

Living the Space from Țara Hațegului: Building Places and Landscapes as Collective Identity and Memory

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Abstract The communication refers to the active role that the space has in the building of cultural schemes, seen as the memory and identity of a place. The intention is to identify types of places with the possibility of overlapping and communication between them within the territory very well defines, Țara Hațegului. The development of Țara Hațegului as the GeoPark leads to the development of some publicly and semi-publicly differentiated spaces within the settlements, which means, in fact, the relationship between the different types of landscapes at the scale of human settlement. The spatial analysis from the morphological point of view highlights the interaction between the geographical configurations and the evolution of the society's culture over time within the Romanian rural landscape.

Keywords Culture • Human action • Settlement • Rural • Vernacular

1 Introduction

Halbwachs (1997/1950) believes that every society cuts out the space (...), so that it a fixed frame in which it closes inside to find its memories, highlighting the thresholds between the spaces where different behaviour rules reign, referring to different memories. The human settlements provide a type of space hierarchy, directly resulted from the identity and memory process of the society: areas identified within the territory by a cultural approach are established in spaces of collective cultural memory, milestones for the society in the evolutionary approach of the GeoPark. What is important is the impact that the revitalization of these spaces manifest over the localities. The rules of the fragmentation mode, the type of basic units, their occupation way, use, can be defined as memories of the place, and they contribute to the specific compliance of

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the rural organism. Exploring viable alternatives to the actual and future relationships of the citizens of the rural public space offer it an active role in the developmental approach of a touristic potential according to the principles of sustainable development. Identifying the cultural, architectural vernacular of heritage values, the landscapes and the relationships in which they communicate and overlap, constitutes an important approach in the study dedicated to the settlements of Țara Hațegului.

2 The Concept of GeoPark

Since the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, held in Rio de Janeiro in 1992, not only the policy makers, the scientists but also the public understood that the protection and the wise management of the environment are a priority. It is known that, to respect the environment, requires a better understanding of the geological, biological and physical processes which left their mark on the earth. A good understanding of the geological heritage and a healthy respect for what it represents are the important factors in the holistic approach and for a sustainable development. In support of these ideas, there have been geo-conservation international initiatives suggested and launched, counting that “geo” is more than geology; it involves geographical and geomorphological issues as well (Farsani et al. 2012). The GeoPark, concept created by UNESCO 1990, is defined as a “territory which includes an outstanding geological heritage and a territorial strategy of sustainable development supported by a European programme. It has, of course, well-defined borders and a surface which is enough for a real economical and territorial development”. The majority of the sites on the territory of a GeoPark require a certain number of geological sites, but their interest can be also archaeological, ecological, historical, ethnological or cultural, strengthening of the cultural, social identity, of protection and the natural or cultural heritage. A GeoPark has an active role in the economical development of the territory or through the improving of a general image about the geological legacy and the development of the geo-tourism. The focus of this article is not on the specific characteristics of a GeoPark, but on a Romanian territory that corresponds perfectly with the requirements of UNESCO: Țara Hațegului. Its mention as GeoPark is important because together with its promotion and development, it will attract different types of tourists and investors accordingly, requiring a special attention on the development of the settlements which belong to this territory.

3 Țara Hațegului: Territory Between Preservation, Development and Promotion

Situated on the main road which tied, even since antiquity, and then in the middle ages, Transylvania to Banat, with the custom from Bretea, Hațeg and Poarta de Fier, and also which had one of the most notable hearths of civilization from the whole Romanian space.

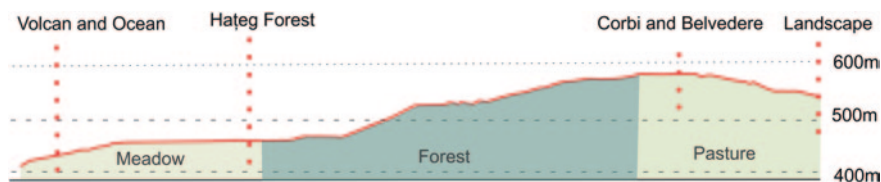


Fig. 1 Macro section—Denus-Stei volcanic landscape. From the point of view of land use, the largest surfaces are covered by forests, grasslands have a percentage slightly reduced, and the most under-represented land is the arable one (*source* the author)

The varied relief, consisting of fields watered by the Strei River, Great River and the Yellow River and their numerous tributaries, from the piedmont and hills covered with forests and rich grasslands were the foundation of a thriving mixed economy, agrarian pastoral. The fishing, hunting, gold washing from the rivers, exploitation of iron, limestone, marble, complement the traditional occupations of the inhabitants.

The sense, which the concept of “country” has acquired over time, characteristically the territory in question, is the mental space one, territorial entity (regional area) “which a community but also an individual belonging to it, integrates it its/his own scale of existent values through perception (*l’espace perçu*), experience (*l’espace vécu*) and imagination (*‘imagined space’*)” (Lefebvre 1974). The regional entity emerges through three major significances: the territory one, political-administrative unit and system. The analysis of the regional space of Țara Hațegului is the most important step in restoring the local–regional identities, the importance of studying it resulting from the fact that the region is considered to be the random circumstance within which the people who reside it formed, in which they act like agents and which components, structures, represent the ways through which people organize their lives. Like any other region, the territorial structure has a role in the implementation of the sustainable process of development, at the same time being also a cultural entity for the local communities which create the process of economical competitiveness and influence the modernization. The landscape, through its specificity, highlights the mountains with extensive fields, at high height for sheep, the fir, beech and oak tree forests down to the hills; the valleys that open to fields and villages (Fig. 1).

Therefore, the GeoPark project, considered 21st Local Agenda of the territory, cements the general frame for a sustainable development, and it values the cultural landscape of Țara Hațegului, distinct territory by its folkloric and traditional crafts, unmistakable popular customs, popular traditions and customs very well preserved.

The identification of the varied landscape is done starting from the last group of dinosaurs, on one hand, to the settlements of historical, scientific and cultural importance, which covers a period of 4,000 years and which, nowadays, consists of milestones for the community of Țara Hațegului. This territory contains well-preserved ruins: amphitheatres and temples of the Roman capital of Dacia, medieval fortresses, castles and forts since thirteenth century, churches



Fig. 2 The Dacian Costesti Citadel 101–102 i.Hr (*source* author)

and monasteries, memory and identity places. Today, as the signs of time, these memory places carry the past in our daily lives, and they become the base for our cultural collective memory. From the man who lived in caves (Ohaba-Ponor, Cioclovina), where there were found polished objects from the Dacian era and kept at Blidaru, Costești and Gradiștea Muncelului (Fig. 2), continuing with the ethno genesis of the Romanian people (Daco-Romans), to the old socio-political compositions of the Middle Ages, every era put its mark on this ancient Romanian hearth.

The first Documentary evidence of Țara Hațegului dates from the medieval, in Diploma Cavalerilor Ioaniți in 1247, with the name Terra Haszok. The further dwelling after this date has been proved through a series of written documents or through buildings, which is a true heritage, which is not fully exploited. The origin of the name of Țara Hațegului has received various explanations and interpretations; the name might come either from Hungarian-hat-zeg, having the meaning of fang or peak being located in the back, on the shoulder (on the hill), either from a Romanian anthroponomy, or it is related to the nickname “hațeg” (“tiny forest, young, bush, thicket”).

Țara Hațegului was recognized the outstanding place it occupies in terms of age and large number of Romanian medieval monuments it contains. It is about 20 monuments, dated prior to the fifteenth century, hosting numerous ensembles of mural paintings from fourteenth to fifteenth centuries. From this land comes the most important family in the history of the Hungarian Kingdom from the fifteenth century—Corvinesti—and one of the brightest personalities of the history of the south-eastern Europe—Iancu de Hunedoara. Moreover, over the past of Țara Hațegului have stopped great Romanian historians Nicolae Iorga, Bogdan Petriceicu-Hașdeu, A. D. Xenopol, Nicolae and Ovid Densusianu, ethnologists, researchers and so on.

What we call today Țara Hațegului does not correspond in dimension with the ancient Romanian territory with the same name, which was part of the principality



Fig. 3 a The Densuș church. b Santamaria Orlea church (*source* author)

of Litovoi, as certified by the famous Diploma Cavalerilor Ioaniti from 2nd June 1247, by which the Ioaniti Knights receive parts from the country of Litovoi, except the country of “Harzszoc”. This domain fit into a much wider one, which later became Țara Românească, as it was kept in the people’s consciousness that Negru Vodă was born in Hațeg from where he went to south.

Synthetic, compared to other European spaces, one can observe the remaining of some ways of living preserved even today. In response, the last decades represent a time of acceleration of the dissolution process of the landscape’s value, of human groups and of the societies, the traditional and rural cultures almost on the entire country, and the common solutions of protection, rehabilitation, promotion, until now they are at a superficial level of the phenomenon.

For Țara Hațegului, the revaluation, as a potential and resource of the natural and cultural heritage, unique in the country by diversity and age, represents, together with the local human resources, the main opportunity of developing of the area, the territory being well defines in space, both through geographical characteristics and the very specific cultural and historical traditions. This geographical space of Țara Hațegului appears as a document, written and re-written (palimpsest) through the people from all the eras, better said as a result of the different temporalities, incompletely preserved. This space, integrated in a project on an international scale, transforms the landscape and attracts, at the same time, a major interest, and it represents an important resource to attract visitors, because tourism is essential in this region. The most important part of the existing activity in the territory consists of the variety of archaeologically, historically and culturally relevant sites. These sites include the well-preserved ruins, including the amphitheatres and temples, of the Roman capital Dacia, medieval fortresses, castles and security towers since thirteenth century, churches and monasteries, including the old churches from Densuș and Santamaria Orlea (Fig. 3).

The territory, which by definition is characterized by individuality and specificity determined by the environment conditions, on one hand, and by the economical, social, ethnological and cultural conditions on the other hand, raises a series of

issues related to the relationship space-community: the way the society transforms the space it occupies, within the settlements, especially in the ones near sites of archaeological, historical and cultural interest, resources for attracting visitors. It seems that, in general, there is really difficult to understand that a certain territory, but shaped prior to the modern era (we could say traditional) should not necessarily be protected as a memory place or historical value or environmental or stylistic, or as a touristic object, but through which it contains as an intrinsic architectural, town planning, landscape value: conformation, materials, technology. Without this way of thinking, the settlements are subject to a continuous pressure of the dynamics of the human evolution, pressure which induces the society of those places “states of tolerance” (Choay 1998).

How will the community from each of these settlements the modelling of the space of Țara Hațegului and how will it materialize it? How will it highlight the identity of each settlement? The reason is a space apparently common can offer now an important support in the possibility to form alternative models in the social building of the landscape of Țara Hațegului. Moreover, the space is used as a filter and as a model of the human behaviours, being a component of knowledge over time.

4 Dwelling of the Hațegan Village: Tradition and Landscape

The landscape, in general, is since some time reported to the national and local policies and to the community spirit and each community (or individual) (de)limits within the landscape a centralized space defined by himself as his own place, a place (of the man) which from the formal point of view, Norberg Schulz (1986) considers it round, meaning it has a centre in which there is the man or the community. The problem of the identity, of the place, ties the phenomenon tradition to the environment in which it was born and was shaped over time and to solve the problem of the identity of a place.

The Romanian Hațegan villages, as the materialization of these spaces, are, indeed, a gathering (grouping) of houses (more or less dispersed) consistent with a spatial symbolism, directly related to the place and highlighting the eternity based on a mentality of the celestial and organic, which centre is occupied is assimilated to the mundi axis and it is marked by “the stake fixed in the middle of the village” (Crețu 1988) (Fig. 4).

The village is the fundamental form in the social life (Gusti 1974), which is also noticeable in its spatial development: organic or linear along a road that links it to another site, without having a pre-established plan. Although located on a lower level of organization of the human habitat, it is characterized by a complex feature defined by the presence of a well chosen hearth, in which there are concentrated the homes and dependencies of the farmers, as well as by a “dust”, the work



Fig. 4 Typologies of rural settlements in Țara Hațegului (*source* author)

place found outside, the duties and the space of the productive activities of the people (Cucu 1981, quote by Vert 2002). The village has its origins in prehistory, the appearance as human groups. It has a continuous inside with different typologies: some geometric rectangular areas, areas organized around some markets, then irregular and deformed areas, as a result of the morphology of the landscape and infrastructure.

There can be noticed conclusive differences between the initial systems of developing, often cellular, while the later system, upgraded, has a more clear geometry, despite the local deformations. What is truly remarkable is the stability of the factors that influence the reality of the settlement and of the community today, due to some systems of filtration of the factors: the organization itself, of the built environment, corresponds to this concept; it allows or denies (Gheorghiu 2008).

Relating to the dates concerning the genesis and morphological evolution of the village, the logic of the spatial organization of the localities is even more difficult to deduce. In his study on the villages from Hațeg (Conea 1935), at the beginning of the twentieth century, he considers that there are no significant landmarks, as in the case of the centre, almost unexpressed from the spatial point of view and

expressed only in some degree from the functional point of view. <<“the Centre” designated by the residents is a fragment of the street, between an intersection—the one with restaurants and school, along with which there is also the cultural community. There are two churches in the village, but by the location and by its common architecture, they do not stand out as landmarks (although both are listed on the historical monuments’ list.>>

Although the village is not characterized by a central space, there can be noticed though, interest points, places expressed from the point of view of the space, with a social value.

They are different, depending on their level of emancipation and community development, whose appreciation is often a subjective matter, because it is related to the reference system of the observer. Worth mentioning, here, is that the way of life of the traditional society was based almost exclusively on decisions following practical utility, the external stimuli receiving an answer in full compliance with daily or long term needs, hence the certain hierarchies in the filled of conceptual and material reality of the group life. Practices, habits and customs were more important than their realization at some point in time. That is, in the case of the Romanian village there is no centre, but the place is marked by landmark and related to the road axis, where the daily life of the community is developing. The lack of a place (mark) is a model in the individual collective consciousness of the existential space, it has an identity linked to tradition and it is built over time, as a mirror of the society and the individual’s experience.

Creating (unique) spaces is a natural, natural and inalienable gesture that is developed within a morphological framework defined by social factors (the cultural model and through tradition system). Thus, anyone can create a place within a morphological framework defined by anthropogenic models (tradition, culture, etc.) and based on a physical support. Once created, the place can be modified and enriched by successive accumulations of human experiences over generations, and it can be opened more than any other anonymous and rigid place. The place, as public space becomes the public’s space, where it participates, spontaneous and legitimate at the same time on the establishment of the landscape (Fig. 5).

Community, the one that creates this landscape, brings with it also the problem of the identity and belonging to a group and thereby the inhabited space and therefore “landscaped” (Tudora 2006) by this group. We are here in front of a concept that balances between the physical, aesthetic and social space, which is defined as a designed space, lived space, perceived space (Lefebvre 1974). After Lefebvre, the designed space is based on a series of representations of the space and conventions (scientists and planners). The living space is a space consisting of images and symbols that accompany the residents or the artists of the performances. The perceived space is intimately related to the daily life (use of time, travelling, places, etc.).

The landscape is a place of conflict, the place of a perpetual compromise (...) (Jackson 1984), which we can consider as a sum of these three spaces. “It is designed because it started from the structure of the collective identity. It is also



Fig. 5 Rural public spaces (*source* author)

perceived, over the customary practices (and through its vernacularism), and it is experienced as it is symbolized; it bears within itself the daily and power signs”.

In reality, these landscapes are not so strong anymore, the village lost its image over time, and they became an “open work” being characterized by a continuous dynamic, due to human actions (economical, social and cultural factors) and nature’s actions (bio-physiological processes).

The tradition that we face today contains stages and components of the town, and its relation with the modernity is not necessarily also decisively dramatic and it is plausible to be able to continue in a peaceful manner, even by losing lately the cohesion of the rural communities, carriers of tradition. The answer, customized to the reality of the area, highlights the disintegration of the community and the way to act, the tradition not longer belongs to this community. The signs of behavioural mutations belong to various historical periods, interventions from outside, continued and continue to grind the internal structures of the rural community, being constantly by chance in front of the inherited landscape: it re-shapes it, it builds it, it modernizes it or uses it the way the know.

With the disappearance of the traditions old jobs have disappeared too, as an important component of the village, and the new constructions in the countryside, new tourist boarding houses, instead of using the traditional landmarks they use modern inappropriate landmarks. This created a different type of landscape, a popular one, formed by mass practice, with an unpleasant visual impact but also a destruction of the local identity took place: perpetual construction and the indifference of the official aesthetics that shapes the daily space (in situ vernacular

building by Jackson) emphasized by a visual landscape, which it is created also out of this trend of modernization. Existing communities, resulted from a social and economic dynamic, have lost everything they gained over time in the field of the collective mentality, without gaining anything that a reverse of values and a bizarre reference to the modernity.

5 Place Architecture: Reference and Identity

Anyone can participate spontaneously on the landscape construction, in the absence of a coherent project which would aim for the landscape construction, as a perceived and enriched space. They are those who, by making the space vernacular they produce transformations, both in situ and in visu.

In situ through the direct effects on the spatial morphology and in visu through affirmation and as a reading grid of the space: a landscape of several individual or collective models that work alongside the official models. And all this because the place's image reveals, also, the daily existence of the individual, which is the connection with his life frame: the material and emotional frame, realizing thus a specific or that spirit of the place "genius loci" (Lobbel 1979 quote by Machedon 2006).

It is controlled by a system of symbols that expresses the character of spatial relations (unit-all, individual-landscape).

The analysis of the places as physical objects in terms of distinguishing characteristics (specificity) is the necessary knowledge underlying the grounding of every intention to upgrade the identity and memory, in accordance with the principals of the European convention (identification) and according to the various cognitive methodologies developed by the European countries.

From the physical point of view, the landscape is "architecture" (in a broad sense this could be read as architecture) and, as such, it is a manufact (manufactus), characterized by the specific natural or anthropological elements/materials and construction techniques.

Thus, the places have a three-dimensional organization, are spaces made of elements that define them, spaces made of construction materials and techniques (to reinforce the concept the term manufact was introduced to emphasize the relevance of the places' characteristics, this prompting their specificity).

The image of the place obtained is evolving and has a tendency to constantly adapt to the successive changes occurring in the relation of approaching, using, amending and consecration (often divine) of the space.

What is proposed here is to retrieve the lost identity of these villages, because the GeoPark develops the geo-tourism, or the agricultural tourism is poorly understood by the community; it is promoted everything that exists as memory and everything it is possible to distinguish as architectural, economical, social, ethnological and cultural value. The intervention is materialized in identity projects which differ on each village, in comparison with many other parameters: position, potential, history, heritage included.

Taking as an example Sarmizegetusa Ulpia Traiana a small village, but, with a Roman archaeological site of great historical value, it is noticed that the tourists stop in the village only to visit the archaeological site, without having any interest in the remarkable architecture in stone and wood or the traditions of the place. The problem of continuity of a certain spirit of tradition can be seen both in terms of historical and cultural (that claims the preservation of some elements of the tradition, history and national culture for memorial, sentimental, cultural, educational reasons or others) as well as from a pragmatic point of view, through which the tradition may be included in the daily process of promoting the living. In view of preserving the collective memory, it was included in the site's documents, one of the chances being the "storage" of some elements in the museum or "in situ".

6 Collective Memory: Cultural Landscape

The recovery of the tradition means to recover a natural way of living, in relation to the natural rhythms and the place's characteristics. The problem, in both cases, is the compatibility: to what extent and which of the components of the traditional housing are able to satisfy the needs of the moment and to lead to the shaping of a creation of a modern approach of the landscape, in other words, through the spirit of tradition, within a full modernity (Gheorghiu 2008).

This requires also the proposal of a strategy of the valorisation of the place's identity itself, and this can be done through changing individuals' or community's mentality occurring in the area of the basic notion of living.

The intention to dissipate the "heart of the settlement" considered to be the archaeological site through conservation and development policies. In other words, it is intended to guide the tourists to know and go through the village using a route, relying, among others, on the close relationship between the site and the inhabited area (where the exit is).

If it is mentioned, but the inclusion of the tradition in the promotion of cultural landscape, without complexing and exaggerating (as it is about the continuity of a process—tradition—in the context and beyond any era—especially the modern era), this would mean either adapting the old assemblies to the actual needs or acquiring and using some traditional elements (of the stable ones, perennial, convenient) to define the contemporary landscape.

A typological observation that could help this depends on a special feature of the building. If a building has withstood time, this was due to either their viability or the lack of replacement. It was not preserved for cultural or artistic reasons, as we would be tempted to believe. These findings apply to all material components, from home-household to the whole settlement (Fig. 6).

The re-conversion of some buildings in craft workshops (souvenirs), cafés, wine cellar or exhibition, would rhyme the course and interest to redefine the identity and preserving the memory of the place. This place would be managed by the owner himself or rented on short or long term.



Fig. 6 Sarmizegetusa Ulpia Traiana. Almost 60 % of the fences are actually stone walls of the annex buildings, which seem to have lost today, their former function. Minor interventions such as moving the gate beyond the annexes and allowing the access towards the kitchen trough the side wall, would make an urban socket Ochinciuc (2006), pretext for the access in the building (source author)

Navigating the village along the inhabited space of the village tries to steer the tourist towards the common areas that include both private and public spaces. It is desired to combine these spaces, using the means of space reconfiguring, the insertion of new features, the spatial change, the insertion of new features, changing the public image and a strategy for sustainable development. In addition, transforming the old spaces by using a new spatial and temporal expression represents a cultural and identity evolution. These spaces will not be opened or radically changed. On the contrary, the interventions will be local and punctual, giving birth to new spaces and equipments of new points of interest related to high social attractiveness. The choice of materials will also contribute to the creation of a place of history, science, action and contemplation.

7 Process: Intervention—Adapting the Landscape

The result will consist of various landscapes, blended in the new configuration of the place, a new fragmentation. As individual items, these places would not tell us much, perhaps, but building places and landscapes allows us to live together the common and unique dimensions of the space, those of anticipation and unforeseeable, controlled or not.

These landscapes, controlled at human scale, tend to bring along a long gone image of the village, re-functioning the spaces and finding a lost identity. If we take into account the fact that the landscape is a representation and that the representation is related to the choice of an image and the acceptance of its vocation to imply itself in these representations, the process becomes the one of reading and listening to the landscape starting from the existing configurations and yet in constant motion.

The latter can take shape and can give a special importance to the common spaces and this is because the place's images result from the cognitive experience and the spatial realities that are part of the individual's and his



Fig. 7 Route Sarmizegetusa (*source* author and Ochinciuc 2006) Part of the proposal for a cultural route and remodelling rural that cross the village and reveals its local value. The proposal relates to architectural, environmental and compatibility, as well as the complexity of implementing a social sustainability

community's life. The landscape is defined, in the minds of Jackson (1984), as "a composition of spaces created or modified by man to provide infrastructure or (the background) of our collective existence". The cell spaces, along the path, (different types of landscape) are reserved for operations that are part of a participatory discourse, according to their form and purpose, of a language because "the landscape is a place of conflict, the place of a permanent compromise between what it is established by the authority and dynamics of the vernacular" (Jackson 1984).

These operations of various natures succeed, inform and change mutually. If today they are only minimal interventions, their effects can be huge for the village tomorrow creating a collective memory of the place. Even in the case of a shift of interests, it is modified the hierarchy of different parts of the course and it will be possible to specify the successive choices of interests that accompany it. The revitalization of these areas, apparently lost, assumes an active role in the approach

of valorising the touristic approach. The tourism puts people in contact with areas that are not familiar to them, but which provides for acceptance, inclusion and understanding. For the tourists, people of the society, accustomed with the idea of the daily life, the contact with new areas is a visceral approach that does not remain neutral or purely functional, but which, for lecture, strengthens the identity of the place (Fig. 7).

8 Conclusions

These landscapes full of identity and memory become landmarks, places of memory, marking the fragmentation of space, and the spatial reorganization concept of the places leads, thus, also to economic, cultural and social aspects that contribute to the formation of the places and many disciplines.

Because the change is possible, there will always be a ratio of arrangements and combinations ranked according to the predominant form of one of the characters, without keeping the same shape. The landscape, also, can be seen as a living map (Hărmănescu 2011), a composition of lines and spaces not too different from the one produced by the architect or planner.

Differences are directly instrumentalized through the process of identity and through the society's memory: territories, "portions of territory are constituted as 'places of memory', for collective identity and as landmarks for the society in order to manage the past" (Nora 1984). In this sense, the distinctions are usually made between the ordinary landscape, which would be unconsciously produced by a human community and the landscape because the objective is to organize a space that can meet human needs.

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