

The Dracula Park Failure: Post-Socialist Development, Sustainability, and German Heritage

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In this piece, I trace the story of a failed development project, a Dracula theme park, near the historical town of Sighișoara, in southeast Transylvania, Romania. I argue that what put the project in the grave for good was the ability and power of its opponents to publicly reformulate what was essentially a controversy about development into one about heritage. The struggle was, then, to draw convincing connections between the park — on a forested plateau outside the town — and the historical citadel, and to make historical heritage of a particular kind (German) the main reference in the controversy.

Introduction

I have the deepest respect for Mrs. S. She was the kind of local character that puzzles and demands admiration. A housewife in her mid 70s, smart, socially active, and reading German philosophy, in German, for fun. Every time I went to pay the rent, we talked about all sorts of interesting things—she would be the anthropologist, asking questions, then telling the stories herself, and theorizing aloud. I would lazily agree to being questioned about what *I* thought about the issues that *I* was interested in, knowing that Mrs. S. would eventually sum it up for me, as she saw it. She told me this particular story twice. One of her sons, very opinionated, smart, and now living in Germany, was against the Dracula Park project. He thought it would have been a disaster for the town. Mrs. S. thought of it the same—except that she thought that it should have been built. She remembers the fights she had with him on this topic, not because she wanted the project to happen, but because she just didn't think this was the way for decisions to be made. How could a minority (less than 5% of the town's population) that was opposing the project impose its vision on the rest of the town? "I thought we left this behind," she said, "in 1989. This is communism; where is the democracy, when a minority decides for the rest? If most people wanted the park, granted it was a stupid idea, why didn't they get it?" Mrs. S., half Saxon and married to a Saxon, was slightly bitter about the arrogance of some who—just like her son—have left the country for a better life and insist on sporadically mingling in its affairs. She didn't think that any outsiders, either, should decide for the people of the town. "We all need to learn from our own mistakes," she said.

Just like Mrs. S., I am curious about how a project with so much political and financial support at both the local and national levels was able to fade into a silent failure in little over a year. My curiosity, though, questions this very support and seeks to understand it as well as the very possibility for the project to be imagined and the emotional force with which it was pursued and opposed.

The Town

Sighișoara is a town of about 30,000, nested among the hills of southeast Transylvania, Romania. Historical accounts of its inception as an urban settlement go back to the twelfth century Saxon colonists that settled most of the region (now known as the "Saxon Thriangle"). The Saxon community developed and

controlled the town, its craft production, and also the trade passing through the area. They benefited from economic and political privileges which they slowly lost in the nineteenth century, with the reorganization of the Habsburg Empire (which was ruling Transylvania at the time), leaving behind a historical citadel, now included on UNESCO's World Heritage List (Baltag 2004; Machat 2002).

The 1918 incorporation of Transylvania into the Romanian state opened new markets for the town industry, resulting in further economic and demographic growth. The Saxon population of Sighișoara formed the majority until the 1930s, when they were surpassed by Romanians coming from nearby villages. The Second World War proved disastrous for the local Saxons, many of them participating in the war on the German side, and many of those fortunate enough to return being deported to Siberia for the years after the war (Baltag 2004).

The socialist period meant, for Sighișoara, profound transformations. Much of the residential, commercial, and industrial property of the town—Saxon in its majority—was nationalized. The industry was forcefully developed by extending the nationalized factories and workshops and creating new ones, in particular for textile and ceramics related activities. This economic development was sustained by massive in-migrations from both neighboring villages as well as other regions of Romania, to the extent that Sighișoara almost tripled in size in fifty years, to today's population of over 32,000. The ethnic balance was also severely tipped towards Romanians, which now account for 78% of the population (the rest, 18% Hungarian, 2% Romani, and 2% German/Saxon).¹ The Romanian and Hungarian in-migration was paralleled by the massive emigration of the local Saxons, leaving for Western Germany under a special accord, practically being sold by the Romanian state to a Germany economically booming and hungry for labor (Wagner 2000). Those who were not able to leave before 1989 left in the early 1990s, leaving the current German population at less than 700.

Sighișoara's post-1989 trajectory is not all that different from that of many middle-sized towns in Romania: a pronounced recession following the dismantling of the state-owned and planned economy, and a shy, but insistent re-orientation towards a locally-bred, and foreign (i.e. IMF, World-Bank, and EU) inspired version of capitalism. Many of the factories closed down, went bankrupt, or reduced their activity, with massive layoffs. In the mid 1990s, Italian entrepreneurs took advantage of the cheap, well-trained workforce and opened textile sweatshops, which closed down once Chinese exports made them no longer competitive. Many people from Sighișoara chose to work (illegally, mostly) in various countries in Western Europe, returning home every few months to visit their families and rest. Tourist development took off with a serene insistence: houses (both in the historical center and outside it) being transformed into bed and breakfasts or *pensiuni*, and five larger hotels being built in and around Sighișoara. In 1999, the historical center of Sighișoara—along with several Saxon fortified churches in the area—was included on UNESCO's World Heritage List. A larger section of the town, as well as isolated constructions outside the historical center, were declared in 2004 protected historical monuments by the Romanian government.²

The project

In early 2001, the Romanian government quietly announced that it was looking for a location and partners to build a Dracula theme park. Like other projects of the Tourism Minister at the time, the park idea was received with a mix of measured distrust and hopeful curiosity.

Five locations announced their interest, claiming rights via direct connections to Bram Stoker's character or to the Vlad Țepeș/Vlad Dracul historical figures: Tihuța-Colibița (Bistrița), Târgoviște, Cetatea Poienari (Argeș), Sighișoara, and Bran. They were to be evaluated in terms of transportation access, architectural heritage, and the contribution of the local community. The decision was made as quietly as the announcement was, and some of the people I talked to claim to remember rumors that Sighișoara would be chosen as a location, long before the decision was announced—as early as the spring of 2001. One in particular—an informant who would later get involved in the controversy—remembers March 2001 discussions in the local council as if Sighișoara had already been chosen.

Indeed, on July 6th 2001, the Romanian government published an ordinance (*Ordonanța de Guvern*) “regarding the adoption and implementation of the special tourist development program for the Sighișoara area,” which explicitly indicated Sighișoara as the winner of the bidding. The law and the project brought together six different governmental departments, showing the weight and importance that the government at the time placed on the park.

Rumors (both contemporary and retrospective) explained Sighișoara's success through political connections between the Minister of Tourism (Dan Matei Agathon), one of his political allies (Miron Mitrea), and Sighișoara's mayor (Dorin Dăneșan). These connections, real or imagined, would play a major role in framing the project controversy on a national level and getting the national press involved in it. Other people suggested that the park was part of an older project, and it was connected to the future construction of a highway in the area. A couple of years before the Dracula Park was even announced as a project, local and well-connected investors bought tracts of land which they were hoping to later sell to the state at a profit.

Dracula Park was going to be built on a plateau called Breite, less than a mile (as the crow flies) from the citadel. Breite was presented as an empty, undeveloped space, a grassy area surrounded by a forest and partly populated by solitary oak trees. The plateau was used for grazing—most of it illegal—and as a weekend hangout for people from Sighișoara. Part of the plateau had been declared a protected area a few years back, but this was not public knowledge at the time. The land, owned by the City Council, had no infrastructure apart from a dirt road. However, as later rumors pointed out, Breite was surrounded by land that could be developed into much desired housing, provided that it had the infrastructure. Some of the people involved in the project were said to have bought land for this very purpose. The forest administration authority owned some part of the hill (adjacent to the proposed site), and the county Environmental Protection Agency had some jurisdiction over the area, which required the builders to file for approval from the agency before starting building.

A brief chronology

On July 6, the Romanian government issued the ordinance that created the needed administrative and legal structures for the launching of the Dracula Park project.³ Less than a month after the project was announced, several articles authored by members of the local German Evangelical clergy appeared in the local Romanian press (*Jurnalul Sighișoara Reporter*, abbreviated from now on as *JSR*) and the main German language paper in Romania (*ADZ für Rumänien*⁴). It was one of the few times I saw members of the local German community explicitly asserting their heritage rights over Sighișoara and connecting them with other kinds of political rights over the town and the region. Several other people published articles in the local newspaper (*JSR*): one local German artist and educator, protesting the park on terms that highlighted the danger it would pose over the built heritage in town, and a Romanian, who would later get involved in the local environmental rights movement. These and others would later form a rather unlikely coalition (very ethnically and religiously heterogeneous), officially registered as an NGO called *Sighișoara Durabilă*,⁵ which fought against the park locally and helped attract national and international attention. The spur of public protests, visible in *JSR*, was short lived and rather isolated. The newspaper was flooded by gratulatory and overly hopeful articles and official declarations that, as one informant put it, “promised that milk and honey would flow, and no Sighișorean would ever have to work again.”

Over the next couple of months, the protesting articles in the local newspaper became rarer and rarer. One informant involved in the protest explained it as a result of a search for new strategies: trying to raise public awareness through isolated and individual efforts didn’t seem to be working, so they were more interested in reaching out to those already against the project and building a protest from there. Another informant explained the dwindling presence of protests in the local press (and their subsequent disappearance, deeper into the controversy) by pointing out business and political connections between, on the one hand, the owner of the newspaper, Bașa, and the local council/the city hall on the other. Later in the fall, the city hall became the newspaper’s largest advertiser (with ads for the project), and it was also public knowledge that the Bașa’s communication businesses (and the long lasting local monopoly of its TV and internet cable company) were somewhat dependent on the local council’s benevolence. Echoing these censorship accusations, another informant laughed at my rather thick pile of news clippings with protests against the project: “they might look like a lot to you, but you can’t tell the censorship from that—you can’t see what never got published.”

One of the journalists working for *JSR* at the time recounted how, although he was opposing the project, he slowly gave up trying to make his opinion known through the paper. Instead, he wrote articles that he would just hand to journalists working for national and international publications. He did all the investigative work and let the journalists verify the information, write it up in their own language, and take the credit.



The Breite plateau: the area where the amusement park part of the theme park was going to be placed.



The Breite plateau (in the back, to the left). The citadel hill is in the middle.

I didn't even bother, anyway, once the international newspapers started publishing materials about this, *JSR* didn't matter anymore, and this is what we did, trying to prevent important investors to come, with lots of money, so the project was hit in its main point, money, there was no money to build the project. Clearly... I worked here, I got all the information here, and it was taken further by the press, so when they went to trade fairs [to raise investing money], those people were already informed. So there was no use telling them beautiful stories with Dracula, jobs, and gains, they were already informed.

He added that, when he really wanted to make his opinion known, he would just write an article that had a double reading in it, visible once the readers knew who authored the article:

So I couldn't write anymore, and everybody saw that I couldn't, but I would comment how I could. For example, I wrote a nice article about Saint Stephen, for his day, he was the first Christian martyr. And that's where I had the courage to comment on the Christian courage, you know... [laughs]... what Christian courage really means. So, the article was well received by both priests and laypeople, but I felt that they already knew I wasn't allowed to write about Dracula, so behind every sentence, there was this image, just like during the communism, behind every word, every poem, song, a second meaning was created... that's why someone would say this, because he is against this other thing, that's how it was, people read for a second... between the lines, and they understood.

On October 21, the annual meeting of the Schäßburg (Sighișoara's German name) Saxons⁶ took place in Sighișoara, at the German high school on the top of the hill. The meeting turned into a protest led by the German Evangelical church and was reflected with (real or feigned) surprise in the local press: "Considering the opportunities presented by the project's proponents (jobs, revitalizing the regional tourism, increasing the quality of life, restoring the historical citadel), the protest came as a shock, especially for the national media present at the meeting."⁷ The national media present at the meeting didn't seem to take the protest all that seriously, either; the titles were, at best, ironic: "The Church rises against Dracula Land. The Evangelicals more Catholic than the Pope" (*Evenimentul Zilei*), "A blow in the chest for tourism: because they're afraid of the Satanists' invasion, hundreds of Sighișoreni protest against the building of Dracula Land" (*Național*).

Agathon sent a message for the Saxons, read to the restless crowd by Dăneșan, the mayor. The message started with a brief introduction of the project as something larger than just the park and the special attention afforded to the "German ethnic and cultural element," which had been, Agathon insisted, the decisive reason for choosing the current position. About three quarters of the message took the rather risky route of addressing "some tendencies regarding the creations of suspicions around the project," a route still remembered by some of the local Germans that I talked to as an indirect threat addressed to them. The main source identified in the speech was *Mihai Eminescu Trust*, a London based foundation that has been interested and active in the area since the 1980s. Agathon responded briefly to all the issues raised by the project's opponents by pointing

out how they were either untrue or unfounded, and closed the address with a menacing tone that reflected the changing attitude of the project's proponents towards the 'German element' from a taken-for-granted ally to a possible and dangerous threat:

I am informing you about all these, because we know the fact that these pieces of information are pushed forth from dark hidden zones whose purpose is compromising the project's actions and undermining our participation on the investment market. I ask you not to fall into this trap, I ask you to help this project with all the means at your disposal.⁸

Another article published the same week in a regional newspaper⁹ reproduced some of the letter word for word and focused on the enemies of the project, which, according to the authors of the article, have international connections and ambitions to turn the controversy into an international one, and which have now the attention of *SIE* (*Serviciul de Informații Externe*, which is the Romanian agency for collecting international intelligence). The *SIE* reference was immediately picked up by both supporters and protesters and brought up again and again as proof of an international conspiracy and governmental oppression, respectively. Regardless of the fact that it was true or not, it is remembered as one of the dark *real* facts about that period in the history of the town, and it is a sign of the intensity and the sincere paranoia that were taking over the entire town. One of the main opponents of the park told me that he is convinced he was under phone and direct surveillance, and that people in his life (family, friends, co-workers) had been approached by strangers asking questions about him and his involvement in the protests. They could have been journalists, but, he insisted, they could have been *SRI* officers (*Serviciul Român de Informații*, the Romanian internal intelligence agency). This article was also one of the first ones in which those who opposed the project locally were directly accused and threatened. Following the language of the time (remember, this is October 2001), they called the local German clergy "Talibans" and accused them of trying to undermine the Romanian government.

Another man to whom I talked, who also opposed the project, told me that in preparation for this interview, he read over the journal that he kept during the events. He was surprised to remember that he only wrote down general facts—no names, no dates, nothing specific about who he talked to and about what:

I didn't write in my journal because I was afraid to leave any traces, because I was seeing so many people, and I didn't know many of them, they could just make me into a public enemy, they could come, search my house, see what they can find... and they take me and say I am a spy, that I met with so and so, look, who he came with, so, I was meeting all kinds of people, but I didn't actually know what they were, I later found out about one that was a secret service officer.

Within a week or so, the mayor's and the project proponents' attitude changed dramatically to an aggressive anxiety fueled by the fear that the financing of the project would become uncertain. By then, it had been decided that the majority

of the capital would be raised through the public sale of shares in a company established through a public-private partnership, with the local council contributing mainly the land, the national government financing some of the basic infrastructure (22 billion lei for roads and 2 billion lei for water¹⁰), and other companies getting involved through direct investments and exclusive contracts. Dăneșan, the mayor, published a position paper in *JSR*,¹¹ aggressively addressing the protesters, accusing them of “ill-will that makes [him] think of particular malevolent interests”:

I would ask the German ethnics [which have emigrated from Romania years ago] that come to Sighișoara every now and then for vacation and to make an inventory of what got broken and what still stands—what and how much have they done so that this town would not die? Coming from Germany and exchanging their Deutsch Marks into Romanian lei, of course they can have a wonderful vacation here... Of course they can afford to critique and offer their opinions on this and that without even trying to really know the problems. Then they leave and work in a capitalist society and live by the rules of that society... But what is the life of those that stayed and live their everyday life with Romanian money—and hope for a better life for their families? For those graduates that want to have a future in their own country, in their own profession, instead of having to do the work that Westerners wouldn't do because it is considered debasing?

He went on to accuse Alexandru Goța (who had been opposing the project on environmental grounds) of having done nothing for Breite before the project was announced, and to mock Hans Bruno Fröhlich (the head of the German Evangelical Church in Sighișoara) for fearing Satan's involvement in the project (when Fröhlich's arguments were wider than just religious concerns). Dăneșan pointed out that the high ranking Romanian Orthodox clergy that he had talked to reassured him of the Church's support of the project, since the faithful need not only “the spiritual food that the Church gives to them, but also material support and good living conditions so that they can raise their children with dignity.”

The Romanian Orthodox Church had actually been reluctant to officially endorse or condemn the project—both options looked too risky. Individual representatives of the Church, though, including the local head, offered their public support for the project, justifying it as supporting the right of the people for a better life. The local head (“Protopopul Dan”) even blessed the project once it was officially launched in a ceremony in November 2001; some people suggested that he was a good friend of the mayor, and that they had known each other since they were very young.

Some of the most acerbic local opposition was born out of the disappointment with the Church's position and a profound feeling of betrayal. Granted, it was an intense period for everybody, supporters of the project and opponents of it, and their perhaps mild attitudes were quickly polarized and blown out of scale by the intensity of the events. For many, it seemed like they had reached a crucial, a defining moment of their existence, from which *the rest of their lives* would be decided, in very final and consequential ways. It was going to be long-promised and desired prosperity, or it was going to be cruelly taken away; it was

going to be the destruction and defacement of the town, or its dignified future. Talking about the religious dimension of the park controversy had the same tremor and intensity attached to it. For Mihai, a religious studies student, on his way to becoming an Orthodox priest, deciding what course to take—against or for—was connected to the very core of his faith. He opposed the project publicly and got involved with the *Sighișoara Durabilă* group, but felt hurt by his own church's reluctance to condemn the project.

At one point, I was under such a pressure, already, I didn't feel encouraged by the encouragements of my own friends, they didn't help me anymore, you know? I was, somewhere, in my own world, under a constant pressure, and I refused to even talk to my mother about this [...] I was too pressured and psychically consumed. At one point, JH suggested that all of us that were against should light a candle and place it in the window, it was right before Christmas, in 2001, November-December. And I lit it every day, and people knew, I put it in the window, right by the street, and whoever walked by, saw the candle in the window. [...] It was a question of courage. [...]

One time, I had a very hard day. I had just written an article, and there was a lot of discussion, and many noticed and were upset, “are you saying that we are all stupid?” Some people were calling me up on the phone, and I didn't know anymore, I felt isolated, and I thought about it...I think I am against my own church. I need to stop before I become a heretic. Because, if I am alone, and everybody else is against me, I think I have a problem... I am not supported, I can't see one sign that someone appreciates what I am doing [...] Even my friends would say, “what about your future, they won't let you become a priest anymore, it's good that you have courage, but...” sometimes I could feel it in their voice. [...] And, that day I was completely turned inside-out, and I said, I will pray to God to give me a sign, should I go on or should I not... (laughs nervously)...I have never done that before, to ask God for a sign, so I prayed for a half an hour, and I stayed home, and ... the phone rang...

He stops, and hesitates. After a while, tears are flooding his cheeks. He asks me if we could take a break, and I turn the tape recorder off. After a few minutes of silence, he starts again and motions to me that I can turn the recorder back on. He apologizes and continues, telling me about a teacher in town that called him up to thank him for taking the stand he took, even though the priests in town supported the park.

...I didn't even know what to say, and that's when I felt, something like a strength, yes, this is the sign I was waiting for, anything can happen now... if I have this one more person next to me, it's ok (laughs), somebody that would be honest. That's all I needed. And, after that, all my depression was gone.

He and two other people asked for an audience with the Patriarch of the Church and published articles in the main national religious publication, *Viața Cultelor*.¹² The patriarch didn't see them, but they did get an audience with one of his vicars. They used the opportunity to relay to him as much information as they could about the project. Towards the end of the controversy, the Romanian Orthodox Church, still reluctant to oppose the project, issued an official statement in which it condemned the choice of the name “Dracula,” while supporting any “idea that would bring material wellbeing to this people.”¹³

The end of October and the beginning of November turned out to be the moment when the controversy picked up steam and spread beyond the town: the project was officially launched on November 5, 2001, with a projected IPO (for December) for the company that was to own and manage the project. The sale was intended to raise 155 billion lei (approximately 5 million USD at the time) by February 15, 2002, but the deadline had to be changed twice due to low sales. By the final deadline, April 3, only 60% of the money had been raised, despite the heavy promotion by various government officials. I met very few local people who bought (or admitted to having bought) shares, and the reason seems to have been not the lack of confidence in the project, but rather the lack of money. Few thought they would benefit through direct profits since the amounts they could invest were so small, and rather, they expected the development project to boost the local economy and benefit them indirectly.

The national sale of the shares as well as the open involvement of several governmental officials in the project were used as proof that the project was, really, a political one, as the supporters seemed to all be part of or connected to the majority party at the time, Partidul Social Democrat (PSD). The first national voices—journalists and political figures based in Bucharest—criticized the project as PSD’s attempt to extract resources from the state (through financing the project directly or contributing with land and resources) and from the people (comparisons were made with pyramid schemes¹⁴ or a large investment scam, FNI¹⁵) in order to consolidate their pre-1989 inherited power. Indeed, a government’s ordinance early in 2002 (*Ordonanța Guvernamentală nr.16/2002*) rewrote the contract rules for companies considered public-private partnerships: contracts no longer had to be transparent and awarded through public bidding; the law also opened the way for expropriations (only allowed for public interest projects) to eventually pass into private hands.¹⁶ Regardless of the intentions and achievements of the ruling party at the time of this project, the Dracula Park controversy thus became initially framed, at the national level, as one between supporters and opponents of PSD. This offered fertile possibilities of intervention for social actors that otherwise could barely claim an interest in the project. The major papers in the country started running articles criticizing the project mainly through its PSD affiliations, but also accepted articles from local protesters who framed the project in terms of its impact on the environment or the built heritage. Some members or sympathizers of the opposition parties also made public declarations or authored articles in several large newspapers.

Liga Pro Europa,¹⁷ an NGO based in Târgu Mureș that worked in the field of ethnic rights but extended its activity to more general “civil society” issues, also got involved in the controversy in November by publishing a statement by Hermann Fabini in their official newsletter. They extended their involvement later by joining other NGOs involved in the conflict, drafting and publishing official statements signed by various personalities, and organizing an “SOS Sighișoara” meeting on March 21st, in Sighișoara. They were followed by *Grupul pentru Dialog Social (GDS)*, an NGO regularly involved—mainly on the side of the right and center-right opposition—in actions that supported political freedom and the

freedom of speech. *GDS* organized, on February 20, 2002, a mini-conference that brought together a diverse group of organizations fighting the project.

Once the project came to be discursively framed as a political dispute, its proponents immediately started to explain its opposition precisely in these terms, with the help of newspapers and journalists that were politically on their side or just interested in keeping the controversy alive. Those that were opposing the project, the proponents said, were part of a conspiracy led by the main opposition party, who was trying to move the project to the Brașov area, at Bran, in one of the locations considered initially. Rumors had it that members of the opposition—who were controlling the Brașov county—had bought land in the area where the park would have been built, and were hoping to use the park funds to develop the area in their own interest. The tension exploded when, in a televised debate about the park, two opposition (*PNL*) senators and one *PNL* Brașov representative presented the advantages of the Brașov location, and Marius Stoian (the representative of the Ministry of Tourism) threatened one of them by promising to reveal a file with information collected about him by *SRI*, the Romanian secret services. One of the senators, Hermann Fabini, originally from Sighișoara and an accomplished architect and architectural historian, was targeted repeatedly in the press through direct declarations and innuendos.¹⁸

On November 13, the Romanian government also organized a press conference in London, meant to attract both direct investments and the attention of major tourist agencies. As reported by Jessica Douglas-Home, president of *Mihai Eminescu Trust* (involved in the area around Sighișoara), those that participated in the conference were not impressed: they indicated that what Romania needs in terms of tourism development is not a Disneyland in an out-of-the-way spot, but investments in the basic infrastructure.¹⁹ Agathon was enthusiastic about the meeting and declared upon his return that three large companies were interested in the project, a fact later disproved by journalists writing for the *Bucharest Business Week* and quoted by Douglas-Home. The investors were not the only thing Agathon seemed to have lied about: he also suggested that UNESCO not only agreed with the project, but also congratulated the Romanian government on its initiative.

By February 2002, the controversy had attracted national and international attention. In February, March, and April, one of the main Romanian daily newspapers, *România Liberă*, ran an almost daily series about the project, publishing articles written by local protesters from Sighișoara, Romanian and foreign specialists in heritage protection, history, and environmental rights, and representatives of local, national, and international NGOs. Douglas-Home used her connections and influence in the UK and authored articles in several large English language publications, and also managed to attract the interest of Prince Charles—the honorary patron of the NGO she was leading—to get involved directly in the controversy. He declared his intention to visit Sighișoara, which he did, between May 3 and 6.

At the December meeting in Helsinki, UNESCO’s World Heritage Commission expressed its interest in the situation, and at the recommendation of ICO-

MOS it suggested that the state consider other sites for the building of the park, promising to send representatives to examine the issue on the ground. The visit, on March 25, 2002, was one of the most memorable moments of the controversy for many involved in the event, especially the members of *Sighișoara Durabilă*, who staged a mini-demonstration in both the citadel and on Breite, where the park was to be built. The confrontation on Breite turned into a humorous little war, with the authorities making the hired guards attack a supposed journalist—who turned out to be an UNESCO official—and confiscate his camera. At the twenty-sixth meeting of the UNESCO World Heritage committee in Budapest, in late June 2002, the Commission expressed its relief at the news that the project site was to be moved and urged the Romanian state not to place any amusement park in the vicinity of the World Heritage sites²⁰ in Transylvania.²¹

Following UNESCO's visit and recommendations, Michel Rocard, the president of the Cultural Commission of the European Parliament, addressed a letter to all the Romanian officials involved in the project, requesting them to stop any work on the park until UNESCO's World Heritage Committee meeting in Budapest.

Both *Mihai Eminescu Trust* and *Sighișoara Durabilă* were somewhat responsible for extending the scope of the controversy beyond the edges of the town: *MET* through its many international and national connections and *SD* by providing a local point of reference that many outside protesters were able to reference as “the local voice.”

SD was a rather small organization born, in fall 2001, through the instrumental association of several people who were opposing the project for a diverse array of reasons. The local opposition was, actually, a minority, as my discussions with the locals and a government-sponsored survey showed. (According to the survey, nine out of ten people supported the project.²²) Initially, the *SD* members were not very well connected, except the German clergy, who had connections with the larger local and diasporic German community, as well as German NGOs and governmental organizations. Once the controversy took on a national scope, *SD* was able to leverage its “local voice” position and access public forums and actors that would have otherwise been out of reach. Two of the *SD* members were able to participate in an early BBC report on the project, and many of them have contributed articles—rather redundant in content—to local and national publications. The name of the organization was included on most of the public statements against the project, and *SD* was present at both roundtable discussions/conferences organized by *Liga Pro Europa* and *Grupul pentru Dialog Social*.

By spring 2002, it was getting more and more obvious that the project actually had little chances of succeeding. The pompous and hopeful declarations of the various governmental officials involved in the project, all the promises and quite daring lies had begun to wear off. The IPO did not bring the expected results—only 60% of the shares were sold. As expected, the short period of research and planning was seen as a reason for distrust, and, a couple of months into the project, the inexperienced manager (a former journalist) stepped down

and was replaced. The project would have required an impressive set of authorizations and approvals from local, regional, and national governmental agencies, with extensive application processes and long waits. In February 2002, the project was already behind its deadlines: none of the twenty-two authorizations needed by that date had even been applied for.²³ The Mureș county Agency for Environmental Protection (*Agenția pentru Protecția Mediului*) kept putting off giving a definitive answer and finally refused its approval of the project on the grounds that Breite was a protected area. The minister's and the mayor's enthusiasm turned, around this time, into bitterness and occasional hysteria, making public statements about the international conspiracy that was preventing the project from taking place. UNESCO's worries about the danger to the built heritage in town were voiced in a final recommendation not to build the park near the Saxon churches region (100 km south and west of Sighișoara) and paralyzed all the remaining traces of desire for involvement in the project. By mid-summer 2002, no voices—not even local—were enthusiastic about the project anymore. In February 2003, Agathon declared that Romania, indeed, does not have the financial and intellectual resources to deal with such a large project, and therefore he had commissioned Pricewaterhouse Coopers to do another feasibility study. PwC's recommendations were, first of all, to move the project to a site that had better infrastructure and was more easily accessible. Snagov was chosen as the new site, without the project everbeing implemented.

As I heard them over and over, the rumors about the real reason for the project's abandonment—at its Sighișoara site—were that Prince Charles called the Romanian president, Ion Iliescu, on the phone and told him to put a stop to the project. The conversation apparently did take place,²⁴ and nobody really knows what was said. As the rumors have it, all the other reasons, in particular the new feasibility study, were presented to the public just so that the real reason wouldn't become known. So, many people jokingly agreed, the government was right—an international conspiracy did stop the project.

Germanness, developmental imaginaries, and local realities

At the July 8, 2001 press conference, Agathon justified Sighișoara's choice by invoking five sets of reasons that were organized, surprisingly, not around the town's fit with the Dracula theme, but around its historical and contemporary German connections, as well as the local community's (i.e. City Hall's) willingness to contribute to the project materially and through a lax and benevolent economic and political environment. The language and the content of his justification seemed to have anticipated future criticisms of the project, mainly that of misuse of the German heritage, and of poor planning and management (for which the Romanian government was notorious). Attempting to court the domestic and diasporic German community or anyone who would worry about it, in a language that echoed the jargon of various international financial institutions that have used Romania as a playground for the past ten years, Agathon expressed his concern for the fate of Sighișoara as a World Heritage site and the only Germanic inhabited medieval citadel in Europe. “Without a sustained effort to rehabilitate and revitalize it,”

he said, “Sighișoara will be—according to UNESCO’s experts—completely destroyed in the next fifty years,” implying that the project would somehow help the preservation of the historical citadel. Invoking feasibility studies done by the “National Institute for Research and Development in Tourism” or commissioned by the Sighișoara City Hall (and completed by Balzer Continental Inc., from the US), as well as the willing contribution of the city in the form of financing more studies, offering the land, and attracting investors, Agathon concluded that Sighișoara would be the most desirable and efficient solution due to its geographical position and economic potential.

What really made Sighișoara most desirable was, to quote Agathon, “the political potential of the ‘Germanic’ space between Sighișoara, Mediaș, and Sibiu for developing projects by involving the German community and with the support of the German government, the government of the Bavarian Land, through direct and indirect investments, and with the explicit support of the Democratic Forum of Germans in Romania.” Agathon also pointed out that “[t]he target market for the Dracula Land project is, first of all, German, and this is why its concept follows the German line.”²⁵ The Germans are the majority of the tourists sent all over Europe by companies like Condor & Neckerman, ITS, and TUI. The park would be modeled after “Westernstadt Pullman City,” a Western-themed amusement park in Germany, and the Romanian government was “very close” to signing a contract with the company operating it. Agathon also boasted that the prestigious German company Siemens would be in charge of developing the infrastructure for the park.

The German mentions were in part preemptive, if misguided, gestures of goodwill towards the local and diasporic German communities, signaling to them that they had been included in the project and that the project was designed with *them* in mind. But, what this German innuendo was mainly doing, I would argue, was sketching and accessing an imaginary—let’s call it modern or developmental—where Romanian hopes for a Western future and a Western prosperity have been settling for decades. Agathon’s rendering of the project—and it wasn’t just his personal vision—was brushing against the German tips of this landscape of desire and hope: the German work ethic, seriousness, and success, German prosperity and its promise of sharing and spilling over into our needy pockets. The German referent was probably one of the most credible and well contoured of the many invoked by this imaginary, thanks to the lingering memory of all the émigrés and the streams of packages flowing back into the country before 1989. Germany had been a concrete, real sign of the West, a credible proof of its existence and success, but a sign nevertheless, and a sign of a remote reality, at that. Agathon made the mistake of trying to do more than just reference it; he tried to make it material, to promise its perfect replication through a hyperbolic project that would bring to Sighișoara—he declared—a million tourists a year, would eventually create 6000 local jobs, and would total 18 million euros worth of direct investments and 20 million euros in indirect investments. A project made for Germans and by Germans, after a German model, would not fail. This was what we all had been waiting for.

I called this a developmental imaginary when there were probably more, centered in different places and in different kinds of ethnic, classed, and geographic subjectivities. Some of the people to whom I talked, even though they supported and believed in the project, admitted to being unsettled by Agathon’s foolish invoking of German references that to them seemed to match his inability to see from the same place as the locals. A southerner and a *bucureștean* (from Bucharest), he was prone to misunderstandings and insensitivity to the local situation, in the same way other *regățeni* (from the ‘Kingdom,’ outside Transylvania) would attempt to inhabit local anti-Hungarian subjectivities. The same Romanians that told chauvinistic jokes and expressed negative feelings toward their Hungarian fellows would feel profoundly insulted when a *regățean* complained about being spoken to in Hungarian by a store keeper or seeing too many Hungarian language public signs and inscriptions. Hungarian and German connections—chauvinism or desire—were, to some degree, seen as local rights.

When the project was officially launched on November 5, 2001, Agathon held a speech in which he addressed fears of southern colonization of the area. By now, the murmur on the street was already that rich *bucureșteni* were buying houses in the citadel and were going to transform it into a ghost town where they would come back to spend several days a year. The myth of the rich and unsophisticated *bucureștean* surfaced every now and then while I was present there for fieldwork, especially when people had to explain cars crookedly parked in the citadel, rude customers, and women struggling to walk in high heels on the citadel’s broken cobblestone streets. So Agathon felt it was important to melt some of these fears, which threatened to feed a local opposition to the project. “These jobs will not be taken by *bucureșteni*, and the *bucureșteni* will not buy the citadel, and the prices in Sighișoara will not explode. (...) the twelve million dollars a year ... will not go to Bucharest.” Referencing the will of the locals backing the project, he continued, “I don’t want to impose this project on you by force, from my office in Bucharest.”²⁶

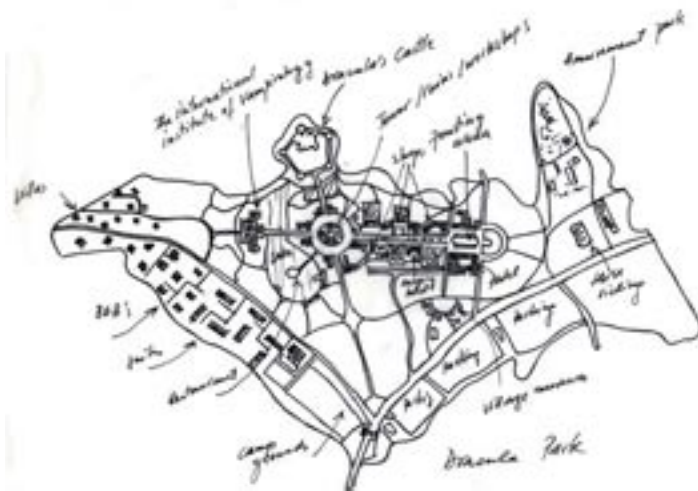
As soon as it was clear that the strongest opposition to the project came from the local and diasporic German community, the German dimension of the project faded and made room to a generic Western image of prosperity, along the same lines and with the same contours: the management/financial jargon of projects and projections, the promise of a Western prosperity that was gullible, obsessed with consumption, and ready to spill into a generic local pocket. This transition, paralleled by an increased local faith in the project, was also connected to the increased leadership role that the local mayor, Ioan Dorin Dăneșan, took in the project. His involvement—with its guarantees of vision from the inside—and his large, if inert, electoral base helped the local population take moral and emotional ownership over the project. Several months into the story, Dracula Park would turn into Dăneșan’s personal crusade. The friends and enemies made along the way still structure the local political arena, and Dăneșan still decries nostalgically the opportunities lost with the death of the project, pointing occasional fingers at local NGOs, Prince Charles, and an undefined international conspiracy.

The park

I look at the plan and the vision of the park as a kind of hopeful snapshot of this imaginary. The plan was ambitious and surprisingly precise. Well into the controversy, the local business community (owners of hotels, restaurants, and bars, as well as the main print shop and the TV/cable company) published two maps of Sighișoara that included the park as if it had already been built. One of them also included a detailed map of the park itself, utopic in its colored, beautiful computer-designed layout, with straight lines, perfect circles, and nothing left unsolved. I look at the map now and I can't blame anybody for the pleasure of taking the park all in, like some make-believe fantasy world that could be brought into reality. A new town, built from the ground up, better than anything present, anything real.

The park was designed around a core that paralleled the concept of most parks, with a main street flanked by stores, restaurants, and hotels. At one end, an amphitheater and a jousting arena, and, at the other, a circle running around a faux old tower and lined with more shops. The circle sprouted into four streets leading to the main entrance gate (called "symbolic gate"), a restaurant in the middle of an artificial lake, the "International Institute of Vampirology," and Dracula's castle (enclosed in a pentagonal wall, and neighboring a labyrinth garden). The park also had an amusement park with rides, a horse-riding center, a large area dedicated to economy tourist lodging, parking, and train stations for the mini-line that was to be built to take tourists up to the park. The plan floated on a beige, gravelly background, with no geographical context, next to a 47 point legend and a border of mini ads for the sponsoring tourist businesses.

Seen from above, the park didn't look very different from the hundreds of socialist neighborhoods, designed from the ground up since the 1970s, but never realized as intended. The flatness of the plan made the socialist utopia lie



Map of Dracula Park

seamlessly on the consumerist one, and touch, through the straight and clean lines, the promise of a Disneyland. I can say with certainty that most people from Romania have not experienced a theme park, first hand, in their lives, but they were able to attach themselves, with fury, to the dream of one.

Regardless of what the exact plan was to fill the park with constructions and décor, the imagination of those talking about it seemed to converge towards a neat fantasy world that was not as much about Dracula as it was about a permissible and permeable "medieval." The park was to be an eclectic collection of signs pointing to a past that both locals and Westerners wished had existed, a Mickey Mouse kind of history (Wallace 1996), sanitized and shrunk down to a self-contained "land." Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett calls it "Distory": "Distory, at least to date, is about history as it should have happened—the best, only the best, nothing but the best. To the degree that the tourism product is 'the concrete expression' of the 'most attractive images possible,' it too is the Distory business" (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 1998:176).

Drawing force from the medieval aura of the citadel, a few kilometers away, the park was to transcend the "hereness," the "locality" that tourism normally relies on, through the vagueness of "medieval." "Medieval" was, for the park, a hopeful meeting point with a European history that Romania has been denied full participation in. It didn't seek to reproduce an authentic version of that history, but rather a utopic version that Western Europe itself had imagined: a history of knights, castles, jousting, princesses, craftsmanship, leather, and metal. Dracula Park was a doubling of utopia: not only the utopia of a western service center (whose physical realization by western standards was utopic in itself), but also the Disneyesque utopia of the West's historical imagination. The park was making visible the desire of the locals to be the West's object of desire.

Also, it seems to me that the park, as planned, was to teach the new consumer-citizens of Sighișoara (and the surrounding Romania) of what different kinds of consumers they could be (and could not). There were six kinds of lodging, discretely separating people into what—with some insistence—could become the new classes: camp grounds, apartments, pensions/bed and breakfasts, individual villas, a hotel, and a luxury hotel in the heart of the "Main Street."

But, Dracula Park was violating expectations. It was "lying" about the historical reality that it was supposed to represent (not by focusing on Dracula, but by focusing on a common, albeit fantastic, European past), and aspiring to a business solution that should not have been available, by any means, to a small town in Eastern Europe. Participation in what the Comaroffs call casino capitalism (Comaroff & Comaroff 2001), where wealth is created from "nothing" (read imagination, the virtual, services) was crossing, too abruptly, the development line. Some opponents of the project insisted that, instead of utopic dreams, Sighișoara should focus on more reasonable dreams of a functioning, efficient, and diversified economy.

None of the locals had any material reason to believe that the park could be built in this form and as seamlessly as promised: who would actually do the building, where would most of the materials come from? But, many still did.

Letters to the editor published in the local newspaper, and often authored by well educated local personalities (like the principal of the largest high school in town), expressed excitement and impatience at finally being able to walk through the park, to take their children there, and to be proud that such a park, worthy of any Westerner's envy, could be built in their hometown. With no regard to the 25 USD entry fee, they reveled in the possibility to access "culture" and "entertainment" again, in a town where the only cinema had just closed down, and the only cultural events seemed to be a handful of dirty and noisy festivals and fairs. It is not surprising, then, that criticisms of the project were read by these people as well as the park proponents as attacks over their right to live the dream that people in the West were already living.

The park lived, then, in the perceived gap between a local economic reality and the Western dream (in its colorful form of a *land* and in that of its imagined local economic benefits). What was at stake here was the power of the imagination to pull this town out of its economic recession and its almost dystopic existence. By 2001, most of the formerly state owned textile and ceramics factories were either closed, bankrupt, or severely affected, with thousands of unemployed people making ends meet with local seasonal work or illegal or short term hard physical labor in the EU. The spectacle of unintelligible consumption put on by streams of tourists passing through the town and the promise of revenue that they offered—if only they stayed a little longer and consumed a little more—filled that gap with credible solutions that had to be about tourism, consumption, and bringing in foreigners and their money. The park would metonymically replicate the object of desire in a way that—as the evolving controversy showed—was not about usurping Germanness, but about accessing the West through it. As one informant put it, "that was it, the project was a beautiful story, it was beautifully presented, and it gave everyone hopes—goodness, there's going to be a castle, and a lake, and an arena... tourists will come, and we will all live well..."

Dracula

The park also promised to bridge the gap between what people perceived foreigners came looking for and what they found, between how Sighișoara/Transylvania/Romania were represented abroad and how they were represented to local and national audiences. For Agathon and the other supporters of the park, Dracula could serve as a broad brush that would smooth over the otherwise abrupt differences in how local history and identity was represented by different groups and to different audiences. Dracula could be a unifying varnish on top of a contested local history, Dracula could be a solution that articulated, in unthreatening ways, the German local history, the Romanian obsession with a national past, and the exploiting Western gaze. At least this is what Agathon promised. If tourists wanted Dracula, why not give it to them—if Transylvania was the (generic) space where his legend was placed, Romania owned it, in some way, since Romania owned Transylvania, as well. Agathon also expressed a blind belief in the power of Dracula as a consumer symbol and Romania's rights over it: "This myth exists, and I package it nicely, I put a bow on it, and

sell it. It is stupid to go to Switzerland to buy watches and wallets with Dracula on them, a country that has no relationship to the legend. It is stupid for the plastic teeth to be made in Turkey and not Romania."²⁷ His righteous crusade to own the rights to the symbol was—he suggested—vindicated when later rumors surfaced that the owners of the Dracula copyrights threatened to sue.

Dracula could also be the shiny solution that filled up the spaces in between national pride and abjection, could be a way of turning the debasing Western gaze around, repackaging this second world place into an object of desire. Dracula was already valuable currency in a global economy of meaning and a tourist mimetic economy (Greenblatt 1991), and therefore it could be a trick that would circumscribe a promising but neglected *local* to a powerful global economy of desire. "My duty," Agathon insisted, "is to use this Dracula pretext to put the foreign tourists in contact with Romania, the real Romania, the profound Romania, the Romania of faith, the Romania of history, and the Romania of tradition."²⁸ Surprisingly, this made perfect sense to most of the people in Sighișoara to whom I talked. I expected a theme-park-sized commitment to this symbol to be at least intimidating. Instead, there was mostly indifference punctuated with tactical, but unconvicted, excitement.

The objects on the vendors' tables—in the citadel and around it—rely on the same kind of hopeful and resigned pull, played out through the distracted and entropic nature of the intelligibility of the objects they were selling. The Draculas—mugs, postcards, statues, t-shirts—did not claim any stable relationship or lasting commitment to a particular representation of the place, in the same way the exact same merchandise didn't do that in other tourist spots all over Romania (and in particular Transylvania). The objects existed in the spaces between the local-global articulations that defined the place (Massey 1994), in the spaces where they get broken, syncopated, distracted. Their existence on the table relied on the precariousness and partiality of their signification, in its tolerated, matter of fact half-impotence. The objects were not hybrids, in the sense proposed by Cassey (1999), they just happened. "You never know what they're looking for," a vendor told me in 2005. "You have to have something for everybody." The Dracula could fix the tourists' eyes just enough for a conversation to be started. Just like Agathon trying to lure tourists into loving the "real Romania," the vendors would immediately push onto them generic "traditional" merchandise—table cloths mass produced in a family-owned shop in Cluj or Russian dolls and wooden jewelry from China.

Dracula Park was a loud attempt to materially articulate the desire to be desired, and, in that, it was an offensive attempt to erase it. The successful opponents of the project were able to reinforce this desire's gaping contours, and in particular the distance between the limitations of Romanianness and the possibilities of Germanness. Heritage (whether production or remembrance) was central to this process.

But, as the controversy around the project showed, Dracula was far from being an innocent trick. It was, in fact, perceived as a political project that articulated—over a thirty year arc—the Romanian nationalist project of rewriting Transylvanian history with a global (well, Western) symbolic economy.



Dracula souvenirs on vendor tables in Piața Cetății (2005).



The first time I heard the story—from an informant that had also been involved in the controversy—I found it hard to believe. Of course, yet another conspiracy theory. We were talking about the reproduction of the local Romanian elite, and how several important figures (the mayor, important business owners and local councilmen) happened to have equally important fathers, several decades ago: mayors, members in the party structure, members in the secret police. Membership in the secret police seemed to have had and still has quite an explanatory power, not only in who was and stayed important, but also in how Sighișoara got to be the way it is. Linking Dracula to Romania and to Sighișoara in particular was a project that was started in the 1970s when “an American” related to one of the recent American presidents spent six months in Sighișoara and mused about the possibility of building a Dracula theme park. The American left, but some of his work—my informant insisted—remained in the drawers of the secret service, to be revived again through the current park project. Another informant told me that Ceaușescu invited an “American” to come and write about how the real inspiration for Bram Stoker’s *Dracula* was the Romanian prince Vlad Țepeș.²⁹ After the “American’s” visit to Sighișoara, two material allusions to this connection (Vlad Țepeș’s statue and the plaque on Casa Vlad Dracul) appeared. The statue, a rough bust, was actually placed in between the Town Hall and the Evangelical Church, on the main tourist route, in the 1980s, and is an obligatory stop for tour groups and wandering tourists. Its presence, just like the plaque’s, are taken as proof of the reality of the connection. Most locals have forgotten about the statue: gray and dark, receding into the landscape, passed by countless times on the way to dropping off a request or a file at some office in the Town



Sign in front of the Casa Vlad Dracul restaurant.

Hall. Tourists, surprisingly, always seem to find it and treat it with excitement, reading carefully the inscription with the name and the years he was leading another country south of the mountains. No explicit connections to the town. The plaque, though, pointed to a connection, to be interpreted together with the statue: “Vlad Dracul, prince of Valahia, lived in this house between 1431-1435.”³⁰ Vlad Dracul, tour guides will explain, was Vlad Țepeș’s father, and Vlad Țepeș was born around the same time, so Vlad Țepeș was probably born here. Dracula was born here. And, if anyone is still confused about why the house is important, there is a metal sign in the shape of a vampire inviting customers inside the restaurant housed in the building.

Dracula Park was, my informant tried to convince me, just an extension of the project started in the 1970s, a project of the secret service and those continuing its work. For him, it was an occult conspiracy, a conspiracy of the devil and the unfaithful—and he wasn’t the only one to describe the project and its results in these terms.³¹ To me, though, it looked more like a nationalist one.

Tying Vlad Țepeș to this place—through a secret service conspiracy or just nailing plaques to a wall—was writing its history as a Romanian one, inscribing a continuous and relevant Romanian presence in a land with an otherwise complex and contested history. Vlad Țepeș’s statue was part of the same project as exhibiting shards of pottery made by prehistoric people said to be the Romanians’ ancestors, marking old Roman—the other ancestors—forts on the map, not too far away from the town, and starting Sighișoara’s history, in the local museum as well as history books, not with the German colonists of the twelfth century, but with older Romanian or pre-Romanian communities (Pascu, 2005).

It wasn’t surprising, then, that the Romanian stake in the historical representation of this space, and of Sighișoara in particular, surfaced as a concern with the offensive blending of the two figures, the national, dignified Țepeș and the foreign, caricatured Dracula. And, it wasn’t surprising to me that these concerns were centered not in Sighișoara, but in Bucharest. Octavian Paller, a well-known Romanian intellectual, said he was offended by France Press’s innuendos that Dracula was a reason for Romanian national pride. Many people have commercialized their heroes, he said, but this is not the same thing.³² Some people wrote, later in the winter, about the Dracula-Țepeș connection as an attack on national identity and dignity.³³ What was most surprising to me was that these concerns were not louder and more wide-spread. It was almost like either the connection was accepted, to some degree, or it was feared that making any national identity arguments would be read as a siding with the extreme right political parties like *România Mare* or a continuation of the pre-1989 national state ideology. On more than one occasion, Agathon brushed these concerns aside, claiming that the project would actually make fun of the Dracula figure, and not take it seriously, as a historical representation. The myth of Dracula exists whether we want it or not, he said on more than one occasion, so we might as well take advantage of it.³⁴

The veracity of the Țepeș-Sighișoara connection was attacked either frontally (by insisting that there is no historical connection between the two) or by sug-

gesting that there are better connections to other sites (Bucharest and Snagov, where Țepeș was buried) and that the park should be moved there.

The questioning of a historical relationship between Sighișoara and Țepeș came early in the controversy. Its use in fighting the project—located outside the town, on a forested plateau—relied on ignoring slippages and creating connections that all articulated, in particular ways and with lasting results, the Dracula Park project and site, the Sighișoara citadel, and German heritage rights. The story of stopping the building of the park is the story of the productive work of filling up any threatening gaps between the three and turning a discussion about a development project in the middle of the woods into one about German/Saxon heritage. Granted, Agathon invited “the German element” into the conversation by exposing the structure of desire that the project was building on. But, Agathon was relying on the German minority’s status of “model minority,” its historical guilt over WWII events and post-WWII migration to Germany, and its reluctance to make any political, historical, and territorial claims. Agathon imagined in it an easy ally, not an enemy.

It was quite a shock, then, when the first voice to protest against the project was that of Sighișoara’s German priest, Hans Bruno Fröhlich. In a respectful and firm language, he did what I haven’t seen any member of the local German community do before or since: claim symbolic ownership over the town and the citadel, an explicit political voice, and a historically based stake in the future of the town. These all added up to an open contestation of the otherwise unspoken Romanian dominance over the region and the town.

Historically, this project affects me (and not only me, but also the other Germans from Sighișoara) directly, for the simple fact that our ancestors, that is the Saxon craftsmen, are the builders of this citadel. If we set aside the myth of the vampire and try to move from fiction (started by Bram Stoker’s novel) to historical reality, then we are dealing with a falsification of this historical reality. It’s just an undocumented hypothesis that Vlad Țepeș was born in Sighișoara. And even if his father (Vlad Dracul) was here, he was here not as a builder of the citadel or ruler of the city, but as refugee from Valachia (1431-1436), who, with the help of the Hungarian king Sigismund, prepared his army. ... ‘Dracula-Land’ would just be a part of a series of such phenomena (historical falsification). I need to remind you of the so-called ‘Casa Vlad Dracul,’ now a restaurant. Few people know that this used to be a shelter for old and poor women, property of the German Evangelical Parish until the 1960s, but abusively taken by the Romanian state. Vlad Țepeș couldn’t have been born in this house, because the house was built 200 years later. I am not nationalistic or chauvinistic. I do not contest the continuity of the Romanian people in Transylvania, but only where this can be proven with the means of the modern historical science. And, after all, territorial continuity does not say anything about the quality of a people. But, if the continuity is what is sought, this cannot be based on undocumented hypotheses and even lies.³⁵

Focusing on Țepeș as an unfaithful historical representation of Sighișoara was then taken up by other critics of the project, but the argument faded off in time, possibly because it had the potential of alienating the Romanian majority and feeding suspicions of a malevolent German conspiracy against the project. There were also some claims of symbolic ownership over the citadel and the

town that were slowly abandoned, as well. On the day of the official launching of the project, November 5, 2001, a national newspaper published a letter from a local German lady, speaking about the Dracula project as an insult to her “inheritance from (her) ancestors”:

For us, Saxons everywhere, a Dracula-Land in Sighișoara is like a punch in the eye. We feel like the moț [Romanians living Apuseni mountains, and one sacred locus of Romanian nationalist pride] having to put garden gnomes in the yard of Avram Iancu [a moț national hero]. ... We feel attacked and humiliated.

I later met her. She did self-identify as a Saxon, but she was far from being a Saxon nationalist. In her late sixties, smart and opinionated, and married to a Romanian from Bucharest, she was often very critical of the local and diasporic German community. The Dracula Park project, she explained, just hit a bit too close to home.

The explicit ethnic content of the controversy was soon left aside, and picked up again only as a call to “tolerance and inter-cultural dialogue” by *Liga Pro-Europa*, an NGO specializing in ethnic politics and involved in the protest.

Heritage protection and preservation

The repeated, protesting German voices left a well-beaten (by mid-fall) discursive path between the historical citadel and the project, several kilometers away. The supporters of the project participated in the same discussion, trying to convince everybody that the money generated from the park business will be used to rehabilitate the crumbling citadel, while trying to argue that there is no material, physical connection between the project site and the citadel. The two, supporters argued, should be treated as two separate things.

The critics of the project, though, were able to cohere around the issue of heritage and, in the end, heritage and heritage protection emerged as the dominant discourse of the controversy. For that to happen, clearer connections between the project and the project site, on the one hand, and the citadel, on the other, had to be established.

A letter from the local German Evangelical Church addressed to the Mayor and the Local Council and published in the local newspaper, reminded everyone of the effect of the yearly Medieval Festival on the citadel. This resonated with many locals and even people outside Sighișoara familiar with the festival. That year, their community’s loss due to the festival was real and material—vandalized churches and cemetery, stolen objects from a church, and the wear of 30,000 people a day on the already degrading streets. The theme park was likely, they were afraid, to attract the same kinds of tourists.

It is well known that we (that is the Evangelical Parish) own maybe the most important historical monuments in this citadel (the Church on the Hill, the Monastery Church, the Cemetery on the Hill, etc.) For these reasons, we are of course more sensitive to and more aware of what is going on here. In the past few years, the so-called ‘Medieval Festival’ reached a size that cannot be beneficial to this medieval citadel, which will not survive much longer under these conditions. In the same time, the festival bothers

us, as inhabitants of this citadel. ... There were desecrated tombs in the Cemetery on the Hill; the police had to remove those people from the cemetery almost every hour. We found the Monastery Church in total dismay. There was vomit by the door, human excrements next to the exterior walls; like every year, the little park between the Monastery Church and the Clock Tower is completely devastated. People broke ledges out of the Covered Stairway and entered the parish garden. They walked on the citadel wall as if they were on a boulevard. The heaviest blow was the theft of the Bible from the Holy Altar of the Monastery Church. ... Events like these, as well as the construction of the ‘Dracula-Land’ theme park, create an atmosphere that invites ‘bad spirits.’ We are not talking about ghosts or vampires.³⁶

The project was to be built on a plateau outside the town, five kilometers away from the citadel on the road, and less than two in a straight line. The initial plans included a cable car that would take tourists directly from the citadel to the park and back. As expected, the cable car came immediately under attack as possibly affecting the structural integrity of the hill that the citadel was built on. Another fear was that the construction work as well as the added weight to the Breite hill (neighboring the citadel hill) would cause land slides and movements, and would possibly affect, in the end, the citadel.

The stakes in creating these relationships were not to convince anyone in particular, but to create a large enough base to allow for a general public concern and for the intervention of more and heavier actors. The debate could not have been won locally and on locally-only intelligible terms—it had to be expressed universally, in a language that translated the ambiguity of the situation into clearer lines and accommodated diverse stakes and interests. The debate had to enter the realm of rights, rescues, and protection, a realm to which specialists, governmental and non-governmental organizations could attach themselves. There was, of course, a pull, as well. These NGOs, specialists, international organizations are in the situation to constantly justify their existence—every claim of having a stake, every attempt at intervention, every utterance on the topic is proof of the value and necessity of their presence.

As early as November, the director of *Mihai Eminescu Trust* (Jessica Douglas Home), the president of *Siebenburgisch-Sachsische Stiftung*³⁷ (H.C. Habermann), the president of the World Museum Fund (Bonnie Burnham), representatives of *GTZ*³⁸ and other organizations, historians and specialists in South-Eastern Europe signed a letter addressed to the Romanian President, Ion Iliescu. They expressed their worry that the park would mean the destruction of the local heritage and “will transform the history of Romania in a caricature. Far from being a reason for pride, it will bring Romania nothing but ridicule. It is just as if the French accepted building a Disneyland inside Versailles, or the Italians—in Venice.”³⁹

The *Mihai Eminescu Trust* (*MET*) had been active in the villages in the region, rescuing the Saxon heritage from abandonment and destruction, but not in Sighișoara. Its voice and prestige grew considerably with this controversy, and in the years that followed, *MET* got increasingly involved in issues connected directly to Sighișoara. The first project, born out of the pain of the Dracula Park controversy, was the implementation of the UNDP Local Agenda 21 program.⁴⁰

MET financed part of the project, acted as the main intermediary between UNDP Romania and the Sighișoara City Hall, and organized and mediated the public debates and the workshops that led to the adoption, by the City Hall and representatives of the local community, of the local plan for sustainable development. The plan was printed in a glossy volume and immediately forgotten by all parties involved, in particular the City Hall. In November 2004, *MET* organized a conference for the sustainable development of the region, bringing together an impressive roster of local NGOs, representatives of international governmental and non-governmental organizations, possible funders, technical and cultural experts, representatives of the local and regional administrations. With this conference, *MET* loudly claimed the status of sole regional expert and the role of broker in contracting and distributing funding to the Saxon region in the area of sustainable development, heritage preservation, and heritage-based tourism. Since then, *MET* has obtained large grants from the Packard Humanities Institute and UNDP Romania. In 2006, *MET* signed a partnership with the Sighișoara City Hall in order to manage the natural preserve of Breite, where Dracula Park was to be built. Also, it had taken two historical towers into custody (the Butchers' Tower and the Furriers' Tower), taking responsibility for their restoration and preservation. *MET* Romania is also now based in the Sighișoara citadel, where it owns and rents at least two buildings.

In Sighișoara and the “Saxon Triangle”⁴¹ at least, crisis and the need for rescue are valuable resources. That is not to say that the old Saxon villages, the fortified churches, and other kinds of buildings are not degrading, or that the old Saxon dialects and all kind of associated knowledges are not being lost and forgotten. As somebody pointed out during the controversy, so are the old Hungarian rural palaces (*conace de grofi*) all over Transylvania, looted and actively destroyed during the socialist period and used by the agricultural cooperatives for storage. And so are, I would add, all kinds of other buildings, and objects, and knowledges, Hungarian, Romanian, Romani, some older than others. Then, why all the worried attention to Saxon heritage?

Producing Saxon heritage in South-East Transylvania is a project that mobilizes certain Western nostalgias, moneys, and interventions by creating historical connections and claiming stakes in the fate of this space. I interpret *MET*'s insistence on using the English translation of the name “Sachsen,” *Saxon*, and not *German* (pushed by actors from Germany interested in a pan-German identity) as a symbolic and powerful way to assert the right to intervene and manage their and others' interventions. Nostalgias for an autochthonous Saxon heritage now about to disappear meet nostalgias for a lost English/Saxon past, and justify rescue interventions that target both the built and the natural landscape. The meadows, for example, were constructed how the English meadows used to be before the extensive sheep raising started several centuries ago, and Prince Charles, on his several visits to the area, talked charmingly about the quaint rural, natural atmosphere, now long lost in his own country. Interpreting the fate of particular buildings and places as a crisis, as in need of rescue, not only offers organizations like *MET* a publicly recognizable *raison d'être*, but also mobilizes

particular resources along particular paths. *MET*'s initial funders were private individuals and foundations in England (referred to by people that I talked to in Sighișoara as the “English aristocracy”), but have now extended to large international organizations and foundations that maybe would not have gotten involved in the area otherwise. The money is stubbornly channeled into heritage protection/rescue projects, only obliquely taking into consideration the larger social problems that need more immediate attention (large rural Romani populations, with no access to proper social services, jobs, or political representation).

Insisting on the Saxon heritage crisis attaches value to this particular local ethnic dimension, to the detriment of others, reinforcing and participating in local ethnic hierarchies as well as ideas about what exactly is European/Western/civilized/worthy in Transylvania and what is not. This insistence also interprets the recent past—the almost fifty years of *Romanian* socialism and centrally planned economy—as destructive, irresponsible, and having a potentially dangerous momentum in the present and the near future. A lot of heritage has been lost and more will be lost, if the right kind of intervention doesn't happen, they seem to suggest; heritage production is in this case, as always, not about the past, but about interpreting and making claims about the present and the future. Organizations like *MET* are involved, then, not only in sorting through the various problems and focusing attention on selected ones, but also in mapping out solutions for future development.

The modernist nostalgias that I alluded to before find expression in a developmental imaginary centered well west of Sighișoara. This imaginary is born out of guilt and fear about what has gone wrong in the past in the West and locally, assumes, announces, and cultivates a position of privileged vision, and orders and disciplines local desires for the West/development/consumerist abundance/ or however we might want to call it. It is, itself, a space of desire for a utopic do-over, for another chance to avoid mistakes made in the past. It is not homogenous in solutions and projections, by any means, as it can both deny desires to modernize and allow for skipping a developmental generation or two, all the way to what now many refer to, in different ways, as “sustainable development.” Concretely, these ideas about sustainable development are always connected to leveraging the value of the local Saxon heritage through small-scale tourism and agricultural/craft production, as well as protecting the natural environment, now increasingly reformulated as “natural heritage.”

Making the Dracula Park controversy about the Saxon heritage did not mean, then, avoiding discussion of the park as a development project. On the contrary, it was precisely about that.

Development

The park was proposed as a development project that would—just like a silver bullet—solve all the economic and social problems of the area, create thousands of jobs, allow for the replacement of all infrastructure, and attract a life-bringing infusion of capital into the local economy. With its professional language of scientific management and planning, the project promised to fill the very desires

that brought this plan into the world, promised to materialize them and to bring Sighișoara into the West. The project, as unrealistic as it might have been, was a loud assertion of a right to develop and a blind belief in the certainties of development. In the same time, it was building on a general sense of urgency about the current historical moment, with economic opportunities that abounded, but were quick to pass.

The first critiques that engaged in the discussion of the park as a development project suggested that the expectations outlined in the feasibility study were unreasonable and probably never to become reality. The one million tourists a year promised were, by all calculations, an exaggeration, and the projected cost of the entire park was a fraction of what would normally cost to build a ride that would attract some tourist attention.⁴² These critiques made a home in the media, in particular, often as professional evaluations, taking the intentions of the park very seriously. The development discussions were quite thin, in particular compared to the more historical/heritage-based ones, but picked up force when it became clear to everyone that the IPO has failed, that general investor confidence was low, and that the project would not raise enough money. The critiques, though, were still expressed in a language that reflected fascination with the new emerging neoliberal order and invoked a development imaginary that was congruent with that of the project's proponents: a linear view of progress, faith in the business spirit, a belief that Romania had to be "pulled out" of its backwardness. But, at the same time, the critiques expressed a lack of trust in the ability of the informal heirs of the socialist order to perform acceptably within that imaginary. There were fears of corruption and taking advantage of a still vulnerable system, and there were fears of incompetence and the inability to see long-term.

Especially towards the end of the controversy, the developmental discussions seemed to be located in a space of critique rooted in the conviction that there were *particular* kinds of lessons to be learned from the experience of the more developed countries. Just copying solutions would be destined for failure, as they were very likely to repeat mistakes that the locals (thirsty for development) were unable to recognize. Unreasoned desire for the prosperity of the West was seen with the same incredulous annoyance that practitioners of cargo cults were probably looked at in the past: mimicking one hyperbolic sign of the West was expected to invoke a whole world of worry-free prosperity. There were sacred boundaries that were unlawfully traversed, skipping decades of "development" and trying to arrive (erasing Cold War hierarchies that many were involved in) at a common point in history.

Summarized under one word—sustainability—the correct solution was meant to put the easterners into their place. Sustainability invoked a body of knowledge and experience that was needed and that justified the intervention of the critiques, and it also located the solution in a nostalgic rethinking of the Western past. It turned Sighișoara and its surroundings into a playground organized around preservation of the natural (untainted) environment and the remnants of the Germanic colonists. It was, in a way, an attempt for deliverance, through a

developmental do-over and a taming of the dangerous developmental desires of the ignorant locals.⁴³

Concretely, the proposed sustainable solutions were built around small scale tourism and agricultural/crafts production (in no way capable of building a real competition to Western economies) that relied on the saved built and natural heritage.

By now (2008), sustainability has actually reached the status of preferred discourse in the context of non-governmental activity in Romania: most environmental and developmental organizations formulate their mission, objectives, and programs through a language of sustainability (financial, environmental, social) and use it successfully to oppose governmental programs and interventions.

At the time of the park controversy, though, this language hadn't entered the public discourse. The group of local protesters that I have already mentioned earlier formed a legally registered organization in November 2001. They were brought together by their opposition to the project, but had to contend with the diversity of backgrounds, interests, and reasons for opposing the park. One of the members, who had been opposing the project on environmental grounds (that it was to be built in a protected natural area, Breite) suggested "EcoBreite," a name that he had already been using publicly in his protests. The other members were a bit reluctant, as they felt their own reasons for opposing the project (historical representations, religion, economy, etc.) would not be represented. At one of their meetings, one of the members brought a friend who was visiting from Germany, and he suggested *Nachhaltiges Schäßburg*, the German for "Sustainable Sighișoara," awkwardly translated into Romanian through "*Sighișoara Durabilă*" (which could also mean "Lasting Sighișoara"). Nobody at the meeting had heard the term before, but the German visitor convinced them that "sustainability" was emerging as the new cool term with a lot of international currency. So "Sustainable Sighișoara" it was.

For *Sighișoara Durabilă*, sustainability was both a way to critique local approaches to development and to align itself with foreign critiques of the project. It was, in that sense, a double strategy: opposing the project locally, and attracting the support of powerful and big mouthed allies by offering them a reasonable way to insert their own interests and worries into the situation. Thus, *Sighișoara Durabilă* was involved in reproducing—despite their good intentions—the same West-East/capitalist-postsocialist hierarchies of practice and knowledge that their foreign based allies were invoking.

I was not surprised by the quasi-dialogue that ensued, between "you don't know how to develop" accusations and "you don't let us develop" kinds of resistance. The actual economic feasibility of the theme park project and the actual chances of it delivering the economic results it promised were, by early 2002, no longer at the core of the understandings of the project and the discussions about its realization. For many locals, the intervention of many critics was unintelligible on the terms that it was intended. Sustainable development around heritage tourism was difficult to translate locally, as it relied on small-scale solutions

which seemed like an insufficient match to the scale of the economic problems the town and the region were confronted with.

Many of those to whom I talked perceived the “sustainable development” critiques as an ill-willed wall in the way of their own desire to modernize. This was the case even for some of the people who were actively involved in opposing the project. They felt torn between finding an efficient way to fight and siding with what looked to them like a new kind of oppressor. To be sure, some of these feelings came from the decades of official public discourse that identified in historical and contemporary foreign forces a likely enemy and oppressor. But, the same kind of consciousness was imbibed with perceptions of the projects these opponents of the park had been involved in, locally.

The problem lay in—expectedly—the preservation focus of many of the programs proposed by these organizations. *MET* (the *Mihai Eminescu Trust*) was identified by many as an organization strangely preoccupied with preserving Saxon houses in the Saxon villages, renovating them according to traditional techniques, and placing them into closed-circuit tourist use. To be fair, *MET* only preserved the façade perfectly, and slightly (if) transformed the interior of the houses to match modern use. Still, when I talked to one of the Dracula Park opponents about *MET* (with which he had allied at the time), he expressed an irritated kind of disappointment at their involvement in the area surrounding Sighișoara. What the *MET* people want, he insisted jokingly, was to “turn us into human zoos; we should stay in the Stone Age and have foreigners come and gawk at us.”

One way that the foreign proposition of sustainability articulated with on-the-ground interests was via environmental concerns. By the time the project controversy took off, there was already a regional environmental rights movement, slightly ethnicized (articulating with Hungarian political movements) but well connected nationally and internationally. Environmental sustainability, even if not accepted as a concern, was a language that was spoken and understood by most of the local public. As proof, the project proponents were genuinely scared of the potential of any environmental opposition, so they founded an organization which they called “Greenpeace Romania,” and immediately had it issue statements in support of the project. Bernhard Drumel, Executive Director for Greenpeace Austria and Central and Eastern Europe, made statement denying any connection to the Romanian organization and threatening them to stop using the Greenpeace name, which is a registered trademark.⁴⁴

Breite had already been declared a protected natural area due to its centuries old oak trees and the well preserved biological diversity that it hosted. The accusations that the park would destroy the trees were met with assurances that they would not be cut down; on the contrary, they would be better preserved as part of the park (since they would be surrounded by fences). Of course, the park designers missed the point that the trees were part of a complex ecosystem and that their giant roots were one way the unstable soil of the hill was kept in place. A good part of the discussions in the national press revolved around the trees and the plateau, with accusations flying left and right. The project builders were

ignoring the law and the long term implications of the project, and the project environmental opponents were only discovering the plateau now (and not when it was vandalized by shepherds and tourists), when they could gain some political currency from fighting the project.

For the environmentalists involved in the controversy, it was important not only to raise awareness for their reasons to oppose the project, but also to connect and build coalitions with environmental organizations from around the country and even abroad. The destruction of the plateau was, in some sense, a resource, in the same way the destruction of the citadel was a resource for heritage preservation organizations and professionals. I am not implying cynical reasons for people’s opposition to the theme park, rather, I am trying to draw attention to the productive force that this opposition had. The coalitions that were formed in that time are still sustained today, and Breite continues to serve as an environmental rights capital for a number of individuals and organizations. In the middle of the controversy, a professional environmental activist, Stephanie Roth, came to Sighișoara and offered her assistance in strategizing and gathering support for the project’s opposition. Local opponents credit her with the idea of sending a series of postcards to the Romanian government, protesting during the UNESCO visit in Sighișoara, and creating lasting coalitions with other environmental organizations. While in Sighișoara, Stephanie Roth heard of another emerging environmental crisis in Roșia Montană (a projected surface gold mine), where she moved and has been working since.

Less than four years later, *MET* signed a partnership agreement with the Sighișoara Local Council to take over the stewardship of the protected area and to draw in funding and support for its further protection. *MET* and another British supported organization, *ADEPT*, have been involved in finding ways to use the relatively unspoiled natural habitat in the region (due to the lack of industrialized, intensive agriculture) for economic (but “sustainable”) purposes.

Despite their loudness and national currency, the environmental protests didn’t become part of the mainstream of the project opposition until they were engulfed and reformulated by the dominant register of heritage protection. The six-hundred-year-old oak trees became *cultural* heritage as soon as it was “discovered” that they had been planted by the German colonists. The colonists, it turned out, were raising pigs and using the nutritious acorns to feed them in the winter.

Another way Breite became cultural heritage was through remembering festivities and customs connected to that space. *Skopationfest*, a yearly celebration following the high school graduation, used to bring up on the hill the entire (mostly German) population of the town for a day-long picnic. The tradition is continued—without explicit links to Breite—through a public parade of the new graduates, decorated with oak leaves and daisies.

Conclusion

The Dracula theme park project failed for many reasons, but what put it in the grave for good was the ability and power of its opponents to publicly reformu-

late what was essentially a controversy about development into one about heritage. The struggle was, then, to draw close and convincing connections between the projected park—on a forested plateau outside the town—and the historical citadel, and also to make historical heritage of a particular kind (German) the main reference in discussing the controversy.

I argue that this intense moment was both symptomatic of and actively structuring the transformation of the town. Mediated by an insistent focus on the German/Saxon heritage, the town is reimagined in very material ways as a German one, interpreting and justifying stakes in the local development, and allowing a diverse set of actors to intervene. Ultimately, heritage becomes one way concerns about development are expressed, in ways that reproduce and harden West-East/capitalist-postsocialist hierarchies. I suggest that at the core of the process lie the different developmental desires that encounter and compete in this space: an indigenous desire to modernize and access the Western dream, and a Western desire to police it, rooted in modernist nostalgias for a lost past and the yearning for a developmental do-over. These desires worked indirectly and diffusely, infiltrating both sides of the argument, with very long lasting results. Today, Sighișoara remains stuck in imagining the future as wrapped in opportunistic and hopeful exploitations of the German heritage, despite the still small revenues resulting from tourism.

NOTES

1 See the results of the 2002 census, updated for 2005: <http://www.insse.ro/cms/files/pdf/ro/cap2.pdf>.

2 *Ordinul nr. 3314/2004 al ministrului culturii și cultelor privind aprobarea Listei monumentelor istorice, actualizată, și a Listei monumentelor istorice dispărute*, published in *Monitorul Oficial al României, anul 172, nr 646 bis, din 16 iulie 2004*.

3 The original name of the ordinance: “*ORDONANȚĂ nr.3 din 12 iulie 2001 privind aprobarea și implementarea Programului special de dezvoltare turistică a zonei Sighișoara*,” published in *Monitorul Oficial nr. 405 din 20 iulie 2001*

4 *Allgemeine Deutsche Zeitung für Rumänien*, <http://www.adz.ro>, is the only daily German language newspaper in Eastern and Central Europe, edited by the German political organization in Romania.

5 Romanian for *Sustainable - Sighișoara*.

6 The meeting was organized by the *Heimatortsgemeinschaft (HOG) Schäßburg* (roughly translating into “hometown community,”) the organization of the former *Sighișoreni* (mostly Saxon) who now live in Germany. HOG Schäßburg organizes similar meetings every year, some in Germany, some in Sighișoara.

7 “Pro și contra Dracula Land,” by Ioan F. Pascu, in *Jurnalul Sighișoara Reporter*, October 24-30 2001

8 All quotes from the letter, as presented in “*Mesajul domnului Dan Matei Agthon, ministrul Turismului, adresat întâlnirii de la Sighișoara a etnicilor germani*,” *Jurnalul Sighișoara Reporter*, October 24-30, 2001.

9 “*Investitorii români și străini pot răsufla ușurați: Dușmanii lui Dracula Park, căutați de SIE*,” by Alin Bolbos and Daniel Sârbu, *Ziua de Ardeal*, October 24, 2001.

10 Andrei, Carmen. 2002. “*Vocea societății civile, cea care plătește taxe și impozite, este ignorată*,” in *România Liberă*, February 22, page 14.

11 “*Poziția primarului Sighișoarei referitoare la unele păreri contra Programului de dezvoltare turistică a zonei Sighișoara*,” *Jurnalul Sighișoara Reporter*, October 31 - November 6, 2001.

12 “*Un grup de sighișoreni s-a adresat P.F. Părinte Patriarh pentru stoparea proiectului Dracula Park*,” in *Viața Cultelor*, February 21, 2002, year X, no.447; “*Conferința ‘SOS Sighișoara’ legată de proiectul ‘Dracula Park’*,” in *Viața Cultelor*, year X, no.453.

13 Trifu, Dan. 2002. “*B.O.R. se opune denumirii de Dracula Park și legiferării prostituției*,” in *Cuvântul Liber*, March 19, page 3.

14 The most famous of the schemes, since referred to through the post-socialist folklore, was Caritas (see Verdery 1995).

15 Petre Mihai Băcanu. 2002. “*Să dea Dumnezeu să ne fi înșelat noi, iar deponenții la jocul piramidal ‘Dracula Park’ să nu-și piardă banii*,” in *România Liberă*, February 21, page 1.

16 The connections between the Dracula Park project and the legislative change done in: Popa, Camelia. 2002. “*Un paradis fiscal, cu investitori aleși pe sprânceană*,” in *România Liberă*, February 21, page 14.

17 Liga Pro Europa had been known for being connected, directly or through the issues they supported, with the main Hungarian party in Romania, Uniunea Democrată a Maghiarilor din România, and occasionally with the political right and center-right, in their anti-communist fight.

18 Toader, Mihai. 2001. “*Ceartă PSD-PNL pe parcul de distracții: Dracula scoate dosarele*,” in *Ziua*, November 19, page 3; Ivanciuc, Cornel. 2001. “*De ce are baba coif sau de ce vor unii să-l tragă pe Dracula, pentru a doua oară, în țepă*,” in *Academia Cațavencu*, November 27 - December 3, page 3; Dan Matei Agathon. 2001. “*Gata cu vorbele. Vom lăsa buldozerele să vorbească*,” in *Jurnalul Sighișoara Reporter*, November 28 - December 4, page 4.

19 Jessica Douglas-Home. 2001. “*A new Dracula horror in Romania*,” in *The Wall Street Journal Europe*, December 28.

20 The World Heritage sites in Transylvania are: Villages with fortified churches (1993, 1999), the Dacian fortresses of the Orăștie Mountains (1999), the historic center of Sighișoara (1999), and the wooden churches of Maramureș (1999).

21 See Report of the UNESCO-ICOMOS joint mission to Romania, 22-28 March 2002 (WHC-02/CONF.202/INF.11 Paris, 25 May 2002).

22 The survey, ordered by the Minister of Tourism and paid for by the project’s company, *Fondul de Dezvoltare Turistică Sighișoara*, showed that in December 2001: 99% have heard about the project, 91% “were happy about the imminent neighboring park,” 57% thought the park would bring more jobs, 18% more money, 11% thought would raise their quality of life, 16% that it could be a nuisance, 19% thought that the main beneficiary of the project would be the town. Source: Ioan F. Pascu. 2001. “*Nouă sighișoreni din zece sunt pentru Dracula Park*,” in *Jurnalul Sighișoara Reporter*, December 27 2001 - January 2, 2002, page 6.

23 Carmen Andrei. 2002. “*În cazul Dracula Park ‘legea e doar pentru căței’—Ministrul Agathon vrea să obțină 22 de avize într-o singură săptămână*,” in *România Liberă*, February 22, page 1.

24 2002. “*Prințul Moștenitor al Tronului Marii Britanii consideră că Dracula Parc poate distruge stilul tradițional al Sighișoarei*,” in *Viața Cultelor*, May 10, no.457.

25 All quotes are from Dan Matei Agathon’s statements at the July 8, 2001 press conference, as presented in “*S-a hotărât: Dracula Land pe Breite!*,” in *Jurnalul Sighisoara Reporter*, July 11-17, 2001, page 4.

26 Dan Matei Agathon. 2001. “*Gata cu vorbele. Vom lăsa buldozerele să vorbească!*” in *Jurnalul Sighișoara Reporter*, November 28 - December 4, page 4.

- 27 Dan Matei Agathon. 2001. "S-a hotărât: Dracula Land pe Breite!," in *Jurnalul Sighișoara Reporter*, July 11-17, page 4.
- 28 Dan Matei Agathon. 2001. "Gata cu vorbele. Vom lăsa buldozerele să vorbească!" in *Jurnalul Sighișoara Reporter*, November 28 – December 4, page 4.
- 29 I do not have any proof, but I suspect that this story is, in some way, connected to the collaboration between a Romanian academic and an American one (both working in the U.S.), collaboration that has resulted in a volume that explicitly connects Dracula to Vlad Țepeș's historical figure (Florescu & McNally, 1973; McNally & Florescu, 1972).
- 30 The actual text on the plaque, in Romanian only: "În această casă a locuit între anii 1431 – 1435 domnitorul Țării Românești VLAD DRACUL, fiul lui Mircea cel Bătrîn."
- 31 Two other people talked about the developments in the citadel in precisely those terms: a satanic conspiracy taking over the town and the region.
- 32 Paller, Octavian. 2001. "Editorial—Draculomanie," in *Adevărul*, October 9.
- 33 Stoiculescu, Cristian D. 2002. "Se distruge identitatea națională a României," in *România Liberă*, February 28, page 14.
- 34 Dan Matei Agathon. 2001. "Gata cu vorbele. Vom lăsa buldozerele să vorbească," in *Jurnalul Sighișoara Reporter*, November 28 – December 4, page 4.
- 35 Hans Bruno Fröhlich. 2001. "Sighișoara nu are nevoie de un 'Dracula-Land'," in *Jurnalul Sighișoara Reporter*, August 1-7, page 16. (my translation)
- 36 2001. "Scrisoare de Protest," in *Jurnalul Sighișoara Reporter*, August 1-7, page 16.
- 37 The Association of the Transylvanian Saxons
- 38 Gesellschaft für Technische Zusammenarbeit—a federally owned enterprise of the German government that supports it "in achieving its development-policy objectives. It provides viable, forward looking solutions for political, economic, ecological and social development in a globalised world. Working under difficult conditions, GTZ promotes complex reforms and change processes. Its corporate objective is to improve people's living conditions on a sustainable basis" from GTZ website: <http://www.gtz.de/en/unternehmen/1698.htm>. It is heavily involved in the Sibiu area, west of Sighișoara, working with the German and Saxon architecture.
- 39 2001. "Conservare și Restaurare," in *România Liberă*, November 5, page 14. (translated from Romanian)
- 40 UNDP Project ROM 98/012, 0033238.
- 41 The area colonized by German Saxons, between Sibiu, Sighișoara, and Brașov. The term was pushed for by the MET and has stayed as a powerful symbol of the area.
- 42 "[O]ne of the latest white knuckle rides can cost in excess of \$200m," while Dracula's castle was going to be built for less than \$1.8m, in Tom Pilston. 2002. "Mickey Mouse with Fangs," in *The Independent on Sunday*, January 27, pp. 18-21.
- 43 See a similar story about a Dutchman trying to set up a pheasant shoot in a Czech village, and getting irritated at the locals' attempts to "develop" (Svašek, 2006).
- 44 Cristea, Romulus. "Din cauza potențialelor pericole ecologice Ministrul Turismului a fost somat să nu mai folosească numele GREENPEACE pentru susținerea programului," in *România Liberă*, February 27, 2002, page 10.

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