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*INCLUDING THE INHABITANTS' OPTIONS IN A PROCESS OF TERRITORY
REGENERATION FOR THE VAUBAN-TYPE FORTRESS IN ALBA IULIA,
ROMANIA*

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Summary: Our study presents a methodology of including the inhabitants' options in urban regeneration, based on the direct involvement of University "1 Decembrie 1918" Alba Iulia in the sociological research on the inhabitants' options and in designing a marketing plan for the Vauban-style Fortress in Alba Iulia, not for suburbs (as urban regeneration generally refers to) but for a city centre hosting cultural and historical vestiges of world value.

Keywords:: urban regeneration, methodology, inhabitants' options, governance, integrative project



Including the Inhabitants' Options in a Process of Territory Regeneration for the Vauban-Type Fortress in Alba Iulia, Romania.

Including the inhabitants' options in regeneration processes can be generally seen as a community development action, of the type *bottom-up*, through which the needs expressed by the population of a given territory are used as a basis for urban development projects. If the city encompasses valuable sites, which can act as poles of urban growth, expressing needs becomes a more complicated process which requires a systematic and methodological effort.

From August 2007 to May 2008, the University "1 Decembrie 1918" carried out two projects at the request of the local administration in Alba Iulia, namely a sociological research and a Marketing Plan for the Vauban-style Fortress. In the case of the Vauban-type Fortress in Alba Iulia, archaeological research has brought to light the remnants of old medieval settlements and especially vestiges of the period of the Roman Empire.

As a result of its studies conducted between 2007 and 2008, the University has suggested the local administration to consider the inhabitants' options when deciding the ways in which the Vauban-style Fortress can be regenerated. Thus, the following stages have been completed: 1) discussion panels with young architects and experts in sociology that identified the main ideas which could be developed within the historical Fortress site (the project was designed as a summer camp for young urban planners and was not organized by the University), 2) experts at the University identified the possible regeneration directions of the Fortress and defined a sociological framework of investigating the inhabitants' options, 3) the opinions of inhabitants interested in the issue of regeneration were gathered (among other methods, a questionnaire with more than 400 questions was used for more than 1200 people) 4) opinions were processed and conclusions to the sociological study were drawn 5) a marketing study was carried out for the first urban regeneration project, to be funded through national or European schemes 6) an integrative project has been outlined for urban regeneration efforts, designed as a type of 'Fortress Governance' and the idea was discussed with the citizens, experts and the local administration.

Further on, we shall present this methodology and its results in the case of the Vauban Alba Iulia Fortress.

Stage 1. The discussion group with the young people experts in architecture and sociology (local people, but also foreigners attached to the town)

The first stage of integrating the inhabitants' options was done as a summer camp, where everybody worked according to a qualitative methodology. There were themes, directions, projects that were tested in the following stages. We are showing some of the working methods: the organisers put together five teams of young experts, who debated on the regeneration alternatives, talked to the local people and even suggested architectural projects. In this stage, the University's involvement was reduced only at the level of coordinating some sociological activities, of gathering the qualitative data.

Stage 2. Inventorying the possible directions of regenerating the Fortress by the experts at the University and defining a sociological context of investigating the inhabitants' options.

The initiative group at the University of Alba Iulia, formed of sociologists, economists, people working in the computer science field and historians made a pilot study in June-August 2007, through which the following needs of the population in Alba Iulia and of the local responsables regarding the touristic promotion of the Fortress were identified:

- a) At the level of the local authorities in Alba Iulia, there is a development strategy that says that tourism in the historical Fortress was declared a strategic priority. Nevertheless, there is no study of proportion that could offer a clear image on the population's options regarding the strategic importance of the touristic objectives in the town, a few years after approving and making the strategy popular.
- b) The studies done by the Sociology Department at the "1 Decembrie 1918" University between 1999-2005, at the level of Alba Iulia they showed the high interest of the citizens of this town in the touristic promotion of the monuments in town. The sociological investigations show that between 1999-2006 the citizens of Alba Iulia



manifest an increasing satisfaction regarding the development of the town, believing at the same time that the touristic resources of the town are not considered valuable enough at their potential. Projects financed by the local budget, such as *The urban camp 2007* (“the young experts”, stage 1) have succeeded in bringing into discussion some possible promotion options. The local public’s sustaining degree for the potential projects of superior quality of the historical Fortress was not known though.

The experts diagnosed that the triple historical value of the Fortress (ancient, medieval and modern), that has some architectural and historical monuments of national and international importance (The Roman Fortress with its vestiges, the bastion-like Fortress of Vauban type, the Baththaneum Library, the Roman Catholic Cathedral, the Union Museum and the Academic College, the present headquarters of the “1 Decembrie 1918” University, etc.) increase the necessity of defining a promotion strategy for the Fortress, based on the opinions of the citizens of this town. Thus, an evaluation programme of the inhabitants’ options was suggested, meant to clarify the strategic directions. In the research programme the following **objectives (the questions of the research)** were defined:

1. Which is the present state of the touristic product of the historical Fortress and which are the steps to follow in order to develop it?
2. Which is the degree of interest and possible involvement of the citizens of this town in developing the touristic product of the historical Fortress?
3. Which is the relative competitiveness of the objectives constituting the historical product (visiting, promotion preference, putting to good use)?
4. How much can the Fortress and the objectives on its land be promoted while promoting the major touristic objectives in town?
5. How informed are the citizens of Alba Iulia, where does he get tourist information on the historical Fortress, how attractive was this information according to the source type?
6. What kind of messages should be used in promoting the Fortress?
7. What major actions would be necessary for the touristic promotion strategy and who should aim at promoting the Fortress?
8. Which would be the potential involvement degree of the general population within interactive tourism offers that are characteristic to the present cultural and historical tourism?
9. Which should be the percentage of the local budget dedicated to developing and promoting sightseeing attractions in the Fortress?
10. Which would be the population’s major options regarding the lines of development for the Alba Iulia Fortress?

In order to address these objectives, a quantitative methodology focussed on two methods has been finalized and tested: diagnosis analysis of the touristic market, sociological analysis and marketing analysis of the inhabitants’ options.

Stages 3-4. Diagnosis analysis of the touristic market collecting and analyzing the opinions of the inhabitants interested in regeneration (a questionnaire with over 400 questions was used and data from 1200 people interested was collected)

The diagnosis analysis of the tourism market for the historical Fortress of Alba Iulia revealed the following:

- i. At present, the main source of request for accommodation services in the city comes from the business or conference sector. On the other hand, there are few catering services and



leisure time activities providers, which are not very diversified. Considering the diversity of foreigners visiting the city, highly qualified hotel and restaurant staff is a must, so as to meet the most demanding tastes (special menus for tourists from Italy, Germany and the Asian countries)

- ii. Specific touristic activities, touristic circuits, organized events are few if we consider the demand and the pressure of competition. Complete touristic products must be designed, which address tourists differently, depending on all the social and motivational elements characterizing them.
- iii. The main categories of touristic resources of Alba Iulia generate tourism forms such as **cultural tourism and business and conference tourism**. Most tourists visiting Alba Iulia and staying at the main hotels in the city are Romanians. However, there is a significant percentage of foreign visitors. Despite the fact that the number of tourists accommodated at the Cetate and Parc hotels in the city, and the level of indicators of tourist circulation (total number of days per tourist and the average period of stay) has a slightly decreasing tendency as compared to the previous years, the number of people visiting the Unification Museum or the Unification Hall has slightly increased during 2005 and 2006 as compared to the previous years.
- iv. With no alternative accommodation sites built, no improved quality of tourist services and classical forms of tourist offers, exceeded by the competition of modern means of attraction specific to world cultural and historical tourism, we arrive at the conclusion that there is a slight tendency to keep tourism inside the historical Fortress to short visiting forms with a lower possibility to obtain consistent profits.

Following the analysis of the data obtained from the inquiry on the inhabitants' options, the University experts have formulated a series of recommendations that the local administration has adopted and included in the Marketing Plan.

The recommendations included in the Marketing Plan were the following:

- A. The strategic development plan proposed by the citizens of Alba Iulia for the Fortress is that of **the exceptional development of cultural and historical tourism** and not of a common development. 82.8% of the citizens choose "the purpose of the area to be visiting monuments, exhibits and historical buildings", 74.5% as "an area of daily tourist attractions, by organizing many open air events in a medieval atmosphere", "50.2% as an area where conferences and cultural events could be organized" and only 24.2 % as "a trading area (grocer's, shops, etc.)" and 12% as "an area with many offices...". As a result, the recommended management structure should be able to satisfy the citizens' option for an exceptional cultural-historical product.
- B. Two important local brands are certified based on the results of the population study: *the symbolic capital of Romania* and *Original and impressive fortifications – marking many historical moments*. The proposal of the study, formulated based on the analysis of statistical correlations between the option of the supporters for the two brands one to promote and value an integrated brand synthesized as follows: **the Alba Iulia Fortress –A Romania symbolic capital with two-millennium old fortifications**. The brand has an extensive support in the case of 90% of the people investigated in the sociological inquiry, which means at least 65% of all the city's inhabitants (including the outskirts). The error for this support base is +/- 2,8% (this is the error margin for the batch). In fact, the adhesion percentage can be by at least 16 percentages higher, to a total of 81% (as not all who refused to answer the inquiry reject this brand, but 50% at the most).
- C. The citizens believe that developing and promoting the Fortress is a budget priority. Over three fourths of the citizens would approve of funds being directed towards this area (17% say that most of the budget should go there and 67% support the idea of sharing an important sum to this and other priorities).



D. The Fortress should be valued by its inclusion in well known cultural and historical tourism circuits. The promotion plan for the integrated brand of the historical Fortress should include solutions to draw foreign tourists to the well known routes (itineraries) to which the Fortress already belongs within the offer of tourism operators, for which it does not yet have a powerful marketing profile. The next marketing step is encouraging the inclusion of the Fortress into the tourism agencies' and tourism operators' plans, which promotes objectives that have similar or complementary profiles to the Fortress brand. Such a marketing method has paid spectacular results in the American-European programme "Routes to the roots", a project coordinated by *American Research Centre* and *University of Oldenburg* from Germany. The programme has mainly aimed at inviting American citizens to visit Germany, with 64 US target cities. Tourists were invited to examine the culture of the region that their ancestors had emigrated to and to study the emigration cases on site. The destination network (tourist destinations) included cities such as Rotterdam, Bremen, Hamburg, Liverpool, etc. (G. Richards; C. Bonink, 1995). Thus, we can mention several routes resulting from diagnosis analysis and from the evaluation of offers for the main tourism operators:

a. *The Romanian spirituality route* (exists in the plan of Romanian operators as the main source of Romanian tourists) includes museums, traditional churches and monasteries of Romania, in a non-structured manner;

b. *The route of the medieval German State of Transylvania* (exists in the plan of Romanian tour operators) includes objectives from medieval Transylvania: Sebeş, Sibiu, Mediaş, Sighișoara, etc.;

c. *The Latin route* (exists in the Plan of Italian and French operators, less in Romania) contains Fortresses on the itinerary of the Roman entrance in Dacia starting from the south of Danube (in Romania, another objective is found in the Orăștie Mountains);

d. *The military Christian route* (does not exist in the tour operators' plans) can address Fortresses from Hungary and Transylvania that the Austrians built to chase the Turks from Central Europe;

e. *The Jewish culture route* (the programme exists within itineraries of European Jews)¹ and can include other cities from Alba county where there are still traces of Jewish culture;

f. *Festival routes* (we have the Wine route, but we encourage other initiatives);

g. *Routes of cultural events* (in the hypothesis that open-air cultural events can be developed to cover most of the year).

E. If we want to value the Fortress, we cannot neglect the endeavour to identify witnesses of the city's multiethnic and multi-religious profile, now of the past. Among these "historical traces" we have to mention first the Germans and the Jews (practically, they no longer live in the city, but we still have traces of their culture left and they are still searched for by tourists from these countries. The proof is a constant tourist flux from Germany, Austria and Israel, as the diagnosis analysis shows). A special interest is paid to the Protestant and Catholic vestiges from the Vauban Fortress.

F. The study underlines the citizens' option in favour of a modern cultural and historical tourism creating many events in a historical ambience and by city planning in a monumental style that can draw tourists from inside and outside the country. The most important visions extracted from the citizens' options are *medieval atmosphere* (with carriages, costumes but also contemporary music events) and *historical monument planning of the Fortress* (such as a medieval tower with a panoramic view, a Roman amphitheatre or a medieval inn). The citizens claim as necessary conditions for tourism development the green space cleaning, well signalled alleys and routes, and limiting the access of cars in the area. The option for commerce aims at *the cultural-historical commerce*. Those who accept other types of commerce are in

¹ <http://www.judaica.ro/>



minority. *A real estate development of the Fortress on a modern line* is not very much accepted (offices for firms or local institutions). Opinions are different on this subject and they depend on the subjects' status.

G. In order to value the historical site, spectacular modalities were identified and put into practice (medieval costumes, permanent lightening, canon fire shots, etc). All of these, among others, which do not exist but which are desirable for citizens (holographic projections on the Fortress walls, projectors, medieval carriages) must be developed and promoted with the promotion of the Fortress, in order to attract tourists (to accompany objective presentations and add value).

H. *Vauban* is an international brand. Thus, the Development strategy of Alba Iulia proposes measures to integrate the medieval Fortress into the European Network of Vauban Fortresses. At the moment, the existing network of Vauban Fortresses contains French Fortresses² that applied for admission at UNESCO. A collaboration on the line of extending this network should have a new objective and it should be supported by concrete measures on this line. Therefore, *the organization of medieval events is agreed by most of the population*. "Vauban" does not have the same symbolic meaning as "medieval" from the viewpoints of the promotion message agreed by the citizens. **The organization within the Fortress's perimeter of a Vauban-Visconti³ area** can be a measure supporting an enriched integrated brand and it can help use the meaning of the word Vauban into the local identity.

Stage 5. Designing the Marketing plan for the first project of urban regeneration and the search for financial resources.

The main recommendations of the marketing plan approved by the municipality endorses the product strategy and the strategy for promoting the tourist offer.

The product strategy takes into consideration the release of a tourist offer, containing products and tourist tracks, an offer issued for the local market (the inhabitants of the city) but also for the national and international market.

An important component of the marketing strategy is represented by the promoting strategy of the tourist offer, which endorses the use of some promoting techniques (advertising, public relations, and attendance to tourism fairs) adequate to all categories of tourists taken into consideration.

The marketing plan was completely included in a financial project with European funds (ORP-The Operational Regional Plan). In this moment the project was declared a winner and it will have a total budget of 12 million Euros. The project will be implemented by the local administration with the collaboration of the University and by periodic consulting of the inhabitants.

Stage 6. Outlining an integrated project for the urban regeneration efforts as a "Governance of the Fortress" and its discussion with the inhabitants, the experts and the administration.

In the last stage of the integration project for the inhabitants' opinions, the University, by the help of the project team, used a quality intercession based on the interview method of return of results. Local leaders were interviewed and an integration project was sketched and it was called, temporary, (we are still in the testing stage of the local leaders' cohesion): "The Governance of the Fortress". The administration is a public private partnership, having as a

² Arras (Pas-de-Calais), Bazoches (Nièvre), Besançon (Doubs), Blaye/Cussac-Fort-Médoc (Gironde), Briançon (Hautes-Alpes), Camaret-sur-Mer (Finistère), deux ouvrages du canal du Midi (la voûte des Cammazes et l'aqueduc de la Cesse), Palais à Belle-Île-en mer (Morbihan), Longwy (Meurthe et Moselle), Mont-Dauphin (Hautes-Alpes), Mont-Louis (Pyrénées orientales) Neuf-Brisach/ Breisach-am-Rhein (Haut-Rhin et Allemagne), Saint-Martin-de-Ré (Charente-Maritime), Saint-Vaast-la-Hougue (Manche) Villefranche-de-Conflent (Pyrénées Orientales)

³ Why "Vauban-Visconti" and not "Vauban"? First of all because it would better define the architectural hallmark of the city, by expanding the reference area. Second of all, it would pay homage to the "designer" of the Fortress's architecture. Thirdly, a certain brand can only exist when there is a connection between the tourist's identity and the brand's identity. From this point of view, Italian visitors (according to the diagnosis analysis, they form the majority) would have something to identify with. This space can receive a more spectacular name which could again extend its attraction area, such as: **The imperial Vauban-Visconti area** (the aim is to make a better cultural and historical definition, to improve tourism marketing and to open to new categories of tourists).



constituent factor the local public administration to which the organizations implied in the management of the cultural-historical patrimony of the Fortress participate. Everything should be fulfilled by the help of the inhabitants, their consulting and their involvement in the processes of informing and tourist orientation. This last aspect should be planned and evaluated by the University by the help of the sociology and marketing department.

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

In the plans of the urban regeneration, they tend to limit the public involvement and the community groups (Brindley, Rydin, Stoker, 2005), no matter the used combination of the management. A formula of private management of the regeneration can reduce even more this involvement, the architectural details and the aesthetic criteria being established entirely by specialists. This thing can take to debates and conflicts. A solution can be a corporatist formula, coordinated by the local administration. The popular participation consists of implying the public too, in the small decisions from the regeneration processes, tested successfully in some cases (the Belfast situation, analyzed in Hughes, Carmichael, 1998), it necessitates a detailed organization of the public informing, based on a direct communication.

The urban regeneration processes are often stages of a larger process of urban transformation where it endorses, in the first stages, the reorganization of the urban mobility by investments in the infrastructure and the revival of some industrial areas. The regeneration of the Torino suburbs, described by Elissa Roso, a strategic plan of the city hall (2004), could not have been fulfilled but only after the forming of the networks of connection and urban integration. In other recent processes of urban transformation (for example, the case of Detroit), sports and culture are also mentioned as key elements in the reconstruction of some peripheral areas. In what concerns Alba Iulia, the particularity is that the regeneration concerns a central area, situated in the city centre, but where the level of investments in the infrastructure was low. The aspect of the area is one of a deserted suburb, where the former warehouses of the army and the catacombs used by it were overlapped with the depopulation of the area and the chaotic constructions nearby. The development of a methodology for integrating the inhabitants' options had as a consequence the elucidation of the strategy directions of the tourist product, the draw of a marketing plan for promoting the Vauban Fortress and the connected vestiges and the development of a corporative formula for the administration of the urban regeneration where the interests of the many groups are negotiated in the limits of the general directions established by the inhabitants.

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