

CSAV Journal

2018

European Year of Cultural Heritage

Vernacular Technics

The technical heritage of Romania's villages
Patrimoniul tehnic al satelor României



Editor: Sergiu NISTOR

Coordonator: Ioana ZACHARIAS VULTUR

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Coordonator al CSAV Journal:

Asist. dr.arh. **Ioana E. ZACHARIAS VULTUR** - Departamentul de Istoria și Teoria Arhitecturii și Conservarea Patrimoniului, UAUIM

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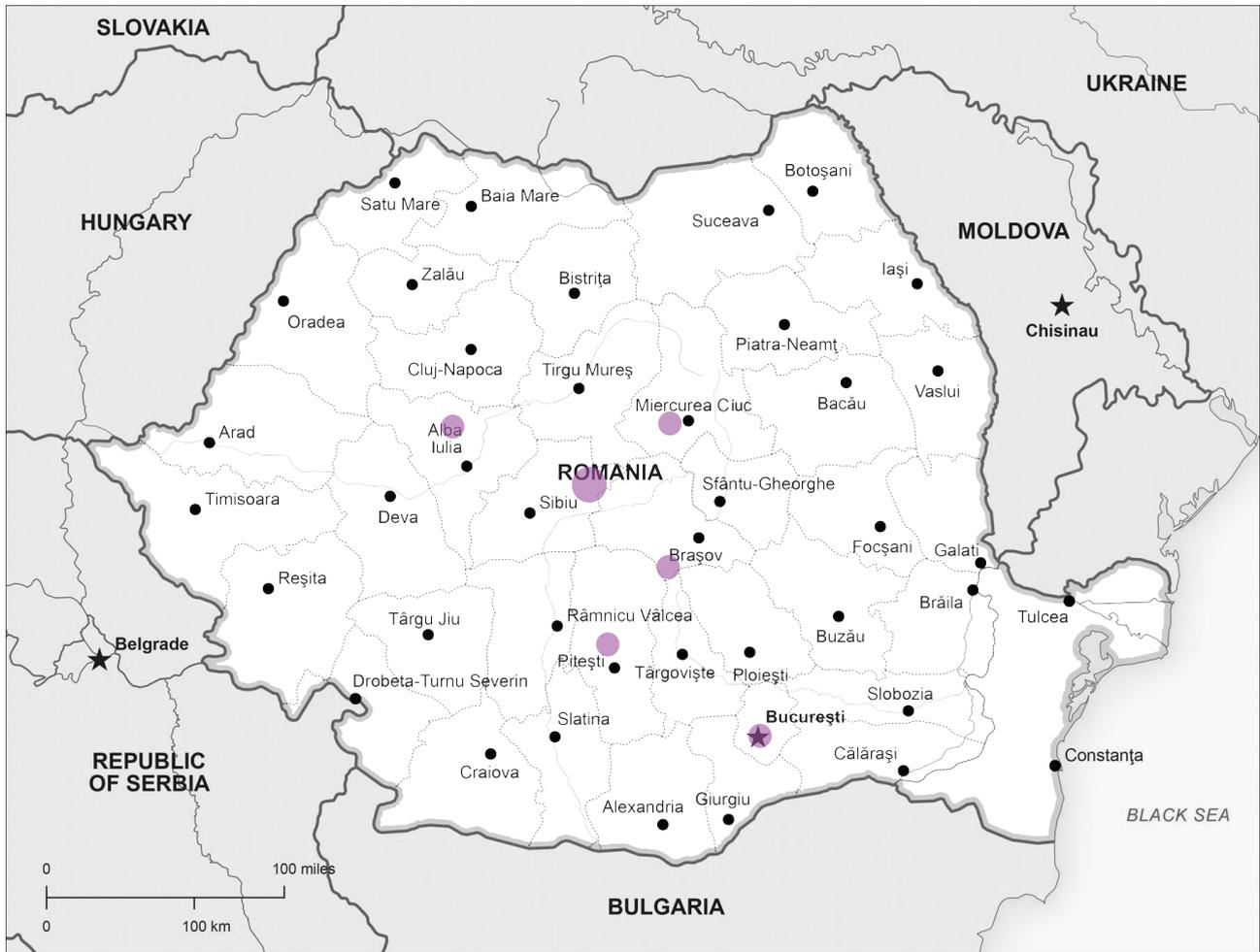
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EUROPE





Vernacular architecture

Text written by Kengo KUMA for CSAV Journal, October 2017

I consider that “vernacular architecture” is about architecture where the relationship between people and materials is happily connected. I say so because buildings are made of materials and the materials had to be found and obtained near the site where the building would stand. Under such restriction, human beings and materials used to keep their conversations, which resulted in the architecture.

In the 20th century however, humans and materials were separated. Materials became available everywhere, and buildings all over the world began to be built with concrete and steel, which led to an ending of the good relation between people and matters.

Books on vernacular architecture had been written already in the 20th Century, but the arguments there were mostly about forms or styles, and discussions about materials were totally absent.

I would say that the most important “forgotten” material is wood. Wooden materials are born and rooted to the place. Furthermore, wood is so easy to work on that human beings have made their nests – the architecture – with wood since ancient times.

Professor Yoshichika Uchida, my most honored teacher from university, is the key figure who contributed to revive wooden buildings in Japan. Professor Uchida used to say habitually that as for the wooden structure, Romania and Japan would build the best ones. His theory is based on the existence of Carpathian Mountains and the Black Sea in Romania, and the Pacific Ocean in Japan. According to Professor Uchida, these topographical features functioned as barriers protected their culture of wood, and Romania and Japan have been able to nurture technology to produce unique wooden constructions in their closed fields.

Since I heard Professor Uchida’s theory, I’ve always dreamt of the beauty and uniqueness of Romanian wood architecture. Now, the mission assigned to both of us is that, having been born in the countries of wood, we truly revive our wooden buildings and create a modern version of vernacular architecture, which is tailored to the speed and density of our time.

Arhitectura vernaculară

text scris de Kengo KUMA pentru CSAV Journal, Octombrie 2017

Consider că „arhitectura vernaculară” reprezintă arhitectura în care relația între oameni și materialitate este una fericită. Spun asta deoarece clădirile sunt făcute din materiale de construcții, iar materialele trebuiau căutate și extrase din apropierea șantierului. Sub asemenea constrângeri, oamenii și materialitatea dialogau, ceea ce a generat arhitectura.

Cu toate acestea, în secolul al XX-lea, oamenii și materialitatea sunt separate. Materiale de construcții sunt disponibile oriunde, iar clădirile din toată lumea au început să fie construite din beton și oțel, ceea ce a condus la un final al bunei relații între oameni și materialitate.

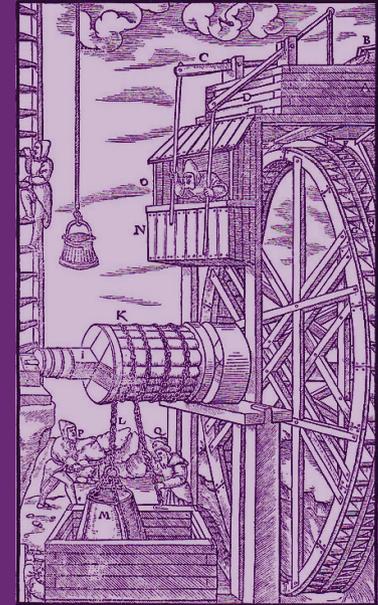
Cărți pe tema arhitecturii vernaculare au fost scrise deja în secolul al XX-lea, dar argumentele acolo au fost în mare parte despre forme sau stiluri, și discuțiile despre materiale erau total absente.

Aș spune că cel mai important material „uitat” este lemnul. Materialele cu lemn / din lemn sunt născute și înrădăcinate la fața locului. Mai departe, lemnul este atât de ușor de prelucrat, încât oamenii și-au făcut cuiburile – arhitectura – cu lemn din timpuri antice.

Profesorul Yoshichika Uchida, mentorul meu cel mai onorat din universitate, este figura cheie care contribuia la revigorarea clădirilor din lemn în Japonia. Profesorul Uchida obișnuia să spună că în ceea ce privește structura din lemn, România și Japonia le-ar construi pe cele mai bune. Teoria sa se bazează pe existența Munților Carpați și pe Marea Neagră în România și Oceanul Pacific. Conform celor spuse de profesorul Uchida, aceste caracteristici topografice care funcționau ca bariere își protejau cultura lemnului, iar România și Japonia au putut astfel să-și „ingrijească” tehnologia de a produce construcții unice în arealul lor închis.

De când am auzit teoria profesorului Uchida, întotdeauna am visat la frumusețea și unicitatea arhitecturii din lemn din România. Acum, misiunea acordată amândorura (arhitecți japonezi și arhitecți români), născuți fiind în țări ale lemnului, să revigorăm cu adevărat clădirile noastre din lemn și să creem o versiune modernă a arhitecturii vernaculare, adaptată / pliată / adecvată vitezei și densității timpurilor noastre.

coș de îngroșat
coș de tras de păr
fântână cu cai
jug pentru potcovit și stănoagă
piuă pentru lână (stofă)
moară de vânt
moară de apă
teasc de stors ceara
teasc pentru ulei
teasc pentru must
teasc pentru vin
teascul *Meschendorf*
oloiniță
șteamp aurifer
văltoare



"De Re Metallica", Georgius Agricola, 1555

Ideea acestui număr al **CSAV Journal** a apărut în timpul workshop-ului internațional VVITA Erasmus + 2018, odată cu vizita într-un vechi sat de pescari din Peninsula Lofoten, Norvegia. (v. pag. 305).

Este vorba despre un sit de patrimoniu vernacular de secol XIX, încă locuit, în care se poate observa o tipologie arhitecturală reprezentată de locuințe și ateliere de pescari sau de bărci din lemn, construcții parțial așezate deasupra malului stâncos al mării, pe stâlpi din lemn. Un loc aparte între aceste construcții îl ocupa un teasc de ulei de pește, cu toate mecanismele din metal și lemn încă funcționale. Se poate observa nu doar o tehnologie răspândită pe întreg teritoriul Europei și mai departe, dar și modul prin care patrimoniul tehnic rămâne un „reper mental” pentru mai multe comunități învecinate, loc de întâlnire și sistem ecologic, adaptat și noilor provocări climatice.

Pe teritoriul României, astfel de sisteme paleotehnice rurale din perioada medievală sau de secol XIX sunt expuse în muzee ale satului sau au rămas *in situ*. Poate acest patrimoniu tehnic rămas *in situ* să devină un răspuns post-industrial la revitalizarea satelor României ?

Ediția **CSAV Journal 2018** acoperă gama completă de lucrări academice care explorează situl rural și arhitectura vernaculară, între teorie și practică. Este vorba așadar despre o selecție de proiecte de atelier, școli de vară, lucrări de disertație, diplomă și cercetări doctorale pe subiectul arhitecturii vernaculare din anii universitari 2017 și 2018, realizate în Universitatea de Arhitectură și Urbanism „Ion Minciu”, București, alături de articole semnate de specialiști și cercetători internaționali.

Ioana ZACHARIAS VULTUR, coordonator



Vernacular technic heritage

The idea of this **CSAV Journal** edition appeared during the international workshop of VVITA Erasmus + 2018, while visiting an old fishermen village from the Lofoten Peninsula, Norway. (see page 305).

It is a 19th century vernacular heritage site, still inhabited, where one can observe an architectural typology represented by wooden housing and fishermen or boat workshops, buildings partially arranged upon the cliffy seashore, on wooden piers. A special place among these dwellings is the fish oil press, with all the metal and wood mechanisms still working. One can observe not only a technology spread all over the territory of Europe and beyond, but also the way in which the technical heritage remains a "mental landmark" for many neighbouring communities, a place for gathering and an ecological system, adapted also to the new climate challenges.

On Romanian territory, such rural paleotechnical systems dating back from the Medieval Age or 19th Century are exhibited in village museums or are still "in site". Can this "in site" technical heritage become a post-industrial answer to the revitalisation of Romanian villages ?

The **2018 CSAV Journal** edition covers the entire range of academic papers exploring the rural site and vernacular architecture, between theory and practice. Therefore it is about a selection of the 2017-2018 studio projects, summer schools, dissertation papers, diploma and doctoral research on the topic of vernacular architecture, created in or in the frame of the "Ion Mincu" University of Architecture and Urbanism, accompanied by articles signed by specialists or international researchers.

Ioana ZACHARIAS VULTUR, coordinator



Mai mult decât biserici. O abordare a dezvoltării de strategii pentru viitorul economic al satelor din Transilvania
More than churches. An approach to develop strategies for the economical future of the villages of Transylvania

arch. stud. Lukas Valentin FLANDORFER

Vienna University of Technology, Department of Architecture, Austria

lvflandorfer@gmail.com

Keywords: *agriculture, traditional farming, economy, fortified church, landscape, wildlife*

1. Preamble

When I started thinking about this design studio, Romania, Transylvania and the Saxon villages I had the idea that food could be the key to boost tourism, economy and living standard in the villages. It should be a program or a programmatic intervention which connects all the villages in some way. I thought all these villages are probably very similar to each other and only covering the area with one big idea would attract enough people to achieve a good performance. But after all the experiences I had in the region, in the villages, with the people and the more I thought about them, my conclusion shifted from accentuating the similarities to developing the differences. Maybe the villages are similar, but the strategic focus should switch from the similarities (fortified churches) to differences, which do not even have to be very distinct already. There are so many possibilities originating from cultural traditions, landscape, handcrafts and so on. The goal has to be to create a network of possibilities, generated from the uniqueness of each single village while avoiding separation. Also I want to note, that this possibilities do not have to focus on tourism exclusively, but rather be strategies to strengthen the economy and quality of life in the villages. Tourism will develop additionally because requirements such as landscape and cultural heritage are given.

2. The Saxon villages

More than 160 fortified churches and fortress churches can be counted in Transylvanian towns and villages, accompanied by several normal churches built by the Transylvanian Saxons. Also Szekely fortified churches can be seen in some villages. Seven fortified churches are included in the UNESCO World Heritage.

Since most Saxons left Transylvania from 1990 to 1992 the left-behind houses and churches fall into disrepair more and more. While the houses are now used by Romanians and Roma, the fortified churches often are vacant and unused since there is nobody left to maintain the buildings and a lot of financial resources are necessary to make repairs and keep the churches in good condition. Since 2015 “Stiftung Kirchenburgen”, a foundation founded in Germany, is in charge to conserve the cultural heritage of the Saxon fortified churches.

In the map, published by Stiftung Kirchenburgen, all Transylvanian villages with Saxon churches and fortified churches, as well as churches which are part of the UNESCO World Heritage, are tagged.

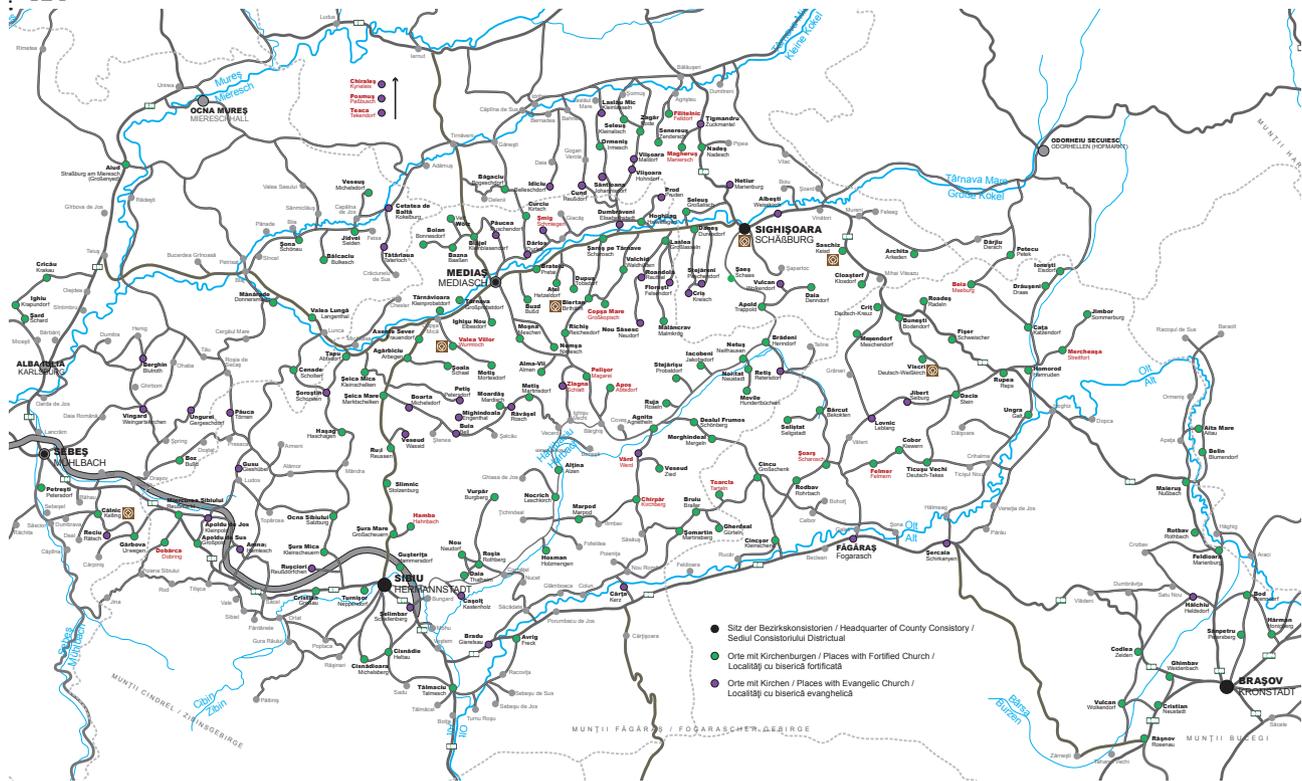


Fig. 1. Source: kirchenburgen.org.

3. The perception triangle

When coming into an unknown environment the discovering of it is a process which normally starts at a specified point. In the case of Transylvanian villages it often is the Saxon fortified church - since this is the place why most people will visit the village. Depending on how much time the visitor has available he will discover the nearest surroundings and neighborhood. If he is open-minded and interested he may even get in touch with the people living there and trying to find out about their lives. So for me in the case of the most Transylvanian villages there are three steps of perception:

- the church
- the village
- the people

Transylvanian villages seem to be recognized in this order from outstanding people or tourists. For someone who has never been in a Transylvanian village, the first impression will of course be affected by the fortified church in most villages. Since especially tourists who are visiting the rural areas get in contact with informations about the Saxon cultural heritage and their fortifications. But what about others, about residents especially - what is their perception on their living environment and habitat? What counts are the people who live in the villages - they know best what they need, what they like about their village and what it lacks.

Though the identity of the fortified churches is strong and they influence their surroundings and landscapes around, fortified churches as a single tourism attraction won't be enough in small villages as an economical perspective. Of course there will come individual people who are interested but to function as a sight and as a museum the fortified church probably has to be located in a bigger village or town, or be recognizable by its condition, size or something which makes it especially unique.

So to overcome this one-dimensional situation, small villages should focus as well on handicrafts, culinary traditions or cultural heritage and try to use side buildings of the fortified churches for these purposes. This way there will be a wider range of attractions within the church sites and also vacant buildings will get a new usage.

The goal is to promote the features, characteristics and strengths of each village and create a village-network. There should be a different speciality in each village or similar projects in a few villages. When the density of attractions is high enough, there can be created routes which "connect" the villages with similar themed attractions (handicrafts, culinary art, cultural heritage, ...). Residents of Transylvania and Romania, as well as tourists, can easily find the route with topics they are interested in. This way people, which would probably never come to a single village, are attracted to visit, which opens up new possibilities for village inhabitants.



4. Possible project topics for development

There is wide range of topics which could be interesting for the economical development of the Transylvanian villages. They range from agricultural subjects to traditional handcrafts and educational purposes. Some of them are described in the following paragraphs.

There is a long and diverse tradition of agriculture within Transylvania. Some products, which have been produced or still are produced in some places, are: schnaps, buffalo milk, vegetables such as cabbage, tomato, beetroot, carrot, onion, spinach, garlic, salad, radish, pumpkin and maize, parsley, feedgrain and lucerne. But there is also animal farming with poultry, guinea fowls, sheep/lambs, cows, pigs, water buffalos and horses which are traditional in Transylvania. An evidence for the manifold traditional farming are rare breeds such as the Mocanitzza cattle, the Carpathian buffalo or the Bazna pig. All of these plants and animals offer opportunities for the Transylvanian inhabitants. Jobs and vocations could be for example tomato cultivator, goji berry cultivator, buffalo breeder, or distiller for plum, apple or pear brandy (Pálinka, Țuică).

Allegedly numerous villages in Transylvania include the word apple in their name. A proof of how important the “Arboreta of Europe” in Transylvania once were. But there are still a lot of other products made in Transylvania as wine, milk, cheese, buffalo milk cream and plum jam.

Transylvania is well known for the many hayfields and meadows. The variety of the Transylvanian flora and fauna is a huge opportunity. Many herbs like sorrel, snapdragon, gentian, marjoram, thyme, meadow salvia can be found here. But this kind of wildlife is also very delicate and is in need of cautious handling. A very important role in this cooperation of sustainable agriculture and nature is the peasants sensitive handling which is managed without pesticides as they are used in big scale agriculture.

These cultivated landscapes are not only important for the peasants, as they feed them. They are also important for all kinds of plants, birds and animals. This unique diversity of flowers, herbs and grasses could be a very interesting opportunity for peasants and residents of the village, as they can often be used as medical plants. The harvesting of herbs could be an interesting source of income, and another alternative to the forestry industry run by big international companies, which in many cases are ruthlessly deforesting the Romanian landscape.

But not only herbs are prospering in the Transylvanian countryside, also broadleaf trees such as the walnut are widespread. Romania already is one of the biggest producers of walnuts within the European Union and maybe there is also a market for regional grown walnut products. Another nice effect of the great plurality of herbs and flowers is that bees really appreciate it. This is why there are more and more beekeepers in the past years. There is even a beekeeper centre in one village, which is located in a formerly vacant Saxon school building.

But there is not only food and agricultural products produced in Transylvania, there is also a rich tradition of handcrafting. After wool processing was nearly forgotten a company is establishing factories in small villages and employing residents. The wool is processed there in spinning mills and woven for carpets (Heltau, Bogatu Roman). But in other factories also wool products such as socks, slippers, traditional shepherd hats and wool sweaters are produced (Viscri). In Romania 10 million sheep are kept, that is the third highest number within the EU after Spain and Great Britain. A lot of these, mostly lambs, are being exported in Arab countries such as Jordan (up to 1 million per year), Iraq and Libya every year, while still having about three million small farmers with only a few acres or less than an acre of land each.

There are also producers of handmade birchwood brooms (Coveș) and producers of baskets and brooms out of bast fibers in Transylvania. In Nocrich there is a group of scouts producing traditional pottery. Traditional Houses and fortified churches are built with traditional construction methods and materials such as natural stone, sand, clay, chalk,

bricks and wood. All of these materials have been produced in the region in the past and still could be produced here. For some of these topics there are already projects in a few villages. Like the bakery in Hosman which was founded with the help of an initiative called Hosman Durabil whose goal is the revitalisation of the village economy by helping small family farms with collaborative engagement. But concepts like this can work in many villages and also are needed there. It is really a good example that it can work and it is not that hard - but of course it needs idealistic people who want to change something. Initiatives like this can also be the beginning of village renewal processes leading also to public interest and a boost in tourism and economy.

5. Education and knowledge supply

Of course many of the people do not have the knowledge about many of those things anymore, especially in handcraft. But there still are some who know and pass on this knowledge to next generations. So this is all about creating the frame conditions where knowledge can be given from one inhabitant to another. There can be workshops and classes in the fortified churches and buildings, where people are shown how things are made in traditional ways. For the younger generations, but also for people who may decide to come back from cities. This way the village inhabitants can learn about self-sufficiency and it is really a asset which they may not even know the importance of.

The educational program can contain courses on traditional handcrafting, as carpentry or masonry, so people are able to renovate their own houses and barns, but also on bakery or distilling. This is the chance to create a new community spirit where everybody can participate and bring their personal ideas in. For these causes side buildings of the fortified church can be renovated and used as educational rooms, but also as manufacturing spaces for handcraft start-ups.

Non-Profit associations like “HOG Schönberg” in Dealu Frumos are helping families with donations in kind which directly or indirectly support educational purposes. With workshops, summer schools and other learning opportunities where children can participate, can support this need for education too and complement the contributions of non-profit associations. There may be possibilities to even expand their support and since they are from the Saxon community improve the relationship between population groups and figure out a way to deal with the utilisation of resources such as unused fortified churches.

With this transfer of knowledge there can be founded workshops, factories and local farmer stores with regional specialities which will also stimulate agrotourism. Activities like these create jobs, fortified churches are serving a new purpose and also tourism will be stimulated. There will be new possibilities for further development. The people, the village, the churches - everybody wins. But also using fortified churches as a hotel or guesthouse is realistic in a few cases.

6. How to create and establish projects

Several steps, including studies and groundwork are necessary to figure out which intervention or project could be the right one to boost the development of each village.

- Research

In a first step it is important to get opinions from residents, from young and old. This can be happening in interviews, group meetings or at festivities where all kind of residents can be asked. What is unique or special in the village - it may



be based on legacies or even on legends. What does their vision for the fortified churches future look like, how do they imagine the village in the next years. What counts is that the public participation is as high as possible. The more ideas there are created the better. In the end of this process the evaluation of what could be realizable possibilities and ideas for the future lead to further development.

- *Vacancy*

Figuring out which buildings are needed. What should they offer, how much work and money is needed to fit the purpose. Eventually there are possibilities for an agreement with the owner which will help both parties. There are many vacant buildings in the villages of Transylvania, not only those within the fortified churches, therefore a different building maybe fits the new function even better.

- *Connect*

Getting in touch with people who already started similar initiatives in the villages of Transylvania or around - there are a lot! Introducing these projects to the residents to show them what is possible could prevent distrust and eliminate fears. The know-how of them could help to set up new initiatives and projects. The projects offer possibilities for all ethnic populations in terms of new income potentials and community strengthening. New residents may be attracted as well.

- *Partnerships*

Trying to get companies into partnerships for projects. There may be a lot of potential and human resources within the villages. There are already some projects, which are showing how this could work on a fair basis, for all of the involved persons. (*Links can be found under References*)

- *Financing*

While first steps of course would need some financial background, which may be provided by regional government, but maybe can also be accomplished by a non-profit association, the goal is that after some time the projects are self-financed and gain profit as well from which involved residents can live. For preservation or maintenance of buildings within fortified churches also Stiftung Kirchenburgen might be a potential partner.

- *Sustainable spatial development*

In order to guarantee a sustainable development of the villages it is a long term process of course. Projects and initiatives have to establish themselves within the villages and need to be accepted from the residents to function. Therefore it is important to find out in the beginning what is needed or has a well-grounded background. A wide public participation within the process is the key for acceptance and success.

7. Themed regional routes

The routes consist of projects from different villages which have a similar theme. The routes can be updated from time to time when there are new projects available and can increase with time. The more variable the themes of the routes are, the better to address a wide range of interested people.

The variety range of the routes can last from those who are focussing on agricultural themes cultural heritage, handicrafts, architectural topics to routes which are serving food tourism for example with regional delicacies, specialities or special herbs. There actually are no limits to ones imagination.

On the right there are some suggested routes and how an overview of these routes could look as a map. But of course



these aren't final since the projects have yet to be realised.

In the following steps of the realization of these routes, it would be necessary to locate and index already existing potential projects as well as additionally necessary projects. This can be implemented in following student works as for example as a diploma work or also in organized field studies by universities.

8. Conclusion

Agriculture and farming is what unites the people and the landscape in Transylvania. Many of the food and groceries consumed are produced by peasants in manual work, without agricultural machinery. These small-scale farms are valuable for food and landscape and should be appreciated. Products of Transylvanian rural areas often are produced in ecological farming and the landscape they are produced in should be protected and supported so traditional farming communities can maintain their work and also to save their economic future. To achieve this goal this written approach suggests the further development of community strengthening projects and a regional networking concept which shall also allow a sustainable development of tourism and agrotourism.

9. Links & References

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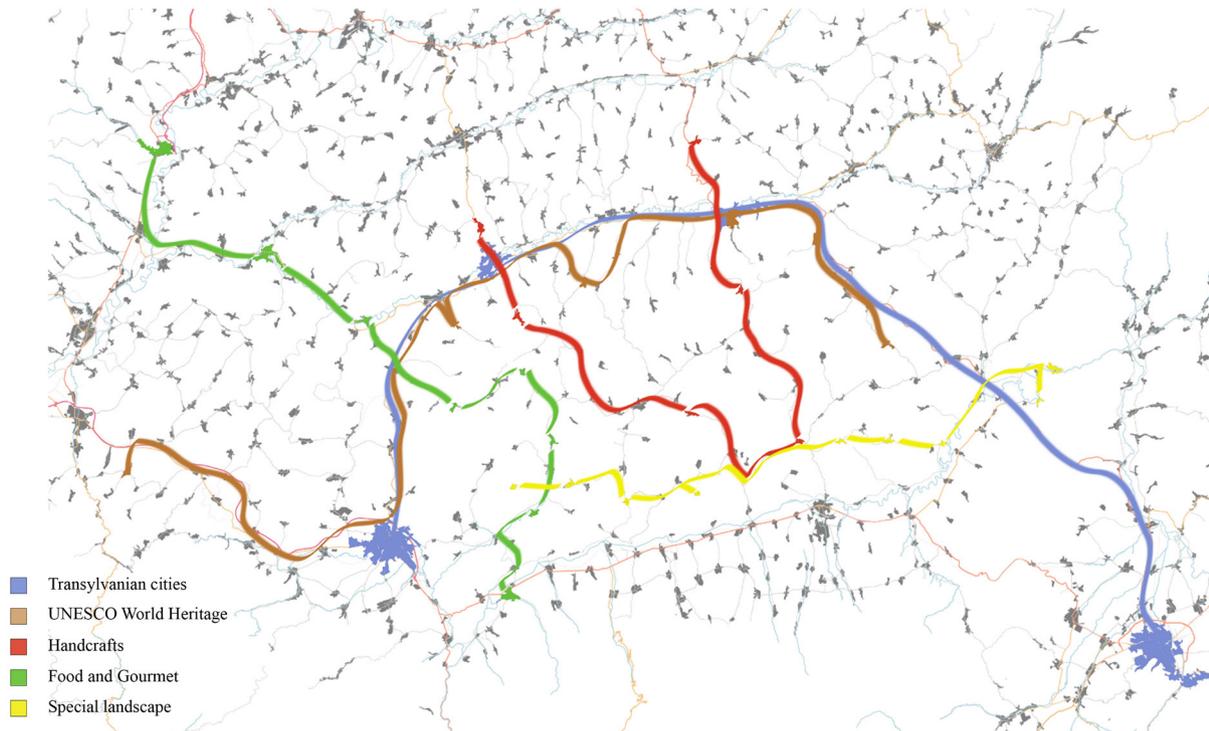
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Illustrations

- Fig. 1.: Biertan, view from the Biertan fortified church
 Fig. 2.: Map of fortified churches in Transylvania – *source: ki*
 Fig. 3.: Hosman
 Fig. 4.: Gherdeal
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 Fig. 8.: Dealu Frumos with fortified church in the background
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