aim of our ethnographic research was to understand the consequences of

tourism on the local community and we discovered a successful model of Roma integration and social development. Naturally, these occur on a present-day scale, with a level of tourist traffic that is significant, yet does not overwhelm the settlement.

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