

Cultural landscapes

Marta Cosma

Babeş-Bolyai University from Cluj-Napoca, Faculty of Geography, Cluj-Napoca, Romania.
Corresponding author: M. Cosma, cosma_marta@yahoo.com

Abstract. This study focuses on the cultural landscape of Lăpuş Country and it analyses the redevelopment of the urban spaces. These areas have suffered plenty of changes over the years due to technological advancements and popular demand. In many cases, the result was a large space with no local identity and in some instances the areas ended up abandoned due to the high mortality and low birth rate. Another important element is that the young people do not enjoy living in the rural area; they would rather search for an easier life in other places. The reorganization of the destroyed and polluted areas from Lăpuş Country is part of a process of urban and rural development whose sole purpose is to create a superior living environment. The present research wants to identify the authentic cultural landscape areas existing in Lăpuş Country and afterwards enhance their value, making them more attractive. This can be done by fully understanding the characteristics of the urban and rural configuration. The proposals were made based on the existing analysis. More green spaces create a pleasant environment for the inhabitants and for the tourists as well, seeing how Lăpuş Country is an area with a very large tourist potential. The complete study hopes to become a model worth following, underlining the importance of the cultural landscapes taken into account.

Key Words: Lăpuş Country, study, cultural landscape, urban and rural development, tourism.

Introduction. This article highlights the structural demographic analysis of Lăpuş Country and aims to strengthen the idea of migration. In the following, we will present a brief description of the studied area, Lăpuş Country (located in the Maramureş County). The cultural landscape has a huge tourist potential. This research project hopes to identify how cultural heritage and contemporary cultural diversity influences the tourist experience in the local communities.

We will perform a short inquiry regarding the origin of the cultural landscapes, hoping to undercover their significance. "The conceptual origins of the term, but not the actual phrase, lie in the writings of German historians and French geographers in the mid/late 19th century. 'Cultural landscape' as a term was apparently invented in academia in the earlier 20th century. The term, and a particular idea it embraced, were promoted by Professor Carl Sauer and the Berkeley School of human geographers in the USA in the 1920s and '30s." (Department of Environment and Climate Change, Cultural landscapes and park management: a literature snapshot, 2008 apud Fowler 2003, p. 18).

Sauer explains in his essay on the morphology of landscape that "The cultural landscape is fashioned from a natural landscape by a culture group. Culture is the agent, the natural area is the medium, and the cultural landscape is the result." (Department of Environment and Climate Change, Cultural landscapes and park management: a literature snapshot, 2008 apud Sauer 1925, p. 46).

A small study will be conducted in order to research the movement of the population from the city to the rural environment and vice versa. Everything will be done in a regional interpretation, according to our times. The increasing migration and the rural-urban dynamics lead to a rural space left without inhabitants. Population analysis characteristics will be defined, starting with the ethnic issues and going all the way to the religious criteria. The censuses that took place from 1930 until 2011 will also be analyzed.

This project is based on the redevelopment of the areas placed in the urban spaces, who have suffered many changes during the years, due to technological advancements and popular demand.

Overall information

Brief description of the Maramureş county. Before we start talking about the region we studied, we must fully understand the definition of the word "region". A "region" is as a patch of land with more or less definitely marked boundaries, which often serves as an

administrative unit below the level of the nation state.” (Eurostat European Commission, 2008). Therefore, regions have an identity and some characteristics such as language, landscape, ethnic origin, history and climate.

Maramures is one of Romania’s most important tourist destinations (Figure 1) being also one the country’s richest regions. Tradition, costumes, folklore and crafts have been well preserved in this place. The rare beauty of the landscape plays an important role in assuring the county’s rightful place as ones of Romania’s most splendid parts.



Figure 1. Maramureş County, România (Source: <http://www.romanianmonasteries.org/maramures/maramures-geography>).

Each year, regardless the season, tourists arrive in Maramures from all over the world and they always come back with great pleasure. From the town of Baia Mare to the valleys of the Historical Maramures or from Lapus to Chioar, the County of Maramures (Figure 2) is a unique place that invites everyone to discover its riches.

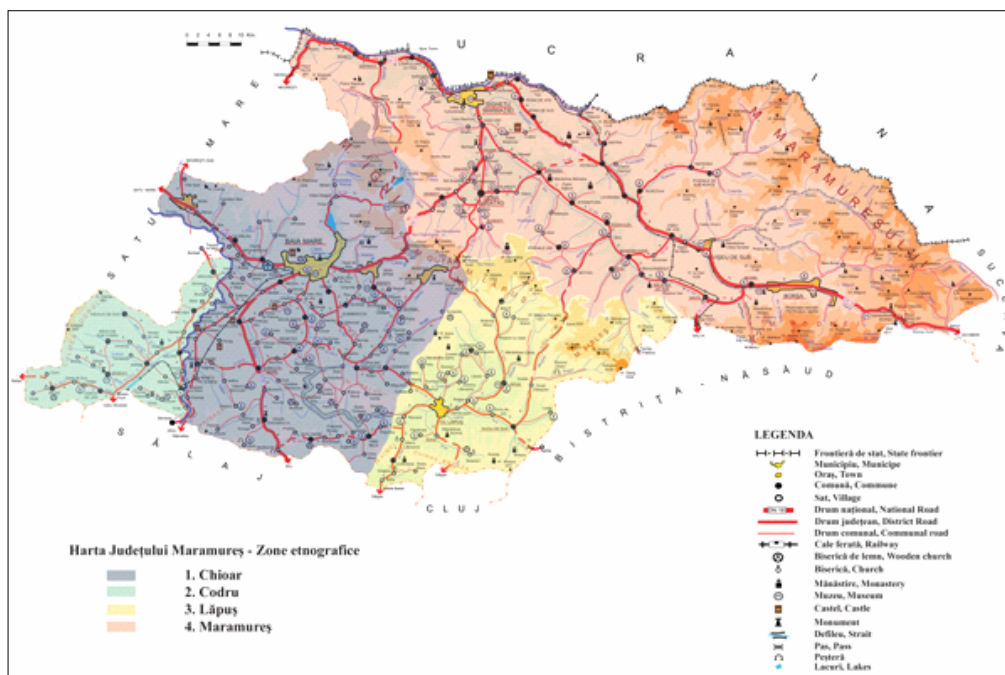


Figure 2. “The Countries” of Maramures County (Source: <http://www.surdestiturism.ro/index.php/ro/localizare-surdesti/tara-chioarului>).

Everywhere you look, you can find undeniable values. Ceramic sculptors who capture in their work the very essence of passion, carpet factories, traditional costumes, folklore, renowned museums and monasteries, and last but not least, the Maramures symbol, the wooden gate.

The traditional businesses ran in this area are known and appreciated all over the world. But one must never forget that the greatest treasure that can be found in Maramures is the population itself. These are simple folk but with very high moral values. The people who live here have big hearts, are very welcoming, hardworking and with faith in God. As they would say, you are always more than welcome in Maramures!

The natural setting of the area. The country of Lăpuş is located in the north-west of Romania on the higher basin of the Lăpuş. From an administrative point of view, the area is located in the Maramureş County. The biggest city is the town of Târgu Lăpuş, located at 47 km east of the capital of the county, Baia Mare. The Lăpuş Depression (about 300-500 meters) which is outlined in the north by the volcanic mountains of Jibleş and in the south by the Preluca Massif represents the largest part of the landscape. The climate of the region is colder than in other parts of Romania, in the winter some of the lowest temperatures in the country are recorded here. The main river that crosses the area is Lăpuş, with its more important tributaries: the Suci, the Libotin, the Dobric and the Rohia. South of the Preluca Massif, the river Lăpuş crosses a wild and spectacular gorge, 28 km long (Figure 3).



Figure 3. The gorge of Lăpuş river (Source: <http://www.defileul-lapusului.ro/>).

The population composition - ethnic and religious criteria. The municipalities were built initially in the depression, but after some time people started moving in an upward direction until they reached the mountain's feet. Today the town of Târgu Lăpuş has 7000 inhabitants and 36 belonging villages. Along with the Romanian population, who represents the majority, we can also find Hungarians. They live in great numbers in the following establishments: Dămăcuşeni, Băiut and Târgu Lăpuş. According to the census performed in 2011, the population of Târgu Lăpuş amounts to 11,744 inhabitants, this a lower number compared to the one reported in 2002, when 13,355 people were registered. With the Romanians being, 83.34% and the Hungarians 10.94% we still have a percentage of 4.83% of the population, whose ethnicity is not fully known.

From a religious point of view, most of the inhabitants are Orthodox (72.12%), but there are also minorities such as Protestants (9.77%), Pentecostals (6.86%), Greek Catholics (2.95%) and Roman Catholics (2.26%). For 4.9% of the population the religion is not known.

Migration analysis - regional interpretation. Back in 1930, the census revealed a population of 30,941 people living in Lăpuş. Unfortunately, now (according to the census performed in 2011) only 28,909 inhabitants are left in the area. After an own representation, the evolution of the population Lăpuş Country, as follows in Figure 4.

The generations between ages 35 to 50 are trying to escape the burdens one may encounter when living in the city. According to the latest statistics, from 2012, 118.000 Romanians moved from town to town, while only 74,000 went from rural to urban. In 1990, just under 28,000 inhabitants moved to the village from the city, "while 550,000 people left the countryside for the urban area", according to www.adevarul.ro

Even in the county of Maramures, there is a category of people who have established a career for themselves in urban environment but who now want to become entrepreneurs in the rural areas. That is why, people living in towns like Baia Mare, Sighetu Marmatiei, Baia Sprie, Targu Lăpuş, have started moving to the countryside, hoping for a better life. "People who have migrated from cities to villages fall into two categories. Former employees or entrepreneurs looking to live in rural areas because it's cheaper, closer to nature and want to do business in that area or poor people who move the city to the villages because it is cheaper, so it is a migration of survival." said Dumitru Sandu, Professor at the Faculty of sociology and social at the University of Bucharest, in an article from www.adevarul.ro.

Another reason is that the big cities became more crowded, and the corporate environment is a massive factor of stress for the inhabitants therefore Romanians yearn to return to nature in order to live away from the pollution and commotion.

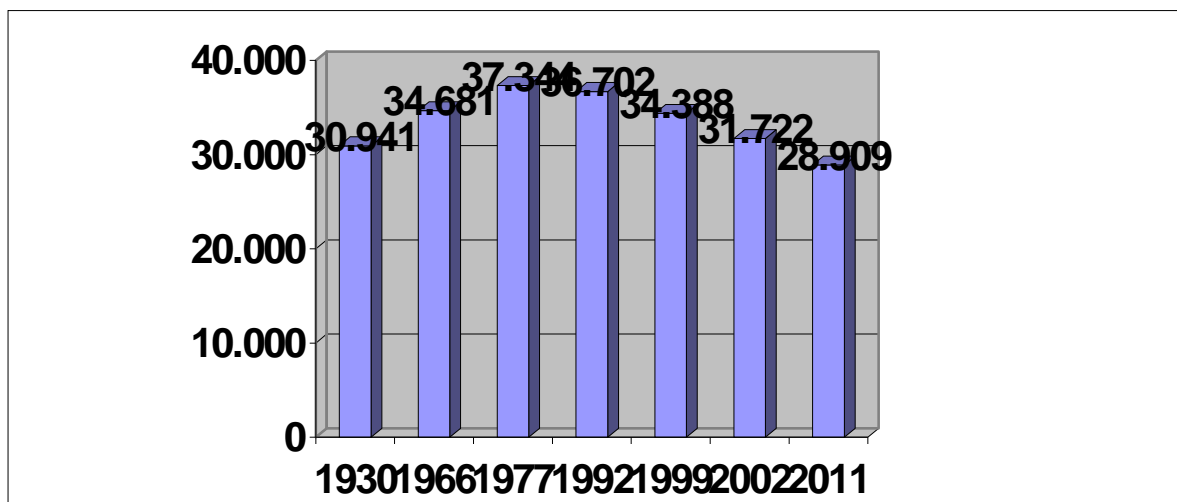


Figure 4. Evolution of Lăpuş County on the census population.

Conclusions. A complex analysis of human resources is required, in order to understand the characteristics of the settlements and the demographic structure. Urban population dynamics indicate the power of the urban areas over the rural ones and provide a real insight into the development of the human factor and its potential to influence urban development.

On the other hand, in recent times, young people are returning to the villages some of them are even investing in the biomaterials business. The tendency to eat bio, can be seen in the way parents are trying to ensure a healthy diet for their children, but also in the what they are trying to improve their own lives by eating products with no additives or chemicals

In the end, we would like to point out the importance of the cultural landscape and its increasing diverse form. In this research project we focused on population diversity, ethnic and religious criteria, landscape diversity, and migration as a regional interpretation. We also studied the comparison between censuses starting from 1930 until 2011. I believe that more research into what we call cultural landscapes into urban and rural regions and territories would reap great rewards for the Lăpuş tourist industry and implicitly for the Maramures tourist industry. This current study has revealed some of that potential.

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Received: 05 October 2014. Accepted: 01 November 2014. Published online: 30 December 2014.

Author:

Marta Cosma, Babeş-Bolyai University from Cluj-Napoca, Faculty of Geography, Clinicilor Street, No. 5-7, 400006 Cluj Napoca, Romania, e-mail: cosma_marta@yahoo.com

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How to cite this article:

Cosma M., 2014 Cultural landscapes. *Ecoterra* 11(4):84-88.