



The Traditional Habitat of Bran Village, Romania.
Sustainable Development in Rural Landscape.

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ABSTRACT

The region consisting of Transylvania's rural areas still offers a living proof of sustainable development. Besides using traditional natural materials, the Romanian peasant has developed various typologies of dwellings across the country starting with the shore of the Black Sea and up to the mountains' top. The dwellings from villages have been built, rebuilt, each of them maintaining the specific of the area in what respects local building materials as well as the architectural style, the latter being adjusted to the relief and the climate, with improvements from one generation to the other. Bran area is still distinguished as a jewel of culture and tradition. Here, magnificent landscapes merge with history and culture, the legendary landmark being Bran Castle. Sustainable development by its adjustment both to environment as well as to local natural resources coincides from the point of view of objectives with the rural traditional habitat, which is still present but not sufficiently valued.

KEYWORDS

habitat, rural landscape, spatial succession, sustainable

INTRODUCTION

Defining the locality's historical-cultural patrimony is closely related to the natural landscape, which is part of history, tracking the temporary transformations, in terms of both climate and human intervention throughout the region's various evolutionary stages.

The conservation of the architectural patrimony must relate to the concept of "integrated conservation" (CE, 1975), and shall adopt methods for conserving the patrimonial elements, based on clearly formulated measures in the local plans for sustainable development, as well as regional development.

The conservation and enhancement of the rural-patrimony elements contributes to accelerating the process of the sustainable rural development, achieving thereby the transmission of the rural-patrimony value.

OBJECTIVES

Landscape patrimony in Bran region's habitat

Sustainable development supposes conserving the natural and cultural environment, which, as a whole, confers identity upon the place and its inhabitants who, in their turn, are in charge with transmitting this legacy to the future. The European Landscape Convention (Florence, 2000) defines the notion of landscape as part of the territory, perceived as such by the population, and whose character results from the interaction between natural and/or human factors, and it emphasizes the importance of conserving landscapes, not only for their aesthetic value, but especially for the quality of human and natural life. According to the degree of human intervention on the environment, one can identify:

- natural landscapes – not affected by human actions
- cultural landscapes – formed by anthropogenic modeling in various proportions.

The establishment of human settlements was conditioned by finding the places endowed with the best conditions for carrying out the specific trades, as the region's prevailing type of economy depends to a great extent on the geographical factor.



Figure 1: Piemont Sohodol village, autumn[2]
Sources: personal archive

The configuration of the mountain villages is the most eloquent model of adaptation to the specificity of the geographical landscape. Given that Bran settlements are situated in a mountain area, we lay the stress on the role played by mountain and forest both for their establishment and for the cohesion of the areas on both sides of the Carpathians. Bran depression looks like a mountain area, framed eastwards and westwards by the massifs Bucegi and Piatra Craiului. The internal relief of the platform is a huge modeling surface, which unfolds as palmate peaks, with altitudes of circa 1300 m, in the area of Fundata, gradually descending in the direction south-west-north-east, down to the level of circa 750 m, in the pre-mountain areas Predeluţ- Sohodol, where they display a partially modified aspect. The peaks of the platform, which detach themselves from the mountain frames, descend along a distance of 2-7 km, in general with very low slopes, offering propitious conditions to the dwelling and to the development of a pastoral economy. Bran platform is crossed by a few main valleys: Moeciu, Şimon, Poarta, Zbarcioara and Sohodol. It is characterized by the presence of two levels of terraces all along, which enabled the establishment of valley-specific human settlements, as well as by a series of secondary valleys,

less favorable for the dwelling .[5]

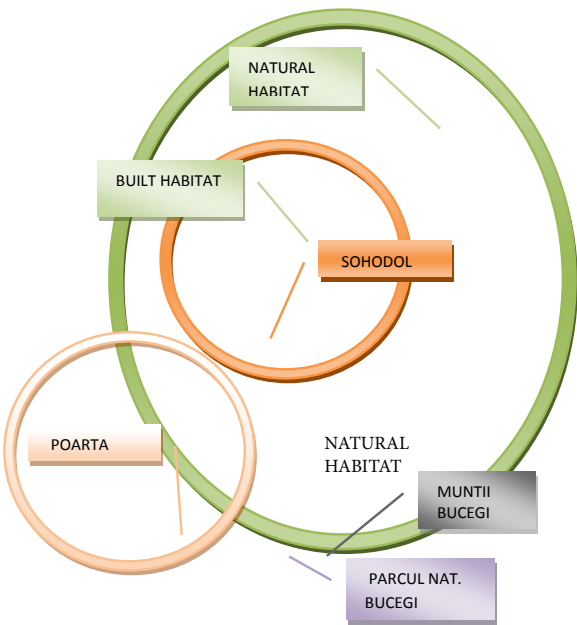
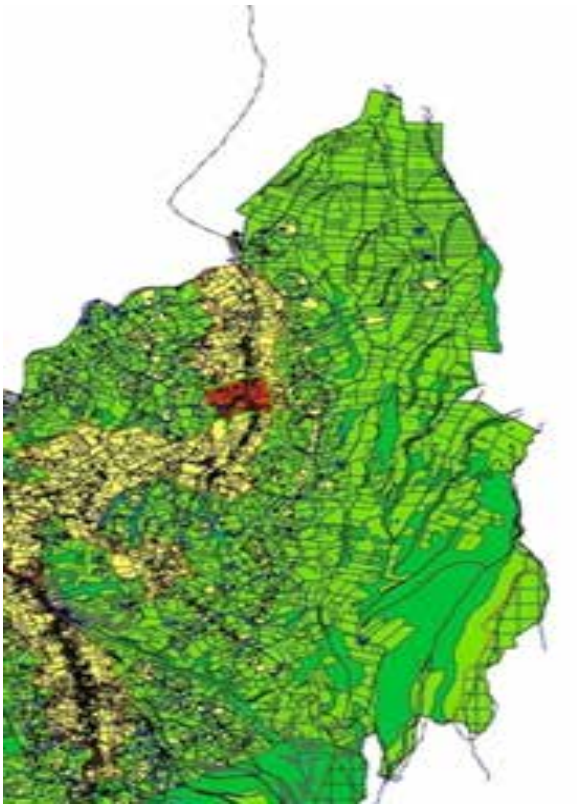


Figure 2: Image taken from PUG-Bran and processed by the author[2]

Sohodol is one of the four villages which make up Bran commune. Due to its mountain foot-specific relief and to the region's pastoral specificity, it is a scattered village. In their establishment, the village precincts usually go by the shape of the terrain, therefore *pastoral swarming* engenders *poly-nuclear villages*. This way, along the rivers, due to the terrain configuration, the houses must group themselves sometimes on one side, other times on the other, sometimes close to the riv-

erbed, other times on the terraces, sometimes on the hills, other times on the edges, sometimes piled, other times scattered.



As one can see, Sohodol is situated at the foot of Bucegi Mountains, in the mountain-foot area, the relief being in a descending spatial succession, starting from the mountain basis, where there is vegetation, there are forests, and continuing up to the area of the built habitat. The scattered village, by its pastoral nature, was intrinsically related to the mountain areas, having access thereto, as tradition-related necessity. In this way, one can see in the Landscape, the gradation of the natural elements, as the habitats are intertwined, the density of the built habitat rises, in relation to the specificity of the region's households. In this way, on the higher areas, temporary buildings, of pastoral or zoo-technical character are placed, and in the average-density areas, households which own the afferent terrains destined either for grazing or for other specific activities, are placed. [8]

PURSUED DIRECTIONS:

- Reaching an equilibrium between the conservation of the traditional habitat of Bran and the landscape – for which reason the area is particularly attractive
- Tracing the new tendencies of intensive development for the commune's inhabitants, also meant to comply with tourism-development tendencies.

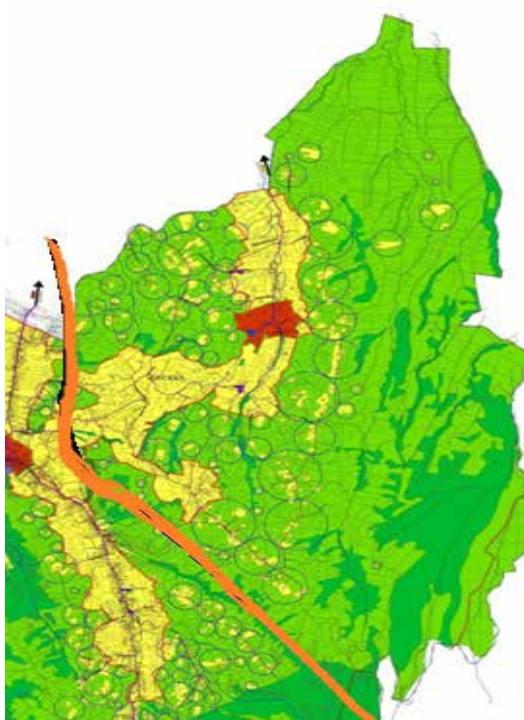


Due to the fact that Bran is a tourist attraction of national interest, the conservation of the specificity and of the landscape is a priority.

Sources: personal archive

It is important for the landscape to have the *Area of Landscape Patrimony* defined (beyond its limits) wherein attention

shall be paid to the conservation of the natural landscape, of the transition landscape and of the traditional-village landscape.



CROSS-SECTION AREAS

Cross-section areas, which function as a frame, allow the identification of several habitats, starting from the natural one and ending with the urban one. Dividing this frame allows the creation of zoning categories. These categories comprise standards that promote a similar diversity to settlements having organically evolved. The standards, which are expressed in parameters, overlap and reflect therefore the succession of natural and human communities. In this way, the transversal areas the environment- and zoning-related methodologies. They allow the environmental experts to assess the composition of the social habitats, and the town planners to maintain the validity of the natural habitats.

- Natural area T-1 consists of lands that are close or back to a wild, uncultivated state and includes the unpropitious fields to human settlements, due to their topography, hydrology or vegetation.
- Rural area T-2 consists of isolated occupied lands, either cultivated or not. It includes woodlands, farmlands, pastures and areas requiring irrigations. The typical buildings to these regions are peasant households, buildings with agriculture-related uses, chalets and houses.
- Village-border area T-3 consists of low-density residential areas, adjacent to the high-density areas, with multiple uses. Houses and outbuildings are allowed thereon. Vegetation spontaneously growths and withdrawals are relatively high. Blocks may be high, and the roads are irregularly built, according to the natural relief conditions.
- Village regular area T-4 displays multiple uses and especially a residential urban tissue. There may be several types of buildings: alone on the plot, coupled and buildings in a row. The landscape withdrawal and arrangement vary. The streets with verges and the sidewalks define average-size blocks.
- Village-centre area T-5 consists of high-density buildings, with multiple uses for commerce, offices, apartments and

houses in a row. It has a dense street-network, curved streets, broader sidewalks and buildings close to the sidewalks.

- Special sectors consist of areas with buildings, which, due to their function, placement or configuration, cannot or must not comply with one or several cross-cut sections, as they are defined. For instance, the area of Bran castle might be deemed a special sector.

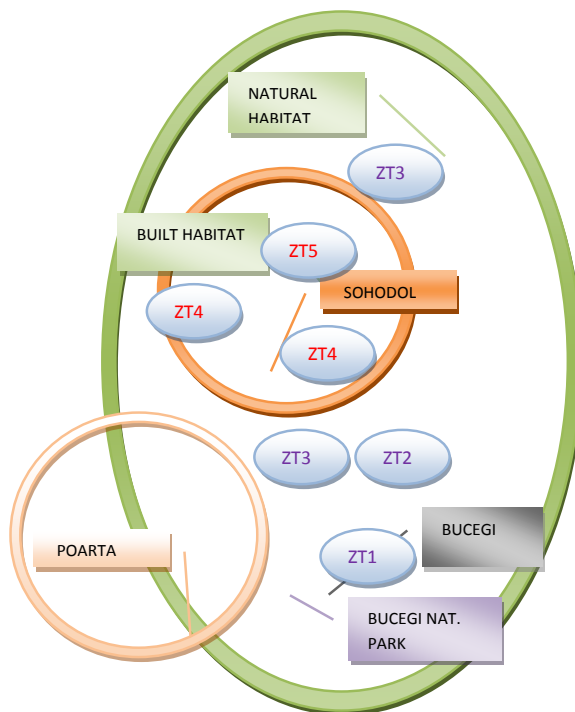


Figure 6: Support image taken from PUG-Bran and processed by the author [2]

The anthropogenic habitat of Sohodol is in fusion with the natural habitat Vatra Statului, being the space where the community's households spatially conduct their activities, both those related to daily living and those related to traditional occupations. The pastoral character, as well the one related to animal breeding, offers a spatial synergy in the natural Habitat.

TRADITIONAL PATRIMONY BUILT WITH LANDSCAPING VALUE

The conservation and enhancement of the specificity are directly related to the traditional dwelling mode, to the occupations, territorial arrangements, customs etc. Tradition is a set of conceptions, customs and beliefs, which historically settle within social or national groups, and which are bequeathed from one generation to another, constituting, for each social group, according to the Convention on Biological Diversity from Rio de Janeiro - 1992 and to UNESCO Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage – 2003, its specific feature. Tradition is a dynamic, community-defining system, which organically changes.

Rural patrimony includes the remembrance of the place, inherited from past generations, the manner in which landscapes and culture developed across our territories. The habitat built as local identity, supported by the economic and social evolution, needs a well-established selection, in order to be optimally preserved.[7] Note the involvement of the Council of Europe in supporting the tradition-safeguarding initiatives, for the purpose of sustainable development.

The basic feature of the patrimony built in Sohodol are the

households with enclosures or with reinforced courtyard. The village specificity being the scattered type, these households are defining for the traditional habitat of Bran, both in terms of function and vernacular architecture.[2]

The origins are defined by the region's pastoral specificity, being a functional and spatial takeover of the traditional sheepfolds, being also influenced by the Transylvanian-Saxon tradition. Sohodol is at the confluence of the cultural space afferent to Tara Românească and of the cultural space with Transylvanian influences.

Across the village, depending on the construction periods, several types of dwellings with courtyard were identified. Located on hills, in sunny areas, on plateaus, they prove thereby to be representative elements of the scattered-type village.

Given that in most villages of Bran region, the household with reinforced courtyard almost disappeared, both in terms of function and in terms of traditional architectural presence; the preservation of this type of building and the creation of perspectives in the vernacular architecture of Sohodol.



Figura 7: Village centre Sohodol. Map taken from PUG-Bran and processed by the author[2]

On the territory of Sohodol village, there are:

- 67 households with enclosed yard (marked with red) which are in various operational stages, such as:

✓ Operational households in good condition, wherein the traditionally built patrimony was kept and/or partially improved. These are positive examples. The field study has shown that the maintenance level of a household is directly related to the number of family members.

Example: 1) Fam. Petric Aron, str. Poenaru

✓ Operational households in acceptable condition. The number of family members is low or implies a single person.

Example 2) Reit Ileana, Drumul lui Marin

✓ Inoperable households in good-acceptable condition, which require restoration with a view to their being made operational, yet which are abandoned.

Example: 3) Household with Transylvanian-Saxon influences, str. I.Flucus

✓ Inoperable households, abandoned, in an advanced state of decay, which require restoration and partial reconstruction.

Example: 4) Abandoned household str. Bradu Inalt

Elder indwellers still reckon this type of "house" as the most beautiful and functional for this area.[2]

CONCLUSIONS[2]

✓ With a view to conserving the vernacular patrimony existing in Sohodol village, we advance the proposal of forbidding the demolition of the households with enclosure (reinforced courtyard), and of the households organized on three sides, regardless of their condition.

✓ Demolishing other buildings endowed with value of ethnographic patrimony shall be endorsed by a Commission of Experts, after their being physically assessed and after consulting the re-operationalizing options.

✓ The rightful owners of the traditional household must maintain them in good condition. In the event of financial inability, they can apply for support to the local authorities, which will develop Operational Programs targeting the re-operation-alizing of the traditional patrimony-specific built groundwork.

✓ The educational system shall foster programmes targeting the landscape, historic-cultural, vernacular patrimony of Bran area, with a view to reconsidering the cultural values.

✓ Economic-revitalisation programmes shall be locally implemented, by establishing partnerships between the inhabitants and by developing networks for practicing and learning the local trades.

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