

BABEȘ-BOLYAI UNIVERSITY
FACULTY OF GEOGRAPHY



– Summary of the doctoral thesis –

CULTURAL LANDSCAPES IN THE TRANSYLVANIAN PLAIN

PHD SUPERVISOR,
Prof. univ. dr. POP CĂLIN-CORNEL

PHD STUDENT,
VODIȚĂ ADRIAN NICOLAIE

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Key words: Transylvanian Plain, cultural landscapes, rural landscapes, conservation, valorisation

SYNOPSIS

The doctoral thesis "*The Cultural Landscapes of the Transylvanian Plain*" adds to other works that study the cultural landscapes, joining the research in this field. The studied area, the Transylvanian Plain, is a subdivision of the Transylvanian Depression, spread over the administrative territory of three counties: Bistrița-Năsăud, Cluj and Mureș. The cultural landscape of the Transylvanian Plain had a complex evolution influenced by a multitude of geographical, historical, and socio-political factors. Presently, its valences are difficult to capture due to the multitude of existing variables. This thesis aims to clarify the evolution over time of the natural landscape and of the human habitat in the region, but especially the interaction and mutual influences between man and nature. The studied geographical unit presents a complex cultural landscape from historical, geographical, cultural, agrarian, industrial and especially habitational points of view, having unique customs and traditions.

The research is carried out over the course of 4 main chapters.

The first chapter contains the theoretical and methodological basis of the study, the second chapter presents characteristics of physical and human geography of the studied area, the third chapter identifies and typifies the cultural landscapes in the studied area, and the fourth chapter highlights the functions of the cultural landscape and the ways to capitalize on it.

Chapter I. Theoretical and methodological basis of the study

Cultural landscape is a complex phenomenon that has been approached by many researchers over time, from different fields such as geography, history, art, architecture, etc. In order to understand the phenomenon of cultural landscape, we will go through the specialized literature in which different definitions and concepts are presented with the aim of decanting the absorbed information and forming a relevant opinion on the cultural landscape.

The study of landscape in geography was first introduced by German geographers. The American researcher Robert Dickinson (1939, pp.1-14) recalled in a 1939 article the foray of German geographers into the study of landscape, as follows: "*it was in the late 1890s when the*

German geographer Otto Schlüter focused his attention on the landscape as the subject of *the Investigation of the Landschaft* as a unit in which phenomena (natural or human) are perceptible, having spatial significance, and forming a distinct association". The emphasis on the landscape as the basis of geographical research was then adopted by French and later American and British geographers.

The simplest definition of landscape describes it as the physiognomy of the geographical environment. The notion of cultural landscape refers to the landscape that has been transformed by man as a result of the development of civilization. The cultural landscapes are extremely dynamic and ephemeral systems. We are currently seeing dramatic transformations of landscapes. The process of consumption and globalization of the landscape takes place on a large scale in the 21st century. Many of the factors that cause these rapid changes are in the realm of geography; these include the analysis of the environmental impact of mass tourism, transport, fragmentation of space as a result of the increase in settlements intended for housing and services, the restructuring of the industry, etc.

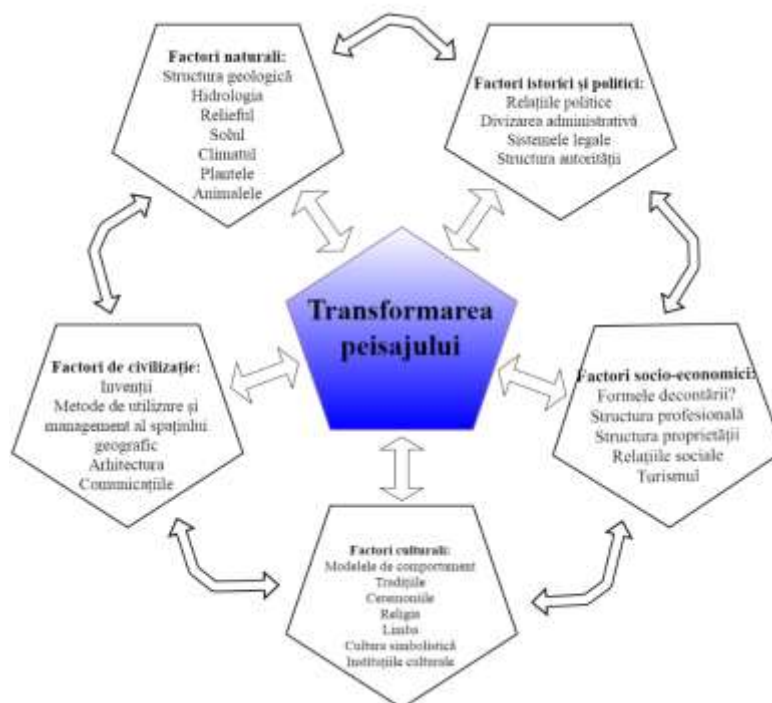


Fig. 1 Factors that influence landscape transformation (after Dobrowolska M., 1948, p.151-205 and Myga-Piątek U., 2012, p.132)

Cultural landscapes are defined by the International Landscape Convention as landscapes that adopt the diversity of manifestations of interaction between humanity and its natural environment. These include projected, organically evolved, and associative landscapes. (as defined by the ICOMOS-IFLA International Scientific Committee on Cultural Landscapes and the World Heritage Convention (UNESCO) Operational Guides) (<https://cutt.ly/dLloDAJ>, accessed on 10.06.2022).

For a more concise classification of the cultural landscape, it is necessary to use some taxa, and Glink, Meyer and Schottke (2007) propose the following taxa: *the complex*, *the ensemble*, *the element* and *the constituent parts of the elements*, which we will detail according to the conception of the researchers mentioned above.

To carry out a complex study on the cultural landscape, we must consider a concrete method of assessing the cultural landscape. The multitude of alternatives related to the assessment of the cultural landscape and the choice of the best solution make evaluation a challenging task, in which the methods and means of evaluation must be summarised. Following the study of the relevant bibliography in the field of cultural landscapes assessment (Dincă, 2005; Cassatella & Voghera, 2011; Pătru-Stupariu, 2011; Cocean & David, 2014), we decided to take over and adapt the model proposed by Pompei Cocean and Nicoleta David for the evaluation of the cultural landscapes of the Transylvanian Plain.

Thus, Cocean and David (2014, p.183) consider it necessary to develop methods of assessing the cultural landscape in which to also consider the creative and conscious component of anthropogenic activities and their result in the landscape system. They propose the development of an evaluation *framework matrix* containing 10 fundamental features of any cultural landscape (substrate modification, biotic substrate, landscape dynamics, function, durability, aesthetic valences, resilience, interactivity, visibility, vulnerability), depending on four evolutionary characteristics, namely the intensity of change, deviation from the standard, productivity and the incidence of risks that have in turn three variants variation (minimum, average, major).

Researcher Ileana Pătru-Stupariu (2011, p.171) recommends assessing the sustainability of the landscape by using the indicators proposed by Cassatella and Peano (2011). The latter propose the classification of indicators into 5 categories:

- ecological indicators
- land use indicators

- indicators of perception
- historical and cultural indicators
- economic indicators

The purpose of this thesis is to explore each facet of the cultural landscapes existing in the Transylvanian Plain. In order to be able to carry out this task, it is necessary to apply methods that allow the studies to be carried out. The anthropogenic factor has shaped the natural landscape over time, transforming it more or less into a cultural landscape, which triggers the need for studies to appear on the impact that human activity has had on the natural landscape.

The goals of the research are:

- **Identification of cultural landscapes in the Transylvanian Plain**
- **Establishing the typology and structure of cultural landscapes in the Transylvanian Plain**
- **Valorisation of cultural landscapes in the Transylvanian Plain**

Research questions:

- **What is the cultural landscape?**
- **What is the typology of the cultural landscape in the Transylvanian Plain and how was it shaped?**
- **What are the characteristics of the cultural landscapes of the Transylvanian Plain and how can they be capitalized?**

Any research is carried out in several stages, such as the early stage, in which we prepare the research, the second stage in which the research is carried out and the final stage in which we complete the research and in which we present the conclusions.

The character of a landscape consists of several layers, from the most obvious, such as buildings, trees and vegetation, to the less visible ones such as soil, rocks and the shape of the land. Other layers overlap the aforementioned layers, among them we can mention the light and color present in the landscape, but also the overall feeling that the landscape instills in you, all these layers contributing to the character of the landscape. In Figure 6, the "landscape amphora" is represented, which presents the idea of links between layers, combining to form landscapes. (ECOVAST, 2006, p.6)

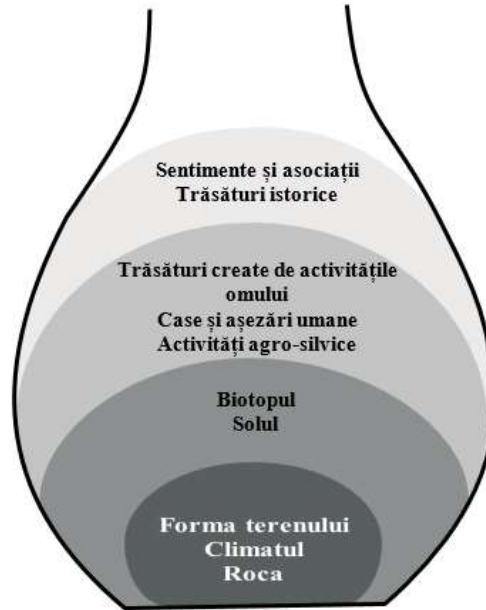


Fig. 2 Amphora landscape (source: ECOVAST, 2006, p.7)

Chapter II. The Transylvanian Plain as an entity of cultural landscape

The Transylvanian Plain represents the area studied within the performed research. Thus, in order to be able to identify and decode the cultural landscapes in this area, we must first identify both the geographical delimitation of the Transylvanian Plain region, as well as its natural and anthropogenic components. Natural components are the foundation of the cultural landscape, where we will consider geology, relief, climate, waters, soils, vegetation and fauna, as well as geographical subdivisions. The anthropogenic components of the studied region culturalize the present natural landscape, turning it into a cultural landscape. The anthropogenic components that we will go through are related primarily to the population (the main factor of culturalization), after which also to factors that influence the specifics of the area and the cultural landscape generated, factors such as human settlements, the ways of communication between them, the economic profile and the geographical axes.

The Transylvanian Plain is a part part of the Transylvanian Hill Depression, being in turn a depression due to its physical and geographical characteristics. The name of "plain" came into use due to the many agricultural crops carried out on its extent (specific to the plains) and was accepted by the geographers, who emphasized, however, the fact that from a physical and geographical point of view the Transylvanian Plain is a depression.

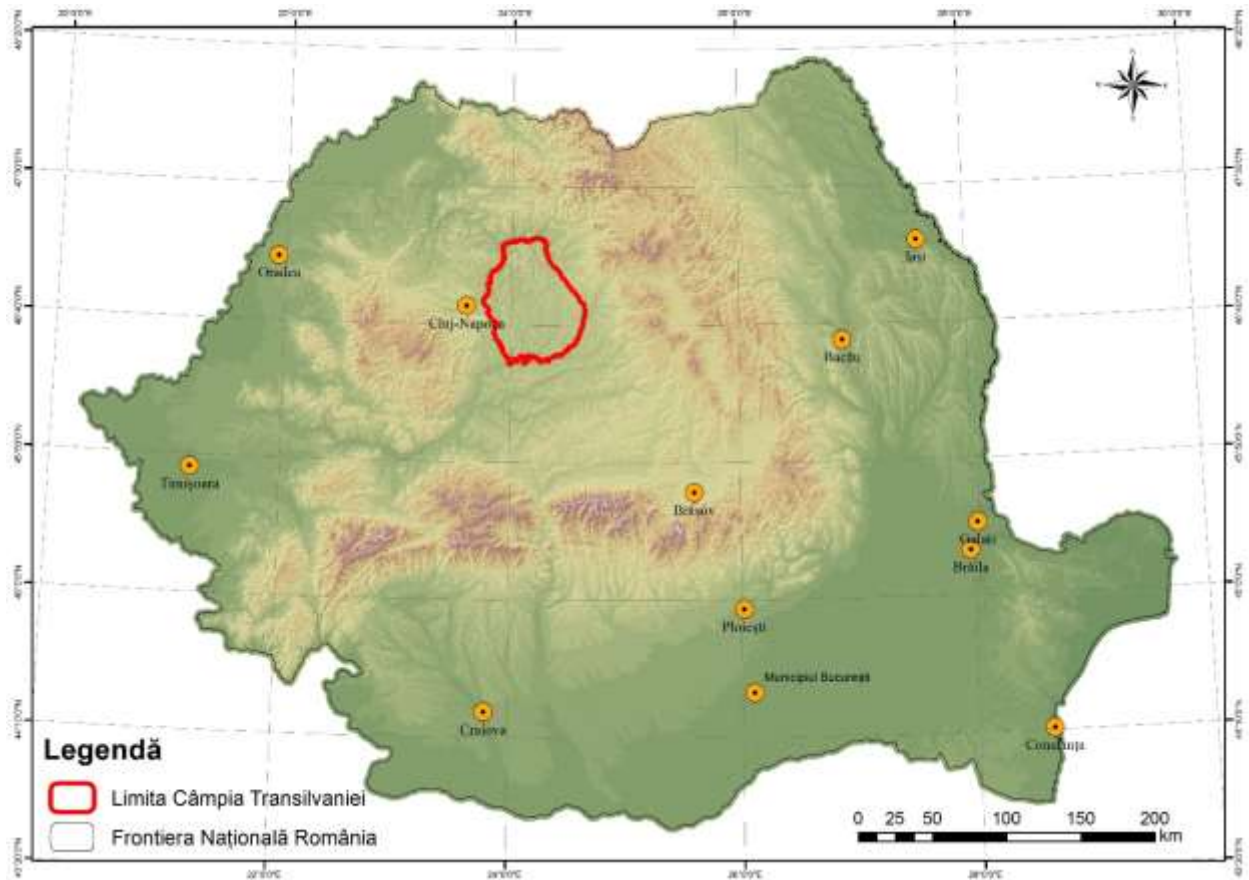


Fig. 3 Delimitation of the Transylvanian Plain

The Transylvanian Plain was formed by the clogging of the Paleogene Sea that left behind in a sedimentary shell of 3000-4000 m, thicker in the north of the region, and thinner near the Mures.

The overall relief of the Transylvanian Plain is *"whitewashed by hills and hills"* (Geography of Romania, III, 1987, p.542), with relatively small heights and gentle slopes, and by wide valleys where there were arranged ponds and ponds with an important role both in irrigation and fish farming, some dating from the Daco-Roman period.

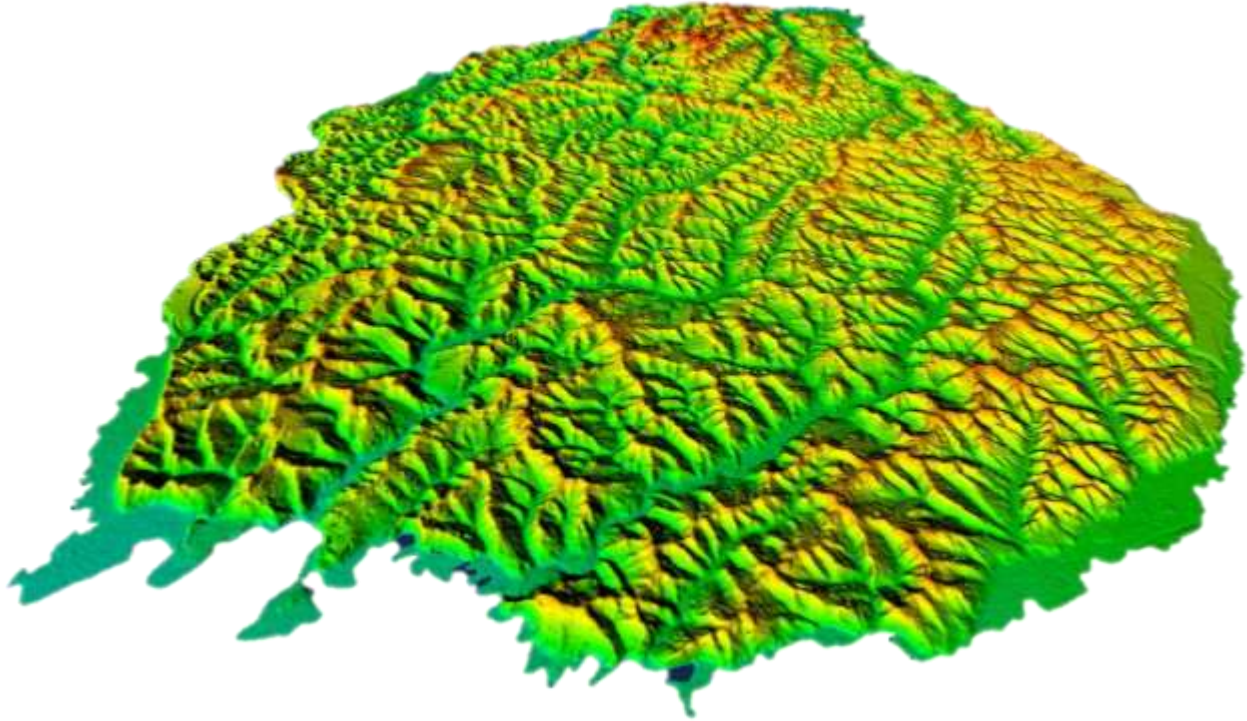


Fig. 4 Three-dimensional map of the Transylvanian Plain relief

Glimes have an essential role in the dynamics and evolution of cultural landscapes. Glimee landslides produce marked changes within cultural landscapes. Mounds with low slopes can generate several types of cultural landscapes, such as agricultural landscapes (especially vineyards, orchards, pastures and meadows, grain fields, etc.), but also habituation landscapes, many rural settlements being found on such mounds.

The hydrographic network of the Transylvanian Plain is deficient, the plain being surrounded by the main rivers, but none to cross to its center, thus, the studied perimeter is poor in the water resources, which can also be seen by the arrangement of the cities on the outskirts of the plain, the central area being rural, except for the village of Sărmașu, declared a city in 2003. Along the valleys inside the plain, ponds and lakes were arranged to ensure the necessary water of the area.

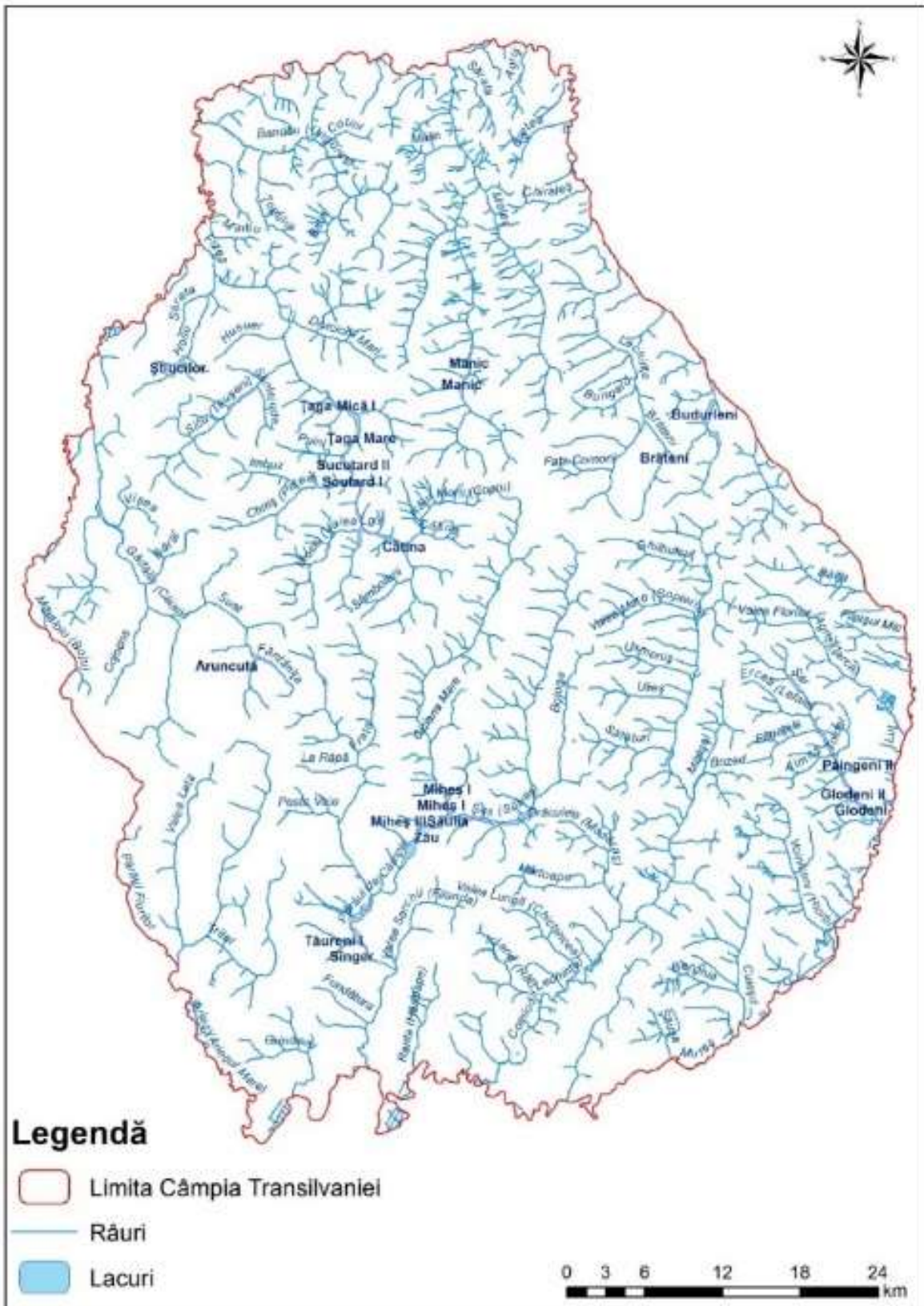


Fig. 5 Map of the hydrographic network and lakes in the Transylvanian Plain

As for the soils, the Transylvanian Plain has a real mosaic of soils, arranged asymmetrically in the territory. The most common of these are clayuvisols, cambisols, molysols, spodosols, vertisols, hydromorphic soils, halomorphie soils and unevoluted truncated or sloppy soils.

The cultural landscapes found on clayuvisols are mostly cultural landscapes of deciduous forests, while in the area of cambisols there are the cultural landscapes of vineyards and orchards, but also the landscape of agricultural land mixed with natural vegetation. Spruce trees have the highest frequency in the studied area, so we can see several types of cultural landscapes, such as the landscape of pastures and meadows, but also of agricultural land. Hydromorphic soils are home to agricultural cultural landscapes with complex crops and non-irrigated crops. In the area of the unevoluted truncated or sloppy splinters there are agricultural cultural landscapes specific to the meadow areas. In the area of vertisols, the landscapes of cereal crops thrive, due to the properties of these soils. In the area of halomorphie soils, a landscape is generated in which halophilic plants are found.

The biogeographical elements of the Transylvanian Plain are those specific to the Central-East European temperate zone, with forest-steppe tendencies (forests covering only 9% of the surface), which left a strong imprint on the geographical landscape and including on the name of the studied unit.

The Transylvanian Plain is geographically divided into two subunits defined by the two main hydrographic basins that cross it, that of Someş and that of Mureş, resulting in two subdivisions, the Someş Plain and the Mureş Plain. Studied in more detail, these two subdivisions can in turn be divided into smaller geographical subunits. In the Someş Plain, the Unguraş Hills stand out in its north, in the centre there is the Fizeş Plain, in the east there are the Lechinţei Hills, and in the south-west, we have the Sicului Hills. The Mureş Plain is located to the south of the Someş Plain and is composed of the following subunits: the Coasta Grindului Hill to the west, the Sărmaş Plain in the centre, and the Mădăraş Hills to the east (figure 21).

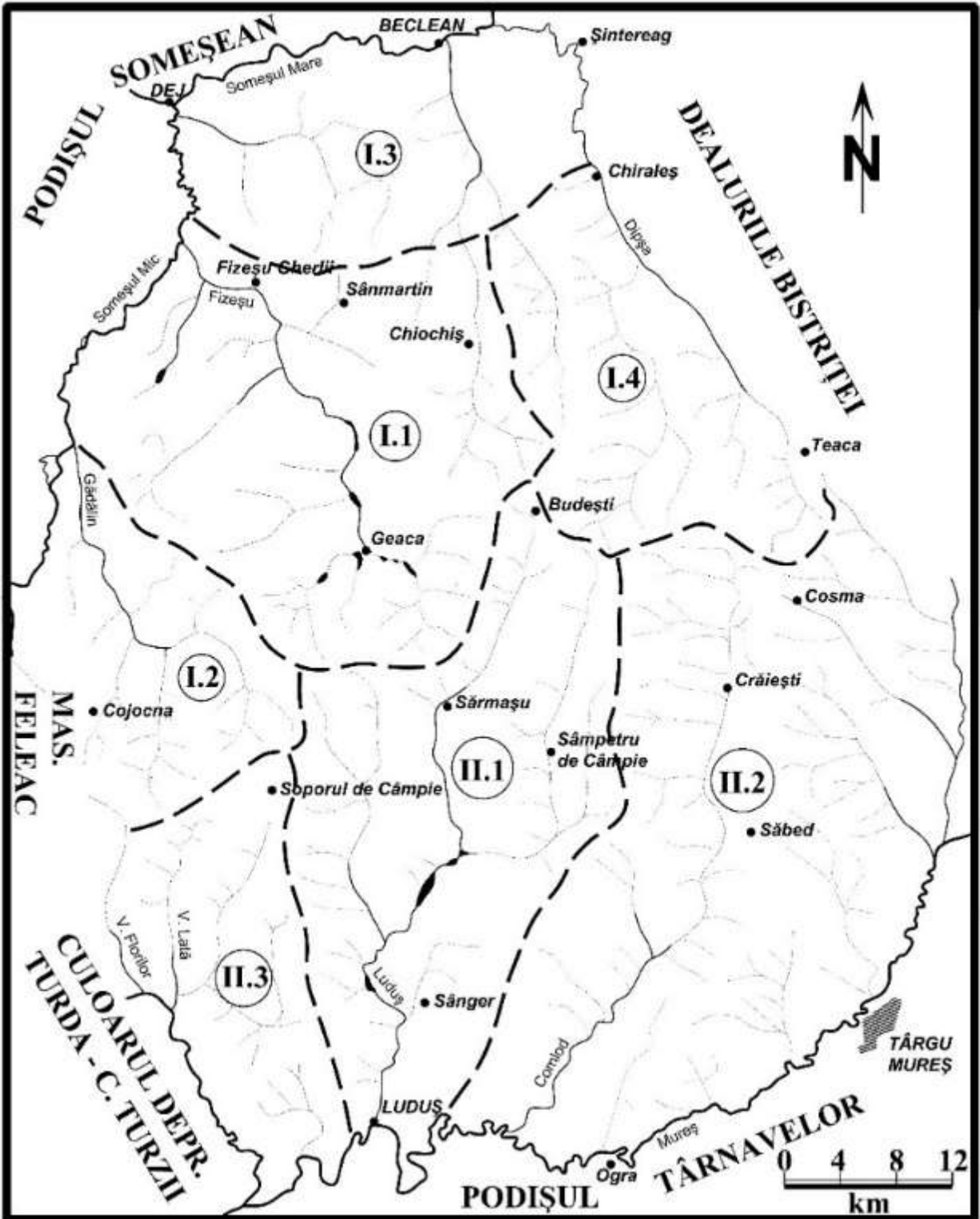


Fig. 6 Geographical subdivisions of the Transylvanian Plain and the ratio to the neighboring regions. (after *Geografia României*, vol. III, 1987, p. 542)

I. Câmpia Someșană: I.1. Câmpia Fizeșului; I.2. Dealurile Sicului; I.3. The Unguraș Hills; I.4. The Lechina Hills. II. Câmpia Mureșană: II.1. Câmpia Sârmașului; II.2. Mădăraș Hills; II.3. The Coasta Grindului Hill

The numerical evolution of the population is influenced by certain factors, such as birth rate, mortality, life expectancy, migration, etc.

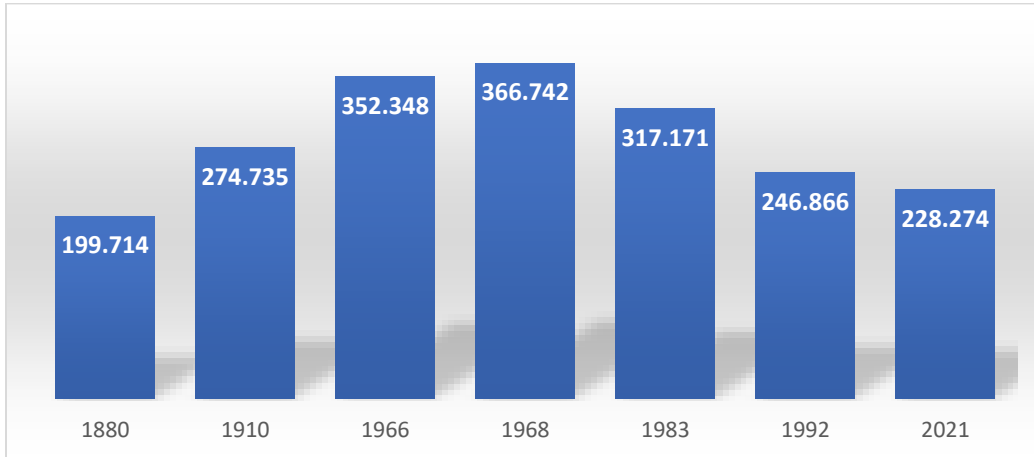


Fig. 7 The numerical evolution of the population from the Transylvanian Plain (taken over and added after Baciu N., 2006, p.82)

By analysing the demographic structure of the Transylvanian Plain, we obtain data on the demographic evolution of the region according to certain criteria, such as the habitation environment, the age pyramid or the ethnic structure.

The structure of the population according to the habitual environment to which they belong is, according to the graph in figure 25, predominantly rural, as 97% of the inhabitants live in rural areas, that is, almost the entire population of the Plain. The population in urban areas has a percentage of only 3% in the total population. The factor that caused this aspect is the fact that the urban environment in the Transylvanian Plain is represented only by one city, while the rural area is represented by 70 communes.

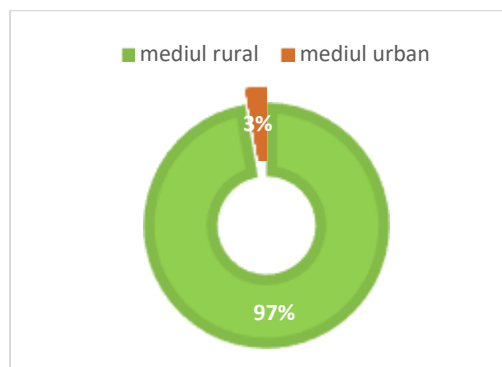


Fig. 8 Population structure by habitual environments

In order to better understand the culturalization of the landscape of the Transylvanian Plain, we concluded that an analysis focused on the ethnic structure is imperative. Following the compilation of data obtained from the National Institute of Statistics, we created the graph in figure 27, where the ethnicities from the studied area are represented.

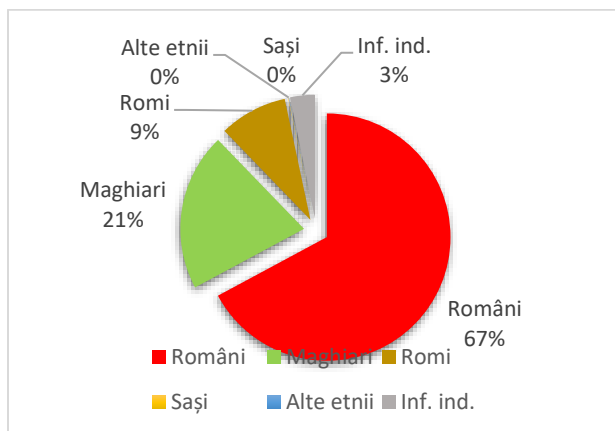


Fig. 9 Ethnic structure of the population of the Transylvanian Plain

The Transylvanian Plain is deficient in terms of transport infrastructure, with the most important of it being located in the proximity of the Plain. Regarding road transport, the studied area is encircled by European roads, such as E578 between Bistrița and Reghin, E60 between Târgu Mureș and Turda (the only one that passes through the territory of the Transylvanian Plain, in the south), E81 between Turda and Cluj-Napoca, E576 between Cluj-Napoca and Dej and E58 between Dej and Bistrița. A small segment of the A3 motorway, which is still under construction, passes through Bogata, in the south of the Plain.

The Transylvanian Plain is covered by 90% with agricultural land (Pop, 2012, p. 190), and even if they are not used at full capacity, these areas cause the economic profile of the Plain to be predominantly agrarian. This fact is mainly due to the rich soils that have sustained agricultural activities since ancient times.

In the Someș Plain there is more emphasis on animal husbandry, fruit growing and viticulture. Thus, in most households we will find cattle, pigs, poultry, resulting in small-scale production of milk and dairy products, meat, eggs, etc. that are consumed in the respective households, with the surplus being sold.

In the Mureș Plain, households focus more on the crop growing, especially cereals. The cultivation of these plants requires the carrying out of procedures in agricultural land such as

ploughing, sowing, hoeing, picking, which ensure a good productivity that will entail a sustainable financial gain.

The Transylvanian Plain is an area where the most important development nodes are positioned on its periphery, with a single node located in the centre of the Plain, namely Sărmaşu. The main transport axes extend in the neighbouring areas of the Plain, forming geographical axes, as follows: to the north, there is the Dej – Beclean – Bistrita axis, to the north-east the Bistriţa – Reghin axis, to the south-east the Reghin – Târgu Mureş axis, to the south the Târgu-Mureş – Luduş axis, to the south-west the Luduş – Cluj-Napoca axis, and to the north-west the Cluj-Napoca – Gherla – Dej axis.

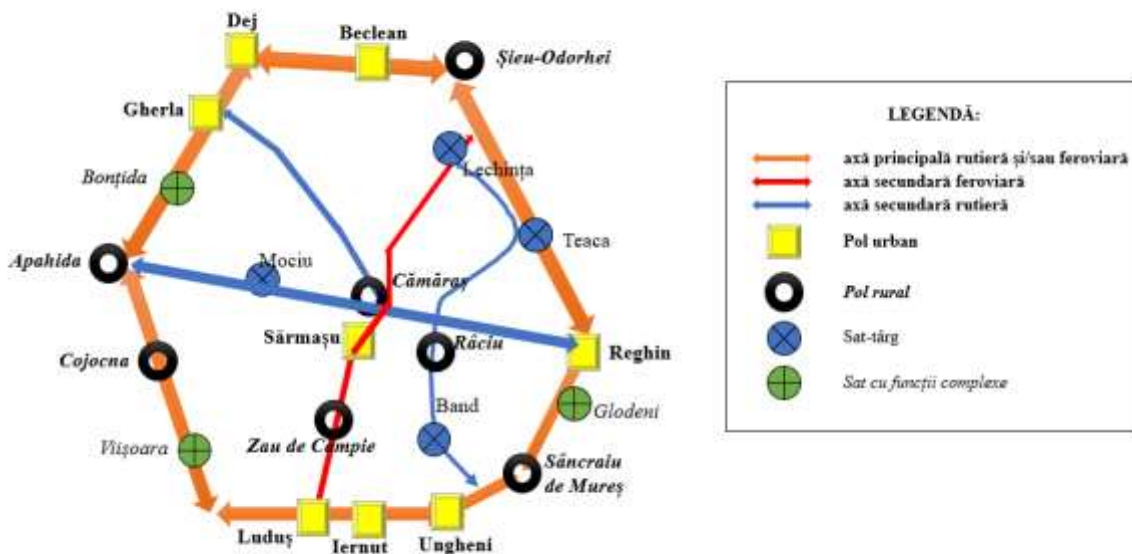


Fig. 10 Geographical Axes of the Transylvanian Plain (adapted from N. Baciu, 2006, p. 94)

Chapter III. Typology of cultural landscapes in the Transylvanian Plain

All scientific disciplines aim to create a classification of their object of study. This also happens in our case, where the subject of study is the cultural landscape, studied as a polyvalent ensemble in a continuous movement, which metamorphoses over time, often creating a palimpsest. For these reasons, the classification of landscapes is a challenging task for researchers, but at the same time indispensable.

Coccean and David proposed, after studying the most eloquent concepts in the field, a perfected, "expressive and complex" typology of cultural landscapes, based on criteria such as genetic criterion, evolutionary criterion, structural criterion, functional criterion, temporal criterion, vulnerability degree criterion and attractiveness criterion. They argue that other criteria can be added, depending on the uniqueness of the landscape studied, but those listed above are the foundation of any research in the field of cultural landscapes.

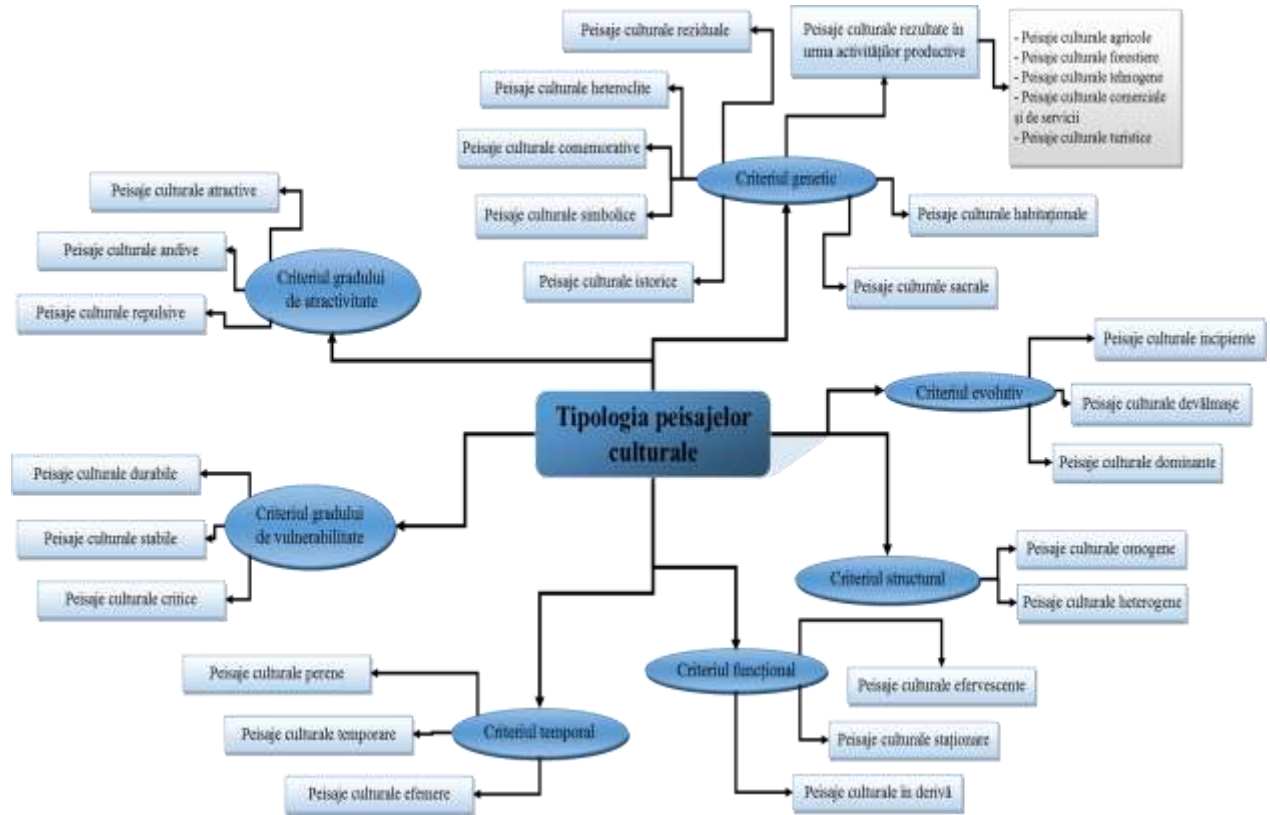


Fig. 11 Typology of the cultural landscape according to the structure made by Coccean and David (2014)

The agricultural cultural landscape is one of the first types of cultural landscapes to appear, being the largest of all cultural landscapes. The agricultural cultural landscape is in a state of rhexistasis, because, in order to make it possible, the natural landscape has been altered.

The agricultural territory of the Transylvanian Plain was divided according to land use, allowing us to map the areas with cultural landscapes generated by agriculture, fruit-growing, viticulture, stock breeding, and fishing. We found that the agricultural landscape of the

Transylvanian Plain is rather heterogenous, dominated by non-irrigated arable lands, secondary pastures, areas of complex crops, and orchards and vineyards.

The forest cultural landscape is influenced by two factors: the natural factors and the anthropogenic factors that shape it. Among natural factors, we point out climatic variations, and as anthropogenic factors we refer to human interventions on forests. In the forests of the Transylvanian Plain, deciduous trees predominate, such as beech (*Fagus sylvaticus*), hornbeam (*Carpinus betulus*), sessile oak (*Quercus petraea*), oak (*Quercus robur*), conifers such as pine (*Pinus silvestra*) and black pine (*Pinus nigra*). The Transylvanian Plain has experienced systematic deforestation over time, both for increasing agricultural areas and for logging. Therefore, the need for forest plantations arose mainly as a result of deforestation.

The industrial cultural landscape has a shorter evolution in the Transylvanian Plain and has largely developed based on local resources producing local economic branches and brands. With the industrial revolution and the modern period, the industries diversified, the settlements of the Transylvanian Plain received industrial valences, and even some villages were industrialized.

The Transylvanian Plain, even if at first glance seems to have a low tourist potential due to the lack of attractive landscapes, can overcome this either by exploiting the existing tourist resources or by alternative forms of tourism.

The Transylvanian Plain is a predominantly rural area, with urban areas being found mainly on the outskirts, except for Sărmașu, thus favouring the development of rural tourism, agro-tourism, eco-tourism, etc. Due to the demographic structure comprising Romanians, Hungarians, and (historically) Transylvanian Saxons, but also due to the ethnological heritage, the villages in the Transylvanian Plain have a high touristic potential, some of them managing to generate a landscape of the tourist villages.

The habituation landscape can be classified into several categories: an isolated habituation landscape, which can be temporarily or permanently exploited; a rural settlement landscape, which is divided according to the type of villages into sprawled villages, scattered villages, and compact villages; and an urban habituation landscape (Cocean and David, 2014, p.104), all being studied in more detail and exemplified in relation to the Transilvaniei Plain.

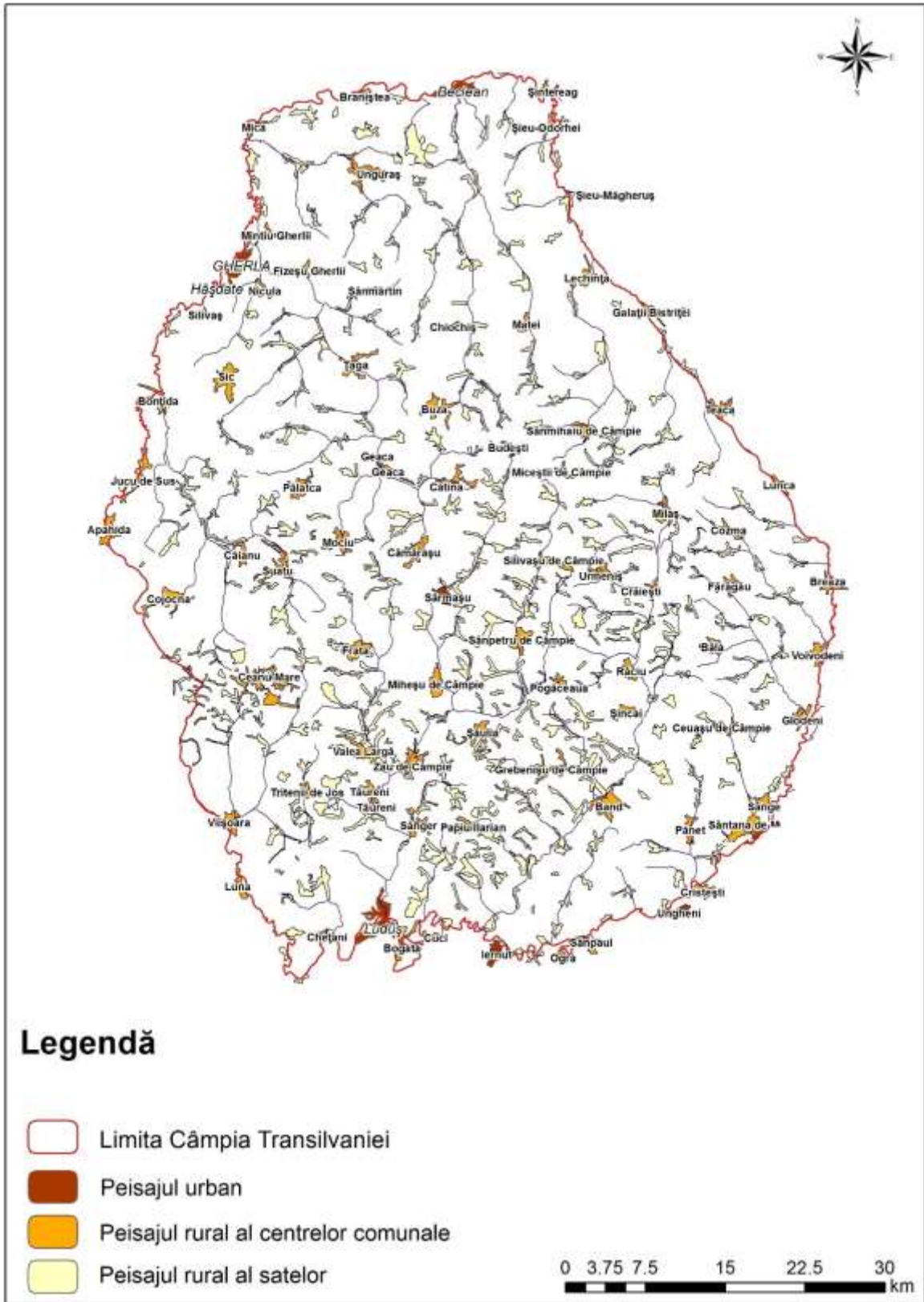


Fig. 12 The rural cultural landscape and the urban cultural landscape of the Transylvanian Plain

The "Hodăi" are small, isolated rural settlements, with a very low number of households, and are found throughout the Transylvanian Plain. These hamlet-like settlements came into being through the phenomenon called *demographic swarming*, when a part of the population of a village, most often from the same family, moved to a location close to the village where they were originally from, forming a new small village. In this particular case, the distance between households is greater than in the case of other villages, and a peculiarity of these is the lack of cemeteries, the deceased being buried within the properties, due to their isolation.

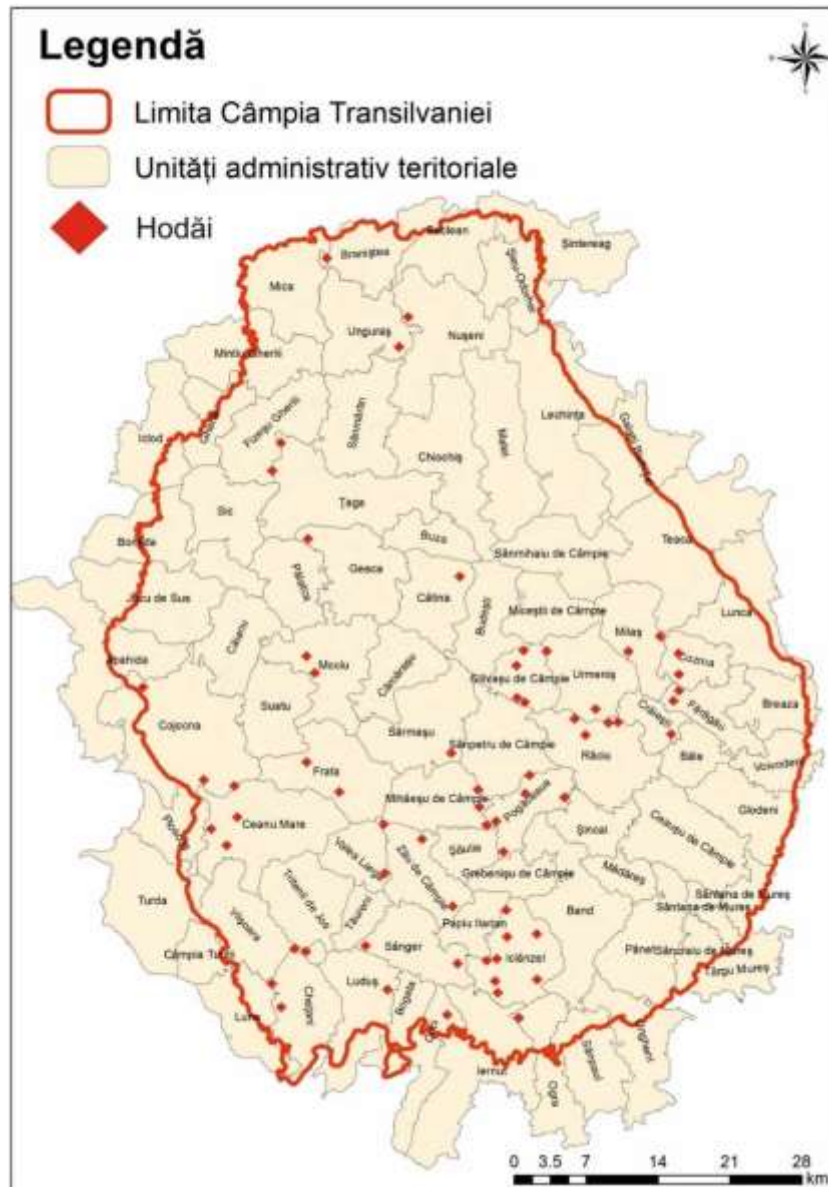


Fig. 13 Map of the "Hodăi"

The study *of the historical landscape* reveals the customs and the way in which people have used the places around them in the past, allowing one to notice the relationship between the artifacts created and the environment, perceiving how the landscape was shaped.

In order to have a clear picture of the historical cultural landscape in the studied region, we must take into account the chronological evolution of the population and the historical sites created by it. In this study, we will consider the number, density and degree of conservation and valorisation of historical cultural sites. The timeframe of the analysis stretches from the Aeneolithic to the present, the historical cultural sites in this interval also having a greater attractiveness and popularization within the common population.

A defining element of the cultural landscapes of the Transylvanian Plain is represented by the castles. They were erected by the Hungarian nobility, fulfilling several functions, namely: defence, administration, and residence. Basically, they represented the fortified dwellings of the nobles, which lost their defensive importance over time due to the decreasing threat from the Tatars, as well as due to the new technological innovations of the artillery that made the thick walls and the geometry of the castles no longer suited to withstand an assault.

Myga-Piątek (2012) believes that *the sacral landscape* is interpreted as a subtype of a landscape where its constituent elements, both material and immaterial in nature, create a favourable environment for spiritual experimentation. As for the specific buildings of the ritual landscape, they are most often part of the habitational landscape and are mainly found in the centre of the settlements, towering over the rest of the settlement.

The wooden churches represent a significant national patrimony, being among the first places of worship built on the territory of the Transylvanian Plain, due to the easy-to-procure building materials. The craftsmanship of the woodworkers, especially obvious in their various techniques of joining the beams with great precision, after which they carved the entrance door, and adding other décor elements, made the wooden churches to hold great architectural value.

Many of people's memories are common among them, being produced by group interactions, but also by cultural practices. Their commemoration lead to the creation of *restitutive landscapes*. These material spaces of memory can be markings, street signs, commemoration plates, monuments, statues, preserved sites, parks, memorials, which are usually found in public places, thus forming the restitutive landscape.

The cultural landscapes that we find are most often mixed ones, comprising two or more separate landscapes either of the same category or of distinct categories. From the mixture of landscapes results a *heteroclite landscape*, much more diversified in nature, in which we find much more landscape elements, increasing their aesthetic value.

The heteroclite landscapes studied in this subchapter are those proposed by the authors Cocean and David (2014, p.160), namely the agro-forest, agro-touristic landscapes, forest-tourist interface, and property border cultural landscapes.



Fig. 14 Agro-touristic cultural landscape, Țăga village, Țăga commune (own source)

Degraded landscapes belong to a special category of cultural landscapes, which are the result either of abandonments of the elements of agricultural, industrial and habitational cultural landscapes, or of abusive anthropogenic actions (Cocean, Filip, David, 2020, p.148).

Chapter IV. Functions and valorisation of cultural landscapes

Anthropogenic intervention in the landscape has generated new functions of the cultural landscape. Also, cultural landscapes can accumulate several functions, starting from a basic function, such as habituation, and adding other functions during time until, due to their history or attractiveness, they become a veritable tourist landscape.

Aesthetic considerations have always been present in the literature on cultural landscape, since this function of the landscape is the first to manage to draw attention to itself through the attractiveness it offers. Man has tried since ancient times to order and/or beautify elements of the cultural landscape that fulfilled certain practical roles, out of the need to surround himself with beauty.

The economic function of cultural landscapes is given by facilitating commercial and services activities, and also by tourist activities, which makes the cultural landscapes themselves being perceived as resources, by their degree of attractiveness.

The possibilities of capitalizing on the cultural landscape of the Transylvanian Plain should start with the assessment of the cultural landscapes and of their elements (e.g., castles and mansions, churches, lavender festivals, etc.) that can generate income. Planning footpaths and bicycle tourist routes (similar to Via Transilvanica), but also creating new tourist attractions based on the resources in the area (e.g., Figa Baths and Cojocna Baths) are possible ways of valorisation.

The social function is best represented, obviously, within the habitual landscape, where people interact most with each other, and where the social activities specific to a settlement take place. Social factors can in turn lead to the shaping of a cultural landscape, for example, influence the architecture of buildings, the structure of management and administration which in turn lead to influences in terms of administrative buildings, cultural buildings, parks, etc.

The cultural landscape can contribute to its environmental character by carrying out actions that generate added value to the environment. Thus, sanitation actions can be carried out, ameliorative works to avoid mass displacements, erosion, torrentiality, floods, etc. (Cocean and David, 2014, p.177).

In order to be able to assess the current state of the cultural landscape from an environmental point of view, the researcher Pătru-Stupariu (2011, p.123) proposes the use of ecological indicators, such as diversity, fragmentation, homogeneity and complexity.

Cultural landscapes are tangible spatial entities and hold an intangible set of ideas (identities, values) whose meaning is also manifested in territorial planning and the designation of a local branding. Recent literature has suggested that place branding is a "tool" that can work alongside spatial planning in the context of place management, and the synergies between them are worth exploring further. (Van Assche, Beunen, Oliveira, 2019).

The Transylvanian Plain has a wide variety of attractive cultural landscapes through its uniqueness and authenticity that could be taught in order to attract tourists and investors through which the region will be able to vitalize and through which it will make itself known internally and why not, even internationally.

In order for the cultural landscape to be perceived at its true potential, it is necessary to have strategies to capitalize on the cultural landscape.

The Transylvanian Plain has a wide variety of cultural landscapes, many of which can be appreciated for their authenticity, aesthetics, historical load, emotional charge, symbolism, etc., which they show. To be able to capitalize on the cultural landscape, we must first perceive it, then become aware of its potential, and then the community and economic actors will take care of promotion, after which the cultural landscape reaches the valorisation phase.

Tab. 1 S.W.O.T. Analysis of the Transylvanian Plain

Strenghts	Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - the authenticity of the cultural landscapes - the palimpsestic nature of the cultural landscapes - diversity of cultural landscapes - authentic traditions - cultural identities - authentic historical cultural landscapes - unique habitative cultural landscapes (hodies) - proximity to the urban poles: Gherla, Luduș, Iernut, Cluj-Napoca and Târgu-Mureș - existence of Local Action Groups (LAGs) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - ageing of the population - population decrease - isolated locations (central insulation) - poorly developed infrastructure - lower incomes of the population compared to the population present in the proximity of the studied area - insufficient financial resources - low investment number - lack of investors
Opportunities	Threats
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - NGOs focused on local development - public investment in tourism through European funds - private investments in tourism through European funds - possibilities for infrastructure development - involvement of the authorities and the implementation of public policies favorable to the restoration, conservation and valorization of some types of landscapes - opportunities for the development of tourism (particularly rural tourism, agro-tourism, religious tourism and fisheries tourism) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - migration of young population to more populated locations - regional disparities in land use - the increase in the number of derelict human settlements resulting in the disappearance of the hodăi - the increasing degradation of cultural landscapes (particularly habitational, agricultural and forestry) - replacement of authentic landscape elements with some without landscape value

We can conclude that the cultural landscape of the Transylvanian Plain is in some places well, and very well capitalized, but the vast majority of it, although it has a high potential for capitalization, has to go through many stages until it reaches that point. In order to capitalize on the cultural landscape, it is necessary to apply a series of measures:

- identification of cultural landscapes with high potential for capitalization
- conservation of cultural landscapes
- restoration of cultural heritage
- developing a legislative framework conducive to the protection and valorisation of cultural landscapes
- achieving an optimal management of cultural landscapes
- infrastructure upgrading

The diversity and multitude of cultural landscapes in the Transylvanian Plain offer a wide range of options when it comes to their touristic valorisation. However, tourism is poorly developed due, on the one hand, to the high attractiveness and accessibility of tourist attractions in the areas bordering the Plain, and the lack of facilities and promotion, on the other. In addition, typologically the tourist offer is not one able to support a multipurpose tourism, and the spatial distribution of the attractions requires travelling from one to another.

Therefore, we believe that the cultural landscape of the Transylvanian Plain can be most optimally capitalized through tourism, combining a theme tour of cultural landscape elements (as main objectives, to be visited) with the landscapes crossed by the route (secondary objectives, to be observed). From the first category, we consider that the elements of historical cultural landscape and those of sacred cultural landscape are best suited to be visited in the circuit or theme tour, and from the second, the observable landscapes are decided by the followed route.

Analysing all these aspects, we decided to propose a tourist circuit of the noble's castles in the Transylvanian Plain, which will include exclusively the eight castles inside the unit as main objectives to visit, regardless of their condition. The rural settlements cultural landscape and the agricultural landscapes (but also forests and fisheries) will act as secondary objectives of this circuit.



Fig. 15 Thematic circuit of the noble castles from the Transylvanian Plain

Conclusions

The research of cultural landscapes requires both the study, juxtaposition and agglutination of a multitude of branches of science, as well as a thorough, critical and objective analysis of the studied territory, to be able to expose an overall image as accurate and concise as possible. The research was aimed at identifying the cultural landscapes present on the territory of the Transylvanian Plain, their evolution in time, and their assessment in order to determine a clear typology, followed by finding ways for their capitalization.

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