

## HISTORICAL CULTURAL LANDSCAPES IN ROMANIA

### Mapping and registration of endangered traditional cultural landscape elements in Transylvania – first methodical approach in the sample region of Bistrita

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**ABSTRACT** - In the paper, the preliminary results of the international student workshop „Inventory and Comparison of Cultural Landscape Elements“ carried out by Babes-Bolyai University Cluj-Napoca (RO) and University of Applied Sciences Erfurt (DE) in Arcalia, near Bistrita, between 20<sup>th</sup> - 25<sup>th</sup> of May 2007, are dealt with. The purpose of the workshop was to test some German methods of mapping, surveying and encoding typical cultural landscape elements in selected villages and their rural environs. The activities were part of the INTERREG III B-Project “CULTURAL LANDSCAPE” and were financially supported by the European Union and the federal state of Thuringia.

**Key words:** mapping and registration, endangered cultural landscapes, Bistrita.

#### 1. BACKGROUND AND INTENTIONS OF THE PROJECT

Worldwide there is a creeping process in the cultural landscapes taking place. The regionally typical features and traditional characteristics are going to disappear. Landscape images are getting more and more interchangeable. The process that is gaining speed in the course of globalisation has especially accelerated in young EU-Member States. In Romania, the socio-economic changes since the 1990s and the construction boom of the recent years radically affect the images of the village areas as well as the open countryside.

In many European countries, similar processes meanwhile have led to a growing sensitivity that Landscapes have a cultural value. There is a raising awareness to accept traditional cultural landscapes as expression of cultural heritage and as “the foundation of identity” as it was declared in the European Convention of Landscapes (2000). In addition, there is a growing agreement, that landscapes with historical roots can have economic value. As objects of public interest, features of the cultural heritage strengthen the regional economy and employment. Hence, integrating cultural heritage potentials in economic processes get growing importance in the context of regional development (e.g. tourist use).

The first step to more strongly perceive, preserve, and develop unique, identity forming (cultural) landscape features is to recognize and define structures of high cultural value and to evaluate its preservation-worthiness. This implies a systematic inventarisation on the base of special evaluation parameters and of an adapted mapping key. In Germany, the mapping of historical cultural landscape features is regarded as one of the sectors with the highest quantity of recorded experience within the topic of cultural landscape. But despite of a series of groundwork and pilot schemes, which lead back to its roots in the early 70s, a “general state of affairs in research and practise” can by far not be adopted as yet (Schmidt 2007b, in press). The more ambitious is it to transfer and adopt a regionally based method to a foreign region with its own cultural background and very different set of landscape elements as it is intended in the course of the INTERREG III B-Project “CULTURAL LANDSCAPE” in Transylvania. In the following chapters, some preliminary results of first methodical approaches obtained in the context of an international student workshop will be dealt with. The project titled „Inventory and Comparison of Cultural Landscape Elements“ was organised and carried out by Babes-Bolyai University Cluj-Napoca (RO) and University of Applied Sciences Erfurt (DE) in Arcalia, near

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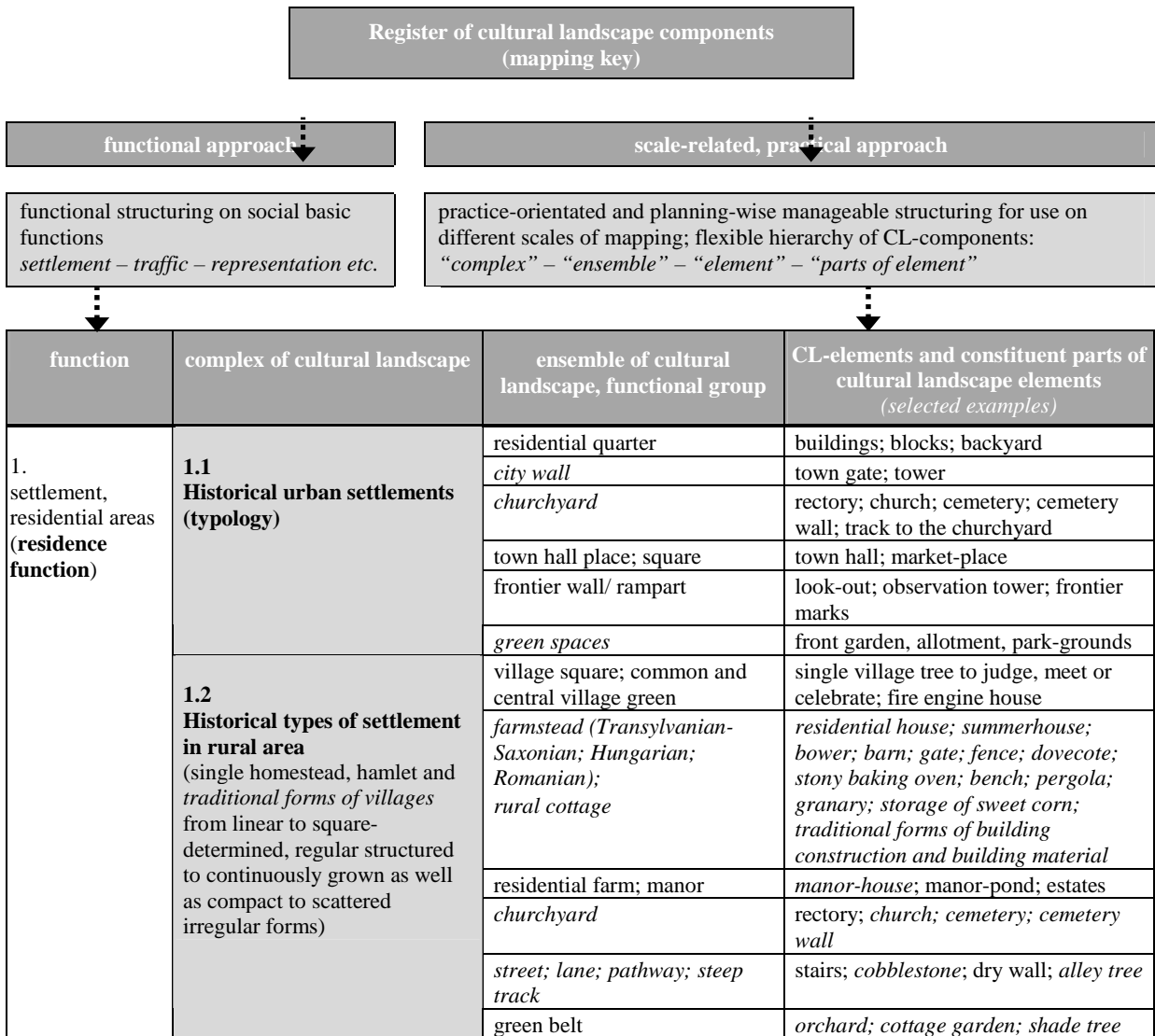
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Bistrita, between 20<sup>th</sup>-25<sup>th</sup> of May 2007. Students from Romania and Germany came together with their lecturers to test some approved German methods of mapping, surveying and encoding typical cultural landscape elements in selected villages and their rural environs (Arcalia, Siniacob, Sigmir and Teaca).

**2. METHODOICAL APPROACH**

**2.1 Register of cultural landscape components (“mapping key”)**

The term “cultural landscape” is gaining growing popularity in politics, laws, regulations, planning processes as well as in the public awareness, but it isn’t always interpreted and applied quite in the same way. There is a widespread misunderstanding and dissension regarding a universal definition of cultural landscape and its associated culturally determined components (Schmidt 2007b, in press). Hence, first of all, transparency in the used terms and definitions are necessary at the beginning of each attempt of recording or assessing landscape qualities in order to keep the complex manageable. The research in Arcalia was based on the definition platform of the Thuringia projects (Schmidt & Meyer et al., 2005; Schmidt & Meyer, 2006). The systematic register with an elementary collection of typical formative cultural landscape components was derived from Schmidt & Meyer (2006).



**Figure 1.** Section of “Register of historical cultural landscape components”; italics: during the field work exemplary registered ensembles and elements.

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Originally developed for Central Germany, this elementary register represents a typical selection of cultural landscape components and forms of land use, also widespread in Transylvania. It functioned as a provisional “mapping key” facilitating the mapping and evaluation of the regionally specific characteristics and making these more comparable and easier to determine (cp. fig.1).

As a first result of the pilot mapping, the Thuringian register was modified and extended according to those historico-cultural landscape parts, which were only found in the sample region and characterize it. *Please notice, that such kind of register does not offer a holistic and complete overview. It only shows a confined number of well-selected elements, which are dominant, regionally specific or especially characteristic in a concrete cultural landscape.*

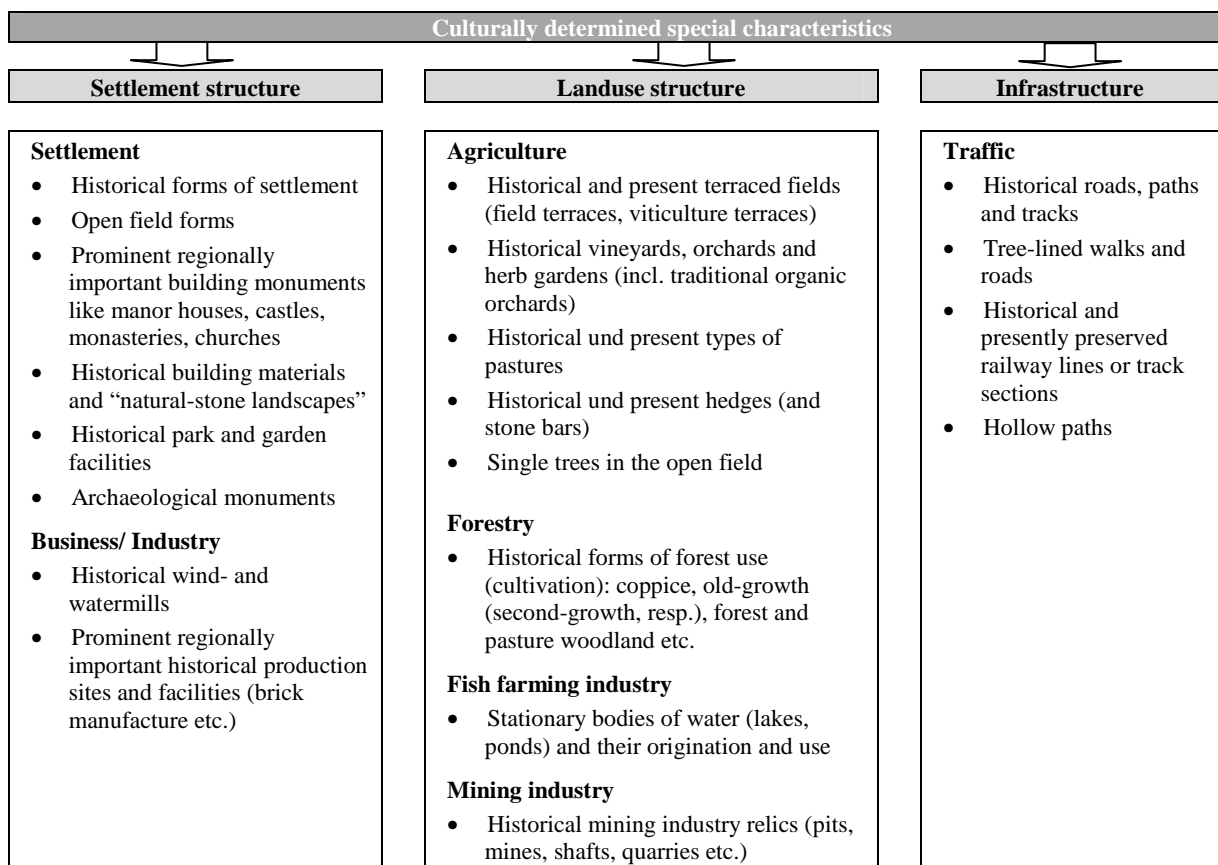
To manage the complexity of cultural landscape and support a systematically identification and easier recognition of cultural landscape elements, the register classifies the huge number of various parts functionally and in scales (levels) of observation:

a) Classification according to functional aspects (cp. fig. 2):

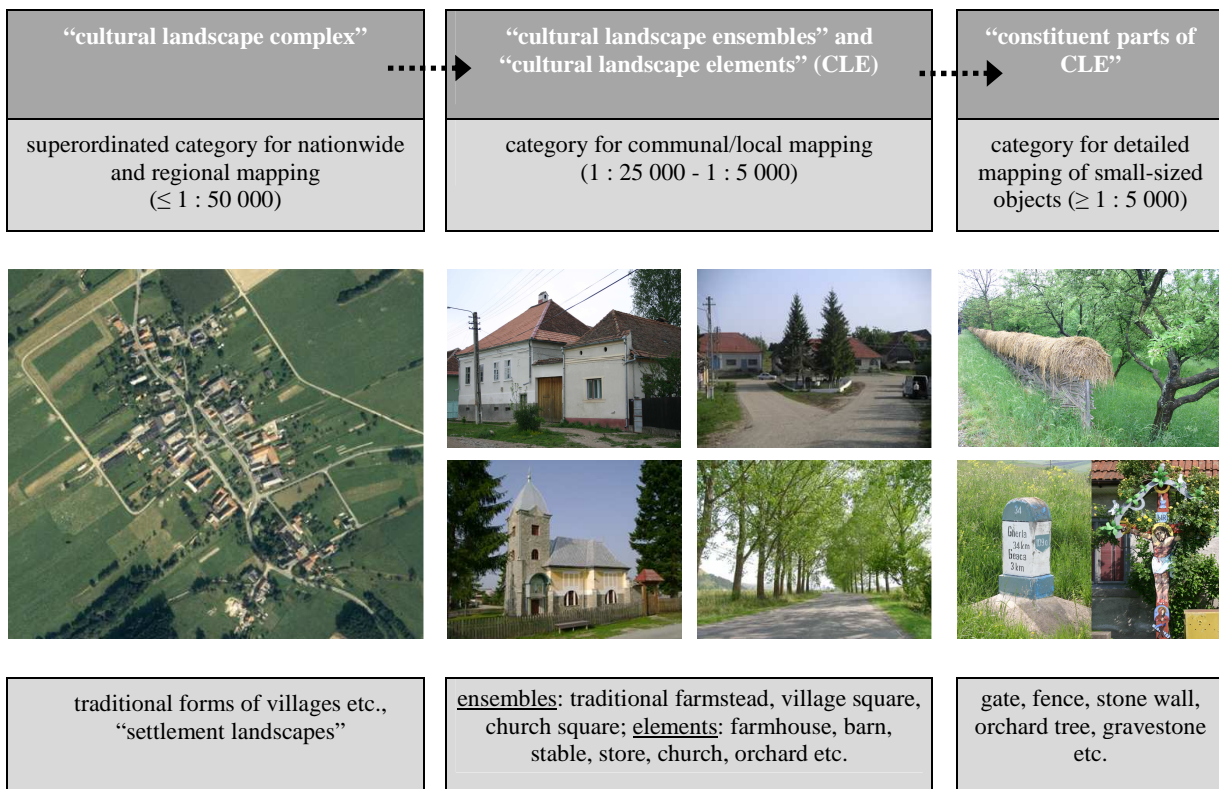
- *settlement structure*: habitation/settlement/housing – representation/sovereignty – religion/confession – public recreation/health – defence/military – trade/public supply – craft/manufacture/industry;
- *open land structure*: agriculture/cattle breeding – forestry – fishing/hunting – mining/disposal;
- *infrastructure*: traffic/transport – information/communication – energy generation/mills.

b) Classification according to the scale of observation (cp. fig. 3):

- national/regional – communal/local – detail/micro scale



**Figure 2.** Recorded historical cultural landscape components in East Thuringia (due to their cultural determined special characteristic and main functions) (Schmidt & Meyer et al. 2005).



**Figure 3.** Scale-related hierarchy of elements with gradual increase of details on the consecutive levels of observation and mapping.

The so-called “**cultural landscape complex**” describes a complicated, area shaped functionally correlating unit on the macro level, consisting of a specified group of superordinate cultural landscape components and their interrelations. It is a category for nationwide and regional mapping (scale  $\leq 1 : 50\,000$ ). Complexes often passed through a similar historical genesis. The unit “village”, for example, is a typical “cultural landscape complex”, which consists of subordinate cultural landscape components (“ensembles”, “elements”, “constituent parts of cultural landscape elements”).

“**Cultural landscape ensembles**” are spatially and functionally correlating units on the communal/local mapping scale. The units “traditional farmstead” and “village square”, for example, are typical “cultural landscape ensembles”, consisting of different cultural landscape elements like farmhouse, barn, stable, church, fire engine house etc. On topographic maps with scales of  $1 : 25\,000 - 1 : 5\,000$  ensembles are mostly generalized as area- or linear-shaped objects.

The so-called “**cultural landscape element**” is a category well-adapted to local/communal mapping scales. The majority of “elements” corresponds with point- or linear- shaped signatures in medium-scale topographic maps ( $1:25\,000$ ). But, the term also comprises area-shaped elements of low complexity like the already mentioned common village green, orchards, pastures etc.

The so-called “**constituent parts of cultural landscape elements**” are small, but well distinguishable architectural and constructional objects like kerb-stones, pavements, steps, stone bars etc. Normally missing on topographic maps due to generalization they can be successfully mapped by field campaign only.

Against the background of the map-recording codes and their hierarchy in the existing cultural landscape registers it remains to state that the terms and their selection criteria are not (and cannot be) applied in a standard manner. Depending on different scale of observation and the gradual increase of details from the regional to the local scale, the coding of objects can shift from one level to the other. Thus, the definition of the terms “ensemble”, “elements” and “element parts” leaves leeway for

interpretation. In any case, landscape is more than the mere sum of all individual components (Schmidt 2007b, in press). To make the object more handable in the following discussions, the term “element” is applied in the sense of both “landscape element sensu strictu” as well as “element part”.

## 2.2 Registration sheet for cultural landscape elements

In order to gather information about historical-cultural landscape elements systematically the two basic tools, the mapping key and the registration form, have to be used together (cp. fig. 4a, b).

During the mapping process, the editor has to complete the vacant fields of the form, to take a photograph of the object and to locate the element on a topographical map. In order to improve the precision of mapping the use of modern technologies like GPS and mobile GIS would be advantageous. After the outdoor survey, the gathered information will be worked off in the registration forms. This could be realized by using database platforms or GIS, to create reports, statistical outputs, and digital maps.

The first section of the form gives general information like name of the mapping project, name of author and date of survey, sheet and index number to recognize the element nation-wide. Section two includes topographic information about the element (county, township, district, name and number of topographical map, northing, easting and a topographic description of the location). The peculiarity properties of the element have to be filled in the third section of side one, at first the element’s name/terminology (cp. CL-register) and, if available, information about the ownership. The following field deals with the code of the mapping key, classified on the base of landuse categories (see 2.1). The size (width, length and height) of the objects and their physical environment are important facts of documentation in the following fields. The “extent of object” differentiates between point, line and polygon features and also between individual elements, element groups and element ensembles. After that, a short description of the object completes the part “object properties”.

Section 4 contains criteria for the evaluation of the object. The editor has to estimate the state of conservation and endangerment in order to consider its preservation-worthiness and if possible to give some advice for further conservation. To evaluate landscape elements it is also necessary to get information about their rarity and their regional characteristic. In this respect an element according to Burggraaf & Kleefeld (1998: 238; cited in Schmidt 2007, in press) can be regarded as highly typical for the region if - due to historical or natural area related conditions - *“it can exclusively be found in a particular region and it is linked to the characteristics of the area”*. The regional characteristic is therefore considered in the scales “highly typical for the region and character forming” (1), “typical for the region” (2) and “not typical for the region” (3). The rarity varies between “frequent” (1), “infrequent (occasional)” (2) and “very rare” (3), the state of conservation between “very well conserved” (1), “moderately well conserved” (2) and “disintegrated” (3), the endangerment between “high” (3), “moderate” (2) and “low” (1). The Landscape related experience effect - determined by the number and presence of historical-cultural landscape elements in the landscape scene - was applied in the scales “well discernible, prominent” (1), “discernible” (2) and “almost not or not discernible, latent” (3).

Page 2 of the registration form repeats head information like the name of the mapping project, name of author and date of survey, the sheet and index number to recognize the element nation-wide. A photograph and a section of a topographical map visualize the object site (fig. 4b).

## REGISTRATION FORM OF HISTORICAL LANDSCAPE ELEMENTS

<b>Project:</b> INTERREG IIIB CULTURAL LANDSCAPE			
<b>Index No:</b>	<b>Sheet No:</b> 48	<b>Author:</b> René Heinrich	<b>Date:</b> 23.05.2007
<b>Location of object:</b>			
<b>County:</b> Bistrita-Nasaud	<b>Township:</b> Sieu-Magherus	<b>District:</b> Arcalia	
<b>Name, No of topographical map:</b>	<b>Northing:</b> 621250,47	<b>Easting:</b> 449998,17	
<b>Description of location:</b> Western part of village			
<b>Object properties:</b>			
<b>Name, terminology:</b> Hollow path		<b>Ownership:</b> municipal	
<b>Mapping key code:</b> 2.1.1	<b>Size[m] (width/length/height):</b> 3,50 / 750 / 1-3,50 metres	<b>Environment:</b> forest area	
<b>Extent of object:</b>			
Point:	Line:	Polygon:	
Individual element:     x	Element group:	Object ensemble:	
<b>Short description of object:</b> Hollow path generated by forestry-use on a steep hillside; subsoil: clay stratum (thickness 1 to 3 m); bottom with deep erosion grooves (0,50 to 0,70 m); still in use; environment: oak, hornbeam and maple forest			
<b>Evaluation:</b>			
<b>State of conservation:</b> very well conserved		<b>Endangerment:</b> low	
<b>Advice for further conservation measures:</b> no measures necessary			
<b>Landscape related experience effect:</b> almost not discernible		<b>Regional characteristic:</b> typical for the region	
<b>Rarity:</b> infrequent		<b>Remarks:</b>	

Figure 4a. Registration form of historical landscape elements, page 1.

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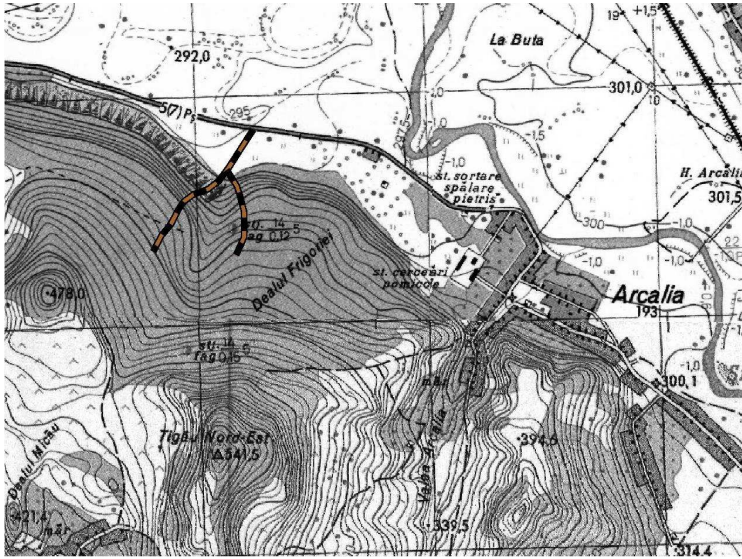
REGISTRATION FORM OF HISTORICAL LANDSCAPE ELEMENTS			
<b>Project:</b> INTERREG IIIB CULTURAL LANDSCAPE			
<b>Index No:</b>	<b>Sheet No:</b> 48	<b>Author:</b> René Heinrich	<b>Date:</b> 23.05.2007
<b>Photograph of object, author, date of capture, remarks:</b>			
			
Photograph: René Heinrich, 23.05.2007			
<b>Position of object in map:</b>			
			
Map: Topographical map of Romania, scale 1 : 100 000			
<b>Further sources:</b>			

Figure 4b. Registration form of historical landscape elements, page 2.

### 3. FIRST RESULTS

#### 3.1 Open countryside

The region of Bistrita shows a remarkable variety of historical landscape elements in the open countryside (not-built-up areas). Abandoned *terraced fields* consisting of narrow step-like stripes only a few metres wide but up to several ten metres length are widespread on hilly terrain. Terraced fields originated in the course of a long-term usage - probably for centuries - as arable or viticulture terraces (fig. 5, 6). Meanwhile they are endangered particularly by slope erosion. Succession of dense bushland and afforestation change their landscape image character gradually.

Very often recorded were *rough grazings*, lean open grasslands with scattered solitary trees, thorny shrubs and shrubbery islands extensively used for sheep, goats and cattle (fig.7, 8). Rough grazings are characteristic land use forms on poor, dry, or waterlogged soils, at hillsides and on rocky underground as well. Due to the recent socio-economical changes they are increasingly endangered locally by shrubbery succession and afforestation.

A typical feature of rough grazings are the scattered *solitary trees*, which originated as shade and mast trees (fig. 9). Their broad and huge, conspicuous crowns are visible on long distance. Solitary (freestanding) trees were mapped with a minimum distance of 50 metres to other trees and 100 metres to forests, shrubbery, and settlements.

*Historical vineyards* (fig.10) are also typical elements of the cultural landscape around Bistrita. The region looks back on a very long wine-growing tradition. Already in Roman times the wine growing had a good reputation. Since the 12th century, German immigrants essentially contributed to viticulture. Although Romania belongs to the biggest wine exporters world wide, a decline of the wine growing is to be recorded in consequence of the social and economic changes in present times. For example, the village of Lechinta owned 300 ha wine until the 1980s. Recently the wine-growing area dropped to 10 ha (oral communication).

*Traditional organic orchards* (fig.11, 12) play an important role in the area. Originally, fruit trees were located in the garden belts of the villages. In the course of time, orchards spread more and more onto the open space offside the rural settlements most frequently on sun-exposed hillsides replacing meadow pastures and old, abandoned vineyards or occupying deserted agricultural terraces. In the German definition traditional organic orchards form irregular quite often open stands with at least ten high-trunk and crown tree top fruit trees. They were usually planted on meadow or pasture land or alternatively situated in a crop field as a sub culture. Today especially orchards on hilly terrain and poor soils located far from the villages are endangered by growing age and absence of care.

To the *traditional forest utilization forms* in the area belong coppice economy and forest pasture. The forest pasture - one of the oldest forms of forest utilization - is generating *pasture woodland* (fig. 13). Cows, horses, sheep, goats, and pigs pluck off the tender sprout of the young trees with preference. Many of such pasture trees carry the scars of the grazing a life long. Curious formed tree individuals which does not exist in dense natural forest develop from crippled "cow bushes" in this way. On the other hand, the old resistant trees are growing in age. Trees with broad tree tops, a typical grub line and bare ground are therefore also characteristic for the grazed forest.

*Coppice economy* is a millennium-old form of the continuous forest utilization. The wood could be used for charcoal burning, tanneries, plaiting and firewood. Trees with easy sprout regeneration like oaks, beeches, hornbeams and hazel were cut at their base in short and permanent rotation (10 up to 30 years). In consequence, multiple-stem shrubby habits originated.

A special kind of coppice economy are *pollard trees* (fig.14), whose trunks divide into branches and boughs at 2 or 3 metres height. The scrubby look and the knaggy crooked head, which originated in the regular cut, is typical for the pollard willow. Plaid fences with twigs usually from pollard trees are used traditionally as field boundaries.



**Plate 1**

**Fig.5:** *Abandoned terraced fields between Taga and Beclean (May 2007).*

**Fig.6:** *Abandoned terraced fields with shrub succession between Lechinta and Teaca formerly used as vineyard (May 2007).*

**Fig.7:** *Rough grazings southwest of Arcalia with thorny shrubs and solitary shade trees (May 2007).*

**Fig.8:** *Traditional cattle watering trunk in a rough grazing area near Alcalia (May 2007).*

**Fig.9:** *Solitary shade trees with characteristic huge crowns and browsing lines in a rough grazing area southwest of Arcalia (May 2007).*

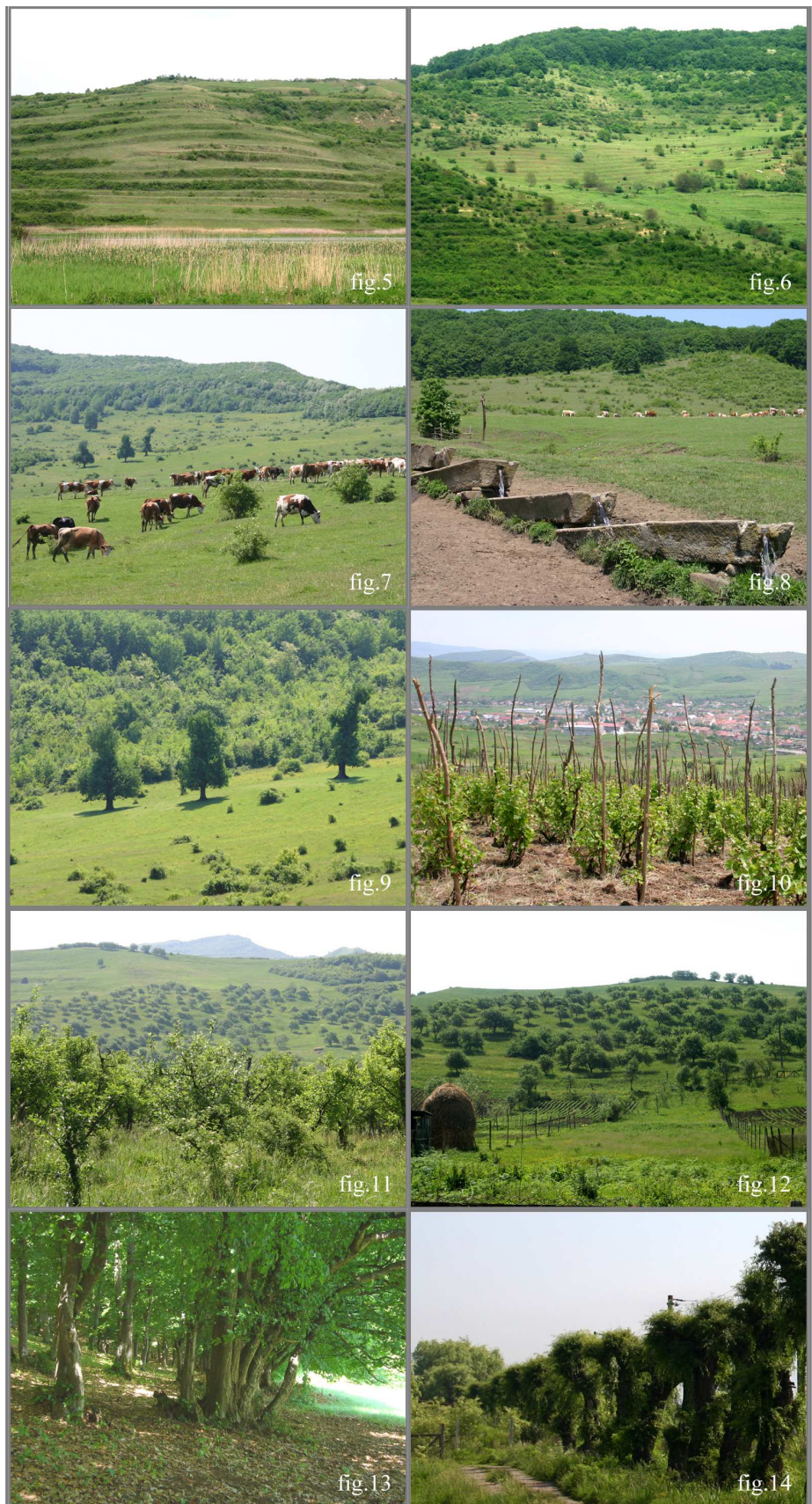
**Fig.10:** *Private vineyard near Lechinta (May 2007).*

**Fig.11:** *Traditional open orchard meadows around Siniacob with high-trunk fruit trees. Modern fruit plantage in front (May 2007).*

**Fig.12:** *Traditional orchard with scattered fruit trees near Siniacob (May 2007).*

**Fig.13:** *Scars of forest pasture with crippled "cow bushes" and browsing line southwest of Alcalia (May 2007).*

**Fig.14:** *Pollard willows aside of the main road to Bistrita northwest of Sarata (May 2007).*



### 3.2 Settlement area

*Traditional forms of rural settlement* varying from single homesteads, hamlets to different kinds of villages contribute to the regional landscape character around Bistrita in a significant manner.

*Villages* are typical forms of rural settlement. The German definition comprises settlement groups of more than 12 farmyards often linked with social public components like churchyard, schools, municipal council, village green, buildings of communal life and craft. Traditional villages are well-embedded into the surrounding agricultural landscape by their green belts and gardens. Due to the hilly terrain of the sample region, village sites often prefer the inundation free and climatic tempered valley bottom sites. According to the varying size, number and spatial distribution of buildings, structural density and scenic integration, the term “village” presents a large variety of settlement types from linear to square-determined, regular structured to continuously grown as well as compact to scattered irregular forms. In the sample region around Bistrita, linear settlements with more than 20 homesteads are widespread (fig. 15, 16). The main access route mostly forms the leading line of the village structure (in larger settlements also two or more main lanes run parallel to each other). Smaller side lanes merging with the main route are often linked by small open spaces (partly with central church-yards, small village greens, wells or washing places). Their typical basic structure corresponds to the German settlement type called “Gassengruppendorf” (“village of lane group”).

*Churches* belong to the most formative village elements (fig. 19, 20). Depending on the variety of confessions, villages can have two churches or more, differing from another by architecture style and construction details or by specific religious symbolism such as special shaped crucifixes. Village churches are often surrounded by small churchyards with gravestones, memory tablets and churchyard walls as characteristic components. In many cases, churchyards are situated on small squares, near street crossings or in centres of settlements. Very specific (and locally endangered by dilapidation) are the Fortified churches.

The regional specific of mapped Romanian villages is also determined by *regional types of farmyards and houses*, traditional construction details and historical, autochthonous building materials. Traditional forms of “three-side farmstead” (German: “Dreiseithof”) and less often “two-side, rectangular farmstead” (German: “Winkelhof”) are typical for rural areas with a high agriculture intensity.

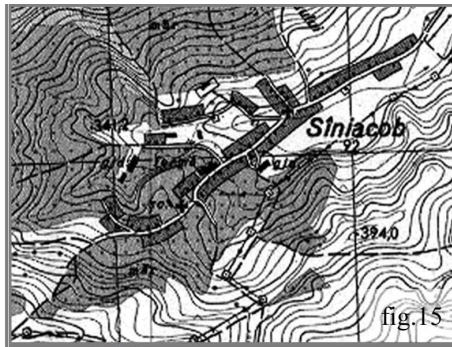
The *three-side farmstead* (fig. 21) consists of a specific three-side building complex shaped like a horseshoe, surrounding a multifunctional yard, as well as cottage gardens and arable farmland on the backside. The dwelling house is mainly orientated gable-side (fig. 25), close and right-angled to the street line, less often cullis-side and linear to the street line (fig. 26). Some smaller buildings such as summer house (temporal dwelling), stores, stables, hen-house, baking house etc. form the opposite side of the dwelling house. A huge barn and stables are running parallel to the street line in the back.

The *two-side and rectangular farmstead* (fig. 22) consists of only two buildings, rectangular to each other, sometimes with smaller adjoining buildings such as corn drying sheds, hen-house, dovecote etc. The dwelling house is with its small side orientated close to the street line; barn and stable on the backside run parallel to the street line. Very conspicuous parts of traditional farmsteads are the *huge entrance gates* (fig. 29) and *fences*, separating the private yard from the public space. Today, original wooden fences and gates with their regionally specific decoration are more and more substituted by modern constructions of stone and metal. Farmstead buildings are often rich in *decoration details* like traditional wooden carvings, coloured paintings, or window frames (fig. 27).

The farmsteads of the various population groups differentiate significantly in their traditional spatial appearance and density. The building arrangements of Romanian or Hungarian farmsteads *e.g.* are more dispersed. *Romanian type dwelling houses* are often built with wooden arcades (fig. 23, 24).

**Plate 2**

**Fig.15:** Topographic map 1:100 000 with the “linear” village of Siniacob.



**Fig.16:** The linear village site of Siniacob in characteristic valley bottom position (May 2007).

**Fig.17:** Street scenery in the village of Arcalia with regional characteristic detail components (grass strip, drainage, small concrete bridges) in front of houses (May 2007).



**Fig.18:** Old cobblestone pavement in Teaca (May 2007).

**Fig.19:** Christian Church with regionally typical crucifixes in Alcalia (May 2007).



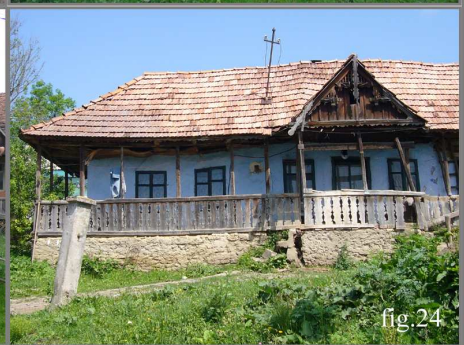
**Fig.20:** Fortified church in Lechinta with dilapidated church yard wall and massive separate tower (May 2007).

**Fig.21:** Three-side farmstead with the typical three-side building complex of dwelling house, small summer house, rectangular barn and stables surrounding a multifunctional yard in Siniacob (May 2007).



**Fig.22:** Two-side rectangular farmstead with dwelling house and rectangular barn in backside of the yard in Viile Tecei (May 2007).

**Fig.23:** Traditional dwelling house with wooden arcades in Viile Tecei (May 2007).



**Fig.24:** Traditional dwelling house with wooden arcades in Siniacob (May 2007).



**Plate 3**

**Fig.25:** Gabel-side dwelling house of Transylvanian-Saxon type in Teaca (May 2007).

**Fig.26:** Gullis-side dwelling house of Transylvanian-Saxon type in Sigmir (May 2007).

**Fig.27:** Dwelling house in Siniacob with traditional decoration details, paintings and carvings (May 2007).

**Fig.28:** Wooden wall construction in the village of Arcalia (May 2007).

**Fig.29:** Typical huge, roofed wooden gate in the front of farmstead in Sigmir (May 2007).

**Fig.30:** Wells with stonewalled dug, winch and roof construction on the public village green of Teaca (May 2007).

**Fig.31:** Draw well with significant draw balk, bucket and weight as counterbalance on the public village green of Arcalia (May 2007).

**Fig.32:** Well-preserved baking oven with iron door and chimney in a farmstead of Teaca (May 2007).

**Fig.33:** Wine espaliers as shading and decoration elements and for private wine production in Lechinta (May 2007) / Drying sheds for the outdoor storage of sweet corn built of single batten construction in farmstead of Teaca (May 2007).

**Fig.34:** Typical street scene with public used benches (May 2007).

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On the other hand, a *farmstead of the Transylvania-Saxon type* has a more massive and regular appearance (fig. 25, 26). Small batten-built *drying sheds* for the outdoor storage of sweet corn are *general characteristics* (fig. 33). The same is true for *wine espaliers and pergolas* (fig. 33) serving as shading and decoration elements as well as for private wine production, which is still quite popular.

*Wells* of different appearance and construction belong to the most prominent detail elements of homesteads as well as on common village green, squares and street scenes (fig. 30, 31). Typical forms are stonewalled dug with winch, bucket, and wooden roof construction or the traditional draw wells with a draw balk, a fixed bucket on one side and a weight as counterbalance on the other.

Less often, but also characteristic, are historical *baking ovens* (fig. 32). They are constructed as small single ovens consisting of natural stone, bricks, or loam or as small baking houses always with iron door and a prominent chimney.

Various kinds of *benches* (fig. 34) are prominent parts of the street scene and traditional places of public communication.

### 4. PERSPECTIVES

The project results presented in the foregoing chapters are the initial step in a sequence of further activities that have to be seen in a long term context. Generally, mapping and systematic registration of historical cultural-landscapes and their elements offer a basis for a subsequent processing in order to deduce concrete planning approaches.

Some short-term activities have to be realized at first:

- the integration of the results into a “*Catalogue of valuable, endangered cultural landscape elements in Transylvania*” for supporting the rediscovery and preservation of the rural cultural heritage (contribution for the INTERREG-Project);
- the evaluation of endangered “*cultural landscapes of high identity*” (landscapes with “unique features”) in a way applied exemplarily in East Thuringia (Schmidt & Meyer et al., 2005).

Based on this, long-term outputs can be promoted in a second stage of activities:

- proposals for *regional planning strategies* in order to preserve, upgrade and develop concrete traditional cultural landscapes of high identity in the region;
- ideas for *projects* that support the awareness for the quality of landscapes and develop the regional characteristics as a source of regional identity and of sustainable regional development.

### 5. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The authors are very indebted to Prof. Dr. Wilfried Schreiber, Dr. Nicolae Baciú and Eduard Schuster (Institute of Geography, Babes-Bolyai University Cluj-Napoca) for their hospitality and support during the field stay in Romania.

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