

TOURISM, IDENTITY AND ECONOMY IN A MAGYAR VILLAGE FROM ROMANIA

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Abstract: *Using field data I will try to explore the mechanisms of identity construction through tourism, in a Magyar village from Romania, focusing on two dimensions of the tourism: cultural and economic. On the one hand I bring arguments that the village is an ethnic enclave, and that the tourism practiced here is a cultural/identitary one. On the other hand, I am trying to show that the tourism as it is practiced here is adopted by the community as a strategy for local development. However, some implicit aspects of this process can be seen as pertaining more to an "ethnic economy" (I. Light). In the final part of the paper I will try to discuss the applicability and relevance of the definition of the ethnic economy given by Ivan Light, within the context of this village.*

Keywords: *Magyars [from Romania]; tourism; enclave; "ethnic economy"; Ivan Light.*

1. Introduction

Starting from the general theories about tourism, I will discuss about the theoretical implications, socio-economic and socio-cultural, both for the host (destination) and for the tourists, trying to make a profile of the tourism in Coltău village. These two dimensions of the impact of tourism were selected considering that they can describe and analyse best the situation from Coltău village, thinking that the cultural dimension (particularly the ethnic one) and the economic dimension are intercorrelated, interacting and influencing mutually on a permanent basis. Of course, one of the most interesting aspects concerns the mutual interaction.

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The analysis will focus on several questions such as: is the tourism practiced in Coltău village, a cultural, identity, thus “ethnic” tourism? If yes, which are the elements defining it and which are the consequences of this thing?

In the second part of the article, using the theories which debate the socio-economic implications of the tourism, I will discuss the directions for [economic] change at the local, “community” level. One of the stakes is the question whether this case is a case of community development or not. Going further, and through the prism of the theories on the “ethnic economy” and “economy of ethnic enclave” (Light) I will formulate several questions about the situation from Coltău village, bringing into discussion the mentioned theories and their capacity of applicability, therefore of generalization.

2. Tourism and tourists in the field literature

The purpose of this paper is not an elaborate incursion into the, more or less arid, field literature on the history and origin of tourism and on the concept of “tourism”. We will also not approach the polemic on tourism as anthropologic subject (see Nash, 1981 and Burns, 2004). However, some clarifications are necessary.

The concept of “tourism” was proposed in the field literature by the definition of the people of practicing this activity, i.e. by the definition of tourists. Well, what is the tourist? “A tourist is a person, in his/her spare time who, voluntarily visits a place remote from his/her residence, with the purpose to experiment a change” (Smith, 1989, p. 2 cited by Stronza, 2001, p. 265). Of course, questions were asked on what drives these people to travel, with what purpose, who they are, which their socio-cultural characteristics are, etc. The case studies so far proposed a range of answers and put new questions, delimiting types of tourism, implicitly of tourists. For instance, Erik Cohen, in a paper from 1984, was identifying eight “conceptual” approaches which he considered important for the study of tourism. I will just enumerate them here: “tourism as commercialised hospitality”; “tourism as democratic way of travelling”; “tourism as modern way of spending the free time”; “tourism as modern variety of the traditional pilgrimages”; “tourism as expression of the basic cultural themes”; “tourism as a process of acculturation”; “tourism as a type of ethnic relationship”; “tourism as a form of neo-colonialism” (Cohen, 1984, pp. 374-376). I will revert on some of these concepts later in this paper.

Discussing about the causes of tourism, David Nash asked some questions, drawing work directions and concluding that the “role of external forces such as the entrepreneurs, advertisers and governmental or supra-governmental agencies is worth taking into consideration; however, the traditions of the host society in terms of services, hospitality and housing of the foreign intrusive elements plays a role in the determination of the situation in which tourism appears and will blossom or not”

(Nash, 1981, p. 465). Thus, tourism is not just an action of an individual decision of the tourist to spend his/her free time by travelling to some place, but the result of many other factors which, on the one hand, configure the destination, while on the other hand, configure the decision of the tourist. However, it is certain that any form of tourism involves two important parts: the tourist/guest (individual or groups) and the host (individual, family, community etc.). This is what yields the two sides. Discussing about the shortcomings of the theoretical and empiric research, Amanda Stronza states: "the current literature on tourism can be divided conceptually into two parts, one orienting towards understanding the origins of the tourism, and the other oriented towards analysing the impact of tourism. One of my main ideas is that both orientations, even when taken together, seem to tell just half of the story. The problem is that many studies on the origins of tourism tend to channel on the tourist, and many researches directed towards the impact of the tourism, tend to analyse only the local people" (Stronza, 2001, p. 262). She proposed that the future studies target both the tourists and their hosts, monitoring them throughout all stages involved by tourism (idem). This proposal targets the explicit need to have a full image on the tourism, taking into account the complementarity of the two dimensions: the tourist and the hosts (local people), in order to understand better what determines the origin of the tourism (in a specific areas, for instance), and what drives the tourists to choose that particular destination. On the other hand, a full image of the tourist-host-place relation may provide pertinent explanations for the impact of tourism in a particular destination.

Undoubtedly, tourism is a complex phenomenon, in permanent connection and interaction with the economic, psychological, social and cultural elements (Burns, 2004, p. 11). There is a wide range of tourism types and their number and form keeps developing.

The ideas on the impact and consequences of tourism are again, divided. On the one hand, here are those postulating that the effects of tourism are negative on the population, environment, host communities and on the elements of culture, nature and everything pertaining to the local traditions: "the anthropologists conceptualised tourism as a factor influencing the fate of the host in several ways such as: whether they will develop economically or not; whether they will be proud or ashamed of themselves or of their traditions, or whether they will find motivation to protect or destroy their environment" (Stronza, 2001, p. 268). Furthermore, within the context of the "exotic", non-Western destinations, tourism is seen as the only solution for local economic development, and as a form of intimate or internal colonization, as a variety of neo-colonialism (see Cohen, 1984, p. 374-376), which aims to continue exploiting the less economically-developed areas.

On the other side are those supporting tourism, mostly economists, who "promote tourism as an ideal strategy for development" (Stronza, 2001, p. 268). The underlying

consideration is that besides the benefits (jobs, money etc.) for the people involved in the system of tourism, or for those displaying touristic activities as hosts, it also develops elementary-collateral matters for the proper exercise of the touristic activities (for instance, infrastructure, services etc.). Even though, sometimes just a fragment of the population from a touristic destination is integrated in the touristic activities, presumably the population which is not directly involved in touristic activities also benefit, or may benefit, of the developed infrastructure or from the touristic practices.

Many times, tourism is seen with suspicion, and as a process leading to the destruction of the local culture, implicitly, to the loss of identity by the host populations, by the adoption of life styles and values specific to the guests/tourists, particularly according to the idea that the “local people have been fooled to accept tourism, rather than accepting it consciously, as an option for themselves” (Stronza, 2001, p. 269). However, there also are opinions supporting the idea that not always commodification necessarily leads to the change of the local customs and traditions; on the contrary, it may revitalise them (Cohen, 1984, p. 387). Even in the cases when the hosts, apparently change some aspects of their quotidian life, in order to be more attractive for the tourists, this doesn't involve directly the fact that they lose their “culture or ability to judge for themselves what is or what is not authentic” (Stronza, 2001, p. 273). On the contrary, as Stronza says, the hosts may feel entitled, by their interaction with the outside people, to redefine who they are and what aspects of their identity they may show or conceal” (Stronza, 2001, p. 273). The conclusion of Stronza (2001) is that tourism may both strengthen the local economic development, or may make it dependent on tourism, while commodification may support sometimes the tradition (with the meaning of particular, specific local elements).

3. Tourism and change. Case study: Coltău village, ██████████ Maramureş County

For a better understanding of what happens today in the locality/village, we need to make an introduction in the history of the locality¹, with the purpose to delimit the context within which tourism is rooted, considering that “it should be clear from the very beginning, that any study on the causes and consequences of tourism must take into account the broader social context to which they belong” (Nash, 1981, p. 466).

Coltău village lies about 17 km away from Baia Mare. The access road is covered in asphalt, being a county road. About 3 km from the centre of the village flows Lăpuş

¹ This information comes from two main sources: townhall of Coltău and monograph of Coltău (see Csaba 2008).

River. Most of the village population consists of Magyar ethnics¹ (62.3%), followed by the Roma community (37.1%²). Of the total 2,254 inhabitants, just 15 people are Romanian ethnics (0.6%).

The settlement was attested by documents in 1405, as Kolcho, then in 1414 as Koltho (from *koho*, oven)³. The local history has been, and still is, marked by the castle⁴ built in the time of Maria Tereza. As of 1845, the castle administration was in the hands of Teleki Sandor – count, writer, revolutionary colonel. In 1846-1847, the poet Petőfi Sándor⁵, pays several visits to count Teleki. The friendship of the count and the natural environment made Petőfi Sándor and his wife, Szendrey Júlia, to spend their honey moon at Coltău (between September 9 – November 19, 1847). Another important character who visited Coltău was the romantic writer Jókai Mór. Count Teleki died in 1892 and was buried in the park near the castle, below a cornel tree. In 1936, the tomb is moved to the cemetery of the village, becoming a pilgrimage place, thus touristic attraction. The last owner of the castle was count Teleki loan, who left the castle for good in 1937, leaving the castle as donation to the commune of Coltău. Under the communist rule, the castle was turned into a functional building with several uses. In 1960, one room was turned into „Petőfi Sándor memorial room”. Gradually, the entire floor was assigned to the same purpose, which was the moment when tourism started in the village.

As of 1968, after the territorial reorganisation, Coltău village was included in the large commune of Săcălășeni, where it remained until 2004, when it separated from that commune, together with a small village, Cătălina⁶, with the intention to make a new commune and to manage better their ideas and needs. The action relied on strictly functional and objective reasons: difficult access to public services and the neglect of the two villages because of the long distance from the commune centre, at the margin of Săcălășeni commune. The separation was the result of common action of the local elites and the population (a referendum was organised).

The village has a varied range of natural resources, facilitating the agricultural practice and animal farming. Similarly to other rural areas from Romania where the

¹ I will use the term of „Magyar” to refer to: i) ethnic affiliation, and ii) the local population (in order to make simpler the difference between the local population and the Hungarian population from Hungary).

² The percentage is the official variant, but it is quite approximative, because of the immigration (from other villages) and of the rather high birth rate of the Roma population.

³ There are several opinions on this matter, and part of them can be found in the monograph of Coltău (see Csaba 2008).

⁴ In fact, this is a rather large villa, with two floors.

⁵ He is the national poet of Hungary.

⁶ Cătălina village is small, along the road, and it consists mainly of holiday or summer houses.

population was both ageing and with a rather low stock of education (medium towards low), Coltău village also displays these features. Education and the access to education are a general problem of the village:

[now], as of this year, I understood that one or two children will go on; I don't know whether they didn't change their mind. But they didn't want to go to a high school; they wanted to go to vocational, apprentice schools. I don't know whether they enlisted, because the subscription is expensive, it is not worthy, because anyhow they will have nothing left. But I think it is worth trying...¹.

The Magyar population grows seedlings and vegetables in gardens and greenhouses, which they sell in Baia Mare. Besides this, they cultivate the land (very fertile land, in the meadow of Lăpuş River) and they farm animals (pigs, cows, horses) and/or work (commute to Baia Mare, working in the bakery and in a local company making PVC products, in small carpentry shops). In the past, most of the people worked in the mining sector (commuting to the mines around Baia Mare) and agriculture (women and the men not working in the mines). Many of the Magyars migrate temporarily, for short periods, in Hungary, where they work for 1-3 months in various sectors (usually farms and agriculture). They come back for a while and then they go back. Many Magyars make incomes from agro-tourism (see Iorga, 2008).

The tourists started to come here from the 1960 years, but after 1989 there was a boom of tourists. The most important touristic element is the castle hosting the Petőfi Sándor museum, and the incoming tourists are almost exclusively from Hungary. There are 12 boarding houses² in the village, each of them with two daisies, *all alike*³. The services they provide consist in accommodation and meals – very appreciated: *they are very satisfied with the food...*, but they can also organise travels on touristic routes, rides in carriage, etc.

Sarmasi Josef, boarding house owner, told us that the boarding houses appeared quite late in Coltău (2004-2005), *and there were a lot of difficulties with their authorization*. He explains their establishment by the increasing flow of tourists who need accommodation: *they are blooming*⁴, *because the number of visitors coming to us is increasing*. Generally, the tourists come in groups (which are preferred by the hosts due to economic reasons), *for more than one night, because they are sight-seeing a lot* [in other areas], and the peak inflow is between April and September. However, there are tourists coming in the other months of the year too.

¹A., Magyar person, social worker, expert in local Roma problems.

² 2007 statistics (source: Coltău townhall). Actually, there are much more households receiving tourists, but they are not yet accredited or registered.

³ The words in Italics, with no further note, belong to J. S. and are extracted from our interview with him.

⁴ „Blooming” has the meaning of „increasing”, „developing”.

Owning a boarding house in Coltău is not seen as a business, but as a complementary source of incomes for the household. It only means the legalisation of the assistance provided to the tourists, because the people running boarding houses are using their own houses to this purpose, and the tourist (the “guest” as they call the tourists) is seen and accepted as a family member for as long as he/she stays¹. However, the profit, in most cases, and part of the household savings, are invested to arrange, expand or improve the house: *if you want to maintain the house, to keep to rooms in the best condition* (S. J.), because the tourists *want better and better conditions... Before it was not like this: the people were coming and were living in your house, in the existing conditions. Now, it is no longer like this! They are demanding.* (I., boarding house owner). In the recent period, special buildings, for tourist accommodation were built, with a strong entrepreneurial character, which makes us reconsider the opinion expressed by the local people, that the [agro]tourism practiced in Coltău is not a business.

Within this context, the transformation of the usual touristic practices, which consisted in the informal hospitality, in this form of “commercialised hospitality” (Cohen, 1984, p. 374-375), through a process of “commodification” (Stronza, 2001, p. 270) is strongly tied to two elements: first, the [commodified] cultural legacy, and then the situation of niche (niche economic practices). We presented above the elements of cultural legacy, but not those behind its revival.

*Starting with the early 1990s, with the support of the **Hungarian Ministry of Culture and Cults**, with the assistance of the employees of the Petőfi Museum of Literature, started the systematization, reorganisation and updating of the entire material of the museum. The objects and materials which had no direct connection with the subject of the exhibitions were stored and each hall was personalized. Thus, were born the Teleki hall, the Jókai hall, the Petőfi hall* (Csaba, 2008, p. 51, my emphasis).

In other words, the inheritance from Coltău is not just a local inheritance concerning strictly the Magyars living there; rather, it is a cultural, ethnic legacy which concerns not just the local interests. In this formula, the causes of commodification can have two sources: a) the actions of the Hungarian state, interested in the promotion and maintenance of the elements of the Magyar culture (on cultural, or rather cultural-ethnic grounds), and then the local Magyar ethnics interested in the inflow of a many tourists as possible (on economic grounds). Irrespective of the causes of commodification, its effects are concrete and functional: “the truth is that the industry of patrimony became, in important and powerful ways, a site of consumption, like any

¹The tourist(s) eat together with their hosts (unless they express directly another option), they share the house with their host (the front rooms, or the “good”, “clean” rooms); sometimes they can even participate in various household works.

other market on which the material culture expands rapidly” (Mitchell, 2002, p. 200 cited by de Weiss, 2007, p. 416). The process of commodification isn’t limited to the aspects of the cultural inheritance; it goes further, trying to introduce within the touristic circuit any element that might or could get touristic value. However, this touristic value can only be obtained through a strong symbolic load, which one side or the other assigns to some marks (be it the “Petőfi legacy”, or the “Colțău panorama”, or the “Vajda spring”, etc.). On the other hand, the so-called “Petőfi legacy” has commodifying capacity: besides the fact that after 1990, the house of culture from the village was named after the poet, the most interesting example of commodification seems to be the local celebration. It started in 1939¹ as a ball, developing thereafter as “celebration” (sic!). In 1984, the ball is banned by the communist regime and it was reactivated after the fall of the communist regime. After the separation from Săcălășeni commune, the Petőfi celebration became the “Petőfi days”, and corresponds with the date established by the local authorities for the days of the commune. This aspect is rather interesting, particularly by the fact that the moment is of huge intensity; in the middle of September in each year, countless busses with hundreds of Hungarian tourists flow in the village. This is a moment when even the Roma are “tolerated” and invited to perform artistic shows (dance and music) for a program of total celebration, of communion, tolerance and “inter-ethnic” harmony. This latter aspect might also have a note of commodification, and it might form the elements of an image which the Magyar ethnics would like to propose to their co-ethnics across the border.

3.1. Tourism, migration and development

The implications of the tourism are not to be found just at the socio-cultural level, but at the economic level too. As shown above, the general idea is that the local people adopted tourism as a solution/economic strategy, and this influences the local/community economic development. The increasing number of accommodation determined the development of the entrepreneurship in the field of tourism or in the related fields. Thus, they passed from the ordinary accommodation in the same house (in the usual conditions of life of the hosts, the guests being seen and treated as family members once they have been accepted in the house), to accommodation in separate buildings, in increasingly better conditions, anyway different from the usual conditions of the place. These conditions appear as express demands by the tourists or as elements of host empathy. It is certain, anyhow, that the field of constructions developed; owning a boarding house became a business and the number of those wanting to own, or who already own a boarding house is increasing steadily.

¹ See Csaba 2008: 19.



Photo 1. Statue of Petőfi Sándor - Szendrey Júlia, done by sculptor Pogány Gábor Benő, unveiled in 1998, in the park from the centre of the village, near the castle.



Photo 2. The castle from Coltău



Photo 3. House turned into boarding house (right) and a new house intended exclusively for tourists (in the back).



Photo 4. Boarding house under construction.¹

Hosting tourists in own house requires a minimum of investments required to create some conditions (for instance, indoor toilet, building a kitchen or fitting a proper kitchen etc.), and the money gained from tourists are reinvested, most times in a better endowment of the house or in a new building. For instance, the husband of the host where we stood for the first week, was away in Hungary working, and when he returned they already started the work to expand the kitchen, because the old kitchen was no longer proper for the accommodation requirements. At the same time, they started a new building in the same courtyard, but didn't finish it. For this, they will need a lot of tourists and many months of work in Hungary.

The temporary migration for work in Hungary is a frequent practice in the Magyar households from Coltău: most families had or will have at least one case of migration for temporary work in Hungary (usually 1 to 3 months), generally in agriculture and/or various farms. The factors which support and influence this practice are: the Magyar

¹Photos by the author of the paper.

language and the easiness to get in a short time in Hungary. The Magyar language is the main factor determining the destination, because it is much easier for them to go to a country whose language they speak, and then the fact that there are just a few hours of travel from the village to Hungary. The financial capital obtained from these travels for work abroad is invested in the reconfiguration of the houses, in the construction of new houses or in different tourism-related endowments. In other words, those who have such (touristic) initiatives, invest almost all this capital in support of these initiatives.

Another factor which supports the temporary migration abroad is the social capital. Invariably, the contact with tourists (through whom information travel), is a source of social capital, and “the more it is used, the more it increases”, being “an important feature for the development of the local economy” (Evans & Syrett, 2007, p. 58).

3.2. Discussions

Indisputably, the Magyars from Coltău are a valuable community (language, religion, common aspirations, etc.), properly formed, solidary and which has a high social capital¹. Furthermore, the village is an oasis in the zonal-regional landscape, isolated [locally] – from the majority population (Romanians) and from the Roma population (living in proximity), but with a global opening (I mean particularly its relations with Hungary and the migratory practices). Given the strong isolation (I don't mean just the territorial isolation, but also to the social, linguistic and cultural isolation, which can be successfully translated in terms of social distance² or social closing), the locality has the characteristics of an ethnic enclave.

On the one hand, the tourism practiced in Coltău is oriented towards knowledge, cultural tourism, based not on natural factors (local resources which the local people try to commodify and sometimes they even succeed to do this), but on the motivation of getting rich and of broadening the cultural horizon; this is rather an identity travel. On the other hand, changes occur both regarding the tourists, and regarding the hosts, the phenomenon of acculturation being bilateral. Furthermore, considering that the “proximity in the social space produces automatically unity” (Bourdieu, 1999, p. 18), and the touristic practices generate proximity, and that by relating with the

¹ The social capital is understood both through its *structural* form (‘[e]mphasizing networks, organizations and linkages through which information and norms are conveyed’ (Evans & Syrett, 2007, p. 57, also see Coleman, 1988 and 1990)), and through its *cognitive* form (‘[w]hich focuses on shared norms, values, trust, attitudes and beliefs’ (idem, also see Putnam, 1993)). In other words, as long as the human capital consists of individuals, the social capital is found in their relations (Woolcock, 2001, p. 12).

¹⁶ It represents the “perceived difference between people or groups in relation with a criterion [...]” (Vlăsceanu, 1998, p. 175)

tourists – who are co-ethnics, we might say that at least the hosts – which interact most with the tourists, if not the whole Magyar community from Coltău, preserve their local identity, while concomitantly “refreshing” their ethnic identity by the contact and relations with the tourists and with the organisations which promote and support tourism in Coltău (local organisations or from Hungary). Of course, a direct consequence might be self-enclavization.

The tourism practiced in Coltău is cultural – identity, on ethnic bases, whose consequences, among other, are the preservation of the [ethnic] identity of the host and the perpetuation of the situation of enclave, after all.

4. Ethnic economy

Following the studies started in the 1970s about entrepreneurship and welfare within several minorities (Chinese, Japanese, Korean, black) from the USA, Ivan Light published, alone, or together with other researchers, several papers in which he defined the concept of “ethnic economy” as a concept having maximal relevance for the studies of sociology and economic anthropology. Undoubtedly, the theory of the “ethnic economy”, as it was proposed by Ivan Light, is one originating from empiric research, being an explanation of the reality as it was studied by the researcher within a specific context (also see the ‘grounded theory’). In other words, we may easily suppose that the theory has its limitations regarding the explanative capacity and the degree of generalization. Even though the supporters of the theory developed it by subsequent studies and completions, the fact that the initial structure proposed by Light remained, is problematic, however.

The “ethnic economy” implies invariably several elements through which it is defined. The case of the minorities from which Light started is that of immigrants [to the USA] who, using various means, and within a specific context, developed a business and/or are involved, one way or another, in a “co-ethnic” business: the “concept of «ethnic economy» refers to any ethnic group or group of self-employed immigrants, their co-ethnic employees and the members of their families” (Light & Gold, 2000, p. 9; Light & Karageorgis, 1994, p. 663, Wahlbeck, 2007, p. 545). Ivan Light (1972) explains the successful situations of some minorities and the unsuccessful situations of others regarding the activities of the ethnic economy by referring to the ethnic relations and networks. For instance, in the case of the Chinese and Japanese, these relations and networks already exist in the country of origin, being just transplanted within the new context; in the case of the Afro-Americans, these relations have been weakened or even destroyed during the period of slavery (also see Kwong, 1997, p. 365). Thus, the accent is not on the financial capital, but on the social capital which, in this case, has ethnic bases. In other words, Light considers that the drive in the ethnic economy is represented by the ethnic affiliation, seen as resources. However, this thesis of the social capital on ethnic bases has its criticisms

(see Sanders & Nee, 1987 and Portes & Jensen, 1989). Peter Kwong demonstrates, in his research on the ethnic economy practiced by the Chinese minority from the USA, that the ethnic solidarity “was constantly fabricated by the economic elite of the Chinese community in order to acquire a better control over the co-ethnic employees” (Kwong, 1997, p. 366).

Briefly, the practice of ethnic economy involves: a migrating minority (a community¹ of immigrants, or an already stable minority, or an enclavised ethnic group etc, usually in another country), within whom entrepreneurial practices develop. These entrepreneurial practices presume employee-employer (sometimes consumer² too) relations between people of the same ethnic affiliation: “the economy is ethnic because the people involved in it are co-ethnics” (Light & Karageorgis, 1994, p. 649, also see Brednikova & Pachenkov, 2000, p. 108).

5. *Ethnic economy? Economy of ethnic enclave?*

Olga Brednikova and Oleg Pachenkov, in a study of the immigrants arrived from the Caucasus area for work in Sankt Petersburg, question critically the theory of the ethnic economy, because its supporters “are not interested in the subjective factors of the immigrant’s activity. They consider that if an immigrant is Chinese (for them this is an «objective» aspect), his/her behaviour fits the behaviour of a Chinese, for instance, he or she will cooperate with other Chinese people. In the empirical research, such researchers try to find (and they usually do) only confirmations of the correctness of their suppositions” (Brednikova & Pachenkov, 2000, p. 108). Reevaluating the definition of Ivan Light, they propose an understanding which to include the subjective perspective of the ethnic group too: „our research proposes to understand the definition of the «*ethnic economy*» as an economy which *involves individuals who in a subjective and conscious manner shape their economic behaviour on the basis of their own ethnic origin, understood in a subjective manner and on the basis of the ethnic origin of the people they are cooperating with*” (idem, authors’ emphasizing). This proposition appeared in the idea that the social-economic networks which the immigrants build and use at destination may also have other causes than the ethnic origin. The conclusion of the researchers is that the “social networks of the immigrants from Caucasus to St. Petersburg, particularly those with economic character, were not at all organised according to the ethnic criterion. This implies that these social networks have not been constructed consciously by the social agents, which would shape subjectively their actions on the ethnic affiliation of those with whom they cooperated (co-ethnic people) (Brednikova & Pachenkov, 2000, p. 114).

¹ With the meaning assigned by Sandu (2005), of community of value, even if it also is a territorial community.

² For this last category, see Wahlbeck 2007.

As shown in the above pages, the village has an aspect of ethnic enclave¹. However, for a better understanding, following are some clarifications on what an enclave is. Thus, the concept of “ethnic enclave”, in the discussions about the ethnic economy, has been defined historically in many ways², taking into account, one at a time, or together, several elements such as: geography-spatiality; statistically significant ethnic composition; business or production and/or entrepreneurial activities of a person of different ethnic origin than the majority local population etc. The diversity of the used definitions has two direct effects: i) the difficulty to compare studies on the same topic and ii) it bestows the concept with a high degree of ambiguity, whose consequence is rather an abstraction of the concept within an umbrella category, than an operational multi-side clarification.

On the one hand, what happens in Coltău in terms of economic activity cannot be included in the typeset of the theory proposed by Ivan Light, because the economic actors are not within a context of immigration, of minority or enclave in a foreign space (another country). In contrast with this aspect, the population has all the characteristics of a community [of immigrants] (mutual assistance, relations based on kinship networks, lack of knowledge of the local, majority language, practicing niche economic activities³). On the other hand, if I were to put myself, somehow simplistically, on the position which states that the “economy is ethnic because its staff is co-ethnic” (Light & Karageorgis, 1994, p. 649, Brednikova & Pachenkov, 2000, p. 108), things would be simpler: yes, in Coltău, the economic practice can be labelled as an economy of ethnic enclave, because the people involved in these economic activities, are either self-employed in a business (boarding house, workshop etc.), or the employees are co-ethnic and, in any of these cases, the household members are or can be involved (see Wahlbeck, 2007, p. 545). Furthermore, even part of the consumers (the tourists from Hungary) are co-ethnic people. However, beyond these indicators, the theory of the ethnic economy presumes that the immigrants have “additional resources which are usually called «ethnic»” (Brednikova & Pachenkov, 2000, p. 108). And these resources are those which, among other, determine the economic strategies of the immigrants. The “ethnic resources” are presumed to come from the fact that the individuals, the members, have the same ethnic origin and consists in the fact that they are united,

¹ The various types of isolation that we discussed about in the above pages, determine the character of ethnic enclave of the village. However, this latter aspect doesn't imply a true reciprocal. In other words, the village, or the enclave, is not totally closed; rather, as shown, it has relations with the exterior (cultural, economic etc.). In a specific way, we might say that the locality is isolated locally, but opened globally.

² The theories on ethnic enclaves and on the hypothesis of the ethnic economy of enclave rely almost exclusively on urban studies.

³ See Kwong, 1997, p. 366.

they cooperate sharing information and developing social and economic networks on the basis of these resources.

6. Conclusions

In the first part of the paper I tried to describe what kind of tourism is practiced in Coltău village and to identify which are the social, cultural and economic levels bearing the consequences of the tourism activities. In the second part I determined the theoretical criteria for a possible classification of the type economy practiced in Coltău as “ethnic economy”.

Discussing about the type of tourism exercised in this village I developed and argued the idea that this is an identity tourism relying on the local cultural legacy and that this form of tourism involves a bivalent situation in the construction, conservation and reconfiguration of the ethnic identity: on the one hand, the tourists (mostly from Hungary, of Magyar ethnics) come to Coltău to “retrieve” or reconfirm some elements of Magyar ethnic cultural elements (fragments from the life of the national Magyar poet); on the other hand, the contact with tourists, plus a specific type of cultural commodification, helps the hosts to preserve their Magyar identity and to conserve the enclave in which they are living and in which their community develops.

I also expressed the hypothesis that also through tourism, the social capital of the hosts increases and supports the temporary migration abroad. Besides the social capital, migration has an additional determining cause: the isolation (particularly linguistic; this aspect implies the relative deprivation of the possibilities, with adverse effect on the local labour market) and the territorial proximity from Hungary.

I consider that by the commodification of the cultural legacy, the community from Coltău village adopted the tourism as a strategy for local economic change. The tourism in Coltău has implications on the whole community: economic, socio-cultural and relational by their nature; they have identity consequences both on the public space and on the individual and collective welfare. The village has the premises of a sustainable development based on tourism and agrotourism. By developing the local infrastructure and by renovating the castle, Coltău village might become a significant touristic spot not just for the Magyar population.

Although it seems improper to adopt a theory of immigration – the theories on the ethnic economy – in this case, I consider that these theories can be and need being reviewed. The definition of the ethnic economy, as proposed by Ivan Light, comes from empiric research and has limitations in terms of the degree of explanation and applicability, as also shown by other researches which, by their results, reevaluate the comprehensive and explanative capacity of this definition. At the same time, my opinion is that the theories of the ethnic economy can be applied to some rural cases and to situations such as that from Coltău.

In this situation of [ethnic] enclave, the Magyar community from Coltău, isolated despite its proximity to a large town (Baia Mare), and rather deprived (particularly in terms of the linguistic impediments, since most of its members have problems with the Romanian language, or better said they don't know the Romanian language), considered opportunely to adopt tourism as niche activity¹, by capitalising on and commodifying the cultural legacy, as single strategy for local change (development). In other words, the "local society"/community have chosen this for itself and it plays an important role "for the determination of the type of tourists which they receive and for the form of tourism they practice" (Nash, 1981, p. 462). The elements of attraction reach and target [just] a specific segment of tourists: the Magyars. It could be no other way, since the cultural legacy is of strictly identitary interest [Magyar, Hungarian].

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¹ Among other, the geographical area where Coltău village is located (south) is not part of the touristic Maramureș, and Coltău is a “hidden” and somehow “odd” touristic spot in this area.

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