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REGIONAL IDENTIFICATION IN PRESENT DAY ROMANIA.
THE CASE STUDY OF SUCEAVA COUNTY

Abstract

In the aftermath of the 1989 Revolution, Romanian mainstream culture set out to reclaim the pre-Communist legacy of the country. The ‘golden age’ of interwar was the obvious choice; both popular and academic debates on Romanian identity looked back at the time of the so-called Greater Romania. The present day Suceava County is singular in its regional identification with the former Habsburg Duchy of Bukovina. The Austrian occupation of the Northern part of the historical principality of Moldova between 1775 and 1918 provides an identity building opportunity to the locals who seem to find fault with Moldovan regional designation. Bukovina comes into the picture of the hospitality industry mostly, yet there is more to the Bukovinian identification. The literature published by Suceava County Council appears to employ a marketing strategy for the same hospitality industry that dwells on what is, essentially, the colonial past of the area. At odds with Romanian self-identification, the narrative of Bukovina underpins the discourse of local government as a means to foster brand awareness for the entire county, although Southern Suceava was never incorporated into the Habsburg/Austro-Hungarian Empire.

Keywords: Bukovina, regional identification, cultural politics, Romania

1. Short survey of national fault lines in Bukovinian (self-)identification

With the collapse of Communism in Eastern Europe, the cultural politics of the interwar nation state came back into the mainstream of Romanian life. It feels safe to say that nationalism was very much on the rise, prior to the country’s EU accession in 2007. The ‘golden age’ of Greater Romania was the obvious choice made in both popular and academic debates on Romanian identity. Effectively, “the ethno-cultural idea of the nation and the idea of a national history” (Petrescu, 2001: 283) were the cornerstones of Romanian discourse on the pre-Communist legacy of the country as well as on the future of the nation state. Factually, Bucharest’s post-1989 cultural politics made the most out of both “interwar and Communist legacies [that] have had a significant influence on” various issues at stake, “parliamentary development” (Roper, 2004:160) included. At least to some extent, the way Romanians came to terms with their post-Communist world was a return to Greater Romania’s orthodoxy and nationalism. The long-standing divide between Autochthonists and Westernizers “in Romania’s political imagery” (Antohei, 1998: 36) surfaced once more, interwar style. Everything was added to the rhetoric of national Communism, which made Ceausescu’s regime rather famous (Carey, 2004: XIX).

As a matter of principle, the interwar kingdom and Communist Romania tried to clamp down on centrifugal, regional identities. In the words of Irina Livezeanu, “the state on the cultural offensive”

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(Livezeanu, 2000: 29) best summarizes the agenda of Bucharest to secure Romanization throughout the country. As far as Bukovina is concerned, the Austrian past was just another proof of the Romanians' successful struggle to achieve self-determination. Much like Bessarabia, Bukovina was erased from history books in the Popular Republic of Romania (1947-1965) while the Socialist Republic gradually moved to approach the topic from the same perspective of a central national and unitary state. Against all odds, in the Northeast of Romania, by popular consent and local government support (i.e., Suceava County Council), the story of the former Habsburg Duchy of Bukovina gathered speed from the 1990s onwards and, eventually, reached national media. The attempt to recall the memory of the multicultural Habsburg crownland builds on loyalty to a pre-national sense of identity. Yet, countrywide narrative knowledge about Bukovina has everything to do with the hospitality industry of present-day Suceava County. In other words, the Southern part of what used to be the easternmost province of the Austro-Hungarian Empire boasts the heritage of an idealized multi-ethnic society, which is presently put on display for prospective Romanian and foreign holidaymakers.

Conclusively, dissociation of national feeling is missing from the story of the natives' infatuation with former Austrian rule. However, there is more to the Habsburg-given name of the province than a marketing gimmick.

Suceava County Council resorts to a pre-modern, national self-identification as a means to articulate a distinctive indigenous character, which should benefit local entrepreneurs. The assumption of cultural supremacy over Moldovans also lies at the heart of the issue. The Romance-speaking population of Bukovina, once Moldovan, expects recognition for the time their ancestors were subjected to Viennese rule. The claim of cultural overlap between Orthodox Moldovans and the prestige German language/Austrian civilization is what drives forward the goal of raising awareness about the fulfilled civilizing mission of German settlers in Romanian lands.

Remarkably, the language of advertising breaks new ground in Romanian literary culture. Romania's modern culture is indebted to what has always been the political agenda of national history. The cultural politics of the nation state enforced a view of the past that, basically, rephrased the thesis of indigenous and uninterrupted Romanian presence on the area that overlaps Greater Romania. Traditionally, the borderlands of the country have been the subject of competing ethnic histories, and Bukovina is no exception. Interwar and Communist Romania came up with academic and popular accounts of the area's past that are almost exclusively concerned with the historical rights of the Romanian nation to Bukovina. The civilizing outcomes of large-scale demographic engineering undertaken by the Habsburg Empire from 1775 onwards in the territory seized from the principality of Moldova was either downplayed or entirely overlooked, which is not the case with by German scholarship on Bukovina.

German and Ukrainian historiography is keen on the modernizing agency of the Habsburg Empire, while Romanian historians make the point of the so-called 'theft' or 'rape' of Bukovina. For instance, 'non-Romanian' historiography does not consider at length the circumstances of Bukovina's foundation. Most of the times, Ukrainian and German-speaking scholars dwell on the Josephinist brand of Enlightenment brought to the orthodox Moldovan and Ruthenian peasants of North Moldova by the Austrian state.

Conclusively, Romanian historiography has consistently emphasized Habsburg scheming as well as the bribery of Ottoman officials (Iacobescu, 1993), which together led to the occupation of northern Moldova. Unquestionably, "the so-called 'theft of Bukovina' (răpirea Bucovinei) by the Austrians, coined by Kogălniceanu and embraced by Iorga, Nistor and Bălan" (van Drunen, 2013: 67) has gained currency in the mainstream of Romanian life. For example, the current partition of Bukovina between Ukraine (former USSR) and Romania has come to be known as "the second rape" (Căruntu, 2001: 279) and very idea of "the Habsburg territorial rape of Bukovina" is very much alive (Șandru, 2013: 46). The exchange over Bukovina between Romania and USSR was always heated enough, at least up to the entry of Russian troops in the Eastern European country at the end of World War II. As far as Romanian historiography is concerned, once the popular republic had effectively replaced the Romanian kingdom, everything was put on halt, only to surface again with the downfall of the Eastern bloc. At any rate, official Soviet propaganda listed Romania among Germany's allies, which meant that "Romanians had been vilified for years, and in the middle of 1940 the Soviet media raged against 'Romanian boyars and gendarmes' oppressing Bessarabia and northern Bukovina" (Berkhoff, 2012: 194).

Meanwhile, the original wording of Moldovan outrage at the Austrian purchase of the North of the country seems to have caught on with some 21st century English-speaking scholars:

Maria Theresa was firmly opposed to such schemes, believing that Vienna had earlier abandoned the Ottoman empire when it was an ally and should not complete the betrayal by seizing territory when it was in no position to resist. The Empress' moral approach to foreign policy was as rare as it was to be irrelevant. [...] This was a quadrilateral of territory [Bukovina] wedged between Transylvania and the new acquisition of Galicia. Its strategic value was considerable... [...] Its economic value at the time was judged to be much less: in 1773 Joseph II pronounced it a 'real desert', though its agrarian development would later be notable. (Scott, 2001: 245)

Nevertheless, such a reading is deemed to be "Romanian nationalist in tone and strongly anti-Austrian" (*Ibidem*: 245), as it was the volume "entitled *Rapt de la Bukovine, d'après des documents authentiques* (Paris, 1875), which the British Library catalogue attributes to D. A. Sturdza" (*Ibidem*: 245). The book, written in French, seems to have introduced to the Western world the Bukovinian question from a Moldovan/Romanian point of view. Authored by Kogălniceanu or Sturdza, *Rapt de la Bukovine* is a seminal statement of nationalist politics in Bukovina and phrases the Romanian argument in terms that the country's literary culture has dutifully appropriated and never actually questioned, throughout the 20th century.

This characteristically Romanian interpretation of the abuse two colonial East European Empires perpetrated against the principality of Moldova is largely dismissed by present-day Bukovinian self-identification in Suceava County. Instead, the County Council and the hospitality industry of Southern Bukovina have a different agenda. Their joint discourse buys into German-written histories, which stress that, as early as 1775 – when Emperor Joseph II (1741-1790) incorporated the province into the empire, Austria brought to the already mentioned Moldovan and Ruthenian 'desert' the values of European Enlightenment. In other words, German-speaking settlers in the area (Germans and Jews) were as much Bukovinian as they were German (Applegate, 1990) and this is the main reason why, eventually, the crownland earned a reputation as 'Europe in miniature' (Kot, 2007: 109). The cosmopolitan and multi-ethnic Czernowitz is something of a pre-national miracle that celebrates the achievements of the Habsburg state. In Suceava County, this translates into the Bukovinian civilization obviously superior to the Moldovan one.

However, an unmistakable colonial pattern is described in current scholarship on the "German legacy in East Central Europe" (Glajar, 2004): "The economic exploitation of raw materials in Bukovina and its financial dependence on Viennese banks, which redirected their profits to the German regions of the empire, are further examples of the Austro-Germans' colonial practice in Eastern Europe" (*Ibidem*: 7).

2. Suceava County Council tourist guidebooks

In communist Romania, picture books about Suceava County have been published since the early 1970s¹. They mostly focused on the heritage of Moldovan monasteries and churches, which were all built prior to the Habsburg conquest of the area. All of them are dutifully listed in the 21st tourist guidebooks of the Suceava County Council. By large consensus, these public places of worship, still very much in use, are deemed to be compelling proofs of traditional Romanian civilization.

Three tourist guidebooks that have been edited by the County Council since 2013 provide insight into the present of regional (self-)identification in Suceava. I approach them with a view to tracking down the way they shape the language of popular literature about the county. The genre appropriates the history of Bukovina for commercial purposes, and, in the end, for building among the natives a sense of belonging to Central Europe rather than to the very fringe of Eastern Europe, i.e., to the Ottoman-ruled historical principality of Moldova. The Austrian half of the Habsburg, Dual Monarchy is put to good use: the myth of Bukovina sets apart Suceava from Moldova and documents

¹ One of the most famous is Ion Miclea's 1976 *Dulce Bucovina*, [*Sweet Bucovina*], Bucharest: Editura Sport-Turism.

the case for the Western credentials of all people living in Suceava County. The aim of the above-mentioned English-translated texts is to showcase the distinctive Bukovinian character of Suceava and of its citizens.

The public discourse of the local government body (i.e., the County Council) should help explain what the regional establishment feels is worth being said in English about Suceava and, importantly, what must go unmentioned as well.

One of the most conspicuous choices made by all three guidebooks is the fact that the place names of 'Suceava' (County) and 'Bukovina' tend to be employed interchangeably. As a result, the claim to the heritage of the Habsburg crownland is effectively reinforced and such a rhetorical expedient has further political meanings. All three brochures make a stand on behalf of 'Bucovina'², as recorded in Romanian language and modern literary culture, while, at the same time, attempt to move away from the strictures of classic national historiography, better said, away from the Bucovina of Romanian history textbooks. Throughout the 20th century, the issue of 'Bucovina' in Romanian history books has been a case in point of the cultural politics enforced by the establishment of the nation state. Simplistically said, Bukovina and Bessarabia have been 'returned to the motherland' at the time of Greater Romania (1919-1940), cancelled altogether from history books at the time of the Romanian People's Republic (1947-1965), and sometimes tentatively mentioned in the history books of the Socialist Republic of Romania (1965-1989), respectively.

*Spirituality in Bucovina*³ (2013), *Rural Tourism in Bucovina*⁴ (2013), and *Bucovina*⁵ (2014) point to a local and rather coherent narrative about the Suceava County. On the one hand, they campaign for the Romanian spelling of the place-name 'Bucovina'. Instead of the better-known English 'Bukovina' or the German 'Bukowina', readers find out about 'Bucovina'. This is telling of the fact that, most of the times, there is little room in the documentary literature published by the County Council for anything else but the Romanian take on the question of 'Bukowina'/'Bukovina'. On the other hand, the overlapping use of Suceava and Bucovina goes against what traditional Romanian historiography believes to be a shared (German and Ukrainian) manner of advocating westernization by way of Habsburg imperialism. In other words, the self-identification in Suceava County openly credits the Viennese take-over of North Moldova with making the region modern.

In the early 21st century, both Suceava County Council and the hospitality industry of the area seem to acknowledge the emancipating action of the Austrian conquest and of the policies carried out by the Habsburg Empire in this part of the country, otherwise depicted as a cradle of Romanian civilization. *Spirituality in Bucovina*, published by the "National Centre for Tourism Information and Promotion, Suceava County Council", approaches the self-evident topic of the area's multi-ethnic heritage. Public Christian worship seems to have been the cornerstone of self-identification in the Habsburg crownland and travelling for pleasure in Suceava entails such heritage tours. "Romanian civilization and culture" (*SB*, 2013: 1) are mentioned from the very beginning, and 18 of the brochure's 42 pages record "Romanian orthodox spiritual routes". However, everything is done in order to prove the Bukovinian credentials of the county. The story is very much in line with the self-aggrandizing style of national historiography and promotional literature, which turn out to share the same old political agenda of competing ethnic/national identities in disputed borderlands. Considering that close to a half of the guidebook deals with Romanian civilization, an expected and desirable Romanian commitment to current European values is to be read in the opening sentences:

Bucovina is a brilliant example of inter-ethnic cooperation, launching the famous expression "homo bucovinensis", the prototype of the tolerant person, who speaks at least two languages and who offers a model of peaceful inter-ethnic cohabitation. The historical and cultural past of Bucovina, a model of ethnic, religious and cultural tolerance offered by this historical region, keeps the interest of specialists and large public constantly awakened and it may offer a model for a united Europe. (*SB*, 2013: 1)

² In my own writing I use the spelling 'Bucovina' in order to convey the Romanian construal of a region that overlaps Suceava County, while I employ to the German spelling 'Bukovina' in order to point to the historical, Habsburg crownland now divided between Romania and Ukraine.

³ Hereafter *SB* in quotations only.

⁴ Hereafter *RTB* in quotations only.

⁵ Hereafter *B* in quotations only.

In order to paint the picture of “Austrian *Bucovina felix*” (Moskovich, 2010: 238), whose memory is presently being revived in its Southern half, Bukovinian Germans are the obvious next choice. Once Romanian and German achievements are listed in no less than 25 pages, the other communities of Bukovina (i.e., the Polish, Jewish, Armenian, Ukrainian, Russian, Hungarian, Italian, and, finally, the Gipsy) are featured throughout the remaining pages of *Spirituality in Bukovina*.

National/ethnic identities are rhetorical commonplaces that pioneer regional self-identification in Suceava County outside the boundaries of Romanian nationalism. The goal is to inherit the former glory of the Habsburg duchy, more or less void of the Austrian legacy and enhanced with European undertones. Specifically, German settlers in the area are said to have found a “depopulated Bukovina” (SB, 2013: 18), which can only help their cause. They were:

the Swabs, who arrived from the South-West German lands, very good peasants, who settled in the plateau areas [...], the Zipsers, coming from the Zips area (Slovakia and Hungary), carpenters who settled in the mountain area of the province, the Bohemians, who came from the Czech area of Bohemia, well-known merchants. (*Ibidem*: 18)

Emperor Joseph II and his thesis of the Moldovan desert, to be manned by a colonizing elite of highly skilled German-speaking labourers, find their way into the popular version of history written by the Suceava County Council for the benefit of unsuspecting tourists as well as natives. If for good reasons Romanian historiography had troubles to reconcile such a view of Northern Moldova with the heritage sites – the famous monasteries and churches of Suceava advertised by the very guidebook under scrutiny as the proof of “Romanian orthodox spirituality” (*Ibidem*: 2) – strangely enough, for *Spirituality in Bucovina* the picture of the uninhabited and wild North seems to make sense nonetheless. To cut a long story short, “Austrians commissioners [...] made a plan to attract the Germans who were chosen for their professional and organizational abilities” (*Ibidem*: 18). This view of the past is in breach of the ‘age-old truths’ on which Romanian historiography built the myth of Romanian indigenous and uninterrupted presence on the land of present-day Suceava/Bukovina. Likewise, other customary features the Romanian ethnotype is believed to display (such as industriousness, determination, etc.) are found implicitly to be lacking in many respects. Anyway, it credits notions of good will and liberality that should also define the Romance-speaking natives.

As it turned out, the Habsburgs policies brought in the crownland a large Jewish community. The fact that prior to becoming an autonomous province Bukovina was either under military rule (1775-1786) or incorporated into Galicia (1786-1849) meant that the Polish community was also encouraged to settle in the ‘empty’ land of former North Moldova.

Polish catholic churches, the salt mine of Cacica, synagogues and Jewish cemeteries are all indiscriminately mentioned over the next seven pages. Though their achievements make for a shorter list (three page-long), the Poles come first and the “Jewish community” (four page-long list) comes second. The history of Poles in Bukovina begins in 1791. They were brought in from “Wieliczka and Bochnia [...] to exploit the recently found salt deposits” (*Ibidem*: 26). “Polish highlanders” (*Ibidem*: 26) also settled in the mountainous area of Bukovina. The Polish community helps *Spirituality in Bucovina* to pay tribute to a Bukovinian institution. The tradition of setting up lecture halls, which used to cater to the needs of Romanians, Ukrainians, etc. and, essentially, served to foster a sense of national belonging among the people of the duchy, is plain to see in the history of Polish societies for lecture. “The Polish Society for Friendly Help and Lecture” (*Ibidem*: 26), established the so-called ‘Dom Polski’ in Suceava as early as 1903. Lecture halls that go by the name of “houses of culture Dom Polski” (*Ibidem*: 28) were founded in 21st century by Bukovinian Poles in the countryside of Suceava county.

The Romanian elite, traditionally in opposition to the Ukrainian but also to the Jewish ones in the struggle for getting hold of the province, downplays the weight of both Ukrainian heritage and Jewish civilization in Southern Bukovina. They are relegated among the less influential ethnic groups and nations of the crownland – Jews come in second to the Poles of Bukovina while Ukrainian ‘spirituality’ is only listed once the Armenian community living in the region is duly recorded. Ukrainians nevertheless outrank “Russian Lipovens” (*Ibidem*: 37). This is a contentious reading of Ukrainian presence in Bukovina. Fundamentally, it argues that in Romanian Bucovina, i.e., South of

the present-day border between Ukraine and Romania, the Ukrainian ethnonym is yet another name for ‘the Hutuli/the Guzuls’:

Considered as an ethnic group reduced in number, daring and hospitable with a remarkable love for nature, the Hutuli/the Guzuls are found in Bucovina ever since the first decades of the 17th century, living in harmony with the Romanian population [...]. They found favourable conditions to practice their traditional occupations: grazing, [raising livestock], working in the forest, rafting.

The guidebook seems to assume that the ethnic group of the Hutuli/the Guzuls is one and the same with Ukrainian nationals living in 21st century Bucovina. Regardless, it goes on to list instances of the way the modern literary culture of the Ukrainian state is acknowledged on Romanian soil: the busts of Ukraine’s national poet, Taras Shevchenko, and of the writer Olga Kobyleanska (born in Gura Humorului, Bucovina) are mentioned among the examples of Ukrainian spirituality.

Although keen on advertising the myth of Bukovina, the Suceava County Council occasionally points to places that historically never belonged to the Hapsburg duchy. The synagogue of Fălticeni and a number of Lipovan churches exemplify this very choice made by *Spirituality in Bucovina* to make use in an overlapping manner of toponyms such as ‘Suceava’ and ‘Bucovina’. Inadvertently or not, Bukovina grows larger and larger to name the whole of Suceava County. Rather unexpectedly for all those ‘in the know’ with what, essentially, is the map of modern-day Romania, one other guidebook of the County Council, *Bukovina* (2014), makes a statement worth recording. Namely, “Bucovina lies in Northern Moldova and along with Muntenia and Transylvania is one of Romania’s largest historical provinces” (*B*: 1). Historical as it is, the 21st century Romanian Bucovina overlaps Suceava County, which cannot possibly be ‘one of Romania’s largest provinces’, alongside Moldova, Transylvania, etc. Most likely, the attempt to make the case of the legacy Habsburg Bukovina passed on to Romanian Bucovina blurs the boundaries between hard fact and the agenda of the County Council, for example between *Rural Tourism in Bucovina* (2013) and the “Suceava tourist map” (*RTB*: 4).

In point of fact, both of them come to prove the “anthropogenic landscape” of the area, as the header of *RTB*’s odd pages makes it known to the reader. Accordingly, the notions of Suceava and Bukovina should convey the same meaning: a Romanian cradle of Western-like civilization has been consistently in place in the Northeast of present-day Romania since the Austrian take-over of Northern Moldova, if not earlier considering the places of Orthodox public worship already existing in 1775. Allegedly, the place names of Bucovina and Suceava have both led to the same myth of the “familiar place, cosmopolitan and favourable to the development and cohabitation with the other ethnic minorities and with the predominant population too” (*SB*: 39). The choice of words that defines the relationship between one (pre)dominant nation and all other ethnic groups/nations living in the area is meant to establish the truth of the Romanian reading of Bukovinian history. For *Spirituality in Bucovina*, the above-mentioned quotation expresses what the Hungarian community (now almost gone extinct in Suceava County) used to think of the crownland, not to mention of contemporary Suceava. To all intents and purposes, the county of Suceava has successfully replaced Habsburg Bukovina, and, in spite of the fact that the Szekely of Bucovina have left for Canada, USA and Hungary, the living proof of multicultural orthodoxy is to be found in (former) “Hungarian villages: Vornicenii Mari – Joszeffalva, Dornești – Hadik Falva” (*SB*: 39), etc.

Given the significant weight of evidence that regional self-identification is prone to regard Bucovina and Suceava as one and the same ‘thing’, it comes as no surprise that the South-East of Suceava County, “the Fălticeni area” (*RTB*: 71), is confidently counted in Bucovina, regardless of the borders the historical Habsburg crownland actually had prior to 1918.

There is no question that the County Council’s guidebooks look back on the history of Bukovina as if it were “Suceava’s church map” (*SB*: 14). Primarily religious and secondarily local self-identification is at the core of what Suceava County Council is doing to promote both Bukovinianism and the hospitality industry of the area. Yet the agenda of the nation state is conspicuous in the reading of the multi-ethnic landscape of Suceava, irrespective of the pre-modern, anti-secular, and local identity allegedly reclaimed by 21st century citizens of Suceava County in their bid to promote their distinctive West-European heritage. Next to Romanian orthodox churches and monasteries, various other places of worship and burial are mentioned, alongside museums, indigenous customs, traditional architecture, etc. The big picture is one of an old, pastoral world peopled by country-folk. Of various religious

denominations and ethnic background, they should work up the enthusiasm of the average Western urbanite for the beauties of unspoiled nature. The desert of Joseph II, which comes across as a signature theme of Bukovina's literary image, makes a return. The wild, uncultivated tract of land is now "Golden Bucovina":

In the heart of the Carpathian Mountains, there is a place where ancient forests echo tales of mighty heroes, and where gurgling streams tell stories of conquest. It is a place where bears seek refuge in clearings and birds chant their calls against the shady sunset. There is a place where paradise is no longer lost. Golden Bucovina, as Romanians call it, is an intersection where nature and history meet... (B: 1)

Travelling to the Southern half of the historical crownland means to experience the sight of the archetypal Romanian countryside. Country life comes with the territory and peasants working the fields make the picture stand out. *Rural Tourism in Bucovina* says it all from the very beginning: "Free yourself from the stress of everyday urban life!", "Spend your holiday or weekend break in a pleasant and relaxing way!", "Come in Bucovina and experience the authentic country life!" (RTB: 3). This is a world apart from the cosmopolitan city life of Czernowitz, the city that customarily accounts for much of the Bukovina myth. Continental Europe, whose urban ethos the crownland had successfully appropriated at Habsburg times, is expunged from the story of 21st century Suceava. Golden Bucovina is a playground for travelling urbanites heading to the 'heart of the Carpathian mountains'. They are promised a 'story of conquest' and, appropriately, the story is told Romanian-style. The indigenous civilization, in the least famous for city life, is put on display: pottery making, painting/dyeing eggs, home tanning of leather, etc. The legend of urban Bukovina is replaced by the question "what does the Bucovina village offer you?" (my emphasis, *Ibidem*: 3) and the answers are telling: "outstanding natural environment", "beautiful and diverse landscapes", "customs and traditions, folklore" (*Ibidem*: 3), etc. Although the memory of Bukovina Felix is ever present and the key words of homo bukovinensis and Mitteleuropa are spelled out proudly by the hospitality industry of Suceava, they seem to be outside the means and the scope of the County Council's promotional literature.

The above-mentioned guidebooks exemplify the widespread use of specific self-identification patterns, which claim the legitimacy of German-speaking civilization in Eastern Europe. At odds with the traditional French connection of Romanian literary culture, the heritage trails of Suceava County Council bring together sites of cultural, but mostly, of scenic interest. They pave the way for a new, inconsistent sense of belonging to Bukovina/Bucovina, a space that fuses a pre-modern, religious self-identification with regional identity built according to the tenets of the EU.

3. The Romanian divide: academic and popular identification of Bukovina

Considering that myths are not consistent narratives of the past, not to mention the present, the Bukovinian/Bucovinian one is no exception. In 21st century Southern Bukovina, the memory of the prestige Austro-German culture fuels the drive for self-identification with a hard-working and affluent 'Mitteleuropa'. Bukovina has gone down in the folk memory of people living in Suceava County as a case in point of belonging to the values of Western civilization. Furthermore, according to the same German-speaking Europe, the Habsburg heritage should necessarily be part of the present-day EU's ethos, and both the local government and the hospitality industry of the area have risen to the challenge and shown that they have reason enough to claim a European legacy of their own. Simply put, the current construal of Bukovina in Suceava County's literary culture is a successful indigenous approach to "the political and cultural identity of the contemporary Europe in progress" (Pireddu, 2015: 55). Knowledge of a glorious Bukovinian past, other than the one readily available in Romanian history books, is devised from popular and non-Romanian sources. Also, the demand for German goods in Romania must have something to do with the popular appeal of this German-related self-identification that is conspicuous in the North of modern-day Romania.

For the last twenty years, the identity building function of the Bukovina theme in the business of operating tours in Suceava County poses a challenge. On the one hand, a brand of historiographic storytelling brings Bukovina closer than ever to the other, former Habsburg and now Romanian province, Transylvania. On the other hand, the nationalism of resentment (Greenfeld, 1992), which

plagued the Romanian-Hungarian history in Transylvania, is obviously missing from the picture painted by the enthusiasts of Habsburg Bukovina. The local grand narrative comes to prove that the language of tourist guidebooks taps into the “myth of Mitteleuropa, where, so it is argued, different nationalities cohabited peacefully” (Blokker, 2010: 172). The Bukovinian sense of fairness, the famed multi-ethnic community of the so-called ‘Europe in miniature’ sits well with the present condition of Romania, acknowledged as a European member state. Equally so, belonging to a former Austro-Hungarian crownland seems to be a means to emphasize the peculiar identity of Moldovans who have outgrown their former self-identification and moved on to a better, more European one. At stake is the same (Transylvanian) “distinction between Western European/Habsburg versus Ottoman legacies” (*Ibidem*: 172), which Suceava County’s citizens seem eager to appropriate themselves. Fundamentally, what sets apart the two regional self-identifications is the afterlife of Czernowitz whose description has almost fabulous overtones. Allegedly free of bigotry and national attachments, urban Bukovina is romanticized and the assumptions about the Europeanism of Czernowitz spill over into everything connected with the former Habsburg Duchy.

Two undisputed facts (the absence of one major ethnic group and the German-speaking community who served as a buffer between Moldovans/Romanians and Ruthenians/Ukrainians) help most of the concerned parties to take for granted the European way of living as well as the Western governance/economic models in the province prior to World War I. Once the Great War was over, Bukovina’s incorporation into the interwar kingdom of Romania meant that “the process of cultural homogenization, a typical fate for a borderland region long claimed and finally acquired by a nationalistic European state, somewhat simplified the cultural demographics of Bukovina” (Frunchak, 2011: 3). This must be why later Romanian historiography could not have possibly acknowledged a Habsburg “golden age” (Smith, 2009: 36) in the pre-20th century history of the province. No other time of good fortune than the one Greater Romania provided mostly to Bukovinians who self-identified with the cultural politics of the Romanian nation state was conceivable for Romanian-minded scholars. What goes unmentioned is that the interwar nation state pursued a policy of Romanianization in Bukovina:

these discriminatory measures united Ukrainians and Jews of Bukovina in the defence of their rights. Rumanian rulers regarded most of Ukrainians in Bukovina as aliens, Galician migrants and the aboriginal Ukrainians as autochthonous inhabitants of Bukovina ‘who forgot their language’. [...] The policy towards Jews was aimed at breaking their economic power... (Moskovich, 2010: 238)

In other words, once Bukovina joined the mother country, the region might have lost its cosmopolitan sparkle, yet, throughout the 20th century, Romanian historiography was not concerned with such issues and, instead, focused on the traditional thesis of indigenous and uninterrupted Romanian presence on the Bukovinian territory too. However, academic discourse about Habsburg Bukovina in present-day Romania looks beyond the parochial confines of national commandments⁶. For instance, a Suceava-based historian, Stefan Purici, is widely read and acknowledged by both English and German scholarship on Bukovina.

Writing history in accordance with Western standards is, nevertheless, outside the mainstream of Romanian life. I find that tourist brochures are much more effective in bridging the gap between the traditional historiography of the Romanian nation state and Western (mostly Austro-German but also Ukrainian) readings of Bukovinian identification. The promotional literature of the County Council and of the hospitality industry of Romanian Bukovina effectively brings together the agenda of Romanianism (i.e., Romanian nationalism) and the view from outside the country to reach the European audience that might be tempted to holiday in the county of Suceava.

Conclusively, something of a Josephinist Enlightenment is around in contemporary Southern Bukovina. The largely Romanian County of Suceava circulates patterns of national self-identification that break new ground in the mainstream of the country’s popular and literary cultures. Unlike Transylvania, Bukovina sets out to boast a Western legacy and Romanian commitments. Possibly closer to Banat than to anything else in terms of regional (self-)identification in the modern culture of Romania, the myth of Bukovina is readily available in the history of this other 18th-century Habsburg

⁶ To name a few of the most well-known, Mihai Ștefan Ceaușu, Ion Lihaciu, Andrei Corbea-Hoișie.

conquest. The same Josephinist worldview has been consistently at work in Banat and aimed to build an ethnically-diverse society, if not a transnational identity, loyal to the monarchy and to a Germanic culture. The Swabians of Banat retain the same cultural clout in the Romanian literary culture as the Germans of Bukovina. Yet, Banat was part of the Hungarian Kingdom, and the familiar Transylvanian setup of Romanian-Hungarian intercourse throughout history is likely to secure a highly distinctive character for Bukovina among Romanian provinces:

Banat, both a geographical and historical region is currently divided up between three countries: the eastern part lies in Romania [...], the western part in Serbia [...] and a small northern part in Hungary [...]. In 1779, the Banat was incorporated into the Habsburg Kingdom of Hungary. [...] under Habsburg rule, a planned colonization took place which brought German, Hungarian, Slovak, Romanian and Ruthenian settlers to the region. (Duric, 2007: 171).

Regardless of the “colonial character of the Austrian rule in Bukovina” (Glajar, 2004: 14) – that is gradually revealed by literary and cultural studies in the literature of the Habsburg Empire and, ultimately, in the cultural politics of Vienna – it is safe to say that, by metonymy, Bukovina stands for the politically correct Europe everybody knows for a fact. As far as regional self-identification with the ethos of Brussels is concerned, Bucovinianism in present-day Romania is a textbook example, which makes the most out of the Habsburg legacy of historical Bukovina. For one thing, there is the myth of a multi-cultural, German-speaking world, peopled by the so-called *homo bukovinensis*⁷. As the story goes, the urban Bukovinian was educated, had no strong feeling for his Romanian or Ukrainian mother tongue and ethnic background. Allegedly, the citizens of Czernowitz were definitely multilingual, loyal to the Habsburg monarchy and to a Germanic culture on a quest to civilize the Eastern borderlands of the Empire. Secondly, the large Jewish, German-speaking community of Czernowitz thrived before World War I and the city is now thought to have been a safe-haven for “East European Jewry” (Cohen, Frankel, Hoffman, 2010), nothing short of a “Jewish El Dorado” (Rechter, 2010: 207). Everything amounts to anecdotal evidence of no ethno-national distinctions among Bukovinians and of the European governance that were both in place in the Habsburg crownland of Bukovina. Even if *homo bukovinensis* was deemed unworthy to become *civis Romaniae*⁸, (s)he is now gradually appropriated as a major means of achieving regional self-identification in Suceava County.

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⁷ Ion Nistor, 1918, quoted in Livezeanu, I. 1995. *Cultural Politics in Greater Romania: Regionalism, Nation-building and Ethnic Struggle, 1918-1930*, Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press. 2000. p 49.

⁸ *Ibidem*: 49.

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