



The Village of Izvin, a Case Study of Prospective Geography

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Abstract

This paper was elaborated by means of social inquires and it represents the result of the answers given by over 100 persons. The perfect image of the village - Izvin - reveals the people's need for the presence of the third sector of activity that is now almost absent. The presence of leisure facilities, shops and a good infrastructure would fit the perfect image of the future rural settlement.

Placed on the national highway that links Timișoara to Lugoj and further to Caransebeș, and on the railway Timișoara-Lugoj-Caransebeș, 18 km away of Timișoara and 35 away of Lugoj and on Bega River, Izvin is one of rich villages of Banat famous by its herd of horses. It is part of a larger commune named Receaș renowned for its vineyards throughout the country.

It is a relatively old village relying on a rectangular plan that is usually common to the villages of Banat as a result of the colonizations.

This article is mostly dedicated to its population that counts a total of 1,396 persons. It was possible to be written by the help of these people, belonging to different ages, sexes or social categories who helped me vita my interviews and proved to be very cooperative.

The major discussion topic of the interview relied on the needs of the people, on their desire and ideas for having a better village; better life conditions most of them similar to those of towns.

Like in all present villages of this country the most important institutions during all periods of time are the school and the church represented in the teacher and the priest. The school and the catholic church of Izvin are having almost the same age - 150 years. Unfortunately the school of the village

remained to its 150 years old shape the teaching conditioned being almost the same. Almost half of the teaching staff comes from Timișoara. In the mean time the religion has been diversified adding to the traditional orthodox and catholic ones the baptists and the pentecostals (Fig. 1).

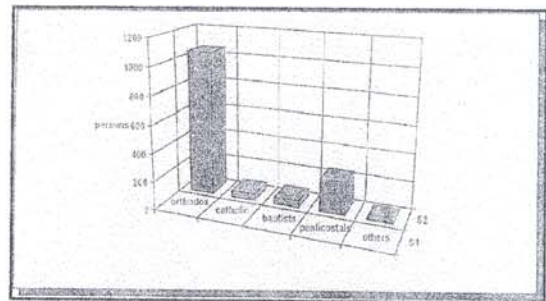


Figure 1. The religious structure of the population of Izvin.

The present ethnical structure of the population is the result of the historical and geopolitical evolution of the entire province of Banat being part of Romania then part of Austrian Monarchy, part of Austrian- Hungarian Empire and after 1918 part of Romania again. All these historical and political events are still to be found within the local architecture influenced by the German style of building the houses. Over 30% of the buildings of the village belong to that period. The rhythm of building of the village belongs to that period. The rhythm of building the houses was 0.96% a year during the first 29 years (1900-1929) and dwindled to 0.86% a year during the next 60 years (1930-1990) in the context of peasant's loss of property on the earth and the general regress of the national economy.

This situation can be better observed for the period starting in 1976 to 1990. After that year, no house has actually been built but some older houses were renewed and enlarged (Fig. 2).

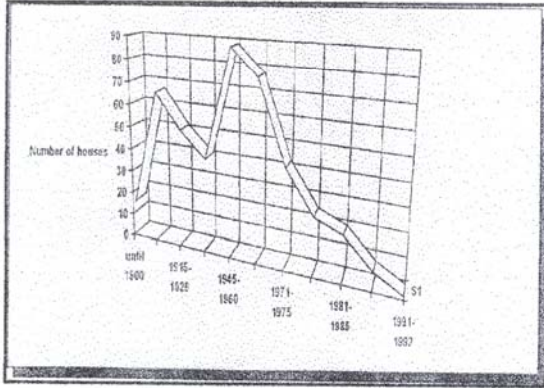


Figure 2. The rhythm of building the houses between 1900-1991.

In order to achieve an optimal image of the village as desired by its inhabitants I have interviewed over 100 persons of different ages. The result of these interviewed were summarized in a mental map, as a map an individual carries in his mind, a subjective image reflecting his (her) preferences for and attitudes towards places (Goodall, p. 299). The concept of representation is essential in order to understand the analysis of behaviorism. It is important to understand and to realize the collective representation of a certain place through the eyes of the individual that is by means of subjectivity and personality (Bailly, p. 133).

One of the most important events to be payed attention was the sexes structure on age groups of the people (Fig. 3).

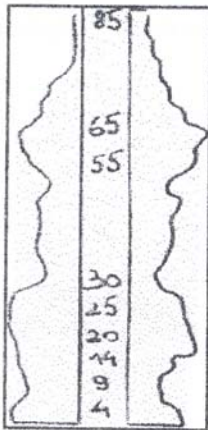


Figure 3. The structure of population on age groups.

The best-represented categories are those between 0-25 years, representing 36.31% of the total population. A relatively lower proportion have the age groups between 26-49 years i.e. 23.85%. The age groups 50-64 years are again well represented with a proportion of 24.28% of the total population. The last category is over 65 to 85 years and they represent 15.54%.

Because young people I have paid represent the largest proportion of inhabitants a special attention to their needs and their image of the perfect village they would like Izvin to turn into. The first group I have most thoroughly interviewed was the group of age 10-11 years old. They were all schoolers belonging to different social levels, ethnical groups and religions. Generally, what these children thought about a better village relied in playing grounds, pupped theatre and almost unanimously a larger school. These children were generally content with the present image of their home village but only 40% of them wanted to live in Izvin when they grew old. The position of the children who were frequently going to Timișoara is also interesting. Most of them used to go there with their parents to do the shopping and when time allowed they went to parks or playing grounds with a weekly or two weeks frequency These children donnot want to live somewhere else but in Izvin. Their contact with the town is sufficient and they prefer the home places they are attached to.

About 30% of children of this age that I interviewed were gypsies. The gypsy population represents 3.22% of the total population of the village (Fig. 4).

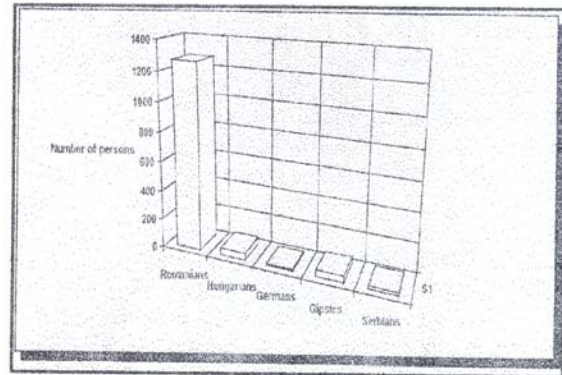


Fig. 4 The national structure of the population.

These gypsy children as well as the poor Romanian children (who belong to families with over 5 children) who are only occasionally getting in contact with the town donnot have any preferences for reshaping the present image of the village. Their local universe seams perfect.

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The situation of the baptist and pentecostal children (religion that encounters 20.41% of the total population of the village) is highly connected to their religious interdiction towards progress. They are not allowed to watch TV, they are not allowed to get information that do not coincide to the preach of their pasture, their universe being therefore very narrow. These children do not consider that any progress is necessary for their village. The world they live in is the perfect one. It is needless to remind that a great percent of the children belong to the baptist and pentecostal families (over 5-6 children in a family).

The next age group interviewed belonged to the age of 12-15. They were all schoolers learning in Izvin. They were mostly concerned about a new larger, cleaner and warmer during winter school, laboratories and a gymnasium. These children were unanimously willing to live in Timișoara, their contact with the city being weekly and for just a few of them once in a month or occasional.

Their image of the perfect village proved to be justified both socially and practically. They wanted a culture's home as a place to meet people, to play or simply to socialize, to dance, a confectioner's shop, a cinema hall, a discotheque, parks, shops, a bistro and a swimming pool. Their car for Timișoara infrastructure of the village is also obvious. They wanted better roads, gas networks, drainage network, water network and cable television. About the present infrastructure, the most important achievement is that of the ALKATEL - telephony and a good start for the gas network.

The age group between 16-30 years, most of them working persons, near the interest for a good infrastructure (gas, water, drainage) proved to have similar preferences as the children (culture's home, cinema hall) but according to their needs they wanted also a bakery, a pork butcher's shop and a hairdresser's shop. Some of these people are workers in Timișoara (50%), and the others only contacted the town once in two or three weeks. Only 10% of them would have liked to live in Timișoara, a person preferred Austria and another Lugoj town. The other never wanted to change the place to live.

The age group between 31-45 years shows the same specific interest for the infrastructure and at the same time for the culture's home, cinema hall, a confectioner's shop and a new kindergarten. Most of these people never wanted to change the place to live but about 10% would have liked to live in Timișoara and only one person in Los Angeles.

The age group between 46-55 years added to the above mentioned preferences the need for a

hairdresser's shop, a tailoring, shoes mending workshop, a drugstore and public telephones. Only one person of the group interviewed wanted to live in New York but the others never wanted to change the place to live.

The age groups over 56 years old restricted their preferences still wanting a culture's home for the young people as a solution for their leisure time, a good and permanent medical cabinet, gas and drainage networks as well as better roads. Their contact with the city of Timișoara is once in a week or twice in a month for the persons up to the age of 71 and after that age the contact is occasional. What is still impressing is the care of these older people for leisure facilities in order to determine the youngsters not to leave their homes from the village and stay there for the rest of their lives.

In the end we can conclude that the needs of the people of all ages are related to the services that are inexistent in Izvin. Even though Timișoara is only 18 km away the children and the older people cannot afford to travel any time they need to buy things. The traveling expenses sometimes double the price of the products they have to buy so that a general store would be absolutely necessary. Another institution that used to exist before 1989 but it was destroyed and the bricks stolen was the culture's home. It still exists in the mind of the people being one of their priorities.

Children do not have good learning conditions, the school is old and cold during winter. They do not have a sport hall or at least a playing ground so that they almost unanimously thought of a larger school, a playing ground, a conditioner's shop and a swimming pool.

The perfect image of Izvin would be that of a rather nucleated village with some well represented services in the center and a new modern infrastructure. It would rather be a solution for preventing the younger people's departure to the city (Fig. 5), (Fig. 6).

In the context of the modern world the old village with unaltered customs belongs to the past. Yet there are some segments of the rural society some of them poor or other religiously determined who do not want any kind of progress. But the majority wants to bring the urban comfort to the countryside. It would be still a matter of time and investments.

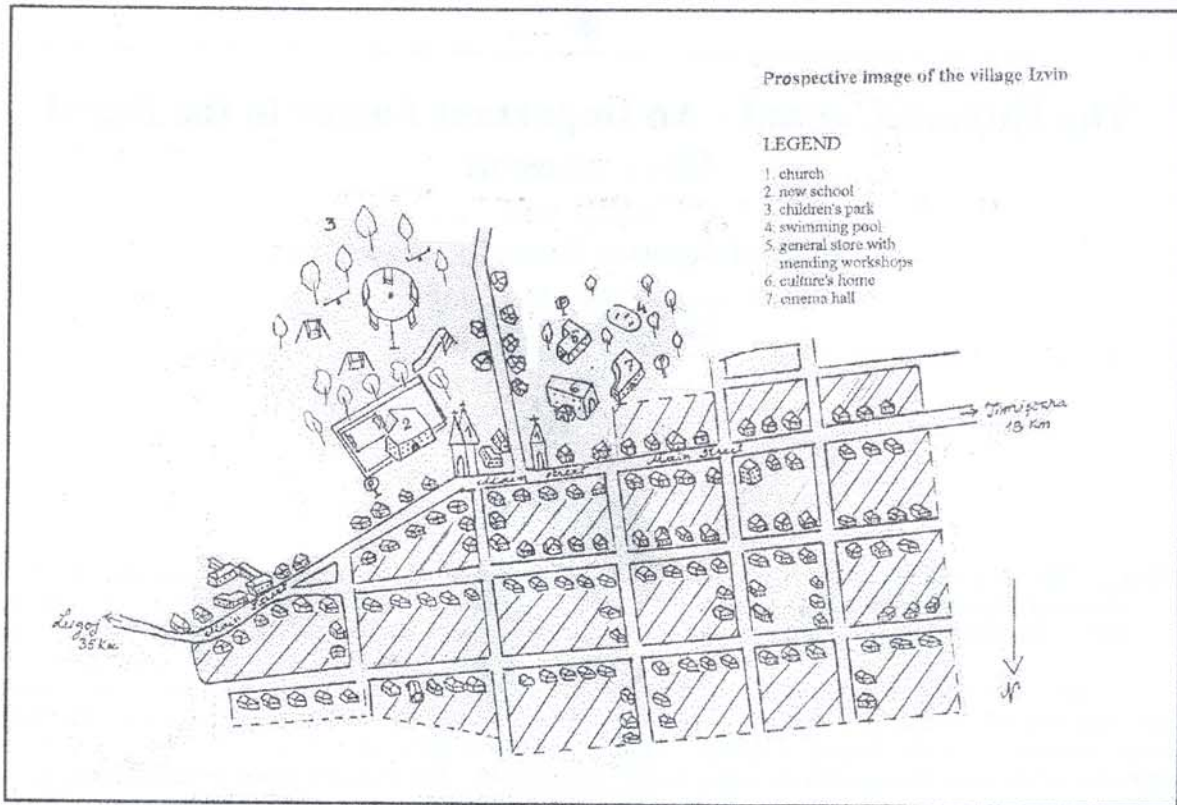


Figure 5. Present day aspect of the village Izvin.

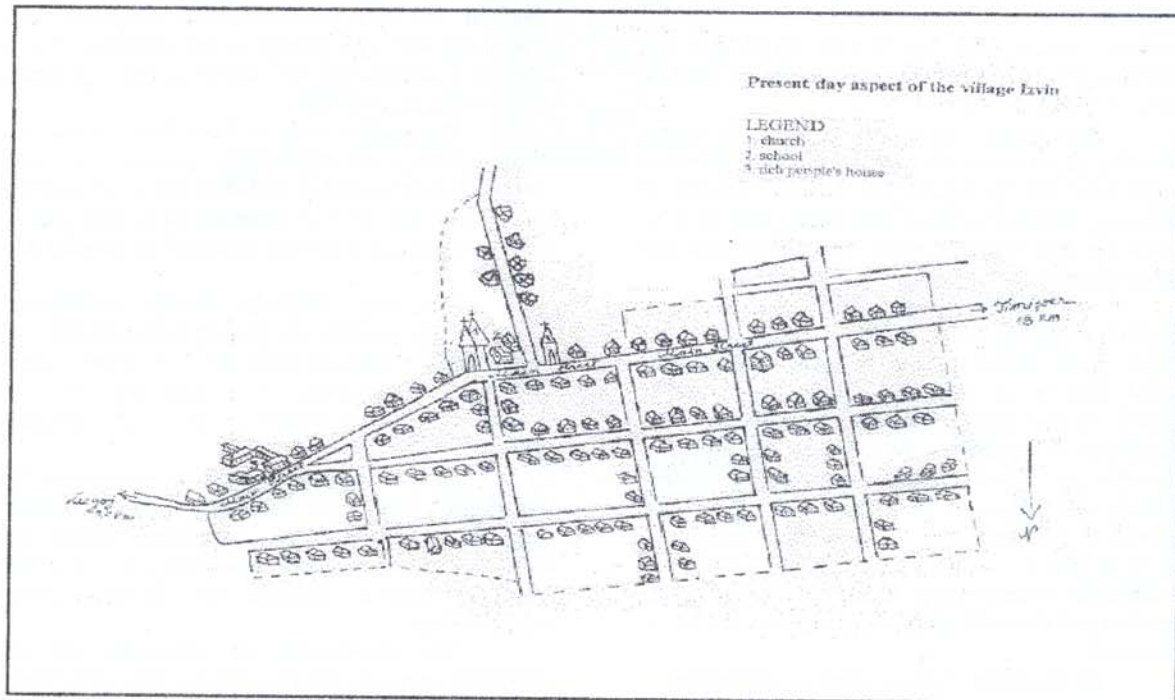


Figure 6. Prospective image of the village Izvin.