

## DERIVATE ICONIC AND SYMBOLIC FROM THE COMPOSITION OF THE RURAL LANDSCAPES DOMINATED BY THE FORTIFIED CHURCHES FROM TRANSYLVANIA, ROMANIA

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**Abstract.** The rediscovery of the village and the desire to know how the life and energy of rural areas pulsate generate increasingly sophisticated study directions that allow us to better understand them. This study aims to identify the personality traits of two Transylvanian rural areas, Biertan and Saschiz villages. They are dominated by the typical lifestyle of the descendants of Saxon settlers (the Transylvanian Saxons), a lifestyle that has its origins in the medieval era. Only two villages were chosen for this study (whilst 5 others are also listed as UNESCO World Heritage Sites) based on their similar features. The study sets out to overcome the condition of promoter of historical and touristic sights such as the fortified churches that clearly dominate the settlements and even a part of their surroundings. However, they are merely a pretext for deeper research into the profound force of expression of the surrounding landscapes, and most importantly of the landscapes that belong to the entire rural area. This way, we explore the essence of the phenomena that shape the local landscapes, allow them to reveal themselves and leave an impression on any viewer, specialist or layman. The dominating side of the landscape, either the natural or the anthropical one and their associated phenomenology, gives its iconic, emblematic character. The researched landscapes, their features, organisation and functioning reflect a central, elongated composition – imposed by the relief – to which all other land-related and urbanistic components adhere. The mosaic of landscapes, whose components are called here *indicators*, is analysed in detail by using a structural and a functional approach, as well as by examining the visual elements of the image and other special aspects. The final result is something that anyone can understand and remember as being iconic, symbolic, as representing the personality of the place.

**Key-words:** rural landscapes, composition, fortified churches, personality, iconic, symbolic

### Introduction

#### 1. Aspects regarding the terminology related to the personality and expression of the place

Each place and environment has a specific *personality*; it emanates a weak or a powerful ‘message’ which awaits to be received by locals or tourists. This personality of the place, be it a city, a periurban space or a village, is expressed in different ways: either

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in a common way by using words which are related to the immediate perception of the viewer (attractive, sublime, repugnant, plain etc.) or by using more elaborate methods, which incorporate a more profound knowledge of the essence of the environmental-aesthetic and cultural phenomena. The latter is the solution used by specialists, who possess the resources that allow them to create a more elaborate synthesis, whose results are words, keywords and expressions from a large semantic array, but quite related in terms of content. These words are: *emblematic*, *character*, *symbolic*, *iconic*, *image*, *representation*, etc. but also *symbolic representation*, *iconic character*, *symbolic space*, *iconic landscape* etc. What differentiates these words, keywords and expressions is the freedom of choice and the ability with which each one of us operates in order to describe the landscape and reach satisfaction and emotion.

## **2. The analytical and empirical treatment of the rural area's force of expression**

The elements of contact and socialising with the space emphasise its emblematic character, the memory of the place, its identity, including an urban identity through *symbolic representations*, so that the part that represents the quintessence of the spatial assembly is reinforced (Dixon, 2009).

The representation of the rural area through all the elements that create its identity (elements that come from various sources) is more sensible. One of these sources of identity is the *iconic cultural character* of certain floristic elements that attract many tourists (Sparks et al., 2012). Another source is *the image of the rural area*, based on the quality of accommodation and sustainability of rural tourism (McClinchey, 1999; Herman & Wendt, 2011). To these we add the *place`symbolisation* and creation of *community identity* through food and commercial manifestations based on food (Adema, 2006). The sites that have a cultural potential because of the *cultural heritage* of the ethnical groups (Jordan et al., 2009) represent an emblematic source of identity as well.

An *iconic image* of the villages and their surroundings can be supplied by *raising awareness of the past* through different elements, features or information about the past times that the rural went through, as a way of accepting changes in the appearance of that certain rural area (Hanley et al., 2009). Additionally, locals or tourists use a specific language to refer to the components of the rural environment from a historical perspective, thus building an *archetype of the symbolic space* (Kelvin, 2008), which, although it is a material environment, becomes a *symbolic rural landscape* (Carolino & Pinto-Correia, 2011). Beyond these objective considerations, there can be *socio-economic conflicts* caused by the pressure of tourists and city dwellers who wish to purchase estates of cultural value in the rural area (Hernik et al., 2013).

It is recommended that the *rural landscape* of different types – well-researched scientifically by different specialists – be a strong element that determines the identity and the iconic character of the rural environment. Through the *image of the landscape*, the landscape in general and the rural one in particular become a *destination image*, just like the combination of landscape and country music becomes a *capital of representations* of an area or of a rural space (Gibson & Davidson, 2004). Therefore, an *iconic landscape* can rely on other reference elements: the paleoecological wood-pasture system (Edwards & Grant, 2011), buildings (Wade, 2009), the absence of trees, as well as their plantation (Sherren et al., 2011) or pictorial representations of villages and human communities (Sulamith, 1999). This means that the aspects that govern the personality of a rural area lean towards understanding the *cultural services* provided by the ecosystems of the rural landscape (van Berkel & Verburg, 2014).

The rural offers the villager and the tourist the possibility to understand the benefit of *experiencing the rural landscape* (Lee, 2007; Rid et al., 2014), the villages as stable

entities from the point of view of their *residential function*, having a *productive and cultural vocation*, and finally of experiencing the *rural space as a cultural landscape*. A rural area with a strong *character*, of a powerful *expressiveness*, also appears in the studies that point to the *quality of the landscape's visual elements*, including those that mention the importance of the *rural buildings in the ensemble of rural ambiental design* (Tassinari & Torreggiani, 2006). This leads to a *logical idealisation of the rural landscape and rural life*. The rural environment was researched from a psychoanalytical perspective as well; thus, the rural area is understood as a secluded, unique, tangible and emotional place, of a bewildering intensity, sensual because of its quality image, and capable of healing in case of trauma (Averill, 2007).

A natural and logical connection between the characteristics of the rural-agricultural landscape and the *rural place branding process* has been scientifically researched in Belgium (Mettepenningen et al., 2012), where rural tourism needs recognition based on the qualitative attributes of the personality of the rural area.

### **The purpose of the study**

A rural space with a powerful ethno-geographical expression, such as that dominated by the Transylvanian Saxon fortified churches, should be more than a historical entity (Țiplic, 2006) or a small touristic destination with cultural characteristics (Mălăescu et al., 2010; Neaguț & Neacșu, 2011; Stăncioiu et al., 2011; Corsale & Iorio, 2014). This study sets out to identify the *indicators* (elements, objects) and the *attributes* (characteristics), as well as their position in *defining the personality* of this Transylvanian rural area. At the same time, it is intended that the results of the study be an *exercise* that allows any geographical space with more or less iconic and symbolic load to be more easily understood by a viewer or tourist, and even useful to specialists in branding strategies. The idealisation of the rural space by means of creating a powerful image and identity of the place in the villager or tourist's consciousness (Hoggart, 1997) becomes a noble purpose. The rural environment in Romania becomes more and more interesting for tourists and certain studies anticipate the future of rural communities, as more touristic value is added to attractive rural landscapes (Ghișa et al., 2011).

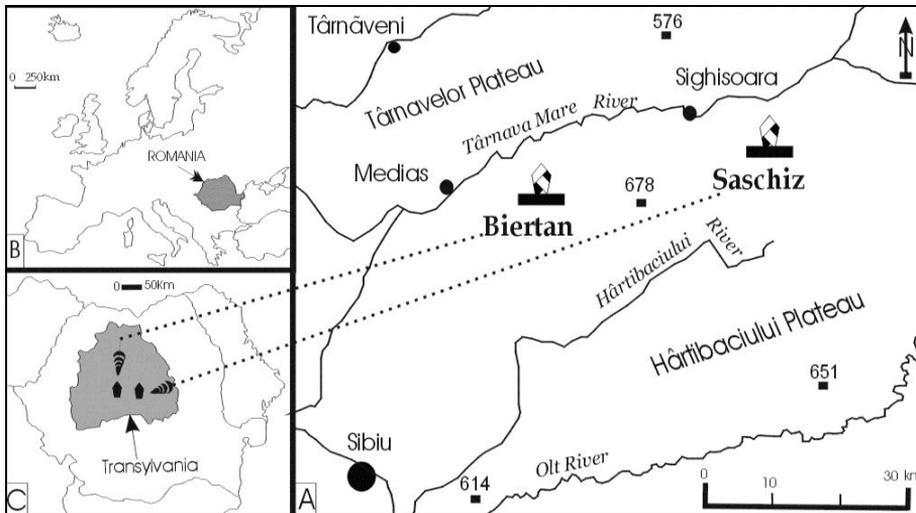
### **Location and elements of the study area**

This study refers to a small geographical area in central-south Transylvania (Figure 1C), where two emblematic Romanian (Figure 1B) rural areas – the Biertan and Saschiz villages (Figure 1A) – are situated. They have inherited general features and details, typical of the rural area situated between Târnavelor Plateau and Hârtibaciului Plateau, in southern Transylvania. This region is crossed by streams, tributaries of Târnavă Mare and Hârtibaciu rivers (Figure 1A).

The villages and fields in this area are set on rolling hills with round, elongated ridge lines that almost take a plateau shape (Figure 2 and Figure 3). The angles of the valleys' slopes range between 30 and 45 degrees. The average altitude difference between the lower parts and the interfluvium is 110-120 m and it rarely exceeds 200 m. The average distance between the highest hills (500-570 m) around the villages is 1,2-1,8 km in the case of Biertan and 2,6-3,2 km for Saschiz (Figures 2 and Figure 3). The two villages are linear; their shape is influenced by the shape of the valleys that cross the villages and are drained by two rivers – the Biertan and Valea Scroafei.

The orographic prominences of each village endorse not only the beauty of the landscape, but also the livelihood in the two villages and the ways the fields are used. On the tall flat top hills, as well as along the elongated ridges, there are thick, healthy young deciduous forests, predominantly of beech and hornbeam trees, and some pine trees

(Figure 5). The soil on the hillsides with high or low declivity is argillaceous, heavy textured and structured, but dynamically stable, of medium and medium-low fertility. This type of soil allows for the development of both spontaneous flora (clusters, lines or small islands of shrubs) and plants used for fodder (20-30 cm high), of good bioproductive quality. Vegetation is also present in the locals' small gardens, in the fields as crops, vineyards and fodder crops and on the less steep hills as fruit trees (Figure 5).



**Figure 1.** Location of the two rural areas – geographical detail of plateau units in Transylvania (A); the location of the two villages in centre-south Transylvania (C)

### Research methods

The research for this study was based on three methodologies. a) First of all, the theoretical, terminological and empirical approaches required by this study were identified in the scientific literature. b) The second level of research refers to the examination of the study area. This process consisted of identifying the geomorphologic and phytogeographic features, the style and details of the rural architecture, of thoroughly getting acquainted with the rural cadastre, of distinguishing the methods used to work the land and identifying other relevant ethno-historical details. c) The third methodology refers to the study of the photographic materials and the clear identification of the features and elements that form the identity of the place. This is based on the geometrical systematisation of the layers, on the disparate components and the ethno-historical-urbanistic symbols, all caught in the image of the landscape. The final process that helps in the identification of this rural area's personality is the analysis of the local rural landscapes (Dupont et al., 2011) using a structural and a functional approach, one based on visual elements (following the model of Klinkers, 1995) and an analysis of special features.

### The general and the particular in identifying the personality of the rural area

Anyone can ask themselves what exactly gives quality to a rural landscape. The simple answer lies in the orientation of the analysis from the general to the particular (Powell, 1985, p. 75); therefore, by getting acquainted with the physical features of the scenery one discovers the *landscape's value* (Brown & Brabyn, 2012) and identifying

them allows for the appreciation of the *rural landscape's visual qualities*, which contributes to national and local pride formation (Gruffudd, 1989, p. 6).

An *iconic landscape*, either part of the study area or from somewhere else, is based on an *iconic image*, whose perception is related to the combination of place, space, identity, nationalism, history and memory (Neville, 2003). To put it in simple terms, we can get to know a village by looking at its defining features, such as: the houses with enclosed courtyards and oversized sculpted wooden gates, the countryside gravel roads, the hay cut by scythe, the horses and carts, the farms, the neighbouring wooded fields (Wood, 2006). Another way of looking at the spatial organisation of the rural area is based on analysing the density of the component parts of the uncultivated landscape, the number of planted plots in one hectare, the diversity of land uses and the medium size of the fields (Levin, 2007).

### **The results of the iconic and emblematic expression of the researched rural area**

The *image of the researched rural area*, the image of an environment that has been wisely transformed, a real product of the Transylvanian Saxon and Romanian community's way of life, is revealed to any observer starting with the simple features and then moving on to the more complex ones. These features of the components of these two villages provide a basic understanding of the rural area's composition, expressed through the *iconic* and *symbolic* characteristics. 19 elements were identified as indicators of the **personality** of these two rural areas. Their grouping and analysis was made based on the powerful impact that they have over the landscapes' morphology, their natural appearance and their degree of anthropisation (Tables 1, 2, 3 and 4).

The **structural approach** emphasises the analysis of the two villages' heritage, identifying the most relevant natural elements or those influenced by humans. These elements create energy and substance and their disposal horizontally or vertically has an influence in sketching the landscape's personality. Finally, the sketch of the landscape's personality – derived from its structure – is made of layers of elements or groups of elements, laid almost symmetrically in the landscape. The landscape's morphology (Table 1) shows that there are only four indicators (elements) between the lowest and the highest point of the landscape.



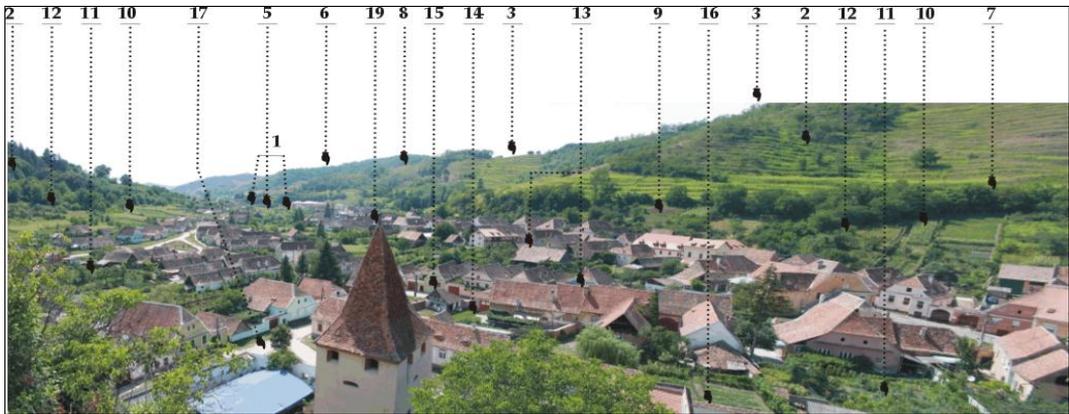
**Figure 2.** Haystacks and croplands on hillsides, gently sloping towards the Biertan village (source photo: S. Onisor)



**Figure 3.** Croplands perpendicular and parallel to the Saschiz village

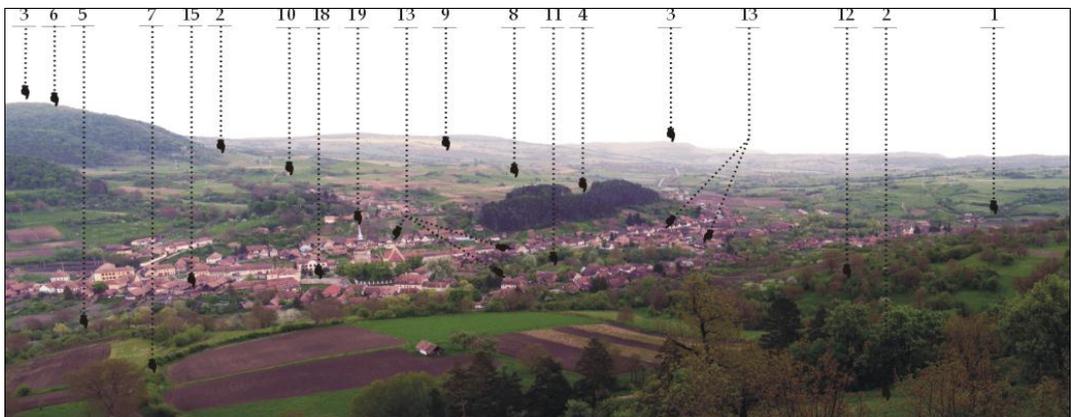
The most present, frequent and potent of these indicators (elements) from an observational point of view are the hillsides (prolonged, with slope angles that range

between 30 and 45 degrees – Figures 2, 4 and 5) and the ridges (rounded, almost flat, they run in the S-N direction, parallel to the main valleys – Figures 4, 5 and 7). The four natural elements (Table 2) are the first echelon of the armour represented by the landscapes of each of the two rural areas included in this study. By extension and by the robustness of their physical expression, the forests, hayfields, pastures, shrubs and the two streams complete the geometrically well-balanced mosaic of landscapes (Figures 4, Figures 5). The anthropicised natural elements (Table 3) complete the emblematic rural heritage of the area. From ploughed and cultivated fields to gardens (Figures 3, 4, 5 and 6), two features are emphasised: the expressiveness of the natural part and the connection of these elements to their use and the local way of life.



**Figure 4.** Biertan – panoramic view which captures the personality of the rural area: the village and its surroundings are situated in the centre, dominated by the medieval church steeple (the numbers point out the indicators/elements in Tables 1, 2, 3 and 4)

The anthropic elements, the most abundant ones (Table 4), complete this emblematic rural space. They reunite indicators (elements) related to the individual habitat – including the annexes: sheds, haylofts and stables (Figures 4 and 6) – and to the medieval fortified churches, alongside the rural infrastructure (Figures 2, 3 and 6).



**Figure 5.** Saschiz – panoramic view where the hilly relief merges with cultivated and spontaneous vegetation, and the traditional individual habitat is centralised around the fortified churches (the numbers point out the indicators / elements in Tables 1, 2, 3 and 4)

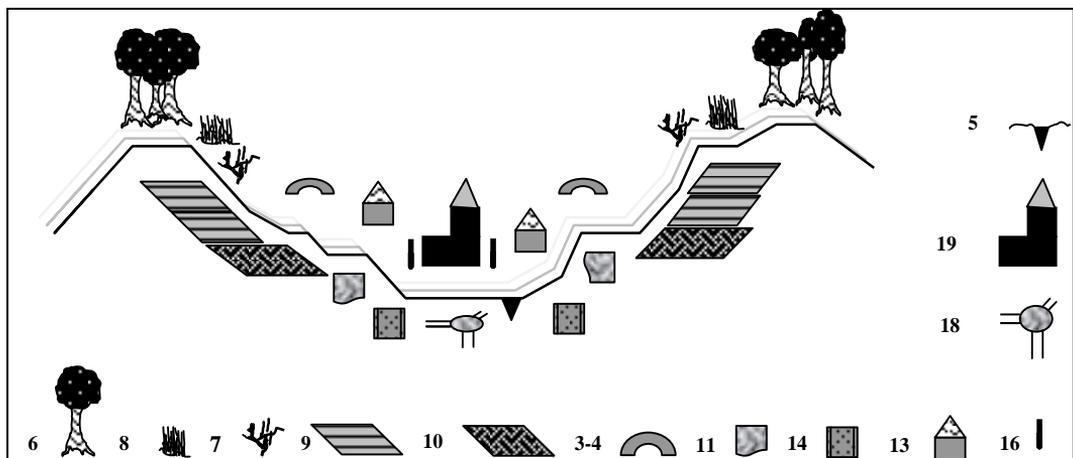
**Table 1.** Personality of the landscape emphasized by the iconic and symbolic character of its elements. The situation of natural elements

		Iconic				symbolic	
		No.	Structural approach	Functional approach	Approach based on visual elements	sketch of the indicator's symbol	
The landscape's morphology	Indicator/element	1	valleys	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- elongated with gentle slopes</li> <li>- strongly eroded vertically and moderately eroded horizontally</li> <li>- situated on the central axis of the village</li> <li>- have narrow meadows, embankments and shoulders of embankments</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- wide curvy line that connects the extremities</li> <li>- visual axis of 2-5 km</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- line that is very noticeable</li> <li>- line that comes to life</li> <li>- a 'narrow and long' nature</li> </ul>
	2	hillsides/slopes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- steep slopes in the upper half</li> <li>- gentle sloping towards the embankments in the lower half</li> <li>- artificial embankments on the steep hillsides</li> <li>- stable rock deposits (there are only small landslides in Biertan)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- homogenous appearance</li> <li>- lines (the artificial embankments) and irregular polygons (groves and groups of shrubs)</li> <li>- elevation angles (as seen from the village) and angles of depression (as seen from the hillsides) of 30-40 degrees</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- the climb from the 'lower' world to the 'upper' world</li> <li>- place that invites to conquest</li> </ul>	
	3	ridges/interfluvies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- rounded and elongated</li> <li>- not very active, stable from the point of view of surface dynamics and superficial deposits (no geomorphologic risk)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- curved planes</li> <li>- the visual axis that run in the N-S direction are a few kilometres long, those that run in the E-W direction are 1-3 km long - maximum aperture angles</li> <li>- elevation angles (as seen from the village) and angles of depression (as seen from the ridges) of 40-50 degrees</li> <li>- broad, wavy lines of visual force</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- calm, energy</li> <li>- giants asleep, protecting the village and its people from 2-3 sides</li> </ul>	
	4	small hills (especially in the case of Saschiz village)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- witnesses of erosion, they present themselves as elevated parts of the valley and function as separate islands from a geomorphologic, phyto and zoocenotic point of view</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- irregular solid bodies</li> <li>- curved lines of visual force with a limited path;</li> <li>- wide visual axis and aperture angles</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- silent spectators to the village's development</li> </ul>	

The **functional approach** emphasises the features that define the connection between the nature, structure and orientation of the landscape's elements (the

phenomena associated to their functioning). The landscape's morphology (Table 1) illustrates the specificity of elongated, rounded shapes, which have a gentle slope and hillocks. These all point to a controllable dynamic, as the landscape's morphology suggests that it is suitable for living, it provides the necessary resources for feeding animals and a healthy environment for cultivated and spontaneous vegetation. As shown in Table 2, the natural elements function according to normal ecological parameters, which is reflected in the graceful presence and evolution of the landscape's elements : the streams have low stream flow, a smooth streambed and low hydrological risk, and even the spontaneous vegetation grows according to the appropriate biocoenoses (the trees, wild shrubs, the grass in hayfields and pastures develop harmoniously, protecting the soil and providing an appropriate amount of organic matter).

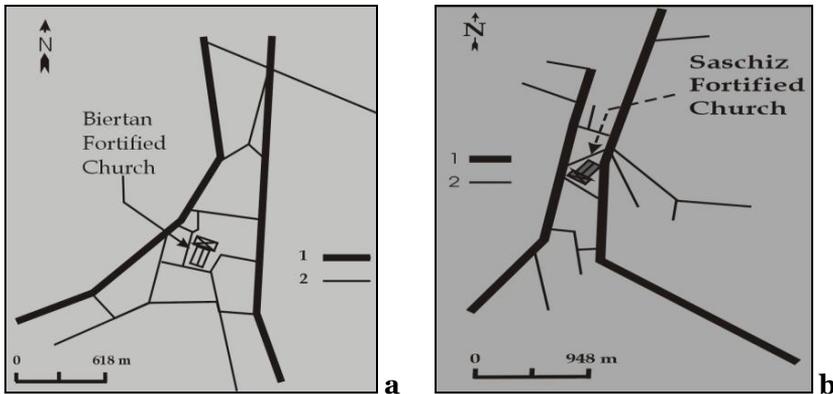
As for the anthropicised natural elements (Table 3), although they are scattered around and do not benefit from a favourable agrochemical environment (the soil is relatively heavy textured, the air and water supply and the accumulation of organic matter are relatively challenging), they adapt and ensure an encouraging level of bioproductivity, enough for the use of locals and sale of the surpluses. The anthropic elements (Table 4) are functionally defined first of all by the valuable original architecture, specific to the landscape (Căluğăr et al., 2012, p. 193). Other functional aspects are derived from: the age of the traditional houses and fortified churches (their old age gives the place a special, rustic charm), the adaptation by elongation of the individual habitat and infrastructure (the courtyards, the masonry fences, the village square and the small, rustic streets – Figure 8) to the relief and therefore to the increasingly smaller area available for the development of the village, and from the occupations and workload that adapted to new conditions.



**Figure 7.** Crosscut profile that shows the emblematic elements of the two villages (the numbers point out the indicators/elements in Tables 1, 2, 3 and 4)

The **approach based on visual elements** takes into consideration the viewer's type of reception, that is to say it filters the whole landscape and its details through its visual characteristics. These explain most of the two rural areas' personality, as the viewer is able to analyse the landscape based on the characteristics of a single element or of a group of elements. The positive or negative relief (Figure 7) remains in the viewer's memory who sees it either from down below (in the village), or from up the hills, as an image dominated by curved, wavy lines, curved planes and lines of visual force, irregular bodies, visual axis and large aperture, elevation and perspective angles.

The natural elements of the two Transylvanian villages are important in terms of image because of their masses, shapes, bodies and structural axis, different textures and homogenous chromatics. The anthropicised natural elements have regular geometrical shapes, their setting is imposed by the relief, the planes and points are typologically limited, and the range of textures and colours is wide.



**Figure 8.** The road maps and the position of fortified churches in Biertan (a) and Saschiz (b)  
 Legend: 1. main roads; 2. secondary roads (rustic lanes)

The anthropic elements can be understood by looking at: prismatic bodies, dominant elements of attraction, lines of visual force - limited as spread, structural axis, degree of visual obstruction, visual axis, aperture angles and corridors – limited in terms of space, smooth textures and sober chromatics.

**The analysis of special aspects**, strictly related to the researched area, is an atypical approach. The following elements have been identified as easy to recognise and associate with the personality of the place:

- *the Transylvanian Saxon spirit; Houses* [placed in rows, they resemble ‘small fortresses’, they look alike and take after the Franconian house inspired by Romanesque architecture (Călugăr et al., 2012, p. 193)], *courtyards* and *narrow streets* form a perfect urbanistic symbiosis;

- *a fertile mix of rural and medieval* in almost all details and in the landscape as a whole;

- the annexes of some houses where *the old custom of making hops* is still kept (Călugăr et al., 2012, p. 193);

- *the Rhubarb festival* (in Saschiz);

- *toponyms*: the name of Biertan comes from Bierthalm, which in the Saxon dialect means ‘Berth’s hill’ (website 2).

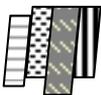
Just as these three approaches to analysing the iconic character of the rural areas contribute to outlining the personality of the landscapes, the symbolic characteristics of these places also contribute to it. Between the act of representation of an element’s symbol and that of familiarising oneself with the place’s emblem there is a moment of schematic reception in the viewer’s mind. The image of these elements of the landscape will stay with the tourist or visitor. To be more precise, the fact that the two researched landscapes share the common features identified through the three methodological approaches means that the image will be dominated by geometrical symbols (planes, points, lines, textures) and shapes that suggest the almost real form of the elements (Table 1, Table 2, Table 3 and Table 4). Finally, being in contact, being face to face with

the landscapes of the two villages and their elements is beneficial in the sense that it allows for a simple recognition of the place's symbols (Table 1, Table 2, Table 3 and Table 4). The landscapes that are dominated by each indicator (element), bring into focus their symbolic character, which includes aesthetical values derived from the force of the local nature and positive emotional reactions (Tables 1, 2, 3 and 4).

**Table 2.** Personality of the landscape emphasized by the iconic and symbolic character of its elements. The situation of natural elements which reflect naturalness and their use

		Iconic				symbolic	
Natural elements	Indicator/element	No	Structural approach	Functional approach	Approach based on visual elements	sketch of the indicator's symbol	
		5	streams	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- low volume of water</li> <li>- low flow rate, with few rapids and gentle course changes</li> <li>- hygrophilous vegetation on the embankments (willows, alder groves, riverside coppice plants)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- line that separates neighbouring bodies</li> <li>- meandering axis</li> <li>- corridor</li> <li>- low luminosity</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- course</li> <li>- Where does the line lead?</li> <li>- search and finding again</li> <li>- the murmur of water is pleasant to listen to</li> </ul>
		6	forests	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- forests, groves and groups of trees (young or mature, deciduous, of medium size, 15-17 m high) with 2-3 floors and 0,6-0,7 coverage; their role is to protect the soil</li> <li>- they maintain a well-balanced biocenosis, dominated by birds and herbivores</li> <li>- provide wood for the villagers</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- homogenous mass</li> <li>- wavy planes</li> <li>- delicate to rough textures</li> <li>- vigorous structural axis (trees)</li> <li>- permanent visual obstruction (as seen from the tree line) and apparent (as seen from inside the forest)</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- draw the eye and spirit's attention</li> <li>- subtle domination of the rural area</li> </ul>
		7	shrubs and hedgerows	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- groups (along a few square meters) and natural alignments (hundreds of meters) of great physiological vigour, that separate the fields and function as biotopes for the small wildlife, as they are very dense</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- curved and straight lines, of variable width (0,5-4 m)</li> <li>- groups of irregular shapes</li> <li>- an alive weave of different elements</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- adds to the naturalness and ambiance</li> </ul>
		8	meadows and pastures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- meadows have high bioproductivity (a 0,3-0,4 m high carpet made of graminaceae and leguminous plants, which are adapted to argillaceous soil)</li> <li>-the pastures cover smaller areas, they are well-cared for, but dry out in summer</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- mosaic of patches that are chromatically homogenous</li> <li>- geometrical aspect of the surfaces</li> <li>- 30-40 degrees angles of elevation (as seen from the village)</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- pastoral ambiance coming from the combination grass-flock-shepherd</li> </ul>

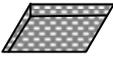
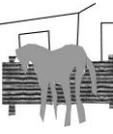
**Table 3.** Personality of the landscape emphasized by the iconic and symbolic character of its elements. The situation of anthropicised natural elements

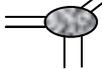
		iconic				symbolic	
Anthropicised natural elements	Indicator/element	No .	Structural approach	Functional approach	Approach based on visual elements	sketch of the indicator's symbol	
		9	ploughed fields	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- agricultural land</li> <li>- their soil is argillaceous, has organic matter and a satisfactory level of water and air</li> <li>- good for planting cereal and plants for fodder</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- regular geometric shapes perpendicular or parallel to the long axis of the villages</li> <li>- it looks like there are parts missing from the green blanket</li> <li>- combination of textures and colours</li> <li>- planes of different shapes</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- rhythm</li> <li>- ploughed land and its moist smell</li> <li>- they show the locals' diligence</li> </ul>
		10	cultivated fields	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- fields used for agriculture that are occupied with crops</li> <li>- have the same agropedological characteristics as the ploughed fields</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- regular geometric shapes perpendicular or parallel to the long axis of the villages</li> <li>- delicate texture</li> <li>- homogenous chromatics</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- the green or the dominant yellow's bucolic character</li> </ul>
		11	gardens	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- they host subsistence cultures, part of which is sold (vegetables, greens, flowers, fruit)</li> <li>- the plants are lined up in green and colourful rows (the greens and vegetables) or in smaller groups (especially the vegetables), organised in small polygonal structures (planting bed type)</li> <li>- between the planting beds there are narrow footpaths</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- planes clearly defined by masonry fences or fences made of other materials</li> <li>- partial visual obstruction (because of the fences) or apparent obstruction (in the case of low fences or fences made of net)</li> <li>- planes (planting beds) and colourful dots (plants)</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- situated behind or on the lateral side of the house</li> <li>- unit of a geometric shape</li> <li>- the diversity of cultivated plants</li> </ul>
		12	fruit trees	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- young and mature trees close to each other, that set the boundaries of the plots in the village's surroundings; they are present from place to place or grouped as part of the plots</li> <li>- good bioproductive capacity they provide the fruit necessary for private consumption as well as for sale (apples, plums, walnuts, pears)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- dots (isolated trees), lines (lines of trees) and irregular planes (groups of trees)</li> <li>- chromatic diversity and romantic ambiance (picking fruit in autumn)</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- creating texture and a mosaic on the hillsides</li> <li>- access to tasty fruit</li> </ul>

**CONCLUSION**

In the two researched villages, the fortified churches create context, as well as a pretext for a specific type of rural ambiance that has a unique rural composition: closely-tied elongated mix of land-related and urbanistic elements, where the hilly relief reveals itself and centres the elements of the village (Figure 7).

**Table 4.** Personality of the landscape emphasized by the iconic and symbolic character of its elements. The situation of anthropic elements

		iconic				symbolic	
		No.	Structural approach	Functional approach	Approach based on visual elements	sketch of the indicator's symbol	
<b>Anthropic elements</b>	Indicator/element	13	traditional houses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- based on the model of the Franconian house with Romanesque influences</li> <li>- they have a steep gable roof, made of fish scale tiles so that the water is easily drained</li> <li>- long lasting foundation and walls; 'wagon'-type interior layout – 2-4 rooms used by a family of 4-6 people</li> <li>- the front of the house faces the rustic lanes or the footpaths</li> <li>- the houses do not have many decorations and the colours are mostly neutral, which gives them a sober look</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- the main attraction</li> <li>- 2-3 prisms (1. the roof and the loft; 2-3. the inhabited part of the house and in some cases another wing)</li> <li>- well-structured axis (the ridges of the houses and the edges of the windows)</li> <li>- dots, lines, geometrical shapes, raised patterns (details in the facades)</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- rigour in simplicity</li> <li>- simple shapes</li> <li>- restful colours</li> <li>- perpetuating a medieval architectural model</li> <li>- the order of the settlement</li> </ul>
		14	rustic courtyards	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- a closed domestic space, situated between the house and the garden, separated from the exterior by high walls and wide gates</li> <li>- their functions are: of representation of the owner's work, of reception and orientation towards the other spaces of the homestead</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- planes clearly separated by masonry fences or fences made of other materials</li> <li>- partial visual obstruction (because of the fence)</li> <li>- limited visual axis and aperture angles</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- order in the geometrical shape</li> <li>- perfect adaptation to the limited space of the village</li> </ul>
		15	annexes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- elements aligned at the back of the house and on its opposite side (sheds, haylofts, stables, summer kitchens, small workshops), which separate the house from the garden</li> <li>- the harvest is deposited here, as well as all the agricultural machinery, tools and construction materials</li> <li>- they also provide shelter for the owner's animals</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- small regular bodies in a small enclosed space</li> <li>- adaptation to the specific Transylvanian traditional architecture</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- rhythm</li> <li>- balance</li> <li>- unity in the diversity of the construction of the rustic building</li> <li>- proportion</li> </ul>

	16	masonry fences	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- 1,8-2 m high, they usually enclose old houses</li> <li>- the fence is as wide as a brick, plastered and painted</li> <li>- it has a small roof in the upper side made of fish scale tiles</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- permanent visual obstruction (as seen from in front of the fence)</li> <li>- thick weaved lines or pieces of a puzzle (as seen from above)</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- rhythm</li> <li>- continuity</li> <li>- they complete the unity</li> </ul>
	17	streets/rustic lanes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- except for the main street, all the others are 4-6 m wide; the space used by pedestrians is covered with grass</li> <li>- they are mostly dirt roads, in some cases covered with gravel; they are used by people, animals, carts and even cars</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- corridor</li> <li>- visual axis a few hundred meters long;</li> <li>- delicate texture at the basis</li> <li>- generally cold chromatics (earth grey for the unpaved rustic lanes, dark grey for the paved ones)</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- they cover the visual field</li> <li>- orientation</li> <li>- perspective</li> <li>- attachment to the built element</li> </ul>
	18	central squares	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- paved or with lawns, they are placed in the village centre</li> <li>- opened towards the N and N-W; they cover an area of around 3 ha</li> <li>- 4-5 entrances/exits which tie the centre of the village to all the other parts of the village</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- plane and limited areas</li> <li>- delicate textures at the basis</li> <li>- partial visual obstruction because of the surrounding buildings</li> <li>- visual axis a few hundred meters long</li> <li>- wide aperture angles</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- connectivity and balance between the reception and the appreciation of the place's spirit</li> </ul>
	19	fortified churches	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- places of worship in a Late Gothic and Baroque style</li> <li>- they are defended by walls, towers and medieval strongholds</li> <li>- in the case of fortified churches, the urbanistic side, the ecclesiastic one and the defence one come together in a harmonious way</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- element of attraction</li> <li>- vigorous architectural ensemble</li> <li>- prisms one on top of the other</li> <li>- sober chromatic range</li> <li>- lines of visual force that change their orientation</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- reference point</li> <li>- energy</li> <li>- majestic</li> <li>- sobriety</li> <li>- mystery</li> </ul>

The sketch of the local rural organisation shows a simple network of houses aligned along narrow streets that enclose a central square, dominated by an imposing medieval place of worship – a fortified church which is defended by walls, towers and strongholds (website 1, website 2). The details of the two researched landscapes are defined by a strong Transylvanian Saxon influence, while other elements have their own particularities; for example the rustic homesteads, ‘enclosed’ by tall walls, with high and sober gates that discreetly ‘hide’ the courtyard. In the courtyard, the annexes are aligned at the back, on the side or opposite the house, separating the courtyard from the garden (which usually has around 200-300 square meters).

The same powerful expression is felt from the natural elements that organically participate in the rural composition. These seem to have a typical local order, as they are integrated in a mosaic-type structure in the highest part of the villages, or in its lower

parts. The personality of these two villages is decisively supported by that which can be visually or mentally retained by any viewer. The elements that are remembered fit symbolically in affective reactions (e.g. calm, finding oneself, coverage of the visual field etc.) and aesthetical values (e.g. invitation to conquest, bucolic character, order, rhythm, simplicity and unity in the diversity of the built element etc.).

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