Ageing + Migration = Vulnerability?
A case to the contrary

Julia Schonheinz & Elisabeth Schröder-Butterfill,

Centre for Research on Ageing, University of Southampton
Migration + Ageing = Vulnerability

• ‘Orphan grandparents’; lack of material support and care
• Emotional loss, loss of traditional roles
• Care drain
• *De facto* childlessness

Migration + Ageing =/= Vulnerability

• ‘Transnational caregiving’
• Remittances

Ageing + Migration: Gaps in Literature

• Neglect of wider kin and civil society

• Inattention to childless elders
Case Study: Transylvanian Saxons in Romania

- Mass exodus within context of social, economic and political upheaval: Vulnerability inevitable?
Who are the Transylvanian Saxons?

- German-speaking settlers, in Transylvania since C12th.
- Successful maintenance of separate identity, despite minority status
- German language, German schools, Lutheran faith
- Few interethnic marriages until recently
The Transylvanian Saxon Population in Romania

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Population</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1939</td>
<td>260,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1966</td>
<td>151,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1989</td>
<td>96,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Today</td>
<td>14,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Most of the 300 ‘Saxon’ villages have lost their entire Saxon population.

More than half of the remaining population is aged over 60; some estimates: 2/3 aged over 65.
Methodology

• In-depth interviews in rural and urban Transylvania in 2008
  – 10 experts (incl. vicars, care home staff, journalists for local German papers, academics)
  – 34 older Saxons (community-dwelling and in old-age homes). Recruitment via referral from experts, snow-balling, meal on wheels round, visits to retirement homes.

• Participant Observation in a Transylvanian Saxon village, including conversations with 25 elders.
## Respondents’ Profile

### Elderly Respondents by Sex and Age in the Two Samples

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Interviews</th>
<th>Village study</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>% of Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>71.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Men</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>28.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Under 70</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>20.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>70-79</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>50.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>80+</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>28.8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
# Living Arrangements of Respondents (%)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Interviews</th>
<th>Village study</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Alone</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>43%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>With others</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>68%</td>
<td>34%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In Institution</td>
<td>58%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>23%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Marital Status of Elderly Respondents (%)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Interviews</th>
<th>Village study</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Never married</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Widowed/Divorced</td>
<td>65%</td>
<td>42%</td>
<td>55%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Married</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>29%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interethnic marriage</td>
<td>48%</td>
<td>68%</td>
<td>57%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
# Respondents’ Networks

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Interviews</th>
<th>Village study</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Childless</td>
<td>56%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>39%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. No close kin</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Only close kin abroad</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Only close kin in Romania</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>47%</td>
<td>29%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Local and transnational close kin</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>47%</td>
<td>29%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Any kin abroad</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Ageing + Migration = Vulnerability?

• Demographic facts are suggestive of considerable vulnerability among elderly Saxons ‘left behind’.

• Aspects of respondents’ profile further support assumption of vulnerability.
Little evidence of Old-age Vulnerability

• Stayed out of choice, not left behind

• Adequacy of financial means, pensions

• Material support from family members abroad insignificant.

• Little evidence of loneliness.

• Little evidence of uncertainty about future care provision in case of illness or frailty.
Framework for Success

TS Identity and Culture

The Church

Diaspora
Framework for Success

TS Identity and Culture

- Knowledge of membership
- Cultural events & traditions
- Political representation and mobilization
- Neighbourhood support & its adaptation

The Church

Diaspora

Links to diaspora and church!
Framework for Success

TS Identity and Culture

The Church

Records of membership & its needs

Welfare delivery:
- emotional [e.g. visits, companionship]
- practical: e.g. meals on wheels, health visits, referrals
- care: operation of care homes

Links to diaspora: mobilisation of money and people

Diaspora
Framework for Success

TS Identity and Culture

The Church

Diaspora

Longstanding institutionalised networks!
Facilitated emigration, ensured German citizenship
Mobilisation of material support:
• German govt funding (e.g. of homes)
• Diaspora organisations (e.g. hometown assocs)
• Private initiatives
• Tourism
The care home in Hetzeldorf
Carl Wolff Heim

Das Alten- und Pflegeheim
Dr. Carl Wolff
wurde als Maßnahme des Bundesministeriums des Inneren der Bundesrepublik Deutschland
im Rahmen eines Projektes des Diakonischen Werkes der Evangelischen Kirche in Deutschland erbaut und eingerichtet und am 22. Oktober 1974 eingeweiht

Architekt: Dr. Hermann Fabini
Bauherr: Diakonisches Werk der Evangelischen Kirche A.B. in Rumänien e.V.
Wider lessons?

1. Transnational individual or family links may become institutionalised and serve the mobilisation of political and material support for sending communities.

- Preconditions: volume of migration, strength of shared identity, history of organizing, economic success in destination sites.

➢ Research on ageing and migration needs to move away from exclusive focus on family networks.
Wider lessons?

2. Central importance of institutions like Church which are rooted locally but are part of wider networks:

- Excellent local knowledge and acceptance
- Capacity to target, design and deliver welfare programmes
- Capacity to mobilise support regionally and transnationally

⇒ Recognition of organisational, networked dimensions of support, rather than just its material value; critical for sustainability.
Thank you and contact details

• Dr Julia Schonheinz:
  j.c.schonheinz@soton.ac.uk

• Dr Elisabeth Schröder-Butterfill:
  e.schroeder-butterfill@soton.ac.uk
Wider Romanian Context

- Nearly 20 years of population decline due to emigration and very low fertility
- 2 million (circa 10% of total population) lost permanently between 1990 to 2010
- Additional estimated 2 million Romanians working abroad temporarily (often as health and care workers)
Transylvanian Saxon Outmigration

- Start of World War II: more than ¼ of million Transylvanian Saxons in Romania, >4% of total population.

- Post-war flight and deportation to Russia

- 1978-1989: German government ‘ransomed’ thousands of Transylvanian Saxons per year.

- 1990: Mass exodus to Germany; German citizenship and pension rights upon arrival.

- Since late 1990s: Emigration virtually ceased; some limited return migration.