

# BUILDING IN LINE WITH TRADITION

G. C. CHIŢONU<sup>1</sup>

**Abstract:** *The territorial structuring of a settlement is determined by the synergy between relief-placement, the manner of living, reflected in the typology of the settlement, and by the manner of economic organization. This synergy of factors has determined the locality's development since the earliest times. The natural-geographic area wherein a culture develops, wherein there are propitious conditions, has been evolving throughout history. History is the resource for the generations' evolution and it ensures the perenniality of cultural tradition.*

**Key words:** *rural settlements, synergy, house with reinforced courtyard.*

## 1. Introduction

In Romania, the rural region, paradoxically, due to less advanced economic factors, was to a lesser extent affected in certain areas, and it can be saved. The manifold factors having determined the socio-economic or cultural degradation of the traditional communities differs from one area to another; nevertheless, the indwellers' cohesion and unity, perhaps even the openness towards what is cutting-edge may actually be reckoned saving for the traditional rural habitat.

## 2. Cohesion Between History and Landscape

The rural landscape of Bran has not yet been totally invaded by modern constructions; it still keeps functional households; and dwellings with planimetric typology specific to the houses with strengthened courtyard or on three sides, are still being built.

The agro-zootechnical and agro-pastoral households are preponderant, as the inhabitants' basic occupation is animal breeding.

Unlike other typologies of households, the households of Bran have two concentric plot-deployment rings. The space where the human being conducts his/her activities, is not limited by property. The traditional habitat is a synergy of household spaces, specific to each family in the community.

The households with strengthened courtyard, offer intimacy and protection only in the built setting; yet, by their placement in the middle of the plots, they offer, at the same time, openness towards the landscape and the environment; as, among the properties, the delimitations do not hinder the free movement and they are transparent, by the nature of the enclosures.

In the commune, a great number of households can be identified, both with inner courtyard, and organized on three sides.

---

<sup>1</sup> *Transilvania* University of Braşov, Faculty of Buildings Engineering.

In this context, the proposal has been advanced to preserve these constructive typologies and to promote them in the current times, as well to adapt them to the living conditions, in contemporaneity.

The answer to these problems might be given by a traditional solution, which mostly addresses the rural areas, where the

traditions and the dwelling style, verified by our ancestors, over the centuries, are still kept.

Likewise, it constitutes a point of return to the natural and traditional house, for the rural areas, which have almost lost their identity, by renouncing to their traditional cultural patrimony.

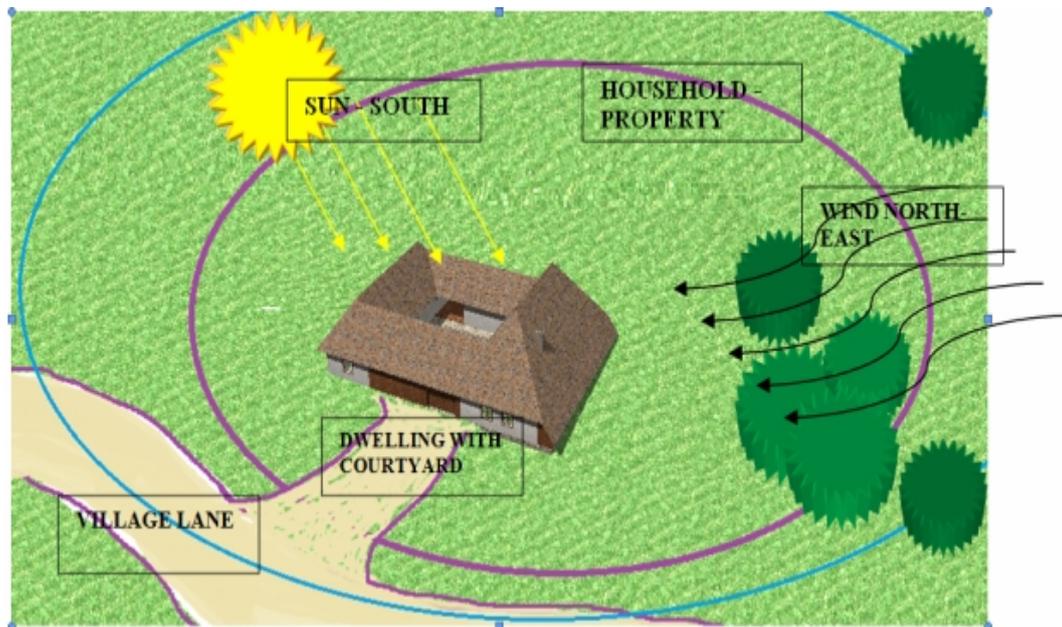


Fig. 1. *Spatial synergy of the household with strengthened courtyard*

[source: our own achievement]

### 3. Continuity of the Romanian Traditional Habitat

The oldest morphological-structural type of household is the house with courtyard, specific to the scattered village, with mostly pastoral economy – which has gone through all evolutionary forms, to the house with courtyard, of our days, with a complex structure, perfectly adapted to a cattle economy and pastoral-product processing economy.

”The traditional house of Bran falls under the area of the wooden architecture, which covers the external and internal mountainsides of the Carpathian ark, in an

interference space between the Central-European elements and the Southern, Balkan elements, where impulses of the Northern and Eastern-Slavic cultural circles, penetrated through the intermountain corridors, Bran being itself a connecting corridor between Transilvania and Muntenia”[1].

In the overall Romanian popular architecture, the old house of Bran belongs to the area of the Transilvanian house, where the ratio horizontality/ verticality is in favor of the verticality, by the upward tendency of the roof, being at the border with the architecture of Muntenia,

characterized by the horizontal deployment and the low height of the roof.



Fig. 2. *Household with porch, the oldest pattern*

[source: personal archive]



Fig. 3. *Household with porch, with wood pillars and railing*

[source: personal archive]

The interior of the dwellings in Bran, in an evolved version, is at the interference of two cultural areas, representing a combination between the interiors of the dwellings in Transilvania and Muntenia, by the merging of two decorative systems: "one of them specific to Făgăraș Country, with superimposed registers, well contoured and with reduced chromatics;

the other one specific to the area of Muscel, characterized by the abundance of woolen, thick, colored fabrics"[1].

With respect to the tendencies of the traditional household in Bran, the conclusion would be that, after over two decades in which the modernity elements have replaced, to a great extent, the traditional cultural elements as regards, first of all, the dwelling, both in terms of external architecture, and of organization of the interior, a return to the traditional values, occurs.

This return is more difficult to make, because of the separation between generations, regarding the transmission of these values, as the younger generation has not acquired the knowledge and the practice of the traditional values; and this supposes, nowadays, a considerable effort and a closer connection with the village, with the households; instead, most youths prefer easier pursuits, which suppose greater freedom of movement.

An impulse in reinvigorating the traditions, is the tourists' interest in knowing the local-regional cultural specificity and the willingness to spend their leisure time in a household that practices the "traditional occupations and supplies them with ecological products and food prepared according to traditional recipes"[2].

### **3. Development Directions in Bran Habitat. Potentiality and Perspectives**

The proposals for the conservation and rational enhancement of the area's architectural, as well as natural landscaping patrimony aim at identifying the modalities to stimulate and develop the tourism activities, while exerting a minimal impact on the region's cultural-ethnographical inheritance and ecosystems.

Directions:

- to maintain a *balance* between the old and the new, between tradition and modernity. This balance is the only modality to *gradually* integrate tradition in contemporary society's reality.
- to mitigate the conflict between tradition and modernity. This supposes *raising the awareness* of the community's young generation on the region's cultural values, as well as *arousing the sense of responsibility* of this generation towards conserving the tradition and environmental elements.

The model of recuperation, conservation and enhancement of the traditional popular culture, is the **agrotouristic household**, as it offers the best solution of harmonization and coexistence of tradition and modernity, as it creates that cultural model, where all cultural-identity elements are adapted to the current living standards.

This new cultural model supposes, first of all, protecting the natural environment and restoring the ecological balance, currently in danger.

A new concept of rural dwelling is brought into focus, where, beside the simple function of habitation, a possible economic function is also considered, within the personal household.

In the process of remodeling the configuration and the functions of the traditional household of Bran, in the buildings, the areas destined to the facilities can be rendered functional again, by arranging accommodation spaces. In this situation, it is compulsory to ensure the infrastructure, linked both to the utilities and to the configuration of the access routes.

In the image above (Figure 4 and Figure 5.1.-5.2.), a possible example is given, for a single-family household, who would like to extend its activity in the touristic field.

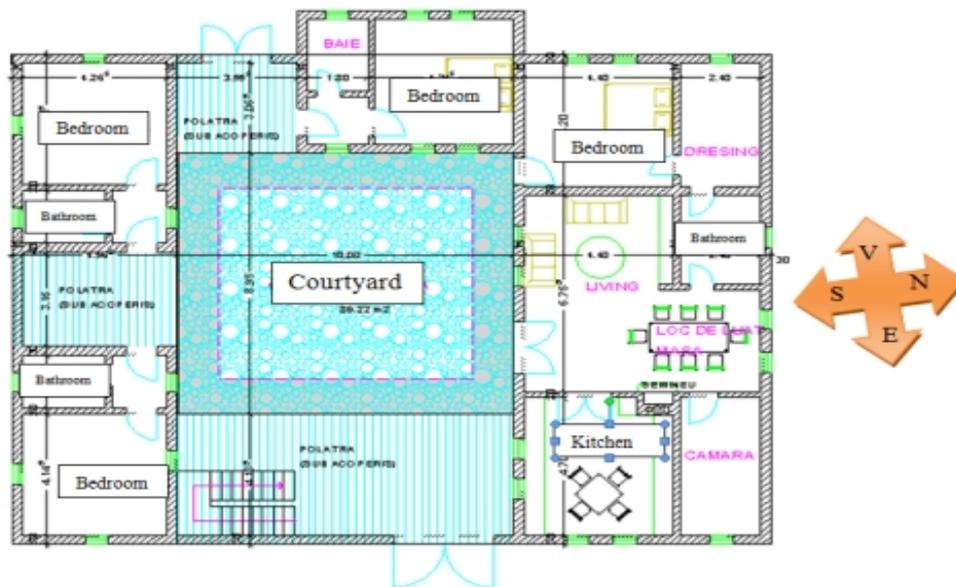


Fig. 4. *Proposal of agrotouristic household*

[source: our own achievement]



Fig. 5.1. *Proposal of agrotouristic household*

[source: our own achievement]



Fig. 5.2. *Proposal of agrotouristic household*

[source: our own achievement]

The existing constructions can be adapted; and, if a new household is to be built, then the specific typology with inner courtyard should ideally be kept, yet adapted to modern living conditions.

In the context of the proposals towards keeping the configuration with reinforced courtyard, it is recommended that the new constructions be durable and comply with the climatic changes.

Conceiving a new generation of energetically efficient buildings, comfortable and lasting, "in the sense of sustainable development, might answer the social, economic and environmental problems"[5].

The planimetric and volumetric characteristics of the houses with courtyard in Bran, are climatically adapted to the mountain areas. The conformation of enclosure (courtyard) is adapted both to the cold winter winds, and to the warm summer periods, conferring natural ventilation by the positioning of the accesses.

The cardinal orientation is usually along the axis North-East South-West; and, however difficult would be its location in the field, because of the relief, there are solutions, as regards the compliance with the orientation rules [8].

## 5. Conclusions

As regards the region of Bran, reaching the proposed objectives is conditioned by the following aspects:

- *Inclusion in the analysis* of all components and activities within the habitat of Bran (buildings, landscaping elements, restoration and real-estate-related activities etc). Knowing in-depth these aspects is a prerequisite for the multiple enhancement of the studied habitat.
- *Inventory of the natural and historical-patrimony elements* of the studied habitat.
- *Rehabilitation of the landscaping component* of the habitat against the background of the conservation and development of the community's tradition in the natural environment, as strategic stimulating element, on a rational basis, of the rural tourism and agro-tourism.
- To use local, natural construction materials for the houses: wood and stone.
- To promote and continue traditional crafts as stimulant for agro-tourism, a source of alimentary and ecological products for practicing eco-tourism.

**References**

1. Praoveanu, I.: *Așezările brănene: satul, gospodăria, locuința (Settlements of Bran: Village, Household, Dwelling)*. Brașov: Editura Transilvania Expres, 1998.
2. Bran, F.: *Economia turismului și mediul înconjurător (The tourism economy and environment)*. București: Editura Economică, 1998, p. 209.
3. Boyle, G.: *Renewable Energy*. Glasgow: Oxford University Press, 2004.
4. Alexandru, M.: *Paradoxul unui univers rural (The paradox of a rural univers)*. In: *Revista Urbanismul* nr.2, 2009.
5. Margolis, L., Robinson A.: *Innovative materials and technologies for landscape architecture*. In: *Living Systems*, Basel, Boston, Berlin: Birkhauser, 2007.
6. Marcu, N.: *Cercetări privind tipologia gospodăriilor și construcțiile gospodărești la români (Research on the typology of the Romanian households and household structures)*. In: *Ethnos*, nr. 2, București: Editura Museion, 1992.
7. Chitonu, C., Cîrstolovean, L.: *Sustainable education developed by Cultural Tradition, Bran – Romania*. In: *2nd Cyprus International Conference on Educational Research* 13-15 February 2013, Ataturk Teacher Training Academy, Nicosia, North Cyprus.
8. Chitonu, G. C.: *Habitatul traditional brănean. Perspective socio-economice și culturale de dezvoltare durabilă în peisajul rural. (The traditional habitat of Bran. Socio-economics and cultural perspectives of sustainable development in rural landscape)* In: *PhD. Thesis. "Ion Mincu" University of Architecture and Urban Planning*, 2014.