

Die Renaissance der ruralen Architektur. Fünf Beiträge zu traditional vernakularen Hausformen im östlichen Europa. Edited by Michael Prosser-Schell and Maria Erb.

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In the book series of the Institut für Volkskunde der Deutschen des östlichen Europa (Institute for the Folklore of the Germans of Eastern Europe) in Freiburg, the editorial collaboration between the Institute's Senior Research Fellow Michael Prosser-Schell and Maria Erb, Associate Professor at the ELTE Institute of Germanic Studies, has once again produced an exciting and innovative publication. Inspired by the presentations of the 2017 and 2018 workshops, the volume's introduction, authored by the above-named editors, and its five case studies address the history, ethnographic/anthropological connotations, and heritage-related appreciation and rediscovery of the built heritage of the German-speaking minority in East Central and Eastern Europe.

To the reader—at least to the author of this review—the editorial theme of the volume is very appealing. It seems a fortunate decision that the subject of the work is not merely the Germans of Hungary nor just the eighteenth-century Danube Swabians. Hungarian researchers tend to forget that the eighteenth-century settlement of Germans in Hungary should be seen primarily in the context of historical Hungary, which, by the way, can be interpreted as a grandiose process of eastward German emigration, extending all the way to the Black Sea, Bessarabia, and the Volga region. Not to mention the fact—and this is also rightly reflected in the book—that there were already Germans living in the region at that time (think of the Germans in Western Hungary resettling from Burgenland and Lower Austria, or the Saxons of Transylvania and Spiš/Szepes), who already had a locally universalized building practice. The editors of the volume have selected the case studies along this colorful theme, their focus extending from the second half of the twentieth century to the present day, but at the same time, the buildings they examine were usually erected much earlier than that.

After a very thorough historical introduction, Maria Erb's study of the 'German open-air museum in Hungary', the settlement of Feked in Baranya County, examines the character of farm buildings (e.g., barns, crop storage units, cellars), as well as representative elements (stucco, colored and sandblasted doors and windows, 'capstones' indicating the builder and the time of construction, etc.). It also examines other elements of the townscape (church, calvary, public buildings), the social changes induced by the displacement of Germans and the Kádár era (1956–1989), and the wide-ranging historic revitalization of the settlement (affecting natives as well as the urbanites who acquired vacation homes there, including Germans, Swedes, Belgians, Dutch, etc.), and the drivers of the process, the points of reference in restorations, and forms of remembrance.

In the second study, Michael Prosser-Schell and Ágnes Tóth both elaborate on their own research topic, the post-displacement fate and culture of the Germans of Hungary in Hungary as well as in Germany (primarily in the Federal Republic of Germany/West Germany). At the same time, they focus on an underexplored topic: the housing conditions (primarily newly built homes) following expulsion (*Vertreibung*), the confiscation of property, and ethnic discrimination (1950s–1960s). Since the author of these lines also investigated the building practices in a German settlement in Hungary and experienced the architectural fashion-shaping consequences of family visits in Germany, he considers the parallel nature of the investigation to be truly pioneering and encourages the authors to extend their research to the 1980s and 1990s.

Irmgard Sedler's case study focusing on Transylvanian Saxons provides an excellent parallel to Erb's writing. From Hungary's point of view, it is unique that the author was able to provide data from as early as the late 1500s on rural residential buildings of an ethnic group that has existed continuously since the mid-twelfth century. The study points to the standardization of the Ceaușescu era, alongside the more notorious 'selling out' of the Saxons, and the impact of agricultural cooperatives from the 1980s onwards. It makes a fascinating transition from these phenomena to the examination of the heritage discourses of post-socialist Romanian society and provides a richly illustrated account of the growing interest in vernacular architecture in the 1990s and 2000s and the consequences of the inscription of individual buildings on the UNESCO World Heritage List.

Jörg Stadelbauer's study takes us to Georgia, one of Europe's more remote regions, sparsely populated by the German minority. In the Caucasian villages that are presented, the standardization of the appearance of the residential buildings with balcony facades had already begun in the 1920s, so the paper focuses on the pre-socialist Georgian rural spaces (*Ländliche Räume*), mainly residential buildings and sacral buildings, from a cultural-geographic perspective. Although the

Germans—who immigrated there mainly during the nineteenth century—were deported after World War II, their dwellings can be found in the villages to this day, so the author has taken into consideration both local and international (UNESCO) heritagization processes of commemoration and musealization, and—to the delight of the writer of these lines—the rural manifestations of modernism.

In the final study of the volume, Michael Prosser-Schell and Aušra Feser focus on the specific architecture of Nida, a fishing village in Lithuania, now a resort town. The paper describes the architectural features of the village—and the Baltic region—related to fisheries from the eighteenth century onward, the artistic and scientific attention paid to the region, and the country's history of occupation in the twentieth century. The study reveals how collectivization took place and led to a change in local lifestyles and the loss of function of buildings. As part of this process, Nida was developed into a resort area, and from the 1960s and 1970s, the fishermen's houses—later listed by UNESCO—were repeatedly discovered, renovated, and musealized as 'folk architecture'.

The case studies in this volume thus focus mainly on the vernacular-architectural heritage of the German minority cultures of East Central and Eastern Europe, especially its rediscovery, revitalization, and heritagization, which is still ongoing, as well as on the motifs of its preservation, and the non-museum—though, in my view, sometimes musealized—representations of identity in the built heritage. Attention is also paid to the increasingly important issues of sustainability, green living, and 'slow living', which make the publication useful for people from different disciplines.

