

# **Balance Brings Beauty**

**Strategies for a Sustainable  
Southern Transylvania**



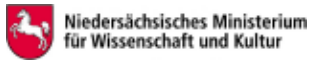
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In addition to the authors listed on the inside of the front cover, the following local organizations and individuals contributed vital expertise and content to this book:

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## FOREWORD

Life starts as a seed. When it rains, the seed begins to sprout and puts roots into the ground – and when the sun shines, the seed begins to grow.

Southern Transylvania is full of precious seeds, which are growing at this very moment, to become a diverse landscape of flowers and trees. As these flowers and trees continue to grow and spread, they are turning into a beautiful garden.

The seeds we write about in this book are the many activities, ideas and projects undertaken by people living and working in Southern Transylvania to create a better future for both people and the environment.

This book is devoted to a vision for a sustainable and beautiful Transylvania, envisaged and pursued by a diverse range of people. In communicating this shared vision, we give a voice to local ideas and ideals, and show tangible ways to reach a future that can make Southern Transylvania a global role model for a sustainable region, in which people and ecosystems alike can thrive. Our target audience is broad, and includes the civil society sector in Transylvania, policy makers, and local community members; but also scientists working in other parts of the world who seek to work with communities in similar ways to what we present here.

Throughout this book, we showcase positive examples of sustainability initiatives already underway in Southern Transylvania. In addition to short examples in the main text, several chapters contain boxes with detailed examples, some of which are contributed directly by local people. Of course, the examples we draw on are not an exhaustive list – we are acutely aware that there are countless positive examples in addition to the ones we present, some well-known, and some largely unknown to date. The examples we present thus should not be seen as “the best” examples of sustainability initiatives, but were chosen based on our knowledge, and in order to provide an overview of the range of different sustainability activities currently underway.

This book has been a truly collaborative effort. It involved coordinating a large author team of researchers, as well as drawing on the input of many different stakeholders, who we acknowledge in the various boxes showcasing examples throughout the book. We greatly appreciate everyone’s constructive input!

We hope this book will inspire, inform, and empower the people in Southern Transylvania and beyond to take charge of their region – for their own benefit, the benefit of their children, and the benefit of all other people and living beings we share our planet with.

The author team (January 2019)





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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Southern Transylvania is globally recognized for its tremendous cultural and biological heritage. A research team from Leuphana University Lüneburg (Germany) conducted a detailed visioning exercise that involved many local actors representing economic, social and environmental interests. This exercise showed a high degree of consensus among a vast range of local actors regarding preferred future development trajectories. Of four alternative visions developed for the future of Southern Transylvania, most local actors preferred a vision entitled “Balance Brings Beauty” – a development trajectory that embodies a diversified local economy, social justice, and ecological sustainability. Given the high degree of consensus among local actors regarding their aspirations for the future of Southern Transylvania, this book documents tangible strategies that can be used to turn this vision into reality.

Chapter 1 details the vision entitled “Balance Brings Beauty”, and explains the scientific methods and participatory processes that were used to generate this vision. Chapter 2 provides background information on the central concept of sustainable development, and highlights different ways in which it can be enacted. An argument is made that government-led efforts and community-led efforts are complementary to support sustainable development. Chapter 3 then shifts the focus back to Southern Transylvania. It showcases a wide range of examples of sustainability initiatives already in place – targeting cultural heritage conservation, nature conservation, small-scale farming, agro-tourism and eco-tourism, rural community development, and education.

Chapter 4 introduces three different strategies in which existing efforts to support sustainability can be strengthened or amplified. These three strategies focus on solidifying existing sustainability initiatives; spreading them to new locations; and fostering appropriate rules and mindsets that nurture sustainability. These three ideas are explored in detail with respect to their implications for Southern Transylvania in Chapters 5, 6 and 7. To solidify sustainability initiatives, we suggest guiding principles that could help initiatives to find their way: to cherish and support good ideas; capitalize on existing opportunities; find key people who can help a given initiative when getting started; and combine vision with pragmatism. To spread sustainability initiatives, key principles are: to be cognizant of the different contexts when transferring ideas to new settings; to make core principles of a given initiative explicit and share these principles; and to empower and encourage leadership. To create nurturing practices, organizations should be aware of the manifold links among different people and phenomena; work with the links between rules and values; recognize pluralism in worldviews; use crises as windows of opportunity; and communicate carefully and wisely with a wide range of stakeholders. For each of these guiding principles, examples are outlined in the respective chapters.

Chapter 8 provides reflections on the policy and regulatory context faced by sustainability actors in Southern Transylvania. It suggests that collaborations are central in order to overcome current challenges. Chapter 9 concludes the book with a series of specific recommendations. Through establishing partnerships between government, private actors, civil society actors, and local communities, Southern Transylvania can become a world leader and global role model for enacting sustainable development.





## “Balance Brings Beauty”: A Shared Vision for Southern Transylvania

### IN A NUTSHELL

- A comprehensive research project has investigated social, economic, and ecological aspects of sustainability in Transylvania.
- Through a process called “scenario planning”, this research project identified plausible trajectories of future development for Southern Transylvania.
- One development trajectory (i.e. one scenario) was very popular across many different stakeholders representing a wide range of different interests in Southern Transylvania.
- This scenario is entitled “Balance Brings Beauty” and describes a widely agreed on vision for Southern Transylvania that balances socioeconomic and environmental aspects.
- Later chapters of this book will illustrate strategies to realize this vision.

What might Southern Transylvania look like 30 years from now? – This question was the starting point of a detailed enquiry led by researchers from Leuphana University Lüneburg (Germany), first initiated in 2011.

There are three main reasons why this is an important question. First, Southern Transylvania abounds in cultural and ecological treasures that need to be taken care of. Its rich history of Saxon but also multi-ethnic heritage is known and valued throughout Europe. Centuries of gradual cultural development, in turn, went hand in hand with a vast array of traditional land use practices. These practices have created one of Europe’s most valuable regional “biodiversity hotspots”. With approximately one third of the landscape forested, one third covered by pastures, and the remainder covered by small agricultural fields, Southern Transylvania offers a rich fabric of different environments, providing habitat for many species that have become rare in other parts of Europe. Such species include the brown bear (*Ursus arctos*), wolf (*Canis lupus*) and wildcat (*Felis silvestris silvestris*), but also bird species such as the corncrake (*Crex crex*) and amphibians such as the yellow-bellied toad (*Bombina variegata*), as well as a vast range of beautiful wildflower species associated with traditional hay meadows.

The second reason for taking a close look at what the future might hold is that these cultural and ecological treasures are under threat. Change is in the air for Southern

Transylvania. With Romania's accession to the European Union in 2007, socio-economic conditions began to shift rapidly. As a result, traditional smallholder agriculture is increasingly less viable, many young people migrate seasonally or permanently in search of more profitable livelihoods, and traditional community values are being lost at the expense of increasing individualism. Managed well, these changes can be taken in stride, leading to a more modern Transylvania that is socially, ecologically, and economically prosperous. But managed poorly, change could also be a threat to Transylvania's tremendous cultural and ecological heritage.

The third reason to think about Transylvania's future is to proactively approach whatever challenges may arise. Despite some changes imposed from the outside, we do not need to be passive recipients of change – there are countless opportunities for working with externally imposed changes in ways that empower local communities to actively contribute to a better future for everyone living and working in Southern Transylvania.

It is for these three reasons then – protecting existing treasures, navigating change, and empowering local communities – that our research team led an enquiry of what the future of Southern Transylvania might look like. Drawing on many hundreds of interviews and workshops with local people, as well as on many months of detailed ecological surveys, we generated an understanding of what might happen in Transylvania over the next 30 years.

In the course of this process, we were amazed by one finding in particular: many different local people, and many representatives of different organizations, each with different mandates, shared clear preferences for what they hoped for in the future.

This chapter details the multi-year, elaborate and participatory process through which we identified this widely shared vision for Southern Transylvania. It first provides general background on a visioning technique called “scenario planning”, and explains how we applied this technique in Southern Transylvania. It then outlines four alternative, plausible directions that the future of Southern Transylvania could take. Finally, this chapter details the vision for a future widely deemed most popular by many different stakeholders – a vision that balances social, ecological and economic concerns. Its implementation could make Transylvania a global role model for sustainable development.

## What is scenario planning?

Scenario planning is a structured way to think about and prepare for an uncertain future. Scenario planning has been used worldwide and in many different contexts. Military leaders have used it to be better prepared for unforeseen attacks by enemies; business leaders have used it to adapt to changing conditions in markets and to navigate competition with other companies; and local people and government offices have used it to navigate socioeconomic and environmental change.

While there are many variants of scenario planning, a common method is to identify so-called “critical uncertainties” about the future. Such uncertainties can then be thought through re-



guarding their likely impact on the system of interest. In the examples listed above, guiding questions could then be: How could we respond if our nation's enemy had a certain weapon and were to use this against us? How could we safeguard our company and its employees in the event of a sudden collapse in the stock market? How can we best foster equitable economic development in our local community, despite a challenging socioeconomic context?



Such questions are best addressed when scenario planning is combined with the generation of a mental map of the system of interest. Such a map shows how different parts within a defined area of interest relate to one another – they show cause and effect relationships. For example, a simple mental map or conceptual “systems model” has been used to explain the arms race between the United States of America and the Soviet Union during the Cold War. Here, more weapons held by either one of the two countries led to a greater potential threat to the other country, encouraging this country to also increase its arms, and so on. The result is a so-called reinforcing feedback cycle. Reinforcing feedback cycles are often problematic because ongoing intensification of any phenomenon in a finite world often causes eventual collapse. Many sustainability problems involve reinforcing feedback cycles. Scenario planning can help to identify and counteract such runaway feedback cycles. Once problematic trajectories are recognized, actions can be taken to help steer the system of interest away from collapse, towards a more sustainable future.

It is important to recognize that scenarios are not forecasts. They are not an objective prediction of what will happen, but rather an exploration of what might happen. Some of the things that might happen will be desirable for some stakeholders, while others will be highly undesirable. Scenario planning seeks to open up our thinking about the future, so that we can prepare for uncertainties, work towards a good future, and avoid clearly undesired outcomes.

## Scenario planning in Southern Transylvania

In Southern Transylvania, we applied scenario planning to generate discussions and new ideas for how to approach its uncertain future. As outlined above, we did this because we saw there were valuable features in Transylvania that needed to be looked after (e.g. its natural and cultural treasures), but we also saw that possible changes might pose a threat to these features.

We involved 17 different local organizations in the scenario planning process. These organizations covered a wide range of interests, including social, economic and environmental interests. They included representatives of churches, the tourism sector, cultural heritage representatives, schools, and nature conservation organizations, and came from different cultures and ethnicities.

The scenario planning process involved five steps. First, we developed mental models of the social, economic and ecological dynamics of Southern Transylvania with the different stakeholders. We summarized the input we received by all the different stakeholders in a single representative systems diagram showing important relationships and reinforcing feedbacks (Fig. 1.1).

Second, we asked stakeholders about critical uncertainties affecting Southern Transylvania's development trajectory. Two key uncertainties emerged: (i) To what extent will policies by the European Union favour economic development versus environmental sustainability? (ii) To what extent will different stakeholders in local communities be able to overcome disagreements and work together towards a common future?

Third, we used these two uncertainties to envision and describe four potential alternative pathways of development for Southern Transylvania over the next 30 years. These resulting "four scenarios" are described in detail in the following section (see also Figs. 1.2 and 1.3).

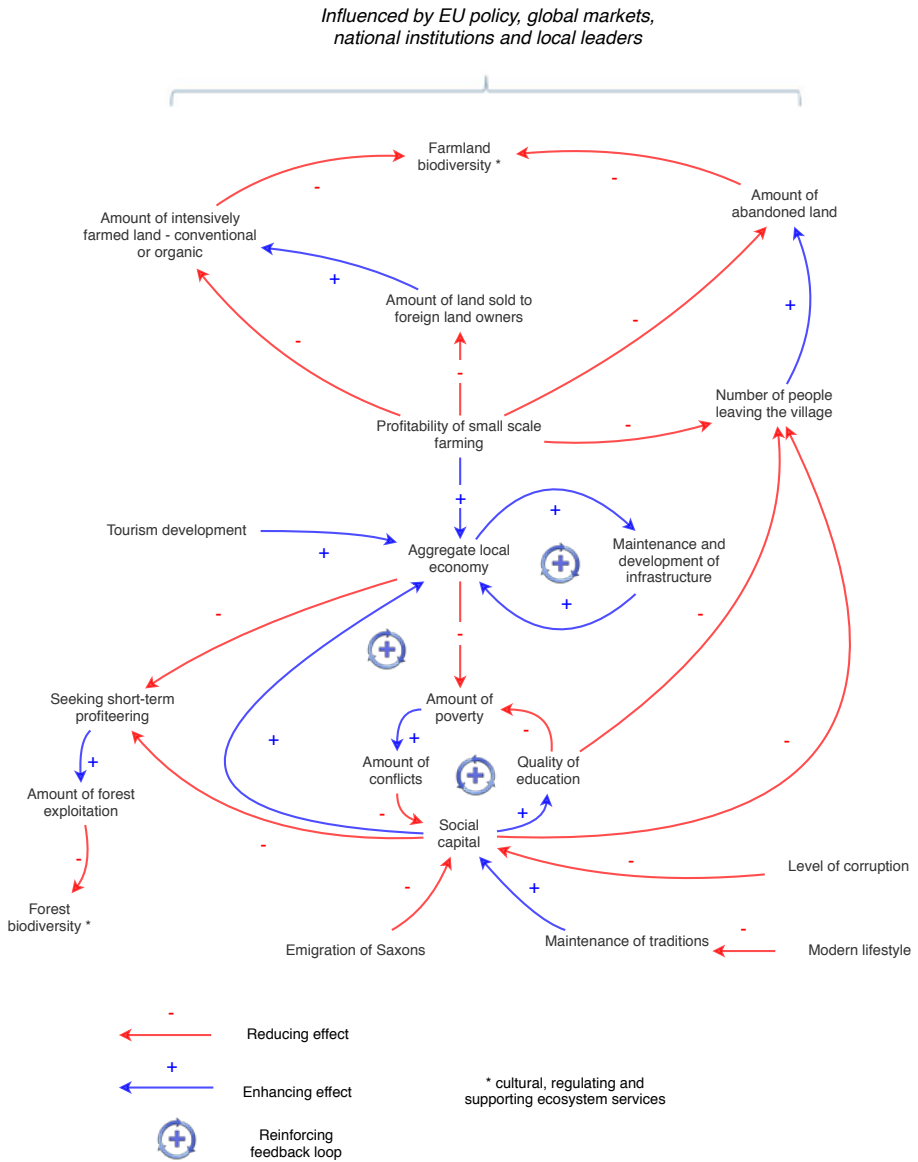
Fourth, we checked our understanding of the mental model we had elicited (Fig. 1.1) – of the two critical uncertainties and of the resulting four scenarios – with local stakeholders before finalizing them. That is, the information we use here as the basis of this book was originally created by local people, and before being finalized, it was again cross-checked by local people.

Finally, we tested the resulting four pathways for their popularity. For this, we visited local communities in a number of different villages and gave presentations at different venues. We also specifically asked representatives of several different stakeholders to formally rank the scenarios by popularity, and explain their ranking to us.

The following two sections showcase our findings – four alternative scenarios for Southern Transylvania, including one scenario that was widely deemed to be particularly popular. We emphasize that the process to reach these findings was very much driven by local people and organizations. As researchers, we elicited local system dynamics, and we elicited local preferences. The vision for Southern Transylvania we share below thus



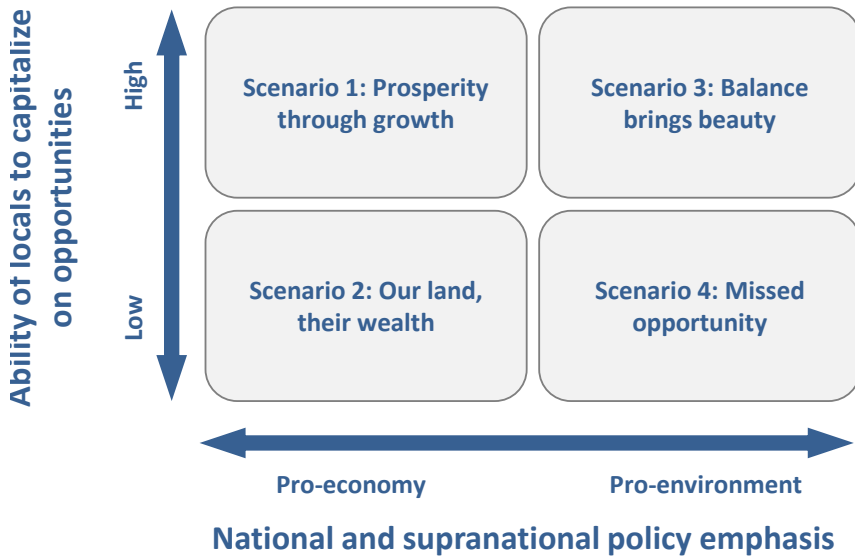
is not the vision of our research team, but rather a vision both generated and aspired to by the people living and working in Southern Transylvania.



**Fig. 1.1.** Systems diagram illustrating the interlinked social, economic and ecological dynamics currently playing out in Southern Transylvania. Reinforcing feedback loops indicate potential problem areas for sustainability, and are highlighted by an encircled "+".

## Four plausible futures for Southern Transylvania

Two critical uncertainties identified for Southern Transylvania related to the extent to which policies by the European Union (EU) would favour economic development versus environmental sustainability, and the extent to which local stakeholders would be able to work together towards a shared goal. Crossing these two uncertainties results in four plausible alternative scenarios for what Southern Transylvania might look like 30 years from now (Fig. 1.2). Artistic depictions of these scenarios are presented in Fig. 1.3.



**Fig. 1.2.** Four scenarios for Southern Transylvania in 2042, in relation to two axes of critical uncertainties.

### SCENARIO 1.

***Prosperity through growth:*** policy focus on the economy, strong local communities. In this scenario, small-scale farming is replaced by intensified, larger-scale, conventional agriculture. Forests are exploited where profitable, and tourism is restricted to the entertainment sector (e.g. new fun parks). Economic development is driven by local people and, consequently, people are becoming wealthier. However, the developments cause losses in farmland and forest biodiversity, and deterioration of the benefits that people receive from nature (e.g. reduced water quality and scenic beauty).

### SCENARIO 2.

***Our land, their wealth:*** policy focus on the economy, weak local communities. In this scenario, land use is also intensified, and also causes a decline in the benefits that people receive from nature. But in this scenario, economic development is driven not by locals but by foreign investors and, consequently, few locals benefit from it. The gap between rich and poor

widens. Crime and conflicts are widespread, including between ethnic groups. People leave their villages for Romanian towns or Western Europe, and farmland that is unprofitable for foreign companies is largely abandoned. Due to difficult socioeconomic conditions and a highly disturbed landscape, the tourism sector collapses.

### SCENARIO 3.

**Missed opportunity:** policy focus on the environment, weak local communities. In this scenario, locals are unable to capitalize on the opportunities provided by a pro-environment policy setting. Instead, foreign companies set up modern organic farms in the region, exploiting easy access to cheap land and labour. Semi-subsistence farming as it has been practiced for many decades is ongoing in the villages, while forests are exploited for firewood and sometimes logged illegally. Most locals are poor, and those who are able to, leave the area. Corruption, crime and conflict are common. Farmland biodiversity has declined due to intensification in some areas, and abandonment in others.

### SCENARIO 4.

**Balance brings beauty:** policy focus on the environment, strong local communities. This scenario describes a future in which locals collaborate and are able to capitalize on high national and international demand for organic agricultural products. Sustainable use of resources co-exists with intensified land use via modern organic farming methods. Vibrant cultural tourism and eco-tourism stabilize people's incomes from the agricultural sector. Although few people are financially wealthy, economic and social inequalities are relatively low, and community spirit is high. Cultural and natural capital is valued and actively maintained. This scenario was by far the most popular among local people, and is described in greater detail below.

## A widely shared vision: "Balance Brings Beauty"

Throughout our workshops, presentations to local communities, and subsequent interviews, almost invariably, "Balance Brings Beauty" emerged as a widely shared vision. From school children to guesthouse owners, from the elderly to church representatives, and from mayors to peasants, this scenario captured what most people wished for – a sustainable Transylvania, in which people and nature alike can thrive. At present, aspects of all four scenarios outlined above can be observed in Transylvania. And while, of course, not everybody will favour the vision encapsulated by "Balance Brings Beauty", its essence does seem to resonate particularly widely with a wide range of different people.

Here, we provide the full scenario narrative for Balance Brings Beauty. It is important to note that the following narrative was first developed in 2012, as a 30-year outlook into the future. It is customary for scenarios to be communicated in present tense, to give readers a vivid impression of what life in the future might be like. Hence, the following narrative is to be read as a narrative of conditions in Transylvania in 2042, rather than at present:

*"Demand for environmentally friendly practices was already high in Western Europe, when in 2020, France narrowly avoided a major nuclear accident. This event precipitated rapid political changes throughout the European Union (EU). Social justice and ecological sustainability were*

*adopted as guiding principles underpinning all EU regulations. Unlike its predecessor, the latest reform of the Common Agricultural Policy brought about fundamental changes, and is considered worldwide as a milestone towards sustainable development. Subsidies are now strongly focused on organic farming, available only to associations of farmers who can demonstrate a holistic, landscape-scale vision for sustainable resource use.*

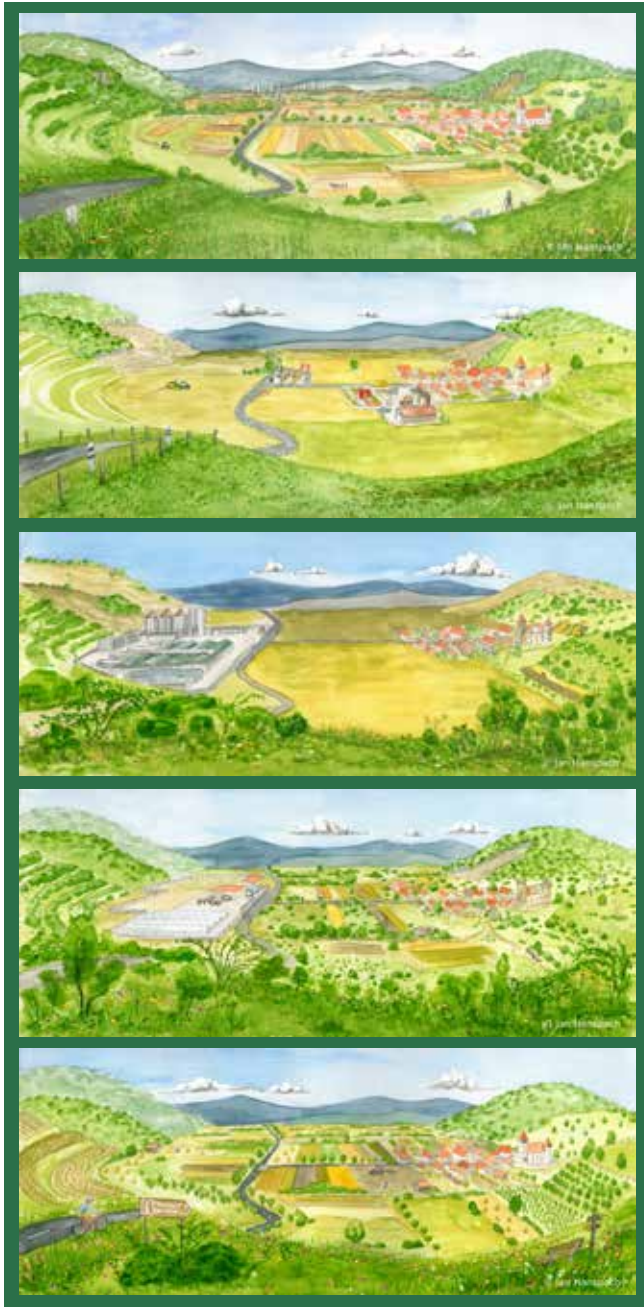
*Romania's education system improved substantially over the past few decades, enabling many locals in southern Transylvania to access the new EU subsidies for sustainable farming. Farms continue to be relatively small, but almost all farmers are now part of agricultural associations and practice modern organic farming, growing a variety of crops.*

*The forestry sector has also changed. Demand for wood products is high, but the majority of Romania's forestry sector is based on sustainable, low-intensity harvesting. Moreover, forest re-growth rates have increased substantially. While few forested areas remain untouched, Romania's forest estate is managed according to the best available science.*

*Farmland and forest biodiversity initially declined when land use was upgraded to modern organic practices, but the losses were relatively minor. Water from the fountains is just as clean as it was decades ago, and continues to be favoured as the cheapest source of drinking water in many villages.*

*A vibrant rural tourism industry has developed in the most scenic villages. Guesthouses are common, as are cafes and traditional festivals. Local people are proud that their cultural and natural heritage is attracting tourists from all over Europe. Few people in the region are rich in monetary terms, but hardly anybody is suffering from poverty. People cope well with occasional droughts, and are largely immune to the fluctuations in agricultural commodity prices that influence many farmers in Western Europe. Ethnic divides have all but disappeared, partly aided by common visits by foreigners and increasing openness towards different cultures. A healthy service industry is developing in addition to the most important income sectors, namely agriculture, forestry and tourism. While many young locals leave the region for a while, many of them come back because they are attracted by the lifestyle and scenic beauty in their home region.”*





**Fig. 1.3.** Five artistic depictions of Southern Transylvania in 2042. From top to bottom: (1) the status quo, (2) the scenario “Prosperity through growth”, (3) the scenario “Our land, their wealth”, (4) the scenario “Missed opportunity”, and (5) the scenario “Balance brings beauty”. The bottom scenario was popular among many different stakeholders and can be considered a widely shared vision for a sustainable Southern Transylvania.

## Outlook

The scenario “Balance Brings Beauty” widely resonates with people from many different walks of life in Southern Transylvania. As such, it can be seen as a broadly shared vision for the future of the region. A key feature of this vision is balanced progress in social, economic, and environmental spheres.

How can such progress be realized? This book seeks to lay out concrete suggestions for the way ahead. Chapters 2 and 3 provide additional background information, focusing on theoretical conceptions of sustainable development and existing sustainability initiatives in Transylvania, respectively. Chapters 4 to 7 then provide a theoretical foundation as well as concrete suggestions for how to upscale the many valuable sustainability initiatives already underway. This is followed by a discussion of the regional context in which local initiatives take place in Chapter 8. Chapter 9 concludes the book and lists specific recommendations for local communities, policy makers and civil society actors.

## Further information

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#### IN A NUTSHELL

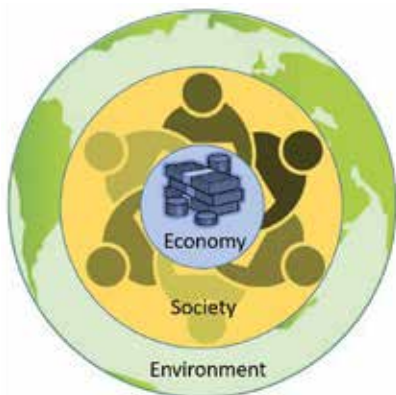
- Sustainability has many definitions.
- Different pathways to sustainability emphasize different possible solutions.
- Some actors will emphasize the role of national government, others that of local government; some advocate community empowerment while others advocate policy change; some see economic development as an opportunity while others see it as a possible threat.
- All of these viewpoints contain valuable insights, and there is nothing inherently right or wrong about any of them.
- To maximize the chances to reach the scenario “Balance Brings Beauty” for Southern Transylvania, it will be useful for actors to collaborate across different understandings of how to best foster sustainable development.

The previous chapter outlined a widely shared vision for the future of Southern Transylvania. In this chapter, we seek to embed this vision within international discussions on sustainable development. Broadly speaking, sustainable development is both a process and a desirable goal in its own right. It implies a healthy economy embedded within a healthy society, which in turn, is embedded within an intact environment (Fig. 2.1) – providing us with clean air, water, a stable climate, and many other services that life depends on.

Perhaps the most well-known definition of sustainable development dates back to 1987, when the United Nations World Commission on Environment and Development published its report *Our Common Future*. This report defined sustainable development as “development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs”. More recently, in 2015, the United Nations agreed on 17 Sustainable Development Goals, which range from topics on poverty, hunger and gender equality, to issues on energy, climate change and biodiversity, and also consider what kinds of collaborations are necessary to reach these goals (Box 2.1).

In this chapter, we outline four different pathways through which different scientists and societal actors have tried to define and give life to the notion of sustainable development: the green economy pathway, the low-carbon transformation pathway, the ecotopian pathway, and the transition movement pathway. We argue that aspects of all of these four different pathways have different strengths and limitations. Actors working in southern

Transylvania, in turn, might be best off recognizing such diversity of possible pathways to a sustainable future, and foster collaborations across different mindsets as to how exactly sustainable development ought to occur. Embracing diversity in this way should help to maximize the chances of success when it comes to reaching the vision outlined in the previous chapter.



**Fig. 2.1.** Sustainability can be seen as a nested hierarchy: Without a healthy environment, there can be no healthy society; and without a healthy society, there can be no healthy economy.

## The green economy pathway

The primary focus of this pathway is on sustained economic development. This, however, is seen to be constrained by environmental limits – for example, climate change may pose a threat to the viability of agriculture, or air pollution may pose a threat to the well-being of people in urban centres. The environment thus is considered important, but not so much in its own right, but rather because damage to the environment may impinge upon economic growth.

Advocates of a green economy tend to seek solutions that encourage businesses to act in more environmentally responsible ways. To this end, market-based solutions are often considered particularly suitable. Such solutions may take the form of subsidies and other incentives to encourage desirable activities; alongside taxes and other economic disincentives to discourage environmentally destructive activities. Subsidies and taxes, in turn, are government instruments, and for this reason, national governments in particular, are seen to play a central role in the development of a green economy.

While sustainable business and national policies are central to a green economy approach, other facets of sustainable development receive far less attention. For examples, local nuances in socioeconomic or ecological context as well as issues of social equity rarely receive explicit emphasis in a green economy framing.

Examples of a green economy approach are increasing. One nice example is the Switch Alliance in Quebec (Canada). This alliance of regional businesses calls for corrections to the institutional context within which businesses operate – demanding policies (such as eco-taxes) and incentives that enable businesses to grow economically, in a sustainable way.

## The low-carbon transformation pathway

Unlike the green economy pathway, the primary focus of a low-carbon transformation pathway is local. In this approach to sustainable development, local government plans, interventions and regulations are seen as central to bring about more sustainable outcomes. Typically, the low-carbon transformation pathway is driven by targets – local and regional governments might define relevant social and environmental criteria, and then put in place policies to reach these targets.

Sustainable development as envisioned through a low-carbon transformation pathway often emphasizes issues with direct implications for carbon emissions, such as transportation and waste management. Similarly, this focus is most likely to speak to urban people and policy makers, and indeed, examples of this transformation pathway are typically found in urban settings. Local businesses are often directly involved in solving problems, such that public-private partnerships are common.

The Swedish town of Växjö provides a nice example of a jurisdiction that has adopted a low-carbon transformation pathway. Its initial focus on energy use and transport has expanded to now address 30 different targets, including increasing the share of organic or locally produced food, and having 90% of households and businesses recycle their food waste by 2020.

Like the green economy pathway, the low-carbon transformation pathway does not challenge the fundamental values and mindsets underpinning the ways societies are currently organized. Rather, existing systems are managed in ways that encourage or discourage specific actions that have an influence on carbon emissions.

## The ecotopian pathway

A third, and very different pathway to sustainable development is the “ecotopian pathway”. Unlike the previous two pathways, this pathway is not satisfied with status quo systems, but demands fundamental changes to how our economies and communities interact with the natural environment. Solutions such as those advocated by the green economy pathway or the low-carbon transformation pathway are seen as falling far short of what is needed to truly reach sustainability: the ecotopian pathway demands a more radical departure from growth-oriented approaches, and more than just incremental changes to status quo practices.

While the view of current socioeconomic systems is rather negative in the ecotopian pathway, the view of people as such is quite optimistic. There is a fundamental belief that many people would love to live in ways that are sustainable – but unfortunately, they are constrained through existing systems and institutions, and for this reason, cannot successfully live sustainable lifestyles, despite a desire to do so.

With this framing in mind then, a possible solution put forward by advocates of the ecotopian pathway is to work outside the mainstream institutions that keep people locked

within unsustainable lifestyles. The ecotopian pathway believes that local communities will, in many cases, identify and pursue new, bold visions of how to live sustainably. Key goals within the ecotopian pathway therefore are community empowerment and the dismantling of harmful and outdated rules and incentive structures.

Unlike the previous two pathways, the ecotopian pathway emphasizes individual initiative and experimentation, and tends to see government structures as likely obstacles rather than the engines of positive change. An example of the pursuit of the ecotopian pathway is the suburb of Vauban in Freiburg, Germany. Here, over 40 community groups came together to take over a previous French army base, and initially without much government support, created a new urban centre, characterized by a uniquely sustainable, modern, urban lifestyle. The suburb is car-free, includes many green spaces, has short walking distances between important amenities, and boasts a wide range of community-oriented initiatives.

## The transition movements pathway

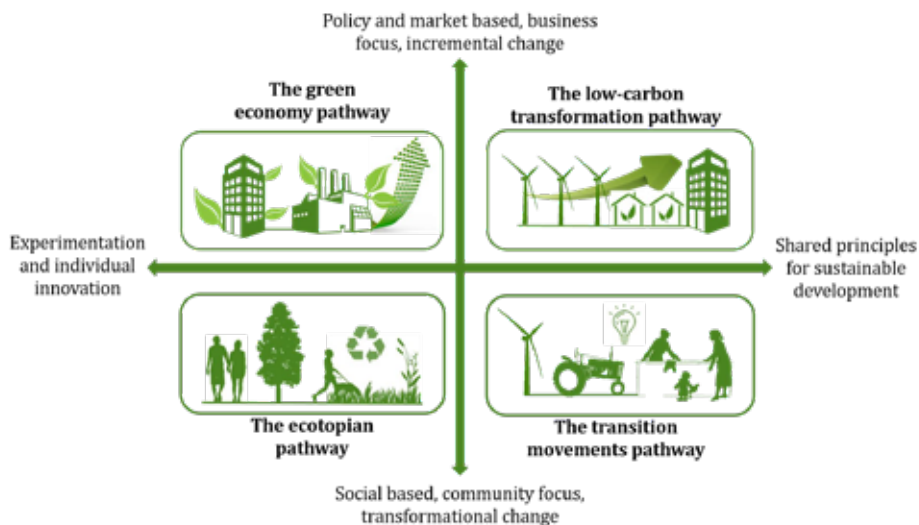
Like the ecotopian pathway, the transition movements pathway also sees engaged citizens as the key agents of change. However, while the ecotopian pathway assumes that people would like to act sustainably, but are constrained by current institutions in their efforts to do so, transition movements emphasize the need for reaching out to many people, including those who are perhaps not yet convinced that fundamental changes are needed.

The transition movement pathway is a direct response to some citizens being dissatisfied with what they perceive to be agendas driven by governments and big business. Transition movements call for a fundamental change to the status quo, including different lifestyles and value systems. Transition movements emphasize bottom-up initiatives. On the positive side, this can lead to new and visionary ideas being pursued, and can empower local people to take charge of their lives and create the reality they want to live in. On the downside, and in contrast to the first two pathways outlined above, a strong focus on bottom-up change runs the risk of inadequate leadership to bring about coherent and coordinated actions for change.

Most transition movements to date have been linked to the development trajectories of towns and cities, having resulted in a global “transition town movement”. This movement plays out in very different ways around the world, but still adheres to a core set of shared principles. Further details on the transition town movement, and on how Southern Transylvania might learn from it, are outlined in Chapter 4.

## Implications for Southern Transylvania

Of course, the four pathways outlined above (Fig. 2.2) are not the only ways to pursue sustainable development – many of the activities taking place in Transylvania will not match directly to any of these four different transition pathways. And still, while the four pathways above are somewhat stereotypical extremes, it is likely that different actors in



**Fig. 2.2.** Overview of the four different pathways to sustainability outlined in this chapter.

Transylvania will implicitly or explicitly pursue aspects that are reminiscent to different extents of the four different pathways. For examples, some actors might emphasize the importance of national or EU policy change, whereas others might focus more strongly on solutions driven by local government. Yet other actors might believe that local communities are the most important agents of change, and therefore emphasize community empowerment. Consistent with this, social justice will be at the forefront of the minds of some actors, but will take more of a back seat position in some other actors' agendas. Divergent viewpoints are also likely to be held on the role of economic growth – is it a key engine of sustainable development, or primarily a threat to the natural environment?

We argue that none of these different nuances in viewpoints are inherently right or wrong when it comes to Southern Transylvania. Instead, to reach the ambitious vision outlined in the previous chapter, much can be gained by seeing this diversity of worldviews and actors as an opportunity. Different worldviews and pathways to sustainable development are unique in their strengths but also in their blind spots, and a comprehensive strategy for sustainable development will recognize the value of diversity and collaboration across viewpoints towards a common goal. Transylvania has a centuries old history of diversity. One modern facet of this diversity is that different viewpoints on sustainable development co-exist. Working with this diversity, in turn, provides unique opportunities for learning and creating truly innovative solutions.

## Concluding remarks

Southern Transylvania has the unique opportunity to become a global role model of sustainable development. While many European landscapes have lost most of their cultural

and natural heritage on their way to greater prosperity, Transylvania has the opportunity to reach a better future for all, without repeating the mistakes made in other parts of Europe. While other regions invest large amounts of money in environmental remediation measures, Transylvania is still rich in natural resources, and at this stage, has no need for such measures. Sustainable development for Transylvania will mean getting the most out of the four pathways outlined above – combining institutional change and bottom-up change, community empowerment and policy reform, and balancing the economic, social, and environmental aspects of sustainability.

Having laid out a widely shared vision for Southern Transylvania in Chapter 1, and having introduced in general terms the many different facets of sustainable development in this Chapter, the next chapter will provide an overview of the many different sustainability initiatives already underway in Transylvania. Following this, Chapter 4 will introduce three concrete approaches through which existing initiatives can be amplified. The remainder of the book is then dedicated to working through these approaches in concrete terms, outlining suggestions for how to put theory into practice.

## **BOX 2.1.**

### **The United Nations Sustainable Development Goals.**

In 2015, the United Nations agreed on a set of seventeen Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) as part of the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda. These goals, which are further specified via 169 individual targets, seek to provide guidance for achieving genuine progress in matters of social justice, environment and economic development through collaborative, local processes.

#### **Goal 1.**

No Poverty – “End poverty in all its forms everywhere.”

#### **Goal 2.**

Zero Hunger – “End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition, and promote sustainable agriculture.”

#### **Goal 3.**

Good Health and Well-Being for People – “Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages.”

#### **Goal 4.**

Quality Education – “Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all.”

#### **Goal 5.**

Gender Equality – “Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls.”

**Goal 6.**

Clean Water and Sanitation – “Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all.”

**Goal 7.** Affordable and Clean Energy – “Ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all.”

**Goal 8.**

Decent Work and Economic Growth – “Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all.”

**Goal 9.**

Industry, Innovation, and Infrastructure – “Build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization, and foster innovation.”

**Goal 10.**

Reducing Inequalities – “Reduce income inequality within and among countries.”

**Goal 11.**

Sustainable Cities and Communities – “Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient, and sustainable.”

**Goal 12.**

Responsible Consumption and Production – “Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns.”

**Goal 13.**

Climate Action – “Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts by regulating emissions and promoting developments in renewable energy.”

**Goal 14.**

Life Below Water – “Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development.”

**Goal 15.**

Life on Land – “Protect, restore and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, and halt and reverse land degradation and halt biodiversity loss.”

**Goal 16.**

Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions – “Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels.”

**Goal 17.**

Partnerships for the Goals – “Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the global partnership for sustainable development”.

## Further information

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Forum Synergies – Linking sustainable practices throughout Europe

Website: [http://www.forum-synergies.eu/index\\_en.html](http://www.forum-synergies.eu/index_en.html)

LUEDERITZ, C., ABSON, D.J., AUDET, R. and LANG, D.J. (2017): Many pathways toward sustainability: not conflict but co-learning between transition narratives. *Sustainability Science*, 12, 393-407.

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Website: <http://www.hnvlink.eu/innovations/eastern-hills-of-cluj/>

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## Sustainability Initiatives in Transylvania

### IN A NUTSHELL

- Many initiatives already try to foster sustainability in Southern Transylvania.
- This chapter introduces some examples of such initiatives.
- Existing initiatives target cultural heritage conservation, nature conservation, small-scale farming, agro-tourism and eco-tourism, rural community development, and education.
- Many dozens of actors are involved in these initiatives, and these have begun to collaborate on sharing information, skills and resources to directly act or lobby for change.
- The rich array of existing sustainability initiatives can be seen as valuable “seeds”.
- These seeds can be the beginnings of a bold vision for a sustainable Southern Transylvania, such as the “Balance Brings Beauty” vision laid out in Chapter 1.

What does sustainable development mean for the people in Transylvania, and what kinds of activities to support sustainable development already exist? As outlined in the previous chapter, sustainable development entails numerous dimensions, and not all dimensions are equally important to all people pursuing sustainability.

Our work in Transylvania to date suggests that indeed, there are differences in how exactly different actors believe sustainability ought to be pursued – but perhaps more importantly, our work also uncovered some striking similarities across many different stakeholders. More than anything, many actors emphasize local community as the key arena for negotiation and implementation of sustainable development (Fig. 3.1). Good social relations, in this context, are often seen as valuable in their own right, as well as the all-important glue holding together different initiatives seeking to support sustainability.

This chapter concludes the introductory section of this book, by giving an overview of existing sustainability initiatives in Southern Transylvania. We provide examples of existing activities and outline the links between actors involved in these activities. The background provided in this chapter provides the basis for the following chapter, which will introduce various ways to grow and expand sustainability initiatives.





**Fig. 3.1.** When local actors were asked to prioritize the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, issues related to strong communities were often seen as particularly important. This figure is an example of the results of such a ranking exercise with a local civil society actor, with the items deemed most important placed at the top.

## Sustainability in action

Broadly speaking, sustainability initiatives in Southern Transylvania occur in the areas of cultural heritage conservation, nature conservation, support for small-scale farming, agro-tourism and eco-tourism, rural community development, and education. The area of cultural heritage conservation has been particularly prominent, and arguably, has been a key starting point for initiatives in the other areas. The conservation and restoration of Saxon heritage is often central to this. It has involved the protection of various churches and citadels, but also the restoration of many farmhouses. Notably, the preservation of culturally important buildings is only the scaffolding for many other activities that engage with local traditions in a range of different ways. For example, the rhubarb festival is a cultural event held once a year in May. It celebrates the value of the local gastronomy using the rhubarb plant as a flagship to strengthen local identity. The festival thus serves as a cultural space to share culinary knowledge, brings added value to local species, and reactivates old forms of social organization like the *Nachbarschaft* or the *Schwesternschaft* (since the festival is organized by the Women’s Association of Saschiz). Similarly, events that weave together gastronomy and culture such as the established “Transylvanian Brunch” with its related events “Bike & Brunch” and “Flavours and Sounds of Transylvania” take place each year from April to September or October. These

events bring together people from all walks of life wishing to celebrate food and culture: tourists, local producers from remote villages, and small-scale tourism businesses. This, in turn, provides an opportunity for multicultural exchange and enlivens traditions, for example through forgotten recipes, while also providing economic returns to villagers. Events can also serve to connect stakeholders, such as NGOs from different areas of expertise. For example, The Transylvanian Brunch was initiated by the Local Action Group (LAG) Microregiunea Hârtibaciu together with the My Transylvania Association and other NGOs. These are just some of the many examples of initiatives specifically targeting cultural heritage. Collectively, these initiatives especially address the sustainable development goals on fostering well-being (Goal 3) and sustainable communities (Goal 11).

Especially since Romania joined the European Union, nature conservation has become a second main area in which many stakeholders work to actively support sustainable development. One example is the proclamation of the Breite wood-pasture near Sighișoara as a protected area. The biodiversity value of this wood-pasture had been carefully documented, ultimately leading to its official protection (instead of its destruction for a Dracula theme park, which had been an alternative development suggestion). Other activities have focused on rare or threatened bird species such as the Lesser Spotted Eagle (*Clanga pomarina*), which has become rare in much of its previous range but persists in the open valleys of Southern Transylvania. Scientists have been working to better understand its habitat requirements so that farmland management can be targeted accordingly. Biodiversity conservation NGOs are taking increasingly holistic approaches. For example, the NGO Milvus, through advancing the notion of ecosystem services, has worked to clarify the value of the natural environment to policy-makers. Forests, too, have received considerable attention by conservation activists. While selective firewood extraction has been a part of the management of Transylvanian forests for many centuries, industrial-scale illegal logging has greatly increased since the communist era. Some activists have made it their mission to carefully document and investigate incidences of illegal logging, such that lawsuits can be filed against the companies and individuals involved. The primary sustainable development goals tackled by nature conservation activities relate to safeguarding life on land (Goal 15), but also to sustainable consumption and production (Goal 12).

A third major area of activity relates to providing support to the ongoing practice of small-scale farming. Small-scale farming has generally become much more challenging over the last few decades, especially since Romania joined the European Union. Economic viability is a key problem for many smallholder farmers – despite it being widely acknowledged that small-scale farming is what has shaped both the social and ecological values of southern Transylvania. Numerous activities have emerged to strengthen small-scale farmers, or as some people prefer to call them, “peasants”. By engaging in self-organized mutual support associations, like the Eco Ruralis Association, peasant farmers advocate for their rights, and make their interests heard in national and international policy debates. Moreover, some NGOs (e.g. Fundația ADEPT, Mihai Eminescu Trust, Eco Ruralis Association, Pogány-havas Association) have supported smallholders in gaining access to EU subsidies for sustainable land management. Similarly, new milk collection points have been established, enabling small-scale producers to contribute the small amounts of milk they produce to larger markets than they could otherwise access. Also, historically, grazing

land was often used communally, but this has changed in the recent past. More wealthy farmers often receive premium access to pastures – with adverse effects on the majority of other community members (who own few livestock), as well as on the ecological condition of pastures. To reverse this trend, which is neither socially nor ecologically sustainable, farmers associations have begun to reclaim pastures as common property. A final example spans numerous dimensions: through advocating sustainable peasant lifestyles as part of a global “slow food” movement, some individuals have gained major public attention, seeking to advocate not only better economic conditions for smallholder farmers, but promoting different, more sustainable lifestyles for both producers and consumers (Box 3.1). Activities related to sustainable small-scale farming support sustainable development goals related to human well-being (Goal 3), decent work (Goal 8), industry and infrastructure (Goal 9), responsible production (Goal 12), and sustainable partnerships (Goal 17).

## BOX 3.1.

### Peasant Farming

*Contributed by Daniel Cismaş, manager of the ecological Țopa farm*

Dan, Tincuța, Maria, Ana and Dragoș Cismaş are a family who have followed a path of ecological agriculture for more than ten years. Since 2009, they have managed Țopa ecological farm, processing their products carefully through traditional methods: cheese, canned vegetables and medicinal herbs, both for themselves and with surplus going to the market. To gain the trust of their customers and create transparency, the family receives guests on the farm, who can buy products and have lunch there. This promotes direct sale, although the farm also has customers among the guesthouses and restaurants around Sighișoara.

With business going fairly well, members of the Cismaş family could simply mind their own business, but they decided to open-heartedly engage with the community. Having learned everything on the go, they wanted their farm to be a meeting place for others also wishing to learn about ecological agriculture, and therefore initiated collaborations with neighbours, schools, young people and research institutes. The family has also been involved in setting up the Eco Ruralis Association, an NGO promoting and supporting peasant farming and small to medium-sized family farming. Although there are still relatively few others who think and act like them, they do not lose faith, nor their belief that the future also depends on them.

Drawing on his experience and active involvement in coordinating the national peasant association, Eco Ruralis, Daniel Cismaş has had the opportunity to participate in international lobbying activities through the European chapter of the global peasant movement “La Vía Campesina”.. This international organization has members in 80 countries and promotes peasants’ rights, argues for access to land, local resources, food sovereignty, ecological agriculture and the use of local seeds. “La Vía Campesina” put together a “Declaration on peasants rights”, which it promotes internationally (see also Box 4.3).

Directly flowing on from abundant cultural and natural heritage, and the need for economically viable livelihoods, Southern Transylvania has an increasingly vibrant sustainable tourism industry – centred around agro-tourism and eco-tourism in particular. Initiatives in this area abound. Many restored farmhouses have, for example, been turned into guesthouses. The families operating these businesses typically provide packages that include accommodation as well as meals, thus providing tourists with an authentic cultural experience. Other sustainable activities for tourists are also growing in prominence – including guided tours for important sites of cultural heritage and opportunities to experience otherwise inaccessible parts of the landscape by horse or horse and cart rides. Moreover, tenths of kilometres of marked bicycle trails between the Saxon villages and their fortified churches are the result of the efforts of several NGOs, with the foundations being laid by the Fundația ADEPT and with marking contributions by the Mioritics Association (see Box 5.2). In recognition of tourism providing important economic opportunities, efforts are beginning to brand appropriate businesses as providing “certified eco-destinations”. Tourism on its own cannot be the sole basis for a sustainable Southern Transylvania. However, through its focus on economic opportunities (Goal 8) that can foster the consumption of sustainable tourism (Goal 12), it is likely to play a significant role in reaching a future such as the “Balance Brings Beauty” vision outlined in Chapter 1.

While tourism is important, it is not the only way to contribute to rural community development. Some initiatives started with a focus on tourism, but have since considerably expanded their mandate to more broadly support community life – such as the Women’s Association in Viscri (Box 3.2). Others have sought to foster rural community development in different ways altogether. For example, the LAG Microregiunea Hârtibaciu is involved in education and integration initiatives targeting the Roma community. This Local Action Group also holds dissemination sessions on the eligibility and selection criteria for projects that could be funded under the local development strategy it designed (see also Box 3.3). In addition, the group promotes both material and immaterial cultural heritage through events and inventory activities. In this way, it contributes to sustainable development, focusing on human well-being (Goal 3) and decent work (Goal 8). Furthermore, its services help to reduce inequalities (Goal 10) and improve community life in general (Goal 11).

Finally, recognition has increased in Southern Transylvania that education plays a central role in many different realms. Perhaps most obviously, new initiatives are emerging that target environmental education of school children in particular. This is critical at a time where formal school curricula often lag behind real-world challenges, whose solution requires making connections between different subject areas, rather than studying these areas in isolation. Notably, environmental education does not stop with school children. For example, the recently established Remarkable Trees Project seeks to involve local people in documenting the biodiversity values of wood-pastures, which were important land cover types in many Saxon villages. Through the direct engagement of citizens in scientific surveys, local community members learn to re-discover the beauty of “their” trees, which empowers them to take ownership of their future management. Other education initiatives are not directly related to the environment, but focus on socioeconomic aspects of sustainable development. Thus, for instance, there are initiatives to train dis-

advantaged community members in traditional trades, or support children in gaining skills related to the increasingly important field of information technology. Education activities directly support the sustainable development goals on improved education (Goal 4), and through this, indirectly support many of the other sustainable development goals.

## BOX 3.2.

### The Women's Association "Viscri începe".

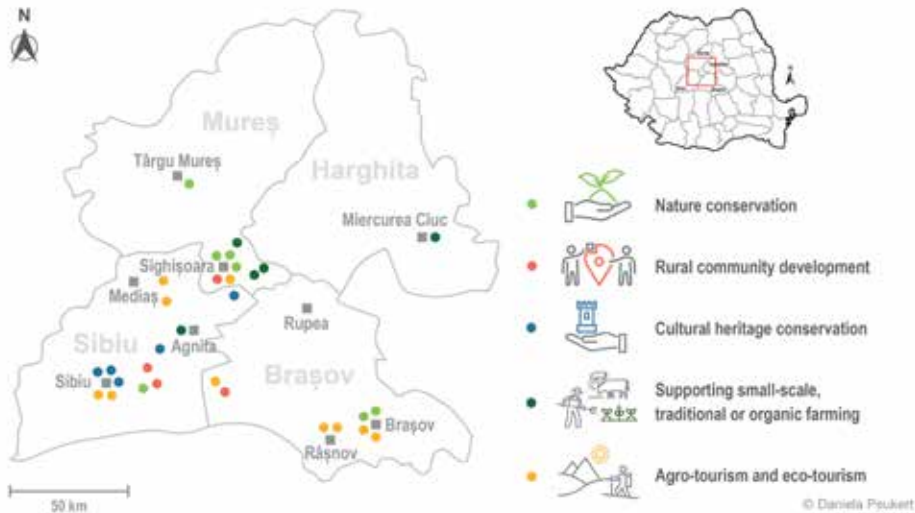
*Contributed by the author team, through a workshop with the Women's Association, and Tina Bing, one of the coordinators of the association*

On a warm day, you see women in Viscri sit on benches at their gates and knit. They produce woollen socks for the women's association "Viscri începe", which was founded in 2001. When the project started, the women knitted coloured socks from old jumpers they had unravelled. But very soon the quality and variety of the products increased, and more and more women joined the association. Today, the project involves around 80 women from the village who knit and felt various products – not only socks, but also mittens, hats, headbands, blankets, jumpers, felted slippers and hats, using as raw material wool from sheep in the region. Through the association, the women coordinate the production and distribution of their products. These are then sold to tourists in a small shop in Viscri, through an online shop and on Christmas markets, for example in Germany. The approach has been fruitful: women generate additional, seasonally independent earnings through their work. This is especially important in winter, when there is very little paid agricultural work. Notwithstanding tangible economic benefits, the association has achieved much more than just improved incomes: the women have experienced that their craft is significant, and that they can change something in their community. Further changes in the village have since been initiated by the association. For example, the association has established afternoon homework help for children, supports the commuting costs for students who attend secondary school in the city, operates vocational orientation seminars as well as language and computer courses for young people, and has helped to enable access to medical services, especially for women and elderly people. Newly envisaged projects of the association include the expansion of the village community house, including a seminar and learning centre for children and teenagers, as well as a home nursing service in the community of Bunești, which will care for approximately 90 patients.

## Who is involved?

This chapter only scratched the surface of the many exciting initiatives already underway to support sustainability in Southern Transylvania (Fig. 3.2). Obtaining a truly complete overview is impossible, both because there are so many initiatives, and because there are new ones emerging all the time.





**Fig. 3.2.** Map depicting the location of 31 initiatives trying to foster sustainable development in Southern and Eastern Transylvania, in the fields of nature conservation, rural community development, cultural heritage conservation, small-scale farming, agro-tourism and eco-tourism. The colours indicate the main domain of activity of each initiative.

In an effort to nevertheless obtain a structured overview of which actors are involved in the many activities related to sustainable development in Southern Transylvania, we surveyed local organizations, and asked them to list other organizations that they were aware of, and that they had worked with. We uncovered more than 30 different core actors in this way – but undoubtedly, there are many more projects than actors, and many more additional (perhaps less well known) actors that we are as yet unaware of. The existing tapestry of sustainability actors thus is extremely rich. Moreover, many different kinds of collaborations among actors are already underway. For example, some initiatives share materials, resources or tools with one another; or they may exchange information; or together advocate for changes in certain policies that hamper sustainability. The rich array of existing initiatives, together with a growing spirit of collaboration, provides an excellent starting point from which to work towards a vision such as that encapsulated by the scenario “Balance Brings Beauty”, outlined in Chapter 1.

### Growing the seeds

This chapter has shown that there are many different kinds of “seeds for sustainability” growing throughout Transylvania. Using this metaphor of seeds, we might ask – how can these seeds best grow into beautiful flowers, or strong trees? How can the seeds, trees and flowers spread, such that Transylvania can become a rich garden of sustainability initiatives?

We attempt to answer these questions in the following chapters. Chapter 4 will provide a conceptual framework for how we can think about the process of getting from individ-

ual seeds to a garden. Following this excursion into a more academic framing, Chapters 5, 6 and 7 then provide concrete strategies of what can be done to strategically build on existing initiatives.

### **BOX 3.3.**

#### **LAG Dealurile Târnavelor: "Keep it local!" A local approach for rural development**

*Contributed by Florentina Călugăr, Manager LAG Dealurile Târnavelor*

LAG Dealurile Târnavelor was formed as an NGO in 2007, under the EU LEADER programme, to engage local actors in the design and delivery of a local development strategy, decision-making and resource allocation for the development of a specific rural area known as the "Târnavă Mare" area.

Our partnership has 47 members: 8 communes (public sector), 21 local entrepreneurs representing the private sector, and 18 NGOs. A board where the private sector holds the majority makes the current decisions.

Bringing together public, private and civil-society stakeholders from our area, in 2013 and 2016 we qualified for funding from the National Program for Rural Development (PNDR) to implement the local development (LDS) strategy. As such, we made steps towards the main objectives for the area and our overall goal: the sustainable socio-economic development of all LAG Dealurile Târnavelor member communes and the entire area.

Using cooperation between local actors as a key to developing the local strategy, the financing measures included in the LDS became an early success. Over 40 projects initiated by private and public beneficiaries from our area were financed and successfully implemented during the previous programming period (2007-2013). Most of them were dedicated to launching tourism activities, modernizing agricultural activities and supporting young farmers' start-ups. Other projects financed were meant to provide public goods and services to rural areas, thus contributing to more prosperous, healthy, attractive and viable rural communities and improving their quality of life.

Through the local selection criteria, we prioritize, wherever possible, those applications paying attention to biodiversity, local architecture, traditional crafts and eco-tourism and improving energy efficiency.

LAG Dealurile Târnavelor also used LEADER tools for developing a national cooperation project with LAG Podișul Mediașului and LAG Microregiunea Hârtibaciu to promote the cultural and culinary heritage of these three territories, training the local producers and working with them to set up local markets. The main actors from the regional level in the heritage field (conservation, restoration) were brought together in a series of conferences promoting traditional crafts, making a common recipe book, and organizing local festivals.

We constantly face a decrease in agricultural employment, so the goal is to increase sustainable economic activities that preserve and value our main competitive advantages (natural and cultural heritage). We need to encourage innovative solutions for rural businesses, in order to stabilize the population from Dealurile Târnavelor/Târnavă Mare area, but also as a proof of our partnership capacity to preserve and promote local identity. It's not a coincidence that the motto of the local development strategy is "we know best what we want the place to be like where we live".



## Further information

Milvus Group

Website: <https://milvus.ro>

My Transylvania Association

Website: <https://mytransylvania.ro/>

Neuer Weg Association

Website: <http://www.neuerweg.ro/>

Sustainable Landscapes in Central Romania – Research Project

Website: <https://peisajesustenable.wordpress.com>

Willy Schuster: Dare the down-shift to a self-sufficient organic life

TEDx Talk: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fKxiJV89Hyw>





### Amplifying Sustainability Initiatives

#### IN A NUTSHELL

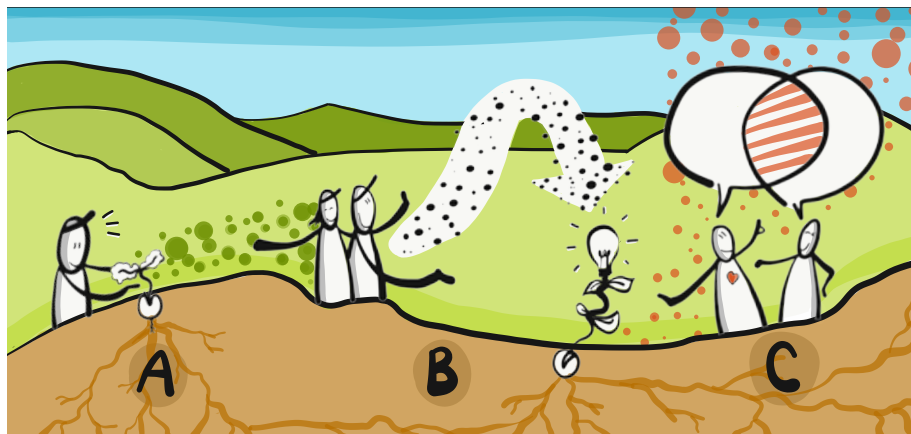
- One powerful way to accelerate humanity's journey towards sustainability is to expand, spread and learn from existing sustainability initiatives.
- We introduce three complementary ways of amplifying existing sustainability initiatives.
- *Scaling within* is equivalent to ensuring that an existing seed can put roots into the ground; it is about firmly establishing a given sustainability initiative so that it can grow.
- *Scaling out* is equivalent to allowing seeds to spread; it is about transferring the principles or practice of a given sustainability initiative to a new location or context.
- *Scaling beyond* is equivalent to combining and looking after many seeds, flowers and trees; it is about working with people's values and with laws and institutions to support sustainability.
- We provide examples from around the world of all three strategies (scaling within, out and beyond).
- This chapter lays the foundation for the following three chapters, which focus on applying the amplification strategies outlined here to Southern Transylvania.

With humanity having caused climate change and record rates of biodiversity extinction, consensus is growing that transformative changes towards sustainability are needed. But how can such changes take place in practice, not only locally, but around the world? The answer might be surprisingly simple: we need to expand, spread and learn from all those initiatives already underway that are already making localized but significant contributions to sustainability.

In the previous chapter, we gave examples of the many local sustainability initiatives that contribute to positive change in Southern Transylvania. Metaphorically, we termed these initiatives "seeds", because from these local initiatives, significant regional change is beginning to emerge. In this chapter, we introduce three amplification strategies – that is, strategies how existing local initiatives can be harnessed strategically to bring about significant regional change towards sustainability. Drawing on the metaphor of such initiatives as seeds, we recognize three main amplification strategies. The first strategy is to



ensure that existing seeds can put roots into the ground (“scaling within”); the second is to spread seeds to new locations (“scaling out”); and the third strategy is to allow different seeds to grow together such that they become a beautiful and well-tended garden (“scaling beyond”) (Fig. 1). In this chapter, we explain each of these three strategies in general terms. The following chapters then provide concrete examples of how these strategies can be applied to amplify sustainability initiatives in Southern Transylvania.



**Fig. 4.1.** Three strategies to amplify local sustainability initiatives are scaling within (A), scaling out (B) and scaling beyond (C). These three strategies are introduced in this chapter, and their application to Southern Transylvania is discussed in Chapters 5, 6 and 7.

## Scaling within: enabling seeds to put roots into the ground

When a new initiative starts in pursuit of sustainability or any other goal, it can be quite fragile. As with a seed, the first important step for an initiative to grow is for it to put strong roots into the ground. Once firmly anchored to its nourishing soil, it can then begin to grow stronger, sometimes quite quickly. Scaling within thus describes the process of a sustainability initiative becoming firmly established, thus being able to generate increasingly rapid impact.

Examples of this phase of establishment and growth have been observed around the world. For example, in a conservation context in West Kalimantan (Indonesia), the Alam Sehat Lestari organization (ASRI), whose name means “healthy nature everlasting”, stabilized its impact by involving communities and organizations around the Gunung Palung National Park to assist with various conservation and reforestation programs. ASRI also organized knowledge sharing about sustainable farming and secured the support from other non-governmental organizations and universities to increase its capacity to adapt to new challenges. Elsewhere, in the context of renewable energies, the community of Schönau in Germany initiated, implemented and sustained a strategy for the self-sufficient supply of energy. After the Chernobyl disaster, the community organized public

meetings to inform citizens about risks related to nuclear energy, benefits of renewable energy, and energy saving measures. From this initiative, the idea emerged to further support the production of renewable energy through direct investments from interested citizens. These efforts ultimately resulted in a community-led electric power cooperative with more than 650 members. In a farming context, too, scaling within can be critical to anchor and grow sustainability benefits (Box 4.1).

## BOX 4.1

### Scaling within to make farming sustainable: the Vereinigte Heidehöfe initiative in Germany

*Contributed by Hans-Peter Bockelmann, Germany*

The association Vereinigte Heidehöfe für Naturschutz (VHN, “association of heathland farmers for nature conservation”) was established in 2017 in the Lüneburger Heide, an internationally recognized cultural landscape in Northern Germany. The association was established by farmers who were dissatisfied with mainstream conservation actors active in the region, and who felt there was a need for income diversification. The Lüneburger Heide contains Germany’s oldest and largest nature reserve, established in 1909 by the Verein Naturschutzpark to protect vast areas of heathlands in the area. The newly established association of heathland farmers argues that nature conservation would be more effective and sustainable if farmers and landowners themselves were put in charge, rather than external agencies. The goals of the VHN association include networking among its members, distributing information about conservation regulations and available subsidies for conservation activities, as well as protecting traditional ways of farming and cultural heritage in the region. Due to a lack of economic options for farmers because of numerous restrictions imposed because of the conservation status of the area, the members of the association collaborate to maintain their ways of living and farming for decades into the future. Within just over a year, the association gained approximately 90 members responsible for the management of around 10,000 ha of land, demonstrating that linking nature conservation and agriculture is both appealing and possible.



## Scaling out: spreading the seeds

Once seeds have established, put their roots into the ground and reached a certain size, they can begin to spread. Such “scaling out” of an existing initiative occurs when the same or a similar set of activities is transferred to a new location or context. A globally well-known example is that of the Slow Food movement, which also has supporters in Transylvania. In response to the rapid growth in unsustainable “fast food”, this movement originated in Italy in 1989, and since then has spread all over the world. The Slow Food movement now has more than 1,500 local chapters (“convivas”) worldwide. Members spread the Slow Food philosophy through hosting shared meals and tastings, visiting local producers and farms, sharing invitations to conferences and discussions, and organizing film screenings and festivals. Through such activities, the Slow Food movement aims to support local food cultures and traditions, thereby providing an alternative to increasingly fast paced lifestyles and hoping to re-ignite people’s genuine interest in the food they eat.

Notably, when scaling out, it is not essential that an existing initiative is copied in every precise detail. Indeed, because a given initiative is transferred to a different context, it is often useful and necessary to make some changes, and instead maintain the essential ideas and values of an initiative, rather than the details of its precise implementation. For example, adopting the principles underpinning a successful initiative, rather than its precise technical details, has been a critical determinant of the success of the global transition town movement, which we briefly introduced in Chapter 2 (see Box 4.2 for further details).

## Scaling beyond: from seeds to a garden

Finally, growing a garden and not just a random bunch of seeds – that is, pursuing a coherent vision for a sustainable future – requires bringing together and actively looking after many different seeds, flowers and trees. This effort has sometimes been termed “scaling beyond”, and relates to making sure that strategies are in place to ensure that a garden is not only created but also carefully and appropriately maintained. Scaling beyond therefore is about fostering intrinsic and extrinsic change in human-environment relationships.

Intrinsic change occurs when there is a change in the values, beliefs and mindsets of people. Intrinsic change has been observed, for example, in the context of time banks. Time banks have been used in the United Kingdom and are a modern way of exchanging services, where people give one hour of service for a nominated purpose, and in turn, receive one time credit for it (instead of a financial payment). Time banks have contributed to increased social inclusion in communities by fostering reciprocal altruism. Strengthening a sense of community, improving learning at school, helping public housing residents to save money, supporting hospital patients as they return to regular life at home, bringing art and music into a community, and helping seniors remain at home as they age all have been important components of a time bank portfolio. This approach thus provides an alternative to the conventional way of valuing work and welfare only through monetary means.

## BOX 4.2

### Scaling out: the global transition town movement

The Transition Town movement started in 2006 in the city of Totnes, where the citizens asked themselves what a community-led response to global sustainability challenges might look like. The idea of a “transition town” rapidly spread to small towns, urban areas, small neighbourhoods and universities. Today, the transition town movement has become a global network of similarly minded communities in towns and cities around the world.

Transition town communities seek to achieve transitions by finding a balance between the *head*, the *heart* and the *hands*. This means they try to apply collective intelligence to find better ways of living (using their heads), work with compassion (using their hearts), and turn visions and ideas into a tangible reality (using their hands). Despite a diversity of creative initiatives being taken worldwide, transition town communities all share ten guiding principles that help orient their activities towards change for sustainability. The principles range from how to treat humans and nature, to how to work together in a free, experimental, creative and collaborative way, and include respecting resource limits and promoting social justice. In implementing the ten guiding principles, transition towns are similar in their mindsets, but differ substantially in their specific foci. Concrete activities pursued thus range from growing food in urban areas to implementing local currencies or running community-led energy plants.

To give an example, the transition towns of Bath and Corsham in the United Kingdom established Bath & West Community Energy, to generate energy locally. Since its establishment in June 2010, this initiative has installed 12.35 MW of solar photovoltaic in its own community energy projects, has collected 16 million pounds through community share and bond offers for its own and its partners’ projects, and has re-distributed 115,000 pounds of profits back into local community carbon reduction and fuel poverty projects. Another example is the Crystal Palace Food

Market in London, which is a transition town project that brings high quality, locally sourced, low-carbon food into Crystal Palace. The aim of this initiative is to create community resilience through supporting small-scale sustainable farming and local food producers, promoting local food production and communities, and creating local employment.



*Haynes Lane farmer's market, Crystal Palace (Source: Wikimedia Commons; Photographer: SheffGruff, 2013; CC BY-SA 3.0).*

While intrinsic change is about people's inherent motivation to contribute to sustainability, fostering extrinsic change can help to provide additional incentives. Extrinsic change refers to reforms to formal institutions such as laws and regulations, which can significantly shape or constrain the actions for or against sustainability in any given location. Extrinsic forms of scaling beyond often originate from the impetus, enthusiasm and initiative of an individual or small number of people, but then take on the role of an institution in their own right. A nice example is the work of PLAN, which is the Planned Lifetime Advocacy Network in Canada, a family-led charitable organization formed by parents of children with disabilities. PLAN's mission is to support parents of children with disabilities to provide a good life and future for their children. The organization advocates for five elements that contribute to a good life for a person with disabilities, namely caring relationships, opportunities to contribute to the community, a home that meets their needs, empowered decision making, and financial security. PLAN's efforts to secure these elements has led to the development of the world's first Registered Disabilities Savings Plan, which changed financial regulations with regards to savings and benefits for people with disabilities, making it possible for many to leave behind financial dependency on the state. Finally, a prominent example that has fostered both intrinsic and extrinsic change at a global scale is the peasant movement La Vía Campesina (Box 4.3).

## Where to from here?

Amplification strategies such as scaling within, scaling out, and scaling beyond have been observed around the world. While engaging in these strategies can be exciting, it is important to remember they are merely means to an end – namely, to facilitate sustainable development. Moreover, amplification cannot happen in a vacuum, or without the active and directed efforts by motivated people and organizations pursuing tangible goals. Investing energy and enthusiasm to pursue amplification strategies can be immensely rewarding, but can also be frustrating and disheartening when the political, economic, or institutional context is challenging. We return to this important point in Chapter 8, where we discuss ways to successfully work with the broader socioeconomic and institutional context when striving for sustainability. Finally, it is worth noting that the three amplification strategies outlined here are neither mutually exclusive, nor will they always need to occur in the order in which we introduced them above. Different sustainability initiatives will be at different stages of scaling within, out and beyond, and will interact with one another in different ways.

This chapter introduced the ideas of scaling within, scaling out, and scaling beyond in general terms. The following three chapters now apply these three scaling strategies to Southern Transylvania.



## BOX 4.3

**La Vía Campesina – a global movement in pursuit of sustainability that has fostered both extrinsic and intrinsic change.**

Founded in 1993 in response to globally increasing marginalization of small-scale agriculture, the international peasant movement “La Vía Campesina” gives a voice to millions of rural smallholders – including agricultural producers, workers, rural women, and indigenous communities from Asia, Africa, the Americas and Europe. Today, it maintains a formal network of more than 160 autonomous social movements in seventy-three countries, representing more than two hundred million families. La Vía Campesina provides an opposition to an increasingly globalized industrial food supply system, which threatens biological diversity, contributes to climate change, and often marginalizes peasant agriculture – thereby ignoring that peasants provide the lion share of the world’s food.

Three key foci of La Vía Campesina have been to frame and defend the concept of food sovereignty, promote agroecological practices, and demand participation in the formulation of agriculture-related policies. Food sovereignty, in this context, was defined in 2007 in the Declaration of Nyéléni as “*the right of peoples to healthy and culturally appropriate food produced through ecologically sound and sustainable methods, and their right to define their own food and agriculture systems*” (cited in Wittman 2018, page 319). This definition emphasizes the values of equity, ecology and local empowerment in the design of food systems. To reach these goals, La Vía Campesina endorses agroecological practices that emphasize the productivity, stability, sustainability and equability of agricultural systems. Concrete measures to reach food sovereignty at a local scale include the creation of seed banks, local markets, buying clubs, agroecology schools and farmer-to-farmer training networks, as well as practices of land occupation and seed sharing.



Rafael Alegria, one of the international leaders of La Vía Campesina (Source: Wikimedia Commons; Photographer: Jean-Marc Desfilhes, 2005; CC BY-SA 3.0).

In the political arena, the organization has worked to influence a wide range of sustainability-related policies, including on trade, agrarian reform, biodiversity, genetic resources and biocultural heritage, land tenure, domestic violence, and human rights. La Vía Campesina thus has worked to foster both extrinsic change and intrinsic change – taking a stand against the dominant paradigm of globalized industrial agriculture, opposing its overemphasis on productivity and efficiency as the only measures of agricultural success, and challenging established institutions, values and worldviews in the global political arena. The Eco Ruralis Association from Romania is a member in the European Coordination of La Vía Campesina.

## Further information

Global database “Seeds of a Good Anthropocene”

Website: <https://goodanthropocenes.net/>

Green Lifestyles, Alternative Models and Upscaling Regional Sustainability  
Case Study: [http://glamurs.eu/case\\_study/the-region-of-banat-timis-romania/](http://glamurs.eu/case_study/the-region-of-banat-timis-romania/)

La Vía Campesina – International Peasant Movement

Website: <https://viacampesina.org/en/>

Planned Lifetime Advocacy Network (PLAN) Canada

Website: <http://plan.ca/>

Slow Food Movement

Website: <https://www.slowfood.com/>

The Transition Town network

Website: <https://transitionnetwork.org/>

Wittman, H. (2018). Getting to food sovereignty (locally?) in a globalized world. In: J. Konefal and M. Hatakana, ed., *Twenty lessons in the sociology of food and agriculture*. New York: Oxford University Press, pp. 312-329.









## Growing Roots: Solidifying Sustainability Initiatives

### IN A NUTSHELL

- As a first step towards sustainability, it is important to “scale within”, that is to solidify or firmly establish a given initiative for sustainability.
- A commitment to establishing firm roots for a given initiative helps to embed it within local communities, and provides resilience to external political or economic changes.
- Focusing on the phase of initial establishment for a given sustainability initiative is also critical to foster its longevity and potential for growth and accelerated impact.
- To help solidify new sustainability initiatives, we recommend to carefully scrutinize new ideas, capitalize on existing opportunities, seek support from key actors, and combine day-to-day pragmatism with working towards a long-term vision.
- While this chapter highlights benefits and ways to grow strong roots of a valued initiative in a specific place, the following chapter will address how to spread good ideas from one location to another.

In Chapter 3, we provided an overview of the many different kinds of initiatives already underway in Southern Transylvania in support of sustainability. In Chapter 4, we then discussed three different ways of amplifying existing initiatives, highlighting how each of these three approaches has been successfully used in different parts of the world. In this chapter, we start to bring together the notion of amplification strategies with what is already happening in Southern Transylvania. We show how the first of the three amplification strategies previously introduced – namely, the process of “scaling within”, or putting roots into the ground (Fig. 5.1) – can help to amplify nascent sustainability initiatives. The chapter first highlights the different benefits of scaling within, drawing on examples from Transylvania. Following this, we provide a short list of guiding principles, which are intended as practical advice for how to best help local initiatives solidify and accelerate the generation of societal impact (see Fig. 5.2).

### The benefits of establishing strong roots (“scaling within”)

There are numerous benefits to making sure a given sustainability initiative can put firm roots into the ground, before trying to extend its impact by other means. We discuss four key benefits below.





**Fig. 5.1.** Scaling within is the process of firmly establishing a sustainability initiative, so that it can grow strong rapidly. Metaphorically, this is analogous to planting a tree and helping it establish strong roots.

**Local embeddedness.** Local initiatives often start from next to nothing, but as they grow, they become part of people's lives. Within a given village, for example, what starts as a small sustainability initiative through time can become an important institution in its own right (Box 5.1). Firm embeddedness within a local context, in turn, lays a strong foundation for an initiative to expand to new locations, or generate change in societal attitudes and values – ideas that we discuss in the following two chapters.

As an example, consider the advent of guesthouse-related tourism in Southern Transylvania. Even ten years ago, guesthouses and associated tourism were very uncommon. But now, in several villages, life without tourism has become unimaginable – in other words, what started as the vision of a few isolated villagers has become part of the daily lives and livelihoods of entire villages. Many new opportunities for sustainable businesses have emerged. Where many years ago, tourists were few, arrived by bus, and stayed for short periods of time, there are now many kinds of activities that tourists can enjoy (see Chapter 3), and these provide economic support for ecologically sustainable landscape management.

**Resilience to sudden changes.** When sustainability initiatives start, they often take the form of a single project, and are sometimes run on a shoestring budget. Individual persons are often critical to the success of such initiatives. With their high dependence on a single funding source, or individuals pursuing a given vision in isolation, nascent sustainability initiatives may not be very resilient – the loss of a funding source, a change in the political situation, or the disappearance of a motivated person can mean the end of an initiative. Firmly establishing a local initiative – making sure it is rooted in multiple sources of funding, carried on the shoulders of multiple people, and bringing in external supporters and knowledge (e.g. from government, non-government organizations, or universities) – can greatly increase its resilience in the face of externally driven changes. Although a strong inner motivation can often buffer against outer threats, finding additional support in similar 'parent' initiatives and liaising with such established initiatives can lead to

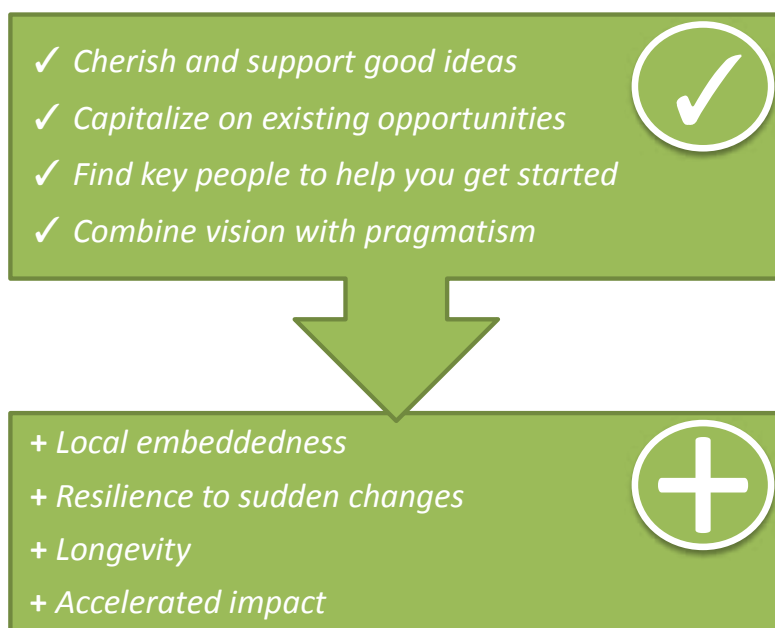
win-win situations. For example, the SCHUBZ Centre for Environmental Education in Râşnov was born out of a pilot project led by a local initiative, which later liaised with a larger organization who had a similar focus on connecting children and nature through experiential learning. The centre now owes part of its resilience to the transfer of interactive methods and tools from the ‘parent’ initiative, and to the multinational network of experts and partners it is part of.

## BOX 5.1

### The Viscri Farmers Association

In 2015, the farming association Agro-Eco Viscri-Weisskirch was founded in the village of Viscri by local farmers and peasants, with the support of the Mihai Eminescu Trust. At the time, farmers and peasants were facing several challenges that prevented them from practicing agriculture and raising livestock in the ways they had previously done for decades. One main challenge was that the community had lost access to what was previously a communally used and managed pasture. This loss of access was particularly difficult for farmers and peasants who owned few livestock. Access to communal pastures had changed over the years, from a context where it was guaranteed through social customs and law, to a context that favoured the access of larger-scale farmers, while small-scale farmers and peasants were increasingly sidelined. As a consequence of this and other challenges, small-scale farmers and peasants increasingly felt they had no choice but to give up raising livestock.

The aim of the Agro-Eco Viscri-Weisskirch farming association was to support farmers and peasants in continuing their work, including raising livestock. The association helped to ensure improved access to pastures, which is now rented out by the Town Hall according to the total number of animals held within the association – individuals with few livestock are no longer excluded this way. Initially, to secure the support, trust and respect of its members and the community, the association needed to take several actions to become firmly established. As a first step, the association created a Board of Directors, which consists of seven members, elected for a period of four years. The board facilitates dialogue, highlights the benefits of the association to both old and new members, and provides a safe space to negotiate the reinforcement of common rules (i.e. rights and obligations) by periodically revisiting the bylaws of the association. To ensure decision-making is democratic and transparent, the bylaws of the association defined that decision power rests with the General Assembly, where a majority vote is needed in the presence of at least 51% of the 56 members. Additionally, to improve contact with the entire local community, the association strived to integrate members from all different social groups of the village, including individuals of different age, ethnicity, gender and farming type. More recently, the association has also started to collaborate with different actors, such as other non-government organizations, governmental bodies, and academic institutions. These actors have helped to bring in new knowledge, which has further improved the association’s capacity to adapt to new challenges (such as changing national or European agricultural laws).



**Fig. 5.2.** Schematic summary of guiding principles and resulting advantages for “scaling within”.

**Longevity.** Directly following from greater resilience to external changes, embedding an initiative locally also helps to ensure its longevity. As an initiative stabilizes, its coverage and impact can start to grow. Hence, the longer a given initiative persists, the more likely it is to generate transformative change for sustainability. For example, bike trails are almost iconic for the landscapes of Transylvania today (Box 5.2). Starting as a small-scale but impactful initiative, with just a few kilometres of marked trails, the bike trails of Southern Transylvania are rapidly gaining popularity among cycling tourists from around the world, evolving into an ambitious network of new routes, local tourism entrepreneurs and service providers. Other sustainability initiatives had the opportunity to build upon this initial impact. For example, initiatives such as “Bike & Brunch” integrated the concept of bike trails into new experiences designed for tourists interested in sports and gastronomy. Using bike trails for different purposes contributes to maintaining their longevity and functionality through time.

**The potential for accelerated impact.** A final important benefit of “scaling within” relates to greater efficiency. Small initiatives, when they start, can often be highly innovative but may lack the scale benefits that generate efficiency. In contrast, once a local initiative grows, it can achieve much more in a shorter time. An example is the acceleration of tree planting in Transylvania (Box 5.3). Creating a new setting for tree planting events by involving more diverse actors brought an increase of efficiency. This, in turn, translated into more trees being planted per action, and reaching a higher survival rate of trees more quickly.

## BOX 5.2

### Sustainable tourism and The Transylvania Mountain Bike Trail (TBT)

*Contributed by Fundația ADEPT Transilvania*

In 2014-17, Fundația ADEPT was funded by Fundația Orange, Swiss funds and other funders to build an innovative green Transylvanian Mountain Bike Trail (TBT) network to bring responsible tourists into the area, increase local incomes and improve the long-term prosperity of local communities. The 100 km network of trails links eight villages across five communes. ADEPT prepared a tourism strategy linking the TBT network with related products and services, so that additional benefits could be linked to the network; and used festivals, websites, and mobile phone apps to promote the area. The TBT network has vastly increased the number of tourists who use the area sustainably, appreciate its natural and cultural values, stay in the area and contribute to the local economy. Now, 70 guesthouses and other service providers are actively involved in coordinated services for tourists using the TBT, and the number of visitors staying in the area annually has increased from under 1,000 before the project to over 7,000 in 2018. Local incomes in the area have increased by over €100,000/year – through an annual TBT competition organized by ADEPT and attended by nearly 1000 participants in 2018, as well as through numerous bike brunches and community events attended by over 600 people per year.

The TBT project has brought the community together in many ways, some of them unexpected, through acting as a catalyst creating viable sustainable tourism networks, promoting local pride, and providing a significant new element for sustainability strategies pursued by Town Halls and Local Action groups. Town Halls have included the TBT in their local strategies and banned motorized off-road recreational vehicles, which damage the landscape and tend not to leave local income. The TBT project has also strengthened the relationships between tourism service providers (e.g. guesthouses and food producers), Town Halls and local communities. It has increased public appreciation of the cultural landscape. It has also assisted children's safe journeys to school (using the trails they can travel by foot or bike, avoiding main roads), and has provided new opportunities for recreation and appreciation of the landscape.

## Guiding principles for “scaling within”

***Cherish and support good ideas.*** When good ideas emerge, it is important for local communities to appreciate these ideas and support them in whichever way is possible – because, as shown above, ultimately everybody stands to benefit. There are countless good ideas and seeds of innovation throughout Southern Transylvania. To name just a few, in the village of Mălâncrav, relatively poor but traditionally skilled community members have begun to weave baskets and sell them to tourists. This initiative emerged from the bottom up, and has enabled community members who were otherwise disengaged from the local economy to actively participate. Elsewhere, in the village of Cund, a German chef and businessman

opened a specialty restaurant. While the restaurant caters primarily to relatively wealthy customers, it makes a useful contribution to the local economy by employing local people, drawing primarily on locally sourced ingredients, and attracting tourists to local guest-houses. Locally produced honey, too, is an increasingly common sight throughout Southern Transylvania, which can provide added value to other local initiatives.

Importantly, not all ideas are good ideas, and it is as important to stop bad ideas as it is to foster good ones. Southern Transylvanians have shown their capacity for this discernment, too. For example, in 2001 a Dracula theme park was suggested to be established on the Breite wood pasture outside the town of Sighișoara. This idea was clearly not in line with the kind of vision outlined in Chapter 1 of this book, and it was met with strong local opposition. Indeed, instead of the Breite having been converted to a Dracula theme park, it is now a protected area, boasting unique biological and cultural heritage.

***Capitalize on existing opportunities.*** Many existing “success stories” are essentially examples of smart opportunism. For example, Viscri already attracted a steady flux of tourists when some local horsemen came up with the idea of offering horse and cart rides to the visitors. Since then, it has been possible for tourists to experience the landscape from such carts, leaving them with memorable impressions of localities otherwise difficult to access, and providing an additional income to the horsemen. While this is just one of a myriad of possible examples, it shows that many small socioeconomic niches together can give life to a vision such as “Balance Brings Beauty” (Chapter 1).

***Find key people who can help you get started.*** It is no secret that Transylvania regularly attracts celebrities with a strong social conscience – most famously, His Royal Highness, the Prince of Wales, but also others such as the internationally acclaimed musician and artist Peter Maffay, who was born in Transylvania. Clearly, through providing much needed publicity for Transylvania’s cultural and ecological heritage, such individuals can make important contributions to sustainable development. Importantly, much less famous “key people” can be equally important. To this day, Transylvania regularly draws on the connections with a large and well-organized Saxon diaspora, who provide social links, knowledge and at times, financial resources to support people and places from their original home. Without doubt, connecting to any type of “key actor” will be useful for a nascent sustainability initiative to become established.

***Combine vision with pragmatism.*** As we highlighted in Chapter 1, many people living in Southern Transylvania share a bold vision for a sustainable future. Holding on to this vision provides a critical compass, signalling the direction towards a sustainable future – but on an everyday basis, the steps that need to be taken are often highly pragmatic ones. On an everyday basis, many people working for sustainability in Southern Transylvania are confronted with sometimes frustrating socioeconomic realities, where things are simply not working as swiftly or as smoothly as one might hope. Notwithstanding inevitable setbacks, we suggest to keep in mind three sets of questions when attempting to deepen the roots of a new sustainability initiative. First, what is the sustainability initiative trying to achieve, and why does this matter? Second, who should be involved, who should benefit, and who might be able to help? And third, which social, material and



financial resources might be available, in the short term and the long term? Having clear answers to these questions in mind will help to maintain a balance between remaining true to a bold vision while also acting pragmatically on a day-to-day basis.

## BOX 5.3

### Tree planting in Transylvania

*Contributed by Tibor Hartel, original instigator of the tree planting activities (2009-2010)*

In 2009 the Mihai Eminescu Trust, in partnership with 'Accor – Plant for the planet' started planting trees in southern Transylvania. The overarching goal of the project was to use trees to (i) increase the economic potential and environmental quality of degraded areas, (ii) help local communities with reforestation, and (iii) involve local communities in tree planting events while assisting local schools with ecological equipment for environmental studies. The planted trees were only native species for the region and the genetic material also originated from the region. Initially, we contacted the local mayor and members of the local council in order to present our vision and explore the possibilities for implementing the project in the community.

The first plantation attempts generated mixed results. The involvement of schools was really exceptional, but the local community remained passive and several planted trees were burned, stolen or damaged by livestock browsing.

Learning from these experiences, we diversified the stakeholders. We involved foresters and local NGOs (if present) as well as making the whole process more participatory, that is, allowing and motivating local communities to decide about the tree species they would like to plant and where. This new setting increased local community engagement, made plantations more attractive, and improved the overall survival of the trees.

By 2018, 2 135 425 trees had been planted in eight counties. The project involved 105 land owners, among them 28 town halls and 72 forest associations. A total of 111 schools participated in the project. Twelve native tree species were planted, the most common being Beech (*Fagus sylvatica*), Ash (*Fraxinus excelsior*), Oak (*Quercus robur* and *Q. petraea*), Sycamore maple (*Acer pseudoplatanus*), Wild cherry (*Prunus avium*) and Common alder (*Alnus glutinosa*). Five school orchards were established, comprising 30 fruit trees each. The project also included wood-pasture restoration activities, where scattered oak saplings originating from ancient oaks in the targeted wood-pasture were planted. Overall, this project suggests that local communities are open for tree planting activities. To ensure success, it is very important that project funders and administration are open to the perspectives of the local community, which can massively increase the success of plantings. Nevertheless, the long term maintenance of tree plantings, which often requires several re-planting events, requires ongoing commitment from local communities, including the maintenance of fences and nursing shrubs around the young trees.

## Summary and conclusions

This chapter made a case for “scaling within” – for solidifying sustainability initiatives in a given location. Drawing on local examples, we highlighted numerous benefits and made suggestions for how to help a given sustainability initiative, in tangible terms, to put roots into the ground (Fig. 5.2). Having established a local initiative, the next challenge is to spread its benefits to new locations. For this, relationships among different actors are critically important. We investigate this process of “scaling out” in the next chapter.

## Further information

Fundația ADEPT

Website: <https://fundatia-adept.org/ro/home/>

Mihai Eminescu Trust

Website: <https://www.mihaieminescutrust.ro/>

SCHUBZ – Environmental Education Center

Website: <http://schubz.ro/>

Remarkable Trees Project

Website: <https://arboriremarcabili.ro/en/about-project/>







## Spreading the Seeds: Expanding Sustainability Initiatives

### IN A NUTSHELL

- A second way in which to amplify sustainability initiatives is to “scale out”.
- Scaling out is the process of spreading a given idea, or aspects thereof, to new locations or settings.
- Transferring ideas to new settings generates many benefits, including the development of a network of actors and initiatives.
- For scaling out to work best, we recommend to be aware of contextual differences between original and new settings, and to be prepared to learn from possible failures.
- For initiatives that are the origin of “scaling out”, it is important to be open to the initiative spreading, including in some cases being adopted by other, possibly unknown actors.
- For initiatives that are adopting ideas from elsewhere, it is important to respectfully acknowledge the origin of ideas, and collaborate with the original “owners” of the idea where possible.

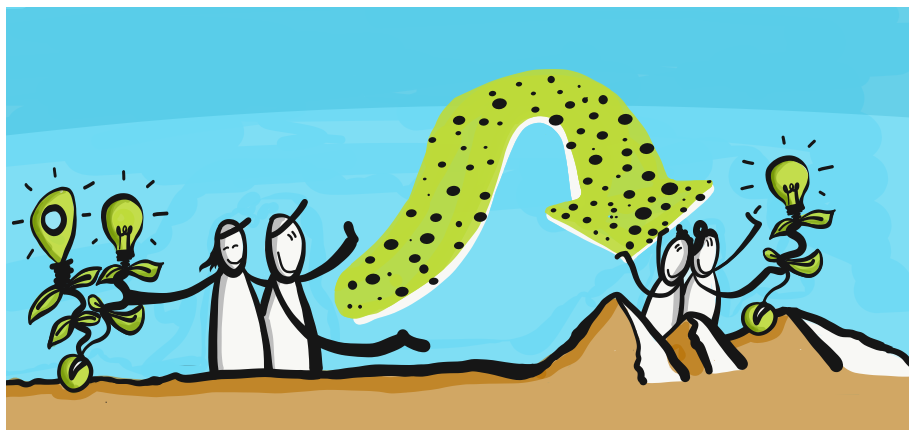
The previous chapter looked at scaling within – that is, the consolidation of a given sustainability initiative in a particular place. In this chapter, we examine a logical, subsequent strategy of amplifying existing efforts for sustainability, namely the process of “scaling out”. To revert back to our analogy of trees and flower, scaling out is the process of spreading the seeds, and of breeding new varieties that are suited to new locations by strategically crossing different kinds of plants (Fig. 6.1). That is, scaling out takes place when an existing initiative is copied and transferred to a different location; or alternatively, if key principles of the initiative are transferred to a new location to inform new efforts in support of sustainable development. We first introduce the rationale for why scaling out is important and then provide guiding principles for how to scale out in practice (see Fig. 6.3).

### The benefits of spreading good seeds (“scaling out”)

The benefits of scaling out range from scale effects to allowing for novelty and experimentation. Four key benefits are discussed below.



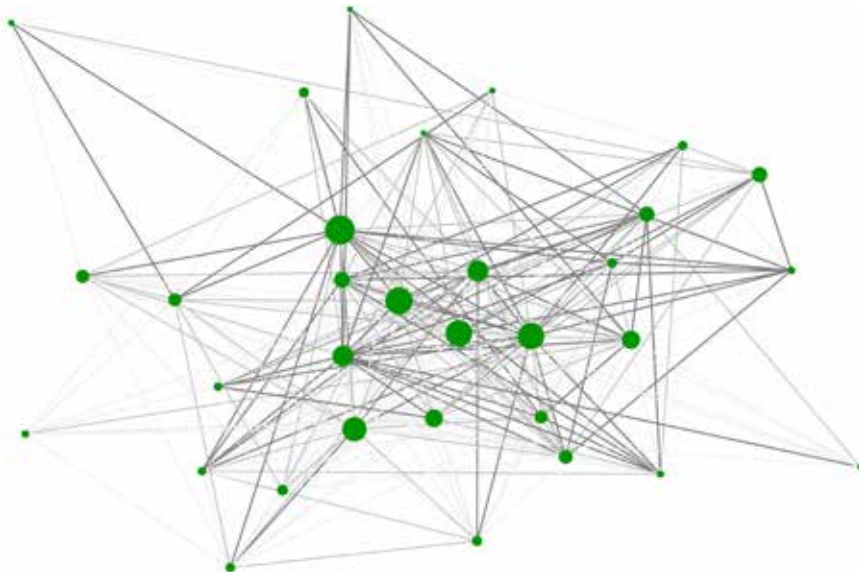
**Scale effects.** Scale effects occur when the combination of multiple small initiatives generates new, higher-level opportunities. For example, many small-scale producers of specialty products in Southern Transylvania can generate increased impact if they adopt each other's ideas, and collectively generate some kind of "branding" for their products. For example, certain specialty wines or cheeses from Transylvania could be labelled as sus-



**Fig. 6.1.** Schematic depiction of the benefits of scaling out. Metaphorically speaking, scaling out is equivalent to spreading the seeds of a given idea, and crossing different varieties of ideas to generate something new in a different setting.

tainably produced, high-quality, local products – a generically recognizable label such as this can then facilitate increased benefits for individual producers throughout the region. Several organizations have already initiated processes for the branding and promotion of local products and services. For example, the aim of the local label “Din Hârtibaciu, cu drag” is that the products from the valley of Hârtibaciu are easily differentiated and recognized by consumers. This is expected to influence consumer choices, especially in the medium term.

Additional scaling effects can take place through the complementarity of different sustainability initiatives operating in a particular location. In the context of agricultural and ecological tourism, for example, each small initiative benefits from the advent of a new one – because tourists end up with a more complete package of options to choose from, making Transylvania increasingly attractive. Thus, bike trails, horse riding activities, guesthouses and the availability of different culinary experiences go hand in hand, and transferring such ideas from one place to another can facilitate the overall spread of sustainable tourism, which is an important part of the common vision for a sustainable Southern Transylvania (Chapter 1). Moreover, once momentum picks up pace, it is possible to engage an entirely new suite of actors than any single small initiative would manage to engage – thus opening windows of opportunity for higher-level change, including changes to policies and the political environment (see also Chapter 7).



**Fig. 6.2.** An example of a network of collaborations between 32 sustainability initiatives from Southern Transylvania illustrating relationships based on pursuing similar strategies, reflecting together on mission and goals, and reconciling differences in values and worldviews.

***Avoiding the re-invention of the wheel.*** When something has already worked in one place, it makes intuitive sense to take on board whatever has been learned there – it makes little sense to re-invent the wheel! In this context, it is important to learn not only from what worked well in a different location, but also from what did not work. Repeated failures can be avoided by studying carefully which aspects of a certain sustainability initiative worked well in a different location, and which aspects did not, and why. For example, the creation of local brands and labels was successfully applied in other parts of Romania, by linking such labels to a specific cause that significantly made a difference for the wellbeing of local communities. In Roşia Montană, a settlement in western Romania threatened with annihilation by a gold mining enterprise, local producers opposing the exploitation were strongly supported by tourists and other people who actively chose to buy their products. This example shows the benefits of communicating that consumers can have a direct impact on the development pathway of Southern Transylvania by choosing certain brands over others.

***Novelty and experimentation.*** Notwithstanding the benefits of avoiding the re-invention of the wheel, no effort to “scale out” will ever encounter the exact same conditions in a new setting. This provides challenges and may lead to unexpected failures of something that worked well elsewhere. But on the positive side, transferring an existing idea or initiative to a new context also provides new learning opportunities – it means that new facets of an idea can be explored and experimented with. Encouraging ongoing but sustainable innovation, in turn, should be a central goal of the trajectory towards a bold vision for Transylvania’s future. For example, the “Alma Viitor” association (Box 6.1), although founded on the model of the association from Viscri (see Box 5.1), expanded its focus to

## BOX 6.1

### Establishing a new farmers association in Alma Vii (Alma Viitor)

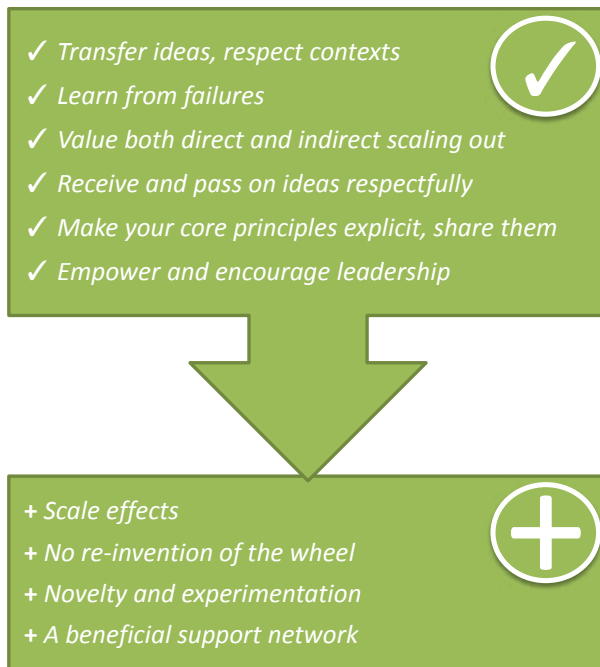
*Contributed by Leticia Doorman, Mihai Eminescu Trust*

The Alma Vii rural community has about 400 inhabitants, many of whom arrived after 1990. When communism collapsed, approximately 90% of the Saxon population living in Southern Transylvania emigrated, leaving major gaps in local communities. Many farmers emigrated permanently or temporarily in search of better working conditions, and in Alma Vii, a relatively large number of senior citizens settled in their place. In addition, Alma Vii's proximity to Mediaș (a major town in the county), its cultural landscape and a certain "natural purity", attracted families who bought holiday houses in Alma Vii, or moved there while continuing to work in town. The emerging new community of Alma Vii thus was highly diverse, but had weaker ties to the local landscape than in the past.

The "Alma Viitor" Association (which translates into "Alma Future") was born in November 2016 out of these circumstances. The majority of community members collectively decided on the association's name in a general assembly. Currently, the Association has seven active members, comprising farmers, tourism service entrepreneurs and craftsmen.

Driven by aspirations of the Mihai Eminescu Trust (MET) to replicate the efforts that had already borne fruit in other villages, such as Viscri or Mălâncrav, the Alma Viitor Association also emerged as a reflection of the community's needs at a time of new opportunities and challenges. To overcome fears, motivate, empower and develop individual confidence and mutual trust, MET organized meetings and workshops with members of other associations from the region, such as the Women's Association (see Box 3.2) or the Agro-Eco Viscri-Weisskirch Association from Viscri (see Box 5.1). During these meetings, participants exchanged experiences, impressions and knowledge. The members of Alma Viitor Association expressed doubts, uncertainties and desires, while the members of the older associations gave their advice, shared their experiences and also their own personal and collective goals. These meetings were vital to promote dialogue among community members and erase imaginary distances between remote communities, which could otherwise inhibit communication. Setting up the Alma Viitor Association required breaking with old habits and collectively orienting the community towards the future. During one community meeting, a participant asked: "What would it mean to be sustainable?" – "Sustainability is hope", another participant replied. Perhaps this idea, full of metaphorical meanings, gave the association its name.

include also cultural, handicrafts and tourism activities, and aims to combine these in innovative ways. Similarly, the women's association in Viscri tries to continuously innovate and improve its design of products (see Box 3.2) by inviting renowned fashion designers or international young designers who are willing to share new ideas and inspiration.



**Fig. 6.3.** Schematic summary of guiding principles and resulting advantages for “scaling within”.

***Harnessing the benefits of a support network.*** Related to the previous point, scaling out also implies sharing beyond a particular location – and thus establishing a network, or a community, of like-minded people and organizations. Such networking has a whole range of benefits, from practical matters such as sharing information or materials, to sharing ideas and values, or working together for structural change within the landscape of policies and politics (Fig. 6.2, see also Box 6.2 for an example). We will return to these benefits in more detail in Chapters 7 and 8 of this book.

## Guiding principles for “scaling out”

***Transfer ideas, but be aware that the context will differ.*** There is tremendous value in transferring ideas between places, but enthusiasm for “copying” needs to be balanced with the need to adjust them to different contexts and locations.. There are plenty of examples of this already underway in Southern Transylvania. For example, restoration efforts of Saxon heritage started in a small set of villages but rapidly spread throughout the region. Similarly, the farmers’ association in Viscri (see Box 5.1) inspired community members in the village of Alma Vii to set up a similar association there, taking into account that village’s different context (see Box 6.1). Contextual differences matter, and will be most important if ideas are transferred to settings that are substantially different in biophys-

## BOX 6.2

### Linking tourism actors: Transylvania Highlands Integrative Tourism Management

*Contributed by Cristina Iliescu, Head of the Destination Management Unit of the Transylvanian Highlands*

The Destination Management Unit of the Transylvanian Highlands is an initiative for the development of ecotourism infrastructure, facilities, as well as local networking. It aims to give tourists a flavor of the true spirit of the highlands, along with good quality services. The DMU initiative arose as a natural result in the process of elaborating the Management Plan for the Natura 2000 protected area Hârtibaciu – Târnava Mare – Olt, which includes 1 SPA (Special Protected Area) and 5 SACs (Special Areas of Conservation), as well as the Breite oak reserve. During consultations with local actors in 2012 regarding the development of a tourism strategy for the Natura 2000 area, there was general consensus that the area as a whole should be promoted because it shares a common cultural, visual (landscape related) and economic background, as well as future.

Therefore, the birth of a new touristic destination was the next natural step. Drawing on experiences from Austria, Germany and France, the Transylvanian Highlands DMU initiative and activities rely entirely on the cooperation among local actors. At the moment, the initiative involves 13 local actors with 5 to 15 years of experience working with communities and preserving cultural heritage in southern Transylvania: Mioritics Association, Sibiu County Tourism Association, WWF Romania, AD-EPT Transilvania Foundation, Mihai Eminescu Trust Foundation (MET), LAG Dealurile Târnavelor, LAG Microregiunea Hârtibaciu, LAG Podișul Mediașului, LAG Asociația Transilvania Brașov Nord, Evangelical Church C.A. Romania, Societatea Progresul Silvic, Leuphana University Lüneburg, and the Monumentum Association. These entities comprise a Tourism Board that meets regularly and decides an annual plan of coordinated actions to develop tourism-related subjects: some are implemented by the DMU, others by each member on its own.

ical, institutional, or cultural terms – as we discuss below, this is where one should be most prepared to learn from failure.

***Be prepared to learn from failure.*** An old saying suggests that success is 10% inspiration and 90% perspiration. Consistent with this, it is useful to persist with a bold vision such as that outlined in Chapter 1, but accept that many of the small steps on the way to realizing this vision may fail. Failures, in turn, should be talked about, because they provide opportunities for learning – both for those who failed, but also for others who can avoid similar failures by learning about what happened elsewhere. For example, the members of the farmers association from Alma Vii had the opportunity to learn from some of the failures on the way to the current consolidated state of the farmers association in Viscri (Boxes 5.1 and 6.1). Specifically, the unavoidable pitfalls that accompanied the establishment of the association made locals of Alma Vii realize that they had to start by developing and negotiating a strong and consistent bylaws document.



***Value both direct and indirect scaling out.*** In the simplest case, scaling out happens directly: a particular idea or initiative in one place has appeal to a new location, and is therefore transferred to that location, often involving some of the same actors (e.g. Box 6.1). In other cases, scaling out is more indirect, that is, facilitated by a higher-level actor or entity (e.g. Box 6.2, 6.3). For example, the Transylvanian Highlands Destination Management Unit and Board provides impetus for spreading the values and benefits of multiculturalism and sustainability as well as economic viability. The Transylvanian Highlands are the largest continental tourism destination in Romania, and the Management Unit aims for it to be Romania's most prominent certified eco-touristic destination by 2020. To reach this goal, the Management Unit facilitates communication and offers assistance to local tourism entrepreneurs who want to develop a business plan according to the principles agreed upon by the Board. Some of these principles directly relate to sustainability, while others target efficiency and competitiveness.

***Receive and pass on ideas respectfully.*** Although ultimately, all of Transylvania stands to gain from good ideas spreading, it is important to be careful with how different people's ideas are used in different settings. This issue is straightforward when a given organization or person is behind the act of "spreading the seed" to a new location. But when an idea has appeal for a new setting where entirely different actors are driving sustainability initiatives, it is important to consider the ethical implications of adopting a good idea from elsewhere. We suggest two simple principles to guide this process. For people and organizations who have led successful initiatives, we encourage that they recognize that ultimately, everyone gains by similar initiatives being enacted elsewhere – the very point of scaling out is that it favours the establishment of networks of sustainability initiatives (see also Chapters 7 and 8). For people and organizations who seek to adopt successful ideas from elsewhere (e.g. Box 6.3), we suggest treating the source of their idea with transparency and respect. For example, in many cases it could be useful to get in touch with the person or organization where an idea originated, and discuss or negotiate fair terms for how the idea might best be transferred to a new setting, to ensure mutual benefits.

***Make your core principles explicit and share them.*** As discussed above, scaling out is not only about doing exactly the same in a new setting, but often involves adjusting existing ideas to new contexts. In Chapter 4, we highlighted the case of the global peasant movement La Vía Campesina. Evidently, what constitutes peasantry in Latin America is very different from what happens in Transylvania – but still, La Vía Campesina has constituents in both regions, as well as in many other locations around the world. This is possible because there are clearly articulated core principles and values that this organization stands for, such as the rights to food and land, the valuation of food providers and their local knowledge, integral agrarian reform, equality and justice between genders, ethnic groups and generations, care for the natural environment and the localization of both food systems and decision-making. Much can be gained from having a shared frame of reference when transferring an idea or initiative from one place to another. For Southern Transylvania, we suggest that a possible frame of reference could be the "Balance Brings Beauty" vision outlined in Chapter 1. It encapsulates healthy relationships and a good quality of life, including social equity, respect for the environment, and a culturally and ecologically diverse landscape. Making the core principles underpinning a particular initiative explicit can be done in many different ways, including among others the formulation of particular values or codes of conduct.

## BOX 6.3

### Spreading environmental education: SCHUBZ Romania

*Contributed by Mihai Dragomir, SCHUBZ Romania*

SCHUBZ Romania started with a dream and a good partnership. The dream was to offer Romanian children the same opportunities to discover and experience sustainability as a way of learning and living that pupils have in Germany. The partnership was formed during the course of two international collaborative projects, between the SCHUBZ Center for Environmental Education from Lüneburg in Germany and the Mioritics Association from Romania.

With the financial support of the DBU (Deutsche Bundesstiftung Umwelt) and the enthusiasm of a joint German–Romanian team, in 2015 the first Romanian SCHUBZ Center started a year-long preparation process in the town of Râșnov, near Brașov. The team brought interactive and experiential educational programs that were developed in Germany, and tested these with Romanian pupils. Creating contact with nature as well as a direct link with the children's own responsibility and ability to act for sustainability were the essential components in the approach of these programs. They were adapted to fit the local context and were enriched by the experience of the local team.

In October 2016, the SCHUBZ Educational Center for Sustainable Development opened in Râșnov. During its first year, 5000 children from primary and middle schools participated in dedicated thematic programs and summer camps. In addition, 360 teachers and nature educators took part in SCHUBZ training seminars, aiming to broaden their methods and understanding of experiential education. SCHUBZ now has a wide range of educational programs that support and inspire local school curricula, as well as children from both Brașov county and other parts of Romania.



**Empower and encourage leadership.** The success of scaling out hinges upon individual people and organizations assuming responsibility and taking on active leadership roles. For new leaders to emerge, it is important to not suppress innovative potential at the outset, just because a certain idea sounds different or unusual. Local people, including those with limited formal education, often hold tremendous knowledge and experience, and can provide entirely different kinds of ideas that can neatly complement those by individuals in more widely recognized, formal leadership positions. We therefore suggest to empower and encourage leadership at all levels of society, as long as it is broadly consistent with the vision for a sustainable Transylvania.

## Summary and conclusion

In this chapter, we highlighted key benefits and principles of spreading the seeds of sustainability throughout Transylvania. We argued that once initiatives have established roots and grown, it can be valuable to transfer their benefits to new locations.

Staying with this metaphor, we have now painted a picture of trees and flowers putting roots into the ground, growing and spreading throughout Transylvania. What is starting to emerge, in this metaphor, is a garden of sustainability. Like all gardens, it needs to be cared for and looked after, following certain ideals and perhaps even rules. How to encourage such nurturing practices is the topic of the next chapter.

## Further information

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Colinele Transilvaniei

Website: [www.colineletransilvaniei.ro](http://www.colineletransilvaniei.ro)

Local Brand “Din Hârtibaciu, cu drag”

Article: <https://www.moara-veche.ro/cu-ce-ne-ocupam/made-in-hartibaciu-marca-din-hartibaciu-cu-drag/>

Values made explicit: La Vía Campesina, international and regional declarations

Declaration of Nyéleni: <https://nyeleni.org/spip.php?article290>

Declaration of Peasant Rights: [https://ecoruralis.ro/web/en/The\\_Rights\\_of\\_Peasants/](https://ecoruralis.ro/web/en/The_Rights_of_Peasants/)

World Wildlife Fund in Romania

Website: [http://www.wwf.ro/despre\\_wwf/wwf\\_in\\_romania/](http://www.wwf.ro/despre_wwf/wwf_in_romania/)





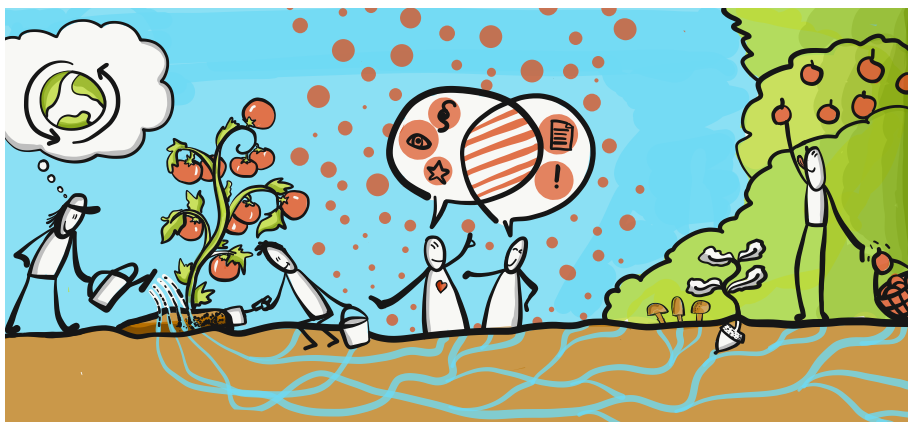
## From Seeds to a Garden: Encouraging Nurturing Practices

### IN A NUTSHELL

- Nurturing a “garden of sustainability” requires identifying and fostering appropriate context conditions and mindsets.
- Scaling beyond describes the process of working with context conditions and widely held mindsets in order to foster sustainability.
- Scaling beyond requires paying attention to rules and other extrinsic influences on individual motivation, as well as intrinsic influences on motivation, such as attitudes, values and beliefs.
- Scaling beyond involves using windows of opportunities to constructively challenge extrinsic and intrinsic influences on individual motivation.
- Active and ongoing communication among different actors is crucial to nurture Transylvania’s emerging garden of sustainability.

The previous chapters introduced scaling within and scaling out as strategies to advance sustainability in Southern Transylvania. Drawing on the metaphor of plants, these strategies are similar to putting roots into the ground and letting the plants grow (scaling within), and spreading seeds (scaling out). Yet, the ultimate vision for a sustainable Transylvania – such as described in the scenario “Balance Brings Beauty” in Chapter 1 – is more than just a few nice projects in different places. This vision describes a future that is socially just and inclusive as well as economically viable, while at the same time providing habitat for a diversity of local species, and acknowledging the biophysical boundaries of our planet. In other words, a new and sustainable social-ecological fabric needs to be created on the basis of the existing potentials and initiatives. This fabric, in turn, must be supported and carried by the rules and values of the community, so that it can be cared for and maintained. To go back to our metaphor of plants, this is similar to establishing nurturing practices for the “garden” of sustainability initiatives – supporting the overall trajectory of the region through extrinsic motivators (such as rules or financial incentive systems) as well as through intrinsic motivation (such as the values, beliefs and mindsets of local people), and interactions between them. We use the term “scaling beyond” to refer to this interaction of extrinsic motivators and intrinsic motivation – denoting the need to move beyond status quo mindsets, rules and practices, if a truly different, sustainable future is to emerge. As in the previous two chapters, we first outline the rationale for why scaling beyond is useful, and then provide several concrete pointers for how to put scaling beyond into practice (see Fig. 7.2).

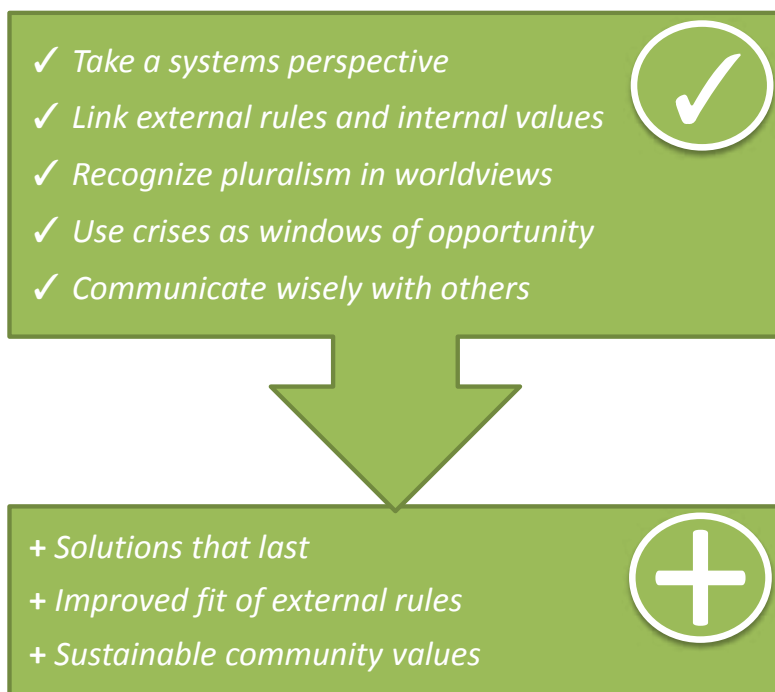




**Fig. 7.1.** Schematic depiction of the process of scaling beyond. Metaphorically speaking, scaling beyond is equivalent to the management of a rich and diverse garden, by putting in place rules, incentives, mindsets and values in support of sustainability.

## The benefits of addressing rules and mindsets (“scaling beyond”)

*Reaching solutions that last.* Around the world, many concrete steps have been taken towards sustainability. And yet, indicators show that as a global community, humanity is still moving away from sustainability rather than towards it. Why might this be? A key answer seems to be that our tangible actions take place within a given context of existing rules and mindsets. These rules and mindsets, in turn, very much constrain what is possible in terms of changes for sustainability in a concrete situation (Box 7.1). Mahatma Gandhi famously stated that “the world has enough for everyone’s need but not everyone’s greed” – implying that an ongoing focus on endlessly increasing material wealth is unlikely to work out well for humanity as a whole; in this example, it is the mindset of greed that should be altered. Rules and mindsets can limit the success, impact and duration of local sustainability initiatives. For instance, a program that pays citizens to recycle their waste may only work for as long as those payments are in place. Instead, changes in peoples’ attitudes and values towards waste disposal are more likely to have lasting effects. Notably, rules and mindsets can reinforce one another. For Transylvania, one might ask: Is there a need to reform the rules that provide incentives for industrial farming? Should access of small farmers to funding be improved? Or might entirely different farming systems than current ones be more suitable? What do we truly want for Transylvania? Arguably, in the absence of reflection on formal rules and our deep aspirations for the future, even the most innovative sustainability initiatives will face an uphill battle. There is no simple, quick fix for modern sustainability problems, including in Transylvania. Questioning existing rules and underlying societal values, and challenging them where necessary, is important to give practical sustainability initiatives the best chance to bear fruit.



**Fig. 7.2.** Schematic summary of guiding principles and resulting advantages for “scaling beyond”

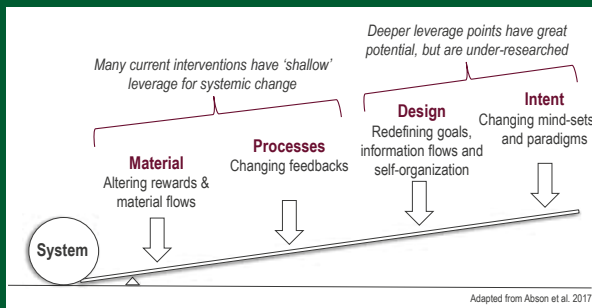
***Improving the fit of externally imposed rules to local problems.*** Some of the rules that influence Southern Transylvania simply do not fit local conditions. It is important to seek change in such rules, especially when they provide incentives that hamper sustainable development (see also Chapter 8). Ill-suited rules may arise for many different reasons. A common reason is that well-intended policy-makers at higher levels designed a certain policy either assuming a “one size fits all” strategy, or simply being unaware of very pronounced differences between different regions. For Southern Transylvania, the perhaps most obvious example is that agricultural policies by the European Union – the EU Common Agricultural Policy – may not adequately fit local needs. The design of these policies often did not take place with Eastern European conditions in mind, and the Common Agricultural Policy as a whole has a history of supporting intensive farming, rather than socially and environmentally sustainable practices. For Transylvania, the fact that some farmers own very little land, making it difficult to access certain payments that should in principle be available to support sustainable farming, is especially challenging. Others are simply overwhelmed by the bureaucratic procedures involved in applying for EU funding; and in different cases again, existing incentives are not in line with what would actually be suitable management practices for Transylvanian ecosystems. Unless such rules are adapted or changed, local people remain constrained in their economic ability to farm sustainably – quite possibly despite having the will and knowledge to do so.

## BOX 7.1

### The “Leverage Point” argument: “Why rules and mindsets matter”

The insights presented in this book result from a transdisciplinary case study conducted by Leuphana University Lüneburg in Southern Transylvania, which was part of the “Leverage Points for Sustainability Transformation” Project carried out between 2014 and 2019 (see further information at the end of the chapter).

The Leverage Points project sought to identify small, yet effective interventions in social-ecological systems that can trigger large-scale, transformative changes towards sustainability. It was inspired by an essay from 1999, published by systems thinker Donella Meadows under the title *Leverage points: Places to intervene in a system*. The basic premise is that systemic change can be achieved by targeting different system properties, ranging from shallow to deep. Shallow system properties are relatively easy to influence, but less likely to result in system wide changes, while deeper interventions have the potential to fundamentally transform a system but are harder to realize. Meadows initially identified 12 ‘leverage points’, which can be grouped into four analytical categories, as shown in the figure below.



*Four categories of leverage points, ranging from shallow to deep, are used to operationalize the leverage points concept initially postulated by Donella Meadows.*

Controversies about how much land should be devoted to nature, versus to human use, ensued. These were struggles about a *parameter*, namely the amount of land dedicated to the *goal* of protecting untouched nature. Modern conservationists, however, have realized that nature is more than wild forests and mountains, and started to value cultural landscapes as well. The broader *goal* of biodiversity conservation allows for more diverse conservation strategies, for example, by focusing on farmland. Recognizing human activity as a potential contributor to biodiversity conservation has marked a *paradigm shift* and transformed the way we understand nature conservation.

This theoretical framework has underpinned the case studies conducted in the Transylvanian Highlands and led, among other insights, to the concepts and strategies presented in this book.

A brief example may illustrate how systemic transformation can be understood from a Leverage Points perspective. Take, for instance, nature conservation. In their early stages, conservation efforts were centred on creating National Parks where wild nature could develop without disturbance.

Notwithstanding these constraints, collaborations between local organizations can help to “bridge the gap” between formal rules imposed from the top down, and the needs of local actors aspiring to sustainability. For example, in the case of agricultural policies, several NGOs have provided support to peasants applying for EU subsidies or funding, thereby helping to alleviate the economic constraints of traditional farming. One notable example is the pilot agri-environment scheme RBAPS, which uses an innovative set of outcome-based ecological criteria for agricultural subsidies, and has empowered local farmers to take a more proactive stance towards ecologically sustainable farming practices (see Box 8.1).

*Growing community values in support of sustainability.* In addition to specific rules that guide and constrain human action, the values, beliefs and mindsets that people hold are important as a compass for how to live a good life. Globally, the expansion of a growth-oriented, consumerist culture has led to higher average levels of wealth, but has also been associated with increased inequality, environmental damage, and declines in some aspects of well-being, such as increasingly common mental health problems. To fundamentally change system trajectories, it is important to grow those values that are in support of a good life, that is, of human well-being supported by a healthy environment. Examples of value changes exist, both in the trajectories of individuals as well as in societies overall. In Southern Transylvania, there are many stories of individuals who left behind their busy and affluent city lives to pursue organic farming or a small scale tourism business in a village – such as a young couple that moved from Bucharest to Viscri, restored an old Saxon house and opened a restaurant and guesthouse that is well integrated in the community. Similarly, at a societal level, there have been major changes within just a few decades – for example, women now hold substantially more positions at decision-making levels than in the past.

Entering discussions about shared values can be helpful to avoid unnecessary disagreements and provide legitimacy to collective action. The values embodied in the “Balance Brings Beauty” vision outlined in Chapter 1, for example, spoke to many different stakeholders from different walks of life. Often, disagreements arise when it comes to the specifics of how to work towards a particular vision, rather than there being disagreement on the vision as such. Being explicit about values thus need not be fuzzy or vague, but can in fact be a very practical step towards working together – despite potential differences when it comes to the implementation of certain ideas.

## Guiding principles for “scaling beyond”

*Take a systems perspective.* A systems perspective highlights that structures and developments in the world can only be understood as a result of continuous interaction among many components including diverse actors, existing infrastructures, formal and informal rules, and environmental conditions. Scaling beyond therefore implies that these components and their interactions need to be taken into account both individually but also as an integral whole (Box 1). The effectiveness of certain pragmatic and urgent interventions may well be limited by systemic rules and values, but this does not make such pragmatic interventions pointless. Rather, it suggests pragmatic interventions and the right kinds of

rules and values need to go hand in hand. For example, access to financial capital for small entrepreneurs, in the form of low-interest loans, will work best if supported by appropriate regulations that are in line with the goals of sustainability, or with community values that seek to preserve ecosystems. Similarly, having just the right rules and values in place will also not be sufficient if, at the end of the day, the numbers in the balance sheet do not make it above the red line. A systems perspective also requires us to consider issues across sectors and locations. The Destination Management Unit and Board of the Transylvanian Highlands is a good example of an initiative that combines social, ecological and economic goals, while also coordinating action beyond local scales (see Box 6.2). Considering possible delays is also an important part of systems thinking: it might take a long time to see the results of certain actions taken today, both for desired and undesired interventions. Thus it is advisable to not be driven by short-term urgency alone, but to also carefully consider the long-term effects of a possible action or systemic intervention.

***Work with the links between internal motivations and external conditions.*** Change towards sustainability will require a combination of bottom-up changes in community values, norms, mindsets and beliefs, as well as top-down changes to external conditions such as regulations and incentives, which may enable or restrict sustainability initiatives. For example, collectivization of land during communism was imposed on the people of Transylvania from the top down – but through time, it also contributed to changes in people’s attitudes, beliefs and values. Still, today, many people are sceptical of working “collectively” because they continue to hold negative associations related to the communist era. Similarly, people’s relationship to the land can change, depending on whether it is state-owned (as it was during communism), privately owned (as before and after communism), or communally owned (as for communal pastures in traditional Saxon villages). Rules, incentives and institutions as well as attitudes, beliefs, mindsets and values fostering certain behaviour are thus tightly intertwined. For sustainability, it is necessary to engage with these interrelated dynamics both from the bottom up (e.g. through changing values) and from the top down (through reducing restricting and fostering enabling context conditions).

***Recognize pluralism in worldviews.*** At the level of a broad vision for the future, many Transylvanian stakeholders could identify with the Balance Brings Beauty scenario outlined in Chapter 1. But despite such apparent consensus, it is also necessary to recognize and respect diversity in attitudes, beliefs and values. For example, previous research in Transylvania has shown that different individuals have partly different preferences for what they would like to see in their landscape in the future. Some may lean towards a more modern type of sustainability, whereas others emphasize the importance of remaining connected with past traditions. Such pluralism need not stand in the way of working together, especially not if key aspects of the ultimate vision are broadly agreed upon. Different worldviews can even be complementary because they have different strengths and weaknesses – as indicated with the multiple pathways to sustainability (Chapter.2). At times, what might appear to be fundamental ideological divisions can, in practice, be reconciled through finding common ground when it comes to pragmatic action. Moreover, rather than only trying to change others, it can be valuable to recognize that a powerful entry point for social change is personal change in one’s own attitudes and beliefs (Box 7.2).



## BOX 7.2

### Agents of change and narratives of transformation

One of the ways we become aware of change, particularly transformation, is through the change in people's stories about themselves and their communities. When transformation occurs, individuals begin to tell a different story about themselves and their relationship to their environment and community. In this box, we briefly summarize in quotes some of the narratives of transformative change shared by residents in Southern Transylvania when speaking with our research team.

We learned that being an agent of transformational change can be a very big task: *"It is very, very hard to start living the values that you preach."* And it involves *"layers and layers of daily practices that are ... so fulfilling when they come out right"*. Transformation thus requires the ability to reflect on our own mindsets, values and beliefs, and to be emotionally ready for the challenges posed by change.

We spoke to many community change agents, whose actions and projects were many and varied. However, all of them were thinking deeply about the future of their communities, as well as their personal place in creating this future. All were prepared to question their own beliefs and assumptions and to start with transforming their own view of the world.

*"I know I can only change myself and maybe one square metre around me"*. As this quote illustrates, societal change often begins with individuals – the one thing you can reliably change is yourself. And the importance of individuals in triggering transformational change should not be underestimated. Through reflecting on their own beliefs, assumptions, values and rules, many innovative thinkers are creating little microcosms of change and action. And as these microcosms link up, more widespread change can happen.

Like a seedling, these initiatives need nurturing and support. Many of the individuals we spoke with reported important anchors and relationships that had helped them to take on the challenge of transformation: *"When the social energy is there ... you can make it work"*. Typically, local change agents are firmly grounded and connected in their communities, and have a strong commitment to strengthening community links and networks. Moreover, many look beyond their communities for inspiration and often have international support networks, thus bringing local and global together in synergy.

***Use crises as windows of opportunity.*** Moments of rapid change are often seen as a "crisis" – but both in the lives of individuals as well as for society as a whole, crises can also provide unexpected windows of opportunity. For instance, after the resignation of Romania's Prime Minister in 2015, a new 'apolitical', technocratic government was installed. One year later, this provided the opportunity to the Minister of Culture to submit to UNESCO the official nomination of Roşia Montană (in the Apuseni Mountains) as a world heritage

site. This nomination had long been kept on hold by previous governments because it was to afford protection to a region subject to major economic interests in mining, thereby effectively stopping a project that had encountered local opposition for more than 10 years. Unfortunately, in 2018, the UNESCO nomination was reversed by a new politically appointed government. This example shows that it is worth to be alert to change, in order to capitalize on opportunities for changing rules as they arise. However, it also points again to the fact that embedding new rules into values that support them is an equally important task, if stable, long-term success is to be achieved.

*Reflect and communicate wisely with other stakeholders.* Good communication is critically important to constructively engage with rules and values. At a shallow level, communication serves to convince somebody of a certain opinion or mindset. But at a deeper level, careful communication can serve a useful mirroring function – as we communicate with others, and study their responses, we can learn about our own blind spots. When there is disagreement, a reflective attitude towards communication can serve to re-consider one’s own position and mindset – we can ask “what can I learn from this disagreement?” rather than “how can I convince the other person?” To convincingly argue for sustainability, it helps to both embody and clearly communicate the key values that are being advocated. In other words, if the vision advocated for is one of an equitable, ecologically sustainable, and socially diverse Transylvania, the most powerful advocates will be those who already embody these values in their everyday actions. In day-to-day communication work, this means framing one’s messages in ways that reinforce the values that need to be fostered in society. For example, it is not advisable to motivate people to install solar panels on their roofs by appealing to materialistic values such as cost effectiveness, because these values underpin many sustainability problems in the first place. Instead, motivating people through universal aspirations of well-being for both humans and nature more closely aligns with sustainability values. In politicized settings, communicating wisely can be challenging, because it means going beyond the impulse to vilify the opposition or portray its values as “inferior”. Instead, trying to deeply understand the reasons for a certain position is likely to be more helpful in the long-term.

## Summary and conclusion

In this chapter, we sought to explain that achieving sustainability is not just a matter of supporting and spreading the right initiatives. Rather, such concrete steps take place within the constraints of existing rules, incentives, mindsets and values. In parallel to taking concrete steps – such as scaling within or scaling out – it is therefore useful to also engage with these fuzzier, less tangible concepts. Rules and mindsets strongly influence one another. Challenging existing rules and mindsets so that they actually support the ultimate vision of sustainability, amounts to encouraging nurturing practices for the “garden” that is to grow from the “seeds” of the many concrete initiatives for sustainability.

Changing mindsets and values often happens from the bottom up – as such, it is up to every community member to directly engage with this challenge. Changing rules, on the other hand, can be more difficult, because many rules are imposed onto Transylvania

from the top down (e.g. from the European Union, or the national government). And yet, such rules are a key part of contextual conditions that constrain in very real terms what is possible in terms of sustainability initiatives. In the next chapter, we look more carefully at how collaborations among stakeholders can help to improve the socio-political contextual conditions within which Transylvania is situated.

## Further information

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*Bonficite Lavandas*

**Descrie o stare de bine si relaxare.**

**Compozitie:**

**Beneficii:**

**Ingrediente:**

**Mod de folosire:**

**Ingrediente:**

**Beneficii:**

**Mod de folosire:**

**Ingrediente:**

**Beneficii:**

**Mod de folosire:**

### IN A NUTSHELL

- The success and impact of grassroots sustainability initiatives depend on the social and institutional contexts that they operate within.
- Social and historical contexts have evolved over time. Communist legacies still influence trust, opportunities and funding required for successful grassroots initiatives.
- Policies and regulations from national and EU levels are highly complex, creating barriers to grassroots initiatives that want to access benefits.
- Fostering links between grassroots initiatives, civil society, public and private actors is vital to overcome barriers created by regulation and historical contexts.
- Such links have the additional benefit of influencing social and institutional contexts, such that future successful initiatives can be better supported.

The previous chapters have highlighted the potential of bottom up initiatives to contribute to the trajectory towards the shared vision of “Balance Brings Beauty”. These bottom-up initiatives respond to sustainability problems as they are experienced locally. But problems are often created, or at least exacerbated, by global phenomena such as climate change, globalization and migration. Furthermore, issues of social acceptability, policy and regulation, and culture shape the opportunities available to bottom-up initiatives. Thus, the role that local initiatives can play in delivering the vision of “Balance Brings Beauty” is influenced by processes that occur at bigger scales than just the local. In a garden, the composition of plants and the final layout of the garden is contingent on the soil and climatic conditions. In our metaphor, the soil and climate are analogous to the social and political contexts that bottom-up initiatives are embedded within. It is these contexts that provide conditions that determine how well the seeds of sustainability are able to grow and flourish.

In this chapter, we are specifically interested in how local initiatives interact with their institutional and social contexts, and how such initiatives can work with government and other stakeholders to change contextual conditions. For so doing we elaborate on barriers and opportunities related to historical legacies and path dependencies that have shaped the present context, as well as on challenges related to current policies and regulations. We discuss what needs to happen to give bottom-up initiatives the best chance to flourish and unfold their transformational potential.



## Historical legacies and path dependencies

The contemporary history of Romania and Southern Transylvania has left a particular soil and climate for the currently growing garden of sustainability initiatives. Decades of communist rule, its fall, and later the accession to the European Union all left their marks in the societal and institutional fabric.

Some of these legacies provide a rather complicated context for grassroots engagement. For example, there are generally low levels of social capital and trust, little appreciation for lay local knowledge and civic initiatives, and issues of corruption and unequal distribution of benefits. The consequences of these can be felt in many ways. For example, there is general suspicion against agricultural cooperatives, born from negative experiences in the communist past, where many farms were destroyed resulting in widespread poverty among rural dwellers. Furthermore, many governance networks are still fairly rigid hierarchies that lack transparency and opportunities for incorporating alternative viewpoints. Together, such factors create persistent obstacles for the success and scaling of local sustainability initiatives.

Such issues can be changed and transformed into more favourable contexts. Time itself may be one force working in that direction: with the ageing of older generations, first-hand experiences of communism and its legacies are fading, so that younger generations may not carry the same memories. At the same time, new technologies allow for new possibilities to access and disseminate information, and for new tools for collective organization. Actively tapping into these possibilities provides ways to create new knowledge and challenge information asymmetries, change established practices, paradigms and hierarchies, and thus organize for strong collective action.

Several context conditions can also be fostered and influenced more actively. For example, negative perceptions of collaboration may slowly be changed by success stories. For example, in central Transylvania, the Lunca Someșului Mic cooperative was created in 2013. It supports local traditional vegetable producers (currently 16 peasant farmers) in



order for them to develop their production potential and improve their revenues from agricultural activities. This cooperative has a range of benefits beyond the actual initiative: learning and social capacity building can occur, trust in collaborations and capacities for engagement can be strengthened, and an entrepreneurial spirit can be fostered, together forming a more favourable context for the scaling of similar initiatives in general.

An important leverage point in this respect is the adherence to democratic principles of checks and balances, accountability, minority protection and sharing of benefits and burdens. Transparency and accountability mechanisms are important to establish trust in initiatives and form close ties between these initiatives and their local constituencies. Further, institutionalized checks and balances help to challenge engrained hierarchies, value local knowledge and perceptions, and empower local people to hold initiatives and people to account. Fair procedures of equal burden and benefit sharing, especially including marginalized people, spread the impact of sustainability initiatives, ground them deep in the local fabric and provide a strong source of trust in communities. Such procedures could include employing diverse service providers – for example, by sourcing food products for events from multiple women in the village, rather than relying only on previously tried-and-tested options.

## Challenges associated with current policy and regulation

Starting and consolidating sustainability initiatives can be difficult when one is confronted with overwhelming administrative rules and requirements (Table 8.1). For example, small-holder farmers and peasants face strict hygiene and formal standards if they want to sell their goods commercially. Similarly, local actors have to comply with complicated application procedures to gain benefits such as access to certain markets. Things get even more complicated when national and European policies – such as the EU Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) – are taken into account. The complex regulations often disadvantage small-holder farmers and peasants, who often lack the time and capacity to comply and access benefits such as subsidies.

**Table 8.1.** Examples of contextual challenges reported by local actors working in pursuit of sustainability (based on Nieto-Romero et al. 2016). Many of these challenges can be overcome by local actors through the strategies outlined in this book.

Type of challenge	Details
Challenges related to community attitude	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lack of entrepreneurship</li> <li>• Lack of social cohesion</li> <li>• Doubts about community capacity to foster change</li> <li>• Lack of cultural bonds to the landscape</li> </ul>
Challenges for local actors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lack of monetary resources</li> <li>• Lack of know-how</li> <li>• Lack of collaboration between actors</li> <li>• Lack of information exchange</li> </ul>
Governance-related challenges	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• High levels of bureaucracy</li> <li>• Insufficient law enforcement</li> <li>• Poor alignment of policies to local conditions</li> <li>• Over-representation of powerful lobby group interests</li> </ul>

## BOX 8.1

### The pilot agri-environment scheme RBAPS in the Ciuc Mountains (Eastern Transylvania)

*Contributed by László Demeter, biologist working for Pogány-havas*

RBAPS is a pilot agri-environment scheme running from 2016 until 2018 which follows a result-based payment approach and which is funded by the European Commission and the German Federal Environmental Foundation. It is managed by the Fundația ADEPT and implemented in collaboration with the Pogány-havas Association. The aim of this scheme is to reward farmers who have High Nature Value hay meadows for the outcomes they produce rather than prescribing uniform management actions. The desired outcome are species-rich hay meadows. To monitor the plant diversity of selected meadow parcels, 30 plant species were selected to serve as biodiversity indicators. Farmers are required to report on the occurrence of the indicator species found on their parcels in order to be eligible for one of the three levels of the scheme (5, 8 or 10 indicator species). In the Pogány-havas pilot area, 56 farmers participate in the scheme with a total area of about 100 hectares spread on 154 parcels. The main outcome of the project is that for the first time in the history of agri-environment subsidies in Romania, such payments are linked to quantified ecological parameters of the land which may change the perception of farmers towards the subsidies paid. Payments that are linked to visible results of land use management bring a sense of a well-defined purpose to them, which is absent in the classic prescribed management schemes. The method also gives land owners the opportunity to participate in the biodiversity monitoring of their meadows which they can successfully implement after just a few hours of training.



Additionally, the administrative capacity of local governments is often limited. Demands and requirements from central government, or even the EU, combined with local pressure and limited technical and personnel capacities can contribute to an environment of widespread dissatisfaction and frustration. One possible way to counterbalance this is to establish formal and informal relationships between representatives of the local government and those of rural communities, as well as with the private sector and civil society. For example, Local Action Groups (LAGs) are forms of public-private partnerships organized at the local level with the aim to pursue integrated rural development targeting the needs of the territory they are part of (e.g. in Transylvania: LAG Podișul Mediașului, LAG Țara Oltului, LAG Microregiunea Valea Sâmbetei).

Notwithstanding existing problems, in some instances, the current policy and regulatory context can also serve as a source for collaboration infrastructure, advice, and even funding. Local government can, for instance, provide space in the town hall to LAGs or NGOs for their activities, especially when they first start. Similarly, once bureaucratic hurdles are overcome, numerous funding sources can provide opportunities to local initiatives, such as EU structural, cultural funds or agricultural funds (see Box 8.1 for an innovative example). Such opportunities can bring expertise and funding into the region, as highlighted in Chapter 3, with numerous potential benefits to communities as well as local administrations.

One important pre-condition for reaping those benefits lies in the active management of ties to local government and administration. Avoiding engagement with public actors and organizations can lead to the creation of parallel structures and initiatives. Thus, problems are sustained and made more complicated through competition for limited resources. Instead, sustainability initiatives should establish ties to local leaders, building on the standing they earn within their communities, and seeking to work together. This does not mean that civic initiatives should be absorbed by or become uncritical towards the governance system and local elites – rather that establishing collaborative ties may prove beneficial for all parties involved. It can increase the resource base for initiatives, especially for scaling out activities, enhance social trust and mutual respect, and may help to better connect local elites to their communities.

## Towards a more favourable context for grassroots initiatives

Essential factors for the establishment of favourable social and institutional contexts include strengthening the connections between initiatives, and creating new opportunities for actors in the region to actively shape such contexts. While poorly functioning networks create problems such as wasting time and resources or solidifying power structures, well-functioning networks can have very positive impacts (e.g. Box 8.2). For example, in the past, professional competition between multiple NGOs in Southern Transylvania contributed to attracting a diversity of funding for several complementary projects, and resulted in a relatively balanced distribution of resources. Growing from this, for the past several years

## BOX 8.2

### **Reducing food waste: the benefits of fostering relationships between public, private and civil society actors.**

A local NGO from Cluj-Napoca empowering youth community involvement – JCI Cluj – recently launched a project called “Food Waste Combat”. The project started to work on the issue of food waste reduction by instigating the “Zero Waste Community Dinner”. This was designed to be a sustainable demonstration aiming to raise awareness around issues of food waste. The first community dinner gathering took place in October 2016, where volunteers together with members of the NGO and professionally trained chefs prepared meals for a total of 80 people. Participants were encouraged to join in the preparation of the food, and were engaged in discussions about issues related to food waste. The ingredients used for this community dinner were sourced from local commercial networks (a farmers’ market and a retailer), using food that was close to its expiry date, or damaged food that otherwise would have been thrown out. The idea was to raise awareness and show people that you could cook from ingredients that would have been considered garbage by others, thus avoiding wasting the ingredients.

After one month, the first event was followed by another, and the NGO started gaining more support from the local community as well as from local authorities. Moreover, one of the events helped a local shelter by offering gourmet food prepared by chefs to 60 people. In addition, the members of Food Waste Combat, as part of the Junior Chamber International Cluj (JCI Cluj), began to be involved in advocacy work and initiated a new public debate on the Romanian anti-food waste law, instigating a national awareness campaign through major media channels. These efforts culminated in October 2018 through the launch of the second Food Bank in Romania.

This is an example of bottom-up initiative where NGO actors (coming from various backgrounds such as science and academia, engineering, and medicine) together with other members from civil society, as well as representatives from the policy sector, have worked to create a precedent to improve regulations around food waste, while involving all major actors in the field. Building on its early successes, Food Waste Combat is now collaborating with teams that create food waste reduction mobile apps (JustNow and TimeToEat Romania), as well as with lawyers and activists, and numerous researchers.

there has been an increasingly collaborative environment that allows NGOs to learn from each other. NGOs now often join forces in initiatives, for instance under the joint umbrella of Transylvania Highlands initiative (see Box 6.2), and thus strengthen the policy influence of the NGO sector as a whole. In doing so, networks influence the broader social and institutional context of Southern Transylvania, and create more favourable conditions for the future success of grassroots initiatives.



The consolidation and deepening of social networks can be fostered through active facilitation of relationships between distant actors, and by motivating people for cooperation and dialogue. Some actors may be particularly useful as relationship facilitators given their position in the network: such favourable positions include actors with many links to others, or with exclusive access to specific sections of the network. Such actors can serve as multipliers and brokers in the network, connecting people and dispersing information, and hence helping the network to consolidate, strengthen and grow.

Taking the factors and dynamics highlighted within this chapter into account will prove useful to facilitate the spread of the various flowers of sustainability initiatives and fertilize the growth of a beautiful, diverse and flourishing garden of initiatives.

## Further information

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RBAPS - Results-Based Payments for Biodiversity: a new pilot agri-environment scheme for the Târnava Mare and Pogány Havas regions

Project Overview: <https://fundatia-adept.org/ro/proiecte/rbaps-plati-pentru-biodiversitate-pe-baza-rezultatelor/>

Natura 2000 in Transylvania

Website: <http://www.natura2000transilvania.ro/despre-proiect>







### From vision to action

This book builds upon a widely shared vision for a sustainable future of Southern Transylvania, entitled “Balance Brings Beauty” (Chapter 1). Transylvania is fortunate to have numerous active and vibrant sustainability initiatives, which together can lead the way towards transforming this vision into reality. These initiatives use many different entry points, including the conservation of natural and cultural heritage, small-scale farming, and rural community development. They are valuable seeds of transformative change and action for sustainability. However, growing these seeds into a “garden of sustainability” is challenging because local initiatives work in many different ways, follow their own unique preferences on the way to sustainability (Chapter 2), and often have to cope with limited resources (Chapter 3). What can be done to maximize the chances of these initiatives joining forces, and together accelerating Transylvania’s journey towards a sustainable future?

### The science and experience of change

To keep up with an ever faster changing world, findings from the ‘science of change’ highlight that societal transformation needs to be grounded at the local level, remaining at least partly in the hands of local actors and agents of change. Our goal, as researchers, was to support and enable the local efforts of Transylvania’s practitioners of change, recognizing and capitalizing on the vast range of inspiring initiatives already underway. To this end, we illustrated ways to upscale and connect existing initiatives through a number of ‘amplifying strategies’.

This book was born out of the motivation to support and connect sustainability initiatives in Transylvania, so that these could more easily move from vision to action. We discussed scaling within, scaling out and scaling beyond as three ways to increase the reach and influence of local sustainability initiatives. Scaling within is about firmly establishing a given sustainability initiative so that it can grow. Scaling out is about transferring the principles or practice of a given sustainability initiative to a new location or context. Scaling beyond is about working with people’s values and with laws and institutions to support sustainability. By showcasing positive examples for each of these complementary amplifying approaches, we showed that the seeds of a brighter, more sustainable future are already germinating. However, seeds sometimes sprout, sometimes fall on barren soil – and sometimes grow in spectacular ways. Understanding when, how and where successes and failures occur helps to more successfully grow a garden of sustainability initiatives. Providing guidance as to what works, and under which circumstances, is precisely what this book tried to explore: we showed it is important to recognize the diversity of existing seeds (Chapter 3), pay attention to where and how seeds take roots (Chapter 5) and spread (Chapter 6), cultivate the



strength to grow a garden (Chapter 7), and finally, feed back what has been learned into the soil, thus further improving its texture and structure for the future (Chapter 8).

The many seeds of existing sustainability initiatives are not the only source of optimism for Southern Transylvania. Over the years, we have repeatedly witnessed a high level of consensus across a wide range of different stakeholders in support of the development trajectory of “Balance Brings Beauty”. During many of our on-ground interactions it also became apparent that actors that may seem quite different at first glance, are often close to one another in terms of their underlying motivations and values that drive their various activities in Transylvania. This book can complement such natural alignment of motivations and values, helping actors to maximize synergies in their goals, and bridge differences in their approaches.

## Bringing voices together

The ideas explored in this book rest on the collaborative effort of many like-minded people. This book brings together different voices and experiences, be it of researchers, practitioners or community representatives. Three annual workshops dedicated to the co-creation of knowledge (September 2016, June 2017, September 2018), approximately ten focus groups on the management of community resources such as pastures, a social network analysis, and approximately 50 interviews around local understandings of sustainability and different strategies to reach “Balance Brings Beauty” back up the information presented here.

Drawing on this information, this book aims to extend discussions about how to reach a sustainable Transylvania beyond academia and civil society. This book also aims to improve dialogue, both within the network of practitioners of change in Southern Transylvania, as well as with local governments, municipalities, and policy makers at various levels – perhaps also initiating conversations with those holding different or opposite opinions on the future of Southern Transylvania. We hope this book will be used as a communication tool at the interface between grassroots initiatives, civil society, public institutions, private actors, and research, and found on the desks of many:

- Local actors in Transylvania – to inspire and empower them;
- Policy makers influencing Transylvania – to inspire and convince them; and
- Academics working on similar issues elsewhere – to inspire and inform them.

A strong vision, backed up by active people who share similar motivations and values, can make change happen. This book is an attempt to provide an incipient toolbox for local change-makers. As these tools are being applied to real-world challenges in creative ways, we trust they will be refined and the toolbox will grow, so that different locations can learn from Southern Transylvania. Concrete recommendations summarizing how to make change happen are listed below.



## Recommendations

Close collaboration between researchers and practitioners, over a number of years, facilitated a valuable two-way learning process about the challenges currently facing Transylvania – a journey that culminated in this book, and leads us to a series of recommendations for practice. We share these recommendations with a note of urgency, given the rapid changes currently underway in Transylvania:

1. *Cherish and support **good ideas**; transfer ideas; receive and pass them on respectfully.* Just like the cycle of life, ideas come and fade in a cycle. This cycle of sharing ideas is foundational to the proposed three amplifying strategies to realize the shared vision, because ultimately everybody stands to benefit.
2. *Combine **vision with pragmatism**.* A clear vision is inspiring and motivating towards a long-term bold goal. Pragmatism serves day-to-day purposes. A grain of madness with a healthy dose of pragmatism might be the winning combination to sustain progress in the desired direction.



3. *Take a **systems perspective**.* Seeing and acting from the perspective of the whole unlocks solutions to complex problems, such as sustainability related ones. Such a holistic perspective (e.g. ‘the whole village concept’) requires the consideration of multiple issues, across different sectors and locations.
4. *Recognize **pluralism in worldviews**.* Divergent opinions need not stand in the way of working together, especially not if key aspects of the ultimate vision are broadly agreed upon. In many instances, it is fruitful to respect such plurality and use understandings of differences in order to build trust.
5. *Make your **core principles explicit and share them**.* Core principles define an action or initiative. Making core principles explicit also enables more effectively working on the links between extrinsic motivations such as imposed rules, and intrinsic motivations including attitudes, values and beliefs.
6. *Capitalize on **existing opportunities, working with what works**.* Integrating and acknowledging progress of local sustainability initiatives is conducive to a sense of empowerment, creates ownership, and improves accountability for change.
7. *Empower and encourage **leadership**.* Collaborative leadership is considered a strong enabling factor for effectively dealing with change and directed transformation. Leadership is needed to orchestrate the efforts of various sustainability initiatives into a set of coherent and coordinated actions for change. For new leaders to emerge, it is important to not suppress innovative potential at the outset, just because it sounds different or unusual.
8. *Find **key people who can help you get started, and communicate wisely with local actors**.* Don’t tend the garden alone. Relationships at the community level and between agents of change are extremely important leverage points. Working together in a network can accelerate the journey towards a sustainable future.
9. *Be aware of the **context**.* Being mindful of how context matters translates into seeing the influence context can have on the success and scalability of grassroots sustainability initiatives, while also recognizing the imprint successfully scaled initiatives can leave on context.
10. *Be prepared to learn from **failures, and use crises as windows of opportunity**.* Failures are useful lessons. They should be talked about, because they provide opportunities for learning – both for those who failed, but also for others who can avoid similar failures by learning about what happened elsewhere. Crises have a majestic eye-opening effect. Crises can both trigger and solidify the change of personal and social values.







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