

A manifesto of understanding. Compared theory and vernacular particularism in Banat

PhD Thesis – Summary

for the PhD scientific title at
Politehnica University Timișoara
in the field of ARCHITECTURE

author arch. Oana Andreea GRECEA (married BĂNESCU)

scientific coordinator: Prof.univ.dr.arh. Teodor O. GHEORGHIU

october 2022

1. Introduction

Based on the **man-place-object** trinome and on the **universal-local** dialogue, the current thesis identifies general value, which is then showcased on the Banat vernacular and, at the same time, it observes the phenomenae that define a local nucleus, a local positive situation - Văliug-Gărâna-Brebu Nou. Firstly, the current built situation is generally understood, and then, the opposite way, value is being discussed through an example that constantly renegotiated it over time, with direct implications on the built environment.

During the first part of the thesis the relationship between man and place is studied more generally, through architectural theory and philosophy, while the second part highlights local phenomenae that led to a new collective definition and acceptance of value, inside the aforementioned nucleus. In the Banat vernacular, this example is an exception that managed to keep and reinvent its character through a series of local actions that led to a qualitative, total understanding of a meaningful place and also a thorough, collective management of the built image – a memento of man in relationship with its surrounding built space. In this intricate relationship, **dwelling** is perceived as a mediator par excellence.

Architecture and **philosophy** have both studied complex relationships in time – space-time, man-space, conscience-matter, subject-object, which all led to different perspectives (objective, realistic, phenomenological, existentialist) that are interconnected and valid in both worlds. The latter has relentlessly searched the essence of things, which completed architecture's vision of man and place. These types of theories are compared throughout the thesis, in order to identify common ground, tension, contrast and qualitative consensus: philosophical (Bollnow, Heidegger), phenomenological (Christian Norberg Schulz), poetical (Bachelard), anthropological etc. Philosophy has enriched architecture with meaning more than once, which is not visible for everyone at once, but reasons with each one of us in a unique time and way.

The current paper comes close to **critical regionalism** (through tectonics, use of local materials and site specificity); it doesn't promote local built laws, but moreso tries to mediate the man-place-object relationship through the **understanding** of universal structures, personal experience, exterior influence, the quality of entourage etc.

In this widely treated relationship in time, **man** has been insufficiently included and understood. He rarely identifies himself with the pure intellectualization of the built environment, with formal purity and simplicity, given that his own interior environment is a heterogeneous collection of personal memories and affinities - so a look at the way man

perceives and experiences space is much needed at this point.

The introduction of man as **presence** in the relationship between place and architectural form expands the possibilities of access to value through understanding. From simple observer to determinant factor, man as presence completes and opens new horizons of relationships, given that valuable architecture lives from the very clarity and quality of these relationships. In the relationship with man, exciting architecture implies experiment, understanding, existential validation, imagination and dreaming, without necessarily using complicated means of expression. In relation to architecture, man perceives himself in space, which he measures, imagines, classifies and sometimes overlooks; towards it, man constantly renegotiates his own knowledge and projection.

Thus, by understanding each component of the **man-place-object** relationship and the value-generating possibilities that they project within it, the observations and appropriate materializations that may appear could be coordinated through relationships and meaning.

The treatment and theorization of **vernacular architecture** is motivated by the fact that it defines and highlights the value of place as a whole and, at the same time, it suggests possibilities that qualitatively renegotiate what has been lost. It has the ability to generate significant places, thanks to the synthesized symbolic systems, thus reaching the ultimate goal that differentiates architecture from pure building. Most places have a personal genius loci (provided it is a recognizable place), which today is not supported and explored, but on the contrary, it is cancelled. The genius of each place is sensed through understanding, and understanding is **learned**.

As an extended area for showcasing theoretical principles in a vernacular environment, **Banat** is a space of experiment, an extremely diverse area from the point of view of external influences, of the ethnicities that have cohabited it, of the way in which it has defined the typologies throughout the built environment, of the landscape, which it managed to assimilate and keep over time. In the last decades, the built environment of Banat has been irremediably modified, paradoxically, due to access to information, the loss of common ideals and the desire for personal representation. Thus, it has become a favorable environment for the application of architectural theories, in order to understand the phenomena that have negatively impacted it, to understand the current situation from a different perspective and to extract valuable aspects in the relationship with place, man and built environment.

The built environment of the **VGB area** (Văliug, Gărâna, Brebu Nou), guided by different rules than those considered valuable by architectural theories, but centered on man and community even after depopulation, can serve as a complement to the theoretical network; it can become a generator of new discussions, polemics and relationships within it. It completes the polemic between architecture as a result of place and self-sufficient architecture through the generic architecture that develops place, which confirms that architecture is neither an epiphany of place, nor an independent object. It is both local and universal. Both individual and collective. Both container and content.

The choice of the Gărâna-Brebu-Văliug nucleus in the mountain area of Banat is both subjective and objective: subjective because I am part of it, both as an architect and as a constant user, and objective for its inspirational qualities - it is one of the only nuclei in the Banat area that has kept a rather coherent built image, despite the multiple influences and phenomena that impacted it in time. Although it appeared through indifferent implantation, without being a product of the place, it was revitalized through culture and collectively assimilated interventions, through the power of the mass (creative or not) - unlike theories, which, individually viewed, militate for a revitalization through architecture itself. Although opposed to theory by the artificial attribute of the place and the pragmatic evolution, contrary to the

scenographic one promoted by theory, the core generates place, character and atmosphere - noticeable and attractive, which have the power to positively constrain the image of the built. Initially paradoxical, the demonstration of visual cohesion through action and collective care can contribute with new information to the developing theoretical. In addition, some of the actors involved in the revitalization of the core have a pronounced sensitivity towards space, atmosphere and place, and in general towards the experiences that make up everyday reality, which leads to saving and maintaining the built image without an architect - a defining means for the reinvented **ethics of change** in the broad process of understanding.

This investigated space is simply observable, it entails projections and expectations, acceptance and personal experience. This choice is not arbitrary, but it results from a motivated focus on the subject, experience of the place, as well as personal and professional circumstances and preferences. The observed aspects and realities open a discussion about value, cultural heritage - both as an introduction to timelessness, and as a constant renegotiation of meaning, function, etc. My personal contact with the area, during the last almost 30 years, is a privileged one, of rich standpoints: guest in the holiday home of some friends, weekend tourist, guest house tourist, construction site supervisor, workers' driver, temporary tenant; thus, I perceived the area through the eyes of a child, a teenager and an adult, I experienced various contacts, living in various houses, in guest houses, local houses or in a tent, and I continue to be both witness and a part of the vibration and evolution of the place today.

Given the current evolution of society and the man-nature conflict, the morphological study of rural architecture can still offer solutions to find meaning, that are collectively accepted and understood. Last but not least, the context of the pandemic and the recent crises have changed the people's perspectives towards rural environment and determined a sought-after reconnection with it.

A secondary basis of the thesis is the **universal-local** relationship, which explores the qualities that can be implemented, in both ways: the universally accepted principles that determine value lead to the understanding of a particular place (in this case, the situation of the *rural environment* in Banat), and its qualitative particularities lead to the renegotiation and completion of universal principles (the *VGB nucleus*). The local valences of theory and the universal valences of vernacular architecture intertwine, they generate dialogue and exchange value. The universal offers understanding, meaning and generally valid principles, and the local offers primary relationships, reinterpretations and more or less adapted solutions, which can generate new tracks in relation to context.

Such a movement transcends the purely theoretical, in which there is a real risk of ignoring real-life situations or people's pragmatic needs. Here, the applied study (in the rural mountain side of Banat) is essential, from the scale of the settlement to the component elements related to housing, relationships and phenomena. This is all the more pertinent as, in addition to its universality, it is applied to a society that **does not know** its connections and form.

The **motivation** of this argument started from the current situation of the built environment, increasingly destructured, chaotic and based on individualism, which I wanted to understand more deeply, and also from the personal passion for the conceptual and theoretical side of architecture. In this sense, the study of the universal ABC of architecture, together with the principles that give value to the constructive act, the possible human condition and role, but also the investigation of concrete, local situations, all lead to the clarification of everyday life and the factors that determine it, and also to the possible identification of qualitative principles that can guide future interventions and define valuable images and relationships.

The **argument** is based both on somewhat critical observations of the built environment,

on insufficiently searched for relationships between theories, as well as on the awareness, even only make-believe, of their practical application. It is built linearly, based on parallels, connections, contrast, case studies, examples, objective and subjective analyses, implementations, further discussed in the dedicated chapters.

In its entirety, the argumentation opens discussions of form-substance, ground-object, limited-open, present-absent, general-specific and brings back into discussion the role of the community within the settlements, reminding of the need to be responsive to people's values and needs, no matter how different they may be. All this envisions a man-place-architecture relationship, in which the quality of the relationships is defined by understanding, in which the professional understands the societal conditions of the lived moment objectively. If the man-place relationship is always redefined, interpreted and can reveal unsuspected qualities of architecture, the local example shows how, paradoxically, it can become a coherent model of community influence in the negotiation and preservation of values. The power of example thus becomes a means to **erode mentalities** and, why not, to manage the image of the built environment in a unified manner.

Throughout the argument, space and man are always discussed conjunctively, while dwelling is considered a mediator, a materialized meeting between the two. Place and space are viewed separately, through their relationship in time: different weights in the searches of architects and philosophers, from container to the supremacy of space and then to the reappearance of place as an inspirational aspect. Throughout history, architecture has had various times of ignoring and even cancelling place, but also visibly adapted attitudes, conditioned by its character. Today, a simple site analysis is no longer sufficient, but a whole plea has been cultivated in favor of a deep understanding of place - from physical characteristics, atmosphere, character, to philosophical and psychological aspects that can provide a motivated track, an assumed attitude towards place, present and future.

Methodology and objectives



Fig. 1 The (open) matrix of theory that supports the argument

During the current argumentation, a series of **methods** are being used, such as comparative analysis of theories, juxtaposition of research perspectives (architectural theory, philosophy, anthropology, visual principles, sociological studies, urbanism, etc.), phenomenology, photographic journal, questionnaire as pulse of the place, participatory process, universal-local bidirectionality, in-place implementation, all in order to serve self-imposed objectives such as:

- Understanding the current situation of the built environment through the juxtaposed, comparative study of selected theory;
 - Discussing the man-place-object relationship, with an emphasis on relationships and its possible improvement;
 - Understanding the possible relationships within the man-place-object relationship and how they define and influence value; supporting the priority of relationships before concepts or uni-directional attitudes;
 - Identifying common ground, tension and contrast within the selected theoretical basis, ordered by theme;
 - Ordering the world through universal references;
 - Awareness and use of presence as a total perception of the world, emphasizing the importance of self acquaintance - body and purpose of man in the world;
 - Seeing dwelling as a mediator between man and place, a common denominator through which the two give meaning to each other, physically and existentially;
 - Remembering the capacity of architecture to produce relevant materializations for collectivity and memories, but also to provide anchor to the local resident.
-
- Understanding the phenomena that contributed to the homogenous preservation of the built environment in the VGB core (local) and their impact on the outside world;
 - Supporting a clear attitude towards place, managed through the materialization and experience of the space;
 - Awareness of the need for appropriate-ness of the new, by referring to possible themes extracted from the existing typologies, attitudes and potential results;
 - An easy to understand example of character identification of a place;
 - Understanding the present condition and the possibilities that appear as a result of this effort: interpretation, appropriate-ness, rehabilitation (of images and characters), as opposed to mere copying or uncontrolled contrast;
 - Sharing one's own experience: observer, user, architect, recipient, builder, as part of the story of the place;
-
- Discussing the proximity between objective reality and theories, in order to enrich both;
 - Simulating understanding as a total phenomenon, as a generator of instantly applicable possibilities, both universally and/or locally;
-
- Bringing together principles related to the perception of man, place and object and a real situation in which they coexist and generate character and collective meaning;
 - The attempt to generate a qualitative discourse, as opposed to a strictly analytical, quantitative, statistical one, by looking at the **man-place-object** relationship as a whole;
 - Identifying some quantifiable aspects that give value, but also the search for value as a

whole;

- Generating a content with substance, a complex argumentation, with multidisciplinary references, concisely presented and therefore accessible to the inexperienced reader;
- Discussing the preconception that the vernacular is unprofessional, organic, grown, and theory is just a professional, intellectualized, never applied tool. The latter, an idealized channel, helps to understand the unfiltered reality, the essence, and is associated here with the buildings that do not attract attention that much (housing), but are the most present built element in the vernacular environment, making up the mass, the background on which the art of place unfolds, its character.
- Replacing the unfocused, defensive, overloaded, time-dependent glance (more and more characteristic of our current times) with an assumed, self-connected, trained and engaging one;
- Engaging the reader through a simple presentation of complex relationships;
- Personal and professional development, improving one's speech;

The result of the theoretical analysis that is conducted in the first part of the thesis is materialized through a visual scheme of tension, dialogue and connection, in which the local example is later inserted, interfering, completing and further generating controversy.

Title

Regarding the title, the word *Manifesto* may seem a bit dramatic, but it is necessary at this point, because it raises the possibility of connecting the architect and the user via a common channel, a result of total knowledge: of the surrounding environment, of the built environment, of a certain place, of the human condition, of the human-space relationship, etc. In addition, it arises from the need to emphasize the unclear current situation, which needs a deeper understanding of the man-place-object relationship - both by professionals, viewers and users.

Theory represents the basis for understanding, both rational and metaphysical, both at a visual, sensory, kinesthetic, as well as conceptual and reflexive level. The comparative treatment of different perspectives on the man-place-object triad offers substance, as well as new opportunities of knowledge, connection and materialization.

Last but not least, the local nucleus, addressed as "local particularism" in the title for its ideological character according to its own dynamics, comes to complete this image of value through the power of example, of community-approved action - by preserving identity through belonging, by joining a collective feeling that is always renegotiated, with unwritten, but respected rules. It shows how understanding the specificity of place and the dynamics of a reinvented, functional community, animates, preserves the intrinsic existing value and defines a more attractive future, both for those who experience it permanently and for those who watch it from afar.

Structure

In order to support the general argument that gravitates around the man-place-object relationship and in order to respond to the previously stated objectives, the thesis is structured in five main parts that bring these themes face to face; between them, conclusions and pauses are punctually inserted, mostly to highlight an important moment.

Globally, the material is organized in two ways: once in six main chapters ("INTRODUCTION", "PLACE", "DWELLING", "PRESENCE", "VGB NUCLEUS", "CONCLUSIONS"), which confront man, place and architecture by juxtaposing various selected theories, and at the same time in two parts - one that is mostly theoretical ("PLACE", "DWELLING", "PRESENCE") and one that is locally observed ("VGB NUCLEUS").

In the first case, the relationship between man and place, mediated by dwelling, is

studied through key words such as structure, language, atmosphere, character; in the second part, emphasis is placed on highlighting and understanding the local phenomena that led to a collective redefinition of value – a potential bidirectional universal-local dialogue, materialized through references and tangents in the main text and through additional mentions in the conclusions area. Each of these **keywords** engages comparative theories on the subject, which determine an overall picture through different connections, affiliations or perspectives.

At the end of each chapter there is a gradual **transition** to the general built environment of the Romanian **Banat** area. Thus, following the review of the theoretical perspectives, each chapter discusses the situation in Banat, as a particular entity that is still valuable enough to be documented and showcased within this dialogue. Also, each main chapter culminates with a conclusion section, which structures and contributes to the final observations, discovered after browsing the entire thesis.

When discussing compared theory, a series of dichotomies appear in the text among connections, that open perspectives and give order: architecture born from the outside vs. architecture born from the inside, autonomous vs contextual, subject vs object, thought vs feeling, subjective vs. objective, constancy vs. change, mathematical vs. experienced (space), being vs. belonging, presence vs. identification, use vs. anchoring (existential validation), knowledge vs. implementation (formal), whole vs. parts, true vs. reproduced, interaction vs. style, relationships vs concepts. The discussion of the selected theories generates both connections and contrast, in a matrix that dialogues through attitudes towards the current situation, man, nature, place, construction, form, atmosphere, perception, language, architect. These key terms have a structural role inside the thesis, but a dispersed position throughout the text, only to be reunited in the final schematization, in order to support the conclusions.

At a more in depth glance, the chapter "PLACE" defines notions, it recalls temporal relationships of architecture and place, it briefly discusses catalytic movements regarding place, it decodes aspects that provide structure and order to both natural and built environment, it signals the importance of atmosphere as a defining aspect of place, it deals with phenomena such as the loss and regaining of place, it reviews the evolution of the local rural built environment. In this chapter, the natural environment, as a qualitative unit, and the built environment are looked at conjunctively; they are considered interdependent, and the connections identified within the theories are then extrapolated to the Banat rural environment, in order to highlight the causes behind its drastic alteration. Within the chapter "Structure of place", a subchapter is dedicated to the evolution of the rural built environment in Banat, as a more or less unified silhouette in the landscape, through the figure-background relationship.

As a whole, the chapter "Structure of place" tries to decode and showcase the formal properties of place, its physical, three-dimensional characteristics, but also the perceptual ones, which assemble its character in relation to the explorer. Here, ingredients that determine qualities of space are being discussed, such as the natural-built relationship, perception, order, assembly, meaning, relationships, outline, limit, proximity, evolution, typologies, language, stability, the reconquest, the art of the place.

The "Atmosphere" chapter discusses the necessary conditions for it to appear, but also its force, as a summed up vibration of a place – a potential generator of local character.

In the chapter "Loss of place", the current situation of the world is being discussed, which is dramatic in the Banat area; also, constructive, formal, perceptive, human aspects are tackled, which determine the appearance of this phenomenon, both globally and locally.

The "DWELLING" chapter, in turn, aims to entail multidisciplinary perspectives, (cosmological, existential, typological, poetic, sociological, etc.) in order to present it as a mediator, as a translator of the man-place relationship.

The chapter "PRESENCE/BELONGING/ABSENCE" investigates the way in which man perceives space as an event, as an experience, as part of his own existential valorization - through presence, the measurement of space is total, encompassing perceptual, mechanical, functional, anthropological, existential and poetic aspects. Structurally speaking, it discusses both physical relationships with space (a chronological overview, from a philosophical point of view, of the human-space-place relationship), as well as typologies that have been identified and personal projections in relationship with space.

The chapter "VGB NUCLEUS, BANAT MOUNTAINSIDE" defines a particular, valuable area, which it analyzes from a historical, structural, social, phenomenological, anthropological point of view, via the following chapters: "Background", "Phenomenae" and "Implant as an experiment". The first one, "Background", has the role of sketching and understanding the physical context in which the identified phenomena appears. In „Phenomenae”, the attention is primarily directed towards the interpretation of various events, actions and attitudes that shaped the character of the area over time: population movement patterns, the metamorphosis of the function of the house over time, the impact of the Jazz Festival, the touristic character, which is inherited and projected, etc. The last sub-chapter, "Implant as an experiment", narrates the process of an attempt to insert new architecture in the existing built tissue, by applying the previously mentioned qualitative principles.

Through this organization, the thesis tries to develop the argument in a simple, clear and concise way, both in the choice of words that define the chapters and in the black and white presentation of the photographs. The purpose of this approach is to emphasize the construction and depth of the argument and the clarity and quality of its results.

2. PLACE

The chapter firstly discusses definitions of place and space, as well perceptions on them over time; often subordinated to space, place oscillated from contained area (Aristotle, Philoponus), site, volume, position in a larger space (Descartes), to cosmic region focused on movement, body and orientation (Kant, Husserl, Merleau Ponty, Irigaray). For Heidegger, *being in place* means *being in the world*, and place, unlike space, gathers, brings together. [1] Place changes according to man's rhythm, it has the character of a landmark and it gives meaning [2]; it represents an entity or an occasion [3], a marked space, qualitatively defined, which possesses character, limit, history, nuance. More than that, its existential condition is what animates it and makes it interesting and worth investigating today: a place that invites and embodies the Fourfold, that evokes meaning, that is prior to building and has the ability to shelter.

„Whatever <space> and <time> may mean, place and event mean even more.” (Aldo van Eyck) [4].

Place is more than an abstract location, than a mere point on a map; it requires space to perfect its condition and at the same time it emanates a personal, intimate characteristic that attracts man in an intuitive way. In its essence, place represents a totality, a sum of tangible, material things that define everyday reality and determine the quality of the surrounding environment, thus the essence of the space around us. So place is directly related to the experience of living, as the sum of natural and human intervention, the characteristics of the natural environment and individual perception and preference. Container and content alike, it is the most comprehensive manifestation of lived life. [5]

Recently, place has become an important actor, if not the center of theoretical discourses, through voices like Christian Norberg Schulz, Gaston Bachelard, Edward Casey,

Jeff Malpas and others, who have revealed some of its intrinsic qualities through poetic, philosophical lenses.

In this context, throughout the thesis, notions such as the *genius loci*, existential place, place as a totality, as well as opposite notions such as the non-place, are being discussed, in order to introduce the vernacular environment as a pure representation of some of them.

The vernacular

Within the present argumentation, the vernacular is seen as an example of a lived world, a place that manifests essence, perceptible character, as well as collective spirit, proximity, that can be easily understood and continued. It is firstly seen as a qualitative universal environment, and then as a local environment, for the phenomena that revitalize and recreate the whole - in a universal-local, general-specific bilateral way. As a built environment targeted at the needs, values, economy, lifestyle of a specific culture, it can represent a tool to (re-) affirm identities, to (re-) discover contact with nature and the environment, to (re-) discover the feeling of belonging (to a place, to a community, etc.).



Fig. 2 The vernacular as lived world, that is defined by local materiality and speaks of proximity; 1 – local annexes (*sălașe*) on the road between Carașova and Oravița; 2 – dialogue between neighbours, Cornereva area; 3 – local materials, Carașova; source: own photographs

"Vernacular architecture is an image of the world, which gives presence to the environment in which life takes place, not in an abstract manner, but in concrete poetic form. [...] Vernacular architecture reveals an image that manifests the <here> of life, the proximity." [6] It is directly related to two lost aspects today: **poetic dwelling** and **proximity** between people.

If the vernacular is perceived as a common foundation between an intelligible formal language, an understanding of social dynamics and an understanding of the environment, it can provide both the roots and the method that is needed to understand the whole. Siegfried Giedion observes that the vernacular environment is also characterized by the relationship between *constancy* and *change*, eternal and ephemeral, which directly links persistence in time to the terms of *monumentality* (symbol, memory) and *regionalism* (roots in space) [7]. The strength of this observation does not lie in the opposition of the two terms, but in the implication that the relationship between man and environment must always be reinterpreted.

The discussion about vernacular must start from **dwelling**, as a result of man's existence in the world (*being-in-the-world*, Heidegger), as a mediator and interpreter of the man-place relationship, as the repetitive module that makes up the built universe.

"Building and dwelling express the way man is in the world". [8]

Vernacular architecture provides a confirmation of this thought. Thus, traditional living

is characterized by permanence, both in what concerns customs transmission, but also spatial language, integrated with the surrounding environment and the world. Heidegger defines permanence by referring to Goethe's words: "*to accord in an unexpressed harmony*", "*only what is accorded perpetuates*". [9]

As an answer in terms of dwelling, vernacular architecture is at the **origin** of the art of the place. By relating to the surrounding environment, its organization, means and construction materials, its mentality, the vernacular environment provides a background for the emergence and understanding of the art of the place, as the art of totality. The traditional space invites poetic living, connected to structures hidden from the eye and opposed to simple measurement. Here, poetic dwelling is closely related to poetic creation, that is, to original, authentic construction, which relates heaven to earth, man to the world, interiority to exteriority, nature to occupation, etc.

Even if the act of building is intuitive, unpretentious, based on variety in homogeneity, the image of vernacular architecture is generally homogeneous, ordered, with rules that are easy to grasp, assimilate and, most importantly, to continue in a coherent and appropriate way. In addition, vernacular architecture treats the relationship with man and environment intimately, generating identification, belonging and persistence over time. It therefore carries concurrent universal, timeless and rooted valences.

In **Banat**, vernacular architecture still offers a respectful example of relating to the existing natural and built environment, despite the fast pace of modern "customization". In addition, against the background of the recent pandemic and economic situations, the countryside is being revalued today by the contemporary man, as an uncontaminated representation of authenticity, sacred origins, timelessness and connection with place. Based on cultural occupation and promotion, the consciousness of the community is oftentimes found, generating matrixes of representation and manipulating the physical reality in a careful balance of its constituent structures.

The study of vernacular architecture emphasizes the connection between built environment and man, in both senses: man influences the built environment through additions, and the built environment directly influences the dynamics and the perception of man, the way in which he uses space. As a sum of everchanging ethnic, contextual and social factors, the vernacular environment must be understood and continuously regained, so that the rendered image remains or becomes relevant again.

In the discussion about vernacular, **critical regionalism** is being treated and evaluated historically, through the lens of the object-context relationship – through theorists such as Alexander Tzonis and Liane Lefaivre, Kenneth Frampton, William Curtis and Harwell Hamilton Harris, through discussions based on the works of architects such as Le Corbusier, Alvar Aalto and Jorn Utzon in the Nordic countries, Jose Antonio Coderch in Spain, Alvaro Siza in Portugal, Carlo Scarpa in Italy, Luis Barragan in Mexico, Oscar Niemeyer in Brazil, Oud, Bakema and van Eyck in the Netherlands, Rossi, Ungers and Snozzi in Italy, Switzerland and Germany, Tadao Ando in Japan, Richard Meier, Peter Eisenman, Frank Gehry and James Stirling, Herzog de Meuron and Peter Zumthor in Switzerland, Olgiati, Anne Holtrop, Pezo von Ellrichsauen ([10], [11], [12]), as well as through the lens of a brief review of the Romanian identity movement in the 20th century. [13]

The structure of place

This chapter tries to decode the formal properties of place, its physical, three-dimensional characteristics and also its perceptual ones, which assemble character and order space - both natural and built environment, landscape and settlement, natural and occupied.

Place can be structured both by the natural setting in which it is located, by three-dimensional composition of the built environment, determined by organization and form, and by its atmosphere. Together, these ingredients determine spatial qualities and character, which define and influence the everyday, lived space.

Another possible target of this chapter is the deep understanding of the natural – built relationship, as well as the importance of defining a clear attitude towards the context - be it structured translation, contrast or anything (assumed) in between. The two worlds, the natural and the humanized, are indivisible, regardless of the reason for in situ architecture emergence.

The understanding of the surrounding environment, both natural and built, is achieved in the following chapters by treating man and place in direct relationship: "*natural units such as the valley, the mountain, the river, manifest themselves as ways of being between the earth and sky, bearing the need to be understood, while artificial units such as the street, the square, the house bring what is understood into the vicinity of man*". [14]

Natural and built landscape

Nature as qualitative unit that generates meaning and inspiration, has been and continues to be a subject of interest for a number of fields such as philosophy, literature, art, architecture, etc. If Rainer Maria Rilke saw nature as the original basis, the ground for our embodied being, Heidegger considered it as an origin of being, Foucault as mere site and exact location which gives specificity to users and buildings, and CNS as an intrinsic manifestation of the genius loci [15]; it is essential to decipher the relationship that nature can generate today with the built environment. As a whole, the natural landscape, although composed of a variety of categories, is unitary, it expresses an identity, a rather distinctive character.

In order to dwell ([16]) between Heaven and Earth, man must first of all understand the 2 elements and the interaction between them. Understanding nature and landscape means more than contact with visual or scientific information, it means deciphering the message of the landscape, identifying gaps, etc. When the environment emanates a clear meaning, man feels at ease, he feels at home.

From a perceptive point of view, the environment is memorable not only for the aspects that immediately catch the eye, but also for those that give it distinctive identities and that establish a relationship with the presence and corporeality of man - for example the shape and direction of some peaks, the perceived order in a forest through repetition, the presence of a stream of water, the atmosphere of a place, etc. Ordered or destructured, perceived in a static or dynamic manner, the natural environment implies different scales and speeds of understanding, always defining a new context on which a built object can be projected.

A brief look at the natural environment in Banat shows variety and layering, complexity through relationships and overlaps, which lead to the birth of particular atmospheres, easily explained through Gestalt theories that are (also) applied to nature itself: clear boundaries, dynamic directions, tension points, textures, rhythm (dense-sparse), etc.

Norberg Schulz's theory starts from the place and relies on its extensive understanding before imagining any added architectural act; in his perception, man's built places can relate to nature in 3 ways: addition, complementarity, symbolism.

A structured built environment manifests itself as such and favors understanding, and therefore identification, through language, that helps materialize it between Heaven and Earth (Heidegger, Norberg Schulz). Thus, taking into account the mobile nature of man in relation to an immovable, valuable image of the built environment, two important axes of their relationship can be emphasized: the vertical sky-earth axis, in which the image is structured and defines relationships through language and the horizontal axis, of the distant or up-close perception and internalization. Up-down and near-far become essential duets in the discussion about the

structure of the environment. Within this discussion, a descending suite of views of the built environment is elaborated within the thesis, starting from the silhouette of the settlement, defined by the figure-background relationship, up to the limit, enclosure and internal organization.

Applied to the rural environment of **Banat**, local peculiarities of the villages are stated depending on topography (plain villages, with firm boundaries, hill and mountain villages, with diffuse boundaries), phenomena that determined the dematerialization of the boundary, distinct spatial organizations [17], housing typologies [18] and, last but not least, defining components of the architectural language, such as the limit, the figure, the roof, the wall, the light, the rooms, etc.

This aforementioned fundamental language is universal and timeless, but at the same time linked to local dialects, which speak of simple, lived worlds. Once it becomes known and understood, the universe of possible relationships opens up.

Atmosphere

Atmosphere is fundamental for defining presence, as a total perceptive tool. As a unifying characteristic, it gives significance to place, making it special and memorable; oftentimes, it represents both the starting point and the goal of architecture.

In the built rural environment of the Banat area, atmosphere is constituted by repetitive and varied elements, which are easy to read and give place an orderly, unitary character, but also by personalizations and individual interpretations.

The loss of Place

The loss of place deals with the current, generalized condition of the built environment in the Banat countryside (and everywhere, really), caused by aspects such as increasingly diffuse boundaries, population movement, identity pluralism, accentuated urbanization, the unclear boundary between village and city, which have all more or less eroded characters and implicitly destroyed the image of the built environment.

The speed of current life and the total access to information have both stripped the built environment of its time for adaptation and thus the qualitative relationships acquired over time have lost their reverberation: man-house, man-collectivity, man-nature, interior-exterior, built environment-natural environment, center-limit, etc. At the same time, the rural environment could not keep up with external interventions, which systematically eroded its structure and relations (with the natural environment, between people, with the built environment), generating a heterogeneous mixture, with direct impact on the local community: loss of unity, confusion, overturning of values, false perception of belonging to modernity. Thus, there is no zero moment of the loss of place, a clear limit between an idealized, functional image of the village and one that is the opposite; however, each place was affected by its own combination of factors, mentioned in the study or not, with more or less dramatic effects.

The loss of place, of belonging to a place, is primarily linked to the loss of atmosphere, the unifying imprint that personalizes a space and makes it distinctive, seconded in the local environment by the loss of distinct identities of the place, changes in hierarchies in relationship with the landscape, the reduction of landscape to quantity or resource, the loss of clarity of demarcation, the poor calibration of proximity, the loss of landmarks, the dominance of scale over space, the appearance and cultivation of representational architecture, the inversion of the fabric-object relationship, emigration, alienation, etc.

"Lack of character implies poverty of stimuli." [19]

3. DWELLING

"The relationship between man and space is nothing other than dwelling in its most essential way". [20]

Essentially, dwelling is more than the urgency of a shelter - it consists of projections, associations and relationships, a system of strata, both individual (position and context) and universal (understanding and gesture). Man defines his spaces and humanizes territories, creates comfortable environments and shapes landscapes, managing a more or less consciously public-private, individual-universal relationship, which, of course, could become a tool for managing and mediating cohabitation - both socially, as well as built. The wealth of relationships that man experiences with and through his space determines different scales and resonances of the act of living: object (tangible), house (shelter), settlement (community), landscape.

Throughout the human existence, the house announces and ticks off multiple roles: anthropological (space that provides security, shelter, space for retreat, relaxation, rediscovery of one's self), philosophical (existential, understanding the human condition, validating existence as meaningful), psychological (reflection, projection), architectural (form, object, relationships), sacred (repetition of Creation, imago mundi, embodiment of a cosmos in chaos), sociological (community at different scales) - and the relationship of man with the house is one in which emotion prevails.

The wealth of human attitudes regarding space does not appear and develop separately in a temporal sequence, but it is discovered, accumulated and preserved throughout life, in a dynamical overlapping. Dwelling thus becomes a goal, a term that we can reach and understand only through a complete effort of the human being, of man's existence on Earth. This is why Heidegger stated that man must first learn to live. To live means to feel at home, to belong to a place, to be rooted in it, but at the same time belonging is a direct result of living, which represents the goal of architecture in an existential sense: *"only in living can we find the fulfillment of our nature."* [21]

More than enclosing a portion of the Universe for oneself, which thus becomes familiar, dwelling involves the assumed materialization of an object between Heaven and Earth, with the aim of accommodating and validating human existence - a duet between man and place where the parts look after and calibrate each other. The home is an interior for the tenant, but also an exterior, an expression in contact with the environment; it is both local and universal, both constant and part of a structure that is always renegotiated, redefined.

Bachelard views space as a poetic image in itself, in which living, an action that implies the presence of man, is not restricted to the house or home, that are archetypal images, but it appears in environments where imagination, habits are cultivated - in the stillness of the earth, in the clarity of water etc. However, the house is a first universe for the soul, a receptacle, a place for poetic images, in which intimacy and the intensity of experience are received. Unlike Bachelard, who perceives the house as a miniature world, Foucault sees it as a closed resting place, while Derrida associates it to a support for the man-witness of the event he experiences.

Dwelling has oscillated in the theorists' perceptions from central or centralized buildings, heterotopic antisites, childhood home, remembered and imagined, to the *being-in* or *thing-based* dwelling imagined by Heidegger.

Next, the chapter deals with the notions of **rite and ritual**, which lie the basis of edification within a traditional society and are related to actions such as foundation, founding, choosing the place of construction, as part of a mythological geography in which man is connected to higher, mythical structures ([22], Ernest Bernea and Novacovici, cited in [23] – the center, the hearth, the founding traditions). Thus, within these societies, built space became

a clearly limited, enclosed, inhabited sacred place, that is ordered by successive social and economic boundaries, in close connection to the center and neighborhoods. The structure of place thus admits closed and centered spaces (the house, the yard, the garden), open places (the field, the forest), as well as the intermediate channels that ensure connections, such as the road, the path, the square, the shed, the shed, etc.

The village is more than a quantitative sum of people and households, it is a cultivated nature and a humanization of the place at the same time, through belonging (*dwelling*), cultivation and exploitation [24]; each home is more than a sum of functions and users, it is a mediator of the sacred-profane, intimate-public, thought-expression dialogue, both womb of personal intimacy and means of representation in society; community and family are more than a sum of individuals, they live through empathy and constant calibration. All these structures communicate, coexist and intertwine, determining temporary and permanent hierarchies.

In the **Banat** rural world, the basis of the social hierarchy is the household and the family and the spatial trajectory of the peasant is marked by two coordinates: the center of the village, highlighted by the church, and the center of the household, marked by the house.

Moreover, the chapter traces the evolution of the housing program in the Banat countryside, depending on factors such as center-periphery ratio, the activities that are locally practiced, the economic situation of the area, the relationship with the civilizations that transited or occupied the area, the geographical position, the relationship with the local and national power, etc.

The **Habsburg** administration visibly shaped both the mentality of the population in the area and the image of the built environment, through partial or complete regularization of their structures. Following the methods applied during the colonization, the resulting built mass received a rather generic component: imported typologies (the baroque house), which successfully managed to determine a coherent built content, which eventually became local, only to be replaced again over time with generic house typologies, like the Mediterranean type, the secluded house, the ascalar volume, etc. If the form was well assimilated initially – it produced variation and became a melange of the place -, within the second "implantation" of generic architecture, the built environment no longer found its unity. Throughout the first models, quality was born through the honesty of materials, the form that was adapted to the place, the cohesive built background, repetition and variation, while the new ones are wasteful, subjective, unable to satisfy physical or aesthetic needs besides representation, stature and decoration. Both now and then, form is an expression of societal needs.

Throughout history, the **house** has oscillated between being an individual shelter, a supplier for the military sector, a place tailored to the craft, a support for the cohabitation of several generations, a showcase for the display of possessions and social status.

Considering that the ultimate goal of dwelling is to facilitate the understanding of one's own human nature by defining and experiencing their personal space, in which turning inward liberates, the chapter also discusses notions such as dwelling without meaning, non-dwelling, external dwelling or poetic dwelling.

"Man identifies himself with his home. He projects himself in it [...] we can express the relationship between man and the house by saying that it is embodied in it. Through this close connection, the house becomes an expression of human nature." [25]

4. PRESENCE/BELONGING/ABSENCE

Thanks to man, space becomes place, and thanks to tailored space, man can find existential anchoring. The relationship between man and space is bidirectional, the two components need each other in order to fulfill themselves. Seen in a first direction, this relationship provides clues regarding man's existence in space - the way he perceives it, uses it, influences it, etc., and therefore launches the first arguments for imagining an experienced space in relation to the human being.

"I lend my emotions and associations to the space, and the space lends me its aura, which sustains and emancipates my thoughts and perceptions. An architectural work is not experienced as a series of isolated images on the retina, but through its complete, integrated material, through its spiritual essence." ([26])

The viewer enriches space with meaning by his mere **presence**, both physical and emotional. Through his body, mobile or stationary in space, man constantly defines and redefines a series of relationships with the surrounding space. It relates to space - through stature, height, width, he sees it, he touches and experiences it, constantly projecting himself in space. Through this affinity towards space and its appropriation, man gets to transform into his own space, to feel one with it.

As true existence in this complex world, man relates to spaces and places at different scales, coming to assimilate a complex, interpenetrated, landscape and built, stretched and contained, visible and sensorial picture. Alone or as part of a community, man can be inside or outside, above or below, behind or in front, towards or from, or a combination of these – in what space is concerned.

Today, man's relationship with the natural environment has become one of superiority, of constantly measured forces, in which the ratio between what he takes and what he gives is a selfish one.

Consciously or not, man relates to the surrounding environment through *use, observation, reflection, understanding, implementation* [27], which all determine a personal knowledge of place, by activating the body, mind and emotions, as tools. Use, observation, understanding are interdependent dimensions of bodily perception and psychological filtering, which paint a layered and at the same time personal reality, which is constantly refreshed.

Use recalls the way in which man gets to know space, through different moments that characterize the way in which life takes place: approach, arrival, access, encounter, clarification and validation - a complex process, irreducible (only) to motor behavior, sensory impressions, emotional or logical understanding; this process trains memory, orientation and identification [28];

Observation/perception discusses the way in which man meets the world around him through senses, through constant self-projection and the influence of previous experiences. The real power of observation is to give birth to connections, firstly implicit, hidden in the depths of the human mind, then explicit, revealing, visible to the rest of the world. Man reads the place through observations, experiments and senses, channels that intertwine and complement each other in order to render a complex image of the environment. Thus, he accumulates a lot of information, which coexists in a grouped way somewhere in the subconscious and relates over time. Once seen again, revisited or remembered, this information creates references, sedimentation, and thus trains and refines the perceptive capacity. What man knows influences what he perceives.

Within *observation*, notions such as the supremacy of the visual and the encouragement of the senses as means of connection (Sartre, Merlau Ponty, Pallasmaa), the body as a perceptive

mechanism, the remembered place (as resonance), the senses and the characteristics of space, movement, dynamics and rhythm are being discussed, and also particular situations like walking and dancing.

Perception does not (only) correspond to sensory information, but it is based on a prior knowledge (*precognition*) of the things *themselves*. [29] So far, only Gestalt theory has managed to explain how precognition works - the knowledge prior to physical perception, based on the laws of visual organization. Although each person has its own sensitivity to the outside world, its own desires and curiosities, there are some generally accepted rules that organize and influence the way in which perception happens. The psychology of perception is shaped by empirical, universal experiences that stand the test of time, as opposed to style or preferences, which fluctuate. Theorists such as Rudolf Arnheim, Ernst Gombrich, Christian Norberg Schulz, J.J. Gibson developed theories that are related to the psychology of perception, its visual character, which, together with the Gestalt theory, explain the way in which sight groups, orders and completes missing information, based on the characteristics, position, proximity of perceived elements.

Understanding appears as an event, as an answer to the questions that are inherent to place, which is seen as a manifestation of the lived world - a term defined by Husserl (world of life) to describe the concrete, spatial world, experienced prior to knowledge, known as what allows us to experience: everything that nature offers, including the organized structures built by man (settlement, house, etc.). The term defines a natural, precognitive, tangible experience for anyone - we live around these perceptions before having our own analytical approach to them, be it objective or subjective. Perhaps the most important thing is that an experience of this type, prior to knowledge, is focused on quality, so the lived world has meaning and deserves to be mentioned in the search for essence in this study.

Although it is an extremely complex process, understanding involves order: visual information, relationships, hierarchies, etc. Man cultivates and sharpens this ability gradually through thoughts, experiences, senses, projecting the self in various poses, as in a simulation, constantly redefining his relationship with the environment. **Philosophy** is used at this point of the argument as a tool to facilitate the total understanding of place by introducing the following terms and methods, considered eloquent in painting a total qualitative image: lived space, experienced space, phenomenology.

Understanding starts from the large **scale** of the landscape, treats the human condition and then discusses the qualitative, philosophical understanding of space, by listing the relationships between man and space, between space and place, from Aristotle to today. Over time, the **space-place-body** relationship had the most varied meanings: if once place was in space, another time space was in place; if one time the body was in place, another time the body was place. In this long relationship, place was first stripped of individuality, reduced to emptiness, and then re-individualized: closed space (Aristotle), void, dimension and extension (Philoponus), part of the infinite universe (Renaissance), subordinated to space (from Aristotle to Newton, Locke and Leibnitz), rematerialized void (Descartes), mere site (Leibnitz), identity of position, point (Kant), body (as a place) in space, with power of orientation (Kant), intimate immensity of the psyche (Bachelard), comfortable and familiar (Bachelard), heterotopia (Foucault), place-as-event (Derrida), built space (Derrida), female body (Irigaray), dwelling, proximity and appropriation (Heidegger), scene for the revelation of Truth (Heidegger), smooth, regional space (Deleuze, Guattari), individualized through heterogeneous (Deleuze and Guattari).

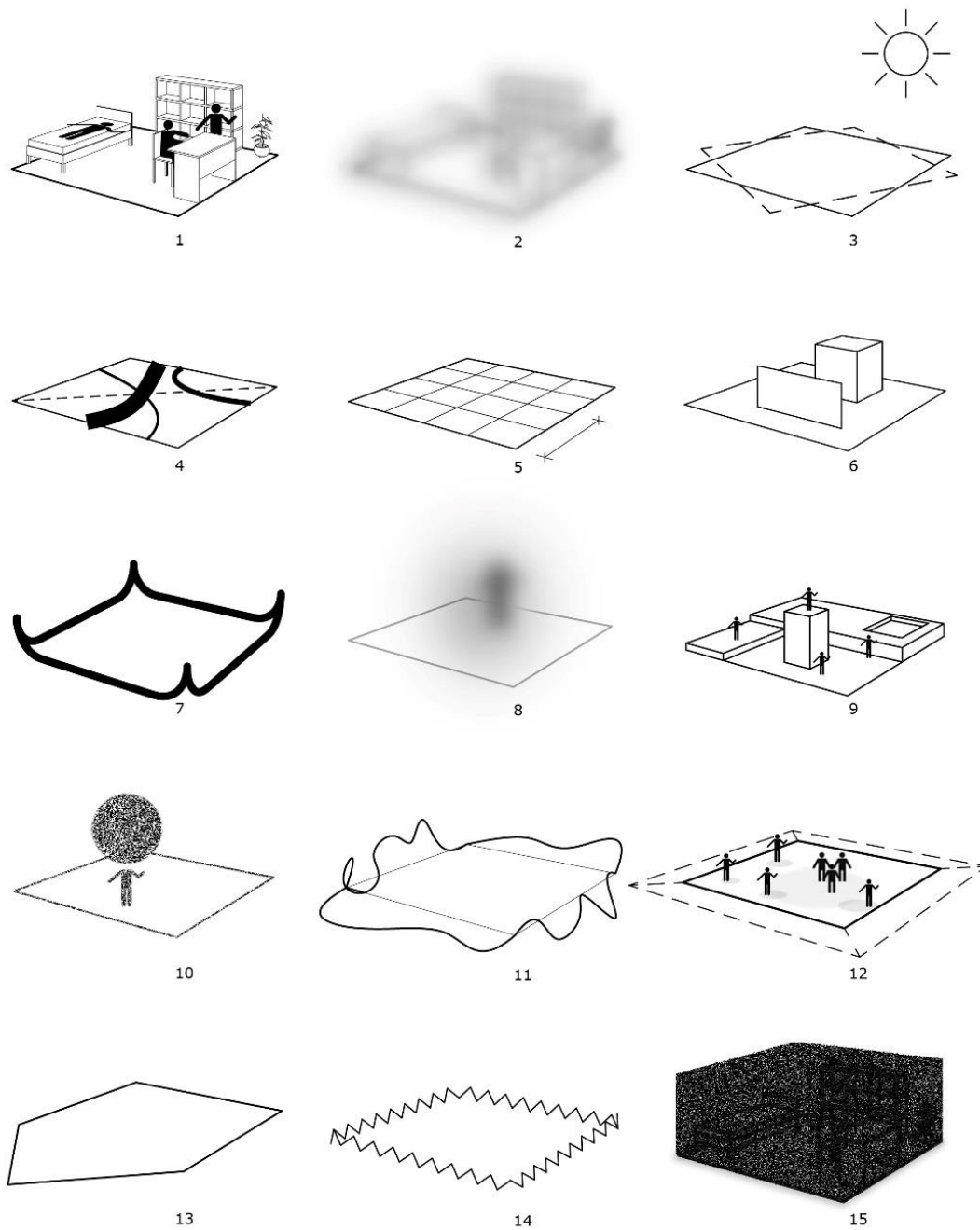


Fig. 3 Types of spaces and their characteristics, as perceived by man

1. Action space 2. Diffuse space 3. Oriented space 4. Hodological space 5. Mathematical space 6. Space as sequence 7. Container space 8. Man as spatial being 9. Position space/point space 10. Imagination space 11. Heterotopic space 12. Smooth space 13. Mythical space 14. Sensory space 15. Night space

5. CORRELATIONS

During the chapters "Place", "Dwelling" and "Presence", theories from the spheres of architecture, philosophy, psychology have been compared, which inevitably determined interactions, overlaps, contradictions, tensions or consensus, around a series of keywords, which ordered them thematically: **current** (regarding today's current situation), **man** (the multitude of roles, perceptions and relationships), **nature**, **place**, **dwelling**, **building** (both as an object and as a process), **form** and **general** (different views). These formed a circular matrix, which allows a quick visualization of connections and delimitations, of constants and discrepancies. As a result of these relationships, interferences and projections, the man-place-object relationship gained both context and qualitative possibilities, inspiration for new hierarchies.

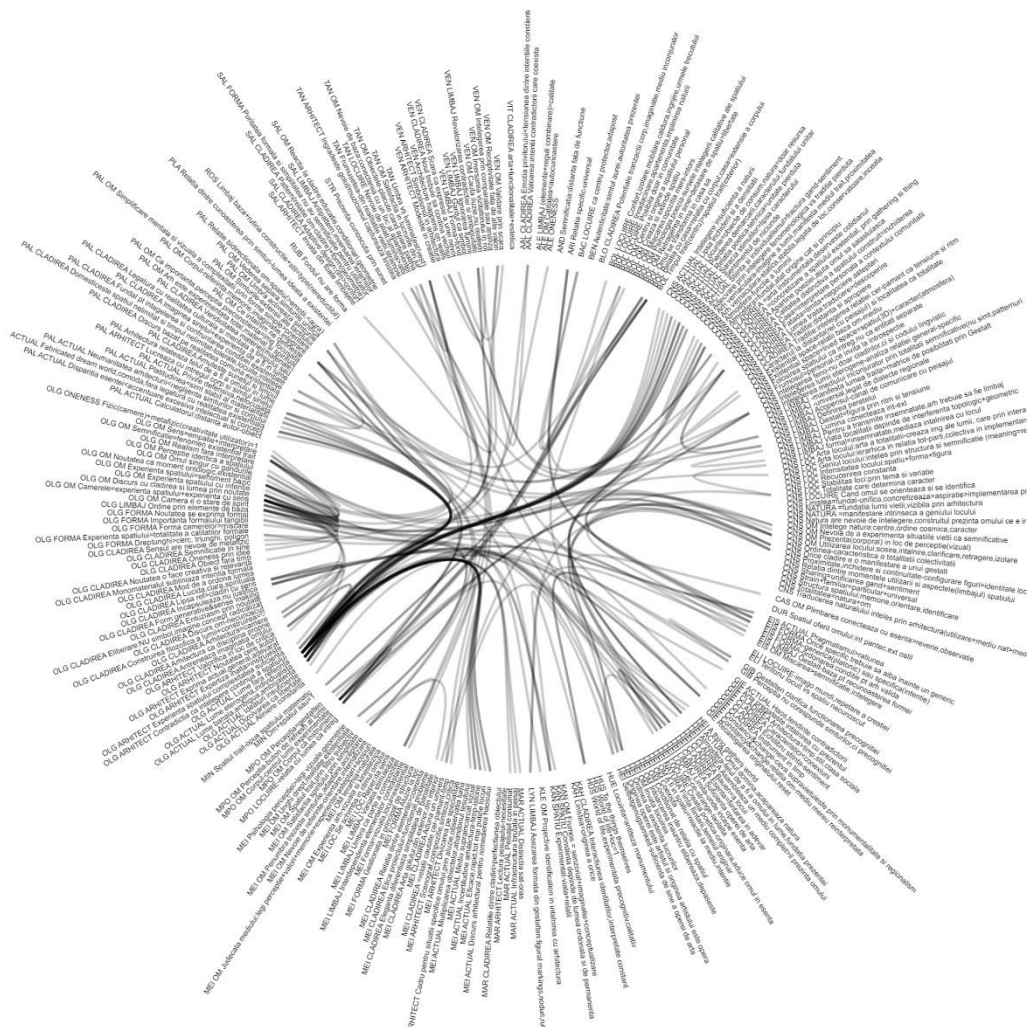


Fig. 4 Visualization of theory correlation, each organised by „AUTHOR.THEME important idea”

Man-place

The agreement according to which man always relates to his space is a common one. Place is not only a sum of conditions in which life takes place, but it also manifests existential meaning, which relates to the human totality (physical + emotional). Thanks to man, space becomes place, and thanks to his space, man can find existential anchorage, sought-after belonging. The two notions are interdependent, generating a symbiosis of mutual fulfillment.

Man relates to space both through his body and through his mind, both physically, emotionally and imaginatively, constantly redefining himself in this relationship.

Approach, arrival, access, encounter, clarification, validation, are all instances of the use of space, physical and psychological, through which man projects himself and knows his space, internalizing it. According to Norberg Schulz, these moments of use are structured by memory, orientation and identification.

Perception is a tool for "weighing" space that is specific to man, which trains the senses, the imagination, the body and its movement in order to understand it. Thus, understanding is hereby considered as a supreme condition of the relationship with space, which determines unlimited possibilities of qualitative interaction between the understood man and the understood space.

Over time, the man-place relationship had the most varied meanings: if one time the body was in place, another time the body was place; if once the main tool for "measuring" space was the body, other times it was provided by the human mind. As a general observation, the interdependent human-space relationship is always renegotiated; space belongs to man's nature and man belongs to space - two conditions that speak of *being in space* or *having space*. A first identified **interaction** between the two components was that of Platonic space, characterized by the relationship between the ideal world of existence and the senses. Aristotle defined closed space, which contains the moving body, to which it refers through pairs of the horizontal-vertical, up-down type. For the first time, Epicurus imagined space as defined by rooms, correlated to the notions of transient-occupant, temporary-permanent, in-between, a preview of current theories about space, which see it as a choreographic collection of rooms, a pure experience through its very organization and atmosphere, where relationships are more important than concepts or the environment (Olgiati, Pezo von Ellrichsausén). Philoponus speaks of spatial extension as the essence of space, which gives place to the body, and bodily extension, which supposes occupied place in space - similar to Bollnow's perception, according to which man creates and expands space, strongly related to his state of mind. Neoplatonists, medieval theologians, Renaissance cosmologists, physicists and some philosophers of the 17th century, all reduce space to its quantitative character, eliminating part of the quality of experience by ignoring the human body.

A key moment in the **man-place** relationship occurs with Kant's transfer of the notion of space to the human mind, which belongs to an a priori intuition and relationship. Space becomes inseparable from the human subject, as part of his cognitive apparatus - it belongs to his mind and consciousness, which depend on an ordered world, on permanence. The body thus becomes an intimate tool for knowing and interpreting space, it represents a privileged way to place. Both Husserl and Merleau Ponty perceive the movement of the body as a primary tool in knowing place; the lived body, animator for the lived world, knows movement and also rest (Husserl). More than simple knowledge, for Merleau Ponty, human movement represents a producer of space, the origin of space and its possible connections, whose character is directly determined by expressiveness and orientation. The human body, an instrument of reaction par excellence, is itself an experienced space, with which all spaces can be understood. If this, as an original space, lacks meaning, the surrounding world cannot be understood.

Simmel notes the importance of inter-human relations in the knowledge of space, through space defined by socialization, ideas touched by Minkowski and Durkheim, through the perception of space in close relationship with human behavior. Man is a subject that reacts and interacts, so it can be characterized by will. This space of intention, more than any space of sight, is, in addition to its physical coordinates, one where life takes place, one that is connected to man through relationships. Just as there are different reactions and intentions, there are multiple ways of being in space, multiple variations of the relationship with space. Man is always in space *somehow*.

Heidegger gives an existential quality to space, by perceiving it as a middle ground between mind and body, an essential condition for the emergence of presence. In relation to man, this is the stage for the revelation of the Truth, defined by *gathering* and *closeness*. Man internalizes the exterior through a double process: spiritualization of space and spatialization of the spirit, negotiated through terms such as region, proximity, dwelling, opening, assembly.

Like a first perception of Kantian space as position, Deleuze and Guattari see a human-space relationship mediated by repositioning and occupation.

In opposition to perceptions that are mostly dependent on movement and positioning, Bachelard promotes an intimate relationship between place and man, in which he receives the intensity of experience, reverie, imagination - similar to that defined by Pallasmaa, in which space is known more complexly, through the activation of all the senses, not just sight.

Christian Norberg Schulz brings together phenomenological, existential and psychological perspectives of space in relation to its user, therefore defining a total relationship between the character of the space, met through presence, and the qualitative materialization of space, as an existential response.

In the world of the **Banat** vernacular, man's relationship with place or space is quite strong, often punctuated by the feeling of belonging: people feel proud to be from Banat and are not shy to state or show this. Oftentimes, however, this pride is only a relationship with an outside, a referral to geographical limits, because the relationship with one's own space is more and more misunderstood, more undefined and less qualitative.

The daily experiences of the people of Banat became focused on quantity, which led to the dissolution of presence, lack of self-knowledge, loss of connection with the environment, felt by the entire community. Life continues, but space no longer represents a lived world, it is currently only a viewed one. The mobility, the contact with various cultures, the access to information, the desire to escape, the egocentrism, all led to the complete subordination of space by man and his personal desires. Today, man no longer conveys identity to place, and place no longer conveys identity to man.

The mediator of the relationship between man and place is **dwelling**. The traditional space invites poetic living, while being connected to hidden structures, opposed to simple measurement - linked to the original, authentic construction, which relates sky to earth, man to the world, interiority to exteriority, nature to occupation, etc.

Place-object

The architecture-place relationship has been highlighted over time by reviewing different currents that dealt with "*regionalism*", through a careful response to site and local cultural context. For the most part, they took over local materialities, worked with the existing climate, orientation and specific topography, which they reinterpreted and physically transposed through a new, ordered language. The result, easy to understand from a formal point of view, encompasses a rich understanding and reinterpretation of the essence of the place. Examples of this type (careful object-place relationships) can be seen in Europe – Alvar Aalto, Jorn Utzon in the Nordic countries, Coderch in Spain, Siza in Portugal, Scarpa in Italy, van Eyck, Oud, Bakema in Holland. However, this type of universal-local dialogue is sometimes more visible in developing countries, with a culture that is far away from the linear laws of international style, such as Mexico (through Luis Barragan), Brazil (Oscar Niemeyer), India, Argentina, etc.

For Norberg-Schulz for example, a building that is in place must have familiar attributes, which express the character of the environment, its matrix, as well as the moments of use, in relation to man. Therefore, he defines the *art of place* as an image with meaning, which expresses the essence of the things that surround us and clarifies the interaction with

them through the local-global relationship: a local presentation of universal meanings. It is therefore an art of totality, composed of complete figures, which can be understood in the way in which they manifest Gestalten, rules of spatial organization and perception. The way in which these figures relate depends on the formal implementation of theories, on the very act of building, of existing in a certain way between Heaven and Earth (Norberg Schulz, Heidegger).

Outside of these ideologies, there are contemporary architects who promote architecture as an independent endeavor (Olgiati, Pezo von Ellrichsauen), which is not a result of the place, but even they admit that the final object takes into account the cultural context, more than the built elements from the immediate vicinity.

Place has its own atmosphere, which gives meaning, it makes it unique and memorable. In turn, the built elements, through form, positioning and relationship, determine specific atmospheres, which interact with the one of the place. Place is a world lived in itself, which manifests essence, so that a clear attitude towards it, anywhere between fusion or contrast, determines valuable relationships, which admit controlled hierarchies between place and object. Form-background and tissue-object relationships are essential for the coherent, controlled management of this dialogue.

The transition from the theoretical to the vernacular environment is made due to the latter's quality of being based on what already exists in place, which collectively admits the object, generating an example of functional place-object symbiosis. Vernacular architecture was at the origin of the art of the place, as the art of totality, through the building's life span that was related to use, the respect of local conditions, the ecological character, the instinctive formality, the representation of identities and the strengthening of belonging, the sincere and poetic expression of everyday moments. If until recently the built environment of the vernacular was based on the local in terms of methods and materials, which connected primary structures of existence and generated perceptible character and ease in continuity, today, paradoxically, the built environment is "reinvented" through inappropriate additions, badly scaled imports, flashy details and materials. For the most part, the rural environment of Banat is facing the *loss of place*, because of the interventions of the last decades in the built environment; in some places though, fragments of respectful reporting to the existing natural and built environment can still be found.

By understanding this phenomenon, the actions and attitudes behind it, trust in professionals, appropriate images and also changed mentalities can happen.

Schulz believes that the existential purpose of architecture is to transform the site, the land with no character, into place, i.e. to discover possible meanings present in the given environment. Even those who choose not to prioritize place as the source of a new project, do not contradict this belief.

Man-object

The relationship between man and the architectural object can be explained through **perception** and **dwelling**. Man perceives the built element through the vastness of his senses: through visual laws, through touch, sound and smell, through movement. The image of any architectural object has an inherent language that obeys the laws of perception and that can generate balance, weights, hierarchies, etc. The eye, the camera that perceives the object, can approach it directly or indirectly, straight or winding, so the perception can be static or dynamic. Through Gestalt theories, the image receives perceptible order, the form ensures presence; their relationship with the context determines significance.

To build means to *live*, to accommodate the Fourfold (Heidegger), to position oneself according to the horizontal axis, of perception and internalization, and the vertical axis, of the sky-earth relationship; at the same time, dwelling implies the materialization of an object between Heaven and Earth, its occupation and personalization. For the human being, the house

is both an internal environment, a personal universe, and an external one, in contact with the surrounding environment. It is both local and universal, both unchanged and part of a world that is constantly being redefined.

In the **rural** area, the built object assumed a pragmatic, limited use of local labor and materials. However, the villages, generated through repetition, do not determine a banal image; on the contrary, they determine one in which the rule is clear, that involves variation through repetition, in which the message is easy to understand - a perceptible order, which responds to the primary needs of man, who orients himself according to the **cosmic aspects** that he knows (cardinal points, occupation and edification rites and myths, the importance of the center, the significance of transition zones, etc.) and **aesthetic ones**, even if mostly intuitive (simple shapes, proportions, compositions). This reduction to simplicity, to essence, is an aspect that would be so necessary to rediscover in today's visually oversaturated, unstructured, world.

Learning from the observed environment, by questioning the way one looks at things, represents a slow but refined evolution. In the opposite sense, considering man as a determining factor of the project awakes internal and external relations with the user, the community, the universe. Architecture is ultimately a hierarchy of the parameters that define it, of the complex understanding of place, man and formal language.

A discussion based on thematically ordered keywords

Most of the theorists involved agree on the situation of the **current** environment: a heterogeneous, individualistic, banal, ambiguous and ambivalent world (Olgiati), characterized by chaos and contradiction (Giedion), in which man dominates and captures both nature (Heidegger), which it turns to mere consumed landscape (Marot), as well as the built environment. Thus, a completely manufactured world, comfortable, unrelated to existential reality (Pallasmaa) results. The lack of humanity and the flatness that characterize it are due to the neglect of the senses, the presence of man in general and a weakened sense of materiality (Pallasmaa). Today, places have become simple tools of consumption, governed by the feeling of nowhere, by the lack of character, clear demarcation and cohesive background (Norberg Schulz) – fewer and fewer breaks in a visually oversaturated environment (von Meiss).

In what concerns **man** in the relationship with his space, the perspectives become more nuanced. If Venturi believes that man seeks illusion, in opposition to the realism of everyday life, Olgiati states that the experience of space is a realistic one, without interpretation, a basic feeling, in which man is alone with his thoughts. Both Heidegger and Bollnow agree that man is determined by the relationship he has with his space, but also with his peers, with whom he coexists. He learns to live (Heidegger) and can only do so within a community (Bollnow).

Connection to a place of belonging, to the satisfaction of daily use, is another basic human need, brought up by Tanizaki, to which Westerners such as Norberg Schulz also adhere, who believe that living occurs when man orients himself and identifies himself. Venturi also makes a vague allusion to man's openness to his peers, by suggesting receptivity to the values of others. When this receptivity becomes validation through scale (Venturi), the opposite of living in community appears, as competition.

Many times in recent philosophical perception, man has been perceived both as center and origin of space, he who creates and expands space by himself (Merleau-Ponty, Bollnow). If sometimes the body was in place, other times the body was place - space belongs to the nature of man and man belongs to space.

Von Meiss, Ching and Norberg Schulz all observe that man needs references to be able to orient himself and to internalize experiences that happen inside space, while Olgiati theorizes an autonomous space, which lives through its very architecture (form, sequence, experience), considering that today people no longer have common ideals and references. Automatically, the lived space in the first case is subjective, and in the second, objective, perceived equally by all

users due to its purely architectural expression.

If for von Meiss **place** is in itself a landmark that gives meaning, for Olgiati or Pezo von Ellrichsauen it is perceived more as a cultural background than the immediate neighboring physical reality. Although Olgiati's theory talks about the sufficiency of architecture, the result ends up having a carefully studied relationship with the landscape and surroundings. Even if self-sufficient, it belongs to the place. Even when it is not the main purpose of the solution, place is an important aspect, always a provider of meaning.

Perhaps the most extensive treatment of place is made by Norberg Schulz, who perceives it as an intense totality that determines character and involves constant reconquest.

As for **nature**, it is considered original ground (Heidegger), a foundation of the world of life, made visible through architecture and an intrinsic manifestation of the genius loci (Norberg Schulz). The latter is of the opinion that nature needs understanding, so that what is to be built presents what has been understood to man, an aspect also observed by Marot. Nature has the ability to be a participatory organism, never a result or an omission.

The process of **building** is in itself a way of ordering the world, through basic elements (Olgiati), a discourse between man and the unknown, and the experience of space is based on the totality of formal qualities, of sufficient complexity, tangible for man. Olgiati approaches Heidegger and von Meiss through the conviction that the built object has meaning in itself, it attracts and encapsulates a universe, and departs from those who see the built object as a direct result of the place, of the community context, of the direct translation of the landscape (Norberg Schulz, Marot). The building as a language is an idea present in most theories: it must be lucid, clear (Olgiati), it must use scale as a means of expression (Venturi), it must be simple through elegance (von Meiss), it must use the possible expressivity of materials (Olgiati, Pallasmaa, Tanizaki).

In the process of construction, both Giedion and von Meiss emphasize **relationships**, considering that they gather a universe and determine coherence. For Giedion, the act of building is based on a science-feeling balance, in which connections are more important than the individual characteristics of objects, an act that survives time through constancy and change, through a human-environment relationship that is always interpreted. For their part, Marot explains how the relationships between buildings, understood on the basis of Gestalt principles, lead to the perfection of the object, and Salingeros sees the building as a form+relations fusion. For Pallasmaa, Norberg Schulz and Heidegger, the built environment is a discourse based on shared existential reality, a background for understanding and confronting the human condition in the world.

Both Heidegger and Bollnow perceive **dwelling** as bringing man closer to the essence: it implies rootedness, belonging, the fulfillment of human nature and is truly valued only in the community (Bollnow). It is a relationship with the world as a whole, a mediator between man and place (Merleau-Ponty, Norberg Schulz).

If for Olgiati **form** is the main expression of quality in architecture, through which spatial experiences are defined, movement is determined, novelty and unity are expressed, the rest of the theories discuss it individually: managed by structure, allusion to place (von Meiss), superior to the background (Venturi), generator of intensity and significance of place, together with space and figure (Norberg Schulz). In extreme opposition to Olgiati, Salingeros believes that formal purity and simplicity have no meaning for the user.

Following the overall discussion of the theories, a series of attitudes, projections and relationships, common beliefs regarding the determination and appearance of the quality of the constructed act, can be mentioned.

Order is a structuring factor, easily noticeable by anyone. Moreover, ordered places and objects are perceived by users in a pleasant way, because they are easy to understand and

have a stable character, which provides security. Humans perceive landmarks much more easily, so the orderly nature of the environment favors orientation and identification, optimal and meaningful use. In the same way, structured, clear images naturally attract through intentional and formal relevance, originating from an understood environment. When the order, the balance of the space is deconstructed, man notices immediately; this aspect can be transposed in a positive way by using contrast or contradiction to emphasize order. In relation to order, chaos is often an avoided condition, less so in the case of a controlled approach, of the order in chaos type.

The **simplicity** of pure forms translates a complexity of perception, relationships and meaning. Most of the authors of the above theories, and of theories in general, opt for the transmission of messages with a cosmological, existential, social, political charge, through compositions made up of simple forms, which directly dialogue. By observing the local built environment, I noticed that people prefer complicated shapes, because of the fear of having a solution that is "too simple", "banal", a solution that lacks imagination, which anyone can do or have. Contrary to this perception, simple forms hide a deep meaning, which has survived the test of time and stylistic models, and therefore are the most difficult to use in order to express an idea. They elegantly voice the current through the general and favor the understanding of the complete message of architecture for the viewer.

Olgiati emphasizes perhaps the most heavily on the need for buildings to be excessively lucid, to have logical **clarity** - spiritual or metaphysical meaning, which resonates with the mind and soul of those who perceive it. Clarity, simplicity and order favor the perception of an object as a whole, both spatially and ideatically (Alexander, Norberg Schulz, Olgiati): *"a building reflects unity if there is a relationship between the contained rooms and the possibilities to expand (yourself) in the metaphysical domain."* ([30])

Both the building and the interior space must stimulate creativity and instigate the viewer's connection; in order for this to happen, knowledge of human psychology is important: the moment when introspection connects with the environment, meaningful places appear. The idea of the project, related to the experience and connection of the space, determines the existence of unity, supported by all the components of the project.

The **datum**, as defined by Ching, is a unifying gesture that keeps heterogeneous elements together. Considering that the world we live in today shows less and less common beliefs, finding means that resonate with a variety of users is more and more challenging. For this purpose, exploring the datum could bring solutions and new interpretations to the imagined project - how do you hold things together, how do you generate totality?

The town needs **theme and variation** in order to ensure stability, cohesion and manage the growth of place. The theme clarifies the relationship with the whole, and variation relies on Gestalt theories to retain its identity despite visible changes. Also, **tension** is a phenomenon inherent in any creative act, a dimension of what is built, which can submit character. It is expressed in the earth-sky relationship and it is applicable to both natural and built environment, determining relationships with the existing context.

The tension between conscious intentions and unconscious preferences has been an important theme for Aalto, who opened the discussion about the role of dichotomies, contradictions and oppositions, in the emergence of quality: *"a work of architecture is great precisely because of the opposing and contradictory intentions and allusions that it manages to merge. A tension between conscious intentions and unconscious attractions is necessary in order for the work to open the emotional participation of the observer. In any case, a simultaneous resolution of the oppositions must be achieved"* ([31])). They intrigue, they stimulate through abstract juxtapositions, such as the present and the absent, the near and the distant, the felt and the imagined, or even through physical characteristics of the spaces: high-low, small-large, textured-smooth, etc. - a constant flow of the human mind, driven by the

possibilities of imagination and repeated attempts at conceptualization.

Architecture is a manifestation of relationships more than a concept, within which **allusion** is always present. By its simple presence, it can refer to location, climate, culture, society, individual or collective through reinterpretation and abstraction, procedures that provide psychological complexity to the spatial process. Just as the allusion conveys a message, the passage of time, treated as an anticipated expectation, can initiate a qualitative past-present-future dialogue. For an element to become something, patience is needed, an aspect with which the present time, dynamic and tireless, is sparing.

The parallel between time-marked objects and new ones can be seen through the East-West contrast, through the theories of Tanizaki and Olgiati - the visible, appreciated signs of the past (faded colors, mono-colors) versus the novelty, which ensures the relevance of the object (the new as a structuring principle). The patina of the passage of time also brings into question the materiality, which gives truthfulness to matter and tells stories about age and human use. Today's buildings no longer exude this truthfulness, which leads to a lack of stimuli in the built environment, to an increasingly flat world.

Also within Japanese culture, the importance of light is emphasized; in the process of dwelling, it is considered the strongest ally. The light-shadow relationship, the preference and search for shadow, as well as materialized light, are all themes that are treated by the architecture of this environment - a direct expression of tradition, of the old-new relationship. Shadow activates senses, ambiguous depth and distance, and invites peripheral (unconscious) vision and tactile fantasy (Tanizaki, Pallasmaa), while strong light homogenizes and dissipates the sense of being in space (Pallasmaa's homogeneity of space as constraint versus homogeneity of material as unifying gesture of Olgiati).

Architecture is not an isolated artifact, it trains perception and provides a horizon for understanding the world - an interaction that strengthens the human sense of reality. Mono or **multisensory spaces** that invite a polyphony of senses redefine limits and relationships and constantly train people, connecting them with place. For example, the space of the forest has a calming character through connection, despite the lack of landmarks and possibilities of orientation. Many times, this stillness becomes the very goal of architecture - the palpable muted in matter, space and light, a fundamental experience where time and space merge, and attention is directed to solitude, solely to man and his thoughts. As a background, **silence** unifies and concretizes a whole, which makes it a secret aspiration of qualitative architecture (Kahn).

In recent times, the increasingly present discussion about sensible aspects has led to reimagining architecture in relation to the intellect - a total experience of space, place and meaning, by engaging the user's curiosity and imagination; this new type of architecture is defined by gradations, reflections, juxtapositions, densities, sensations, therefore defining a new sensibility, superior to pure perceptual experience: *"works of art address the intellect and conceptualizing capacities, instead of targeting bodily senses and responses"*. ([32]).

Through the aforementioned keywords, the theories discuss the man-place-form relationship in a comparative way, highlighting valuable principles, which target general understanding: of the place, of man, of the architectural object and its form, and, more importantly, of the complex relationships that can arise between them. Their implementation can result in an ordering of the place, a more pronounced belonging, a grounded awareness of what is valuable, a gradual recovery of the place - a test worth applying to the current world.

In the end, the principles that can be extracted from this comparative discussion represent starting points for the individual, be it professional or not, for personal knowledge, evolution and responsible management of the built environment; these are not universal truths,

but codes with nuances and possibilities.

The **Banat** area is a favorable environment for practical references in the theoretical discussion, because they can elucidate the attitudes and gestures behind its deterioration and inspire diverse possibilities for the adequacy of the new. The situation in Banat is a perfect place for testing these theories, because of the absence of clear urban planning rules, of openness to the appropriation of guidelines and their implementation, of understanding the importance of individual actions in the community.

As a natural **conclusion** of this discussion, architecture should take into account the following: function, comfort, experience, it should be an existential mediator, it should concretize tension, incite imagination and emotion, provide a setting for movement and provide orientation, it should define lived space, train perception, memory and imagination, materialize ideas of an ideal life, remember and reinvent its user, reconcile one's self with the world, synthesize universal attitudes in place, etc. A one-size-fits-all solution is not an option; these characteristics are the result of a personal understanding and interpretation of the man-place-object relationship, within which the architect generates his own meaningful building hierarchies through dependencies and relationships.

The physical image, made possible by architecture, is a complex sum of several factors – cultural, social, local, administrative, ethnic, personal – understood and transposed from one world to the other. In order to be able to manage this complexity, the image needs structures on which it can be based on, which ensure a minimum common language, variation and distinct qualitative instances.

The Gestalt theory has established certain rules of vision, which, once known, can actively participate in the process of form-finding; they can give meaning to the built object and mediate the encounter with the place.

As I mentioned in the „Atmosphere” chapter, the refinement of the space is supported by a specific atmosphere, supported by all the elements that define that space. This type of space has a clear identity and becomes easily internalized by its direct and indirect users.

6. THE VGB NUCLEUS – THE BANAT MOUNTAINSIDE

The chapter analyzes a local situation, found in the nucleus formed by Văliug, Gărâna and Brebu Nou, from a historical and factual point of view, in order to initially create an easily understandable background. Then, the study focuses on understanding the specific phenomena of this place, which led to its preservation as a qualitative totality, directly influencing the image and dynamics of the built environment, and on presenting an example of built insertion into the existing fabric, which would support and contribute to the qualitative discussion in the area.

As for their appearance, the 3 settlements represented the late **colonization** of the Habsburg Empire in the Banat area - romanians, austrians and germans were brought to Văliug in 1720 and germans and austrians were brought in Gărâna and Brebu Nou in 1828.

The area that accommodated them turned out to bear **tough** conditions (limited resources and possibilities, poor accessibility, hard work, enclosed universe), so that after about 5 years large movements of population began, which decisively influenced the image of the nucleus until today: dissipation in the country, emigration, some returns, annual visits, a true dynamic between the place of departure and the selected, better place. The area is marked by a constant movement of the population, a constant coming and going that has become emblematic of diversity and multiculturalism. Today, it is rather positively perceived, as a shape giver over time and an attractor of the area. The few hundred pems that were installed in the area by the Habsburg administration turned into several thousands over time and then disappeared almost completely, as a result of the war, deportation, migration. In recent history, their relatives have

resumed contact with the area, through repeated visits, contacts and local investments.

The Kirchweih (chirvai) **celebration** still animates the place in October, with popular costumes and specific traditions: the religious service, taking down, carrying and decorating the tree, walking the tree through the village to the town hall, etc. - a partial reference to the past, which coexists with the new manifestations of the place.

In the evolution of the place, the road construction between Văliug and Gărâna in 1855, as well as the openness of the locals to the occasional accommodation of tourists since around 1900, represented significant moments. Although Văliug was the **first** to be founded in the area (almost 100 years before the other settlements) benefitting from a better connection with the surrounding, more developed world, the phenomena linked to the communities of Gărâna and Brebu were the ones that opened the subject of controlled transition of value, with visible effects in the image of today's built environment.

Since the beginning of the population **exodus** in the 80s, the area has responded punctually and varied: new phenomena and connections appeared, new temporary residents, multiple activities, which left their mark in different ways on the 4 localities - Văliug has become a satellite for Reșița and an attractor for young people from the neighboring towns, Gărâna has reinvented itself as a cultural, experimental pole, Brebu hosts relaxing and outdoor activities, and Lindenfeld, the completely abandoned village, attracts tourists with its mysterious character.

Today, the **houses** mainly belong to people from neighboring towns who come here on vacation, that form a small permanent intellectual community who has invested in services and an even smaller number of Germans who have kept or re-acquired their properties over time, which they visit annually - a certain social category, which appreciates living and seeks refuge, escape. This social network, based on the redefinition of a community, presents a refined method of taking possession of the place and managing its image in a controlled collective manner over time.

The structure of place looks at the three localities in parallel - landscape, relationship with the surrounding environment, the scenographic route, the connection with the main road, the access and bifurcation points, the "events" that occur in these key points (temporary functions that marks the place), plan footprints (figure-background, tissue-object, density), the spatial organization and the particularities related to the structure of the built environment: planimetry, center, specifics of the parcel, position of the house in relation to the front, facade, etc.



Fig. 2 Street level perception; built rhythm: 1 – Văliug, 2 – Gărâna, 3 – Brebu Nou; source: own photographs

The "*Phenomena*" chapter aims to identify specific aspects that have contributed to preserving today's unitary image and which, understood, could be inserted into the universal

matrix of value, with which they generate further discussions, tensions, polemics. Some of them are "The element of surprise", "The dynamic colonization", "The image of the German in place", "Interference and import", "Celebration as a common space", "The new actors of the place", "The local brand and the relationship with tourists", "The function of the house - from pragmatic to conceptual". [33], [34]

"*The surprise element*" discusses the way in which Gărâna became the engine of the area, although Văliug appeared earlier and benefited from certain facilities, as well as about the dynamics and relations of the 3 localities over time.

"*The dynamic colonization*" discusses the intense phenomenon of population movement in the area, from the Habsburg colonization to today's constant depopulation and repopulation, with its inherent nuances and influences.

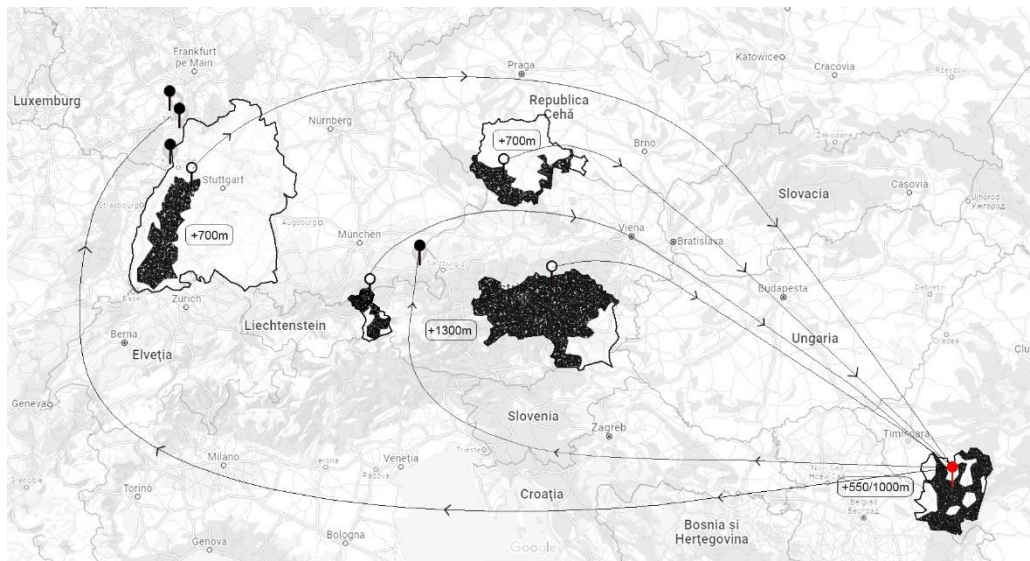


Fig. 6 Origin and destination in local people's movement dynamic

"*The image of the German in place*" presents the perception and interethnic, double-sided relations over time.

"*Interference and import*" follows the way in which the area was occupied, the places of origin and the places of emigration, as well as the cultural and architectural interference along the way - imported models and styles, materialized in the first phase through generic architecture, which ended up determining the genius loci; also, this chapter identifies present built typologies in the rural environment of the colonists' origins, as well as relationship typologies, as an example.

"*Celebration as a continuous common space*" shows how the appetite for celebration translates today and represents a natural, unifying characteristic through the Jazz Festival and the cultural reverberation it creates in the area.

"*The new actors of the place*" brings into discussion the new type of owners, those who bought properties in the area after 1989 and represent the great mass of local population today.

"*The local brand and the relationship with tourists*" explores the way in which the touristic component contributed to the growth and negotiation of the quality of place.

"*Function of the house*" proposes a comparative analysis of the floor plan of the house, between the accommodation of some basic pragmatic needs, up to those of the installation and the comfort needed by the new owners. This approach is applicable on two different scales, that of the home that has kept its function, becoming a holiday home, or the home that has become an accommodation unit, which has involved more extensive interventions to accommodate the new function and ensure the necessary space, illustrated by 5 different examples to cover them.

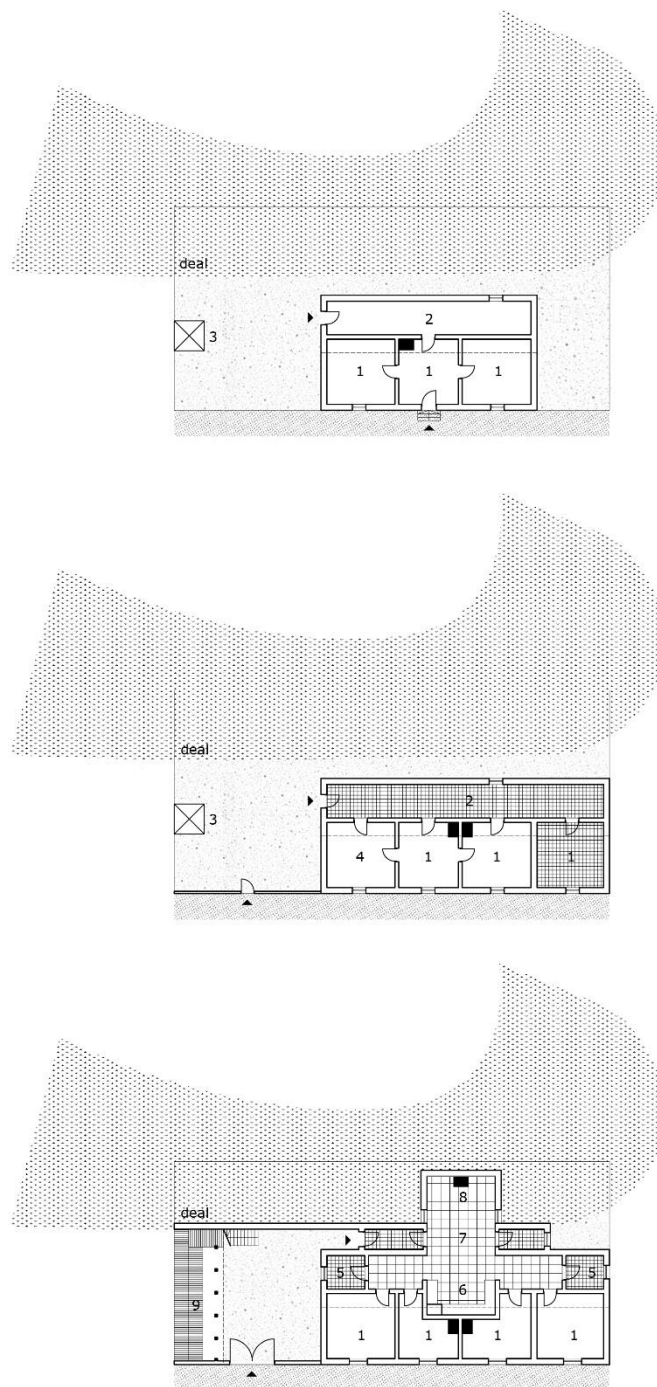


Fig. 3 House in Vāliug, arch. R.R. – 1987, temporary living;
 1. Room/bedroom 2. Kitchen 3. Rudimentar toilet 4. Storage area 5. Bathroom 6. Cooking recess 7. Daytime area 8. Fireplace
 9. Firewood storage

The "*Implant as an experiment – the Vāliug house*" exemplifies an attempt to insert new architecture into the built fabric in Vāliug: a vacation house, built on a vacant lot, connected to the vibration and particularity of the place. The presentation of this approach is linear, almost school-like, starting with the site and context study, and touching concepts, relationships and materiality.

7. ADDITIONS

The intuition to identify the Văliug-Gărăna-Brebu nucleus as a valuable one was confirmed by the results of the study, by an atmosphere that persists and redefines characters and attitudes and by numerous qualitative relationships it generated - both locally and universally. Its character was different from the beginning, through the colonization of labor force for the factories in nearby Reșita, in a wild natural environment, with harsh climatic and topographical conditions. Although people have largely adapted to these unfriendly conditions over time, perhaps this very characteristic has led to unity and to the preservation of local specificity, as intact as possible.

The areas of **origin** of the dwellers (Bohemia, Austria, Germany and even Romania) had different specificities, unified at the time of relocation by the equality of Baroque Bohemian inspired houses, that were adapted to this particular place, and the relationship, sometimes careful (Gărăna), sometimes indifferent (Brebu), to the local topography. Unlike other examples of colonization in the Banat area, where foreign populations were accommodated in relation to the Romanian population, here the majority of the implanted population was of German origin.

The **character** of this specific area is perhaps most intensely shaped by the movement of the population, to, in and from place. After the Second World War, an exodus to the west began, that was amplified almost to the point of depopulation after the fall of communism. Thus, local dwellers left for Germany, created consistent diasporas there, that proved to be insufficient in order to recreate the atmosphere left behind; some return recurrently, others permanently, generating, together with the inherent dynamics of the place, a complex melange of mostly temporary residents: commuters, emigrants, new-type residents, returning retired residents, immigrants that did not adapt to Germany, homesick immigrants, festival tourists, intellectuals with vacation homes, people attracted by the tourism potential, willing to invest in the area, etc.

In the beginning, Romanians and Germans perceived each other with skepticism, but learned to accept and even inspire each other over time; for Romanians, the image of the thorough German became an inspiration, a model of integrity and order, an aspect that attracts and organizes the place even today.

Currently, the actors of the place have diverse origins, but somehow they manage to coexist and gradually redefine a community, whose unwritten rules are respected both by those inside and outside. The tourist-owners after the Revolution, the townspeople who invested in tourism, the participants in the events in this area, all belonging to a certain social stratum, metamorphosed the place by creating a conceptual network, by generating events that gather and invite belonging. Here, the pride of belonging is returned to the community, like when tradition ensured this intimate connection some time ago.

Over time, the **function** of the house has changed, from a purely pragmatic one, that was based on basic family living, to one that is directly related to the variable needs of the new owners. From simple shelter and craft accommodation, the house was firstly improved in order to adapt to the current living conditions, eventually integrating broader functions, characteristic for larger accommodation programmes.

Most of the new homeowners knew the history and particularity of the area, which most of the times represented the very attraction, which was stronger than the individual need for expression; thus, most of the interventions in the built fabric are minimal on the outside and richer on the inside or towards the back of the land, which indicates respect, adequacy and uncovers unlimited possibilities of intervention. In this process, **scale** is a vital tool of relationship management - if, as far as the houses are concerned, it is kept almost unanimously, when function is changed a visible contrast appears, countered by the examples discussed in the analysis.

Celebration, an integral part of this community since the beginning, represented moments of pause within a hard and demanding lifestyle, as well as moments of maximum openness of an autarchic, isolated and skeptical community. The jazz festival and the cultural events that were embraced by the new, constantly redefined society, seem to be a natural continuation of a local need to escape the everyday. This ensures both the reference to a local particularity and the relationship with the universal at the same time, through music and amplitude. The slowed down world, the distant background of the celebration, is now being replaced by effervescence and anticipation.

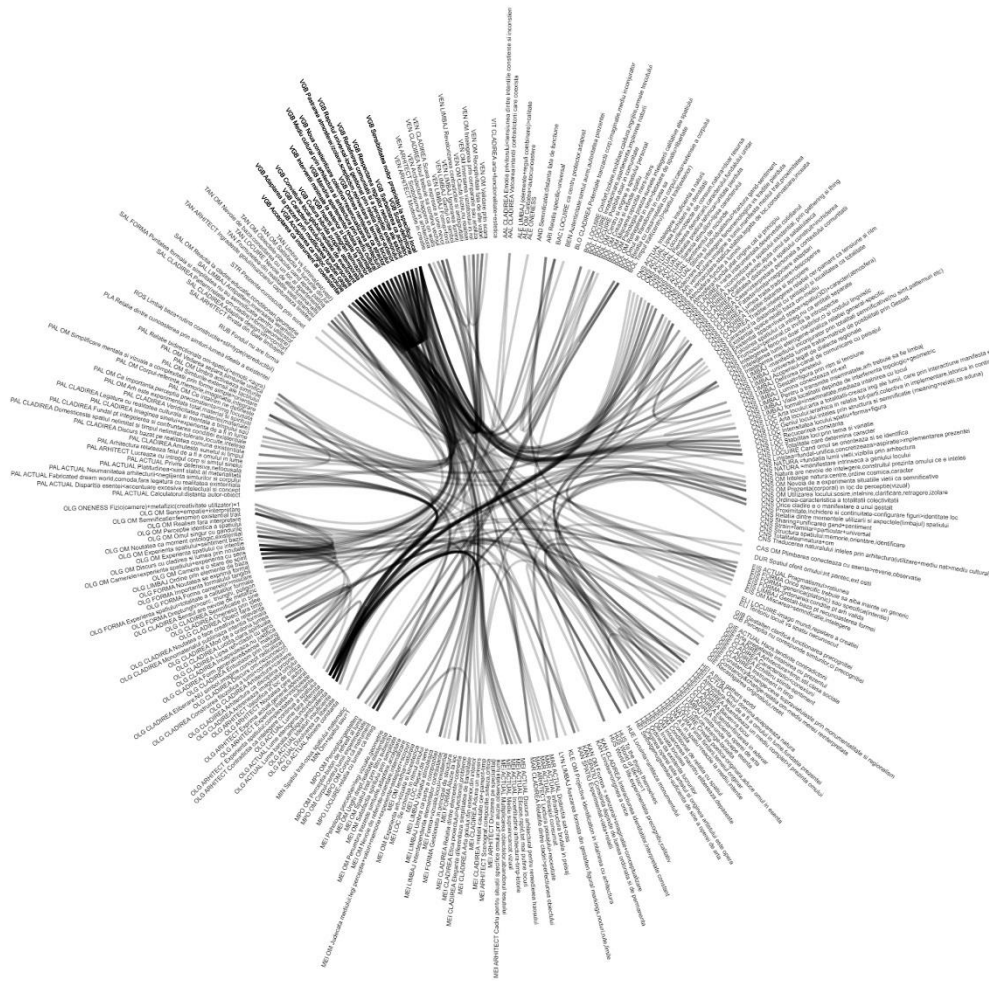


Fig. 8 Visualisation of local additions in the general theory matrix and newly determined relationships, organised by „AUTHOR.THEME important idea” (general theory), VGB.important idea (valuable local phenomena)

The **conclusions** following the study of these local phenomena, all involved in preserving the quality of the surrounding environment, are being summarized through the following ideas: the sensitivity of the new owners to the local specifics, non-invasive insertions and integrations, minimal interventions on the outside and richer ones on the inside, the universal-local relationship, managed through an interior-exterior relationship, respect for the unwritten rules of the village, character of the place equals more than personal expression, adaptation to the present by changing the function of the house, redefinition of the community and the perception of the outside, the pride of belonging that is returned to the community, a new collective awareness, which leads to the resensualization of architecture, cultural environment through architecture and architecture through cultural environment, timeless

hybrid culture, preservation of atmosphere through isolation, skepticism and reinvention in terms of place, acceptance as a tool of coexistence and evolution, local-global coexistence, mediated by event, celebration as a constant activator, the German order as an attractor, the importance of the scale etc.

Once introduced into the matrix of theoretical dialogue, they generate new **connections** with universal qualitative principles, which reflect both the personal, consciously limited character of the place, and their timeless and universal relevance - which once again confirms the fact that vernacular architecture is an image of the world (Schulz). On the one hand, the phenomena are specific to the place in which they appear, on the other, they are linked to various theories, in some cases even opposite, from Norberg Schulz and Pallasmaa, to Venturi and even Olgiati.

For example, it is not surprising that the respectful attitude and sensitivity of the new owners regarding the local specificity finds most links with Norberg Schulz's theory of place; according to it, the surrounding environment is understood through significant totalities, which take into account a set of determining factors of a perceptible character, and place implies constant reconquest: understanding-implementation in repeated rows.

Another possible connection occurs with Heidegger's perception of **man**, namely that *being in space* implies a reaction to the environment, an intention connected to the cultural and mental reality of lived time (Pallasmaa). Likewise, this aspect can be connected to Marot's point of view, according to which the perfection of the object results from the relationships between the buildings.

When talking about **form**, Pierre von Meiss says that it must be an allusion to place – a new possible connection with minimal interventions undertaken in place. These non-invasive insertions and integrations, more visible inside than outside, engage a dialogue with the tangible formality of Olgiati and the modesty of Venturi's "architect".

The interior-exterior relationship that mediates the universal-local relationship in the case of the analyzed nucleus refers directly to Durkheim's dual space, offered to man through a womb-like interior and a hostile exterior, but also to von Meiss, who considers the form to be strictly visual, and the interior place, existential. Considering local character to be superior to personal expression is a provocative opinion, given that it refers to a situation in the Romanian built environment. However, it is valid for much of the environment in this example and carries connections to both Norberg Schulz and Pierre von Meiss. Similarly, the former perceives the building as a personal interpretation of the community context, which through theme and variation gives stability to place, while the latter believes that form must always allude to place, which change in the rhythm of man.

Adaptation to the present by modifying the **function** of the house determines various connections, from Bachelard's dwelling as a protective center, to Bollnow's man as the center and origin of personal space, to Heidegger's conviction that man's turning inward liberates and overcomes, and up to Olgiati's theory in which architecture is an assembly of rooms, different states of mind and meaningful experiences of space.

The pride of **belonging** to a reinvented community is closely related to Heidegger's existential perception of man, as a coexisting entity, and a response to the current situation of the world, considered heterogeneous and individualistic by Olgiati. In the same way, preserving and refining architecture through culture responds to Olgiati's theory, which criticizes the current situation of the world and discusses a necessary duet between classical and philosophical construction in order to define meaningful space. Giedion believes that art prepares the encounter with the present, and the hybrid, timeless culture of the mentioned core confirms this thought.

Celebration as an activator is closely related to a human need of experiencing life's situations as memorable, to the totality of nature-man in this case (Heidegger, Minkowski). In

addition, the immersion of the visitor in the celebratory role, according to Venturi, contributes to its nuances and intensity. According to Heidegger, an atmosphere is a way of being of man in the world, the foundation of his presence, an idea expressed by celebration par excellence.

Norberg Schulz sees **order** as a characteristic of the totality of the community, Eisenman as a necessary condition for a valid architecture, Heidegger as an aspect that gives existence to things, and Olgiati explains how the building is a mechanism that orders the world, via basic elements. It is therefore not surprising that the German order assumed and applied to the lifestyle and the built environment, an action that generated qualitative images that are easy to understand by everyone.

Last but not least, the controlled management of the **scale** of the added or modified object in the built mass led to the perpetuation of a cohesive, structured and adequate image.

All in all, this initially imported environment, although depopulated at some point, has been assumed and continues to grow through cultural redefinition, a timeless approach that brings together the community and the event and directly takes care of the built image. The importance of man in this whole process, and therefore in the man-place-object relationship, is reaffirmed, thus defining new relationships and possibilities. Just as the Romanians finally accepted the colonized population, a fact that led to a symbiosis and growth on both sides, the local population accepted and integrated the townspeople who bought houses for personal or tourist purposes. This phenomenon gave birth to a new type of coexistence, which can bring new opportunities if managed closely, carefully and assumed.

The study of vernacular architecture emphasizes the connection between man and built environment, in both ways: man influences the built environment through additions, and the built environment directly influences the dynamics, the perception and man's use of space.

Both the identified themes in the rural environment of origin, as well as the local attitudes contribute to the shaping of relevant directions, reserved in means and rich in content, for this environment, for this type of tissue, for this type of function.

The perception of the VGB nucleus in a new context, linked to universal ideas, proves that it is not only relevant, but a true example of the reinvention of qualitative totality over time.

8. CONCLUSIONS

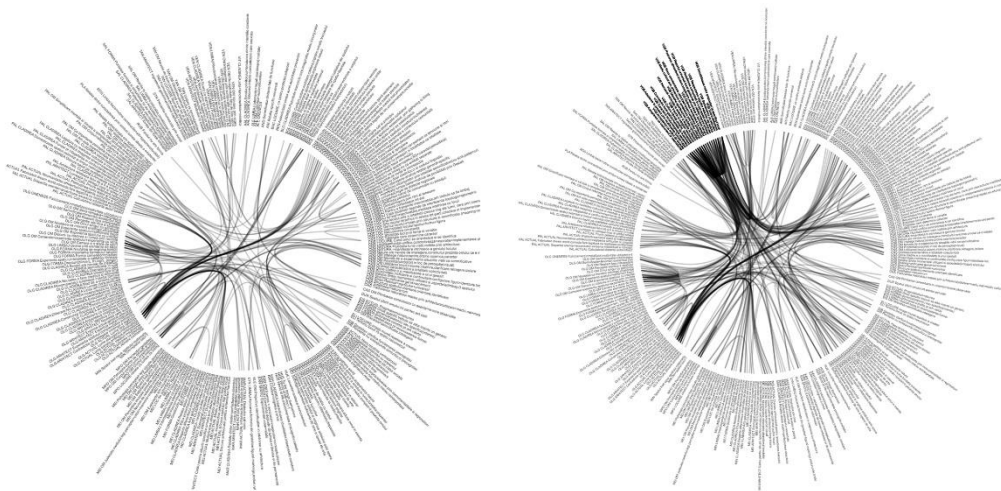


Fig. 9 Parallel view of correlations (left) and additions (right), both universal principles and local phenomena

I stated at the beginning of the thesis that architecture must be contextual by place and autonomous by form in order to generate adequate images that bring together complex totalities, easy to understand at the same time.

After imagining and going through the argumentation, in which universal theories and qualitative phenomena of the precisely identified place were seen together, I would like to reformulate the previously made statement: architecture must be **contextual** by place, **autonomous** by form and **exciting** by its relationship to man.

Contextual doesn't just mean a direct result of place, autonomous doesn't mean simple formalism, and exciting doesn't mean subjectivism.

Contextuality implies a relationship with an existing environment, that involves a specificity of its own: architecture appears *somewhere*, and that somewhere can be more or less expressed in and through architecture. The autonomy of language implies knowledge of visual and compositional laws, an assembly of a meaningful image in an easy-to-understand manner. Exciting for humans means providing a framework that inspires: imagination, dream, memories, orientation, interaction, self-knowledge, sense of belonging.

The **man-place-object** relationship is a good companion in architecture, it allows unlimited references, possibilities and attitudes, both necessary and clarified by an object with meaning. The three components, which in themselves involve complex relationships, can be interpreted subjectively, depending on the intentions, preferences and attitude of the Creator. Architecture is not a predefined sum of stated factors, just as there is no single correct way to operate with them: each Creator interprets possibilities, selects personalized hierarchies and, why not, even ignores some of the terms, without necessarily being doomed to an unsatisfactory result. Geometric abstraction is an aspect that everyone defines according to their own culture and experience, between rationalism and picturesque.

In the first part of the thesis, **value** within this trinome has been defined through a comparative view on thematically arranged architectural theories. The result of this approach was the identification of some common attitudes and principles, direct mechanisms of qualitative access, such as order, variation in theme, careful management of the tissue-object relationship, sensitivity, clarity, unity, etc. In the second part, value, present in place in different co-existing instances, became negotiated through collective feeling and event. This new perspective highlights value from a human perspective, through both the individual and collective ability of man to manage the built mass and to revive qualitative totalities.

The juxtaposition of these two types of values, one theorized and the other negotiated on the spot, determined a new perspective on the universal-local relationship, reaffirming the relevance of rural nuclei and exemplifying the real power of man through community and also through the force of personal example.

If the first chapters offer possible clues regarding the **quality** of the architectural act through language and the way in which man relates to place and understands it through perception, the nucleus comes to dialogue with them mostly from a sociological point of view, of collective relationships that also shape the built environment; by redefining a functional community, the qualitative notion of exchange reappears, as well as the event that generates cohesion, atmosphere and character. The built environment is directly influenced by this common phenomenon, which must be learned and cultivated through empathy.

Within this discourse, the **vernacular** environment is not only perceived as a place of memory that requires protection, nor simple tourist attraction, but as a valuable environment both from the outside (through architecture, spatial organization, density, relationships, materials, technologies) and from the inside (by reinventing some communities that bring the dialogue with the universal back up to date).

Through determinant language and the quality of the man-environment relationship, both managed by the architect, the architectural object can gather complex worlds, which it can physically translate in place - simplicity through complexity, complexity through understanding.

Personal contributions hover around the aforementioned conclusions, whom they directly endorse:

- Bringing together a varied enough set of architectural theories, that illustrate common points, tensions, ambiguities, contrasts, overlaps, etc., through an easy-to-understand, interactive graphic method that is never finite, but accessible and easily continued;
- Illustration of some unknown aspects within the theories, revealed after seeing them in relation with each other;
- Understanding the reasons behind the current situation of the rural built environment in Banat (and beyond), through the lens of theory;
- A different perspective on the rural area after understanding general theory;
- A complex understanding of man: one's self, one's relationship with space and one's relationship with the built object;
- A different perspective on architecture after understanding man's existential condition;
- The perception of a local rural core in a different context, in relation to universal theories;
- The different perspective on theory through the rebellious, non-theorized example;
- Exemplifying the definition of a perceptible totality, through ad hoc, non-architectural methods: redefining the community, needs and ideals and cultural manifestations;
- Bringing theory and practice nearer and attempting to theorize a purely pragmatic environment;
- Identifying and stating valid attitudes towards the existing built environment;
- The need for stratified understanding, as a determinant condition;
- Defining an access to the qualitative by managing the human-place-object relationship;
- Facilitating the understanding of current conditions, but also of valid possibilities, through the man-place-constructed object discussion;
- Emphasizing the freedom of the architect in the creative process, in imagining meaningful buildings;

Value thus becomes source of inspiration for architecture and goal at the same time. It can be inherent or a result of architectural language, of the reinterpretation of place, of the interaction with the human being, all factors that conjunctively translate understood aspects through dialogue - the built object, in which relationships are superior to concept. Everything that surrounds us is connected, it only depends on how we manage the quality of these relationships.

The **man-place-object** relationship governs the thesis throughout the argument, emphasizing the importance of understanding each term separately, but also the relationships that can be defined between them, that determine qualitative aspects of the final architectural object.

As a result of both its global and local, both personal and collective condition, architecture must be **contextual** by place, **autonomous** by form and **exciting** by its relationship with man.

Further possible directions of the research

The varied methods that have been used in supporting the argument, as well as the different, but clearly defined framework in which the identified relationships are discussed, allow extensions in several directions:

1. The open type study and the possibility to add more theory

The theories that coordinate the present study were chosen based on objective criteria, with a subjective nuance: the relationship with man, place and object, but also personal preference. Thus, the matrix they generate can be completed within the limits of new self-imposed conditioning. The selection criteria can be redefined or supplemented in order to illustrate a more complex overview. In addition, the study offers the possibility, but also the method, of direct interaction between the universal and the local, with local information that can vary according to needs – for example, the interference of an always new particular place with the general matrix of value could be studied.

Through this openness of completion, the matrix of previously identified relationships can generate new ratios, contrasts or hierarchies: with each new information that is being introduced, it redraws its connections.

2. Creating an interactive platform, that would allow interactive data introduction and further detailing of connections and mutual influences of theories.

If, in order to serve the purpose of the thesis, the visual support could accommodate a considerable number of ideas, with the increased amount of information, it risks becoming illegible. This situation can be prevented by keeping it online, on a platform or in an application that allows both the introduction of new data and automatic refresh, as well as interaction with the resulting visual scheme: zoom in, click on an idea, highlighted links, etc.

3. Detailed presentation of local typologies

Currently, in the discussion about local specificity, typologies have been drawn from sources that are external to the present thesis. They can be collected, redrawn and presented as a unit in order to generate a clear database that can be simply and quickly understood. This approach could also determine practical consequences, because through a simple but focused presentation, characteristic aspects could be assumed, reinterpreted or abstracted, or new relationships could be introduced, in a clear relationship to the existing character.

The identified typologies within the studied core have been drawn from scratch, which provided the opportunity for a deeper understanding of the area's relationships, dynamics and character.

4. The appearance of new phenomena in the above studied environment, which introduce new perspectives on what has already been researched and which redefine relationships, hierarchies, values.

5. Inclusion of new valuable nuclei

Besides the one mentioned in the thesis, the Banat area offers various other examples of uniformly preserved nuclei, such as Ilidia-Socolari-Potoc. Here, too, the settlements that compose it have different particularities, but generate a cohesive nucleus, activated by community, event and positive example.

6. Materialization of the study in a printed format

The completion of this study involved a large volume of work, presented in the terms of a research paper. It involved affinities, but also insufficiently treated areas, which, weighed and refined, could become viable material for a future written volume.

References

- [1] M. Heidegger, *Originea operei de artă*, București: Humanitas, 1995.
- [2] P. von Meiss, *De la formă la loc + Tectonica. O introducere în studiul arhitecturii*, București: Capitel Avangarde, 2015.
- [3] E. S. Casey, *The Fate of Place. A philosophical history*, Berkeley, Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1998.
- [4] W. Manifestul studenților de la arhitectură Witwatersrand, For us, articol *Beyond visibility*, Aldo van Eyck, 1962, p. 20.
- [5] C. Norberg Schulz, *Architecture: Presence, Language, Place*, Milano: Skira Architecture Library, 2000, pp. 59, citat din E. Husserl, *Tatsache und Wesen* (1913), în *Ausgewählte Texte*, I, p.98: "Place is the most comprehensive manifestation of the world of life".
- [6] C. Norberg-Schulz, *Architecture: Presence, Language, Place*, Milano: Skira Architecture Library, 2000, p. 12.
- [7] S. Giedion, *Space, time and architecture: the growth of a new tradition*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2009, p. 356.
- [8] M. Heidegger, *Poetry, language, thought*, New York: Harper perrenial modern classics, 1971, pp. 141, cap. *Bauen, wohnen, denken*, cit.orig. "To construct and to inhabit express therefore the way in which man is in the world".
- [9] V. Gaivoronschi, *Matricile spațiului tradițional*, București: Paideia, 2002, p. 45.
- [10] A. Tzonis și L. Levaivre, *Critical Regionalism. Architecture and Identity in a Globalized World*, Prestel, 2003, p. 14.
- [11] W. Curtis, *Modern architecture since 1900*, Third edition, Londra: Phaidon Press Limited, 2005, p. 639.
- [12] K. Frampton, *Arhitectura modernă. O istorie critică*, București: Editura Universitară Ion Mincu, 2016, p. 332.
- [13] N. Lascu și I. Tulbure Moldovan, *Arhitectura modernă și contemporană în România - note de curs*, București, 2018, p. 31.
- [14] C. Norberg-Schulz, *Architecture: Presence, Language, Place*, Milano: Skira Architecture Library, 2000, p. 85.
- [15] C. Norberg Schulz, *Genius Loci*, New York: Rizzoli, orig. cit.: "A natural place is understood since the earliest times as an intrinsic manifestation of a genius loci", 1980.
- [16] M. Heidegger, *Originea operei de artă*, București: Humanitas, 1995.
- [17] T. O. Gheorghiu, *Locuirea tradițională rurală din zona Banat-Crișana. Elemente de istorie și morfologie; protecție și integrare*, Timișoara: Eurobit, 2008, p. 346.
- [18] N. Săcară, *Valori ale arhitecturii populare românești*, Timișoara: Facla, 1987, p. 74.
- [19] C. Norberg-Schulz, *Genius Loci*, New York: Rizzoli, 1980, p. 190.
- [20] M. Heidegger, *Originea operei de artă*, București: Humanitas, 1995, p. 189.

- [21] O. Bollnow, *Human space*, Londra: Hyphen Press, 2011, p. 122.
- [22] M. Eliade, *Tratat de istorie a religiilor*, București: Humanitas, 1999, p. 290.
- [23] A. m. s. bănățean, *Memoria satului românesc I. Studii de etnografie, etnologie, artă populară*, Timișoara, 1997.
- [24] A. m. s. bănățean, *Memoria satului românesc I, Studii de etnografie, etnologie, artă populară*, Timișoara, 1997, p. 135.
- [25] O. Bollnow, *Human space*, Londra: Hyphen Press, 2011, p. 273.
- [26] J. Pallasmaa, *The eyes of the skin – Architecture and the senses*, Anglia: John Wiley & Sons, 2005, p. 12.
- [27] C. Norberg-Schulz, *Architecture: Presence, Language, Place*, Milano: Skira Architecture Library, 2009.
- [28] C. Norberg-Schulz, *Architecture: presence, language, place*, Milano: Skira Architecture Library, 2000.
- [29] J. Gibson, *The perception of the visual world*, Cambridge: The Riverside Press, 1974, pp. 199, cit.orig. „Things must be substantial before they can be significant or symbolic. A man must find a place to sit before he can sit down to think.” .
- [30] V. Olgiati, *Non-Referential Architecture*, Zurich: Park Books, 2019, p. 74.
- [31] J. Pallasmaa, *The eyes of the skin - Architecture and the senses*, Anglia: John Wiley & Sons, 2005, p. 29.
- [32] J. Pallasmaa, *The eyes of the skin - Architecture and the senses*, Anglia: John Wiley & Sons, 2005, p. 34.
- [33] T. Pârvulescu, *Gărâna Jazz. Povestea unui festival, a locului și a publicului său*, Timișoara: Brumar, 2012, p. 26.
- [34] S. Vultur, *Germanii din Banat prin povestirile lor*, Iași: Polirom, 2018.