



SEA4NEB

Case Study

The Whole Village Concept

Diesis Network



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Social Economy Actors for New European Bauhaus



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Case study of good practice:

Whole Village concept, Romania



Thematic axis: Regaining a sense of belonging



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CONTEXT AND HISTORY OF HOW THE GOOD PRACTICE HAS BEEN DEVELOPED

Geographic, demographic, economic and social context

Mihai Eminescu Trust (MET) is a non-profit organisation founded in 2000, with its activity mainly based in rural areas of the Transylvania region in Romania. Its mission is to safeguard and restore Romania's cultural and natural heritage by fostering responsible economic development, tackling social inequalities and reshaping the nature-culture relation through an integrated and trans-disciplinary approach. Our work within the rural communities has brought us to the attempt to couple heritage conservation and heritage-based sustainable development with building resilience among locals on one hand, while integrating the preservation of biodiversity in the surrounding environments on the other. This has resulted in the conceptualisation of our approach which looks at the revitalisation of rural areas in the region, as a roots-based initiative and life-centred approach to heritage processes.

The Mihai Eminescu Trust works mainly in the rural communities of Transylvania, which are situated within a landscape historically shaped by the relationship between humans and their environment, resulting in the uniqueness of the region. The villages with fortified churches in Transylvania, an important landmark of the landscape, were built by the German-speaking population, also known as Saxons, who were encouraged during the 13th century to colonise the South-East line of the Carpathian Mountains in Transylvania for defensive reasons in the face of Mongolian incursions. The Transylvanian Saxons were the majority population until the fall of the totalitarian communist regime in 1989, but most of them left Transylvania and relocated to Germany in the early 1990s. The exodus of the Saxon population had a major impact upon the demographic configuration of these rural areas, altering definitively the local communities and therefore the heritage pertaining to these areas. The mass emigration has created a demographic gap, which was filled by diverse ethnic groups, with different values and heritages, often in conflict with each other, as nowadays Saxons represent less than 10% of the total population. This was the main challenge identified by MET.

While our initial actions were intended to raise awareness of the potentialities of the heritage of the Saxon community in fostering sustainable development, we also tried to open a dialogue between the different ethnicities and create common ground for the co-existence of their diverse cultural values. Raising awareness among the local communities of the potential of the existing heritage as the ground for dialogue between different ethnic groups and as an asset for sustainable development has remained the main challenge for MET, one towards which the organisation is continuously working.

Within the current socio-economic context, rural areas are at risk of depopulation, due to the migration of the population to urban areas in search of better economic opportunities on one hand, and the ageing of the population on the other. All these challenges are counteracted by

MET through the organisation of capacity building programmes for locals: organising community meetings, training adults to revive traditional crafts and traditional building techniques, traditional agricultural practices, and organising educational activities for the younger generations. We do this in order to change the perception among communities about their role as custodians of their local heritage as an important resource for sustainable development. Integrating intangible and tangible cultural heritage with natural heritage in developing cultural tourism will generate income for rural families, improving their quality of life. By working closely with the local community for heritage making, heritage restoration and its responsible use, MET supports the development of the local economy through the sustainable valorisation of the landscape. Within this scenario, the landscape (with its natural and cultural heritage) becomes a place of dialogue about multiculturalism, about the need to find instances of co-existence within and with the natural environment, as necessary steps for sustainable development.



Our approach encourages intergenerational transfer of know-how related to the preservation and valorisation of heritage. Younger generations are involved in a series of activities designed as educational workshops and summer camps, through which we provide a proper environment for knowledge transfer, for the development of personal skills and personal development, and for increasing self-esteem and trust in the future. Another goal of these activities is related to educational activities about the local heritage and its benefits for communities. An overarching hallmark of these initiatives is guidance and preparing the younger generations for searching and creating professional opportunities.

The consolidation of the local community is done by building an open communication channel, through regular community and individual meetings, to identify local needs and set priorities, then to integrate them in grant applications and implement them with the support and involvement of the community. By raising awareness of the importance of personal contribution to heritage conservation and valorisation, MET inspires locals to become proud of their village and identify themselves with it, increasing a sense of place and sense of

belonging. This further contributes to enhancing the relationship between different groups in the community and between communities and the natural environment as well.

Origin of the practice

MET concentrates on the villages of Transylvania, a special case because of the age and richness of their culture and the emergency caused by the mass emigration of the Romanian Saxon inhabitants in 1990. The village community transition period which followed gave MET the opportunity to contribute to the formation of the new communities, to bring to the fore ancient cultural values and restore ownership of the local heritage.



The primary group targeted was the community of the village of Viscri, in Braşov county, which was where the Whole Village concept was developed. The community numbers about 400 persons, of whom the majority are Romanians and Roma. Due to the constant work deployed by Mihai Eminescu Trust, this community has reached a certain self-sufficiency, through the development of niche cultural tourism, by valorising the local tangible and intangible heritage. The initial target group has been enlarged, and a further nine rural communities numbering 6,500 persons are now targeted by the projects developed under the umbrella of the Whole Village concept, “with”, “for” and “through” the community.

These 10 rural communities from Transylvania (Viscri, Criţ, Meşendorf, Archita, Stejăreni, Mălâncrav, Floreşti, Biertan, Richiş and Alma Vii) have similar cultural and natural resources, yet the Whole Village concept needs constant adaptation in accordance with each community’s specificities.

The years of “Communism” in Romania have deeply influenced rural communities especially, as these were threatened with being moved, against their will, to other parts of Romania, with their houses being destroyed to make way for new “modern” buildings – blocks of flats. This recent past has changed the mentality of locals, making them passive and “afraid” of having ideas and initiatives. The 23 years of MET activity has managed to reverse this mentality to

some degree, achieving a higher level of participation and involvement for the common good, for the community, and for the development of the entire village.



The Whole Village concept includes the following steps for involving communities:

1. Obtaining the support of the local authorities
2. Evaluation of the existing cultural heritage and its potential for development
3. Organising community meetings, to identify problems and set priorities
4. Identification of financial resources
5. Identifying the project leader and the local project team
6. Organising training in project management, community development, traditional construction techniques, reviving crafts, traditional guesthouse administration, English language, local tourism guiding and leadership
7. Planning and implementation of activities for the sustainable development of the village
8. Support and mentoring for local entrepreneurs
9. Continuation and building on the achieved results

The biggest success is expected in local communities who are aware of the value of local cultural heritage and become the multipliers of the principles shared by MET. This was achieved by being present in the villages, and involving local people in project planning and implementation.

Policy framework

The absence of a policy framework for the implementation of the Whole Village concept poses challenges due to its multidisciplinary and cross-sectoral nature. The concept encompasses various aspects such as cultural heritage preservation, sustainable agriculture, regional development and social inclusion. These dimensions cut across different sectors, making it complex to establish comprehensive legal and financial regulations that address all the interconnected elements of the concept.

Despite these challenges, the engagement of MET with representatives from ministries such as Culture, Tourism and Entrepreneurship, Agriculture, Environment, and Regional Development is a positive step. By involving relevant stakeholders in policy discussions, MET has been able to raise awareness of the importance of the Whole Village concept and build support within the government. These interactions serve as a platform for sharing knowledge, exchanging ideas, and fostering collaboration between MET and the government.

While the desired outcome of establishing an integrated governmental support framework may not have been directly achieved, the discussions have nonetheless contributed to policy improvements at the regional level in various sectors. This indicates a growing recognition of the significance of cultural, agricultural and regional development policies that promote social inclusion and the circular economy. The impact of MET's engagement with governmental institutions is seen through the positive changes and improvements in these policy areas.

However, the limited capacity of MET in terms of human and financial resources poses a challenge in addressing the complexities of implementing the Whole Village concept. The organisation's ability to carry out research, planning, coordination and implementation of projects may be constrained. The multidisciplinary nature of the concept requires expertise in different fields, and the lack of resources may hinder MET's ability to comprehensively address all aspects of the initiative.

Despite these limitations, MET's ongoing dialogue and collaboration with relevant stakeholders remain crucial. By actively participating in policy discussions, advocating the Whole Village concept, and sharing its expertise, MET can influence the development of policies that facilitate the implementation of the concept. Its involvement can help shape an enabling environment for holistic community development, social inclusion, and the promotion of the circular economy.

To overcome resource limitations, MET can explore partnerships with other organisations, seek grant funding opportunities, and prioritise specific aspects of the concept based on available resources. Capacity building initiatives within the organisation can also help enhance its expertise and effectiveness in addressing the complexities of the initiative.

In summary, while the absence of a policy framework and limited resources pose challenges, MET's engagement with governmental institutions and its impact on policy improvements indicate progress. Ongoing dialogue, collaboration, and advocacy efforts are vital in shaping

policies that support the implementation of the Whole Village concept and enable holistic community development, social inclusion, and the promotion of the circular economy.

SUMMARY OF MAIN CHARACTERISTICS OF GOOD PRACTICE APPROACH

The "Whole Village" is an integrated concept of rural development through heritage, which aims to revitalise local communities and help them become self-sufficient. The concept of the Whole Village has been developed progressively and continuously, starting in the year 2000 with one village, continued in 2001 with a further four villages, then in 2003 with other three villages, and in 2008 the last two communities were included in this revitalisation process.

Since 2008, Mihai Eminescu Trust has been working in close collaboration with these 10 selected Transylvanian communities, following the belief that projects must be planned and developed **"in"**, **"together with"** and **"for"** the community.

The aim of the Whole Village concept is achieved through three main key objectives:

- **Restoration, conservation, and revitalisation of cultural heritage:** buildings, agriculture, landscapes, crafts, traditional farming practices and building techniques, reforestation of degraded soils;
- **Involvement, consolidation, and empowerment of local communities:** discussing community needs and priorities, drafting community action plans, organising informal educational workshops, providing training;
- **Developing the local economy through cultural and sustainable tourism:** supporting small rural businesses – farmers/craftsmen, creating job opportunities, promoting walking routes, traditional guesthouses, home-made and local products and the unique experience of traditional rural lifestyle.





The principles followed by MET in project development are:

- Our projects are selected together with local people and address real needs
- Local authorities are informed and involved in the process
- The projects are implemented by MET together with the local community
- We apply the local know-how, traditional practices and techniques
- We empower locals to take over and develop project results further
- Our interventions are progressive and continuous

Legal form and governance

Mihai Eminescu Trust was founded in 2000, in Romania, by the board members of the UK organisation Mihai Eminescu Trust. The Mihai Eminescu Trust UK was founded in London in 1986. Before 1990, the aim of the trust was to help Romanian philosophers, writers and historians keep in touch with western universities, particularly Oxford and Cambridge.

In 1988-1989 the trust became aware of Ceausescu's *systematisation* plan to raze to the ground thousands of Romania's historic villages and to rehouse their inhabitants in apartments. For this reason MET asked for the support of HRH the Prince of Wales, who prepared a speech about the villages' destruction for the London Civic Society. After his speech in 1989, the Prince of Wales wanted to visit Romania – and in 1998 MET supported him to plan a visit to some Saxon villages.

After 1990 the trust's scope was increased and began protecting not only individual buildings but revitalising whole villages and their communities.

In 1999 the trust's board decided to establish a Romanian non-profit organisation to preserve the cultural and natural heritage of Transylvania, especially in the Saxon villages with fortified churches, some of which were recognised by the UNESCO World Heritage.

At present, the governance of the Mihai Eminescu Trust in Romania is in the hands of the board of trustees, composed of a president, two members and five advisers.

MET is managed by Caroline Fernolend, general manager and president, Alexandru Neagu as deputy manager, and Michaela Türk, as director of project planning and implementation. Liza Bunescu is the communication manager; Noemi Simo is the MET architect and Anca Maria Costea is the project manager assistant.

With projects of over €300,000 every year, the MET also works with other consultants and collaborators. At community level we work closely with local partners, who are either formally associated in an NGO or work together in informal initiative groups. People in the communities are not employed by MET: they work as volunteers or are paid for services delivered.

The tools used for project planning are the Development Strategy of MET, the Sustainable Development Plans elaborated for different villages, the General and Zonal Urban Plans, management plans of heritage sites, local surveys, also the results of need identification and prioritisation activities elaborated together with the community.

Funding system and financial management

Different sources of funding and grants have made complementary contributions to the implementation of the Whole Village concept. The biggest value in this project is the authenticity of the living heritage and the responsible involvement of the community members in the revitalisation and valorisation process of Transylvania's diverse cultural heritage.

In the course of the years, since MET started its activity in Romania, the key sources of funding have shifted from mainly fundraising activities in the past, to currently coming from successful applications for different grant programs and project funding. In the 2000s fundraising activities were carried out by MET in the UK and the main donors were private foundations such as the Packard Foundation (US) and the Horizon Foundation (Netherlands).

Since 2007 MET Romania has mainly raised the funds for its activity on its own, by applying for different public grant programmes from the following sources:

- Public grant programmes and projects, such as EEA Grants and EU Structural Funds;

- Romanian public funding programmes, such as AFCN from the Ministry of Culture, the Romanian Ministry for Youth and Sports and the Ministry for Environment;
- Applying for funds from CSR campaigns from companies such as Accor Hotels and Rompetrol;
- To a lesser extent, private donors continue to be a source of funding for MET to date.

The amount invested in the Transylvanian villages – for heritage restoration, community development, agriculture, reforestation, entrepreneurship, between 2000 and 2022, from the above-mentioned sources – amounts to approximately €13 million.

Key partners for the restoration projects are: Mihai Eminescu Trust London and Horizon Foundation. Mihai Eminescu Trust Romania sends yearly applications to these two organisations to support different restoration projects in the 10 Transylvanian villages. The grant programmes of these two partners are limited to a certain amount per year, currently to a maximum of €100,000 – €150,000 per year. Due to the constant support of these long-term partners, MET has succeeded in ensuring continuity in the implementation of the Whole Village concept. The grants received from these key partner organisations are crucial for the implementation of the restoration programme, to preserve the authentic traditional streetscape, being one of the very few funding possibilities for privately owned historical buildings. No other public funding programmes support investments in privately owned buildings. Historical buildings of public property or public use were restored by applying for European and international public funding programmes like Culture 2000, EEA Grants, NGO Fund, Swiss-Romanian Cooperation Programme, US Ambassadors Fund for Cultural Preservation and Active Citizens Fund.

Romanian grant programmes for restoration works are limited, consisting of small-scale grants for "soft" interventions are available from the Ministry of Culture, the Ministry for Youth and the Ministry for Environment.

The main income source are non-reimbursable funding programmes, and they differ from year to year, depending on the programme/project duration.

Financial year of Mihai Eminescu Trust in 2021

Income of MET in 2021 = €722,910

(for the year 2022 the financial situation was finalised at the end of May 2023)

Funding obtained under various public non-reimbursable funding programmes = €672,320

Other income = €26,950

Donations = €20,750

Sponsorships = €2,025

Forward 3.5% (private persons can redirect 3.5% of their income tax to NGOs) = €565

Services rendered = €300

Expenses of MET in 2021 = €619,933

(for the year 2022 the financial situation was finalised at the end of May 2023)

1. Services performed by collaborators = €249,300

2. CSR programme (saplings for the reforestation programme, tools for planting and equipment for participating schools) = €160,230

3. Salary expenses = €140,750

4. Depreciation expenses = €27,000

5. Administrative and operating expenses = €17,200

6. Expenses with consumables = €14,203

7. Duties and taxes expenses = €6,800

8. Other expenses = €4,450

Sustainability

From the beginning of its work MET invested progressively a lot of resources to revitalise and build the new community. The traditional sense of community has been significantly affected by the previous totalitarian communist regime which aimed at destroying the sense of community by exacerbating individualism and scepticism. MET dedicated a lot of time to organising gatherings with people, encouraging them to speak up, debate and develop a common voice, to motivate them to participate in the development of “common wellbeing”. The ultimate common aim was to improve living conditions for the community. The challenges faced in engaging the community were: the lack of trust of local people in their own forces, initially there was a lack of trust also in the approach of MET, seeking to involve and increase the sense of responsibility of the community members. It took a while to find a “common language” to gradually make the community members understand that modernisation should be done in a sensible way, which did not damage the cultural and

natural heritage, but would still improve their livelihoods. The villagers were “learning by doing” with the support of the MET team and traditional restoration experts.

Links with social entrepreneurship

Mihai Eminescu Trust shares some objectives with social enterprises such as community development, sustainability, and social impact, and it operates as an NGO rather than a business entity. NGOs like the Mihai Eminescu Trust typically rely on grants, donations, and other forms of funding to carry out their work, whereas social enterprises generate revenue through the sale of goods or services with a social or environmental mission.

Mihai Eminescu Trust has established two social enterprises, where MET is sole shareholder:

Pro Mihai Eminescu Trust (Pro MET) – is the first enterprise established by MET, and one of the first companies in Romania to produce certified organic apples since 2003. The idea behind the establishment of this small business was not only to manage an apple orchard in the village of Mălâncrav, where traditional apple varieties are still found, but also to create jobs in the village and reinvest part of the profit in community development projects carried out in the village. The competition in this market, as well as the challenges faced by organic agriculture in Romania, make fulfilling this mission difficult. Buying organic apple juice produced in Mălâncrav contributes to the development of this village's community;

Experience Transylvania (ET) – is the second enterprise established by MET in 2013 with the aim of developing and managing tourism in the villages of Transylvania more efficiently. Experience Transylvania is, in fact, a network of heritage houses in eight villages. In these villages, Experience Transylvania manages together with local partners 20 guesthouses, traditional Saxon houses, and 2 Maramureş houses that can be rented. In many of them, the experience is similar to spending a night at the Village Museum. MET managed to preserve them as they were 100-200 years ago, bringing them into the present through interior design that combines traditional elements with modern functions. The houses are leased by MET to Experience Transylvania, which is a social enterprise, specifically focusing on promoting sustainable tourism and preserving the cultural and natural heritage of the Transylvania region. It operates with the aim of creating positive social and environmental impact while generating revenue through tourism-related activities.

As a social enterprise, Experience Transylvania combines commercial activities with a social mission. It seeks to provide authentic and sustainable travel experiences that benefit both travellers and local communities. The enterprise maintains a close collaboration with local families. Experience Transylvania oversees the booking system for the guesthouses, while the families responsible for managing the guesthouses ensure that the houses are prepared to welcome tourists and provide meals as booked by tourists. The revenue for Experience Transylvania comprises the accommodation fees, deducting the costs associated with house cleaning and laundry preparation. On the other hand, the local families receive income for their services in cleaning the house, doing the laundry, and cooking and serving the meals.

ET provides additional tourism-related services, such as organising visits and workshops with artisans, farmers and community organisations. The aim is to create tourism products and experiences that not only contribute to the local economy but also help preserve traditional crafts, cultural practices and natural resources. This initiative is designed to support local livelihoods while promoting sustainable tourism practices. Spending a vacation in these houses offers a slightly more special tourism experience – it is not simply accommodation – and this experience directly contributes to generating additional income for multiple families in the villages.

Overall, Experience Transylvania serves as a notable example of a social enterprise in the context of sustainable tourism. By integrating social and environmental objectives into its operations, it contributes to the well-being of local communities, promotes cultural preservation, and supports the sustainable development of Transylvania.

Social economy plays a significant role in the structure of the Whole Village concept, on community and individual levels, to create positive social change, address community needs, and promote sustainable development. For MET, on the organisational level, social economy enterprises play a significant role in accomplishing its mission to revitalise rural communities through heritage valorisation.

The social economy structures developed and supported by MET within the Whole Village concept in the 10 rural communities in Transylvania are grassroots initiatives, which are fostered to grow progressively. They aim to create:

- Local employment: by providing employment opportunities within the community, they contribute to reducing unemployment rates, improving livelihoods, and fostering economic self-sufficiency;
- Community development: the social economy enterprises actively participate in consolidating the local community. They address specific social, environmental or cultural needs by offering services or products that meet those needs. For example, a social enterprise might focus on providing affordable housing, sustainable energy solutions, or locally produced organic food;
- Social innovation: the social economy enterprises introduce new ways of addressing social inclusion, active citizenship and shared responsibility for the "common wellbeing";
- Collaboration and cooperation: social economy enterprises foster collaboration and cooperation among various stakeholders within the community. They often engage in partnerships with other local businesses, NGOs, public authorities, or other communities.

The added value of the Whole Village concept in close relationship with fostering social economy structures at community level generates:

- Social impact: reducing poverty, improving access to education, supporting marginalised groups, and promoting environmental sustainability. By addressing these issues, it contributes to the common well-being and increases the quality of life for inhabitants;
- Economic development: the Whole Village concept generates economic activities within the community, creating jobs and income opportunities. It also supports local partnerships and local supply chains, and contributes to maintaining incomes within the community;
- Empowerment and inclusion: the Whole Village concept focuses also on empowering individuals and marginalised groups by identifying meaningful employment opportunities, basic training, and skills development;
- Sustainability: the Whole Village concept aims to fulfil the sustainability objectives, promoting social and environmental responsibility.



Correspondence with New European Bauhaus values

SUSTAINABILITY

The concept was built on sustainable principles. The Whole Village concept integrates:

- **Social sustainability**: Special attention is paid to the community in project development and implementation. The empowerment and capacity building activities aim to consolidate community members to be active citizens. The informal educational activities dedicated to the young generation have become an important part of our work;
- **Environmental sustainability**: The MET restoration principles: functional conversion of historic buildings, repair not renew, minimal intervention on historic buildings, reversibility of interventions, save and reuse building materials, repairs in the spirit of the historical building. Use of local traditional building materials contributes to preserving the authentic village cultural landscape. The natural and agricultural landscape around the villages is of equal importance in the implementation of the Whole Village concept;
- **Economic sustainability**: MET works to keep as much as possible the incomes in the community, to attract resources to continue its interventions in these communities, and identify together with locals opportunities to develop the local economic partnership.

The local economic partnership is built around the responsible cultural tourism developed in time by MET in these communities. The principles followed by MET to develop the local economy are:

1. The local cultural and natural values (landscapes, historical buildings, traditions, lifestyle, etc.) represent resources, and their exploitation for tourist purposes must not lead to their destruction or depletion. In this respect MET works with the inhabitants to make them aware of these values, to bring them close to heritage, to involve community members as much as possible in diverse activities, to support local initiatives, to make people proud of their heritage and highlight traditional techniques;
2. Tourism should not replace the traditional occupation of the rural population – agriculture. Tourism must rely on agriculture. MET supports traditional agricultural practices, sheep and cow breeders, encourages farmers to maintain old fruit and vegetable varieties, and local farmers' associations. The agricultural landscape around the villages is an important component of the cultural landscape created over centuries by past generations. Also, reforestation activities are important to maintain wildlife and wild flora;

3. Most of the income from the tourism activities stays in the community. To achieve this goal MET organises regular community meetings, during which we build the motivation, interest and involvement of the inhabitants to be part of the economic circle. MET guides and counsels locals individually and special attention is paid to vulnerable categories, who become part of the local economic partnership.

For MET, responsible cultural tourism means providing accommodation in traditional guesthouses, where "normal" tourism standards are not fulfilled – for example no TV or wifi are available. These guesthouses are historic buildings, restored by MET according to its restoration principles, with the rehabilitation work done by local craftsmen. Handmade bricks and tiles are used to maintain the authenticity of the building, only lime and sand mortar is used and wooden elements are replaced only if necessary. Traditional wooden window frames are repaired and sealed to maintain thermal comfort. The few blacksmiths in the area forge the ironmongery for furniture, doors and windows. The Roma population makes the different storage baskets and wickerwork. Some women still have a loom and weave carpets, tablecloths, curtains and draperies.

All these people from the community contribute to setting up the guesthouse. The guesthouses are owned by MET or by private individuals, but all are maintained by families from the community. These families prepare the guesthouses for tourists, they cook and serve traditional dishes, prepared using most ingredients from their own household or that of other farmers in the villages. Tourists can experience everyday life in the villages, they can take part in daily agricultural activities or can visit local craft workshops, take a horse and cart ride around the village or undertake other recreational activities. Discussing and being in a constant relationship with the inhabitants of these communities is crucial for the sustainability of the undertakings. Preparing inhabitants to interact with visitors and motivating them to share responsibility for the entire community is a long process, and results are seen in the longer term. To understand better the entire process of sustainable development, MET focuses on informal educational activities dedicated to children and youngsters, the future adults of these communities.

AESTHETICS

The authentic streetscape and landscape around the village, which MET is trying to preserve and sustainably develop, are one of the main attractions for visitors and tourists. Forgotten crafts, agricultural practices and gastronomy are other important elements of an enriched experience for visitors. MET works to promote these communities as niche cultural tourism destinations, because the Whole Village concept, which stands behind tourism development, is the most important. MET works actively at community level to build a strong local partnership, a heritage community which is aware of the cultural heritage, the natural resources and the opportunities offered by heritage valorisation.



INCLUSION

The beginning of MET's activity has been focused on saving the built heritage and giving local people an opportunity to become part of the rehabilitation process, training them and involving them in restoration work. Creating economic opportunities for locals was the second stage of the Whole Village concept. Cultural tourism development was the first option, to promote the built heritage, to offer local accommodation and local food. Soon also other tourism related services were developed by inhabitants. This economic development around the cultural and natural heritage always took into consideration what inhabitants considered suited them. Organising community meetings to discuss the needs, the potential solutions for the problems identified, and thoughts for the future, are an important aspect, in which the MET team invests time and human resources.

From the beginning of its work, MET has dedicated a lot of projects to the inclusion of Roma, as this minority has an increased presence in Transylvanian villages, as they had moved into the houses left behind by the Saxons. A particularity of the Roma population in Romania is that many Roma do not declare themselves as such in official censuses. One of the general reasons is that they do not wish to be part of a minority which is discriminated against – because the Roma minority is subject to many negative stereotypes. Thus, the official data do not reflect the real number of Roma in Romania and the Transylvanian villages; in reality this number is higher than the official database states. This situation has created difficulties in accessing grants designated for Roma communities. Therefore, the approach of MET for social inclusion targets the entire community, instead of just a part of it. This has also helped to decrease the perceived differences between Roma, Romanians and Saxons, thus reducing discrimination.

During the activity of MET, by encouraging the participation of community members, especially the Roma community in formal and informal training, certification and personal development activities, MET created opportunities for the Roma minority and sought to give them the courage to believe in their own capacity and skills. The effects in this regard are that Roma families also benefit from the restoration work carried out in these villages, as well as

from the cultural tourism taking place in these villages, through the authentic services and products they offer: accommodation, meals, felt products, woollen socks, horse and cart rides, demonstration of crafts: blacksmithing, manual brick and tile making, cheese production and other crafts.



EVIDENCE/JUSTIFICATION FOR GOOD PRACTICE

Hard evidence:

Cultural and natural heritage

- 700 historical buildings rehabilitated
- 3 million trees planted
- 7 school orchards were planted and pupils take care of the fruit trees

People and skills

- 400 locals trained in traditional building skills, agro-tourism, cooking, English
- 48 locals trained in agro-tourism
- 28 locals trained in cooking
- 40 locals taught basic vocabulary in English
- 100 local jobs created within MET projects
- 140 temporary local jobs during tourist season

Rural entrepreneurs

- 20 master craftsmen helped to set up a business
- 4 blacksmith and 3 carpentry workshops supported
- 2 brick and tile kilns built
- 20 villagers helped to establish their own guesthouses
- 2 weavers supported to produce and sell traditional carpets and embroideries
- 1 organic orchard and an apple juice factory
- 1 tourism enterprise
- 1 enterprise for wood pellet production
- 7 community associations – social enterprises founded and supported



Education

- 8,500 pupils from rural areas helped to plant more than 2.200,000 trees under a reforestation campaign supported by Accor-Orbis Hotels
- 200 children have participated in the thematic summer camps organised by MET, since 2012.
- 75 children took for 1 semester an optional initiation course in architecture

Civil society consolidation

- 10 “Whole Village” communities developing
- The Whole Village concept included in the “Europa Nostra Educational Toolkit – Civil Engagement”
- MET is a member of FARO community network
- MET is a founding member of the Federation “TransylvaNET”
- MET is a founding member of the Destination Management Organisation “Transylvanian Highlands”

Soft evidence:

- Winner of the Grand Prize of the Civil Society Gala in Romania, “The Whole Village Project”, 2010
- Winner of the Art and Culture Award, “The Whole Village Project”, Civil Society Gala Romania, 2010
- Winner of the Excellence Award for Promotion and Conservation of Sibiu Cultural Heritage, Ministry of Culture, 2010
- Winner of 1st and 2nd Prizes at the Green Apple Awards for Service to Cultural Heritage Conservation in Viscri and Mălâncrav villages, 2009
- Honourable Mention of the Art and Culture Award, “Restoration of the Evangelical Church in Florești”, Civil Society Gala in Romania, 2009
- Honourable Mention of the Art and Culture Award, “Restoration of the Manor in Mălâncrav, Sibiu County”, Civil Society Gala in Romania, 2008
- Winner of Top Prize for Dedicated Service to Cultural Heritage Conservation, Europa Nostra and European Commission, 2006
- Winner of Austrian Government Award for Eco-Friendly Tourism, Vienna 2006
- Winner of the Cultural Heritage Award, Bucharest Business Week, 2005

- Winner of Responsible Tourism Award for Innovation, London 2004
- Winner of the Excellence Diploma for Conservation-Restoration and Capitalisation of Heritage, Ministry of Culture, State Secretary of National Cultural Heritage, 2003



OUTCOMES FOR THE DIFFERENT STAKEHOLDERS

Individual level: improved quality of life, improved access to public services, higher educational attainment, more local jobs, higher financial incomes

Community level: attractiveness of the community for new inhabitants (coming mainly from big cities), a collaborative local network – local work for the common well-being

Local authorities: improved dialogue in local communities, more prosperous communities, more income from economic activities in the local budget

Regional authorities: higher attractiveness of the region, higher income from tourism activities

National authorities: best practice model, which can be adapted and transferred to other communities

Schools: higher school attendance, higher educational attainment, improved attractiveness of learning activities thanks to the informal educational activities deployed in the communities

Universities: students choose MET projects as case studies for their research activity, students visit the Whole Village communities to study different aspects of sustainable rural development

Tourism agencies: enriched tourism offer, niche activities are offered to visitors, individual and personalised tourism offers are created in these communities.

Private sector: CSR programme opportunities for companies for reforestation activities

STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES

| Strengths | Weaknesses |
|--|---|
| Community level: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Locals participate and are involved in community life; revived community spirit; increased responsibility Local partnerships are built Improved quality of life (local jobs, direct income, local infrastructure, etc.) Support for business start-ups | Community level: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Locals rely on MET activities as main income resource The local population displays little interest and engagement if there is no perceived immediate economic gain; this is related to the poor quality of economic resources |
| Heritage restoration projects: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> High impact in cultural and natural heritage conservation Use of traditional methods and materials Complementarity of MET projects to national development and conservation programmes | Heritage restoration projects: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Difficult to implement Constant growing claims Constant input from MET after the implemented projects No long-term partnerships with national and international institutions to financially support heritage restoration projects |
| Entrepreneurship: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> High impact in reviving the social and economic life of communities Traditional crafts and techniques are supported and promoted New use of abandoned civil and religious heritage Double use of heritage, e.g. dwelling and guesthouse Rich cultural and eco-tourism offer Support and promotion of heritage and local products Preserving identity and authenticity | Entrepreneurship: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Locals rely on MET “bringing” clients Low capacity of locals to manage the bureaucracy of the businesses created High prices and not always high standards Changing demands of the market No constant income from tourism/agriculture related businesses |

| Opportunities | Threats |
|---|--|
| <p>Community level:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Additional income for locals • Strength of the community spirit • Beautiful and clean villages • Opportunities for locals to make their own contribution to village development • More comfort and a better environment • Economic development of the region | <p>Community level:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dependence on MET • Envy among locals • High prices of real estate • Low interest of owners, they wish for "quick money" • Not enough financial contribution from the owner or other co-financing sources |
| <p>Heritage restoration projects:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Partnerships with local authorities • Partnerships with local, national and international organisations • Efficiency and sustainability of projects | <p>Heritage restoration projects:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High investments with rather high risks • Little or no support of local authorities for project implementation • Political and legislative changes discourage and slow down new grant applications |
| <p>Entrepreneurship:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development of niche services/products • Form partnerships with similar businesses • Target new markets, e.g. bigger cities • Know-how exchanges with other rural entrepreneurs • Good means to promote MET actions • Potential for attracting new partners • Opportunities for other small businesses/services | <p>Entrepreneurship:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased regulations and taxes • Changes in customer buying preferences • Dependence on MET • Economic development attracts opportunists • Danger that locals want only profit • Tourism development alters the traditional/authentic way of living of the community |

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