

GEOGRAPHICAL AND HISTORICAL ISSUES WITH IMPLICATIONS IN TERRITORIAL EVOLUTIONS OF THE PEȘTIȘ

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Abstract: Peștiș is one of the three villages belonging to the city of Aleșd, the pole of the Territorial Development Planning Unit Valea Crișului Repede. First mentioned in a 1302 document, in its first stage of development, the village was lying at the confluence of Peștiș, Șinteu and Morii Valleys in Lugașului Hills. Its population has grown steadily, and up to 1870, was larger than that of Aleșd. With 1454 inhabitants, Peștiș comes first after Aleșd, followed by Tinaud and Padurea Neagra, the other two components of the municipality of Aleșd. The two factors that had led to the elongated form and the spreading of the settlement are the relief and the frequent flooding. This eventually generated a linear-tentacular pattern. The spontaneous expansion of the village towards south resulted in the merge of Peștiș and Aleșd. Due to an increase of real estate investments, more and more green fields are used to construct buildings. Following various analyses, there have been identified small areas that are suitable to future enlargements. The locations coincide with the current trend of expansion, on the Eastern riverside terrace of the Șoimului Valley.

Key words: territorial evolution, territorial planning, local development

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GENERAL LOCATION ASPECTS

The Crișul Repede Valley is among the 11 territorial planning units (TPU) in Bihor county, having Aleșd as a development pole. According to the Romanian settlement network, this is subordinated to Oradea, which is the zonal center.

Located 38 km east of Oradea and 112 km west of Cluj-Napoca, Aleșd holds a key position within Oradea-Borod corridor, which is both the main road and rail axis connecting the western

territories with the Transilvanian Plateau. The vast territory (7,195 ha) is a result of the peculiar componse of the city - Aleșd itself and the three villages, Tinăud, Pădurea Neagră and Peștiș (Petrea et al., 2009).

In comparison with the other two component villages, Peștiș has a favorable position within the administrative territory because it is the closest to the city of Aleșd.

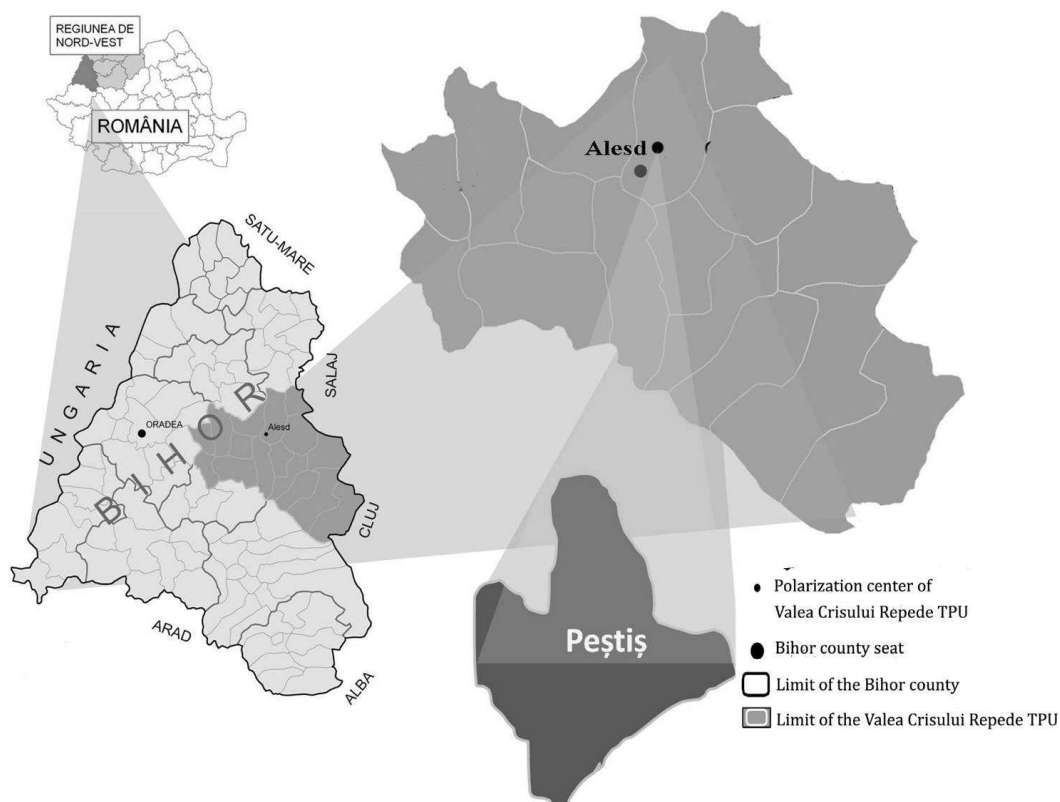


Figure 1. Location of Peștiș village

HISTORICAL ASPECTS

Peștiș was first mentioned in documents in 1302 under the name of Pestus. The documents mention three original settlements at that time: The Lower Peștiș, most likely on Morii Valley, The Upper Peștiș, on Peștiș Valley (actual km 6) and Soimului (falcon) Stone, on Șinteu Valley near the citadel.

Built in the second half of 13th century, 4.8 km from the village's hearth, near the border with Upper Lugaș, the Șoimului fortress was erected on a limestone cliff, in a strategic position. According to the first census conducted shortly after the fall of the Ottoman garrison city of Oradea (Todoca, 2000), between 1660 and 1692, Peștiș was part of the Aleșd Sanjak (the Turkish administration). By the end of the 17th century, the ancient three settlements of Pestus merged into a single village called Soimului Stone Peștiș (Solyomkopestes).

According to the Aleșd Chambers Domain census of 1779, there was a public tavern in Peștiș, alodial unproductive land, alodial vineyards (Fig. 2), brandy boilers and four mills. In 1790, the manufacturing of glassware started in Sinteu (which was a hamlet of Peștiș at the time). During this time many Slovaks came to the area for lodging works, and many of them settled down in the area. By the end of the 18th century the first manufacturies began producing different products around Aleșd.

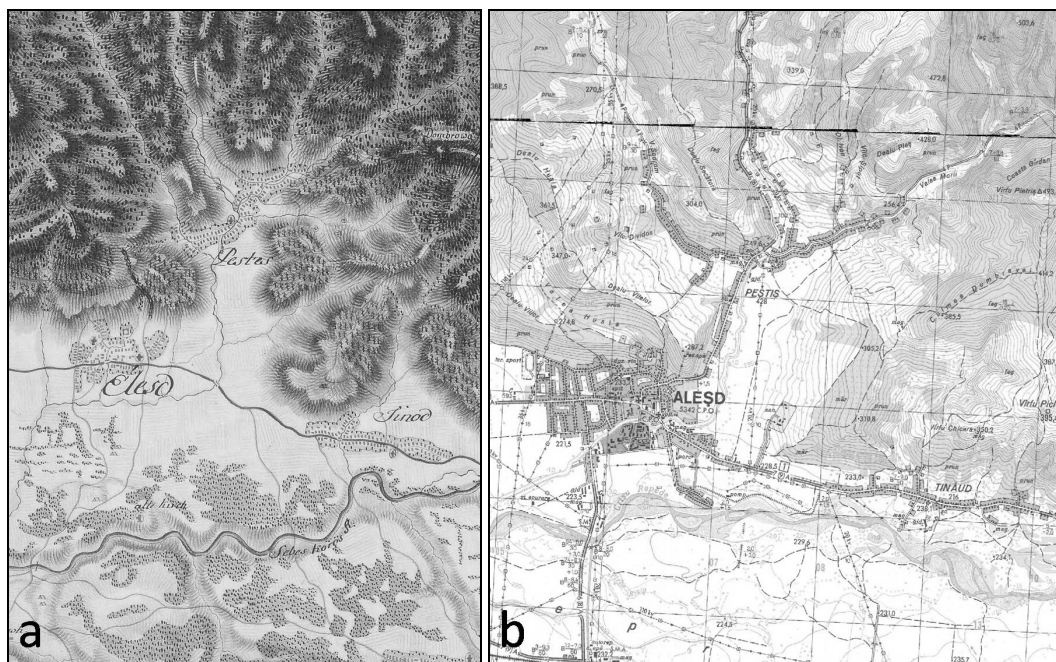


Figure 2. Aleşd, Peştiş and Tinăud in the eighteenth century and twentieth
(Source: a, extracted from Josephinische Landesaufnahme -Coll. XXVIII, Sectio XX
and b, extracted from topographical map 1:25000 DTM)

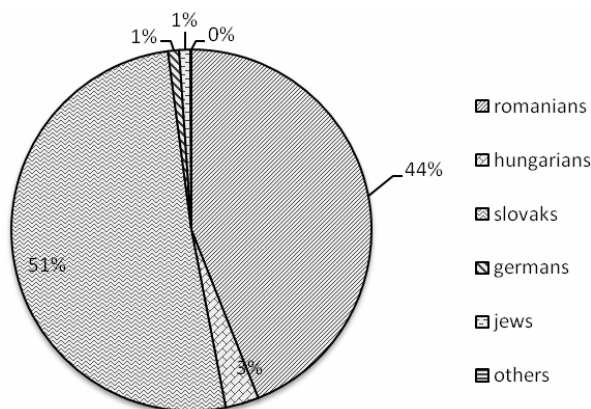


Figure 3. The ethnic structure in the eighteenth century
(Source: Studia Censuistica Transsilvanica)

For the next period, until the present day, the area knew no other special events, which allowed it to perfectly fit in the classic development pattern of the modern Transylvanian villages indirectly affected by the two World Wars and the subsequent political and historical events.

Landscape elements

Firstly, the settlement developed around the confluence of the three valleys that all together come to form the Şoimului Valley. Composed of sandy clays and Pannonian sands, the Lugaş and Aleşd Hills are prolonging the steep slopes of Plopiş Mountains forming short hills (400-250 m), slightly inclined towards the Crişul Repede Valley (Petrea, 1998). Peştiş village developed in the erosion

basinet formed by the Șoimului Valley, with a high habitat potential: altitudes below 250 m, slopes less than 5 degrees, the relief energy below 30m (Mac and Blaga, 2004).

Fluvisol soils are dominant on the riverside terrace and Luvisol, Haplic Luvisol, Eutric Cambisol, with average or low fertility, for the rest of the territory.

The relief and the frequent flooding (until the local water management took care of this starting with 1989) were the two factors that had led to the elongated form and the spreading of the settlement.

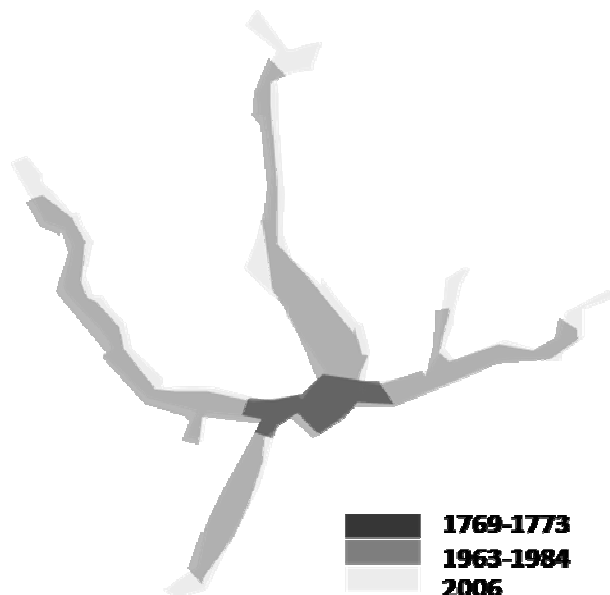


Figure 4. Peștiș. Territorial evolution
(processed after Josephinische Landesaufnahme - Coll. XXVIII, Sectio XX,
topographical map 1:25000 DTM, and aerial images from ANCP)

DEMOGRAPHICAL ASPECTS

Peștiș had a constantly increasing population, up to 1870, when Aleșd took over.

During the communist era, due to the industrialization, Aleșd knew a rapid demographical growth, mainly people from the surrounding villages, including Peștiș, which led to a decreasing number of its inhabitants.

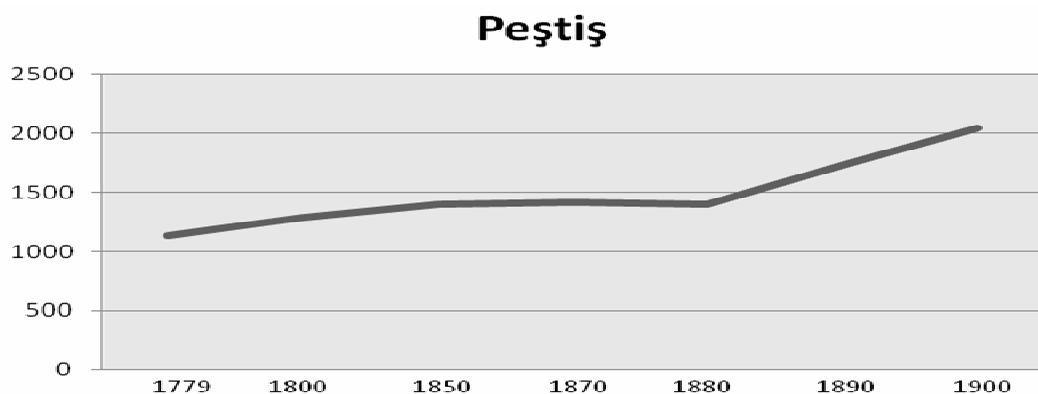


Figure 5. Peștiș. Numerical evolution of the population between 1779-1900

Since 1989, the population decreased slowly, to the point of 1454 in 2002. It currently ranks second, after Aleșd, followed by Tinăud (805) and Pădurea Neagră (769). Population aging is advanced, with 19 % elders of the total population.

In 1900, over half of its population was Slovak (Fig. 3). Today, Romanians represent 91% of the total population Peștiș followed by Slovaks (8%) and Hungarians (1%).

During the 18th century the main occupations of the population were viticulture, fruit and crafts. At the end of the 19th century the processing of timber was added (there is a sawmill). The presence of important raw material resources in the neighboring mountain area (limestone, refractory clay, bauxite, quartz and wood) and in its basin (coal), has led to the economic development of the area. The most important remaining building materials enterprises in Aștileu and Chistaș with staff partly coming from Peștiș.

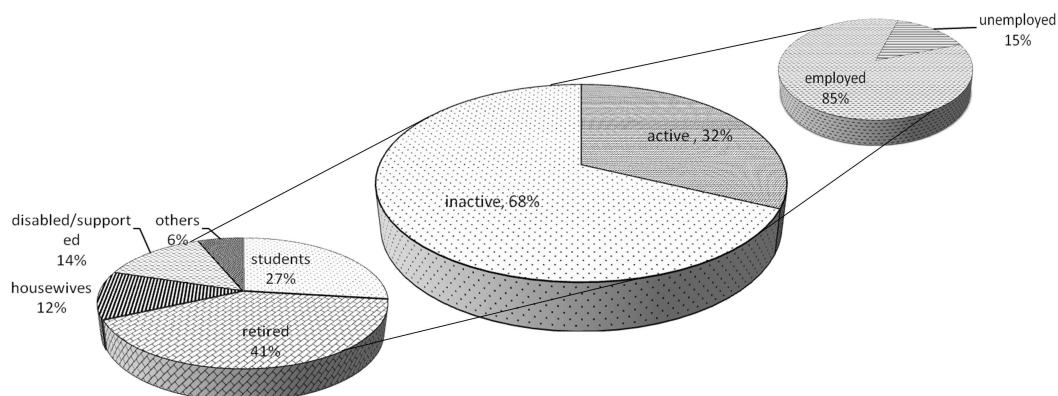


Figure 6. Peștiș. Active and inactive population

The economic revival, due to the Lohn-type industry, occurred in 1999 when Aleșd was included in a deprived area, has provided employment for people of Peștiș as well. However, the inactive population holds a considerable share of the total population. Two thirds of the population is inactive (of which 41% are retired).

The touristic potential (Șoimului stone fortress, the Lion Valley paleontological reserve, the 18th century wooden church of the Annunciation, rural inns), together with the good location and infrastructure, could be an alternative for the settlement's development.

URBAN PLANNING ISSUES

In terms of urban planning, the urban pattern of the village bears the imprint of the area's natural elements. Thus, the hearth of the village is developed along three valleys that come together to form the Șoimului Valley. This fact is responsible for linear-tentacular pattern, along with most of the hills which are oriented towards north-south. These basic features imprinted a local pattern that influenced the streets' layout, building orientation, general housing issues, all together affecting the current land use categories within the settlement.

The elongated street network doubles the valleys that cross the area, the most important being the national route DN 1H, which detaches from DN 1 (E60) and goes up to Sălaj county. The other streets, labeled as municipal roads, along Șinteu Valley and Mill Valley.

Building orientation is also linked to the streams and street network. Building fronts are generally oriented towards east and west, on the two sides of the valleys. This makes the valley to be a ubiquitous component of the local landscape.

Housing was represented by 522 residential buildings according to the 2002 census. They shelter a total of 526 apartments, of which 438 permanent and 88 seasonal. The fact that 16.7% of households are for seasonal use (one can notice an increasing trend), revealed the preference of

outsiders (from Aleșd, Oradea) for Peștiș, as a holiday location. These trends are aiming especially the northern part of the village, on the upper course of Peștiș and Șinteu Valleys. The water, the forests, but also the welcoming inhabitants and the authentic countryside are the main strengths of the area.

Residential buildings are 100% privately owned, but only 47.5% have water inside the home and 47.2% have sewerage network.

There are 22 territorial units with different land use regulations, mostly based on existing residential housing scheme with low height and with regulations that allow interventions and building of new homes of low or medium height. Other additional functions are related to streets and roads, public services of the municipality and industrial and warehouse units (not represented in the territory). One thing that draws the attention is that the Land use Plan of the village provides for territorial units UTR 3, 5, 7, 8, 11, 12 construction of freestanding or coupled holiday houses, on new allotments proposed by zonal or detail land use plans, with different heights: 1,2,3 or 4 story buildings (PUG 2005). This permissive regulation represent the very legal framework for building houses or hostels that have nothing to do with the local style and landscape neither by form (coupled houses), nor by height (up to 4 storeys). It should also be noted that the regulation requires local planning construction compliance (by shape, color and materials) with the general appearance of the area, without mentioning yet which shapes, colors and materials are allowed. In these conditions, the only way to take care of all the inherent problems is by knowing the natural reality on the one hand, and local management mechanisms and tools with all actors involved in this process, on the other hand.

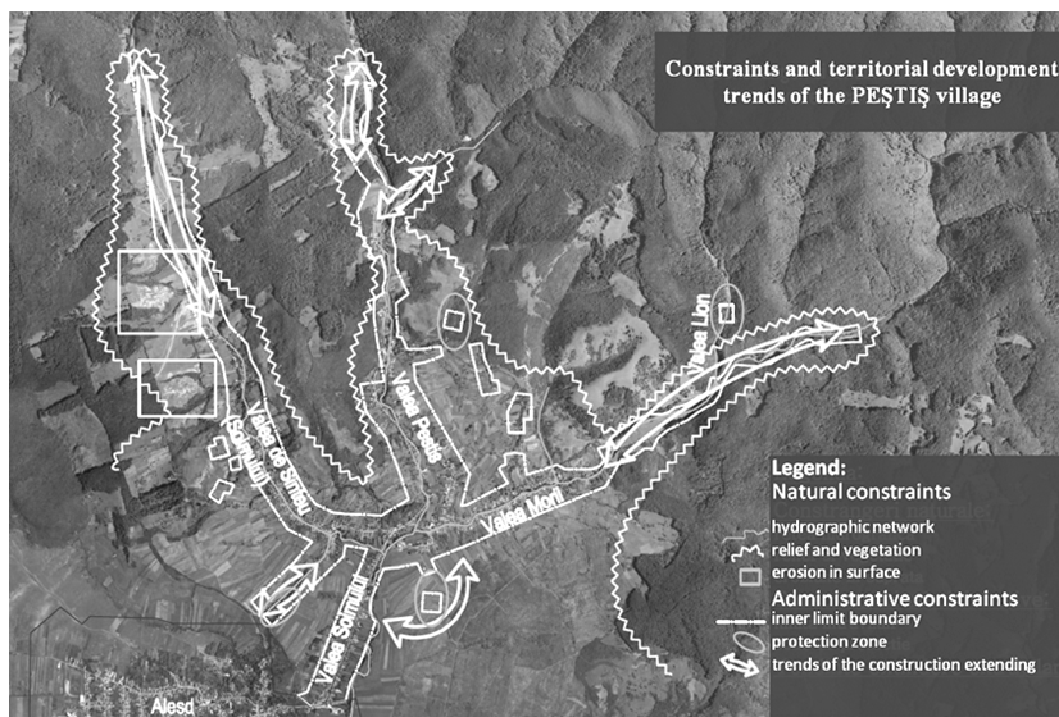


Figure 7. Peștiș. Constraints and territorial development trends

TERRITORIAL EVOLUTION PERSPECTIVES

The spontaneous expansion of the city led to the merging of the territories of Peștiș and Aleșd. Due to an increase of real estate investments, more and more green fields are used to construct buildings. Following various tests, there have been identified small areas that are suitable

to future enlargements. The locations coincide with the current trend of expansion, on the Eastern riverside terrace of the Șoimului Valley. The green fields occupied by the new buildings have reach Fluvisol soil.

Following various tests on lithology, relief (slope, risk events), soil (fertile soils are considered important resources for agriculture) and different land use areas there were identified few favorable future enlargements areas, which coincide with current trends expansion. The hilly zone can be occupied with buildings only in compliance with rules on slope stability, taking into account that we are talking about high-swelling and contraction ground there (PUG, 2005). In other sectors adjacent to the main urban tissue, extension is hindered by steep slopes (over 15 degrees) due to structural contact between mountains and hills, especially in the western part of Peștiș, and Șoimului valleys and the eastern part of Șinteu Valley. Another factor that contributes to the restrictiveness of this area is the landslides and the erosion risks. Thus, the first terrace is practically the only major land reserve for a significant future expansion. Presently, the areas on the eastern side of Șoimului valley are progressively covered with buildings.

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