

**Recovering Past Stories for the Future:**  
**A Synergistic Approach to Textual and Oral Heritage of Small Communities**  
**RESTORY**  
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## I. Purpose of the Research Methodology

The purpose of this Common Research Methodology (CRM) is to provide to all partners a coherent perspective on the methods, instruments, and resources to be employed in order to achieve the proposed results. It encompasses information about all activities envisioned in Restory and, implicitly, for respective WPs. Some of the WPs have their own specific methodologies in specific deliverables, but for all the other we provide here detailed information. The following output integrates and reworks several core ideas developed in the RESTORY project proposal as submitted in March 2023. The same text has already been adapted into an acknowledged paper expected to be published soon in the journal *Review of Historical Geography and Toponomastics*.

## II. Methodology Overview

The core of Restory consists of methodologically-hybrid case studies in partner countries, constructed on a theoretical skeleton provided by the textual and oral heritage of the communities consisting in the past by Transylvanian Saxons, a pluri-ethnic group of German-speaking colonists settled starting with the 12<sup>th</sup> century in the territory of nowadays Romania. Besides an exceptional production of textual heritage, the Transylvanian Saxons gave rise from the 14<sup>th</sup> century onwards to prosperous urban and rural hubs that radiated a praxis model of awareness towards the sustainable management of human and material resources. Such standards were absorbed by the neighbouring communities of Romanians, Hungarians, and Roma, establishing a symbolic vocabulary of intangible cultural heritage and multi-dimensional territorial identity. The relevance and general validity of these medieval, modern, and more recent traditions – partly discontinued due to the emergence of the centralized, national, states or the political upheavals of the 20<sup>th</sup> century – are to be tested against the (similar or contrasting) experience of several other small or middle-seized groups across Europe, expressing their written or oral agency as emancipated social actors. Among all routines and strategies developed over the last 800 years in pursuit of a better management of limited resources, over various and extended periods of crisis, the focal point of

these parallel case studies remains the collective behaviour of coherent and coordinated bodies (based on any sorts of ties, be that territorial, legal, religious, intellectual etc.) concerning the topics of schooling, recycling, and communicating the attachment to historic/ natural/ civic environments, all of these aspects highlighting the transformative nature of cultural messages.

This original set of research methods, questioning perspectives, and answering solutions combines classical historical enquiry, oral history, multifaceted perspectives of cultural anthropology, or human geography. The methodological philosophy of Restory is based on a mixture of a classical, positivist, attitude towards source material (analysis of archival and library records with the help of palaeography, codicology, see Coulson, Babcock 2020) and new approaches (such as oral history, the only way to retrieve data in specific scenarios), an extensive comparative modus operandi, the use of digital tools and pluri-disciplinary interpretation of source information according to “the three I-s”: Innovative – Interdisciplinary – International.

The complexity of the study cases will bring Restory researchers in investigating archives across Europe, from Iceland to Ukraine, from Finland to Sardinia. It will provide a rich depository with documents in private and public institutions, family documents, etc. According to the project proposal, P1 to P11 are in charge with carrying on types of research of the written and/or oral heritage generated by different communities in different historical periods. The table below offers an overview of the Restory study cases:

	Partner	Country	Study cases/small communities	Written heritage	Oral heritage
1.	UNIVERSITATEA BABES BOLYAI (UBB)	Romania	Sighișoara	Yes	Yes
			Jelna	Yes	Yes
			Cincu	Yes	Yes
2.	HASKOLI ISLANDS (UoI)	Iceland	Pingvellir National Park	Yes	No
3.	CENTRE NATIONAL DE LA RECHERCHE SCIENTIFIQUE CNRS (CNRS)	France	University of Vienna community of knowledge (1382-1450)	Yes	No

4.	UNIVERSIDADE DE COIMBRA (UC)	Portugal	Coimbra parochial network (14th-16th century)	Yes	No
5.	HELSINGIN YLIOPISTO (UH)	Finland	Cathedral chapter of Turku during the Middle Ages.	Yes	No
6.	TARTU ULIKOOL (UTARTU)	Estonia	The perception of the German past in East-Central and Eastern Europe.	Yes	No
7.	UNIVERSITA DEGLI STUDI DI ROMA LA SAPIENZA (UNIROMA1)	Italy	Rome between the 14th and 16th centuries (production activities, pollution, urban hygiene, waste, rubbish and manure)	Yes	No
8.	ATLANTIC TECHNOLOGICAL UNIVERSITY (ATU)	Ireland	St. Conal's Hospital complex originally established in 1866 as the Donegal District Lunatic asylum	Yes	No
9.	BUKOVINIAN STATE MEDICAL UNIVERSITY (BSMU)	Ukraine	Roşa - Cernăuți/Chernivtsi	Yes	Yes
10	UNIWERSYTET IM. ADAMA MICKIEWICZA W POZNANIU (AMU)	Poland	An area called <i>Szachty</i> area (ca. 170 ha) located in the south-western part of the city of Poznań - resident's affective and pragmatic connection	Yes	Yes
11	UNIVERSITA DEGLI STUDI DI CAGLIARI (UNICA)	Italy	Medio Campidano region and the municipality of Villacidro - local development of the inner areas of Sardinia	Yes	Yes

### III. Written Heritage of Small Communities

When attempting to reconstruct the historical image of various local communities from medieval and early modern Transylvania, one has to navigate through multiple archival depositories. This task would be achievable if these documentary evidence would have been currently preserved by the successors of their initial creators or beneficiaries, or at least centralized in a natural and accurate manner. The reality, however, tends to be different, since several political

cleavages imposed themselves over time in Transylvania, culminating with the discretionary cultural policies of the communist dictatorship that ruled Romania for more than 50 years in the 20th century. Due to this complicated past, the historical research of any local community must take into consideration not only the closest archival authority (a County Department of the National Archives of Romania), but also all its equivalent branches in the region and several other institutions. A quick survey of the available Romanian depositories shows more than 180 different archival collections that can be used to reconstruct the past of various Transylvanian local communities. Most of these units are preserved in the county structures of the National Archives, but there are also several other organizations, such as museums, libraries, or church archives of various confessional denominations, that can also deliver relevant evidence.

One might distinguish two main directions when attempting to reconstruct a local community in its historical paradigm: 1) lay governance and 2) ecclesiastic presence, always interplaying each other on various levels. Furthermore, both layers incorporate two other perspectives, a) a self-management standpoint and b) a regional or central leadership. Therefore, reconstructing the past of any Transylvanian local community has to incorporate various information recovered from archival fonds of local administration, both urban and rural, regional supervision, parish organization, and regional church governance. Although this structuring is rather a formal one, more information can be obtained from various other archival holdings, artificially created in time: collections of documents belonging to local museums and libraries or county branches of the national archives. Originating from local administration and religious presence, two other types of archival collections appear to be relevant for such an approach, those belonging to former craft guilds and schools, both of them highly active and engaged in social, political, and economic matters. Additionally, the relocation of the Transylvanian Saxon ethnics to West Germany after the Second World War has determined the partial exile of community records in new settings, such as the archive of the Siebenbürgen-Institut in Gundelsheim (Beer et al. 2019; Dincă 2019).

The following brief description intends to cover (in a 'bird-eye-approach') the research workflow and scientific evaluation of historical written sources and artefacts preserved in archives,

museums, and libraries (or in any institution or repository of cultural memory), public or private, regardless of their location or targeted topic/thematic/time. However, its focus rests in the history of pre-modern societies and their cultural heritage. It serves as a basic guideline or framework for the multifaceted and varied fundamental and applied research engagement employed within Restory; it may involve the following stages:

- 1. Identification of institutions holding historical written sources and artefacts:** This implies the prior consultation of bibliographic references, source editions, websites, databases, etc. Additionally, at this stage, suggestions from other researchers, formal and informal discussions (i.e. local historians, archive enthusiasts) can compensate for the lack of information in the case of lesser-known institutions. Refining research questions and methodology according to preliminary academic expectations customary occurs along this initial phase.

Such institutions might be (for the case-studies located in Romania): The Sighișoara History Museum, The „Zaharia Boiu” Municipal Library in Sighișoara, The Archive of the Evangelical Parish Church AC in Sighișoara, Brașov County Branch of the National Archives, Mureș County Branch of the National Archives, The „Ioan Raica” Municipal Museum in Sebeș, many of them with a limited on-line presence, and with outdated and incomplete on-site accessibility and consultation instruments (See below no. 2).

- 2. Identification of specific and relevant collections:** As a general rule, such holding institutions provide researchers with inventories of the collections they manage. In the case of unregistered or poorly described archival or library collections, it is necessary to browse the entire written material to identify and select pieces of potential scientific interest.

Such collections are (for the research endeavors conducted in Romania): Collection of the Evangelical Parish Church AC in Sighișoara, Collection of the Evangelical District Consistory AC of Sighișoara, Document Collection of the Museum in Sighișoara, Historical Collection of the Sighișoara Townhall, or Historical Collection of the Sebeș Townhall.

- 3. Selection of historical sources and artefacts of interest:** This stage deals with the consultation on site of each relevant unit, kept in the previously identified collections, from

each institution of interest. Usually, stage 3 (which still retains a predominant quantitative charge) serves as a transitional phase towards a qualitative development of the overall enquiry, as it narrows down the targeted zone of expert interest (administrative records, literary texts, remnants of material culture and so forth).

- 4. The primary processing of the selected historical sources:** Stage number four wraps up the overall evaluation of the preservation state, quantitative features (such as, measurements), and the complex photographing/digitizing of the identified written sources and artefacts. These procedures are necessary in order to record all important elements for further scientific interpretation (quality of parchment or paper, watermarks, seals, book bindings, or other relevant information). This stage also involves pre-organizing of a digital archive, by hierarchically arranging the images into a specially designed system, which replicates the original structure of the collections. In a close dialogue with custodians or other cultural professionals, specific recommendations with respect to preservation or restoration actions may be formulated.

Phase number four defines as a specific goal the hierarchical structure of the intended database by clearly formulating the metadata. Historical assets in the repository must be well-organized, discoverable, and properly managed.

The metadata used to describe digital resources, specifically for a historical assets database, typically follows the Dublin Core Metadata Element Set.

Here are the key metadata elements commonly used:

*Title* (dc.title): The name given to the resource.

*Creator* (dc.creator): The person(s) or organization(s) responsible for creating the resource.

*Subject* (dc.subject): The topic of the resource, often represented by keywords or phrases.

*Description* (dc.description): A textual description or abstract of the content of the resource.

*Publisher* (dc.publisher): The entity responsible for making the resource available.

*Contributor* (dc.contributor): Other individuals or organizations that contributed to the creation of the resource.



*Date* (dc.date): Important dates associated with the resource, such as creation or publication date.

*Type* (dc.type): The nature or genre of the resource (e.g., text, image, video).

*Format* (dc.format): The file format, physical medium, or dimensions of the resource.

*Identifier* (dc.identifier): A unique identifier for the resource, such as a URL or a handle.

*Source* (dc.source): A related resource from which the described resource is derived.

*Language* (dc.language): The language of the resource content.

*Relation* (dc.relation): A reference to a related resource.

*Coverage* (dc.coverage): The spatial or temporal topic of the resource, often specifying a geographic location or time period.

*Rights* (dc.rights): Information about rights held in and over the resource, such as copyright status or access rights.

**5. The secondary processing of the selected sources and documents:** In parallel with the establishing of a digital archive, one can develop additional analytical sheets, transcriptions (complete or partial), indexes (thematic, onomastic, or toponymic), which will facilitate the scientific interpretation of the archival material in a broader historical context. These metadata, including chronological and geographical references, person specific details, annotations and attributes related to objects, ideas, materiality etc., are essential for refining database records. Stage number four is preoccupied with gathering quantitative evidence; nevertheless, its focus tends to become the qualitative interpretation of extracted and selected features.

**6. Publication and dissemination:** The collected digital archives and recorded metadata might be adapted into a database, while the research findings and interpretations, derived from these sources, can be disseminated in conferences, lectures, articles, studies, or books. Exhibitions (and the appropriate catalogues) should also be considered. The actual written sources can also become subjects for specialized critical editions.

Ethic concerns imply a research approach contrary to plagiarism or scientific misconduct, and a correct use of image licenses and copyrights. Data protection issues are not expected, since

the information of interest is older than two centuries. For more recent times, aspects involving ethical issues must be addressed discretely in connection with specific contexts.

#### IV. Oral Heritage of Small Communities

Methodologically, Restory looks at oral history as a composite genre consisting of both the oral account, the active, dialogic, and directive role of the historian, as well as of his interpretation of what has been spoken. From this perspective oral history is “both a genre of narrative and historical discourse, and a cluster of genres, some shared with other types of discourse, some peculiar to itself” (Portelli 2003, 23). An oral history interview is a text in the making since the witness goes through a creative effort to shape a story which has never been told before in that particular way, it is “a story untold, even if largely made up of twice-told stories.” (Portelli 2003). To put it otherwise, even though fragments of a life story could have been told in many instances before, given the presence of the oral historian, the account will take a new shape. Portelli outlines the fact that in order to structure the story, the narrator will have to make use of socialized linguistic matter and genres, and that we should look both at the genres used and the elements which “knit everything together, the formulaic material, the apparent formless connecting and supporting matter, the dialogic and directive role of the historian.” Last but not least, the historian himself will need to follow the conventions of different genres of historical writing when he/she presents his work. Thus, when embarking on an oral history project we need to take into account the narrative genres used by the interviewee, to make a (self-reflective) analysis of the narrative genres of historical work used by the oral historian as well as the narrative genres in between. Consequently, oral historians have employed a number of analytical strategies to narrative analysis in order to access the meaning as opposed to [just] the content of their stories. As it is suggested by both Alessandro Portelli and Lynn Abrams, the methods used to identify narrative shape [genres] and strategies in fictional works may also be applied to oral testimony, not least because we know that people draw upon narrative styles circulating in the social world to construct their own stories. “When you find an oral respondent borrowing a particular style, it may be because he or she sees

it as appropriate to his or her own story and the context of the oral history interview. The heroic story needs a melodramatic style, a fantastic journey may need a fairytale structure, and so on. So, the oral historian may detect what the narrator means by a story from the narrative structure he or she adopts.” (Abrams 2010, 115). Another strategy is to analyse the how gender constructions shape and give meaning to people [autobiographical] narratives. “It has often been noted how narrative strategies are culturally and gender specific” (Abrams 2010, 115).

According to the definition provided by the UNESCO, oral history interviews are considered [intangible digital born heritage](#). The recordings will be based on a semi-structured interview guide (Annexed to the Common Methodology Sheet), conducted in a dialogical manner, adjusted to the interests of the interviewee, but with specific questions about Restory’s main preoccupation: the management of human and material resources. In oral history, the interviewee is considered to be the co-author of the recording, which means that it is generally accepted that their name can be mentioned, with the his/her explicit consent. Moreover, giving the fact that seldom, the interviewees belong to marginal communities, it is an empowerment mean for the individuals and the group. However, the interviewee has the possibility of remaining anonymous or, there might be situations when specific life story details might affect the image of the interviewee and the International Ethics Board, following the recommendation of the interviewer, might recommend the anonymization. At the beginning of the interview, the interviewee will be informed about the ethical implication of his/her participation as volunteer in the project, asked to read and signed all ethical documents (informed consent form, information sheet, GDPR documents). In specific situations, where written consent is impossible, the explicit consent can be recorded at the beginning of the interview. P1 with its Oral History Institute provides a framework of tested principles regarding the ethical aspects of oral history research, in line with other reputable oral history research centres such as Columbia Centre for Oral History Research (Columbia University), which will be followed in the present project and are to be systematically followed by the other consortium members. This framework of principles meets the European legal and ethical requirements for oral history research. In each country, the interviews will be conducted with men and women, in rural and urban area, preferable – but not exclusively – elderly people

(over 60 years of age), as we intend to record interview with people that have oldest memories possible. The fragility of the elders, overlaps the priceless value of their memory as only depositary of certain experiences in the past. Therefore, we consider an emergency collecting the oral history narratives of people in their 90s, 80s, and 70s, with a slow decrease in age according to the availability of people when on field.

One of the specificities of oral history is that any single life experience is valuable and will be taken into consideration, as a legitimate source for how the past is remembered by people. That means that there will not necessarily be a sampling of the interviewees, which is specific to sociology. However, a core interview guide has been drafted (See Annex 1) in order to have consistent information from all recordings. Moreover, several experimental interviews are to be conducted as for all researchers in the team, coming from different educational and professional backgrounds to be consistent in gathering representations of sites in oral history narratives in similar manner. At least 500 life story interviews will approach all topics – traditional views on schooling and education, recycling behaviour, place attachment, and their interconnectedness – and will be recorded with people who live in small and medium-sized communities (rural/ urban areas), local authorities involved in the implementation of cultural initiatives, researchers, and visitors attracted to former Transylvanian Saxon settlements by touristic branding around festivals, architectonic heritage or re-enacted gastronomical traditions. A particular category of interviews is envisioned with Roma ethnics, who interacted mostly with the deserted homes and remnant possessions of the Transylvanian Saxons after their relocation abroad (such as furniture, clothing, tools, etc.), repurposing the buildings and objects they came upon. This phenomenon mirrors a unique and fascinating episode of “mass-repurposing”, difficult to encounter under different historical circumstances. Hence, a special attention will be granted to this marginalized group, whose stories of recovery and reuse may bring a fresh perspective on modern recycling / upcycling practices. Previous undertakings, financed by regional authorities, have tried to build on this liveliness, such as the 2013 ‘Roma-Re’ recycling venture in Alba County, which ceased its activity shortly. Furthermore, a significant proportion of interviews in this community will be recorded with Roma women, emphasis being placed upon diverse aspects of their lives, tackling several

stereotypes concerning their alleged lack of agency. At the same time, by giving a public voice to an underserved community, Restory engages an active role in democratising society, strengthening the social inclusion of Roma ([‘Romani movement’](#)).

While the essence of the methodology used by oral history consists in collecting life experiences in the form of stories and transforming them into scholarly work, one should avoid universalizing shared experiences as well as defining people as a group due to shared dependencies. When referring to oral history the sociologist Ann Oakley concluded: “interviewing is rather like marriage: everybody knows what it is, an awful lot of people do it, and yet behind each closed front door there is a world of secrets” (Oakley 1981, 31). In an interview in which the life story of an individual is brought to the fore, the respondent is confronted with “a view of their self as a culmination of a life,” (Abrams 2010, 33) situation which is perceived as unexpected for most of the interviewees. “Recalling and retelling the past is often accompanied by an emotional response,” (Ilic, Leinarte 2016, 4) write the oral historians Melanie Ilic and Dalia Leinarte in a recent book. When interviewing women, discussions may be facilitated by shared life events such as: marriage, motherhood, friendships, household chores and so on. When discussing women as a “category of analysis” (Talpade Mohanty 1986, 338) in general, one of the most common mistakes one makes is to designate them different labels, to assign them into one category or another, to summarize their existence using general statements. Moreover, by using this kind of terms one acknowledges that when discussing the subject of women, defining them in terms of their “object status” (Kóczé, 2011, 25) prevails: they are daughters, wives, mothers and so on, they rarely exist on their own, as sole individuals that are detached from their male counterparts or labels on any kind.

Restory aims to offer a model for preserving, safeguarding, and promoting the past stories of small communities as a means to facilitate and widen access to cultural heritage. Making use of innovative digital tools to generate knowledge about past and present in dynamic new ways is nowadays mandatory when conducting historical research. Thus, elements such as digital archives, digital born heritage or cultural analytics play an active role in interpreting and understanding history. The highest standard will be respected in the implementation of the research, to which the

personal data protection and the copyrights which are specific to oral historical research (see D1.4 Data Management Plan). From a disciplinary perspective, BBU follows the ethical principles proposed by reputable oral history research centres/ associations such as the Columbia Centre for Oral History Research (USA) / Oral History Association (GB)/British Library (GB)<sup>1</sup>. As such, within the RESTORY project, the team will use three legal documents, following the example provided by the British Library: 1. Participant information sheet; 2. Participation Agreement; 3. Recording agreement - in order to ensure compliance with the GDPR and Romanian legislation as well as with high ethical standards (see Annex 3). All data produced in the project will have different levels of accessibility, which is explained in details in the Data Management Plan (D1.4).

Each oral history interview will be accompanied by a registration sheet (see Annex 2) with general information about the date/ place of the interview, the interviewee (name and surname, place and date of birth, marital status, domicile, other contact information) as well as information about the duration, topics and keywords of the interview. Additional information on the registration sheet regards the method of contacting the interviewee, the format of the recording and a short description of the context in which the interview was recorded (description of the space in which the interview took place) and possible disturbing factors (interventions of other people, background noises, pauses etc.). Another section of the registration sheet refers to additional materials provided by the interviewee (photographs, documents, collected objects, etc.). All interviews will have written summaries in the language of the interview and English. The annexes will be translated in the language of the interviewee, adapted to the ethics national legal framework, and to the institutional requirement of each consortium partner.

## V. Interpretative Framework

Once identified in textual and oral sources, the past stories of small and middle-sized communities will be investigated with a particular focus on the management of human and material resources, translated into practices related to schooling, recycling, and affective-based

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.ohs.org.uk/gdpr-2/>

communication strategies of group agents. These topics will be interpreted in an academic setting, then conveyed as upcycled stories to GLAM professionals, local stakeholders, and communities, to be put to use in heritage interpretation (print and electronic publications, public lectures, on-site and directly related off-site installations, educational programs, community activities). Thus, the past stories for the future will be enhancing not only the visitors' experience, but also the connection between people and their history through a meaningful recovery of discontinued traditions, also stimulating local history in schools. This dialogue will be constantly mediated by partners as facilitators. The interpretative phase of the project is based on a combination of cultural geography and innovative historical questioning with influences from sociology or psychology. The geographical framework of RESTORY is constructed on three key concepts: territorial identity, place, and place attachment. This is due to the fact that the project aims to contribute to building or reconstructing people's sense of place. This concept combines territorial identity and place attachment: "the characteristics of the place and the intimate bonds between people and places" (Banini 2021, 23). Territorial identity is a complex concept that includes material and immaterial values, as well as representational and performative practices (Banini and Ilovan, 2021). It contributes to increasing people's quality of life, because it implies the existence of a feeling of belonging that people experience in connection to certain places: the place attachment (Altman, Low 1992). Both territorial identity and place attachment are dynamic and flexible processes that construct local communities. As such, Restory uses the theoretical framework proposed by the cultural turn and the 'New Cultural Geography' from the 1980s to present. One may sum up that territorial identity is a complex and fluid concept, both from a theoretical point of view and as methodological approach. In this project, we adopted the constructivist paradigm to research territorial identity and place attachment (Banini, Ilovan 2021). Place is a meaningful location, which embodies experiences, values, and emotions (Ilovan, Markuszewska 2022). Through lived experiences space is appropriated and becomes place.

Place attachment is the process of emotionally bonding with place (physical and social) and its result – the bond (Devine-Wright 2014). Place has a material or tangible component and an intangible one – the socializing space. Therefore, attachments to place evolve together with the

evolution of places and communities. Place attachment is dependent on space and time. Associations to the past form the basis for present affiliations. Besides the spatial and temporal dimensions, the social one contributes to the formation of place attachment.

Restory's primary sources for the analysis of place attachment are interviews, conversations, narratives, participant observation, focus groups, written and video memoirs and documentaries depicting the affective relationship between people and places as expressed in their perceptions, (self)representations, and practices. These data are interpreted against a background made of secondary sources: (a) scientific literature on the topic of place attachment (including the emotional connection to people and things, beside the spatial characteristics), and about (b) the places or settlements we explore. Research so far proved that qualitative methodology is the most pertinent to identify and delineate understandings and feelings that inhabitants develop towards places, people, groups, communities, etc., more exactly to explicate the meanings of place attachments that are constructed discursively (Ilovan & Markuszewska, 2022). We process these data by employing descriptive analysis and qualitative discourse analysis in order to identify key themes and the finest features of mechanisms that create place attachment.

One crucial piece of the international scientific literature to study place attachment includes the overarching methodological framework of our research, which was developed on three-dimensions: person, place, and process. This was proposed by Scannell and Gifford, in their article on "Defining place attachment: a tripartite organizing framework", *Journal of Environmental Psychology*, 30, 1-10. Considering this article on methodology, the theoretical and analytical foundation we use to interpret our data about place attachment has the following dimensions: personal with individual elements (experiences, realizations and milestones) and cultural/group features (cultural shared meanings), place as physical (natural and built) and social (social arena and social symbol), and process, with a focus on affect (love, pride, happiness), cognition (knowledge, meaning, memory, schemas) and behavior (maintaining proximity and place reconstruction).

Further interpretative frameworks of practices, strategies and attitudes connecting small communities to the sustainable management of human and material resources come from the



scholarly field of microhistory in a ‘Longue durée’ approach (Tomich 2012), with an additional methodological input from microsociology, focusing on the evolution of individuals or small-scale groups and their exercised agency in pursuing their own well-being (both historical genres are missing altogether with regard to the Transylvanian Saxons). Long term microhistorical interpretation is the key concept for a multidisciplinary approach, uniting history with economics, sociology, geography, and other SSH disciplines. The principle of agency as a community factor of interpretation is a crucial element in the new cultural geography, as well as in microsociology, scholarly paradigms of fundamental importance for the current project, as well. Microhistory has been defined as the junction of the three characteristics: the intensive historical investigation of a relatively well defined small subject matter (be it a single event, a local community or an individual), the conviction that this investigation can lead to finding answers to ‘great historical questions’, and, finally, that microhistory always regards those who lived in the past as actors, people who made decisions and thus shape their lives in an active fashion (Szijártó 2016). This perspective, developed over half a century of methodological quest, had an impact on the understanding of environmental history, as scientists chose to examine the microhistory of small groups stressing the marginal or exceptional character of their relationship to the local environment. By telling the stories of communities that have learned how to adapt to limited resources and harsh environmental conditions, researchers pointed out that, in the end, such groups developed successful strategies through a subsistence or barter economy, while accumulating knowledge and strengthening personal and community identities as well as fundamental ecological values. The reduced scale, the “exceptional normal”, the search for documentary clues and the emphasis given to relationships and their contexts have been identified as suitable features for the study of the interplay between humans and nature through time, linking the micro and macro levels (Franco 2018). Supplementary micro-sociological suggestions (Benzecry, Krause, Reed 2017) convey the notion of agency into the conduct of people in face-to-face social interactions and small groups. In this context, the management strategies regarding human and material resources are further categorized into gender analysis and acculturation patterns. Women’s traditional occupations as food growers, water and fuel gatherers, and caregivers strengthen their connection

to available natural resources; they also possess knowledge and skills (intangible heritage) that are critical to finding multi-generation educational solutions to environmental challenges (Carr, Thompson 2014). Acculturation operating at macro-level versus micro-level time scales can also be viewed at the intersection of cultural geography and history.

To wrap up, Restory's research framework adopts a plural perspective over the meanings of small-sized communities in relation to the cultural heritage that they generated over a long time, creating their own identity. The culturally charged items transmitted in a specific environment mirror the agency of the 'creators' over centuries of collaboration between nature and human society and contribute today to the shaping of a better connection with the inhabited territory.

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## Annex 1: Oral History Interview Guide

### **NB!**

- Some of the questions are specific to a particular context; please adapt it to your particular research context!
- It is recommended that the succession of the questions should follow the dialogue with the interview and not the particular order of this guide, which have the questions organized thematically and chronologically.
- The Interview Guide needs to be translated and adapted to the language spoken by the interviewee in the recording.

### **Childhood and family:**

1. Where were you born and in what year?
2. Can you tell us something about your parents? What about grandparents?
3. Could you tell us when and where were they born?
4. What did your parents and grandparents do for a living?
5. How many children were in the family?
6. What stories do you remember your parents/ grandparents used to tell?
7. What other relatives/ friends did you have contact with growing up?
8. What are some of your childhood memories?
9. Can you describe the household in the childhood?
10. What were children's household duties?
11. How girls and boys were assign responsibilities in the household?
12. What games did you play when you were a child?
13. Who were your childhood friends? What was their ethnicity?
14. Did girls and boys play together or separately? Why? (if the answer is yes) What were the specific games for girls/boys?
15. What kinds of toys did you play with? What is their story?
16. In your childhood, how were holidays celebrated in your family/ community? What holidays were the most important?
17. Did your family/community have any traditions and or celebrations? What were they? How did they come about? Where did they take place? Do you remember wearing special (traditional) clothes during these celebrations?
18. Are there certain foods that were traditionally prepared for holidays and celebrations? Who made them?
19. Can you express any olfactory or auditory memories from your childhood?
20. What family heirlooms or keepsakes do you possess? Are there any memories or stories connected with them?
21. Did you/ your family go to trade fairs? How do you remember them?
22. How did your family manage the waste? What was recycled or reused?

23. Do you remember how the decisions were made in your childhood in the house? For example, how was the decision for the schooling of the children taken?

**Habitation, place attachment**

24. Please describe the space (village/ city) you grew up in.
25. Describe the village/ city where you grew up. What was it like? How has it changed over the years?
26. What did people do for a living?
27. What specific traditions do you recall?
28. What are/were your neighbors like?
29. Can you portrait the house you grew up in? Describe the courtyard. Describe your room.
30. What's the largest town or city you remember visiting when you were young? Can you describe your impressions of it?
31. How and why did people go to another village/city back then?
32. For how long have you lived in this place? How did you get here?
33. What had in common people living in your community?
34. How did you spent your free time?
35. Did any houses remain empty after WW2? Where did people go? Have they returned? If yes, when and why?
36. What happened with the empty Saxon houses after WW2?
37. How did the communist regime manage the relocation of people in these empty houses?
38. Have you heard about the relocation of Roma families (nomads or sedentary Roma) to this locality? If yes, for how long did they live there? How did the locals interact with them?
39. Did your family share the house with other people/ families after the end of WW2?
40. Did your family move somewhere else after WW2? Where? Why? For how long?
41. Did you/ your family leave the country after the end/ during the WW2 or during the communist regime?
42. Did you/ your family leave the country after the 1989 Revolution? What happened to your house?
43. If yes, how did you settle into your new home? Did your life change (in terms of traditions, occupations)?
44. Did your family return to Romania? When?
45. What made you come back to this place? (if applicable)
46. What ties you to this place?
47. How was the waste managed in your household? Was it easier to change or to repair items around the house?

**School:**

48. How was the decision for your education taken? What about your children?
49. What was school like for you? What did you like about it? What was hard about it for you?
50. Who were your friends at school?
51. What did you do in your spare time?

52. What did you want to be when you grew up?
53. Who were your favourite teachers?
54. Describe their teaching style. How did they influence you?
55. What were the different groups at your school? Which did you belong to? How do you think you were perceived by others?
56. Were you involved in any extracurricular activities? What were they?
57. What were your plans when you finished school?
58. What did your parents think of your plans?
59. Did the boys and girls in the family have different plans/expectations?
60. What do you remember about recycling practices in your school?

### **Marriage**

61. When did you get married?
62. How was the decision for your spouse taken?
63. Can you describe your wedding? Where was the event organized? How were the guests? Are there any wedding traditions that are specific to your community?
64. Could people from different ethnicities marry at the time? How were these marriages perceived by you community?

### **Profession**

65. When did you start working? Where?
66. Do you remember the first day at work?
67. From whom did you learn this profession? What was the learning process like?
68. Does your profession have any special relevance for your community?
69. Who was the primary earner in your family?
70. What income did your work bring you? Were you able to make a living out of your work?
71. How do you get along with your work colleagues?
72. How did you get along with your supervisors?
73. What were the different groups at your work place? Which did you belong to? How do you think you were perceived by others?
74. Did you ever change your profession? Why did you make this choice?
75. Which were the recycling/reuse/repurposing strategies at your working place/s?
76. How was the waste managed at your work? Was it easier to change or to repair items you needed in your profession?

### **Customs and traditions**

77. What traditions or customs are specific to your community?
78. Why are they important?
79. Do you know the history of these traditions? Do you know how and where these traditions originated? How did they change over time?
80. How did/do you celebrate important community festivals or other similar events? Who is involved and how?

81. How did you celebrate religious holydays? What holidays are considered to be the most important? Who is involved and how?
82. Are you directly involved in any of these celebrations? What special knowledge, skills, and abilities are needed? How did you learn? How was the learning process?
83. What are the “traditional” clothes in your community? Can you describe them? How and when are these clothes worn?
84. Are there any “traditional” dishes in your community? Who is responsible with cooking these recipes? Are some specific to certain important family/ community events/holydays?
85. If there are other ethnic groups living in your community, can you describe their specific traditions and customs? Do you take part in any of their celebrations? How did things change over time?

### **The army**

86. Did you serve the army?
87. When were you drafted and how old were you then?
88. To which branch of the army were you assigned to? How long did you serve?
89. What rank did you have in the army?
90. How did you get along with other soldiers? What about superior officers?
91. What was a day in the life of a soldier like?
92. Did you have free time in the army? How did you spend it?
93. How did you keep in touch with your family?
94. Were you able to practice your religion?
95. Were there party members in the army? Were they privileged? Have you become a party member?
96. Do you remember any major event that happened while you were in the army?



## Annex 2: Oral history interview - Registration Sheet

Name, surname of the interviewer/s:

Place of interview:

Date:

Duration:

Name, surname of the interviewee:

Place and date of birth:

Marital status:

Domicile:

### **Information regarding the interview:**

Method of contacting the interviewee:

Place of the interview:

Recording format:

Particularities of the interview:

Disturbing factors:

Interviewee suggestions (other people for interviews):

Materials provided by the interviewee:

Topics:

Key words in Romanian:

Key words in English:

**Summary in Romanian:**

**Summary in English:**

## Participant Information Sheet

You are being invited to take part in the *Recovering Past Stories for the Future: A Synergistic Approach to Textual and Oral Heritage of Small Communities* (RESTORY) project - financed by the European Commission/ EUROPEAN RESEARCH EXECUTIVE AGENCY under the HORIZON Research and Innovation Actions program, grant agreement ID: 101132781.

### What is the purpose of the research?

The purpose of the project is to investigate the textual and oral heritage of small communities in eight European countries by using diverse research methods, from paleography to oral history. A key part of the project is the creation of a Digital Archive that will preserve and make publicly accessible the stories contributed by participants. Before you decide, it is important for you to understand why the work is being undertaken and what it will involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully and discuss it with others if you wish. Please ask if there is anything that is not clear or if you would like more information. Take time to decide whether or not you wish to take part. Thank you for taking the time to read this.

### Who will conduct the research?

The research is being directed by dr. Adinel Ciprian Dincă and dr. Lavinia Snejana Costea, Babeş-Bolyai University, Romania and will be conducted on the field by a team of researchers.

### Why have I been chosen?

Your stories and memories of living in your community are important, irreplaceable, they need to be preserved for your family and future generations, and will be an invaluable contribution to the Project, as well as for the history of the nation.

### What would I be asked to do if I took part?

If you decide to take part you will be invited to take part in an interview which will last between half and two hours and be audio and/or video-recorded. The interview is an opportunity for you to share your stories and memories. The interviewer will present you with some topics/ questions but you are free to discuss other topics or subjects you consider to be relevant and important. With your permission, your recorded interview will become part of the Oral History Institute Archive,

Cluj-Napoca, where it will be preserved as a permanent resource for use in research, publications, education, lectures, broadcasting and internet. The interviewer may also ask your permission to take your photograph. If you agree, then the photograph will also become part of the Digital Archive where it will be preserved as a permanent resource for use in research, publications, education, lectures, broadcasting and the internet.

### **What happens to the data collected?**

A key part of the project is the creation of a digital archive that will preserve and make publicly accessible the stories and memorabilia contributed by participants. With your permission, your recorded interview will become part of the Oral History Institute Archive where it will be preserved as a permanent resource for use in research, publications, education, lectures, broadcasting and the internet. We will never use your information without your consent, and you can tell us how it should be used on the RESTORY Consent Form which you will complete after your interview has been completed.

You have the following options:

**I consent to use of my full name:** You can tell us to credit you by name when we use your contributions on the website, in print, and in public.

**I want to remain anonymous:** Your identity will not be made public. We will use a randomized pseudonym (or you can choose one yourself). The pseudonym will be used in the Oral History Institute Archive and attributed to your contributions on the website, in print, and in public. All information that might associate with you will be as well anonymised.

Occasionally, you may wish to request partial or complete closure of your interview to public access. Once the interview is completed the interviewer will store you interview in the Oral History Institute Archive where it will be accessible only by the research team. If you have chosen to use a pseudonym, we will allocate a unique identifier to your interview and all details of your identity will be kept separately to the audio files and the interview summary. The project team will summarize the interview and review it to ensure compliance with GDPR requirements. When the project ends in 2026, all the information that has been contributed by participants will be archived as a permanent record of the project, for use by researchers in the future. All future use of your contributions will adhere to the same access and privacy conditions that you select now.

### **Your personal data**

We are collecting and storing this personal information in accordance with the [EU Regulation 2016/679](#) on the protection of natural persons with regard to the processing of personal data, which legislate to protect your personal information. The legal basis upon which we are using your

personal information is "for archiving purposes in the public interest, scientific or historical research purposes" (art. 52, 62, 65) if sensitive information is collected. The Babeş-Bolyai University, as Data Controller for this project, takes responsibility for the protection of the personal information that this study is collecting about you. In order to comply with the legal obligations to protect your personal data the University has safeguards in place such as policies and procedures. All researchers are appropriately trained and all interviewers will sign a Confidentiality Agreement to ensure that they protect and respect the confidentiality of interviewees.

### **What about documents, images and objects?**

Some of you may have kept interesting documents, images and objects relevant to the RESTORY project. The team would be very grateful if you were willing to share these with them. We will arrange to scan them or take a photograph and upload these digital files in the archive. We will never use your documents, images or objects without your consent, and you can tell us how it should be used.

### **How is confidentiality maintained?**

All interviewers will sign a Confidentiality Agreement to ensure that they protect and respect the confidentiality of interviewees. All data from the research will be stored in the Oral History Institute Archive and be accessible only to the Project team. If you have chosen to use a pseudonym, all identifying data will be kept separately to the audio files and summaries. At the end of this project in 2026 all future use of your contributions will adhere to the same access and privacy conditions that you select now.

### **What happens if I do not want to take part or if I change my mind?**

It is up to you to decide whether or not to take part. If you do decide to take part you will be given this information sheet to keep and be asked to sign a Participation Agreement before the interview and a Consent Form after the interview. If you decide to take part you are still free to withdraw from the interview at any time without giving a reason and without detriment to yourself. You will be free to withdraw from the research, even after the interview has finished up until the project finishes in 2026. If you decide to do this then the digital file and any material relating to your interview, eg. summaries/transcripts/photographs will be deleted from the Digital Archive. If your contribution has already been used in any way on the website you can contact us and we will remove it from the website.

### **Will I be paid for participating in the research?**

There will be no payment for participating in the research.

**What is the duration of the research?**

The interview will last for between a half and two hours. If you get tired during the process you can ask to stop and take a break, continue on another date or terminate the interview completely.

**Where will the research be conducted?**

Interviews will be conducted at a time and place convenient to you. This could be in a place like a community center, a local school or library or in your own home if you prefer.

**Will the outcomes of the research be published?**

The outcomes of the research will be published on the website and used in research, publications, education, lectures, broadcasting and the internet. We will never use your information without your consent, and you can tell us how it should be used on the Consent Form.

In order to help prevent any inappropriate reuse or manipulation, whole digital interviews and edited extracts will be made available through the Creative Commons licence, 'Attribution Non-Commercial No Derivatives' (referred to as CC BY-NC-ND), and will be attributed to you/ your pseudonym and it cannot be used for commercial purposes.

**Who can I contact if I have any questions?**

It is highly unlikely that anything should go wrong during your involvement in this research. If however you have any questions or concerns in the first instance you should contact the Project director, dr. Adinel Dincă ([adinel.dinca@ubbcluj.ro](mailto:adinel.dinca@ubbcluj.ro)) and/or Project manager dr. Lavinia Snejana Costea ([lavinia.costea@ubbcluj.ro](mailto:lavinia.costea@ubbcluj.ro))

## **Participation Agreement**

The aim of this document is to explicate how the recorded interview which you agree to undertake within the project "Recovering Past Stories for the Future: A Synergistic Approach to Textual and Oral Heritage of Small Communities" (RESTORY) is curated by the Oral History Institute, Babeş Bolyai University, Cluj-Napoca (OHI). When you sign this form, you are agreeing to take part in the interview and allowing us to store and make use of your personal data now and in the future in order to administer and archive your interview.

After the recording of your interview, we will ask you to complete a Recording Agreement to sign-off the terms under which your interview will be accessible at the OHI.

### **Oral history at the Oral History Institute**

OHI has been operating as a centre of Babeş-Bolyai University since 1997. Its objective is the elaboration and interpretation of oral sources in order to recover part of the recent memory of Romanian society, excluded from written testimonies; thus, the research program of the Institute has a civic dimension, due to the need to manage the traumatic post-communist past. It also provides a perspective of the ever-changing nature of immaterial heritage consisting of stories about the past as told by members of local communities. Unlike most academic research, oral history can be considered as part of the citizen science because members of the society tell their story and thus co-create a document of the past to be used in many instances: archival records, academic studies, digital products, education instruments for local history, etc. In fact, one of the most relevant features of oral history is that since its creation contributed to the democratization of historical research as it gave voice to previously unheard voices of marginal people.

### **Your personal data**

New data protection legislation, [EU Regulation 2016/679](#) on the protection of natural persons with regard to the processing of personal data 2018 and its national implementation by the EU states has changed the way in which we inform you about how your personal data is stored and processed, and how you can get access to it.

### **What we will do with your personal data**

The data contained within this form will be held securely and not shared with anyone, unless the OHI is obligated to do so for legal purposes, such as evidencing ownership or demonstrating a valid Agreement. The information contained within the oral history interview will be made available (subject to your agreement) through the OHI to researchers, academics and other members of the public who access oral history content, for scientific purposes. We will keep this data in perpetuity, so as to preserve the oral history of Romania and inform the research of future generations. You can request partial or complete closure of your interview to public access using the above-mentioned Recording Agreement. You can request a copy of the personal data we hold about you as well as the photographs and video/audio recording(s) at any time.

### **Your agreement to take part**

This Agreement is made between the Oral History Institute, Babeş-Bolyai University, 11 Napoca St., Cluj-Napoca, and you in the quality of the Interviewee:

Your name: \_\_\_\_\_

Your address: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

### **Declaration**

I hereby agree to take part in an interview within the RESTORY project and I am fully aware that the content of this interview will be publicly available, subject to any closure or other restrictions that I might request when the interview has been completed.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

## Recording Agreement

Recordings of oral histories are integral to the Oral History Institute's intention to preserve the nation's memory. Your recorded interview (audio/video) and photographs will become part of the national collection curated by the Oral History Institute Archive, Babeş-Bolyai University, Cluj-Napoca, where it will be preserved as a permanent public reference resource for use in research, publication, education, lectures, broadcasting and the internet. The purpose of this Agreement is to ensure that your contribution is added to the collections of the Oral History Institute Archive in strict accordance with your wishes.

This Agreement is made between the Oral History Institute, Babeş-Bolyai University, 11 Napoca St., Cluj-Napoca, Romania and you in the quality of the Interviewee:

Your name: \_\_\_\_\_

Your address: \_\_\_\_\_

In regard to the recorded interview/s which took place on Date/s: \_\_\_\_\_

**Declaration:** I, the Interviewee confirm that I consented to take part in the recording and hereby assign to the Oral History Institute Archive all copyright in my contribution for use in all and any media, under the following conditions:

  

I consent to use of my full name.

I want to remain anonymous.

If you do not wish to assign your copyright to the Oral History Institute Archive, or you wish to limit public access to your contribution for a period of years, please state these conditions here:

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This Agreement will be governed by and construed in accordance with the [EU Regulation 2016/679](#) on the protection of natural persons with regard to the processing of personal data, the is implemented by the Romanian national legislation.

Both parties shall, by signing below, indicate acceptance of the Agreement.

**Interviewee**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

**On behalf of Oral History Institute:**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_