

Saxon Settlements in Brasov- a Declining Cultural Landscape?

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Abstract

The cultural resources of Saxon settlements are part of the tourist offer, and tourist potential of the researched area. We will analyse 5 historic rural landscapes from the point of view of tourist capitalization: Prejmer, Hărman, Bunești, Cristian, Bran and 4 urban landscapes: Rupea, Râșnov, Brașov, Făgăraș. The purpose of the research is to find answers to the following questions: How attractive are these landscapes for tourists? To what extent does cultural tourism contribute to the salvage of declining Saxon village landscapes? Does the status of U.N.E.S.C.O protected monument, represent advantage in being selected as tourist destination? In the present research, the focus will be the evaluation of cultural tourism on the level of historic Saxon village landscapes over an 8 year's period, 2008-2015, using a series of quantitative indicators, such as: the number of tourists arriving in Saxons Villages, the number of foreign tourists, the tourist capacity use index, the number of existent accommodation capacity, the average duration of a stay.

Keywords: *cultural landscape, material and immaterial heritage, cultural tourism, Saxons, U.N.E.S.C.O, Brasov*

Introduction

Cultural landscapes are geographic areas where humans and environment have interacted through a variety of land-uses over long periods of time [Plieninger et al., 2006, Vos and Meekes, 1999] creating distinct ecological, socioeconomic and cultural patterns [Farina, 2000]. There are many types of cultural landscapes, but all are historically dependent on initial landscape conditions and on the culture of a given time [Farina, 2000]. Many traditional cultural landscape in Europe are rapidly changing. Changes are occurring in social, ethnic, cultural, institutional, and economic spheres [Bell et al.2009, Plieninger and Bieling 2012, Sutcliffe et al.2013]. These changes affect the nature of the relationship between people and the environment [Fischer et al.2012]. Many valuable cultural and ecological elements and ecosystem services may be lost because of these changes [Fisher et al.2012, Plieninger and Bieling 2012]. The landscape provides multiple values and

functions including recreation [Merlo and Croitoru, 2005] and cultural heritage [EEA, 1995]. Cultural attractions have become a crucial component in constituting the attractiveness of tourism destination [Hughes, 1987, Katasoni & Venetsanopoulou, 2013, Prentice, 2001]. Some researchers have also studied culture as a destination attribute [O'Leary & Deegan, 2003], or as an important reason for traveling to destination [McKercher&du Cros,2003] indicating that cultural differences might be a driver of tourism destination choice. Saxon settlements in Brasov were built by a group of settlers of German origin called Saxons, starting with the 7th and 8th centuries [Hughes, 2008]. These emigrated from the Rhenan, Flandra and Bavaria regions to Eastern Europe, at the call of the Hungarian King, Geza II, between 1141-1162, from military and economic reasons. [Grimm, G., Zack, K. 1995] Saxon settlement occurred based on the granting of a set of privileges from autonomy to self-administration. The guarantee of the privilege to exercise traditional rights and select their own management bodies [Wagner, P., 1990], drafting their own set of laws [Wagner,P.,1990], communication in Saxon dialect, the fact that the German settlers population had the right to live freely, according to their own value systems, norms and believes, to form a self-sufficient people, all those aspects have encouraged the development of economically affluent settlements. All political events that followed the loss of autonomy and self-administration in 1876, World Wars deportations of Saxons in the USSR, communist regime, collectivisation and Saxon migration to the FRG [Dinu,C.,2012, Gundisch,K.,1998] made the Saxon historic landscapes more fragile.

Temporal analysis

The high density of village settlements on the territory of Brasov district, the toponimy and high number of historic remnants indicate a continuous population of Saxons in the investigated area, the existence of a relatively compact and ethnically homogenous population. For the end of the 19th century, Jekelius presents a number of 155 village settlements, plus another 62 outside prince lands. [Jekelius,A.,1908]. Between 1992- 1998 following a Romanian-German agreement between ICOMOS Germany, ICOMOS Romania and the Cultural Council of Germans in Transylvania, an inventory program was carried out for the settlements created by German settlers, inventorying a number of 243 localities based on some topographic methods. [The Report of Romanian Ministry of Culture, 2014].

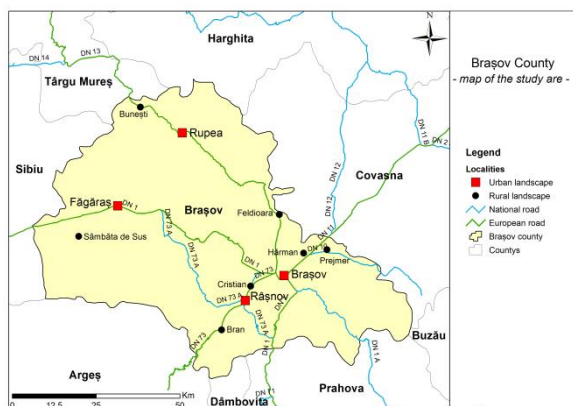
The purpose of my research is to analyse to what extent cultural tourism is a viable solution for the reviving of the declining of Saxon historic landscape in Braşov county, if the historic landscape is attractive for tourists. The present study will focus on the cultural landscape created by Saxons in Transylvania, regarding its patrimonial and tourist value. The research will focus on finding answers to the following questions: How attractive are these landscapes for tourists? To what extent does cultural tourism contribute to the salvage

of declining Saxon historic landscape? Does the U.N.E.S.C.O protected element represent an advantage in its selection as tourist destination?

Data sets and methods

Study area –localization

The Central part of Romania, called Transylvania, is known for its cultural diversity, since several ethnic groups have lived in this area over centuries and have left their mark of the current landscape, from Romanians to Hungarians, Germans, Romani and Jews. The traditionally managed landscape mosaic is considerate one of the most biodiversity– rich regions in lowland Europe [ADEPT, 2011], and the same time the region is one of the poorest in Europe in terms of financial resources, infrastructure, and education.[Dinu, C.,2012, Fisher et al, 2012].



Brașov county is located in the south-eastern part of Transylvania, being one of the districts that included in its ethnic structure, a very large number of Saxons. According to the date in Table 1 from the National Statistics Institute, Brasov Statistics Department, Saxons represented a large ethnic group in some localities representing the majority. The data in the table present the number evolution of Saxons in Brasov county from 1930 to 2011 indicating a drastic drop of about 17 times.

Table no.1 Numeric evolution of Saxons on the territory of Braşov county, 1930- 2011

Year	1930	1956	1966	1977	1992	2002	2011
Population	50585	39546	40857	38623	10059	4418	2923

The statistic data has been collected in the field and from Brasov Statistics Department and the National Statistics Institute of Romania. The statistical analysis of data has been used to identify the total number of tourists, foreign tourists, number of arrivals between 2008-2015 in the 9 localities. For a better understanding of the phenomena and in order to find answers to the research questions we have also used qualitative indicators such as: accommodation use index and average duration of accommodation, as these reflect to what extent the cultural services of the ecosystem bring benefits to local communities.

Methods As research methods I have also used SWOT analysis and the processing of statistic data (elementary statistics, using Excel). SWOT analysis represents an especially useful method for evaluation and analysis that we have used in the evaluation of the touristic potential of Brasov district. Since the researched area has a high tourist potential, it is expected that the value of the quantitative indicators used in the evaluation of the 9 cultural landscapes will have high values.

A.SWOT Analysis

Strong points

- High tourist potential of Braşov county : 25 reservation and nature monuments, 6 fortresses, 7 fortified – fortress-type churches, 1 fortified urban area, 11 churches and church buildings, 1 Dacia fortress, 29 museums and museum points [National Statistics Institute, 2014]
- Age and distribution of the patrimony depending on the historic period it belongs to: from the Medieval Period (12-16th Centuries) in Braşov area there are 141 attractions, in Făgăraş area 39 attractions, in Rupea –Cohalm 63 attractions, from the pre-modern and modern period (sec.17th-19th) other 593 attractions.[I.N.S., 2014]
- Traditional architecture. The fact that there are fortified churches in the villages is a unique aspect that preserves the architecture that is specific for Saxon settlements. The architectural style is similar to some fortified settlements in Germany, Austria and Northern France.
- Landscape uniqueness and authenticity. There is no other place in Romania with such a large number of rural sites with fortified churches in a small area, which proves that the phenomena has been largely popular in the geographic and cultural area where Saxon settlers lived .¹

¹ <http://whc.unesco.org/en/list/596/documents/> accessed in 4/5/2016

- U.N.E.S.C.O protected historic and architectural monument status. Fortified fortresses from Brasov county Braşov, Prejmer, Viscri were entered on the list of U.N.E.S.C.O World patrimony in year 1997, 1999.
- High density of cultural attractions
- Relatively small distances between tourist attractions allow the creation of tourist circuits. Prejmer fortified fortress is located 17 km away from Brasov. Hărman fortress is 11 km from Braşov. From Braşov to Râşnov Fortress there are 20 km and 64 km to Rupea Fortress .
- Tourist infrastructure is the highest in the Centre Development Region with 474 tourist accommodation structures.

Weak points

- Saxon fortified fortresses (Prejmer, Rupea, Viscri) need to be more efficiently brought to the front through tourist promotion activities as their potential is not promoted sufficiently or efficiently.
- The lack of come massive investment in the cultural field (Prejmer, Viscri, Râşnov) for the purpose of restoring, preservation and a better valuation of material patrimony, including by using multimedia means.
- The notoriety of Bran Castle, due to the association with the Dracula myth and that of Râşnov Fortress cast a shadow over the fortified fortresses in the rural area.
- Braşov county is one of the most attractive regions of the country due to the variety of tourism forms that can be practiced, cultural tourism is in strong competition with mountain tourism, proven by the large number of tourists registered in Predeal and Moeciu.
- The percentage of foreign tourists on the national level between 2007-2010 has been of 22,2 % while on the level of Brasov district, it was of 17,3% [National Statistics Institute, 2012]
- Service quality: more attractive museums, tourist information points, materials, leaflets, books, DVDs for sale.

Opportunities

- The use of European funds for: culture, tourism, education, regional development
- Capitalization of tourist potential in public –private partnership.
- Saxon associations in Germany that emigrated from Braşov county can be involved in projects to save Saxon patrimony
- Implication of the Evangelic church in the tourist development of village communities
- Promotion of an integrated tourism: mountain, historic, cultural, shopping in Brasov county that can encourage less practice tourism types, such as the cultural one,
- Promotion of an integrated tourism on the level of the Centre Development Area, including the following districts: Alba, Sibiu, Braşov, Covasna, Mureş, Harghita.

Threats

- Saxon fortresses, Saxon historic landscapes can also be found in neighbouring districts Sibiu and Mureş so that a better cultural management of local and regional authorities in the latter might compete with Braşov county, a fact that will be reflected in the tourists' stay duration.

- Mountain tourism competes with culture tourism as indicated by statistic data, among the main targeted area of Brasov we have Predeal, Săcele, Zărnești, Moieciu, Râșnov city ranks 7th [National Statistics Institute, 2012]
- Romanian tourists prefer destinations abroad.

According to the SWOT analysis, if we use it as a starting point for the analysis of cultural tourism, we should get high values for the analysed quality indicators as the tourist potential is quite high. If the indicators are not above average, then there are problems on the level of tourist marketing on the land level reflecting on the regional level.

B. Statistical analysis

In the evaluation of cultural tourism between 2008-2015 we will use the following indicators: the number of tourists arriving in localities with a patrimony belonging to Saxon ethnic group, the number of foreign tourists, the tourist capacity use index, the number of existent accommodation capacity, the average duration of the stay.

Table.No.2 Tourist arrivals in Saxon settlements from Brașov county, between 2008-2015

Localities	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Brașov	295521	218485	251188	320194	359750	396384	423630	479125
Făgăraș	2650	2738	3596	4896	5254	5530	6482	9585
Râșnov	8433	6623	7866	8211	10628	16352	17230	19230
Rupea	4973	4535	7565	6858	7396	7636	8237	9861
Bran	35786	33675	40062	50353	54139	65481	68214	67677
Bunești	487	213	181	80	415	696	1071	1549
Cristian	140	136	229	765	1072	815	729	1576
Hărman	4194	4149	1491	2367	1781	2281	2260	2842
Prejmer	193	502	325	781	1062	913	925	587

Table .no.3 No. of foreign tourists between 2008-2015

Localitatea	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014
Braşov	30,58	23,48	24,70	26,96	25,44	24,07	25,50
Făgăraş	26,07	14,85	13,37	18,89	15,46	15,53	16,60
Râşnov	19,12	14,66	15,99	12,61	9,92	9,26	10,71
Rupea	23,74	19,38	22,15	22,61	15,42	19,58	21,16
Bran	16,23	13,34	17,26	18,93	14,16	15,46	15,34
Buneşti	13,09	6,11	6,09	4,10	13,97	20,37	30,00
Cristian	5,17	9,52	6,34	13,45	10,43	9,49	14,93
Hărman	46,18	39,72	21,91	25,44	20,31	32,02	20,34
Prejmer	12,24	10,01	5,24	10,74	16,11	8,15	10,61

Results

According to the data in the above mentioned tables, the number of foreign tourists arriving between 2008-2015 in Saxon rural localities Prejmer, Hărman, Feldioara, Cristian, Buneşti is not significant, with values between 0 and 251 de tourists. Urban landscapes such as Braşov , Făgăraş , Râşnov and Rupea succeed to draw a larger number of tourists according to the data in table 1 since they are urban areas where several types of tourism can be practiced; mountain, cultural and agricultural tourism. Râşnov fortified fortress draws a large number of foreign tourists due to their proximity to Brasov and 20 km Bran. Rupea fortified fortress draws 3 times more tourists than the fortified ones in Viscri and Prejmer although it is not entered in U.N.E.S.C.O patrimony. Tourist infrastructure is especially important in the tourist sector. Braşov county has a variety tourist infrastructures with hotels, hostels, tourist bed and breakfasts, vacation villages, bungalows, apartments, tourist cabins. I cannot state that the low number of tourists is due to the insufficient accommodation infrastructure that would discourage tourists, on the contrary the hotel infrastructure has a low occupation degree, according to the statistics data. According to the data regarding the use degree of the tourist capacity between 2008-2014 I notice a significant percentage decrease after 2008. This is probably due to the world financial crisis that has left its mark on Brasov touristic sector. Significant drops up to 10% are recorded in 2008 and 2014 in Făgăraş and Râşnov cities, up to 16% in Hărman. Exception are

Bunești locality that registers an increase by 17% and Cristian of about 10%. In comparison to other European tourist attractions, in Romania low prices might represent an advantage in the selection of our country as tourist destination. In the analyzed locations, tourist infrastructure has risen, in Brașov, Râșnov, Bran up to 50% over the last 6 years, without an increase in the number of tourists. Another aspect that needs to be analysed in the evaluation of tourist activity in Saxon landscape is the average duration of a stay. This indicator also has an economic value as it reflects the financial means that a tourist spends in that locality. According to the statistic data the average accommodation duration over the entire 2008-2015 period is 2 days indicating a transit tourism, the tourists do not spend enough time in the middle of the communities to interact with the local population, and it is not enough to financially support the development of local economy. Cultural services offered by the: tourist activity, relaxation and resting, creation of traditional artisan work, organisation of artistic events, folk festivals, will not support the sustainable development of the landscape if the tourists only spend a little time here. Given the relatively low distance between localities this means that on average a tourist spends 2 days in the researched area. We note a drop in the stay duration in Făgăraș from 3,56 in 2008 to 1,85 in 2015. On the other hand, the fact that Hărman is near Brașov represents an advantage in its selection as location, registering an increase from 1,52 in 2009 to 4,30 days stay in 2015. Nevertheless, the average duration of the stay is still not enough to contribute to the development of cultural landscapes in decline, through the loss of population in Prejmer, Hărman, Cristian, Bunești, Rupea, Râșnov.

Discussions

The Saxon settlements have a high tourist potential that can be capitalized as cultural tourism as results from the SWOT analysis. The purpose of the study was to find out if the historic cultural landscape created by Saxons in Brasov county is sufficiently capitalized given its patrimonial value and touristic exploitation through cultural tourism.

To the question 1: *To what extent does cultural tourism contribute to the saving of Saxon historic landscape currently in decline?* When we refer to the Saxon settlements in Brasov county as declining cultural landscapes we see this as an involution, a regression without the continuity of an event.[Piccardi, S., 1986]. Cultural transmission means are very sensitive to events of demographic nature. Though the settlements have acquired, starting with the 12th century –social, cultural and historic value due to the traditions, techniques, land use method, some past events – up to the 19th century, they have been vibrant evolving landscapes. At present the immaterial patrimony is more vulnerable than the material one and there is the risk that it will be lost as it is not transmitted to future generations of Saxons, no longer living in these settlements, as follows: songs and poems, traditional organ music, communities' choirs, marching bands, food recipes, traditional activities,

traditional folk art, folk costume, festivals and traditional carnivals represent patrimonial elements with an inestimable value that need to be valorised through tourist activities. Following the statistic analysis, results indicated very low values of the total number of tourists, and foreign tourists arrived in rural historic landscapes Prejmer, Viscri, Hărman, Cristian, Feldioara. The weight of foreign tourists is very low, under 250 tourists a year in Prejmer, Feldioara, Viscri, Hărman, Hărman. Under 1300 foreign tourists we have in Rupea, Râșnov and Făgăraș as well. As the number of tourists is insignificant for the 5 historic rural landscapes and the 3 urban landscapes: Făgăraș, Rupea and Râșnov I reach the conclusion that for the time frame 2008-2015 cultural tourism has not been a viable solution, able to revitalize the declining historic landscapes, made more fragile by the loss of their population. According to the statistic data obtained from Brasov Statistic Department, German tourists remained at the top of tourists visiting the district, for example in 2010 they represented 15,2% of the total number of foreign tourists. The fact that there are strong cultural bonds between Romania and Germany, should also be exploited from a touristic points of view, now that something of the collective memory of Saxon history still remains. Tourism is still a world industry in which competition is strong and the presence of simple historic monuments in a landscape may not be sufficient in the current context of globalisation. My research interval coincides with the debut of the financial crisis in 2008 which may have positively influenced the development of cultural tourism in Brașov county, through a reorientation of foreign tourist fluxes to cheaper destinations in Europe, among which Romania as well, but following the analysis of quantitative indicators this is not the case. The present study indicates the fact that historic landscapes such as Prejmer, Hărman, Bunești, Cristian, Rupea, Râșnov do not succeed to draw a sufficient number of tourists from the total weight of tourists arriving in Brașov county. Despite the fact that these historic landscapes have cultural resources of a high cultural value, a valuable material patrimony represented by fortified churches, fortifications, traditional houses, their touristic capitalization for the purpose of salvaging and preserving cultural heritage has not produced any effects between 2008-2015.

To the question 2: *How attractive are these landscapes for the tourists?* Starting from the fact that landscape patrimony includes the historic dimension of landscape: identity, traditions of local population, culture as the agent that created the landscape, folk memory and imagination [Schwerer,O.,2012], I think that material patrimony plays an important role in tourist motivation. The cultural factor that has acted in the past whose traces are visible in the present has individualized a special type of landscape, the historic landscape, a conclusive example being Saxon rural settlements such as Prejmer, Hărman, Bunești,

Cristian, Bran. The high patrimonial value, authenticity and identity are the main characteristics of Saxon historic landscapes. The presence of a fortified church on a village territory is a unique aspect that is specific for Saxon settlements. The architectural style is similar to severed fortified settlements in Germany, Austria and Northern France.² The regular shape of the streets, their parallelism, the positioning of the fortified church and the Committee Centre are just some of the particularities of Saxon settlements. Prejmer and Hărman are two rural historic landscapes in which the only type of tourism that can be practiced is cultural tourism, due to the existent cultural-historic elements, such as fortress-type fortified churches, landscape aesthetics, traditional architecture of houses. The low number of tourists suggests that the number of those interested in culture is very low, that culture is not a motivation to travel. Bran, on the other hand is an exception, being the only tourist attraction in rural area that succeeds through the tourist capitalization of Bran castle to draw a large number of tourists in comparison to the other rural attractions, with values between 4360 and 7830 tourists a year.

To the question 3: *Does the U.N.E.S.C.O protected monument status represent an advantage in its selection as tourist destination?* The answer is not the expected one. The data shows that historic landscapes Prejmer and Bunești holders of two important tourist attractions, such as the fortified fortresses and Saxon churches entered on the list of U.N.E.S.C.O world heritage do not succeed in attracting tourists despite their international protection status they received. The management plan of the two U.N.E.S.C.O monuments is not efficiently applied by the responsible authorities since they cannot capitalize their status from a tourist point of view. At the same time, the number of Romanian tourists is not high, for example, Prejmer has been visited by 134 Romanians in 2008 and 846 in 2012, despite the fact that the locality is close to Brașov and Hărman and there can be common circuits between the 3 localities and common tourist services can be offered. I think that Romania is one of the few countries with historic monuments entered on the list of U.N.E.S.C.O world heritage that cannot properly promote them from a touristic point of view, since in 2008, Prejmer was visited by 59 foreign tourists and in 2015 by 83. At the same time Viscri locality has received a massive promotion from Prince Charles of Great Britain but in 2010 it was only visited by 31 foreign tourists, in 2012 by 46 and in 2015 by 241. The increase is high but in reality it is not significant, as it does not contribute to the economic increase of the village, or the use of financial resources obtained from tourism for the finance of preservation and restoration works. The U.N.E.S.C.O protected status means that this international organization do not offering financial funds is only of a symbolic nature and the monument should be capitalized through the tourist promotion of the sites. In

² <http://whc.unesco.org/en/list/596/documents/> accessed in 4/5/2016

our case, the U.N.E.S.C.O international protection status for the Fortified Fortress of Prejmer Fortress and peasant fortification in Viscri is not an advantage in their selection as tourist destination. A plausible explanation we could find for this paradox is the lack of coherent strategies to culturally promote Romania in Europe, for regional development through the support of cultural tourism, some educational programs through which the students get to know their country, stimulation of internal tourism.

Conclusions

From a theoretical point of view cultural tourism contributes to the sustainable development of cultural landscape, it represents an importance source of financing for historic monuments preservation and restoration works. In the case of our area, there's a long way from theory to practice, the two variables do not seem to converge. The purpose of my research was to verify the cultural tourism dynamics in the 9 historic landscapes of Brasov county between 2008-2015. I have focused on a series of 5 rural landscapes with high tourist potential such as Prejmer, Hărman, Viscri, Cristian, Bran in the attempt to find out if the revitalizing of these landscaped made vulnerable through the loss of population, through the capitalization of patrimonial elements is the solution, and the answer was a negative one. The impact of cultural tourism has been reduces as the number of visitors has been very low. In the case of urban landscapes Rășnov, Făgăraș, Rupea statistic data have indicated modest results. In Brașov's case, it is difficult to dissociate the types of tourism practiced: mountain, cultural, business, as it is the largest city in the county centre of various tourist axes. U.N.E.S.C.O protection status that Prejmer and Viscri were awarded is poorly exploited from the tourist point of view as sadly, these two sites remain unnoticed by most of the tourists.

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