

**Archaeology as Advocacy: Celebrating Cultural Heritage and Promoting Sustainability in  
Transylvania Mining Communities**

**How to preserve and promote the cultural heritage of rural Transylvania?**

**Liz Arnold  
Professor Colin Quinn  
Hamilton College Levitt Center**

## Introduction

All human behavior is rooted in the places in which those behaviors occur. As dynamic contexts for social interaction, places gradually acquire social meaning through associations with group experiences (Fisher 2009). This process, called *placemaking*, is the process by which places embody social meaning (Fisher 2009). Because the meaning of place is derived from human experience, interactions with place entangle notions of broader cultures and identities.

Archaeologists have noted the importance of placemaking in the past (Bergh 2016; Fisher 2009; McAnany 2011; Henry 2017). Through analysis of the interplay between humans and their landscapes, archaeologists can better understand not only how people of the past negotiated identities and institutions, but also how they oriented themselves towards the past. The social meaning developed through placemaking is not a coincidental byproduct, but rather is the intended result of people using place as a resource to intentionally invoke the past and remake relationships between people and cultural institutions. In doing so, people have been able to define their identity and establish a sense of belonging and place (Smith 2004). In many cases people of the past have deliberately engaged with place during times of cultural and political upheaval in efforts to assert their identities or claim authority (Fisher 2009; Smith 2004). The political nature of interactions with place forces us to question who is engaging with place, their purpose, and the longer-term consequences of their actions. Furthermore, it highlights the strong link between place and identity as place becomes critical in the intentional establishment of notions of identity and belonging.

Key to the process of placemaking is the location-specific cultural heritage. Heritage is socially constructed through people's day-to-day interactions that are a part of a deeper social network that constitutes the heritage of place (Corsale and Iorio 2013). The ICOMOS

International Cultural Tourism Committee (2002) defines cultural heritage as an “expression of the ways of living developed by a community and passed on from generation to generation, including customs, practices, places, objects, artistic expression and values” (Veghes and Popescu 2018:130). Heritage encompasses the entirety of placemaking: the tangible, the distinctive places of human habitation, villages, objects, industrial systems, and more, as well as the intangible, the forms of traditional and popular culture, works based on tradition, and the social context rooted in themes of cultural meaning (Veghes and Popescu 2018:130). Vecco (2010) recognizes the role of intangible cultural heritage by further noting that cultural heritage also involves additional aspects such as cultural value, value of identity, and the capacity to interact with memory. The tangible and intangible aspects together strongly impact how communities identify with place as they also identify themselves and their social expectations. In the process, people use and preserve landscape in different ways to create and maintain both aspects of heritage.

In the present, cultural heritage is a critical political resource in providing claims to the past to establish a sense of place and cultural identity. As tangible and intangible heritage impacts perceptions of identity and memory, it is used as a symbol for perceptions of social, cultural, and historical identity at individual, community, and nation levels (Smith 2004:7). Thus, the intentional preservation of cultural heritage is symbolic because it has an ability to “provide physical and tangible links with the past,” playing an “important role in the development, maintenance, and contestation of a wide range of identities” (Smith 2004:17). In this process, heritage preservation can be a powerful political and cultural resource that ignites cultural pride, encourages cultural expression, and gives coherence to political movements (Smith 2004:26).

In this paper, I examine the practice of cultural heritage preservation. In particular, I seek to understand how cultural heritage in rural landscapes, both in its intangible and tangible aspects, can be sustainably preserved. Rural, traditional landscapes express a unique sense of place that defines identity (Gullino and Larcher 2013). It is in these landscapes that heritage uniquely represents place and tradition links the place to people and generations. This intangible heritage, however, is the most fragile and difficult to sustain, and without it places lose their meaning, the natural environment degrades, and connections within the community are lost (Eppich 2014). In the face of modern development, unemployment, and changing policies, traditional landscapes face threats that diminish the effect of culture. Therefore, rural landscapes are an especially suitable context for examining cultural heritage preservation and how it can effectively connect people to their past to reinforce a sense of belonging (Eppich 2014:8). I approach preservation as a political act rooted in placemaking to emphasize the intentionality behind landscape interactions, the role of stakeholders, and the overall social organization behind preservation. I also emphasize placemaking to recognize the goals of the community museum in intentionally designing the museum to meet the goals of the community. Because place is continuously used to negotiate social statuses, roles, and identities, we must understand that the messages portrayed through preservation are intentionally provoked by the people with the authority to make those decisions. I will apply the knowledge gained through exploring this question to design a community museum in Transylvania that promotes sustainable engagement with cultural heritage that is rooted in placemaking perspectives.

I focus my discussion on traditional rural landscapes in southwest Transylvania, Romania. Specifically, I ask how can we design the Ramet Museum Project to preserve and promote the cultural heritage of rural Transylvania? I examine case studies across Transylvania

to identify the specific types of crafts and practices critical to rural Transylvanian identity. I then implement the insight gained to identify some best practices in developing the community museum in the Ramet case study.

### **Preservation as a Political Act**

In order to understand relationships with landscape established through past human experience, it is necessary to understand the concept of place as a context for human experiences constructed in movement, memory, encounter, and association (Matero 2008:2). Furthermore, the social meaning of place is established through constant interactions with landscape rooted in the process of placemaking. Because places are imbued with meaning, these interactions also have social meaning as ways of intentionally creating and remaking connections among people and cultural institutions in which social statuses, roles, and identities are negotiated. How people engage with heritage especially involves the process of making sense of and understanding the past and the present. Corsale and Iorio (2013) refer to the process of “heritagization” to highlight the political nature of cultural heritage preservation. Heritagization is the process in which things selected from the past are attributed meaning and create heritage (Corsale and Iorio 2013:23). The decisions made or not made regarding what is selected involve a set of values placed on things by people with the authority to interpret heritage through lenses such as race, nationality, and status (Corsale and Iorio 2013). As heritage is a symbol of the past that holds value in the present, conservation of a place and its heritage is inherently a political act intended to reify cultural identities and historical narratives over time. Behind these decisions are aims to establish solidarity by dividing people into “we” and “they”, highlighting differences and legitimizing certain political and social realities (Corsale and Iorio 2013). Matero (2008) highlights that “all

conservation is a critical act in that decisions regarding what is conserved, and who and how is presented, are a product of contemporary values and beliefs about the past's relationship (and us) to the present" (Matero 2008:2). With the knowledge of heritage preservation as a political resource, we must understand that heritage is the result of a selection process led by people with the authority to make those decisions. Thus, much of the heritage we see and attribute to place reflects the vision of these authority figures who most likely reflect the dominant group. We must understand that "heritage is inescapably related to a choice about which history should be discredited, which forgotten and which people disinherited" (Corsale and Iorio 2013:23). The people who make decisions on preservation and the values they emphasize impact broader perceptions of identity within and outside of the community the preservation is meant to serve.

### **Traditional Rural Landscapes**

As with any place, rural landscapes have a significance that extends further than simply its environmental role as a landscape. Just as humans engage with the environment to create place, people's day-to-day interactions with landscape especially help to distinguish rural, traditional landscapes as dynamic living systems. In the process of interaction between humans and the environment, culture is formed, which impacts the environment and human society (Zhang et al. 2017:171). Traditional methods, techniques, accumulated knowledge, and cultural practices produce and manage these unique landscapes (ICOMOS 2017). In Southwest China, reliance on the continuity of rice farming practices has contributed to the protection and preservation of Hani rice terraced landscape and socioeconomic stability for over 1300 years (Zhang et al. 2017). Because of the importance of practice in maintaining these places, rural landscape systems "encompass rural elements and functional, productive, spatial, visual,

symbolic, environment relationships among them and with a wider context” (ICOMOS 2017). At the Hani rice terraces, it is also culture that contributes to the maintenance of the traditional agricultural landscape as farmers are driven to persist farming according to well-established lifeways (Zhang et al. 2017:177). Therefore, the heritage of rural landscape systems embodies both the physical attributes as well as wider physical, cultural, and environmental links. This includes cultural knowledge, traditions, practices, meanings and expressions of identity and belonging, and the cultural values attributed to the landscape in both the past and present community (ICOMOS 2017).

### **Why Place Matters**

While culture and tradition are what tie people to the land and help maintain the stability of the cultural system, culture cannot absolutely overcome the impacts of economies, technological advancement, and modern life to maintain traditional rural landscapes. As the ICOMOS-IFLA International Scientific Committee on Cultural Landscapes (2017) reveals, rural landscape heritage faces demographic and culture threats involving population growth in urban areas and a loss of traditional practices, knowledge, and culture, as well as structural threats involving rapid globalization and intensification of practices such as agriculture. In the case of Hani rice terraces, many farmers do not want their children to continue farming mainly because of the difficulty of the job relative to the abundance of non-farm works (Zhang et al. 2017:177). Zhang and colleagues (2017) refer to a system of pull and resistance behind the people who maintain rural landscapes. While the “pull” mechanism drives people to stay near their hometown and persist their various practices according to traditional lifeways, the “resistance” mechanism is what holds people back as they hold into stagnant thinking and develop an

inability to adapt to non-local society. Yet in a rapidly changing world, traditional practices are becoming obsolete and are no longer able to financially support those who rely on them. The few economic opportunities available in rural landscapes and concentration of economic opportunities in urban centers results in the depopulation and collapse of these communities. Losing people means losing community, which is the vital unit of heritage preservation.

Recognizing the threats to rural landscapes, archaeologists have explored best practices when it comes to cultural heritage preservation. Archaeologists have emphasized first developing a deep understanding of rural landscapes and their heritage values to effectively communicate and transmit the heritage and values of rural landscapes (ICOMOS 2017). In order to accomplish this, Eppich (2014) introduces an integrated management approach based on basic principles such as multidisciplinary involvement, participation with a strong involvement of all relevant stakeholders, cooperation between participants, consideration of site and context specifics, and values based on regional characteristics (Eppich 2014:90-92). With these principles in mind, successful solutions include culture in the conservation efforts to instill pride and a sense of identity (Zhang et al. 2017:X). While cultural pride is essential in preservation, Zhang and colleagues (2017) emphasize that conservation strategies need to include an economic driver that helps to keep the land practices sustainable. Mazzanti (2002) calls for a multi-dimensional, multi-attribute and multi-value approach to consider the economic dimensions of cultural heritage, such as the varying flows and benefits provided by cultural economic goods and services. Bakri and colleagues (2015) emphasize that a more sustainable approach focuses on the economic, social, and physical to understand how stakeholders value the cultural heritage. As previously noted, it is the practice that maintains the stability of the land, and without a financially-sustainable practice culture cannot fully contribute to heritage preservation. In their



study of Chinese heritage assets of Bendigo, Australia, Laing and colleagues (2014) highlight a process of heritage commodification in rural communities achieving growth in tourism. Tourism requires the ‘commodification of heritage assets as tourist experiences’ to help tourists decipher meaning and assign value (Laing et al. 2014:180). This includes developing industries such as eco-tourism and involving government compensation for practices in hometowns (Zhang et al. 2017:178). While heritage commodification has proven important in developing rural communities, it may not be welcomed by community members, and therefore Laing and colleagues (2014) argue that authenticity in the development of tourist experiences in heritage settings should be explored. With placemaking perspectives in mind, it is important to recognize the history behind a cultural heritage even while modifying place in hopes to gain cultural and economic attention.

### **Transylvania Case Study**

Romania’s communist past makes rural Transylvania a suitable context for investigating cultural heritage preservation in unknown landscapes. With the desire for control and surveillance, the Communist drive for consolidation pushed people to live in the cities in the effort to urbanize. Outlying villages, especially ones that relied heavily on agriculture, were seriously disadvantaged (Surd and Turnock 2000:290-292). The agenda of modernization in urban areas and lack of focus on rural areas lead to substantial differences in living conditions. The government’s commitment to assert Romania in the global scene involved a concentration on and intensification of the mining tradition and other industries that led to a lack of agricultural improvement and increase in non-agricultural employment (Surd and Turnock 2000:290-292). This concentration of economic opportunity in urban centers combined with the increasing

obsolescence of agricultural practices meant that young people left rural areas to pursue higher incomes, further isolating rural places that relied on traditional practices to maintain their land (Surd and Turnock 2000:290-292). The trends that emerged during this consolidation are still present today as depopulation and the polarization of space are issues pertinent to many rural areas across the globe. A strong focus on urbanization and economic success in the consolidated urban areas created a dynamic still relevant today in which urban areas and their practices were equated with progress, while rural areas and their traditional practices were equated with hindrance. I aim to refocus the conversation on and increase public interest towards the rural areas of Transylvania. The construction of Romanian heritage has gone through drastic changes especially through manipulation under communism. In turn, much of the Romanian rural heritage and its Bronze Age prehistoric roots have been overshadowed. Special attention should be given to the active involvement of local people in the management of rural landscapes to re-center traditional lifeways and rural Transylvanian identity. This project presents ways to help regain identity in this unnoticed landscape.

### **Rural Mountain Heritage**

Settled between the Pannonian Plain and the Transylvanian Plateau and north of the Mures River are the Apuseni Mountains - also known as the Western Carpathian Mountains. The mountainous landscape holds great value – filled with deep river valleys, wooded slopes, and exposed limestone formations, the Carpathian Mountains have an impressive level of biodiversity that includes 45 percent of Europe's top big carnivore population and over 400 limestone caves inhabited by a rare species of bats (Taylor 2019). The area also presents great geological diversity of eruptive rocks, limestones, conglomerates, and sandstones (Buza et al.

2001). Its richness in minerals is fundamental to the mining tradition, yet this tradition was rapidly intensified throughout the Communist period and continued exploitation over time on the natural resources exploits the rich cultural heritage of the Apuseni Mountains (Gherasim 2012). Due to its rugged beauty, the Apuseni mountains are an important spot for ecotourism, though much of the tourist infrastructure is underdeveloped (Cosma et al. 2014).

Among the mountain range's slopes is a distinctive hamlet settlement pattern essential to the landscape (Surd and Turnock 2000:285). Settlements are dispersed widely across the mountain surfaces and include relatively small commune centers – both permanent settlements used for stock rearing, forestry work and wood crafts as well as temporary habitations used for grazing livestock (Buza et al. 2001; Surd and Turnock 2000). The wide variety of landscape and resources has created opportunities for inhabitants who have adapted their practices to the environment and have created a valuable relationship with the landscape. The pastoral economy is a prominent economic and social practice in the uplands. In the lower and less steep slopes families practice subsistence farming and manage land to make hay and graze livestock to support their social, economic, and cultural livelihoods (Taylor 2019). In the woodlands, forestry is a key commercial resource for timber extraction as well as a setting for locals to create and sell handicrafts (Surd and Turnock 2000:285; Taylor 2019). The forests provide timber for construction and wood pasture as well as raw material for woodworking residents in carpentry and construction wood carving (Cosma et al. 2014). There are many skilled craftsmen in the area who contribute to the wooden heritage of the mountains with constructions of wooden tools, musical instruments such as alpenhorns and pipes, and other wood crafts. Coopers or barrel-makers are well-respected in mountain communities, making barrels, casks, kegs, food containers, mugs, and more (The City Of Alba Iulia 2014). A glance at traditional folk

architecture highlights the importance of wooden heritage, as wood is used extensively inside and around the home (The City Of Alba Iulia 2014). The carved wooden architecture is thatched and characterized by a tapering roof, tall wooden shingles, and wooden sculptures, grave poles, and house facades, as seen in Cluj County (Cosma et al. 2014; Gica and Coros 2016).

Traditional crafts are an important part of local identity. In addition to the wood works previously mentioned, there are many arts and crafts valuable to the landscape. Other elements of folk art include ornamental decorations, fabric, leather vests adorned with seams, and metal tools with ornamentation (Cosma et al. 2014). It is tradition in the Apuseni Mountains for



*Figure: House in mountainous regions of Alba. Source: Romania Dacia.*

both men and women to spin their threads in the winter to make yard used for making sheets, towels, and various clothing (The City Of Alba Iulia 2014). With the pastoral economy that is present especially in the uplands, wool and fur are resources frequently used for carpets, thicker clothing, and household textiles (The City Of Alba Iulia 2014). Special attention has been paid to traditional wool and leather costumes worn by women from areas such as Buzau and Muscel (Etnotique 2020).



*Figure: Example of popular costume of Muscel County. Source: Etnotique.*

There have been efforts made to preserve the traditional crafts that are key to the landscape. The Guild of Transylvanian Craftsmen is a non-governmental organization that supports the over 630 traditional artists and craftsmen who are registered in its database (The City Of Alba Iulia 2014). There are a variety of crafts represented

that go back to the Middle Ages and are centered around old Saxon settlements, including metal works, decorative arts, glass works including stained glass, hand-crafted toys, pottery and stove building, bone carving, textiles and clothing, natural cosmetics, musical instruments, leather goods, jewelry, and more (The City Of Alba Iulia 2014).

Like its surrounding hamlets, the village of Ramet embodies subsistence farming and the social and cultural traditions of generations. A village in Alba County in the Apuseni Mountains, Ramet illustrates the interplay of rural development and heritage preservation. At Ramet,



*Figure: Inside of Romanian house, featuring homemade carpets and textiles. Source: Romania Dacia.*

rural development involving the construction of a road and the legalization of land ownership has changed the local economy, but also raises some concerns. While this construction has increased access to the isolated landscape and thus provided the opportunity for the area to develop its tourism product, there has been a concern that increased land development may lead to a loss of the area's cultural heritage. In addition to the land management and woodwork valuable to the area's heritage, the built heritage of thatched buildings, textiles, and design present in the village's buildings and layout are equally as important. An ethnographic museum in Ramet displays the typical thatched Romanian house completely produced by local craftsmen, including traditional tools, clothing, furniture, and textiles (Taylor 2019, Romania Dacia). What makes these aspects of heritage even more valuable is their situation within a rich landscape. While there is major concern over the development of new businesses and how it may impact traditional farming practices and cultural architecture, the opportunity for nature tourism shows

promise for Ramet. As a beautiful landscape steeped in cultural heritage and traditional practices, Ramet attracts visitors specifically looking for natural landscapes and interactions with locals through active experiences. Increased tourism in the area encourages the continued maintenance of cultural traditions to educate the local community and visitors about the importance of cultural heritage, traditional buildings, and land management (Taylor 2019).

### **Saxon Built Heritage**

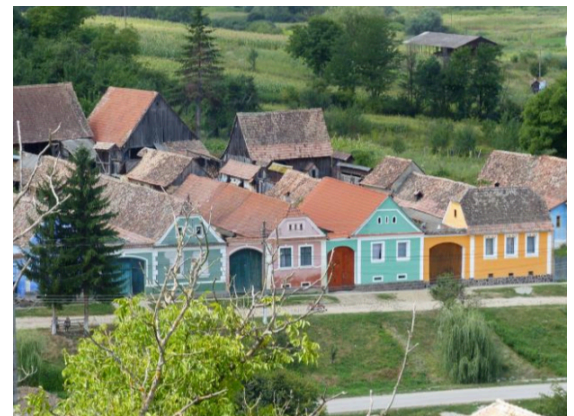
An example of a better developed heritage resource is the medieval landscape that spans southern Transylvania. Southern Transylvania is home to hundreds of well-preserved Saxon towns and villages built between the 13th and 15th centuries that mostly lie within the medieval fortress-towns of Sibiu, Sighisoara, and Brasov (Akeroyd and Page 2006). Saxons came to Transylvania in the mid-1100s and immediately gained respect for their skill and talent, thus gaining power resulting in almost 9 centuries of existence in southern Transylvania (Cristini et al. 2020). Despite the fall in the Saxon population that has occurred since World War II, the long existence of the Saxon community and its tangible architectural heritage of historical buildings have been secured by Romanian institutions in place. The 250 Saxon villages still existing in Transylvania retain architectural features that include a Lutheran fortified church built in Romanesque and Gothic style and a traditional rural settlement pattern with colorful family farmsteads of Baroque style (Corsale and Iorio 2013). There are 3 types of fortifications preserved, including the church with fortified walls, the fortified church, and the fortress church (Valentina 2012). These structures continue to be promoted and seven of the prominent churches

of the area are listed on the UNESCO World Heritage List, including Biertan, Calnic, Darjiu, Prejmer, Saschiz, Valea, and Viscri (Valentina 2012). Efforts to preserve other built heritage are active in these villages especially. Settlements are typically organized so that they surround the central fortification and its defense systems, and the traditional house is situated at the end of each plot and has a characteristically colorful facade which oftentimes has



*Figure: The Lutheran fortified church of Viscri. Source: Corsale and Iorio (2013).*

been restored according to Saxon traditional styles, techniques, colors, and decorations (Corsale and Iorio 2013; Cristini et al. 2020). Communities have come together to develop programs such as “Buildings for Reuse” seeking solutions to ensure that buildings comply with contemporary housing standards without drastically changing their structure, historical scales, or constructive features and “Project Know How from Oblivion” promoting traditional architecture by training local craftsmen to guarantee long-term transmission of construction connected to the historical architecture of these villages (Cristini et al. 2020).



*Figure: Houses in the main street of Viscri. Source: Cristini et al. (2020).*

Corsale and Iorio (2013) push back on the promotion of the Transylvanian Saxon culture as heritage, arguing that it overshadows the legacy of the rest of the Romanian and Roma population. Despite the drastic change in the ethnic composition of southern Transylvania that has occurred as the Saxon population has decreased, much of the built heritage of the area is linked with the ancient Saxon presence. In the typical medieval Saxo heritage of Viscri, only 15 of its 420 inhabitants are



Saxon (Corsale and Iorio 2013). The culture promoted by Saxon built heritage does not necessarily reflect the majority population, which consists of Romanians and Roma – while the Saxon community is bilingual Romanian and German and follows the Lutheran faith, the Romanian and Roma populations speak mostly Romanian and are predominantly Orthodox. While religious and historical sights are promoted, the population does not necessarily reflect these values. In a questionnaire distributed to Romanian citizens to determine awareness of existing churches, 97.3 percent of respondents were of Romanian nationality and nearly one third of the entire pool of respondents were unaware of any fortified church name (Valentina 2012). Furthermore, local perception of Saxon heritage preservation is mixed, as evidenced by interviews with Viscri inhabitants. Positive responses have come from those who like the look of the village and whose livelihoods have been improved from tourism development, typically those who are involved in restoration in some way and have thus been provided work. Others have complaints about the heritagization efforts, arguing that the real needs of the community have been pushed aside when restoring Saxon architecture and that restrictions imposed on restorations have limited repairs (Corsale and Iorio 2013). Despite the mixed perceptions of Saxon heritization by local communities whose majority do not identify with Saxon heritage, the image of Viscri and similar villages that is presented to the outside world is a Lutheran Saxon village because that was deemed the best option for socio-economic development (Corsale and Iorio 2013). In turn, much of the Romanian and Roma population has been overshadowed as inhabitants are unable to shape their villages according to their own cultural values. While tourism development shows some benefits to the community, it also continues to replicate a culture that inhabitants may not necessarily identify with – stripping the preservation efforts of their fundamental duty to serve the community.



While Saxon built heritage is not necessarily a type of rural heritage that needs to be further promoted, how it has been promoted within Romania is still useful for our research. To navigate the social context of Saxon villages and fortresses in southern Transylvania, Romanian institutions and communities have monumentalized the landscape by preserving key built features. Drawing upon examples of how communities have come together and used national resources to promote the built heritage and create an infrastructure for tourism can be useful in additional preservation efforts within Romania such as our own.

### **Saxon Biodiversity and Lifeways**

The heritage development that has been done in the Saxon towns has helped to preserve additional aspects of rural Transylvania like the agricultural and ecological features that represent older Europe. As one of the last traditional European landscapes, the landscape of the region is valued as an ecosystem that most of Europe has now lost. Like other Transylvanian regions, the Saxon villages region is a biodiversity-rich rural landscape that has a significant diversity of natural woodland and grassland habitats with an abundance of wildflowers and wildlife (Akeroyd and Page 2006). These species-rich plant and animal communities go hand-in-hand with the traditional non-intensive mixed farming practices that have carried on through generations. Traditional and un-mechanized agriculture practices include mowing by scythe and weeding by hoe as well as 3-crop rotation, all excluding the use of herbicides (Akeroyd and Page 2006). Efforts to preserve Saxon villages continue to support farming with the preservation of farmhouses suited for agriculture. Traditional non-intensive farming and grazing have allowed for the persistence of a rich assemblage of wayside flowers, woody plants, and many human-influenced weeds and ruderals (Akeroyd 2007).

The push for restoration and protection of village buildings and their agricultural lands have overshadowed the characteristic flora of church enclosures, yards, stress, and road-verges (Akeroyd 2007). The Saxon Village weeds and ruderals are as much a part of the culture as the fortified churches and traditional agricultural practices, yet its rich assemblage of wayside and woody plants has often been ignored by conservationists. Wildflower meadows and wayside weeds have provided a link to communities' medieval past with the survival of a living tradition of plant use. Many of the village weeds have been used as foods, medicines, dyes, and more. Some include the use of *Urtica dioica* found along walls and corners for soups and dyes as well as a medicinal herb to treat urinary issues, the use of the woody plant commonly found in yards and around churches *Sambucus nigra* (Elder) to reduce fevers and chest infections as well as an ingredient in a popular drink, the use of *Achillea millefolium* in treating blood circulation and staunch wounds, and the persisting use of *Lamium album* to alleviate urinary, respiratory, and digestive complications (Akeroyd 2007). The conservation of the diverse ruderal plant community presents challenges consistent with many rural communities, mainly due to the fact that the plants' chance of survival is dependent on the survival of traditional village life that may not be sustainable. Despite this challenge, one way to continue the preservation of these species is to continue conservation within the context of the village buildings and churches, which is promising considering the already-strong conservation efforts. While the promotion of Saxon built heritage in turn can help wayside weed species survive, more attention should be placed on the very diverse plant community and the traditional lifeways that incorporate them. The Saxon tangible heritage has proven important, but we must recenter the discussion to focus on the intangible heritage practices, like plant use, that contribute to this rich landscape.

## Takeaways

Based on the research above, I have summarized some of the major takeaways concerning the cultural heritage of rural Transylvania.

### 1. Landscape

Rural Transylvania presents a unique variety of ecosystems with rich biodiversity. After learning about the importance of the environment in rural communities, it comes as no surprise that in the Transylvania case study the rich ecosystems are what drive many of the traditions that constitute the heritage of the area. From the caves and cliffs to the wooded slopes and deep river valleys, the landscape is known for its beauty and has also served as a vital resource for the people of Transylvania. It is the basis of traditional lifeways of its citizens, ranging from pastoral subsistence farming to various crafts.

### 2. Hamlet Settlement Pattern

The diverse and channelized landscapes are scattered with a hamlet settlement pattern distinct to rural Transylvania specifically the mountains, with widely dispersed settlements and small commune centers. Commune centers typically lack a central plaza and rather the relatively small buildings are connected by compounds. The unique settlement pattern demonstrates how humans situate themselves in the landscape, as the form the settlement takes is constricted to the environment. Hamlet settlement pattern is a specific way that people of Transylvania have adapted to existing environmental restraints.

### 3. Wood Heritage

The rich forest environments of the area are especially important in the development of heritage. The forests are a key resource for woodworking residents in construction, which is apparent in the abundant wooden architecture of the area. Not only is the resource essential to the built architectural heritage of rural Transylvania, but it is also a major resource for many artisans. Crafts are also a significant aspect of the wooden heritage with networks of craftsmen who specialize in wood carving of wooden tools, musical instruments, and more.

#### 4. Crafts and Practices

The importance of crafts is not just limited to wood, but rather involves a variety of resources and techniques. The tradition of spinning thread to make yarn for various textiles is also prevalent in the area, as well as some metal works, glass works, and other ornamental decorations. However, despite the finding that there are many crafts of the area, there is still a gap in scholarship concerning these crafts. People know of this aspect of heritage, but cultural identity in this context has not necessarily been synthesized or theorized.

#### 5. Traditional Medicinal Plants

The efforts in place to promote the built heritage of Saxon fortress towns have contributed to the continuation of other aspects of Saxon culture that are not necessarily highlighted. The traditional use of medicinal plants was a part of Saxon culture for centuries and is an important aspect in the preservation of these towns. Like many of the other traditional practices, it allows for a promotion and understanding of rural Transylvanian biodiversity and establishes a connection of the people with the flora and fauna of the landscape.

## **Ramet Case Study**

The Ramet community museum project is the collaborative effort between the institutions of Hamilton College (Primary Contact: Colin Quinn), Cambridge University, the National Unification Museum in Alba Iulia (Primary Contact: Horia Ciugudean), Asociatia Culturala Ovidiu Bârlea (Primary Contact: Viorel David), and the Alba County Council. Up to this point the project has been funded by grants from the American Philosophical Society, Wenner-Grenn Foundation, Alba County Council, Hamilton College, Cambridge University, and EU Marie Curie.

Driving research is the question of the lived experience and performance of death in the Apuseni Mountains during the Bronze Age. Evidence of simultaneous stone-covered burials in the uplands and earthen-covered burials in the lowlands of the Apuseni Mountains incites questions on the creation of inequality during the Bronze Age. Research aims to uncover how the upland tomb phenomenon fits into the context of migration and understanding how mountain landscapes are connected to lifeways. We seek to understand the heritage of Ramet and other rural Romanian communities and how it connects to landscape.

For the National Unification Museum and the broader academic community in Romania, the development of a local museum and site reconstruction would serve as a model for curating a cultural landscape and help contribute to communities' long term goals of promoting cultural heritage, expanding awareness of the region and threats of modernization to a wider audience, and building an infrastructure for cultural heritage tourism. With collaboration with the community throughout the entire process, the museum offers the county and rural Transylvania as a whole a promotion of culture to regain identity in an unnoticed landscape.

The progress to date involves excavations at Ramet that took place in the summers of 2018 and 2019. In these two periods, consultations with landowners and the mayor of Ramet took place and permits from the National Romanian Archaeology Commission were granted for excavation. Research gathered includes geophysics, excavations, topographic mapping, LiDAR, and drone survey. The site of the Bronze Age cemetery, Gugu, is an active archaeological site managed by the Alba County Council and overseen by the National Unification Museum in Alba Iulia.

The next steps for the project include approximately three more summers of excavation, with the goal of finishing by 2023. Once excavations are completed, we can start the process of reconstructing the site and planning the museum. The purpose of this paper is to develop a proposal for the community museum that will be sent to the local County Council to help the community secure funding and political support for an on-site museum.

## **Action Items**

### **1. Importance of the landscape**

Because of the role the environment plays in the cultural heritage, the museum should highlight the landscape in some way. This can be achieved by including some kind of open element, whether that means the entire structure being an open, roofed building or including this type of structure in the overall plan. Having an open structure would allow visitors to experience the landscape of the area.

### **2. Hamlet settlement pattern**

Because of the distinctive feature of widely distributed settlements with small buildings connected by compounds, a possible action item can include the

construction of multiple structures that are connected that visitors can walk through. Expanding visibility into multiple structures can highlight the different materials and crafts in varying areas, such as the wooden heritage of forest environments in the mountains of southern Transylvania. The location alone also highlights the lack of central plazas typical of the settlement pattern, as its location at Gugu is not in a central community gathering place.

### 3. Wooden heritage

Because wooden architecture is vital to rural Transylvanian heritage, and successful preservation efforts have focused on built architectural heritage, the building technique and material should incorporate the tradition. One key way to achieve this is to bring in local carpenters and architects, who have direct knowledge of Ramet, to be a part of construction and highlight wooden architecture. To ensure the local heritage is being accurately represented, local architects should also communicate with other Ramet locals in determining the sense of expertise in Ramet specifically.

### 4. Crafts and Practices

With crafts and practices being a significant aspect of cultural heritage, they should be considered in the development of the community museum.

Fundamentally, because of the lack of scholarship concerning the role of crafts in Transylvanian cultural identity, the educational goal of the museum should be to compile and make accessible the types of crafts important to the area. This involves designing exhibit(s) specifically about crafts and identity of landscape. In order to obtain this information, we would need to incorporate ethnographic

work by both talking to people about the specific crafts that they deem essential to local identity and then effectively demonstrating that in exhibits through a variety of media transcribing oral accounts, incorporating audio file, video ethnography, and physical examples of works.

#### 5. Traditional medicinal plants

An additional tradition that can be highlighted is the medicinal plant practice. To achieve this, we will talk to local community members particularly knowledgeable about the local resources. Similarly to the methods we can use to incorporate some of the specific crafts of the area, this would include interviewing people about their experiences with some of the wayside and ruderal plants to highlight their importance to local identity. For the museum, we can synthesize a collection of prominent plants of the area and their uses in a physical form such as a guide book. Incorporating Additionally, we can include physical examples by constructing a garden with several of the prominent plants.

### **Conclusions**

Using placemaking as a theoretical framework highlights the importance of the environment for cultural heritage. The relationship between landscape and people is recursive, especially in rural landscapes where traditional lifeways depend on and also maintain the land. In rural Transylvania, the rich biodiversity is key to communities' eco-environment and agro-pastoral identities. Traditional lifeways such as woodworking, agriculture, a variety of crafts, and medicinal plants are several examples of how people of Transylvania have uniquely interacted with the environment to assign place heritage. However, as in many other rural landscapes, these



practices are becoming more obsolete in the face of modernization and depopulation. In order to sustainably preserve this heritage, special attention must be paid to the practices that underscore community identity and environment. The connection of people with their landscapes is the result of a history of people adapting to existing environmental restraints in a specific way. Just as the relationship between landscape and people cannot be disarticulated, it also cannot be ignored in efforts of heritage preservation.

### **Acknowledgements**

I would like to thank Hamilton College Levitt Center and Summer Science Program for their financial assistance in making my participation in this project possible. Special thanks are due to Professor Colin Quinn for allowing me to work on his project and for his constant feedback and support throughout the research and writing process. I would also like to thank my fellow research assistants Aidan Leahey and Bella Roselli for their collaboration in the writing process.

## References Cited

Akeroyd, John R. and Page, Nat

- 2006 The Saxon Villages of Southern Transylvania: Conserving Biodiversity in a Historic Landscape. *Environmental Science and Engineering*.

Akeroyd, John R.

- 2007 Ruderal Floral of the Saxon Villages (Transylvania, Romania): A Neglected Conservation Constituency. *Transylvanian Review of Systematical and Ecological Research* 4:65–72.

Bakri, Aidatul Fadzlin, Ibrahim, Norhati, Ahmad, Sabarinah Sh, and Zaman, Nurulhusna Qamaruz

- 2015 Valuing Built Heritage in a Malaysian Urban Context. *Procedia – Social and Behavioral Sciences* 160:381–389.

Bergh, Stefan

- 2016 Turlogh Hill – Place-making and Mountains in Prehistoric Ireland.

Buza, Mircea, Dimeb, Levente, Pop, Grigor, and Turnock, David

- 2001 Environmental protection in the Apuseni Mountains: The role of Environmental Non-Governmental Organizations (ENGOS). *GeoJournal* 55(2/4): 631–653.

Cosma, Roxana Maria, Mogos, Liliana Paula, and Popescu, Cosmin

- 2014 The Tourism within the Apuseni Mountains Zone. *JOUR* 15: 530–535.

Corsale, Andrea and Iorio, Monica

- 2013 Transylvanian Saxon culture as heritage: Insights from Viscri, Romania. *Geoforum* 52:22–31.

Cristini, V., Garcia-Soriano, L., and Vegas, F.

2020 Villages with Fortified Churches in Transylvania: Architecture, History and Intangible Culture. *The International Archives of the Photogrammetry, Remote Sensing and Spatial Information Sciences* 249–254.

Eppich, Rand (editor)

2014 Cultural Heritage, Landscape & Rural Development: Good Practice, Methodology, Policy Recommendations & Guidelines for Rural Communities. *HISTCAPE: Historic Assets and Related Landscapes*.

Etnotique – Negrila, Alexandra (project manager)

2020 Portul popular din zona Muscel. *The Etnotique Cultural Project*.

<https://etnotique.ro/?fbclid=IwAR2mWoCOWZ1L3C->

Y1glSbCko2zUYHBfA9xul\_isTZeuO7FnFaL2U\_T40nHI , accessed September 2, 2020.

Fisher, Kevin D.

2009 Elite Place-making and Social Interaction in the Late Cypriot Bronze Age. *Journal of Mediterranean Archaeology* 183–209.

Gica, Oana Adriana and Coros, Monica Maria

2016 A Comparative Analysis of Two Rural Destinations from the Perspective of Sustainable Tourism. *International Conference Entrepreneurship in the Hospitality Industry*.

Gherasim, Virginia

2012 Adaptive Management Study of Mountain Landscape from the Perspective of Sustainable Development of Tourism in the Apuseni Mountains, Romania. *Ecological and Environmental Protection*.

Gullino, Paola and Larcher, Federica

2013 Integrity in UNESCO World Heritage Sites: A comparative study for rural landscapes.  
*Journal of Cultural Heritage* 14:389-395.

Henry, Edward R.

2017 Building Bundles, Building Memories: Processes of Remembering in Adena-Hopewell Societies of Eastern North America. *J Archaeology Method Theory* 24:188–228.

ICOMOS

2002 International Cultural Tourism Charter: Principles And Guidelines For Managing Tourism At Places of Cultural And Heritage Significance. *International Council on Monuments and Sites, International Cultural Tourism Committee.*

ICOMOS

2017 ICOMOS-IFLA Principles Concerning Rural Landscapes as Heritage. *ICOMOS-IFLA International Scientific Committee on Cultural Landscapes.*

Laing, J., Wheeler, F., Reeves, K., Fros, W.

2014 Assessing the experiential value of heritage assets: A case study of a Chinese heritage precinct, Bendigo, Australia. *Tourism Management* 40:180–192.

Matero, Frank G.

2008 Heritage, Conservation, and Archaeology: An Introduction. *AIA Site Preservation Programme.*

Mazzanti, M.

2002 Cultural heritage as multi-dimensional, multi-value and multi-attribute economic good toward a new framework for economic analysis and valuation. *Journal of Socio-Economics* 11:529–558.

McAnany, Patricia A.

2011 Practices of Place-Making, Ancestralizing, and Re-animation within Memory Communities. *Archaeological Papers of the American Anthropological Association* 20(1):136–142.

Reif, Albert, Rusdea, Evelyn, Pacurar, Florin, Rotar, Ioan, Brinkmann, Katja, Eckhard, Auch, Augustin, Hoia, Bühler, Josef

2008 A Traditional Cultural Landscape in Transformation. *Mountain Research and Development* 28(1): 18–22.

Romania Dacia

2014 Traditional rural houses – romanian villages architecture. *Generic Information on Romania* (blog), October 28, 2014.

<https://romaniadacia.wordpress.com/2014/10/28/traditional-rural-houses/> ,  
accessed July 27, 2020.

Smith, Laurajane

2004 *Archaeological Theory and the Politics of Cultural Heritage*. Routledge.

Surd, Vasile and Turnock, David

2000 Romania's Apuseni Mountains: Safeguarding a cultural heritage. *GeoJournal* 50(2/3):285–304.

Taylor, Jackie

2019 Rimet – A Living Landscape: Establishing a Natural & Cultural Heritage Foundation in Romania, a Case Study in the Apuseni Mountains. Archnetwork (blog), October 11, 2019.

<https://archnetwork.org/rimet-a-living-landscape-establishing-a-natural-cultural-heritage-foundation-in-romania-a-case-study-in-the-apuseni-mountains/> ,  
accessed July 20, 2020.

The City Of Alba Iulia (visitalbaiulia)

2014 Traditional Crafts in Alba County. Electronic document,  
<http://www.visitalbaiulia.city/traditional-crafts-courses> , accessed August 2, 2020.

Valentina, Serb Silvana

2012 The Fortified Churches from Transylvania – How Well are They Known by the Romanian Citizens? *Conference Proceedings, “European Integration – New Challenges”* 7:1948–1953.

Vecco, M.

2010 A definition of cultural heritage: From the tangible to the intangible. *Journal of Cultural Heritage* 11:321–324.

Veghes, Calin and Popescu, Ioana Cecilia

2018 Fortified Heritage, Cultural Tourism and Sustainable Development: The Saxon’s Fortified Churches of Transylvania. *International Multidisciplinary Scientific Conference on Social Sciences & Arts SGEM* 129–136.

Zhang, Yongxun, Min, Qingwen, Xhang, Canqiang, He, Lulu, Zhang, Su, Yang, Lun, Tian, Mi, and Xiong, Ying

2017 Traditional culture as an important power for maintaining agricultural landscapes in cultural heritage sites: A case study of the Hani terraces. *Journal of Cultural Heritage* 25:170-179.