

# **SOCIO-ECONOMIC SOLIDARITY, NEIGHBOURHOODS IN SOUTHERN TRANSYLVANIA.**

Frîncu Raluca Maria

## **Abstract**

Model of social organization, neighbourhoods were brought by German settlers with their arrival in Transylvania. This form of social organization originates in Franconia models from the XI-XII centuries. One of the arguments behind this statement is given for comparative research; analyzing the functions of the Saxon and Franconian neighborhoods come to the conclusion that there are many similarities.

The origins of neighbourhoods we find at the old north-germanic tribes, Tacitus works are talking about neighbourhoods. From him we find out that their members gathered around a fountain, forests and plains, where practiced specific rituals. Neighbourhoods holidays, considered heathen were convicted in Catholic medieval texts. In several decrees, Carol the Great condemned neighbourhoods heathen sacrifices made on the occasion of funerals or judgments organized on the day after Christmas.

A definition of neighbourhoods *-Nachbarschaften-* is a form of social organization based on the criterion of spatial proximity. Some authors consider it to be even a "social institution" brought in Transylvania by Saxon settlers. In view of Stephan Ludwig Roth neighbourhood members were those who "... were watered from the same fountain, which ate bread from the oven, who have watched one the other at bedside in the night, who raised their homes with community arms, which, in sickness and misfortune, have helped like relatives, which, in the end, rested all on the same hearse, who dug each other grave, who led the dead to the cemetery with their hands, making them the sad honor to accompany them on the path of no return, who praised the merits of the missing one to the mourning mass and cared for widows and children's wealth on

behalf of the community- this fellowship society it is said to be based on the community of place, neighbourhood or close ones.

If economically, saxons distinguished themselves by organizing into guilds, socially they distinguished themselves by organizing into neighbourhoods. This requires different rules regarding the daily lives of individuals, and their main function was to persuade neighbours to aid and to support each other in the important moments of life.

## **Chapter 1**

### **History of research**

In the last two centuries the study of neighborhood institution has preoccupied German intellectuals. Information on the history, organization and neighborhood functions are found in various forms: complex works – monographs, articles and studies in various journals and periodicals, integrated chapters in general works on the history of Transylvania or the Transylvanian Saxons. Along with general and special works devoted to the theme, the present study (paper) is based on the study of the existing funds of the National Archives Services in Sibiu county, Alba and Braşov, as well as those held by the Black Church Archive from Braşov.

## **Chapter 2**

### **Social and economic evolution of Saxon towns in southern Transylvania**

Foray in the organization of neighborhoods in southern Transylvania would be incomplete without providing geographic framework that worked and developed them. Place along the Somes Valley and Bistriţa, on Târnavă and Sibiu saxons soon managed to contribute to economic and social development of mentioned areas and to impose in the political and administrative life. Their involvement in the commercial activities and crafts caused the separation of rural and create a urban bourgeoisie involved in all areas of economic, social and cultural life.

Development of cities in Transylvania was due to Saxon privileges received after the Golden Bull. These privileges have brought many benefits resulting evolution and development of areas inhabited by them. In medieval Transylvania, according to the legal status, cities could be classified as: royal free cities (Cluj, Braşov, Sibiu, Târgu Mureş, Bistriţa, Mediaş, Sebeş, Alba Iulia); privileged cities (Sf. Gheorghe, Odorhei, Hunedoara, Haţeg, Ocna Sibiului); tax cities (Dejul, Turda, Aiudul)<sup>1</sup>.

Sibiu, Braşov, Mediaş and Sebeş participated actively in the development of economic, political, social and religious life in southern Transylvania. From general conscription dates since 1750 shows that Sibiu was the first among the Transylvanian towns as number of craftsmen as well as the number of trades, followed by Cluj and Braşov was the third, Mediaş fell from sixth place on the twelfth. According to time statistics, in 1836 the largest craft center of Transylvania was Braşov with a number of 4.918 craftsmen, followed by Cluj which had only 2.347, while in Sibiu were mentioned 1.767.

During the late XVII-th century until the first half of the XVIII-th century was a period of decline both economically and socially. The main causes were wars but also the plague epidemic that have befallen the people of Transylvania. In the second half of the XVIII-th century economic and social development has seen a new impetus. Great craft center producing goods to satisfy the internal market but also for the Romanian (Countries). Major changes are noted in the early XIX-th century when Sibiu lost the first place, falling on the third place, in favor of Braşov and Cluj.

### **Chapter 3**

#### **Brotherhood, guilds and neighbourhoods - Saxon population specific organizational forms**

Association desire, specific Christianity, determined the appearance of brotherhoods in the X-XIth centuries. If at first monastic and priestly brotherhoods prevalent, gradually made their appearance in the West those of the laity, as penitents and flagella movement. Brotherhoods represented the attempt of people to meet to get

---

rid of loneliness, a manner of socialization of individuals and obtaining respect in the community. Medieval man was attracted to join the brotherhood because they offered him the material safety. In case of need could borrow money from the fraternity cashier or could get, in case of sickness, a bed in one of the fraternity hospitals to which he belonged. According to medieval principles, who was part of a brotherhood shall ensure, through prayers to the saint protector, peace in the afterlife. In the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries in Europe this type of association knew height of their development and the first signs of decay, due to wars, epidemics, but also Western church schism. The role of brotherhoods decreases with taking over by the municipality or state the social problems- related to homeless, poor and sick- as they are busy.

The guilds were professional associations that bring together all craftsmen who practiced the same trade. Religious brotherhoods and guilds operate in parallel and not merged. Therefore, in case of guilds we find a balance between professional and spiritual side of members; although it also had religious functions, guilds could not perform the requirements imposed by the Medieval world that are found to religious brotherhoods.

Along with spiritual and economic side, the Saxons have paid special attention and have neglected the social side, so the saxon neighborhoods first document from Transylvania dates at the end of XV-th century. Their late appearance shows that they were formed and took shape only in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, having as model religious associations and guilds.

I considered necessary to present a brief history of religious brotherhoods, guilds and neighborhoods, to highlight similarities and differences between the three forms of social organization and how the concepts behind the organization of brotherhoods were taken by guilds and then by neighbourhoods.

## **Chapter 4**

### **Establishment, organization and evolution of southern Transylvania Saxon neighborhoods**

The first documentary attestation of the Transylvanian Saxon neighborhoods dates from 1498, from a document find in the village association from Gossmar street bought a spring in Prejmer. In another document from 1533 they appear as the

vecinatus; the document dated August 23, 1541 we find that the magistrate of Braşov sent to Sercaia two officials who had to deal with sharing the village in neighborhoods. A document from 1526 attests neighborhoods of Sighisoara, and the oldest information on Sibiu neighborhoods dating from 1563. Their late appearance shows that they were formed and took shape only in the XVI-th - XVII-th centuries having as model religious associations and guilds. The neighborhood was an association between neighbours, based on spatial criteria, clearly defined rules and it is led by a neighbourhood father. This type of organization includes all married couple and those who reach the age of 24 years.

Cities initially certified, new form of community organization has spread rapidly in the Transylvanian Saxon villages, however, communities in northeastern Transylvania (except the city of Bistrita) they were established at the beginning of the twentieth century. Powerful ethnic identity instruments and community control, Saxon neighbourhoods have been subordinated to Evangelical Church C.A, especially in the second half of the nineteenth century. After the massive emigration of Saxons starting with 1990, the number of neighborhood drastically reduced, currently their function is seen only in settlements, few in number (ex, Alina, Stejarişu, Hârtibaci Valley), which still preserves elements of community life. Over time, Saxon neighbourhoods have been a model of organization for the Hungarian and Romanian communities in Transylvania.

Neighbourhood institution was headed by a neighbors father (*Nachbarvater*), chosen among the eldest members for one year, then he could be re-elected. He chose a young father (*Jungerer Nachbarschaftsvater*) next to which it was chosen a council called Altschaft, consisting of eight prominent members of the community. Their role was to advise the neighborhood leaders, to check expenses, to visit fire outbreaks. For the services to the community they were not rewarded, just content with the authority and respect of the other members.

Neighbourhood Father (*Nachbarvater*) had to be an example for all members, he had to live in accordance with the rules and statutes. Breaking the rules had serious consequences, he was punished worse than the rest of the members. To understand its importance at the local level we name few of his duties: convey a general meeting, church distributes tasks, resolve conflicts between neighbours or family, deals with

monitoring how customs were respected. Members behavior was closely pursued by the neighborhood father; if a neighbor had an immoral behavior was severely criticized and even fined on the day of judgment. Neighbourhood Father had an important role in the relationship with the authorities and the church, and members of the neighborhoods board could become magistrates in cities and villages, church board members.

Among the Neighbourhood father duties is included maintaining order and discipline, fixing with elders fines for members who have committed various errors. If some stranger wanted to buy a house in the city, the father of neighbours must notify authorities. This is due to the decision taken in 1541, that only Germans were allowed to buy houses in the city. Both in Sibiu and in other cities in southern Transylvania, Romanians and other nations were forbidden, until the eighteenth century, to buy houses in Saxon cities. Communication between the neighborhood and authorities is also done through the father, he informed citizens on all decisions taken by local authorities.

Together with board members, father noticed if neighbors dressed according to the rules stipulated in statutes. On the occasion of marriages neighborhood father, together with the neighbours mother, attending to catechism examination of the young pair. When it was a death, family members were required to announce neighborhood father who notify the neighbors about the sad event.

A householder father was careful that streets and yards were neat, he also monitored wells and chimneys cleaning. In the Middle Ages plague epidemics were frequent of, making havoc among the population, therefore a neighborhood management task was to oversee homes where there were sick people. Those affected were isolated not to spread the disease, and neighborhood members supply them with the necessary things. Since the sixteenth century, one of the Neighbourhood father duties was to keep accounts of neighborhood income and expenditure. These works were made by neighborhood father on a honorary, instead he was exempted from certain obligations. Analysing Neighbourhood father activity we can conclude that he was responsible for protection of neighborhood institution, based on ethnic, religious and local collaboration.

As the guilds, neighborhoods had ritual objects as -chest, sign or tin, flag, seal- these were individualized and were used on the occasion of important moments for neighborhood, such as accepting new members or meetings over the year.

One of the most important objects for neighborhood was chest. This appears in medieval documents as *pixis* or *Büchse*, it had the same functionality as at guilds. Into the chest were kept documents - statutes, registers, receipts-, money collected from contributions and fines as well as seal, sign, etc. At both guild and neighborhood that was opened during the general meetings, in front of it were received disciples, were enshrined journeyman titles-at guilds, and at neighborhood were welcome new members.

Chests were made of soft or hard wood, had rectangular shape, dimensions and different decorations, depending on age and neighborhood or guild incomes. If in the XVI-th and XVII-th centuries, the décor of chests was simple, since the XVIII-th century we can notice a tendency to change, it appeared massive chests made of hardwood- beech, oak, walnut- and the decor is complex. Neighborhood chest was closed with two keys, one held by the old father and the other one by the young father. It was opened only in the presence of the two during the general meetings held regularly, at the judgment day and in the procession that was held immediately after the election of the neighbourhood father, which show the seriousness and solemnity of moment. After the election of the new neighbourhood father this was transferred, by a procession composed of neighborhood members present at the meeting, to the house of the new father.

Another object taken from guilds, is the board or the sign of neighborhood. The existence of these signs is attested only in the XV-th century, in status from 1376, although they were regulated various issues including the organization of guilds, the signs were not mentioned. From the XVI-th century signs were mentioned in documents as the *Zeichen* or *Tafelt*. Their role was to spread the message of the guild leader or neighbourhood father and to inform organization members of various events that took place. It had various sizes and shapes- rectangle, shield, etc. - it was worked in tin, brass or wood, painted or engraved with text and images of significant buildings of

neighborhood, with the image of women working in the kitchen, the name of the neighborhood etc.

Initially there was one sign that announced the various events that took place in the neighborhood. Since the XVII-th century appeared funeral marks through which it was announced the sad event. These distinguished themselves by symbols and inscriptions. The material used for these it was mainly wood, its shape was the heraldic shield. The decoration was made by carving, painting or engraving, iconography being fit for purpose: the neighborhood identification which sign belonged- the emblem of that city or a gate tower -and elements that makes direct reference to the sad event as sandglass- sign of time passing- associated with the inscription *Hora fugit* or *Tempus fugit*.

From XVIII-th and XIX-th centuries, with signs begin to be used conveners- were known as the column, these were simple pieces of wood, square or rectangular, provided with a catching handle decorated through carving or inscribing. Their role was to convoke the neighborhood members at general or quarterly meetings that took place during the year. They were distinguished from the classic signs, because on one side it was attached a paper with a table that included the names of the neighborhood members.

In conclusion, the sign was a symbol of authority for the neighborhood, of the organization and functions performed both outside the community as well as to its members; transmitted through its messages it had an official character.

Another element specific to guilds and taken over by neighborhoods was the flag. It was carried at funerals or other important occasions of the community life. The material from which flags were made was linen, cotton or silk; this is why very few have been preserved until nowadays. The decoration was made by painting, embroidery or applied, represents flowers and stalks arranged in garlands, bouquets or wreaths, angels, inscriptions which name the neighborhood it belonged.

At the end of the XVIII-th century, some neighborhoods have drawn the coat of arms, and others have made seal with their marks, which demonstrates the importance of these organizations at the local level. Documents authenticated by seals are testimony

to neighborhoods activity, seal serving to guarantee a secret or to ensure the document's authenticity. By wearing their marks (emblem, text), it was a mean of identifying the issuer in time and space, it could be both a person as well as an institution. In medieval times, the seal represented the holder authority, his place in society and the importance given to the act or document that was applied. Some of the sealing patterns of urban neighborhoods are in museum collections; a good example is the Museum of History - Altemberger House from Sibiu, which has several pieces of this kind.

Along with ritual objects- chest, sign, flag- and those of authentication- seal, an important role in shaping the image of neighborhoods have had the registers, kept in Neighbourhood chests passed down from generation to generation. These are important sources of information on the number of members, the taxes paid by them, the practiced trades. Besides lists with names of members, in registers can be found minutes recorded on the occasion of meetings over the year these providing valuable information on problems faced by neighborhood.

If so far I mentioned ritual and identification objects of neighborhood, we must not forget that they had common objects as, tables, chairs, benches, dishes used at weddings and funerals. Also, neighborhood had various accessories used for funeral, tools used for field work (sieves for peas and hemp, bushels and weights for measure, iron markers for animals, farm machines, animals), but also tools used by firemen for fighting fires(ladders, buckets etc.).

For neighborhood members most important festival was the Beginning of the Lent (known as *Sittag*, *Richttag*, *grosse Nachbartag* or *Gerichtag*). On this occasion, the men dressed for celebration gathered in neighborhood father's house and, in front of the open chest, thank god; on this occasion was verified financial situation of the neighborhood, and at the end held judgment itself. Young father must record throughout the year the mistakes of neighborhood members, so that they can be discussed and fined on the occasion of this meeting. *Richttag* or Judgement Day was held before noon and was a serious festive event, attended by men only. By opening of the neighborhood chest placed on a table, meeting received a strong ceremonial character, opening of the chest symbolizing reconciliation between neighbors. Now was elected the new neighborhood father; after the new neighbourhood father was elected chest and all objects were

transferred in the house of the newly elected; if the father remains the same, meeting ends with a simple closing of the chest.

One of the most important functions of the neighbourhood was mutual aid, granted on the occasion of major events in the life of its members: christening, marriage or funeral. In these moments, the community was obliged, according to statutory provisions, actively participate in development of the event. Both happy moments - weddings, christening- as well as funerals were held by certain rules followed by all members of the neighborhood. As shown in documents, each contributes to the smooth running of the community, without expecting rewards. Dishes, tables, banks for organizing weddings, christenings or funerals were used, and women offered their help for cooking. Young married were helped to raise the house, offered support for the renovation of houses and dependencies or, in case of fire, for those oppressed the community offered support. Participation of neighbors in these important events in the life of a family created spiritual ties between its members.

Birth of a child was a moment of joy for the family, and also for the entire community. On this occasion the women in the neighborhood help the family and mother who needed rest to recover. An important event in everyone's life was marriage. On this occasion the community participated in the smooth running of the event. There were even written regulations which established in the smallest detail how the event would take place, luxury and waste being in this manner tempered.

If the happy events of life - birth and marriage - were celebrated by family together with the community, this was also involved in the difficult moments of human life through participation in development of the event and to acquit mourning family of some of the problems. Death of a member was a new opportunity when the mourning family received neighbourhood support. If a neighbour got sick, neighbourhood members were obliged to help him in the fields, to gather the harvest and to help him with the household work.

Another important function of the neighbourhoods was citizen's safety, his wealth and health. In the statutes there were provisions and neighbours were involved in providing guard overnight, field supervision and houses to announce a fire outbreak. Since the appearance of neighbourhoods, this aspect was taken seriously by all members.

To avoid spread of fire a strong accent was on cleaning of the houses chimneys, every citizen had this duty, and who was neglecting this was severely punished by the father of the neighbourhood which checked on. From XVIII-th century chimneys were controlled by a trained person, known as Rauchfang-Aufseher, at the end of the nineteenth century this service was made by chimney sweep who, for payment, cleaned the neighbourhoods chimneys.

A special attention was paid to wells and pumps cleaning, rebuilding bridges, roads and dams in areas threatened by floods. Public health was closely linked to the quality of water that they consumed, that is why each citizen was required to participate, when he was summoned to clean the fountain, absence from this work was penalised. Neighbourhood also involved in public health issues. During the plague epidemics were carefully observed people entering in the city and houses where there were sick people. In the XVIII-th century appeared the so called *Leichen – Aufseher*. Both Sibiu and Braşov were intended to inform the authorities about the health of the population. Field guard, fire prevention rules, order and cleanliness of neighborhoods streets are problems which will be taken at the beginning of the XX-th century by the authorities of cities, therefore, the provisions on these issues no longer found in the statutes were emitted in this period.

Another function of neighborhoods was to protect moral values and good coexistence; in the value system of the Saxon nation honor, honesty and credibility plays an important role.

Arguments and fights in the street should be avoided, to shout at someone on the street was a real insult. At nine o'clock in the evening party ended and the participants withdrew for rest back home. There were few exceptions, such as women spinning reunion is extended until 10 in the evening, and who disregarded this provision was sanctioned. The worst crime for Saxon communities was theft. Individual honor was tested in the neighborhood by rotating the administration of joint assets; who does not properly manage was severely punished and even excluded from the community. Statutes stipulated fines and penalties for all who came out pattern.

Church had an important role for neighbourhoods, respect that was inspired from childhood. If in the XVI-th and XVII-th centuries, its influence was quite shy, until the

XVIII-th century in the statutes were introduced requirements that each member of the neighbourhood had to respect this institution. Those who did not attend church every Sunday or worked on holidays was severely criticized and fined. Before major holidays - *Christmas, Easter, Pentecost, Harvest Day* - neighbourhood members were preparing spiritually for the celebration, at that time each neighbourhood presented in front of the priest to take Holy Eucharist. Those who were arguing and kept anger were forced by the neighbourhood father to reconcile a night before. Shy at first, the influence of the church gradually increased, and in the XIX-th century neighbourhoods became real propaganda tools for the church.

Although actively involved in organizing social life, during the nineteenth century, a light decline of the neighborhood institution had been noticed. One reason may be the taking over by the magistrate of the city the prerogatives of neighborhood fathers, mainly those related to public order.

So we conclude that the neighbourhoods functioned as: burial society, space for spreading the official news space of mutual aid, gathering place and advice, place of watching the health, place of political propaganda and place of expressing public opinion.

## **Chapter 5**

### **Neighbourhoods everyday life was reflected in the neighbourhood statutes and records**

At first neighbourhoods were organized by statutory provisions transmitted orally, only in the sixteenth century their content was put on paper to be transmitted from generation to generation and respected by all members. Status was the basic document of the organization, it was kept in the neighbourhood chest and was taken out only on special occasions, when new members were received into the neighborhood to be notified of their rights and duties.

The study of the neighbourhood statutes issued during XVI-th – XIX-th centuries in Sibiu, Braşov, Mediaş and Sebeş reached the conclusion that all had the same basic structure. They pursued respecting the same principles, even if the articles or certain provisions were different. What can be noticed in the statutes of the sixteenth

century and early seventeenth century is that they differed in terms of a neighborhood structure to another, although the basic principles were similar. Only in the second half of the seventeenth century local authorities were actively involved in their organization by designing statutes which apply to all neighbourhoods of a settlement. From the eighteenth century the church influence on the organization of neighborhoods was growing, increasing the number of articles on behavior in church.

The provisions of neighborhood statutes can be classified as: provisions relating to management, conditions and entrance fees in the neighborhood; a different series are related to mutual assistance of neighborhood members at christenings, weddings, funerals and their moral conduct, and not least, the provisions relating to citizen safety and its property and cleanliness in the neighborhood. All these provisions reflects, in fact, the main functions of the neighborhood, listed in the previous chapter: mutual aid, citizen safety and protection of moral values. The same provisions can be found replicated in rural statutes analyzed in various localities in southern Transylvania.

The conclusion that emerges, after a thorough analysis of statutes issued in the middle of the sixteenth century until the late nineteenth century, is that in structural terms, the organization of neighbourhoods has changed very little. The evolution of society and changing attitudes has led to some changes, such as German origin condition for those who were going to be accepted into the neighbourhood. If in the sixteenth century it was one of the first statutory provisions, in 1796 the government ordered that all homeowners, regardless of nationality, to be summoned to neighborhoods meetings. Other changes are those related to night guard, which in XVI-th – XVIII-th centuries was made by members of the neighborhood, and from the end of the XVIII-th century this duty was for persons employed by neighbourhood.

Interesting to notice is how the statutes were designed. Those from XVI-th – XVII-th centuries, although touched all aspects of mutual aid, behavior in society, public safety, had elaborated concise phrases and items were not arranged as a certain typical. Since the XVIII-th century, in Sibiu even in the late the XVII-th century, is observed particular emphasis on how they were written, some of them were divided into chapters and subchapters, others from article title could find out from the issue that was to be regulated. In the Statutes issued XVI-th – XVII-th centuries, each article ends with a fine

imposed to the one who was wrong, opposed to those from the nineteenth century, when each item had a title and includes several sub-points and fines collected were not even mentioned.

Since the nineteenth century a part of neighbourhoods obligations - street lighting, streets and fields security, prevention and fire fighting - will be taken over by the city administration. All these measures leading to the diminution of neighborhood functions, but they remain active preoccupied with the social problems of community, (mutual assistance of poor members, help at the funeral) and respecting the moral values.

In medieval Transylvania it is observed a strong trend for social discipline, reflected both in guild statutes as well as in those of neighbourhood. Writing and respecting these statutes shows that discipline as a social phenomenon was considered necessary and was supported by a part of the population who wanted an organized life.

## **Chapter 6**

### **The neighborhood pieces Catalogue**

Over time in museum collections entered different objects that belonged to neighbourhoods. Among the existing objects in the collection Medieval of the History Museum - Altemberger House store chests, signs, conveners, flags, seals, stamps, dishes, silver cups.

In chapter four we present generalities about objects that were part of the neighbourhoods wealth in this chapter we attempt an overview of the pieces preserved in museums. The catalog is structured in three chapters: the neighbourhood chests, neighbourhood signs, conveners, flags, seals and stamps, other neighbourhoods objects; objects are presented in chronological order on the following descriptive criteria:

Name of object:

Photo:

Workshop: the workshop where was the object worked

Material: the material from which the object was worked

Dating: in case there is an inscription on the object or by typology

Dimensions: Height; Length; Width;

Sources: locality where the object comes from

Museum where the object is located

Number of inventory:

Description:

### **Final thoughts**

Although the main objective of the study was to analyze Saxon neighbourhoods in southern Transylvania, it should be noted that this organizational model is also met at Hungarian and Romanian. They began to lose authority because of shortcomings in their activity, and because of a new lifestyle; for example pubs, cursed in all neighborhoods statutes, become at the end of XVIII-th century places where we met even honorable people.

Neighbourhoods had adapted to changes of power, being receptive to everything demanded by authorities, after the First World War, although their functions were limited, these had an important role in strengthening the Saxon national identity. End of the Second World War caused changes on ethnic, demographic, cultural and social composition in localities from Transylvania. In this total changed world and full of dangers and threats (expropriation and deportation), Saxons reestablished neighborhoods. Although their functions were limited, these have become after the war the most important institution of mutual help. They acted as local institutions of the church, which in addition to organizing red-letter days played an important role in organizing funerals.

At the end of the XIX-th century, in Sibiu, as in other Transylvanian cities, neighborhoods abolition was decided. In 1892 in an article from "*Siebenbürgisch* -

*Deutsches Tageblatt*" newspaper proposed that the "chests, supplies and glasses" of the abolished neighbourhoods in the previous year to be donated to Brukenthal Museum in Sibiu. Although they have been removed, neighbourhoods have resumed their activity at the beginning of the XX-th century, being used as tools for political propaganda. Testimony of their activity stands, along with documents and three-dimensional objects. I studied the evolution of historic neighbourhoods dating from XVI-th – XIX-th centuries, when the mode of involvement in the life of the individual was much stronger, and their role was obvious.