

**DISCOVERY, OBSERVATION AND TOURISM RECKONING ON  
RURAL SPACE'S NATURE THROUGH ACCESSING COMMON  
AND SPECIFIC FEATURES OF SOME LOCAL LANDSCAPES.  
TARGET: THE THEMATIC BACKDROP OF A VILLAGE IN  
PROVINCE OF CRIȘANA (ROMANIA)**

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**Résumé:** *Découverte, observation et tourisme en employant la nature de l'espace rural, par accès aux traits communs et particuliers de certains paysages locaux. But: le fond thématique d'un village de la Province Crișana (Roumanie).* Découvrir les paysages d'un endroit peut paraître facile. Découvrir les paysages par observation, suite d'une activité touristique organisée au niveau d'un village, est une affaire très sérieuse. Ainsi, par l'entremise de l'étude d'un espace appartenant à un petit village situé au nord de la Province Crișana (ouest de la Roumanie) s'analyse au grand détail un set des paysages ordinaires, générales, mais avec des traits remarquables, particuliers. À cette occasion sont soulignés des aspects qui peuvent esquisser et orienter un type de pratique touristique dans un village (intégré dans un programme touristique thématique en quelque sorte complexe ou par écotourisme) en partant du *thème des paysages*. Les aspects se rapportent à neuf types de paysages grevés par le relief collinaire d'altitude modérée, avec beaucoup des composantes naturelles (des forêts de rinceaux, des arbustes sauvages, des pâturages et des prairies, des ruisseaux etc.) et artificialisées (des maisons, des jardins, reste d'une citadelle médiévale, des clôtures etc.) déployées de façon équilibré. Le résultat consiste dans une ambiance attrayante, réconfortante et qui invite, résultat en provenance de la réunion du commun et du particulier, mais qui parle au sujet d'un milieu décontracté même dans les conditions d'une grande pression touristique.

**Mots-clés:** rural landscapes, discovery, observation, nature, eco-tourism, village, Province Crișana

**1. Short introduction into the theory of discovery and touristic observation of the nature's landscapes. Practical resonances of such a study.** The inquisitive modern human been, whose search willing focuses to acquire visual information, as well as the wealth-based spiritual and material benefit, plans and frames his activities starting from proximal surroundings perception. By searching, the individual satisfies his basic needs, organic requirements to identify new elements, new state of things, new places, to identify himself with something, to gather news.

Thus he succeed to discover throughout different ways, using inclusively the simple and accessible option of observing, the nature in proximity of his settlement. This is done by various undertakings, from the healthy loitering to the most advanced form of tourism. The tourism regulates and dictates the quality of good "consumer" for the (especially urban) modern human been, who identifies himself with and retrieve him within the nature, by officialising a privileged relationship with the same nature through **the landscapes** he discovers and observes by means of tourism. Determinant is the fact that any form of tourism would practice, regardless of place, and any initiatives would appear in the

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sense of orientation of funds for investment in tourism, all undoubtedly link to the contact with the landscape frames and the ability to exploit and value their particular features.

Regardless of origin, age, education level and type of the followed program by a tourist, also the infrastructure level, the strength of natural wealth and tourist resources involved, the tourist reach some cognitive-emotional benefits through discovering and observing landscapes from a touristic space. The listed attributes are based on what frames and fixes landscapes in the mind of tourist, linking him to motivations derived from the attribute of *target picture* (H. S. Martin, I. A. S. del Bosque, 2008), *human-wild life interaction* and the shaping of *tourist educational elements* (K. Papageorgiou, 2001). Adding the *orientation of the "consumers" behaviour* to forms and large or minimalist criteria of vegetation or fauna (these leading landscapes' structure) through ecotourism or nature tourism (D. B. Weaver, 2005) and *profiling a psychosocial dimension* among residents and tourists through cultural tourism in the rural area (R. Bachleitner, A.H. Zins, 1999), where, logically, there are landscapes. It is up to emphasizing the economic side of environment, involving local people and natural resources (A. Ruijs, R.B. Dellink, D. Bromley, 2008), and can bring landscapes to value.

Choosing landscapes as touristic attractions, in the direct sense of the theme or complementarily thematic, especially when speaking about the countryside, it is important by revealing some big advantages. They arise from the absence of most administrative restrictions imposed to the tourist, as the hotel-related tourism does, the contact and tourist's integration with landscapes being made without the imposition of the prescriptions of ethical codes (MP Fleckenstein, P. Huebsch, 1999). The only provisions are imposed exclusively by moral-environmental reserves, the nature being designated as depository for landscapes, and by the depth of tourist's choice toward a specific route towards or destination, the more or less complexly and functionally structuralized land space, as well as by the expectations in terms of experiences, events, emotions, preferences, level of satisfaction (P. Chhetri, C. Arrowsmith, M. Jackson, 2004). May arise here even operational definitions of landscape like experienced landscape - Hull and Stuart summoned by Chhetri et al., 2004) or from the variety and spectacular of wild world landscapes that condition a successful ecotourism (O. Krüger, 2005). With access to a landscape/scenery wanted/desired or by the free, uncensored and non-directed discovery, through all the senses, the tourist directly and individually shares the strength of the components gear, interprets and even mentally identifies himself with the personality of the nature around him, a stage marked by features and natural and artificial determinants.

**2. Methods.** Results were obtained from field observations (through basic and auxiliary components research, photo exam to grasp visual aesthetic register of the territory), the results being integrated through cartographic software ArcGIS 9 - ArcMaps vers. 9.2, beginning with the support of ortho-photoplane.

**3. Identifying the area of study and reasons for choosing the local landscape as being representatives for the touristic potential.** The study addresses a rural area, as for here Șușturogiu Village, entity belonging administratively to Oradea Metropolitan Area (OMA), and historically and geographically to Crișana Province. The village is situated in the northern part of the OMA and Crișana Province, and at a distance of 21.5 km from Oradea city, in north-western Romania, the distance that separates him from the border with Hungary in a straight line measuring 23.4 km. The village is a small settlement in the population, with less than 200 inhabitants, and researched area is limited to only 12.57 km<sup>2</sup>, but offering a well morphologically expressed scenery (hilly area below 300 m with a valley wide sector), also based on additional patrimonial-physiognomic characteristics (fig.

1). Moreover, this study starts from the premise that almost any landscape unit or scenery mosaic without spectacular traits or organizational complexity, but with *common level features*, has the potential to become and be affirmed in the tourism branch through specific suited and valuable forms, including here tourists' and nature lovers' personal experiences. Moreover, any rural location may bring itself to knowledge through its landscapes, the only condition being to be made known by simple promotional materials, accompanied by explanations written in a plain language, or by simply visually and spiritually accessing it. Making tourists access easier to local knowledge, a kind of knowledge intermediated by landscapes and their personality, it may be shaping a local brand (and by interpolation to get it to the regional), bearing in mind that an eco-label activates a forceful process of economic development based on a healthy eco-protection (V. Sasidharan, E. Sirakaya, D. Kerstetter, 2002), until relieving a clear terminological and factual kinds of *tourist landscapes* as common "goods" (R.G. Healy, 1994).

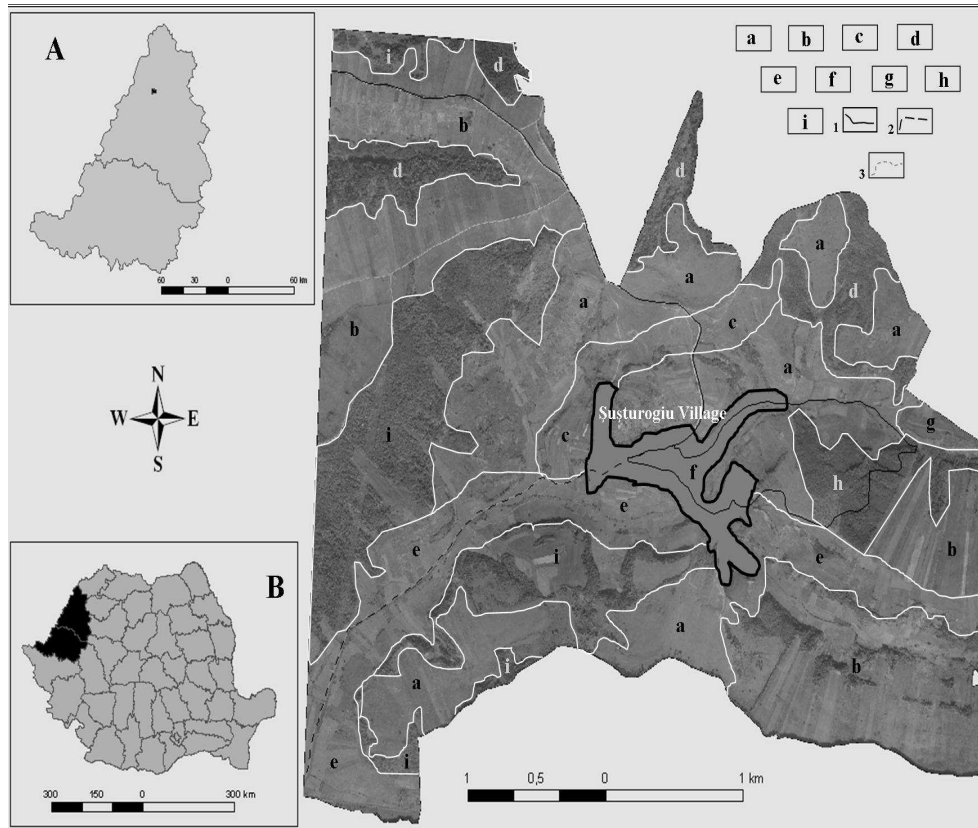
### **3.1 The local landscape typology and identity characteristics of landscapes.**

The natural factors and how the rural community has evolved definitely influenced the configuration of landscape wealth. The types of landscapes that reveal in detail the inherited and aesthetic-visual features that can be discovered and sighted by potential tourists, may be acquired through a *non-spectacular, but nonetheless interesting, common sense of perspective*, therefore resulting a serious potential of attraction related to *landscape theme*:

**a) moderate/highly sloped hill landscapes, with meadows or hayfields and shrubs** (image 2). Patrimonial features: grass garment; shrub clusters (wild rose, hawthorn); 25-40° sloped hills; modernized road; sheepfold (with sheeps and goats). Features derived from the image's elements: belvedere-favouring sites south-oriented (the village and the southern slopes are generously acquirable); depth sight angle over 25°; chromatic range dominated by shaded strong green alternating with soft pale green; reinforcement lines following soft paths. Additional benefits for tourists: the chance to visit a sheepfold, interfering with held animals and shepherds; buying organic, genuine products directly from shepherds; the mystery and magic of the hoar frost covered land.

**b) soft sloped hill landscapes, with hayfields and shrub clusters.** Patrimonial features: (partly in image 4): grassed surfaces, slightly waved, soft and irregular garment of vegetables, with polygonal insertions, wrinkled by micro-hollows, cornices; compact, prolonged rags or islands of savage shrubs; slopes under 20°; discreet pathways, but agreeable to step on thanks to the planking short grass. Features derived from the image's elements: soft landscape plans, opening angles, sighting axes with maximum viewing; chromatic palette dominated by green, but with pleasing effect determined by meadow flowers and bushes' fruits colour insertion. Additional benefits from different activities: the promenade enabling the knowledge of flora and fauna of small meadow; the achievement of plant products articles (festoon, crown of flowers, a.s.o.); beautiful scenery.

**c) coping hilly landscapes with slightly wavy meadow pastures and curtained shrubs.** Patrimonial feature: the elongate and weakly waved interfluvies; wild herbaceous body, 20-30 cm height, with sufficient dry part, frequently pastured; 3 – 4 m height dense shrubs, flowered or with fruits, cluster shrubs elongated to the climax; orthodox cemetery. Features derived from the image's elements: open space in all directions; sighting axis; very favourable prospects for observation, especially toward south and southeast; unitary whole; reasonable limits of relief plasticity and living bodies. Additional benefits for tourists: invitation to dreamy-state in places of high visual engagement; actual integration with the local nature; the remote discovery of the village through houses, gardens, meadows and cropping animals.



**Fig. 1** The Șușturogiu Village territory, including a typology of adjacent landscapes probing *discovery* and *touristic observation potential*.

Legend: a, b, c, d, e, f, g, h, i – landscape types (detailed in chap. 3.1.); 1 and 2 – main proposed routes for the theme of local landscapes ; 3 – secondary proposed route for the theme of local landscapes; inset A – Researched village location within the Crișana Province; inset B – Crișana Province location in Romania.

**d) low - moderately inclined hilly landscapes with mature deciduous forest.**

Patrimonial features: hills with a succession so small valleys and soft slopes; closed forest consisting of oaks, hornbeams, and acacias, with 15-17 m height, with thick base and upward dominating foliar apparel; floor herbaceous vegetation in a soft garment; wild fauna consisting of numerous populations of small or predatory birds, small deer in groups of 3-4 and wild boars communities of 4-7 animals. Features derived from the image's elements: unitary expressive body; simple structured horizontal and vertical axis (caught at the forest edge, understood as a prismatic volume elongate on the topographic surface), also by isolated ellipsoidal volume (consisting of higher trees); easily vigorous plasticity, expressed through the very pronounced green colour, shaded to sufficiently expressive and soothing nuances. Additional benefits for tourists: invitation to introspection; deeply recreating; direct and personalized contact with this vivid body; intimate, spiritual contact with small sized wild life, gathering mushrooms and wild fruit from the forest edge; the use of a particular sort of quiet (forest's vegetal silence, submitted to wind caprices, also enriched by birds' singing).



**Image 1.** Soft hilly and large valley passage landscape framework, emphasizing the interference between human settlement, fruit trees, gardens, forest, meadows and shrubs

**e) hilly slopes landscapes, wide valley with meadow and creek vegetation** (partly image 1). Patrimonial features: hill slopes below  $20^\circ$  in the form of large plans that range into the bottom in a valley sector; grassy meadow appearance, 30-50 cm height, with good density of ears and flowers; the creek with a soft bended trail, deepened to 1-1,8 m; trees of 3-4 m, with appearance of shrubs (willow, Tartary maple, poplar, a.s.o.), spread along the brook. Features derived from the image's elements: long sighting axis, 1-2 km; opening angle of value below  $80^\circ$ ; oblique or vertically structured axes, small sized (determined by transversal valley profile and the moisture based vegetation); living bodies clearly visually defined and set in pastel shades of green. Benefits for tourists through various activities: walking and identification of places and local natural resources (wild birds, frogs, water insects); assistance to haymaking and building hay cocks.



**Image 2 .** Summer moderate/ highly sloped hill landscapes, with meadows or hayfields, shrubs and modernized road

**f) rural-agricultural landscapes of soft hill with houses, vegetable gardens and fruit trees** (image 6). Patrimonial features: morphology dominated by areas with reasonable slopes; individual habitat small-medium sized (2-3 rooms, unpaved courtyards, dependencies), with simple-angle roof street fronted, built by local or modern materials or minerals, contemporary rural style homes, often integrating influences of secession style; vegetable gardens, 200-300 m<sup>2</sup>, near/behind the house; narrow streets of 4-5 m, dominantly mounting uphill; rustic metal or wood fences; fruit trees (mirobolam trees, walnuts, plums, peaches, apricots, apple trees), sporadically spread in the garden or at the edge of these; stony formations, megalithic appearance, consisting of unconsolidated grit stones enclosed in the slope's body. Features derived from the image's elements: prismatic volumes, structuring axes and many scenery plans; compact mosaic of colours, ranging from red to green; harmonious associations of plant mass. Activities and benefits for tourists: visits and short walks through the village; attending social and cultural local life; free consumption of fruits and easy access to organic products; mental satisfaction through the return to origins.

**g) hilly, inclined landscapes, depicting meadows' interferences, hedges and vineyards** (image 5). Patrimonial features: hilly surfaces, less than 35° inclination; meadows with dense vegetation, 40-50 cm height grass, forming up polygons; hedges consisting of wild bushes below 3 m, separating herb plots; rectangular plots of hybrid vine, seldom covering surfaces more than 1000 m<sup>2</sup>. Features derived from the image's elements: the dominant position of vineyard as main attraction; ordered-geometric aspect of plant masses; the inspired mix of the natural side and human-related community. Activities and benefits for tourists: invitation to wandering and discovery of nature expressed in different forms and types of organization; discover the patterns of the local ground works and processing of agricultural resources; gathering fruits and flowers.

**h) landscapes of hilly promontory, with young foliate trees, meadow, shrubs and marks of an old fortification site** (image 3). Patrimonial features: cut hill; well biologically expressed meadow, hosted by a gulf-shaped micro-depression; "islands" of eglantine; young, dense forest, with trees of 7-12 m height (especially hornbeam); mineral marks of a former ground-made fortification. Features derived from the image's elements: masses and volumes well expressed morphologically; vertical separation of the natural bodies; angles of opening and viewing axes with limited values; homogeneous chromatic palette (shades of green). Activities and benefits for tourists: a call to places' history through discovery of the former fortification marks by brief, but energetic, and involved trips.



**Image 3.** Summer landscapes of hilly promontory, with young foliate trees, meadow, shrubs and marks of an old fortification site



**Image 4.** Summer landscapes of hilly slope, slightly inclined, with meadows and mature foliate trees





**Image 5.** Summer landscapes of sloped hills, with meadows, hedges and vineyard interferences

**i) forest landscapes of young foliated trees, meadow meshes, hilly soft slopes** (in the last plan of image 1). Patrimonial features: soft hilly slopes; young forest with 10-12 m height trees, plenty of 20-30 m height pieces on 100 m<sup>2</sup>; pastures with tall grass, 15-25 cm height, arranged in oblong meshes S-E oriented. Features derived from the image's elements: partial block of the sighting field due to the brush; dense structuring axes with vertical and horizontal development (levelled vegetation and trunks positioning); environment marked by an extra-lighting and somewhat ponderous access. Activities and benefits for tourists: trips on the unmarked routes; gathering berries; recognition of some wild biotopes.



**Image 6 .** Rural-agricultural summer landscape of soft hill and crossing creek, with rural secession style houses, vegetables gardens and fruit trees

**4. Forecasting the impact of tourism activities.** Some studies appreciate as stress the tourism practice over the environment, as a result of the actions placed between *rigor*

and *routine* (P.W. Williams, I. F. Ponsford, 2009), reaching a certain level of touristic space carrying capacity through eco-touristic activities (M. Hercock, 1999), seeking along the time even landscapes protection models (S. Ferreira, 2004). Turning the rural area to the attention of tourists interested in *knowing the local nature by its landscapes*, the pressure which may be reached at a micro-scale reference is maximized at several thousand tourists per season, including recreational activities.

**4.1. Participating entities and the complex organization of tourism activity on theme of landscapes discovery and observation.** The forecasted touristic activity supposes two entities: the nature (with its landscapes) and the involved tourist. In a good part of the studied scenery, the discovery and observation procedures, which may generate psycho-cultural and educative benefits, may allow landscape-focused tourism practice with no excessive restrictions. There are conditions to orientate a *touristic flow*, aiming the knowledge, familiarization and sharing of tourists' personal feelings, based on a typological palette of local landscapes, on two round routes, a main one and a secondary one (there is possible to extend the areas covered by limited secondary circuits, regarding the length and consumed time). The main circuits (fig. 1) are connected to the modernized road that brings tourists to discover landscapes from the most favourable panorama-like view and appropriately load-featured, where can be added the precinct site of the village plus some special natural features. The secondary circuit (as in chart no. 1) can be enriched with a lot of other routes. They may be related to the choice of the tourist who wishes to further approach the scenery detail at a micro-scale level (forests' ambiance, shrubs forms, chromatic harmony and the constitution of meadows' flowers, the appearance and frame of houses, gardens, alleys a.s.o.). As about the level of *routes difficulty*, which enables the potential tourists to socialize and to interfere with the landscapes/desired landscapes, this is a whole debate. Routes can be short (up to several hundred meters) and lighter, lasting 30-40 minutes, as well as intermediate (2-3 km long, 1.5-2 hrs and average difficulty) or medium-difficult (over 4 km, including height landscapes sighting, lasting 3-5 hrs). If talking about the criterion of *tourists' category* who this type of discovery tourism is turning to, may be noted that there is no age limit (even old or corpulent travellers, can step through to explore more difficult positioned landscapes) or required level of education (this kind of travel is suitable for anyone who has sufficient understanding to nature). The manner in which the tourist interferes with the landscapes, knows how to react facing nature's features, determines the local scenery pieces' capacity to bear the tourists' pressure and to preserve the details for the future (table 1).

According to data contained in table 1, the most types of landscapes are framed by common and private details, only a few (being related to the higher areas, but something poorer as real) not showing spectacular frame details. Tourists can perform the discovery and observation in the whole scenery space by small walk-trip, attracting and facilitating tourist's integration with nature and enabling him to learn how to respect the nature. When it comes to the carrying capacity of the local environment (as landscapes holder) regarding any large influx of interested tourists, it can be noted that for the most part they have a good tolerance level. This is because a type of landscape-based tourism practice has the basic premise to not use transportation means or to perform violent or harmful actions breaking down the functional equilibrium of the ecosystems. The majority of situations recommend the individual movement or walking groups, as long as they not exceed a few hundred individuals/ day /unit of landscape.



Local landscapes environmentally integrated, which are observed, discovered and reacting in different ways to the tourist pressure

Table 1.

Types of landscapes (as to chart no. 1)	Landscapes including details		Main touristic action	Environmental carrying capacity	Maximum recommended number for tourists/scenery unit/day ratio
	common	particular			
<b>a</b>	yes	yes	Walking, organic products buying	moderate to strong	several hundreds
<b>b</b>	yes	no	Promenade	accentuated moderate	several dozens
<b>c</b>	yes	no	Visual information acquisition	strong	several hundreds
<b>d</b>	yes	yes	Relaxation, vivid nature approach	light moderate	several dozens
<b>e</b>	yes	yes	Light walk, agricultural works assistance	moderate	several dozens
<b>f</b>	yes	yes	Gradually discover of settlements and habits, socializing with inhabitants	strong	several hundreds
<b>g</b>	yes	yes	A pure nature observation, as well as anthropogenic organized nature approach	light moderate	several dozens
<b>h</b>	yes	yes	Discover through history the site's particularities	moderate	several dozens
<b>i</b>	yes	no	Travelling and limited familiarization with wildness	moderate to strong	several hundreds

**5. Comments and conclusions.** The village which is the subject of this study is recommended as a good proof for what *thematic tourism* and narrow, but consistent, niche exploitation mean for those who love and respect the nature through his landscapes, as happens even in developed countries (E.L. Shafer, Y. Choi, 2006). Moreover, it shows that despite the dominance of elements and details of common rank, usually easy to understand, surrounding tourists within the scenery, it may be a valuable acquisition in the cultural and aesthetic ways. As a corollary, the landscapes here are expressed by a balanced, reasonable wildness, with no spectacular accents and without exciting tensions coming from unusual forms of relief or other natural or artificial components. What is remarkable here is the accessibility through direct consumption, by sighting and moving, without severe restrictions related to age, the physical capabilities or education level. We emphasize the large number of belvedere points and the amount of easy routes for walking – discovery – observation throughout the environmental scenery dominated by pastures, meadows, young and mature foliate forests; valleys well profiled morphologically; traces of medieval history; individual habitat manifesting local and regional influences. All these conclude to recognize that, in terms of environmental supportability, the landscapes' discovery and observation tourism is supposed to promote and practice traditional forms of organization, available for a sufficiently large number of tourists. The services paid by tourists can contribute to a local sustainable development of such settlements, as it already happens in other places of the world (Buckley, Weaver and Pickering, cited by E. Laws, 2009).

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