

Original scientific paper

UDC 338.48-53:7/8 (4 Romania)  
<https://doi.org/10.2298/GSGD2202201T>

Received: June 16, 2022

Corrected: June 23, 2022

Accepted: June 30, 2022

**Alexandru Marius Tătar<sup>1\*</sup>**

*\* Babes-Bolyai University, Faculty of Geography, Cluj -Napoca, Romania*

## **GEOGRAPHIC AXES AND CULTURAL DIVERSITY IN ROMANIA**

**Abstract:** Culture as a factor for sustainable development reaffirms the importance of local and regional identity and specificity, which implies the need to protect heritage and raise community awareness of its value. These objectives position culture as the fourth pillar of sustainable development, alongside the economic, social, and environmental sectors. The measures support the contribution of culture and cultural heritage to sustainable development, defining territorial vitality by highlighting elements of local and regional identity and by better protecting cultural heritage. To protect heritage, it is necessary to analyse and present data on cultural tourism, including details of the cultural development of certain peoples and acculturation phenomena, all of which form part of a heritage that can then be exploited for tourism purposes. This is the premise from which I started, trying to highlight the possibilities of tourist exploitation of the existing heritage. The research objectives are: The exploitation of cultural resources - elements of local and regional identity - for sustainable territorial development and high quality of life along geographical axes; Better protection of cultural heritage, based on a knowledge of the situation through the development of a tourism program based on cultural diversity in the area of the geographical axes: Siret, Mures, and Bistrita-Nasaud county. Thus, to achieve the objectives following observations in the field and through the cultural diversity present on the territory of Romania given by the heritage of the past (over two thousand years of history) we will be able to outline the geographical axes. The research theme sets the direction of action by promoting an integrated approach to territorial development interventions, highlighting the role of culture in the development of the geographical axis.

**Key words:** cultural tourism, cultural tourism axis, heritage, sustainable development, geographical axis

---

<sup>1</sup> alexandrumarius232@gmail.com (corresponding author)

## Introduction

Culture includes in its sphere of attitude, acts, and works limited in genesis, intention, motivation, and purpose - to the realm of spirit and intellect (Drîmbă, 2013). Culture, which comes from the Latin word *colere*, generally refers to human activity (Mihu, 2002). Angela Banciu defines culture as “the totality of spiritual values created by mankind in the course of social-historical practice and representing the processes achieved in the knowledge of nature, society and the very becoming of the human being” (Banciu, 2003).

Cultural heritage is a testimony to and an expression of the values, beliefs, knowledge, and traditions that have resulted over time from the interaction of human and natural factors. It is constantly evolving and makes a fundamental contribution to human development and to enhancing the quality of collective life. After all, cultural heritage delights and inspires old and new generations on their journey towards knowledge. It is therefore a treasure to be protected as such (<http://www.cultura.ro/directia-patrimoniu>).

It is an essential resource for Romania's identity and the development of a society of peace and stability based on respect for human rights, democracy, and the rule of law. Active participation and modern management of this strategic resource add economic, social, and cultural value to the community (Ministry of Culture of Romania, 2022).

There are three basic requirements for the affirmation and development of cultural tourism as a form of recreation and knowledge:

- )] Protection and preservation of the entire cultural heritage - national and international;
- )] The preparation and provision of high-quality tourist services;
- )] Respect for the way of life of the indigenous populations.

Another approach, focusing on the organization of the cultural tourism product, states that for a trip to be included in the sphere of cultural tourism, it must meet certain conditions:

- )] it must be motivated by a desire for knowledge;
- )] consumption of a tourist product with cultural significance (monument, work of art, performance, etc.);
- )] it must involve the intervention of a mediator - person, document, audio-visual material - who will highlight the cultural product.

In this context, the interconnections between cultural tourism and other forms of tourism can be explained, by the presence of cultural motives in the development of holidays for leisure, recreation, spa, etc.

As far the World Tourism Organisation is concerned, it considers that cultural tourism includes (Istrate & Glăvan, 1994):

- )] youth tourism, where the cultural-educational aspect predominates, including study trips, language learning, international youth camps;
- )] reciprocal exchanges of artists, writers, etc. and the events which they organize;
- )] rural tourism, family stays in the region or country visited;
- )] stays in holiday villages integrated into the local cultural environment;
- )] participation in regional, national, and international festivals;

- ) cultural tours, including visits to museums, historical sites, and participation in various cultural events;
- ) pilgrimages to historical and religious sites and monuments.

Cultural tourism has a complex content, this characteristic manifests itself in terms of the products offered and how travel is made concrete, but also from the perspective of consumers of cultural holidays (Istrate & Glăvan, 1994).

Cultural tourism is based on a wide variety of resources (artists, craftsmen, tangible and intangible objects, actions, and relations between the arts which are practised for the benefit of cultural tourism consumers) which have shaped other sub-forms of tourism - cultural-religious, pilgrimage, archaeological, urban, rural, museum, ethnographic, etc. (Moldoveanu & Franc, 1997).

The notions of “axis” and “corridor” are used in spatial planning documents, even if the difference between them is hardly perceptible to specialists, as the two concepts have not yet been clearly defined either at the European or national level. However, most of the accepted concepts focus on the importance of demography, the economy, infrastructure, the dynamics of rural settlements, and environmental protection when discussing regional economic development (Toma, 2020).

The national cultural heritage is composed of goods of exceptional historical, archaeological, documentary, ethnographic, artistic, scientific and technical, literary, cinematographic, numismatic, philatelic, heraldic, bibliophilic, cartographic and epigraphic value, representing material testimonies of the evolution of the natural environment and human relations with it, of human creative potential and the Romanian contribution to a universal civilisation (LAW no.182 of 25 October 2000).

## **Methodology**

To integrate the territory under investigation into the study of geographical axes, the following was used the principle of regionalism stems from the reality that the object of geographical research is a concrete territory, resulting from the specific interaction of natural, social, economic, and cultural elements, thus creating unique territorial systems. Hence the need to delimit and prioritise these territorial units, as whole regions, so that they can be analysed in a complex and interdependent manner, with a view to their sustainable development (Figure 1).

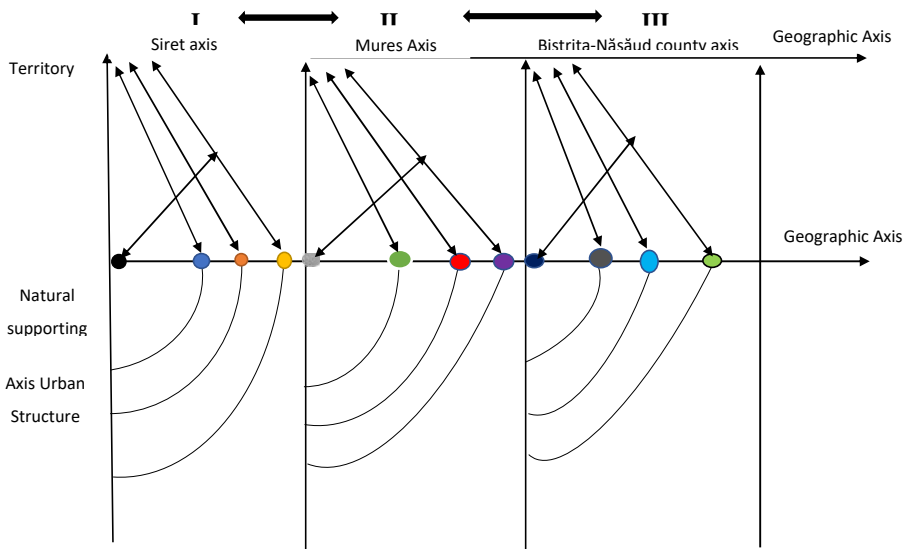


Fig. 1. Interconnected system of the geographical axis

Using the principle of regionalism and analysing the components of the study, it was possible to create an interconnected system of the geographical axis. Through the interconnected system of the geographical axis, the research objectives can be achieved, namely: The exploitation of cultural resources - elements of local and regional identity - for sustainable territorial development and high quality of life along the geographical axis.

Better protection of cultural heritage, based on an awareness of the situation through the development of a tourism programme based on cultural diversity in the area of the geographical axes: Siret, Mures and Bistrita-Nasaud county. The flow of matter between the territory and the components of the geographical axis: the natural support, the structure of the urban axis and cultural tourism are found in an interdependent system.

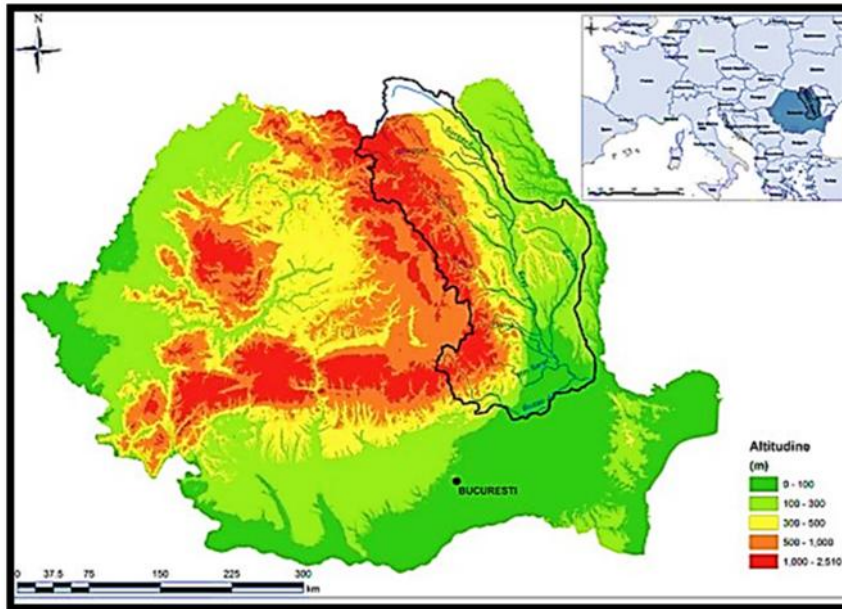
## The Siret Axis

### *Natural Supporting Base*

The Siret River is Romania's largest inland river. It flows from the Paleogene Fjords of the Patagonian Carpathians (Ukraine) at a height of 1238 m and drains, through its watershed, the central-eastern part of the Eastern Carpathians and part of the Curbura Carpathians, the Moldavian Subcarpathians and the northern sector of the Curbura Carpathians, the Moldavian Plateau and the Lower Siret Plain. The total area of the Siret river basin is 44 871 km<sup>2</sup> of which 42 890 km<sup>2</sup> is on the territory of Romania. The length of the Siret River in Romania is 548 km and 110 km at the entrance to the country from Ukraine (Ministry of Environment of Romania, 1992) (Figure 2).

From its source, the Siret follows a typically mountainous transverse valley with an average gradient of around 10 %, which is maintained until it enters the subcarpathian depression of Berhomet (Ukraine). Further downstream, after a wide bend to the

southeast, the Siret has a wide valley, a true corridor, with a typical submontane course until the spillway (Ujvari, 1970).



*Fig. 2. Map of the geographical position of the Siret river basin within Romania and Europe*

The Siret Corridor is a valley corridor located in the Moldavian Plateau, Romania. A morphological and hydrographic unit, it overlaps the valley and slopes of the Siret River from its entrance into Romania at Vășcăuți to its exit in the Siret Plain.

The Siret corridor is a revealing example of the type of anisotropic region, with an elongated, filiform unfolding and the presence of axially arranged polarization centres with or without relations between them. The unit is morpho-hydrographically shaped by overlapping the valley and slopes of the Siret River from its entrance into the country, at Vascauti, to its outlet in the Siret Plain. The transversal profile of the corridor has variable widths, between 2.5 km in the Racaciuni gorge and more than 40 km downstream of Roman where its meadow widens out like an open funnel towards the plain (Bacauanu et al., 1980) (Figure 3).

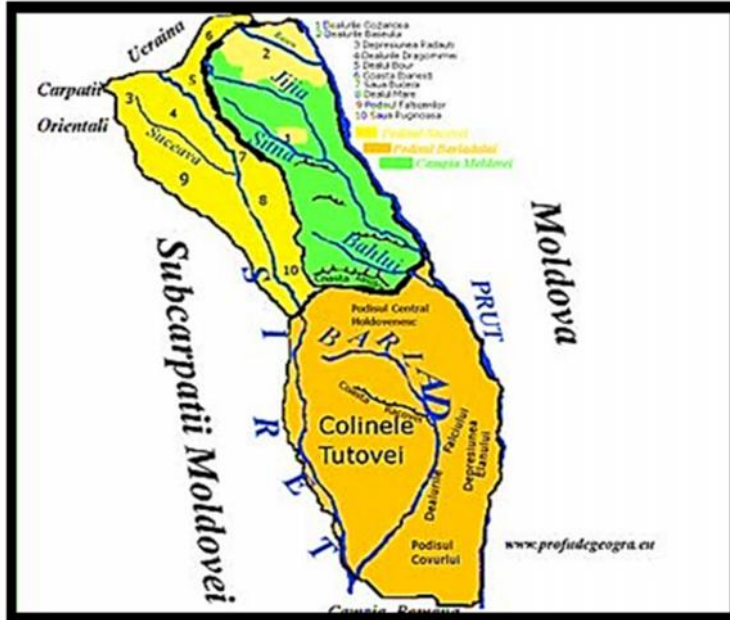


Fig.3. Geographical Location of the Siret Culvert

Another specific feature is related to the increased interaction with neighbouring regional systems, which has resulted in a high number of junctional axes, usually perpendicular to the main axis. This contributes to the spatial and functional integration with neighbouring regions (North-East Moldova, Bârlad, Lower Danube, Curbura, Bistrița - Trotuș, Bucovina), cooperation relations being supported both by the structure and direction of material and energy flows (e.g. resources, finished or semi-finished products) and by information flows (at administrative level) (Bacauanu et al., 1980).

#### **Axis Urban Structure**

The cities of Galați, Bacau, Siret, Pânceni, Roman, and Adjud play the role of local polarization centres. The city of Bacau is evolving towards the requirements of a regional polarization centre due to its functional complexity and demographic potential (Figure 4).



*Fig.4. Administrative Organisation of the Siret Axis*

The Bacău Metropolitan Area is part of the Siret Major Geographical Axis and the Local Geographical Axis, which includes the following administrative units: the municipality of Bacău and the neighbouring communes of Berești-Bistrița, Buhoci, Faraoni, Filipești, Gioseni, Hemeiuș, Itești, Izvoru Berheciului, Letea Veche, Luizi-Călugăra, Măgura, Mărgineni, Garleni, Odobești, Prăjești, Sărata, Săucești, Secuieni, Tamași, Blagești, Horgesti and Traian, with a total population of approximately 227.057 inhabitants (See figure 5).

Bacău is considered, according to Law 351/2001, as one of the 11 urban localities of rank I, with a population of 210,469 inhabitants on January 1, 1999 (according to the 2012 census, the population of Bacău reached 144,307 inhabitants). To achieve a balanced development of the territory in the Capital of Romania and the municipalities of rank I, the basic administrative-territorial units of these areas may associate in a voluntary partnership for the establishment of metropolitan areas related to urban space.



*Fig.5. Bacău Metropolitan Area*

### ***Cultural Tourism in the Siret Axis***

From an ethnographic and cultural point of view, the Siret Axis overlaps the historical regions of Moldova and Bucovina with influences from the Muntenia area.

Tourism has an appreciable ethnographic and cultural potential (Hanu Ancuței, the Vasile Alecsandri Memorial House in Mîrcești, the royal courts of Roman and Bacău, museums, monuments) which can be optimally exploited through transit tourism, rural tourism, or short-term cultural tourism.

The court of Bacău (pole of development of the axis), was built in the time of Stephen the Great (1457-1504) and consists of the Voivodal House, the defence tower, and the Domnească Church. Stephen the Great's son, Alexander, was responsible for the construction between 1476 and 1481. In the first half of the 16<sup>th</sup> century, after the Turkish invasion in 1538, the Manor House and the Tower were destroyed. The cellar of the former building, built of quarry stone, is still preserved today. In the ensemble, there is also the church of "The Assumption of the Mother of God" - Precista, built of brick by Alexander, son of Stephen the Great, between 1490-1491, which is typical for the series of royal churches of this era. The lacquer was repaired by the ruler Vasile Lupu (1641).

The court of Bacău was the administrative, control, and organizational centre of the Lower Country during the Middle Ages (Figure 6). From an architectural point of view, the church represents a symbol of Romanian Orthodoxy.





*Fig.6. Church "The Assumption of the Mother of God" Precista*

***Ghika Castle, Dofteana village***

The castle was built in the Romantic style as a hunting lodge in a picturesque area at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Founded by Nicolae Ghika, governor of the National Bank of Romania, a member of the family of noblemen (Ungureanu, 1993). The palace is now privately owned. The old "huluberia" in the park has been transformed into the "Dofteana Park" guesthouse, which evokes the atmosphere of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The decor is rustic, with six rooms with utilities available for tourists. At the Ghika palace in Dofteana has shot the film, "Miss Christina", a screenplay after Mircea Eliade, and in the summer of 2016, in the same location, for almost a month was filmed for the movie, The Wanderers (The Spirit Hunter) - feature film directed by Dragoş Buliga (Ungureanu, 1993) (Figure 7).



*Fig.7. Ghika Dofteana Castle*

Bacau County is famous for its winter customs, admirably preserved especially in the Trotus Valley, from the springs in the Ciucului Mountains to Comanesti, Darmanesti, Dofteana, and Onesti.

At the end of each year, between Christmas and New Year, the towns of Comanesti and Bacau, as well as many villages, host folk festivals. Thousands of Bacauans and tourists come to see the masked games in which young groups of young people from Bacau and other counties of Moldavia compete, groups that play the Bear, Horses, Goats, or Deer Dance. The carolers wear traditional masks - many made by craftsmen who have preserved the tradition of skin and fur processing, and many moments ironize real characters - the doctor, the policeman, the policeman, the hunter, etc. (Ungureanu, 1993).

The bear dance, the most famous in the ethnographic area of Trotus, evokes the regeneration of nature, and the passing of the seasons. In the dance, performed to the roar of the drums, the beardies, then comes back to life - an evocation of the power of this animal, of its ability to overcome the harsh winter to herald spring. The most famous bear herds are in Dărmănești, Asău, and Dofteana.

The play of the bears evokes youth and fertility. In ancient times, the horse was considered a pavement against evil spirits, and a defender of households and churches. Nowadays the dance impresses with the agility of its performers (County Public Service for the Promotion of Tourism and Coordination of the Bacău Rescue Activity, 2022).

The goat's game, originally a fertility dance, nowadays entertains the public. The herd of goats (they often play in a circle) is led by a shepherd, who has funny cheers, accompanied by the song of the whistlers (County Public Service for the Promotion of Tourism and Coordination of the Bacău Rescue Activity, 2022).

These traditional games can be admired in Bacau at the Alaiul datinilor si obiceiurilor de iarna, organised immediately after Christmas by the Ansamblul Folcloric Busuiocul from Bacau. Also, in Comanesti (57 km from Bacau) there is a festival of traditional customs and traditions held, most often, on New Year's Eve, after the large event organized in Bacau. (County Public Service for the Promotion of Tourism and Coordination of the Bacău Rescue Activity, 2022).



*Fig.8. Ghika Dofteana Castle*

The game of the goat is the oldest and most widespread of the mask games, taking so many different forms that each village has its specificity, although the agrarian ritual message is the same - the revival of nature and the hope for a richer New Year (Figure 9).



*Fig.9. The game of the goat*

The custom generally presents a spectacular ceremony in which dance, music, costumes, props and text express moments in the life of the goat: buying, selling, getting sick, dying, mourning, weaning and the joy of resurrection (Albailuia, 2022).

For this performance, larger or smaller retinues are formed, with specific characters - the captain, the hunter, the shepherd, the masks, the musicians and the most important one is the goat, with its wooden head wrapped in fur, with horns on its forehead and a clanging muzzle, dressed and adorned very differently.

The goat's flock can be admired on New Year's Eve, in the alleys of the villages of Neamt county or on the streets of the towns - during the folklore festivals. They delight people with the rhythm of the drums, the clinking of the rattles, the explosion of colours of costumes and masks, and the specific dance, enlivening the atmosphere of celebration and joy.

The most interesting goat games are those in the villages: Bahna, Dămuc, Grințieș, Ceahlău, Timișești, Oniceni, Pipirig, Toșorog, Bâra and many others.

Head masks have been developed in a wide range of shapes, from zoomorphic to anthropomorphic, with ugly to cheerful physiognomies. Of the animal masks, the most common are those of bear, ram, goat, goat, and bird; anthropomorphic masks, of old man, old woman, merchant, officer, doctor, gipsy, drunkard, gurgling woman and other negative characters (Figure 10).



*Fig.10. Head masks*

Various materials are used to make them: fur, cloth, fabric, textile fibres and threads, wood, straw, brass, horns and others. Head masks are usually worn by dancers dressed in folk costumes, who accompany the goat's retinue, but they are also organised in separate groups, such as the "ugly" of Răucești - a parade of masks, with players dressed in coats with their crutches on the outside and armed with crooked sticks, in a lively game designed to scare off evil spirits.

In the past, until the middle of the 20th century, the participants in the winter games made their masks from light materials, which they threw away after use. But even then, there were some villagers with more experience in mask-making who worked for less-skilled young people. Thus, a new craft was born, which has recently become true art, from which some creators from Neamt county, especially those from the villages, have made their reputation: Târpești-Petricani, Timișești, Pipirig, Humulești and others (Centrul Județean pentru Cultura, 2022).

## **Mures Axis**

### ***Natural support base***

The Mures is the largest tributary of the Tisza, a major tributary of the Danube River. The river, which flows through the town of the same name, springs from the Hasmasul Mare massif and drains the Gheorgheni Rau Depression, the left tributary of the Tisza: 756km (of which 718.5km on the the the Romanian territory). It springs from the Hasmasul Mare massif, drains the Gheorgheni Depression, crosses the volcanic chain (through the Toplita-Deda gorge), and then the Transylvanian Plateau (from north-east to south-west), and finally separates the Poiana Rusca Mountains from the Apuseni Mountains through the Deva - Radna gorge (Stamate 1997) (Figure 11).

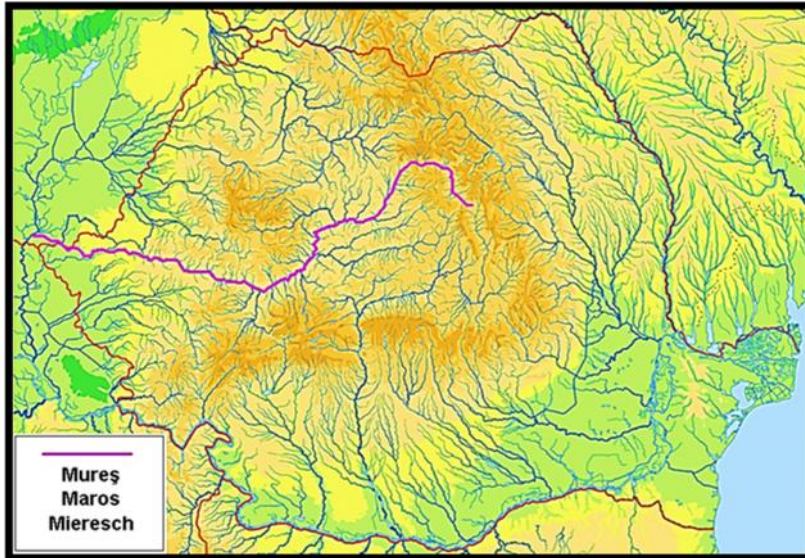


Fig.11. Geographical location of the Mures river

The Mures is a river that flows between Romania and Hungary, marking a 22.3 km stretch of the Romanian-Hungarian border. It is considered one of the most significant rivers of the Carpathian Basin, as the length of the main course is 789 km, of which 28,310 km<sup>2</sup> and 761 km are included in the territory of Romania. The most important tributaries of the Mures are the Târnavă, the Arieş, the Sebeş, the Cugir and the Cerna (Stamate, 1997). The surface area of the river basin is 29,767 km<sup>2</sup>, which makes this basin rich in relief forms, such as mountains 23%, hills, and plains 52%, with altitudes ranging from 2500 m in the Retezat Mountains to below 100 m in the Western Plain (Stamate, 1997) (Figure 12).

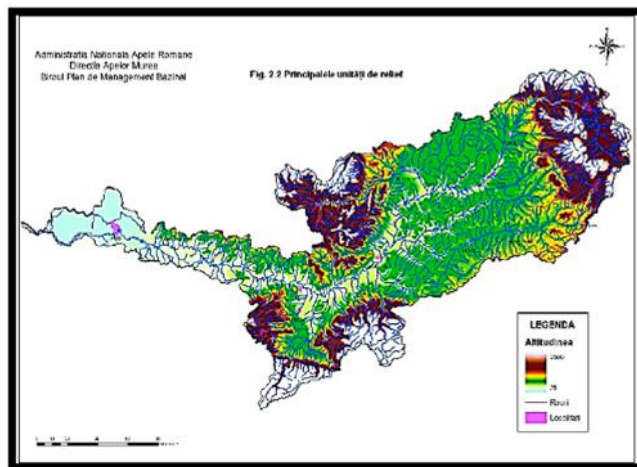


Fig.12. Geographical features of the Mures Axis. It should be noted that the Axis overlaps the Mures River Basin. Source: National Administration of Romanian Waters, Mures Waters

The Mureş is a hydronym that comes from the old Romanian form Morisis, from which the Hungarian form Maros later derived (Madgearu, 2019).

### ***Axis Urban Structure***

The urban axis of the study area is composed of the following cities: Reghin, Targu Mures, Alba Iulia, Deva, and Arad (Figure 13). It is worth mentioning that in the Mures Axis there is no main pole as in the Siret Axis.



*Fig.13. Location of the urban axis along the Mures River*

### ***Cultural Tourism in the Mures Axis***

For a thousand years, the Mures Axis represented the political, geographical, and cultural border between the Hungarian Kingdom and the Old Kingdom of Romania formed by Wallachia and Moldova.

In 1918, after the Great Union, the border on the axis disappeared, and the border ended up in its present format. From an ethnographic and cultural point of view, the Mures Axis is influenced by the historical provinces of Banat and Ardeal, to which are added the Saxon and Hungarian influences.

Alba Iulia tells the story of its European antiquity, starting with the Roman civilization which had a significant place and role here. The Romans founded two cities here with the name of Apulum (n.a. the Latin name of Alba Iulia). Each occupied a large area in the southern and eastern parts of the present city.

The civil settlements of Apulum, built around the castrum of the 13<sup>th</sup> Gemina Legion, formed the most important urban centre of Roman Dacia. The elements discovered by archaeologists are exploited for tourism in the Three Fortifications Route, on the main artery of the Citadel, Mihai Viteazul Street, and in Citadel Square. Of the two cities founded here by the Romans, only one remains - Alba Iulia. Abandoned in the 3<sup>rd</sup> century, the ruins of the Apulum castrum and the surrounding buildings were not used for new purposes until the early Middle Ages.

On the ruins of the Roman fortress were built the walls of another fortification - the medieval fortress. Today the bastions built in the 17<sup>th</sup> century on the south side are still visible. The Saxon Bastion, for example, is used for tourism as part of the Three Fortifications Route. The Saxon Bastion was a successful part of a larger project to equip the medieval fortress with four defensive bastions, to which the Prince of Transylvania and the three political nations, the Saxons, the nobles, and the Szeklers, were to contribute the prince and the Saxons managed to build the bastions on the southern side of the fortress, both of which are today part of the Alba Carolina Fortress (Albailuia, 2022) (Figure 14).



*Fig.14. Alba Carolina Fortress*

The route of the Fortress Gates takes you from Gate I in the East to Gate VI in the West. That is, the route that takes you past the Union Hall, the National Museum of Unification, the Palace of the Princes of Transylvania, and the two cathedrals, the Roman Catholic Cathedral, and the Coronation Cathedral. A good opportunity to decipher the architectural style and sculptural decoration.

Alba Iulia has been the religious capital of Transylvania, of one or more denominations, for almost a millennium. The role played by religion in the moral and physical structure of Alba Iulia is visible to the naked eye. In the centre of the fortification built by the Austrians 300 years ago, two architectural jewels still stand today - the Roman Catholic Cathedral and the Coronation Cathedral. The former encompasses all the styles used between the 10<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries, with Romanesque taking pride in place. Other cultural sights: the Principia Roman Museum, the National Museum of Unification, the Batthyaneum Library, the Călnic Fortress, the Betlen Haller Castle - the Baltic Fortress.

In Alba County, one of the oldest customs related to the winter holidays is preserved in the village of Limba, near Alba Iulia, where children go “pițarat” from house to house to collect in trays colăcuți, apples, nuts, or other goodies. Another custom related to Christmas is that of the “Christmas cribs” which have been preserved for at least 100 years in the villages of Blaj, Alba County.

In the village of Sâncel, the "Craii" custom begins with the Christmas fast, when a group of young people aged between 15 and 20, chosen to carry on this tradition, start preparing a biblical play in the village church (Albailuia, 2022).

CSÉPTÁNC - The game of fur. A Hungarian game specific to the locality of Măgherani originates from one of the old traditions that took place during the summer, after the harvest, when no mechanized work was done in agriculture, but the grain was harvested with a sickle, gathered and stored in the barn, and after drying it was covered with a furnace<sup>17</sup>. Harvest time was a joyous occasion and a day of celebration for the peasant because the wheat ensured the survival of his family. As the rinses were often made with "ceterași", ending with music and dancing, a specific game became established over time, in which the host would make specific dance movements with the "îmblăci" while he was making the rinses. This is how the 'dance with the tinkle' was preserved in Măgherani, a unique game, specific to this locality, which we find today in the wider repertoire of the Hungarian folklore ensemble here.

Something about toponymy and Arpadian (Dynasty that ruled the Hungarian Kingdom between 896-1301), Castro-toponymy in the Transylvanian basin in the 11<sup>th</sup>-13<sup>th</sup> centuries points of view on Uioara de Sus, Alba county, Mures axis. One case we bring up, namely the locality of Uioara de Sus, is the centre where we have an attestation, according to Coriolan Suci: villa Vyuar [1202-1203], i.e. the village of the New Fortress.

Here we only note, the apparent fact that the New Fortress was certainly before the town, which was very easy to name as the proximate location of the fortress, and when the human settlement in the vicinity increased enough, the toponymy was easily imposed by the zonal authority or the inhabitants (Hasan, 2018). We do not know where the old fortification (óvár) (Old Fortress) is, but we can suspect it is in the same nearby region (Hasan, 2018).

We believe that in the case of that fortress we have three options: a.) the old Roman fortress of Ala I Batavorum in point Războieni-Cetate (village of Földvár), on the other bank of the Mureș, which probably in the period was still visible on the site at that time, or b.) another fort that was built by the royalty for defensive purposes, before the first half of the 11th century, somewhere near the location between Razboieni and Ocna Mures, the Uioara de Sus district, on the banks of the Mures, but not where the Palace is located today. Teleki Palace an area which may have lent itself to the erection of a later fortification (Castrum Novum); c.) A third possibility would be an older gyepű, a prison also in the area (see also below). The fortification on the Mures river could have been part of a Doboka county administrative centre from which the counties of Torda and Kolozs were later separated, provided that the speculator Fantiska was linked by his job to the fortress of Dobaca (Hasan, 2018).

## **Bistrița Năsăud county axis**

### ***Natural support base***

The geographical elements that make up the link between this reference are the mountainous crown Țibleș-Rodna-Suhard-Bârgău-Călimani, the hilly foothills (Someșului Mare Hills, Someșului Mare Hills Bistriței, the Transylvanian Plain) and the upper course of the Someșului Mare, with tributaries draining almost the entire county (except the extreme



south, which gravitates towards Mures) (Bâca, 2014). The administrative neighbours of the county area are represented by Maramureş County to the north, Suceava County to the east, Mures County to the south, and Cluj County to the west (Bâca 2014) (Figure 15).



*Fig.15. Location Bistrița-Nasaud County*

### ***Axis Urban Structure***

The urban axis in arial consists of the ruminating cities: Bistrita, the central pole of the axis, Năsăud, Beclean, Sângeorz-Băi (Figure 16).



*Fig.16. Main urban poles of development within the Geographical Axis of Bistrița -Năsăud County: Bistrița, Beclean, Năsăud and Sangeorz -Bai*

### **Cultural Ethnographic Value**

The relief of ethnographic differentiations between certain parts of Bistrița-Năsăud county led to the territorial outline of seven sub-areas, four countries with specific geographical, economic, main traditional occupations, historical-demographic, and artistic populations (Băca, 2014).

By considering these criteria, as well as others that will be considered during the research, the ethnographic zoning of Bistrița-Năsăud County becomes the result of a complex scientific operation. A fully conclusive characterization, as well as a fully appropriate delimitation from a territorial point of view, of the ethnographic countries that make it up, will undoubtedly only be possible at the end of the research and studies being prepared for the county ethnological monograph (Băca, 2014).

Bistrița's country presents some aspects of material and spiritual culture as more complex, explainable on the one hand by the more pronounced presence of the neighbouring nationalities, and on the other hand by the existence of the old city of Bistrița, the county seat. It forms a central sub-area, surrounded only by sub-areas of Bistrița-Năsăud County. It consists of two communes in the Budac Valley - Cetate and Budacul de Jos, then the commune of Livezile and the town of Bistrița in the valley of the same name, as well as the commune of Dumitra situated on the Dealul Țîrgului (Băca, 2014).

Historical research highlights the following phases of the population: the colonization of the Saxons in the 12th century, later adding to the town of Bistrița a Hungarian population. The Romanian population has always been present both in the countryside and in the city of Bistrița. Except for the villages of Raglan and Budacul de Sus, which were part of the Năsăudean border, the other localities belonged to the Saxon district of Bistrița. The village of Sărata was for a time in the domain of the fortress of Unguraș under the MoIoldova suzerainty (Băca, 2014).

To be as simple and efficient as possible to visit, we have divided Bistrita, the main centre of Bistrita County, into three tourist axes:

**Crown Axis:** This axis includes many historic houses. For example, the Silversmith's House, which once belonged to a guild of jewellers. The facade of the building was designed by the town's own Evangelical Church mason. Also on this axis is the Church of the Minorite Monastery, the oldest building in the city, built by Franciscan monks, known today as the Orthodox Church of the Crown, and the Municipal Park;

**Axis of Arts:** On the Axis of the Arts are the Small Square, Central Square, Republic Boulevard, and Butchers' Passage. One of the imposing buildings on this axis is the Palace of Culture, then historical monument houses including the Petermann House, the Andreas Beuchel House, the Parish House of the Evangelical Church, the Evangelical Church, the Sugălete Sirul, the Evangelical Gymnasium, today the "Liviu Rebreanu" National College. The Sugălete Ensemble, located in Central Square, the square surrounding the Evangelical Church, is the longest row of medieval buildings with ground-floor arcades in Romania;

**Axis of Guilds:** On this axis, there is the Roman Catholic Church, the Dogars Tower, the Dominican Monastery (today a home for the elderly), and fragments of the enclosure wall belonging to the Medieval Fortress of Bistrita. On this trip, we also set out to discover the Bistrita wine trail. The Lechința vineyard is the queen of vineyards in these parts. The Jelena winery tells the fascinating story of the wine used centuries ago as currency. And the youngest winery in Bistrita-Nasaud, Crama Valea Ascunsă inTeacha, wants to revive the tradition of good wine.

Ox-herding is an agro-pastoral custom and belongs to the fertility rites around the summer solstice. This custom has at its heart the sacred, powerful, life-giving, and fruit-bearing animal. It is celebrated on Whitsunday in several villages such as Tăure, Figa, Șieu-Cristur, Căianu Mare and Căianu Mic. The structure of this agrarian custom includes the following stages: the weaving of the wreath, the stuffing of the ox, the carrying of the ox to the house of the farmer, the arrival of the festive retinue at the host, the feast, and the game of (Centrul Judetean pentru Cultura, 2022) (Figure 17).



*Fig.17. The oxen trainer*

The city of Bistrița, the county seat of Bistrița-Năsăud, is one of the seven medieval cities of Transylvania (Siebenburgen), along with Cluj, Sebeș, Sighișoara, Mediaș, Sibiu, and Brașov, which gives it a privileged status from a historical and cultural perspective. Thus, the old town centre preserves several architectural buildings from the medieval period, with emblematic value, among which we mention: the ruins of the enclosure wall, the evangelical church, the church of the minors, the "Sugălete" ensemble, "Casa Peterman", etc. (Băca, 2018). Thanks to this, Bistrita has become a city of festivals and cultural events, aimed at highlighting its historical heritage (Băca, 2018).

## **Conceptual Considerations on the Economic Development Strategy of the Geographical Axis**

The development of cultural tourism as a generator of income and a recognized form of tourism has emerged as an objective of both heritage institutions and tour operators around the world. In this sense, tourism operators, like hotels, tour companies, retailers and others become more receptive to new ideas and approaches. Increasingly, they are taking notice of cultural attractions and events as worthy partners in packaging and other cooperative arrangements (Ciachir, 2005).

In this sense, the museums must communicate to existing and potential supporters their important role in helping to meet not only the preservation and educational needs of a community but also the wider community needs such as tourism, economic development, and downtown revitalization (Ciachir, 2005).

By cultural tourism products, we refer to museums, heritage opportunities and events. We all know that the better the cultural product the greater the likelihood that residents will spend money within a region, province, or country. Even more important is the ability of cultural products to attract or increase the length of stay of long-haul tourists because they bring in new money. In this regard, the reality is that not every cultural product, and certainly not every museum or historic site, is willing or capable of being a significant tourist attraction, nor need they be. (Silberger, 1997)

The strategy is structured in 3 development pillars with 3 strategic directions under each one. For the presentation of the strategic directions, a structure inspired by the Logical Framework Matrix, Annex I to the Framework Partnership Agreement was used by the European Commission.

Each pillar presents the reasons why it is necessary to include that sector in the (needs, opportunities, and actions targeted for development, the contribution of other sectors to the development of the sector).

The one addressed, and the expected impact), reasoning supported by the Geographical Axis's current situation and the development vision for the coming years. In our view, the three pillars selected are justified by the following considerations: Economic diversification, innovation, and entrepreneurship.

The sustainable exploitation of local specificities is a prerequisite for enabling people in Geographical Axis to make the most of the area's special natural setting through the development of tourism and local crafts and the promotion of cultural, industrial, social, and natural heritage, with the mining tradition as the central point of attractiveness, based on an integrated approach aimed at attracting visitors to urban and mountain areas

Accessibility, mobility, and connectivity are essential preconditions for facilitating all activities related to future economic of the axis.

## Conclusion

The preservation of cultural heritage, contemporary creation, and cultural diversity as a prerequisite for European cohesion and solidarity is expressly mentioned in the EU Sustainable Development Strategy and is reflected in the main policy documents of the European Union, according to the Government Strategy for 2014-2020. Culture can be considered as the whole complex of distinctive characteristics of a spiritual, material, intellectual and emotional nature that characterize a society or a social group. It includes not only arts and literature, but also ways of life, fundamental human rights, value systems, traditions, and beliefs.

Sustainable development in culture implies free and diverse practices and tools for access to education and knowledge, to the cultural treasure of one's nation and of humanity as a whole, to all resources that can develop creativity and the spirit of innovation; ensuring that everyone has the opportunity to become a producer of culture, thus going beyond the status of mere consumers of entertainment; applying the principles of development equally to cultural heritage and natural capital; preserving inherited resources for the benefit of future generations; continuous information and specialization of decision-makers in the field of culture; ensuring intercultural exchanges.

Through the development of geographical axes, we can see the cultural potential given by historical heritage and protect cultural heritage.

Conflicts of Interest: The authors declare no conflict of interest.

Publisher's Note: Serbian Geographical Society stays neutral with regard to jurisdictional claims in published maps and institutional affiliations.

© 2022 Serbian Geographical Society, Belgrade, Serbia.

This article is an open access article distributed under the terms and conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivs 3.0 Serbia.

## References

- Albailuia (n.d.). AlbaIulia - blogul oficial de turism. Retrieved July 25, 2022, from <https://vizitezaalbaiulia.ro/>
- Bâca, I. (2014). *Bistrița-Năsăud County Geographical and Historical Coordinates*. Argonaut Publishing House.
- Bâca, I. (2018). Branding and City Branding Case Study: The Tourist Brand of the City of Bistrita (Bistrita-Nasaud County). *Ethnocultural Studies and Research Journal*, 18, 351-356.
- Bacauanu, V., Barbu, N., Pantazica, M., Ungureanu, A., & Chiriac, D. (1980). *Podisul Moldovei*. Editura științifică și enciclopedică București.
- Banciu, A. (2003). *Culture and Civilization*. Lumina Lex.

- Centrul Județean pentru Cultura (n.d.). Tradițional Customs. Retrieved July 16, 2022, from <https://cjbnc.ro/serviciul-cultura-traditionala/obiceiuri-traditionale>
- Ciachir, B. (2005). Cultural Tourism - Strategies and trends. *Muzeul National*, 17, 476-478.
- County Public Service for the Promotion of Tourism and Coordination of the Bacău Rescue Activity (n.d.). Tourist attractions. Retrieved May 10, 2022, from <https://turism-bacau.ro/attractii>
- Drîmbă, O. (2003). *History of Culture and Civilization*. Vestal Publishing House.
- Gheorgehe, A. M. (2020). *Ploiești-Vălenii de Munte Brașov Axis of Territorial Balance and Development*. University of Bucharest Publishing House.
- Hasan, M-F. (2018). Something about toponymy and Arpadian castro-toponymy in the Transylvanian basin in the 11<sup>th</sup>-13<sup>th</sup> centuries. Views on Uioara de Sus (Alba County) and beyond. *Revista Bistritei*, 32, 93-110.
- Istrate, I., & Glăvan, V. (1994). Cultural tourism in Romania - a bond of Romanian spirituality from all over the world. *Tribuna Economica*, 5.
- Madgearu, A. (2019). *The Hungarian expansion in Transylvania*. Cetatea de Scaun.
- Mihu, A. (2002). *Antropologia Culturală*. Editura Dacia.
- Ministry of Culture of Romania (n.d.). About Heritage. Retrieved May 10, 2022, from <http://www.cultura.ro/directia-patrimoniu>
- Ministry of Environment of Romania. (1992). *Water Atlas of Romania*. Ministry of Environment of Romania.
- Moldoveanu, M., & Franc, V. I. (1997). *Marketing and Culture*. Expert Publishing House.
- Silberger, T. (1995). Cultural tourism and business opportunities for museums and heritage sites. *Tourism Management*, 16(5), 361-365. DOI:10.1016/0261-5177(95)00039-Q
- Stamate, G. (1997). *State border of Romania*. Military Publishing House, Bucharest.
- Toma, A. M. (2020). *Ploiești-Vălenii de Munte Brașov Axis of Territorial Balance and Development*. University of Bucharest Publishing House.
- Ungureanu, A. (1993). *Geografia Podisurilor si Campiilor Romaniei*. Universitatea "Al. I. CUZA", Facultatea de geografie-geologie.