

# THE TRADITIONAL HABITAT AS POSSIBLE CURRENT ECOLOGICAL ANSWER

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**Abstract:** *Decoding of the sustainable development concept requires a holistical analysis. Projects for sustainable development change their gravity centre from the factors that may promote progress to the socio-human implications they determines in an ecological context. One can speak of a philosophical and moral vision regarding development.*

*The rural communities in Romania still maintain the specific of the traditional habitat which is the expression of the geographical, social and economical background. The historical evolution of the Romanian village follows a holistic approach, namely, it forms a unit with all its components, that is, neither of the functions of a complex system can function separately they may only function together.*

**Key words:** *tradition, originality, perpetuity.*

## 1. Introduction

The concept of sustainable development is undoubtedly a modern concept, welcome to the current crisis situation in the world, therefore the answer given by architects to the environmental crisis demonstrates the global interest regarding the genesis and development of the existential built space.

The roots of the sustainable development concept originate in the promotion of sustainable use of natural resources. The statutory provisions concerning the conservation of marine resources, wildlife, the protection of habitats, the protection of the cultural and natural heritage, etc. aim to protect the global environment's resources and indicate a wide international acceptance of the sustainable use of natural resources.

The definitions of sustainable use are varied, but reflect the concept of fairness between generations. The Convention on Biodiversity stipulates the following:

*“Sustainable use consists of the use of components of biological diversity in a way and at a rate that does not result in the long-term decline of biological resources, thus maintaining its potential to meet the needs and aspirations of present and future generations”.*

## 2. Content

### 2.1. Objectives-Sustainable development

“Sustainability refers to the ability of a society, ecosystem or any active system to function continuously for an indefinite period, without being forced to slow down

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because of the depletion of essential resources” Robert Gilman, president of Context Institute [5]

1. “The effort of a sustainable community consists in approaching long-term systems for developing and achieving a healthy community by joining economic environmental and social issues. The development of a strong sense of community and the development of partnerships as well as the consensus between the pillars of society are important elements of this endeavour.

2. The focusing and balance of environmental efforts depend on local conditions, including the resources, policy and individual actions and the unique characteristics of the community. The sustainable communities’ vision was applied to various aspects, such as urban spreading, replanning of city real estate, economic development and growth, ecosystem management, agriculture, biodiversity, green buildings, water management and pollution prevention.

Many of these issues and other community problems can be easily solved by traditional methods within our society.

The Romanian report refers to documents of the CIB W82 Ascot meeting for sustainable development in the construction sector, namely: “healthy built environment based on effective use of resources and administration, its use and reconstruction based on ecological principles”. The main recommendations concerning the strategy for sustainable development of the construction sector were summarized at the level of the Final report and derive from national reports:

- Buildings’ owners and customers have to play an important part in disseminating information on sustainable constructions; they represent the “demand” for the construction sector;

- The initiative of designers, the industry and entrepreneurs will lead to the

adjustment of regulations, standards or taxation and other incentives;

- Education and introductory courses should be used on a large scale for understanding the concept of sustainable development and its acceptance by the entire population;

- Development of a common language;

- Designers should adopt the principles of integrated design as approach style for their projects;

- Building products’ manufacturers should promote product development based on their life cycle considerations;

- Buildings user should consider environment issues as a productivity aspect;

- Building maintenance should be considered consciously as an environment issue and a competence factor;

- Decision making tools should be adjusted;

- The construction process itself should be improved. [5]

At construction level a “sustainable” construction may be defined as a building that:

- requires, by consumption, an energy and water intake throughout its entire life cycle;

- is built from materials that come from renewable sources, which include a small quantity of energy in manufacturing, using minimum energy for transport and which don’t require excess packaging, have an increased life cycle (resistance, recyclability) and can be easily dismantled;

- generates a minimum waste quantity and is not pollutant throughout its life cycle;

- uses minimum land surface and is integrated in the environment:

- serves the needs for which it was built, but also future needs (flexibility, adjustability, site quality);

- ensures a healthy indoor environment.

## 2.2. Climate aspects

Recent climate changes have dramatic effects on human life in several parts of the world.

Temperature fluctuations kill hundreds of thousands of people and affect the health of millions.

A report of the World Health Organization shows that climate changes generated by people against the Earth's climate have resulted in the death of over 150,000 people annually and the ill health of at least five million.

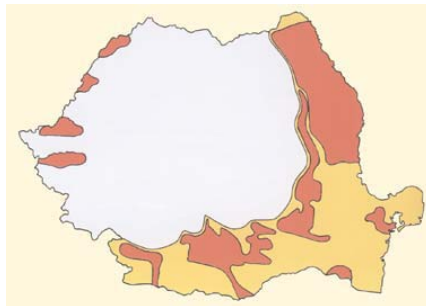


Fig. 1. ■ Areas affected by drought  
■ Intense drought affected areas

Researchers found that temperature fluctuations affect human health in several ways, including the spread of infectious diseases and the generation of heat waves and floods, propitious environments for the dissemination of diseases. The document contains concerning data and draws a warning: if in the following 10 years greenhouse gas emissions are not confined, climate change will get out of control and will cause major nature disequilibrium.

Rising temperatures will lead to an increase of extreme phenomena such as extreme heat, drought and violent storms.

Although climate change impacts have made their presence felt in Romania, the state of health of the population, especially in urban areas being at minimum quotas, the possible causes of major environmental disasters are still not made aware.

The focus and balance of the environmental efforts depend on the local conditions, including resources, policies and individual actions and the community's unique characteristics. The concept of sustainable community has been applied to various aspects, such as urban spreading, redevelopment of built-up areas, economic development and growth, ecosystem management, agriculture, biodiversity, green buildings, water management and pollution prevention. [6]

Many of these issues and other community concerns may be settled by addressing the traditional methods of our community, making the connection between architectural history and present.

## 2.3. Present and tradition

The holistic approach involves, first, an overview of a society's environmental context, of its geographical location, climate, vegetation and fauna, that is, what in anthropology is referred to as habitat.

The traditional settlements are the result of many factors: geographical location, customs, faith, occupations and ethnicity.



Fig. 2. *Village - Rucar*

The principles developed currently by the international trend "ecovillage" are based on the integration of spiritual and natural resources of each community by returning to the traditional habitat or by creating a new habitat in harmony with

nature. This is how the idea of tradition may successfully merge with sustainable development. [8]

The modern man's need to escape from every day's routine and the constant permanent urban stress, seeking temporary or permanent refuge in nature, gains increasingly pronounced outlines.

Ecovillage design is a new discipline, expressing the future needs for sustainable development and lifestyle. It has grown and been unfolding from below. In order for it to expand and fulfil the needs of society the time has come to formulate a standardized educational program that can be taught in ecovillages. [7]



Fig. 3. Earth house - ecovillage

#### 2.4. Rural ecologic concepts

Today, in Romania, the architectural style of rural communities is the expression of the geographical, social and economical background in which people lived their lives. The historical evolution of the Romanian village follows a holistic approach, namely, it forms a unit with all its components, that is, neither of the functions of a complex system can function separately they may only function together. The traditional settlements are the result of many factors: geographical location, customs, faith, occupations, ethnicity. Nowadays, after centuries of existence, the traditional Romanian architecture is going through an

unfortunate process of deterioration, posing the danger of losing a vital cultural identity. [2]

At present day, for its better integration the history of the Romanian land, which offers evidence that the oldest settlements date back to the Paleolithic (Romanesti, Baile Herculane, Cosava, Visage, Dubova) bears witness that after all the vicissitudes of time and countless attacks and invasions, the geographic, historical and economic conditions have enabled the permanent continuance of a stable form of life intrinsically linked to the preservation of "the village boundary".[3]



Fig. 4. Village from Bucovina

Different types of villages, either the linear village (plain areas) or the cellular village (hilly and mountainous regions) or scattered, gathered and crowded villages have a basic feature: Unity, as H.H. Stahl (1946) characterizes the village: "manages its territory as it would constitute the patrimony of a single economic enterprise".[1]



Fig. 5. Scattered Village, Bran-Sohodol

The durability of these patriarchal settlements lies precisely in their cultural, patriarchal, economic and social unity, unity that maintained them intact over the centuries. Popular tradition is maintained alive to this day, although the present is about to abolish it, ironically, not by its physical destruction but by forgetting ancestral customs belonging to the rural habitat.

Stanculescu FI (1987) emphasizes the need to maintain village life, by forms permanently adjusted to time, by threads which link us to our past: "Tradition represents the nature of a people, the specific which distinguishes it from other nations".[1] I would add as defining feature: the Romanian people's faith. The center of the village has always been a cradle and in its middle was located the church. Small or big, made of wood or stone, it was the core element around which were grouped the peasants' households, it was the highest reference point on the hills, it was the warning signal against invaders but also the meeting place for sharing the holidays joy.



Fig. 6. *Village – Mărginimea Sibiului*

The road from the space of worship to the living space is not long. In the Romanian village the household was and maybe is still a living organism, shelter for the man and his large family and shelter for his animals, a proper place for work, rest, school, recreation, and last but not least for creation. [2]

The rural house is based on a unitary concept regarding a content wider than the country's boundaries, which shows a constancy older than the state foundation. The notion of *matrix house* (casa matca) introduced in architecture by FI Stanculescu is found throughout the country; having a rectangle shape with three rooms in a row and a *porch* along its length. The multitude of forms and exterior decorations that cover this repetitive Romanian element is reflected in the warmth of the rural habitat, harmoniously connecting man and the exterior. Through this intermediate space the peasant brings nature into his house and at the same time lives within nature. In building households the environmental conditions, relief forms, the sunshine and the direction of prevailing winds were always taken into consideration. [1]



Fig. 7 – *Scattered Village - Sohodol*

I wonder how many architectural styles and trends have succeeded one another in towns, over the centuries or even millenniums, but the village always remained nearly the same. Village dwellings were built, rebuilt, each of them keeping the specific of the area, both in what regards the local construction materials and the architectural style. The latter is adapted to the environment forms and climatic conditions and is improved from one generation to another due to the originality of the Romanian peasant.

### 3. Conclusions

The rural communities in Romania still maintain the specific of the traditional habitat which is the expression of the geographical, social and economical background. The historical evolution of the Romanian village follows a holistic approach, namely, it forms a unit with all its components, that is, neither of the functions of a complex system can function separately they may only function together. Components mutually support and adjust themselves, maintaining their roots in history and tradition, thus resulting the Habit specific for each area.

Previous generations had the capacity to preserve ancestral traditions and to transmit in the future real treasures in architecture, art, popular technique, craftsmanship, economic and agricultural activities. All these values of the Romanian people are endangered in the current modernity.

Folk buildings art combines both architectural aesthetic, site integration as well as the successful harmonization with the surrounding landscape. Romania by its folk tradition is a true open air museum, which still preserves, in most of the rural areas, living examples of the originality and perpetuity of the building techniques. If the principles of sustainability and sustainable development may be transmitted by tradition, then, their

implementation will be faster, and the future generations will learn to preserve their history and at the same time enjoy a healthy and unpolluted environment.

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