

# Perceptions Regarding the Land of Năsăud Regional Identity

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## Introduction

**R**EGIONAL IDENTITY refers to all the elements and interactions which define a region. The more complex they are, the more unusual and profound, the more known and attractive the region is. Although it seems simple, a fair and objective interpretation of a region's identity is actually difficult, not only because the existing elements and interrelationships are of a different nature and relations but also because they are generating multiple analytical possibilities and they are highly subjective.

Identifying, promoting and correctly ranking a regions' main identity elements is an action marked by subjectivism, because of two main reasons: (1) depending on the researchers' specialization, they promote the elements which are closer to their field of study at the expense of other more relevant ones, and (2) the local community tends to exaggerate the importance of existing elements and interrelations at the level of the concerned region.

In this material, through a case study focused on the Land of Năsăud, we propose a more objective model regarding a region's identity analysis, since it captures and ranks the main regional identity elements after comparing existing perceptions from the scientific literature to those prevailing at the level of the local community. Naturally, the local community's perceptions about the defining elements of the region they occupy should prevail, given the existing assumed regional awareness. But regional awareness and regional identity are considered ambiguous concepts (Hurrell, A., 1995, p. 41), exactly because of the subjectivity that human communities generate relative to their own region (Terada, T., 2003, p. 253).

Regional identity has become a popular concept in recent decades (Paasi, A., 2002, p. 137). It consists of three types of elements: *cognitive* (the regional community becomes aware of the region, its specificity and limits in relation to others), *affective* (this refers to common feelings generated in a given region, which create a common identity in relation to other more complex identities—national identity, European identity etc.) and *instrumental* (use of the region as a mobilization territory for collective action in pur-

suit of political, economic or social goals) (according to Paasi, A., 2002, pp. 475-485, quoted by Botan, C.N., Gligor, V., Pavel I.H., Fonogea, S.F., 2015, p. 286).

From the regional geography perspective, the identity of a region results from an accumulation of elements and defining or representative interrelations which belong to the natural and anthropic frame and which have the status of regional brands and can constitute the main attractiveness of the region in question. It is necessary, however, to satisfy a minimum condition in this respect, namely, the collaboration between the key regional actors, namely, the local and regional authorities and the human communities in the region, which through a continuous exchange of ideas and by engaging in their specific activities, may exploit effectively their regional elements (Terada, T., 2003, p. 253).

Following another train of thought, the regional identity is seen as a factor that can play a positive role in cultural, social and economic terms. The regions are no longer seen as a refuge but as a preserver of elements able to counteract the domino effect, which was proceeding at ease in a globalized economy (according to Cocean, P., 2011, p. 9, quoted by Botan, C.N., Gligor, V., Pavel I. H., Fonogea, S.F., 2015, p. 286).

At a national level, the “land”-type territorial units are probably the most expressive in terms of the regional identity concept for the following reasons: they represent the most authentic vestiges of the Carpathian archetypal mental space; they represent the undeniable proof regarding the unity of the Romanian language; they represent undeniable examples of diversity affirmed through unity; they constitute novel ethnographical structures, different from each other, in which the customs, traditions, occupations and especially folklore display an outstanding variety; they set up program regions with systemic characteristics, invoked as supreme regional targets by the regional fields efforts; they are ideal territorial cohesion models (in a unified but diverse EU) targeted by political, economic and social actors; they are regions where man’s relationship with his environment is profound, etc. (Cocean, P., 2011, pp. 10-12).

The Land of Năsăud, the emblematic region of Transylvania, fits perfectly into this structural and functional matrix because of several specific elements and interrelations, which in time became clear regional identity brands. The building of the regional identity of the Land of Năsăud is based on profound and unmistakable elements and interrelations, among which we mention: the uniqueness of the natural surroundings, induced by the alternating mountain-valley-interfluves with a convergence towards the Someșul Mare river macro-axis (Ilovan, Oana Ramona 2009, p. 175), which gives it the unique character of “slope country”; the existence in the past of the Năsăud Border Regiment, which shaped a distinct cosmopolitan character, in terms of the administrative organization; the schools, which trained a significant number of academics known in the Romanian and European cultural space; the ethno-cultural heritage and folklore; specific traditional activities; underground resources, among them the mineral waters; specific costumes, with some items unique in the world; the local dialect; the specific mentality; religious heterogeneity; prominent cultural figures, etc.

All these represent solid arguments justifying an objective analysis, after which we should establish the hierarchy of the main elements of the Land of Năsăud identity, taking into account the perception of both scientists and the regio’s inhabitants.

## Aim, Objectives and Methodology

**T**HIS PAPER, by the addressed topic, its methodology, the obtained results, is desired as an objective model regarding the analysis and ranking of the elements and inter-relationships that define the identity of a “land”-type region. The chosen case study is considered a relevant one because the Land of Năsăud is one of the most complex regional entities of this kind at the national level and, we venture to suggest, in Europe.

The model proposed by us consists of the comparative analysis of the identity elements of the Land of Năsăud, considering two different approaches, one that studies them based on the key scientific papers which focused on the region, and the other that confronts them with the perception of the area’s local community. Our model can be transposed to analyze the profile of any other region, the reasoning being that this type of approach enhances the analytical objectivity. The model tries to validate irrefutable arguments from the existing scientific works by confronting them with the opinion of the residents, of those who perceive and feel a region in its intimacy since they have assumed it existentially.

Three objectives derive from the proposed goal, focused on analyzing and ranking elements of identity and interrelations that define the personality of the Land of Năsăud.

The first objective is to identify physical, human and historical geographic elements and structures that allowed the individualization, configuration and structuring of the Land of Năsăud, namely: the morphology, the mineral waters, forestry and agricultural resources (evoked in the Romanian literature, particularly by several local personalities), the Someșul Mare river—as the axis of all regional energies, and the specificity of the administrative-territorial organization.

The second objective consists in identifying the authentic aspects that define the human community in the region by analyzing household architecture, the inhabitants’ occupations, local dialects, ethno-cultural values and the collective mentality (Boțan, C.N., Gligor, V., Pavel, I.H., Fonogea, S.F., 2015, p. 287).

The analysis and ranking of the elements and the specificities listed as elements defining the identity of the Land of Năsăud required a dual scientific approach. Thus, we initially considered the contribution of the mentioned items to the region’s identity through the analysis of 15 representative scientific papers that approached the region from different perspectives. In the second phase, which aimed to fulfill the third objective, we interviewed a representative sample of residents of the region about the veracity of the region’s identity elements extracted from these papers. Therefore, the third objective deals with the perception of the local inhabitants regarding the ranking of elements that define the regional identity of the Land of Năsăud. For this purpose we developed a questionnaire whose content concerns precisely the mentioned issues.

The questionnaire was distributed to a sample of 520 people living in 26 administrative-territorial units of the Land of Năsăud (two cities and 24 villages). The selection of respondents in each administrative-territorial unit was random. We distributed an equal number of questionnaires in each administrative unit (20 each). The number of questionnaires in each administrative unit disregarded the total population number because for our approach the opinion of every section of the region’s population was important, and not the proportionality between the number of inhabitants and the number of questionnaires.

To meet the demanding standards of sociology and thus to ensure the representativeness of the surveyed sample, we structured the respondents by the following variables: gender structure (equal number of questionnaires—260 women and 260 men); age group structure (173 questionnaires in the age group of 0-19 years; 173 questionnaires in the age group of 20-59 years and 174 questionnaires in the age group of 60 years and above) and educational level (173 questionnaires for those with a maximum of eight years of schooling; 173 questionnaires for those with high school education and 174 questionnaires for those with higher education). Field data collection was completed in August 2015.

The model proposed by us, which consists in interviewing the region's population about the hierarchy of the main elements that define the regional identity of the Land of Năsăud and comparing the results with those from the analyzed scientific papers, is justified because the community decides its own goals, values and identities (Bujalos, I., 2011, pp: 79-91, quoted by Boțan, C.N., Gligor, V., Pavel, I.H., Fonogea, S.F., 2015, p. 288) and the model can also be successfully applied to any other region.

The query of a representative sample of inhabitants from the Land of Năsăud, about the importance and hierarchy of elements that define the regional identity of the region, complied with the sampling criteria mentioned above, so that the results would be accurate. In the interpretation of questionnaires and in collecting the results, the most important aspect was the direct correlation between the respondents' replies and their place of residence. Given that our approach relates on the identification and ranking of elements which give the identity of the Land of Năsăud, the said correlation prevailed in our research (answer—place of residence of the respondent). Through this correlation one can infer the importance of each identity element, their ranking, and identify the areas in the region in which one or the other becomes a priority in defining the regional personality. Thus, after we identified the correlation between the answers and the place of residence of the respondents, we took into account the other criteria involved in the sampling (ex. sex, age and educational level) to complete and harmonize the main results and the conclusions.

## Results

**T**HE LAND of Năsăud is a territorial entity located in the northern part of the Transylvanian Depression, in a sheltered space, bordered to the north by the high peaks of the Țibleș and Rodnei Mountains and in the east and southeast by the smaller Bârgăului Mountains (Ilovan Oana Ramona, 2009, p. 124). It is composed of the adjacent areas of the towns of Năsăud and Sângeorz Băi, respectively the Căianu Mic, Chiuza, Coșbuc, Feldru, Ilva Mare, Ilva Mică, Leșu, Lunca Ilvei, Măgura Ilvei, Maieru, Nimigea, Parva, Poiana Ilvei, Rebra, Rebrișoara, Rodna, Romuli, Runcu Salvei, Salva, Spermezeu, șanț, Târlișua, Telciu and Zagra communes. The contact with neighboring units is made through the high passes of Șetref, Rotunda, Ilva and Tihulă, because it is surrounded on three sides (northwest, north and east) by other "land"-type geographical entities (Ilovan Oana Ramona, 2009, p. 124).

The identification of the main elements that define the regional identity of the Land of Năsăud was based on the analysis of the following 15 scientific papers that have addressed the region from different points of view, representing different fields (e.g.

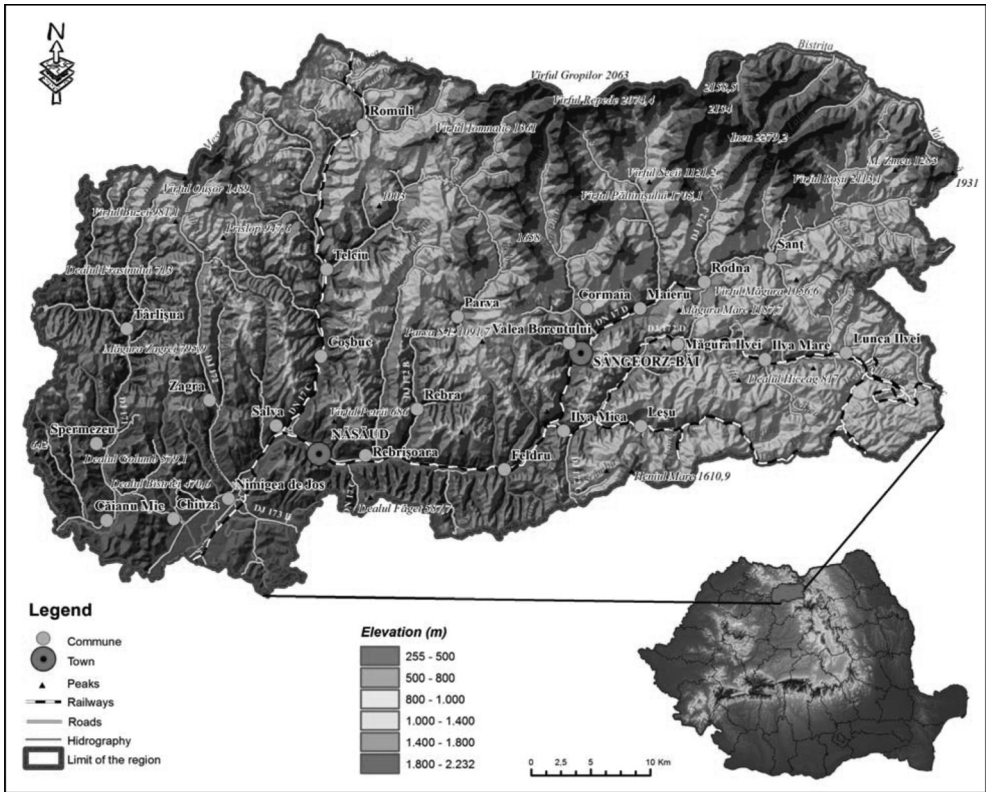


FIGURE 1. The regional system of the Land of Năsăud

history, geography, ethnography and folklore, regional development, tourism etc.). The analyzed scientific papers are the work of the following researchers: Bodiș, A., Golban, Maria, 2012; Bolovan, I., Onofreiu, A., 2003; Chintăuan, I., Prahase, M., 2004; Cocean, P., Boțan, C.N., Ilovan, Oana Ramona, 2011; Cosma, I., Pop, M., Sabău, N., 1971; Göllner, C., 1973; Ilovan, Oana Ramona, 2009; Mitu, S., 2006; Mureșianu, M., 2000; Onofreiu, A., Bolovan, I., 2006; Pavelea, T., 2001; Rus, V., 2005; Ștefănescu, P., Ursa, S., 1979; Tanco, T., 1996 and Ureche, L., 2001.

In the following table (Table 1.) we present the main regional identity elements of Land of Năsăud which emerged from these research papers. We chose to systematically present the main arguments featured in the mentioned works, which shaped the hierarchy of identifying elements, its structure and also its defining and identifying vectors.

According to the 15 analyzed papers the main elements that define the regional identity of the Land of Năsăud are, in order of importance, those set forth in Table 1. Thus, first come the outstanding cultural personalities of the region (“Năsăud’s academics”), followed by the region’s affiliation to the 2<sup>nd</sup> Romanian Border Regiment during 1763-1851 (2<sup>nd</sup> place), the regional communities’ collective mentality (3<sup>rd</sup> place), ethno-cultural values (4<sup>th</sup> place), underground resources and the related industries (5<sup>th</sup> place) and elements with tourist potential (6<sup>th</sup> place).



TABLE 1. The Land of Năsăud's hierarchy of regional identity-defining elements  
(According to scientific papers)

The Land of Năsăud regional identity components	The Land of Năsăud regional identity subcomponents	Arguments in defining regional identity
I. Significant cultural personalities ("Năsăud's academics")	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ <i>Florian Porcius</i> (1816-1906) - botanist, member of the Romanian Academy;</li> <li>▪ <i>Constantin Moisil</i> (1876-1958) - historian, archaeologist, numismatist, honorary member of the Romanian Academy;</li> <li>▪ <i>Luliu Marțian</i> (1866-1937) - historian, archaeologist, honorary member of the Romanian Academy;</li> <li>▪ <i>Nicolae Drăganu</i> (1884-1939) - philologist and linguist;</li> <li>▪ <i>Liviu Rebreanu</i> (1885-1944) - novelist, playwright, member of the Romanian Academy;</li> <li>▪ <i>Virgil Șotropa</i> (1867-1954) - professor, journalist, honorary member of the Romanian Academy;</li> <li>▪ <i>Luliu Moisil</i> (1859-1947) - publicist, honorary member of the Romanian Academy;</li> <li>▪ <i>Grigore Silași</i> (1836-1897) - Greek Catholic Priest, linguist, folklorist, the first Romanian language teacher at the University of Cluj, honorary member of the Romanian Academy;</li> <li>▪ <i>George Coșbuc</i> (1866-1918) - poet, literary critic, translator, member of the Romanian Academy;</li> <li>▪ <i>Luliu Prodan</i> (1875-1959) - botanist, honorary member of the Romanian Academy of Sciences, member of the Romanian Academy;</li> <li>▪ <i>Leon Silviu Daniello</i> (1898-1970) - phthisiologist, member of the Romanian Academy;</li> <li>▪ <i>Tiberiu Morariu</i> (1905-1982) - geographer, member of the Romanian Academy;</li> <li>▪ <i>Traian Ionașcu</i> (1897-1981) - lawyer, member of the Romanian Academy;</li> <li>▪ <i>Luliu Hossu</i> (1885-1970) - Greek Catholic bishop, cardinal, honorary member of the Romanian Academy.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ The Land of Năsăud is recognized in Romania for the significant number of personalities that have decisively influenced different fields of science and technology in national and European culture;</li> <li>▪ There is indisputable evidence regarding the value and tradition of the region's schools, which made it a veritable interregional educational center, with increased attractiveness for the border region and for those located in the vicinity;</li> <li>▪ The Land of Năsăud's cultural personalities have constantly promoted the values of the region, becoming undisputed identity vectors for it;</li> <li>▪ The Land of Năsăud is the region that has given the Romanian science, culture and art the largest number of academics, followed in this respect by Mărginimea Sibiului.</li> </ul>
II. Member of the 2 <sup>nd</sup> Romanian Border Regiment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ During 1763-1851, the existence and functionality of the analyzed region were shaped by the 2<sup>nd</sup> Romanian Border Regiment, founded by Maria Theresa and consolidated by Franz Joseph;</li> <li>▪ Administrative territorial-type identity;</li> <li>▪ Cultural and social emancipation;</li> <li>▪ Security / Insecurity;</li> <li>▪ Regional development (e.g. infrastructure);</li> <li>▪ Despite this secure military structure, the region registered a negative impact on the existence and the demographic evolution of frontier communities (the border guards had a high mortality rate);</li> <li>▪ Soldiers' pride;</li> <li>▪ Negative perception of the border regiment by family members.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ A number of radical changes in the status of the region and its duties (e.g. to die for the monarch, as the duty of the border guards) emerged and remained imprinted in the mentality of the inhabitants;</li> <li>▪ The region experienced a different administrative-territorial identity from the rest of country;</li> <li>▪ Residents had the possibility of greater socio-cultural empowerment.</li> </ul>

<b>III. Collective mentality</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ The imagined Land of Năsăud community (Anderson, B., 2000);</li> <li>▪ The characteristics by which the natives identify themselves are: self-esteem (Năsăud pride); diligence; attachment to church and school; love of culture; common sense; hospitality; honesty and fairness; preserving traditions; conservatism; love of wealth; pursuit of opportunity; cult of property (land); envy; intelligence; ambition; local patriotism; cleverness; strong family bonds; firmness; parsimony; sometimes interest governs hospitality; mountain people; celebrators; stubbornness; fatalism; willingness to overcome their condition; desire to know; goodness; rapid adaptation to various new situations; modesty; kindness; shyness and ignorance (Ilovan, Oana Ramona, 2009, p. 69).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ They have created in time an imagined community introducing the term <i>năsăudenitate</i>;</li> <li>▪ The inhabitants of the land identify with all these attributes (most of them positive) and promote them whenever they come into contact with inhabitants of other regions;</li> <li>▪ Residents outside the region perceive them with all these qualities and defects.</li> </ul>
<b>IV. Ethno-cultural valences</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Folklore - reveals the identity of the region by some customs unique in the country;</li> <li>▪ Habits and customs imposed by agricultural practices;</li> <li>▪ Traditional costumes characterized by elements unique in the national, European and global space, becoming an identity brand for the Land of Năsăud;</li> <li>▪ Craft items and plants contribute decisively to the regional identity;</li> <li>▪ The elements of traditional architecture have a unique global role;</li> <li>▪ The Land of Năsăud dialect - unmistakable given the specific pronunciation of some words.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Bees, handicraft evening sittings, empirical remedies, folk songs;</li> <li>▪ The wheat crown; live fire; maypole or 'arminden' ascension, etc.;</li> <li>▪ The peacock feathered hat; breastplates; boots; breeches; sandals; skirts; aprons, etc.;</li> <li>▪ Water mills; traditional whirlpools; brandy stills, etc.;</li> <li>▪ Wood bridges with shingle roofs.</li> </ul>
<b>V. Underground resources and associated industries</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Some underground resources are defining for the Land of Năsăud, through their value and by the emergence of related processing industries: mineral waters, non-ferrous ores (lead, zinc, gold, silver), kaolin, marble etc.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Locations like Sângeorz-Băi, Rodna, Valea Vinului, Anieș, Cormaia etc., are known nationally for their underground resources and the related industries.</li> </ul>
<b>VI. Elements with tourist potential</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ The Land of Năsăud is identified by some elements with high tourist potential, which define its territory and constitute genuine polarization centers in Transylvania and at national level;</li> <li>▪ They belong to different categories, namely: natural tourist resources, elements of the built cultural heritage, tourist resorts, places of worship, national parks, museums and memorial houses, etc.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Sângeorz Bai resort; Izvorul Tăușoarelor Cave; Wine Valley; Liviu Rebreanu Museum; George Coșbuc Museum; Roman fort remains at Ilișua; Parva-Rebra Monastery; the Border Museum in Năsăud; Rodnei Mountains National Park, etc.</li> </ul>

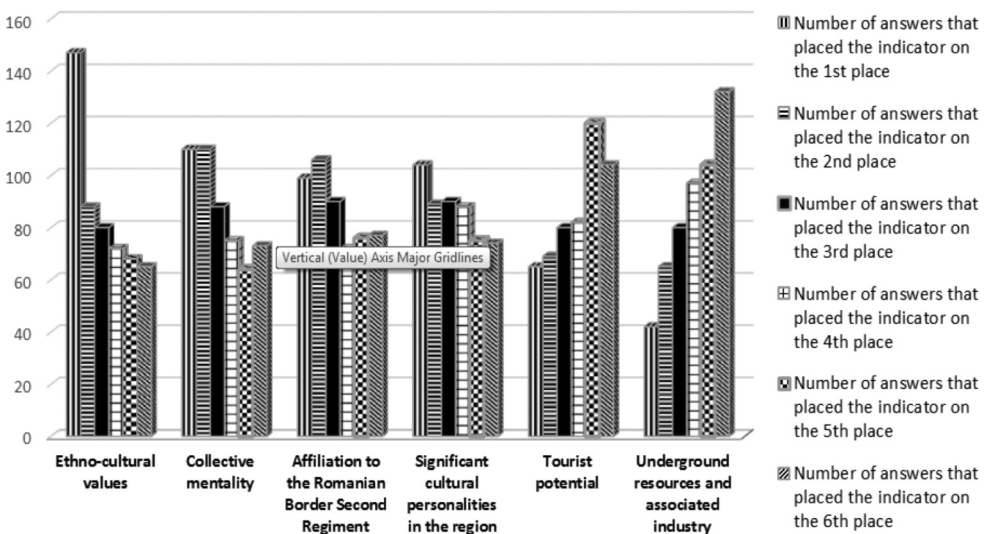
In the second part of the demonstration, our study shows that inhabitants of the Land of Năsăud (through the 520 survey respondents) confirmed the six items mentioned in the analyzed scientific papers as standard indicators of the regional identity of the Land of Năsăud, but in a different hierarchical order. Note that the six elements of identity of the Land of Năsăud were specified in the questionnaire (because otherwise it would have been difficult to obtain responses) and the distribution of the questionnaires has complied fully with the requirements listed in the methodological chapter of the research.

From the perspective of human community living in the Land of Năsăud the elements that define its regional identity, in their hierarchical order, are reported in Table 2 and Figure 2.

TABLE 2. Number of answer regarding the hierarchy of elements which define the regional identity of the Land of Năsăud

Indicator \ Hierarchy	Ethno-cultural valences	Collective mentality	Member of the 2 <sup>nd</sup> Romanian Border Regiment	Significant cultural personalities ("Năsăud's academics")	Elements with tourist potential	Underground resources and associated industries
1	147	110	99	104	65	42
2	88	110	106	89	69	65
3	80	88	90	90	80	80
4	72	75	72	88	82	97
5	68	64	76	75	120	104
6	65	73	77	74	104	132
<b>Total</b>	<b>520</b>	<b>520</b>	<b>520</b>	<b>520</b>	<b>520</b>	<b>520</b>

FIGURE 2. Hierarchy of the elements which define the regional identity of the Land of Năsăud (in the native people's perception)





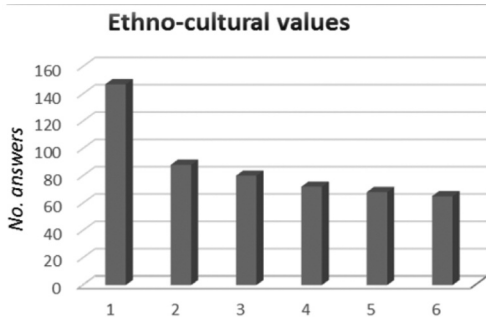


FIGURE 3. Distribution of answers regarding the importance of ethno-cultural values

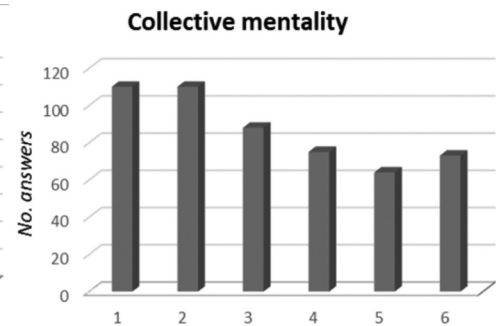


FIGURE 4. Distribution of answers regarding the importance of collective mentality

The indicators that define the Land of Năsăud's regional identity were nominated by the respondents, who also established their hierarchical order by rating them from 1 to 6. Grade 1 means that an item is most important in defining regional identity and 6 means that the element is least important.

Analyzing the answers from the 520 questionnaires, we see that according to the locals, ethno-cultural values represent the primary element in defining the regional identity of the Land of Năsăud and in the last place (6) are the underground resources and the associated industry, because today it is in a difficult situation, causing real problems in areas of the region where they were specific.

Thus, a total of 147 surveyed people consider that the ethno-cultural values hold the first place in the definition of the Land of Năsăud's regional identity, 88 place them in the second place, etc., and a number of 65 respondents say that they are in the last place (6) considering that the other elements are more important (Fig. 3). The most numerous responses, which rank the ethno-cultural values in the first place come from the most isolated areas of the Land of Năsăud, which still preserve the authentic traditions (e.g. Runcu Salvei, Zagra, Spermezeu, Șanț, Parva, Măgura Ilvei, etc.). Conversely, the respondents who believe that the ethno-cultural values don't hold an important place in shaping the regional identity come largely from the two cities in the region and from their most developed neighboring communes (e.g. Năsăud, Sângeorz-Băi, Salva, Maieru, etc.).

The indicator generically called collective mentality ranks second in defining the Land of Năsăud regional identity, unlike in the scientific papers, in which it only ranked third. Its position resulted from the fact that a total of 110 questioned people indicated it as number one and another 110 chose it as second, 88 regarded it as the third most important and only 73 people placed it in the last place (fig. 4). The territorial distribution of the answers reveals some uniformity across the region, both in terms of those which placed them in the first three places and those which considered them insignificant regarding the regional identity of the analyzed area.

Respondents say that on the third place in the hierarchy of elements that define the uniqueness of the Land of Năsăud lies the indicator which we called affiliation to the 2<sup>nd</sup> Romanian Border Regiment (1763-1851), because of the implications and legacy

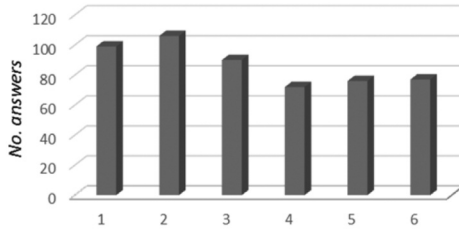
**Affiliation to the Romanian Border Second Regiment**

FIGURE 5. Distribution of answers on the importance of the affiliation to the Romanian Border Second Regiment

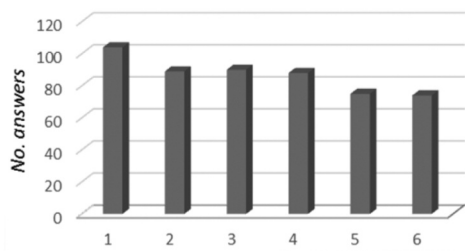
**Significant cultural personalities in the region**

FIGURE 6. Distribution of answers on the importance of significant cultural personalities in the region

that this historic reality left on the territory and in the mentality of the region's inhabitants (Fig. 2). In the analyzed scientific papers it ranked second in the hierarchy of components that defined the region's identity, given the deeper knowledge (of the researchers) regarding the implications of historical fact for the Land of Năsăud and other similar entities. Thus, 99 of the people surveyed ranked it first, 106 ranked it second, 90 deemed it third and 77 of the respondents ascribed minimal importance to it (Table 2; Fig. 5). From the respondents who ranked it in the first and second places, most come from the towns of Năsăud and Sângeorz-Băi and the neighboring administrative units (Salva, Coșbuc, Rebrîșoara, Rebra, Feldru). The explanation is that respondents from the two towns are better educated and know more about the importance of belonging to the 2<sup>nd</sup> Romanian Border Regiment during 1763-1851. Also, the respondents coming from the neighboring communes of Năsăud (which hosted the regimental headquarters) know more deeply than others this historical reality, as many of the former guards were from these locations. In this context, we also found that the respondents in all other administrative units who ranked this element first are people who graduated from a higher education institution and are either between 20 and 59 years of age or in the over 60 group.

The outstanding personalities who contributed to the prestige of the Land of Năsăud and also of Romania are generally placed fourth by respondents in the hierarchy of the analyzed territory identity elements (Fig. 2). Among these personalities, some are also known in the European space due to their scientific and cultural achievements (ex. George Coșbuc, Liviu Rebreanu, etc.). In the scientific papers, Năsăud's academics are considered the main identity and perception vector of the Land of Năsăud, as an emblematic cultural region of the Romanian territory. Their positioning by the respondents only in the fourth hierarchical place doesn't have a positive connotation, showing that the memory of the outstanding men of Năsăud risks to be forgotten. Thus, of the 520 surveyed people, 104 believe that the prominent cultural figures element should occupy the first position in the mentioned hierarchy. Most of them have higher education and know the contribution of the region's personalities to its reputation in the country and abroad. A total of 88 respondents consider that the mentioned personalities should

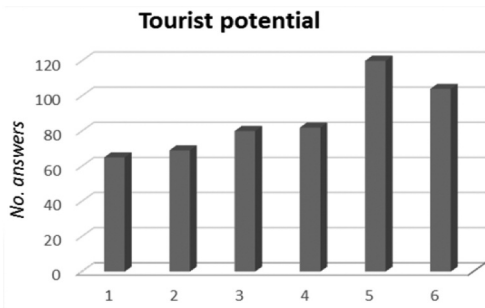


FIGURE 7. Distribution of answers on the importance of tourist potential

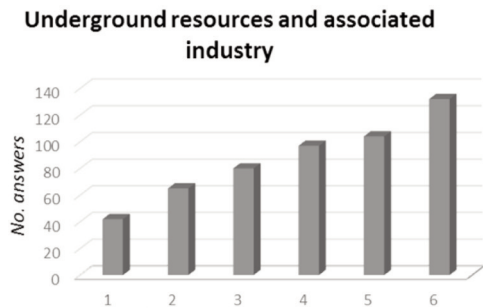


FIGURE 8. Distribution of answers on the importance of underground resources and the associated industry

rank fourth in the hierarchy, 90 placed them in third place and 74 respondents gave them the last position (Table 2; Fig. 6). The territorial distribution of the responses reveals a generalized uniformity in the regional space, from the perspective of respondents with higher education. Most respondents with higher education, regardless of origin, placed first Năsăud’s academics in defining the identity of the region. On the other hand, respondents who completed a maximum of four grades, regardless of age and sex, and who are also uniformly distributed across the territory, constitute the primary contingent that considers that the outstanding personalities of the region should take the last places in the hierarchy of the regions’ identity elements.

According to the local inhabitants perception (Table 2 and Fig. 2), the last two positions (5 and 6), in the hierarchy of elements that define the Land of Năsăud personality are occupied by the indicators called elements with tourist potential (5<sup>th</sup>) and underground resources and the associated industry (6<sup>th</sup>). The two indicators hold the same positions in the hierarchy established by the analyzed scientific papers, but in reverse order (underground resources and the associated industry was 5<sup>th</sup> and tourist potential 6<sup>th</sup>). In the case of both identity elements, respondents who placed them in front positions are almost entirely from administrative units where the underground and tourist resources are located, as well as from those located in their proximity. We note however, some territorial and qualitative differentiations in the distribution of responses regarding these two identity indicators.

The majority of respondents who believe that tourist potential is a defining element for the Land of Năsăud identity come from Sângeorz-Băi, Rodna, Maieru, șanț, Telciu etc. communes, because their daily activity depends directly or indirectly on the development and functioning of tourism. Some of the respondents have tourist establishments (e.g. pensions) or operate in some branch of this economic field. Among those who believe that the underground resources and the associated industry should be the main identity brand of the region we mostly find those living in the administrative units holding such resources and who, until recently, worked in these industries (ex. respondents with secondary education or with up to 4 grades, adults aged 60 and

above, from the communes of Feldru, Ilva Mare, Leșu, Maieru, Măgura Ilvei, Parva, Rebra, Rebrîșoara, Rodna, șanț and from the town of Sângeorz-Băi).

For both indicators, the majority of respondents who considered their contribution to the identity of the whole region as insignificant come from administrative units located far from those that have tourist potential and/or underground resources. Also, these respondents come especially from the younger age groups (they hold little information about the importance of the two elements), and from among those with higher education (who perceive the increased importance of other indicators in defining the region's identity). In some cases, respondents who placed the two elements in the last hierarchical positions are people who have worked in the past in the mentioned areas and subsequently lost their jobs due to mine closures or to the current deplorable state of the Sângeorz-Băi resort.

## Conclusion

**F**OLLOWING THE analytical approach, we conclude that Land of Năsăud is a region with certain identity valences in Romania, contributing thus to the overall heritage value of the cultural identity. Scientific papers on this subject have identified the main vectors of the region's identity, but they only partially confirm the local community's perception.

In view of these research papers one can conclude that the central identity role lies with the outstanding cultural personalities from the analyzed region, due to their reputation, which they transferred to the entire territorial assembly and which is known at national and European level. In the opinion of the locals, ethno-cultural values rank first, those unique traditional elements through which the Land of Năsăud became an unmistakable entity.

An important role in defining the personality of the region, in both perspectives, comes from the collective mentality of the Land of Năsăud, transposed in the way the local behave and which also comes, most likely, from the pride of always having been free people, who belonged to the elite military unit of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Romanian Border Regiment during 1763-1851. This membership brought some advantages and also responsibilities that definitively influenced the people's mentality, shaping their every action and attitude.

The other analyzed elements also contribute significantly to the identity of the Land of Năsăud, and even if there are some less relevant ones, all create the whole image of a "land"-type region from the Romanian space, which falls unequivocally in the myriad of defining regions of the current European space. It holds all the cards to be defined as a territory with a precise identity, in the new paradigm of interpretation for this kind of entities in the diverse European Union space.

The Land of Năsăud's identity elements and contents shape its visiting card at national and European level, representing well-defined regional brands. The brand quality is recognized both in the scientific papers addressing the region and in the perception of those who live and work in its area.

Therefore, we consider that our material is a plea for the national and European recognition of the Land of Năsăud, the arguments in this sense being solid. Sometimes, in certain works, the external perception of the region is more positive than that recognized nationally. According to the principles stipulated in the European Union, each specific element which exists in the 270 component regions should be preserved because it contributes to the universal identity heritage.

Finally, we believe the analytical model proposed by us is complex and comprehensive, and this analytical approach can be transferred to any other region. Without comparing and confronting the perceptions from the existing scientific papers (about a certain region) with the perception of its inhabitants, the attempt to identify and rank its main identity features is partial and shows real bias.



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### Abstract

#### Perceptions Regarding the Land of Năsăud Regional Identity

The regions are defined by a series of attributes which give them their own identity and uniqueness. The more notorious they are, the more the territory becomes known, easier to identify mentally, and more attractive. The regional identity of a region is based on various elements and features, resulted from its morphology, traditions, habits or activities, all outlined and established after long interrelations between peoples and places. This cohabitation generates in time a series of unmistakable regional identity brands through which a region may be easier to decipher. Moreover, knowing the identity of a region, decision makers may establish a precise territorial diagnosis, proposing solutions and adequate strategies to enhance the living standards of the inhabitants.

This paper aims to highlight the values and elements that make the Land of Năsăud known at national and European level. We intend to approach the subject from a double perspective, namely: (1) identifying and ranking the elements that define the identity of the Land of Năsăud, by analyzing some scientific papers researching the region in question and (2) confronting the scientific conclusions with the local perception regarding the hierarchy of elements and values that define the region that they have existentially assumed. Thus, we analyzed a total of 15 scientific papers and we consulted through a questionnaire on the subject a total of 520 respondents.

The results show that the Land of Năsăud has a set of clear identity elements, which through an adequate and sustained promotion can become regional brands that can facilitate the development process. Their importance is, however, understood differently by the locals relatively to the hierarchy established in various scientific papers.

### Keywords

Land of Năsăud, regional identity, collective mentality, significant personalities, ethno-cultural values