

Resilient Tangible Saxon Heritage in the Cultural Landscapes in the Hârtibaciu Valley of Transylvania, Romania

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1. Introduction

THE HUMAN-shaped environment with added value and special cultural significance (Cocean and David 2014, 9–13) is the landscape constantly modified, adapted, and improved by people, in the past and in the present. Landscapes are cultural constructions in which humans imprinted their culture in every detail of their living space (European Landscape Convention). Cultural landscapes can be seen as harmonic, complex phenomena and results of the co-evolution of man and nature (Plieninger and Bieling 2012, 3–5; Booth 1994, 240) and also adaptations between key influences: eras and events, cultural groups and their interactions, the geographical features and land use (Jones 2003, 30). According to Cosgrove (2006, 52), the landscape has the capacity to combine incommensurate or even dialectically opposed elements: process and form, nature and culture, land, and life. Cultural landscapes reflect the way of life of a community of people, driven by certain circumstances, to decide, to act, and to live by created guidelines (UNESCO). The density of elements, their age, and appraisal, determine the value and the attractiveness of the cultural landscape (Schreiber and Baciu 2008, 16).

UNESCO divides the cultural landscapes into three major categories: designed (clearly defined and intentionally created by man), associative (religious, artistic or cultural associations of the natural element) and evolved (originated under a social, economic, administrative and/or religious drive and evolved through interaction with the natural environment). If the actions of the community are materialized in physical objects, like household products, houses, tools, artifacts, etc., they shape the tangible cultural landscape (Palang and Fray 2003, 3, 7). At the same time, habits, beliefs, knowledge, manners or traditions outline the intangible cultural heritage (Vecco 2010, 323; Munjeri 2004, 14). For their unique character and the legacy that they hold within, cultural landscapes have to be protected and preserved for future generations (UNESCO).

2. Theory and Methodology

THIS PRESENT study focuses on changes in the most resilient tangible cultural landscape elements in the Hârtibaciu (Harbach, Hortobágy) Valley in Transylvania, Romania, shaped by the Saxon community for more than eight centuries, and aims to point out excellent practices of restoration and conservation of architectural ensembles. The main objective was to find unique patterns, techniques, and typical details in built structures, settlements, houses and annexes, churches of the Saxon minority, and also to identify common harmful changes on the elements of the cultural landscape caused by modernization and/or neglect. Due to the fact that the majority of the Saxon population emigrated mostly to Germany after 1989, and the few, scattered, aged members that remained in some villages can't conserve, practice, and perpetuate the Saxon legacy, edifices are endangered by decay. With useful examples of elements restored and renovated according to traditional practices and rules, suggestions for proper conservation and sustainable development were outlined.

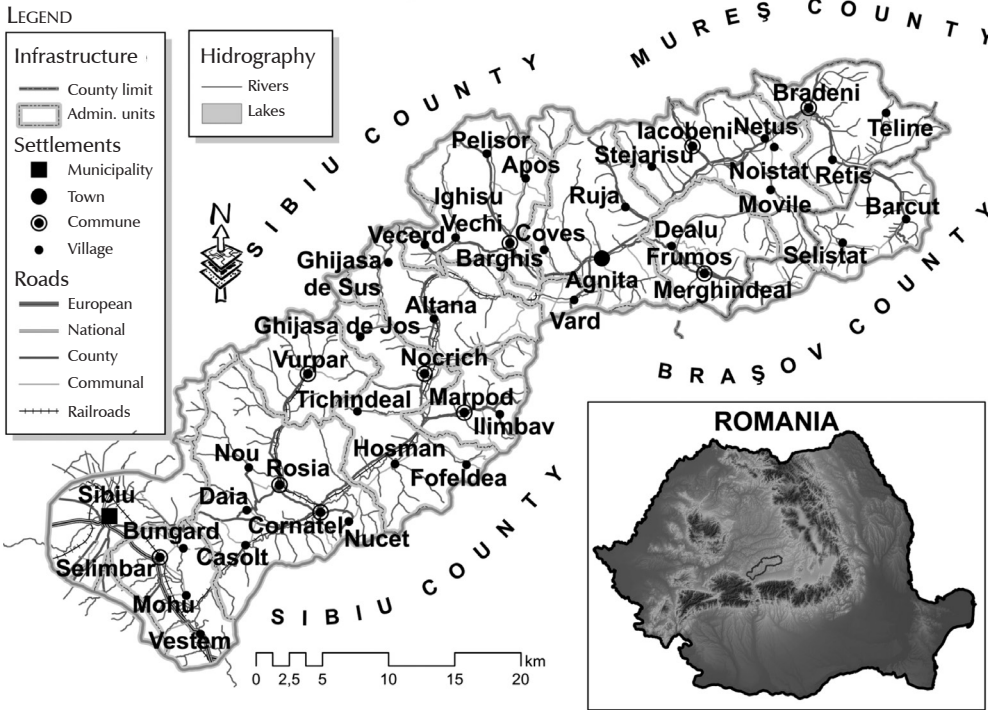
2.1. The Hârtibaciu Valley: Brief Presentation and Historical Context of the Emigration of the Saxon Community

The natural and the cultural heritage are well-balanced in the Hârtibaciu Valley. The micro-region has a profoundly rural character, and not the whole population kept up with the rapid changes that the modern era brought, as one can still encounter numerous archaic landscapes and living practices. These contributed as well to the existence of a diverse flora and fauna, which resulted in the inclusion of the Hârtibaciu Valley into the Natura 2000 network (fig. 1).

About 70 km in length, the valley is home to a total of 38 rural and one urban settlement. The settlements have an elongated shape, mainly along the main communication axis, having a few arteries with a lateral, transversal, or parallel expansion, also named "Straßendörfer" (Völkers 1942, 33) in the German terminology. The emplacement and structure were conditioned by the morphology of the terrain (Grecu 1992, 130). Due to often or sudden flooding in spring or fall, the population placed most of their settlements in the meadows, pediments or on terraces. Compact settlements can be found in depressions close to the Hârtibaciu River or by its tributaries. Concerned about the water supply, the settlements were established not far away from the watercourses (Fabritius-Dancu 1980, 4-5). For better accessibility, all households are aligned along the main communication axis. Due to the fact that the streetfronts are between 12 and 20 m wide and the length of a plot is about 50-100 m depending on the morphology of the terrain, they have the shape of narrow strips—"long lots." The exact delimitation, the similar size and land surface denote their equable allotment and distribution to the population (F. Teutsch 1896, 11; Poschlod 2014, 8) at the time of colonization. Moreover, the wider the streetfront, the bigger the tax (Moldt 2009, 42).

The historical analysis of the extension of the settlements shows that the structure and typology were preserved throughout history. The localities were founded in the

FIG. 1. Hârtibaciu Valley: General map of settlements



Middle Ages (G. D. Teutsch 1874, 20–30), as many historical documents and records state, but their first appearance was on the “Chorographia Transylvaniae Sybembürgen” map done by Johannes Honterus and printed in 1532 in Basel. The alignment pattern and the structure of the localities can be observed on the first large scale maps, the military survey maps, dating back two and a half centuries, to the Habsburg rule. The current satellite images show that the road network with its architectural ensembles have been preserved until the present time (fig. 2).

Examining the structure and the types of households in the settlements, we see that many elements have been combined by the population, but at the same time, conservatism and the administrative regulations of different ethnic groups preserved the appearance and the style of the specific homesteads. The most eloquent marks were left by the German minority—the Saxons colonized into the Romanian community by the Hungarian kings, which occupied the heartland surrounded by the Carpathian Mountains about a millennium ago (G. D. Teutsch 1874, 10–11). The colonization started in the mid-12th century and was done for defensive, strategic, and economic reasons (H. Roth 2006, 41–42). To attract a large number of colonists, many privileges (G. D. Teutsch 1874, 20, 40–42, 48–54) were promised to the people willing to start a new life in the land beyond the woods—*trans silva* (G. D. Teutsch 1874, 10, 14), later named “Transylvania.” The bill of rights was issued by Andrew II of Hungary in 1224 and was formerly known as

FIG. 2. A. Stejărișu (Probstdorf, Prépostfalva): Josephinian land survey of the Habsburg Empire —Transylvania 1763–1787, fragment of sheet no. 207; B. Stejărișu, satellite image



SOURCES: A. Wikipedia-Public Domain; B. Google Earth Pro.

Andreanum or *Goldener Freibrief der Siebenbürger Sachsen* (Golden charter of Transylvanian Saxons) (*Documente privind istoria României* 1951, 189–193; G. D. Teutsch 1874, 57; Kaindl 1907, 17). In exchange for the mandatory military service against the frequent Ottoman incursions, the colonists gained administrative and religious autonomy (Bărbulescu et al. 1998, 148). The majority of the German newcomers were of rural extraction, concluded from the fact, that they received land with the aim of farming and growing crops. They received equally divided plots, the so-called “Hofstellen” for living, farming and gardening (F. Teutsch 1896, 11, 15; Wolff 1882, 9-10). The origins of the colonists are located in Flanders, in the regions of the Rhine river, between the Moselle and the Meuse, and between the Lahn and the Lippe rivers (G. D. Teutsch 1874, 18-19).

The life of the Saxon society continued for almost nine centuries, with flourishing eras as well as with hostile times. The radical, historical changes occurred after 1989 created the opportunity for the German minority in Romania to emigrate from a communist country, primarily to capitalist Germany, and many families decided to do so. What followed was an exodus that left mainly the rural areas with only scattered members of the Saxon community.

As a result, the intangible heritage vanished together with the last members, and in present times the efforts revolve around preserving and conserving the more resilient, tangible cultural landscape, which remained as a mark of identity in the landscape.

2.2. Saxon Tangible Cultural Landscapes: Houses, Marketplaces and Fortified Churches

The resilience of the tangible cultural landscapes is reflected in the capability of these built elements to resist and persist through time against all odds (Plieninger and Biel-

ing 2012, 15–16). In opposition to the intangible heritage, which lasts as long as the Saxon community exists, the tangible heritage elements can be protected and preserved, although the members of the community who created them are no longer there.

2.2.1. SAXON HOUSES: STRUCTURE, LAYOUT, ALIGNMENT AND BUILDING TECHNIQUES

Analyzing these elements, many similarities, in terms of agricultural, like the “Dreifelderwirtschaft”, the rotation of crops (Poschlod 2014, 12) and building practices, can be tracked down to their places of origin.

The houses are aligned along the main road for better accessibility and building them in the right proximity offered protection and privacy to the community. From the initial equal size of the property, in time, some of the properties grew wider due to farm enlargement processes, marriages, or inheritance. The symmetry in the organization confirms a well-developed, structured and at the same time conservative homestead model. The adjoining built annexes offered sufficient space in the courtyard. The attics of the houses are considerably high, so that they could have been used as an additional storage room. By the house, there were sheds, a garden, a courtyard, and a stable for the cows, horses, or pigs. Provisions and crops were stocked in the cellar, which was usually built under the house. The material used for the cellar was marlstone and/or sandstone, and this, due to its porosity, provided higher humidity (Hülsemann 2012, 35–36) and because of that, a constantly low temperature suitable for storing the provisions was maintained. For the upper levels of the house, people used bricks because of their increased thermal insulating properties. Openings in the roof allowed the air to circulate and ensured favorable conditions (temperature, humidity) for the stored, usually dried edibles (cereals, meat, and milk products, fruits and vegetables, etc.), clothing, and other household objects (fig. 3).

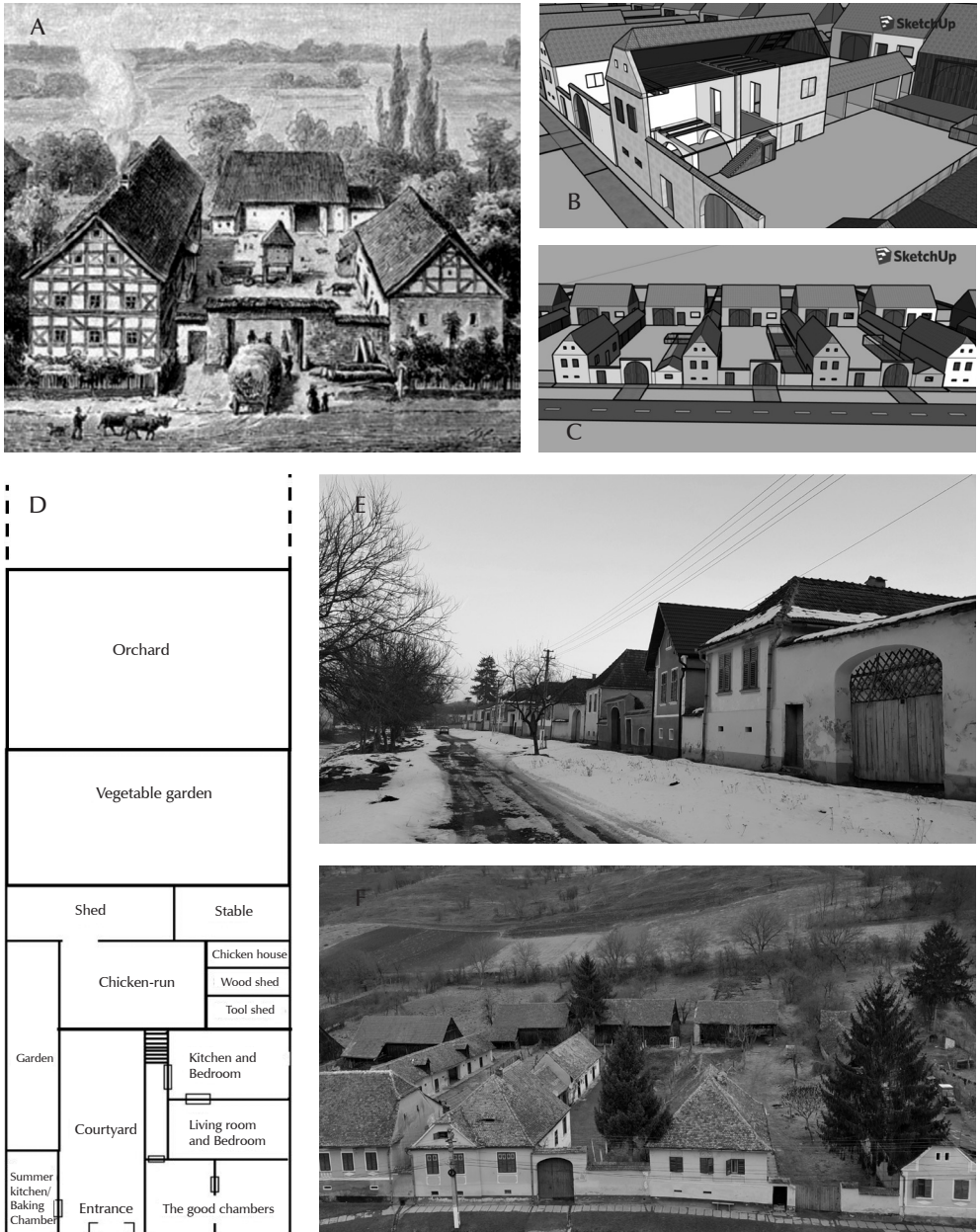
The rooms facing the main road, the “good chambers,” were kept tidy at all times, and only guests or newly married couples in the families were temporarily allowed to make use of them; this rare usage determined the families to keep the wooden blinds closed almost all year round.

The entrances were built high enough for the loaded hay carriage to fit through. The big doors were kept closed and often locked. All annexes were built like a small fortress surrounding the courtyard, and for better privacy, a big barn for hay and/or a stable with its perpendicular position on the property blocked the access of strangers (Riepshoff 2012, 18). As hay is highly flammable, the settlers left a safety area around the barns as a precaution in case of fire, so that the flames wouldn’t spread to the adjacent annexes or to the neighboring barns. Vegetables for cooking were picked fresh from the garden. Surplus ones were preserved and stored in the cellar. Poultry, pigs, cows, or calves were grown for meat, eggs, milk, and other products. Oxen and horses were used as draught animals. The peasants were self-supporting and still, to this day, they practice subsistence agriculture and produce their necessary food.

2.2.2. SAXON MARKETPLACES IN VILLAGES AND MARKET TOWNS

Another tangible Saxon heritage element in the settlements from the Hârtibaciu River Basin is the marketplace in the center of the locality. Since the founding of the settle-

FIG. 3. A. Type of homesteads in Rhine-Moselle regions and Franken, Germany; B. Cross-section of a Saxon house (SketchUp-model); C. Homesteads alignment in the settlements with a German minority (SketchUp-model); D. Layout of a Saxon homestead; E. Street alignment of Saxon houses in Stejărișu; F. Panoramic view (from the bell tower of the Evangelical Church) of Saxon households in Stejărișu



SOURCE: Länderkunde für höhere Lehranstalten, public domain.

ments in the Middle Ages, the population has given great importance to the central open space. This hasn't only served its mercantile purpose, but it was also used for important events in the community, like gatherings for communicating announcements, different celebrations, or open judgments back in historic times and in newer times, for manifestations, exhibitions, concerts, etc. In the villages, the markets were held and seasonal products like grains, household tools, harnesses, animals, and other products were marketed. For Agnita (Agnetheln, Szentágota), who received the right to hold weekly fairs from Louis I of Hungary (Fabritius-Dancu 1980, ill. 14; Rus 2006, 19) starting with 1376, a generous rectangular marketplace was organized in the center of the settlement. For more than half of the 20th century, it was the central station for the narrow-gauge train and often the “Corso” where people used to meet and have a walk. The initial role as an open space changed for good after WWII when the authorities built a park with a monument reminding of the changeover on the 23 August 1945—see *Agnethler Blatt* 27, 87 (December 2016). At the beginning of the '60s, a new city hall was built in the northern half of the park (fig. 4).

The name of the square also changed from Market Square (Marktplatz) to Square of the Republic in the communist period and to Revolution Square after 1989. Changes in the appearance of the marketplace also occurred in the '70s when the Hârtibaciu was

FIG. 4. A. Market square in Agnita about 1900, view to the south with the bridge over Hârtibaciu River and the fortified church in the background; B. Market square in Agnita, view to the west with narrow gauge steam train; C. View to the north from the bell tower of the fortified church. In the center of the marketplace is a small park and the building of today's city hall. The pedestrian bridge over the Hârtibaciu River can be seen.



SOURCE: *Agnethler Blatt* 27, 87 (2016).

embanked on its course through the settlement, as a protective measure against the yearly floods. The wide bridge over the river by the fortified Evangelical Church was replaced by a pedestrian bridge, which made access for vehicles impossible and diminished the connectivity.

Except for just a few interventions on the eastern side in the communist period, the architecture of the rows of houses surrounding the former market place remained unchanged for the past century and, together with other houses with unique architectural elements, they have been included as protected heritage in the National Register of Historic Monuments in Romania (Ministry of Culture). This fact forbids changes to the façades and restricts the use of modern renovating materials and techniques, with the aim to preserve and conserve the appearance of the townscape. Although a legislative framework for the protection of historical monuments has existed since 2001 (Law No. 422 from 18 July 2001, with subsequent additions), due to the permissiveness of the authorities many inappropriate modern insertions and modifications were made during renovations.

Concerning the weekly fair, it's still being held on Fridays, offering fruits, vegetables, and miscellaneous products. In addition, the traditional, seasonal livestock fairs are also still held, but at other locations.

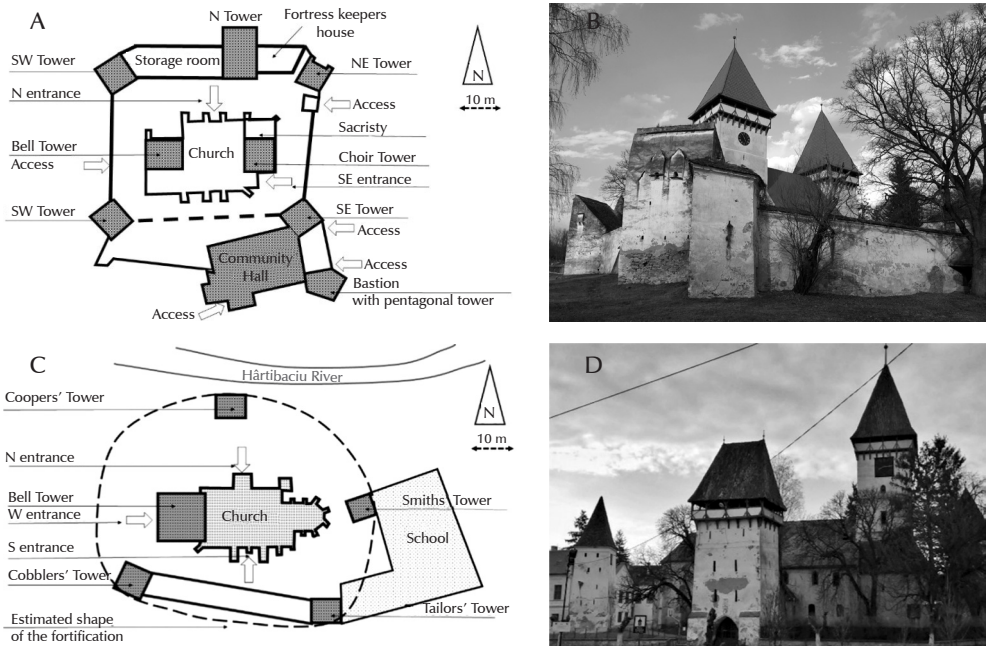
2.2.3. SAXON FORTIFIED CHURCHES

Another element of the built tangible cultural landscape is the fortified church, which was the most important institution in Saxon society throughout time. Besides its religious role, it was also an educational, judicial, and military entity. The location of the church was chosen either in the center of the settlement or on a nearby hill, commanding the surroundings of the settlement. Alternatively, if the configuration of the landscape was flat, around the ecclesiastic structure the community built imposing concentric defense walls and high towers with machicolations. For additional protection, the walls were surrounded by a moat. The importance of the edifice was also reflected in the dimensions of the architectural ensemble, provided with a massive bell tower. Built in the course of several centuries, several of the churches received two towers, like the ones in Movile (Hundertbücheln, Százhalom), Brădeni (Henndorf, Hégen) or Dealu Frumos (Schönberg, Lesses) (Drăguț 1979, 122). On the last level, an open platform allowed the watchman to see far in the distance and to spot the warning signs of smoke and fire from approaching enemies. Emergency alarms, close downs, mass hours, and other important events were announced by ringing a certain bell or blowing a trumpet. The towers, the defense walls, and even the church were provided with loopholes and machicolation orifices (V. Roth 1905, 80). In times of war, the community would leave their households and would defend themselves against enemies and assailants from the fortification walls, towers, and church. During sieges, the church was used as a shelter for all the families of the settlement, and the provisions stored in chests and chambers specially constructed inside the walls (Fabritius-Dancu 1980, 6; Franke 2010, 82-83) ensured the survival of the community. For the water supply, the people dug several wells in the interior of the fortification, as well as inside the church (Fabritius-Dancu 1980, 8; Franke 2010, 110; Fabini 2020, 431, 824, Cocean 2010b, 106).

Several towers of the fortifications bear either the names given by the purpose of their usage or the name of the guild by whom they were built, used, and defended. Guilds existed mainly in towns, and in the Hârtibaciu Valley these respected medieval craftsman organizations were present in the small market town of Agnita as well. Four fortification towers that are still standing remind of the existence of the guilds: The Tailors' Tower to the southeast, the Smiths' Tower to the east, the Coopers' Tower to the north and the Cobblers' Tower to the west. In the villages, all peasants took part in the construction of the fortification, and the towers were named by their cardinal position or by their usage: The Bell Tower, the Guard Tower, the Gate Tower, the School Tower, etc. (fig. 5).

Of vital importance throughout time was the *Speckturm* (lard tower), where all the families in the settlement stored all year round their smoked pork lard pieces to be preserved in good conditions of temperature, humidity, and aeration, and to be available to the community during sieges (Fabini 2002, 64, 431). In some settlements, the villagers still conserve bacon, sausage, lard, and other pork specialties in the lard tower. The access to the provisions was restricted, and only according to an agreed schedule, once a week,

FIG. 5. A. Layout of the fortified church in Dealu Frumos; B. Fortified church in Dealu Frumos, view from the west with well-preserved fortification wall and towers; C. Layout of the fortified church in Agnita; D. Fortified church in Agnita, view from the north with the Coopers' Tower in the foreground



SOURCE: Layouts after Fabritius-Dancu; Fabini.

the families could take home the desired quantity of lard. The churches were built in the spirit of the Catholic religion of the Middle Ages and grew as complex architectural compounds with Romanesque, Gothic, and Baroque details (V. Roth 1905, 110–111). The Reformation took place also in Transylvania and brought not only changes in the religious practices but several conversions and modifications in the decorations and in the architecture of the buildings.

3. Results and Discussion

HISTORIANS, ARCHITECTS, and other specialists pointed out the value of these cultural elements, and the authorities took the first steps in the conservation of the ensembles. In all the settlements from the Hârtibaciu Valley, the fortified churches and the associated annexes and fortifications are protected monuments and are listed in the National Register of Historical Monuments administered by the Ministry of Culture and the National Heritage Institute. Additionally, houses with a particular architecture, of exceptional historical significance, and memorial houses are also included on the list of protected monuments.

For many of these monuments and valuable elements of the cultural landscape, the future remains uncertain. Concerning the fortified churches, as they are the property of the Evangelical Church of Augustan Confession in Romania, this institution is responsible for the maintenance of the ensembles. Before 1989, when the Saxon community was larger, the members of the community maintained the edifices in good condition. In present times, due to the insufficiency of funds and the lack of members who would support and make the necessary improvements, the fortified ensembles with churches, defense walls, and towers are in a dire situation. They require permanent care and repairs, and for some, their very survival depends upon immediate restoration. For the fortified church in Agnita, the ongoing restoration work started in 2019 was also of absolute necessity. Other monuments due to be renovated are the fortified churches and all defense walls, towers, and annexes in Vărd (Werd, Vérd), Movile, Apoș (Appesdorf, Szászapá Apátfalva), Nou (Neudorf, Szászújfalú), etc. Several edifices have already benefited from repairs and restorations and wait to be explored and appreciated: Brădeni, Stejărișu, Merghindeal (Mergenthal, Morgonda), Dealu Frumos, etc.

Immediate care should also be given to several residential units in the Hârtibaciu Valley. In all the villages there are plenty of endangered houses that belong to the Saxon heritage and need to be renovated and conserved, on the one hand, and protected from modernization, on the other hand.

The low interest of younger people in living in the countryside led to demographic ageing in rural regions. Many houses are abandoned, due to migration to more developed areas or due to negligence and economic interests. Among the houses in a deficient condition there are also some extraordinary architectural ensembles, like the one in Nocrich (Leschkirch, Újegyház), the memorial house of Samuel von Brukenthal, the former governor of Transylvania at the beginning of the 18th century, to name only the most famous of them.

FIG. 6. A. House no. 60 in Apoș before the restoration according to traditional practices; B. House no. 60 in Apoș after restoration; C. Board with recommendations and examples of suitable and inadequate practices for renovations within the campaign initiated by the Ministry of Culture in Romania, positioned in the center of Agnita



MINISTERUL CULTURII
MĂSURI PENTRU CONSERVAREA ȘI PROTEJAREA
ARHITECTURII TRADIȚIONALE
 ZONA VEST-CENTRUL AGNITA

FAȚADE:

RECOMANDĂRI:

SE INTERZICE:

ACOPERISURI:

RECOMANDĂRI:

SE INTERZICE:

TĂMLĂRIA:

RECOMANDĂRI:

SE INTERZICE:

PORTI - GARDURI:

RECOMANDĂRI:

SE INTERZICE:

ANEXE:

RECOMANDĂRI:

SE INTERZICE:

EXEMPLU NEGATIV DE INTERVENȚIE:

CLĂDIRILE NOI TREBUIE SĂ RESPECTE:

SPONSORI:

ARTTA

SOURCE: Monumentum Association, The Monuments' Ambulance for South Transylvania.

Still, encouraging examples of restorations and renovations initiated by different NGOs, dedicated architects, and volunteers stand as good examples for architectural monuments. The traditional practices and materials transformed ruins into masterpieces enhancing the village scape (fig. 6).

A major step forward to preserve the traditional architecture and character would involve persuading of the locals to disregard modern materials like concrete, metal roof-

FIG. 7. A., B. Modernized former Saxon houses with unaesthetic intense colors, plastic window frames, metal roofs, tiles or rocks for insulation in Bărcuț (Bekokten, Băránykút); C. Ruins of an abandoned house in the center of Bărcuț



ing, artificial insulating materials, windows with plastic frames and to avoid intense, vivid colors for the exterior coating of the houses. To illustrate the examples, informative boards like the one in fig. 6.C. have been placed in most localities with the purpose of educating, instructing, and inspiring the population. Due to its social implications, this campaign is difficult and problematic. Not only aesthetic taste and conceptions of the locals have to be influenced, but also their assumptions that modern, often expensive construction materials, are a reflection of social status and wealth. The most common practices and trends are inspirational for neighbors and other locals because, in the rural

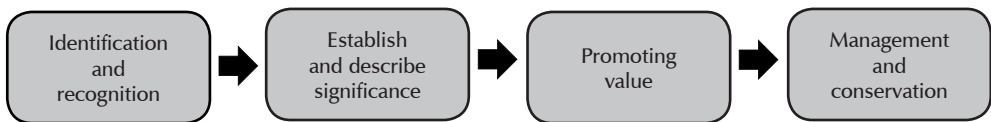
areas, it is still important what others think and say about one another. Consequently, the families want to take part in the modernization and don't want to be disparaged by other members of the community and considered old-fashioned (fig. 7).

The main challenge for today's authorities and the stakeholders in the Hârtibaciu Valley is the continuity of conservation based on the strategy for the development of the residential, cultural landscape. The difficulty lies in changing the perception of the local communities concerning the surrounding elements, from acknowledging the elements only by their functionality to increased awareness and to their recognition as identity carriers and cultural heritage. The simple recognition of the value of the cultural landscapes opens the path to sustainable development and for the functioning of the social-ecological system (Kirchhoff 2012, 55-56). The first palpable measure that should be taken is to register all the elements of the cultural landscape in an inventory (Schreiber et al. 2008, 19-20), irrespective of the ethnic background. Great examples of online free databases for elements of the cultural landscape can be found all over the world: KLEKS: KulturLandschaftsElementeKataster (Germany), LandscapeFOR (Italy), Patrimonio cultural (Peru), to name just a few of them.

Additionally, for the unique or most endangered elements in the Hârtibaciu Valley, a statement of significance—*Wertstufen der Kulturlandschaftsräume* must be given (Gunzelmann 2012, 126), or they can even be placed into a greater state of conservation, like a UNESCO site, or could be included in different programs (educational, tourist, social events, etc.), which can bring financial support for the maintenance of the sites and implicitly their conservation. Through an opportune planning policy, which consists of restoration and protection, with more intense interventions on the most significant and/or higher risk elements, this conservation goal can undoubtedly be reached.

In the creation of a conservation plan for the residential, cultural landscapes, local players can follow these steps:

FIG. 8. BASIC PROCESSES IN THE CONSERVATION OF CULTURAL LANDSCAPES



SOURCE: Cocean 2010, 193–197.

The main processes need to be done with the full involvement of the authorities and the local population, but also with the collaboration of experienced communities that are more advanced in cultural landscape practices. For this we suggest they can adopt a specific framework ensuring the consistency of their results:

- outline best results and practices in the cultural landscape conservation (ex. Monumentum Association, Mihai Eminescu Trust, Moara Veche Hosman, etc.);
- trace the historical development of the cultural landscape in the Hârtibaciu Valley and establish the key influences during time;

- develop a framework for the identification and recognition of the cultural landscape based on character-defining features, “to illustrate the role of evidential value in linking the past with the present” (Dobson and Selman 2012, 466, 470);
- summarize the values of the cultural landscape and point out important elements (Shipley and Feieck 2009, 464–465; UNESCO);
- draw up a landscape report and inventory, furthermore register the cultural landscape elements on a map (Schreiber et al. 2008, 21), and through internet services open access to a database;
- identify landscape elements and priority areas for inclusion in the immediate intervention plan for the elements with potential and/or existing risks to their integrity (Green 1997, 216);
- devise an intervention plan and a landscape strategy (Booth 1994, 254) to be applied in the whole micro-region (ICOMOS);
- recommend activities and processes for developing a cultural landscape program (Coccean 2010, 176–186);
- increase local income through the involvement of the local population in activities such as brunches (My Transylvania Association), rural tourism circuits (farming, gardening, equestrian, etc.), school camps for children—in Cornăţel (Harbachsdorf, Hortobágyfalva), Nocrich, Bărcuţ or Seliştat (Seligstadt, Boldogváros)—natural tourism and wildlife observations, etc. and involve in the projects as many locals as possible (Coccean 2010b, 155-156).

Given the above, all processes in the suggested framework will have as a substantial result an inventory of the tangible elements of the Saxon heritage from the Hârtibaciu Valley, which can be used by experts in their action plan for prolonged conservation.

Furthermore, another main objective of the landscape experts is to offer convincing solutions and models (Constantin 2016, 58–59) encouraging the local inhabitants to maintain the traditional village character. As a result, the locals will learn through their involvement not only to appreciate more their intimate connection to the land and to nature but also to strengthen the sense of place (UNESCO). Valuing the character and the importance of the inherited cultural landscape elements will increase the meaning of identity for the people, which results in terms of stability and a lower migration rate. The preserved traditional character reflected by the renovated architectural ensembles and the variety of attractions and activities will attract more interested parties, which will increase the income of the locals, having as a goal the sustainability of the micro-region (Stubbs 2004, 292; European Landscape Convention).

4. Conclusions

CULTURAL LANDSCAPES disclose valuable information about the culture of a group: they reveal aspects of the past, the origin, how culture has changed, contemporary circumstances, and the values that humans hold as a society today. The eth-

nic signatures present in all tangible landscapes in the Hârtibaciu Valley are marks of the cultural heritage; they make the connection to the past, showing that traditions are valued and carried on and that they still shape those places today, leaving unique imprints in all daily activities. Because of their value and importance to both locals and visitors, all elements need to be renovated, conserved and preserved, so that today's society and the future ones can benefit aesthetically, functionally and economically from the cultural and natural heritage.



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Abstract

Resilient Tangible Saxon Heritage in the Cultural Landscapes in the Hârtibaciu Valley of Transylvania, Romania

Cultural landscapes are identity reflections of diverse ethnic groups and populations. The unique, well-preserved medieval settlements in the Hârtibaciu Valley (Transylvania, Romania) were the home of the German (Saxon) population for almost nine centuries. Given the massive emigration of this ethnic group, new building and insulating techniques or shifting interests/negligence, the most resilient cultural landscape elements (housing units and famous fortified churches) experience an undesirable deterioration. This paper aims to raise awareness and ensure the protection and conservation of the remaining tangible Saxon heritage elements (traditional restoration practices and a conservation framework plan established by authorities) and simultaneously, to evoke the sense of value in the civic consciousness and to suggest some solutions for sustainable development.

Keywords

architecture, conservation, fortified churches, monument protection, resilience, Saxon heritage