

# Land of Hațeg Identity and Regional Brands

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## Introduction

**F**ROM AMONG the specific components and values included in the structure of a territory, one may identify, in a regional context—and this could give it a geographical recognition—a spatial representativeness, and the possibility to capitalize on its identity heritage for future development. In a world dominated by globalization, it becomes more and more obvious that it is necessary to identify and use those specific techniques and processes which allow complex territorial studies, able to reveal the regional systems identity structures.

Currently, the literature brings various clarifications on the concept of “identity,” the idea is most often analyzed from a national, historical, linguistic, ideological, religious, cultural, political or social perspective (Mettepenningen, Vandermeulen, and Huylenbroeck 2010; Balogh et al. 2011; Popa-Gorjanu 2011; Vaishar and Zapletalová 2016).

The plurality of used concepts and the numerous interdisciplinary approaches demonstrate a real concern of the academic world for a conceptual clarification, and a challenge in terms of identifying the most effective specific methods and techniques for a niche research. In this respect, we must mention a number of terms with a content similar to that of regional identity, such as “spatial identity,” “traditionalism identity,” “regionalization identity” (Sandu 1996, 2010), alongside geographic conceptualizations developed in numerous studies (Paasi 2002, 2003, 2009, 2011) which subsequently offered a new vision of “region,” “regionalism,” “regional identity” etc. The last cited author points out some analytical differences which need to be made between “regions identity” and “regional identity,” showing that while regions are now defined in academic debates as relational entities, interconnected and delimited, regional identity involves some distinctive limits and policies.

M. Keating (quoted by Paasi 2003) focuses, in defining regional identity, on the existence of a functional territory, and identifies three item categories that are associat-

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ed in the regional construction process (cognitive, emotional and instrumental). The recent literature (Terlouw 2009, 2016) highlights the existence of a dynamic transformation, in current regions, which indicate a flexible development of regional identity structures from the traditional-historic forms (structures of “memory”) towards a reshaped identity form (structures of “adaptive” type). As expressed, current phenomena are different from the dynamic construction of regional identities in other historical periods (Popa-Gorjanu 2011).

The identity assessment of a region consists mainly of the analysis of some dominant elements, defined as “regional brands.” Continuing this reasoning, the “regional-identity brand” is also a manner of differentiating the various regions (Durrieu 2008). It can be analyzed at a correlative-multiscalar level (microregional, mezoregional or macroregional) and aims at highlighting the distinctive elements that contribute to the increase in regional competitiveness (Maessen et al. 2008, quoted by Messely, Dessein, and Lauwers 2010) in the broadest sense (natural environment, landscape, cultural heritage, traditional specific products, historical valences, human habitat and associated activities).

The research approach of the present paper supports a point of view focused on interdisciplinary research, correlated with the current geographical investigation methodology. This approach is justified by the advantages provided by the use of regional analysis processes and techniques that manage to objectively highlight both the historical human modeling framework of a territory, as well as the regional-identity structures that define its specificity. The argumentation of these aspects, as decisive elements in defining the regional identity of the Land of Hațeg, has at its base an ample applied research approach, based on multiple correlations between the constituent elements, the territorial specificity, and the perception of the inhabitants of the values with which they identify themselves. All of these provide a complex interdisciplinary analysis model for the identity of a regional system in a European context (Boțan et al. 2015).

## **Aim, Objectives and Methodology**

**T**HE AIM of the paper is to identify the territorial structure and synthetic relations which define the regional identity brands of the Land of Hațeg, in order to ensure the increase of the attractiveness factor, to diversify the possibilities of development and to integrate the elements that make up the current identity. The analysis of the territorial brands is done especially for the representation of identity and in order to highlight the specificity of the space owned by the local community, which are also the basic directions of the cohesion process and of the local environmentally friendly creativity (Mateo and Seisdedos 2010, quoted by Filimon et al. 2016).

Our research was based on the analysis of the authenticity of the identity elements defined in keeping with twelve chosen scientific papers, focusing on the regional system of the Land of Hațeg, and their comparison with the patrimonial identity of the territory, highlighted on the basis of the answers of local people taken from a number of 330 survey questionnaires.

In this sense, the exploratory research process had the following main objectives: (1) highlight the elements defining the territorial identity of the Land of Hațeg according to the most representative scientific papers; (2) apply a standardized questionnaire to a sample of 330 people living in the region, in order to hierarchize the elements that define the identity of the territory in the view of local people; (3) collect and correlate the data from the two informational sources and formulate opinions based on an extensive systematic research process; and (4) capitalize on the information obtained through the exploratory research process and correlate this with the developmental potential of the Land of Hațeg, based on the highlighted regional identity brands.

The present study represents a unique combination of quantitative (questionnaire, statistical analysis) and qualitative (observation, statistical interpretation, method of analysis, etc.) research methods and the obtained results predict a novel interdisciplinary research for the analyzed space, based on the specific techniques of spatial statistics. The usefulness of the research is confirmed by the possibility of integrating the obtained results in the future local development policies and strategies, representing a starting point meant to remedy and avoid the occurrence of some dysfunctionalities in the territory.

Querying a representative population sample in the Land of Hațeg, regarding the importance and hierarchy of the region's identity brands, met all the necessary sampling criteria. The questionnaire interpretation process sought to correlate the responses with the respondents' home address. Through this correlation, one can draw concrete conclusions regarding the importance of each identity element, their hierarchy, indicating areas in the region in which one or another becomes a priority in defining the region's personality. Thus, after we have made this correspondence between the answers and the respondents' address, we have also taken into account the other sampling criteria involved (e.g. gender, age groups and educational level), to complement and harmonize the main results and outcomes.

## Results

**T**HE LAND of Hațeg regional system is located in southwestern Romania, defined by the “intersection of two Carpathian units: the Southern Carpathians (Retezat-Godeanu and Parâng groups) and the Western Carpathians (the Banat Mountains, Poiana Ruscă and the Western Carpathians . . . this limit includes the entire Hațeg Depression . . . and partly units belonging to the Retezat, Șureanu, Țarcu, Poiana Ruscă, Godeanu Mountains and the Hunedoara Hills)” (Hognogi 2016, 78).

The Land of Hațeg has an area of 1,443 km<sup>2</sup> and includes the administrative-territorial area of the town of Hațeg and the Baru, Densuș, General Berthelot, Pui, Răchitova, Râu de Mori, Sarmizegetusa, Sălașu de Sus, Sântămăria-Orlea and Totești communes (Fig. 1).

The investigation of the main elements of territorial identity of the Land of Hațeg (regional identity brands) is based on the analytical study of 12 scientific papers, belonging to different research fields (e.g. history, geography, ethnography and folklore, regional development, tourism, etc.) and are also relatively recent, representing the research of the following scientists: Bara, Toma, and Lazăr 1, 2012; 2, 2012; 3, 2012;



TABLE 1. A HIERARCHY OF THE ELEMENTS WHICH DEFINE THE REGIONAL IDENTITY OF THE LAND OF HAȚEG  
(ACCORDING TO SCIENTIFIC PAPERS)

Land of Hațeg identity brands	Main identity subcomponents	Arguments in defining regional identity
Archaeological sites	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Dacian fortresses (ex. Costești, Costești-Blidaru, Luncați–Piatra Roșie, Grădiștea Muncelului–Vârful lui Hulpe, Grădiștea Muncelului–Dealul Grădiștii, Sarmizegetusa Regia, Sarmizegetusa Ulpia Traiana; Bănița, Căpâlna etc.</li> <li>▪ The Tivilization of Roman Dacia provides, in today's landscape, specific structures such as: amphitheaters, aqueducts, public squares, temples, public baths (thermae), farms (villa suburbana) etc.</li> <li>▪ Other isolated Romanian sites (ex. Valea Dâljii, Ostrovel, Sânpetru, Vadu, Nălațvad, Balomir, Ohaba de sub Piatră, Baru, Râu Alb, Sălașu de Sus, Mălăiești, Păucinești, Poieni, Livezi, Fărcădin, Hățăgel, Ciopeia, Ohaba-Ponor, Ponor etc.).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ The Dacian-Roman period is important for defining the personality of the Land of Hațeg.</li> <li>▪ The main traces of the Dacian civilization are located in the Șureanu Mountains.</li> <li>▪ At the end of the Second Dacian War, the Hațeg Depression was included in the Roman province of Dacia, founded (by the Emperor Trajan) the city of Colonia Ulpia Traiana Augusta Dacica Sarmizegetusa (today Sarmizegetusa).</li> <li>▪ The preservation of local legends about hidden Dacian treasures (like King Decebalus' treasure) brought a certain fame to the Land of Hațeg.</li> <li>▪ The reconstruction of these archaeological sites is a necessary, difficult, but also vital step for the socio-economic development of the Land of Hațeg.</li> </ul>
Historical organization in the knezates	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Râu Mare Valley knezate, with the center at Râu de Mori; the Râu de Mori ruler (knez) constructed the castle at Colț;</li> <li>▪ Densuș Valley knezate, whose existence is confirmed, among other things, by the existence of the Castle of Răchitova;</li> <li>▪ Bărbat River knezate, with the center in the homonymous settlement;</li> <li>▪ Râu Alb knezate, small size, made up of five villages;</li> <li>▪ Britonia knezate, located in the western part of the Hațeg Depression;</li> <li>▪ Sălașuri knezate, with dominion over the villages of the homonymous valley; these rulers raised the city of Mălăiești and the noble residence at Sălașul de Sus;</li> <li>▪ Silvaș knezate;</li> <li>▪ Vad knezate, ruling over villages on the lower course of the Râu Mare River.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ The knezate was representative for the administrative models of the Land of Hațeg.</li> <li>▪ In 1276 the first mention of a ruler from Hațeg, in the person of Peter Aba, a royal governor.</li> <li>▪ The territories inhabited by the Romanians, both in the Land of Hațeg and in the rest of Transylvania, were distinguished by the churches, courtyards and stone fortresses, built by the local rulers (a clear argument for the existence of local knezates and voivodates in this region).</li> <li>▪ There were several types of knezates, namely, village knezat and valley knezate.</li> <li>▪ The knezate districts were preserved until the end of the 14<sup>th</sup> century, when John Hunyadi was appointed voivode of Transylvania.</li> <li>▪ The existence of Romanian ruling families is difficult to prove before the 14<sup>th</sup> century, but they are evidenced by the stone churches built by the rulers of the Land of Hațeg.</li> </ul>

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Table—Continued

Land of Hațeg identity brands	Main identity subcomponents	Arguments in defining regional identity
Hațeg Castle	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ certified by the ruins, in Subcetate settlement Sântămăria-Orlea commune;</li> <li>▪ certified by the archaeological site of Subcetate-Turnul Orlea (Măgura, Dealul Petriș);</li> <li>▪ reveals elements of the Turdaș culture, the Petriș culture, the Coțofeni culture, the Balta Sărată culture, the Dacian culture and the Roman age;</li> <li>▪ the keep—the only visible wall fragment.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ it is an undeniable historical brand of the region;</li> <li>▪ reveals habitation traces from the Paleolithic, Neolithic, Bronze Age, Hallstatt and La Tène periods;</li> <li>▪ had control over the access routes to and from Transylvania;</li> <li>▪ was the most important fortress in the county of Hunedoara;</li> <li>▪ it was destroyed by the Turks and was rebuilt during the reign of John Hunyadi.</li> </ul>
Elements with tourist potential	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ the existence of well-known tourist routes (Cetatea de Colț; Vulcan Road; Dinosaur Valley; Nature, people and humanity etc.);</li> <li>▪ Șureanu and Retezat Mountains;</li> <li>▪ Retezat Mountains glacial lakes (ex. Peleaga, Bucura, Galeș, Lia, Zănoaga etc.) and the waterfalls (ex. Lolaia, Șipot);</li> <li>▪ Colonia Ulpia Traiana Augusta Dacica Sarmizegetusa, Lunca-Piatra Roșie Castle, Costești-Blidaru, Costești-Cetățuie, Căpâlna-Bănița, UNESCO patrimony;</li> <li>▪ historical monument worship places (ex. Densuș, Peștenița, Peșteana, Clopotiva, Hațeg, Sântămăria-Orlea, Paroș etc.).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ it is a tourist region;</li> <li>▪ the complexity of the elements with tourist attractiveness is well highlighted;</li> <li>▪ the territorial identity from a tourist perspective is given mainly by the Dacian-Roman fortresses, the capital of the Roman province of Dacia and the old places of worship.</li> </ul>
Prislop Monastery	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ tomb of the priest Arsenie Boca;</li> <li>▪ Saint Nicodemus's foundation, dating back to the second half of the 14<sup>th</sup> century;</li> <li>▪ Slavonic Tetraevangelion, copied here by St. Nicodemus (today it is preserved at the National Art and History Museum in Bucharest);</li> <li>▪ cave of St. John of Prislop, who lived here in the 15<sup>th</sup>–16<sup>th</sup> centuries;</li> <li>▪ the monastic ensemble;</li> <li>▪ remains of religious ensembles built of stone, scattered all over the Land of Hațeg (ex. Densuș, Strei, Sântămăria-Orlea, Hațeg, Sălașul de Sus, General Berthelot, Peșteana, Peștenița etc.).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ the Prislop Monastery represented, for six centuries, a landmark for the Romanians in Transylvania;</li> <li>▪ was visited by some outstanding Romanian personalities (Domnița Zamfira, Nicolae Iorga, Priest Arsenie Boca, buried here);</li> <li>▪ today the Prislop Monastery is the most visited monastery in Romania, the main attraction being the tomb of Priest Arsenie Boca (according to the Inspectorate of Hunedoara County Gendarmerie, in the mini vacation of 1 May 2016 there were about 95,000 pilgrims);</li> <li>▪ currently it is the main promoter of the Land of Hațeg image.</li> </ul>

Protected natural areas	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ 20.2% of the total area of the Land of Hațeg belongs to the Retezat National Park;</li> <li>▪ Grădișteea Muncelului-Cioclovina National Park—holds 10% of the area;</li> <li>▪ Domogled-Cerna Valley National Park—circumscribes 0.03%;</li> <li>▪ the Dinosaurs Geopark in the Land of Hațeg.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ The region is known for the fact that most of its area (91.1%) belongs to protected areas of different categories.</li> <li>▪ The existence of areas with a high degree of protection regarding various geographic elements (e.g. the scientific preserve Gemecele in the Retezat National Park).</li> <li>▪ It represents a model for environmentally protecting valuable items.</li> </ul>
Membership to the 1 <sup>st</sup> Border Regiment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ In the period 1764–1851 a part of the land of Hațeg settlements belonged to the 1<sup>st</sup> Regiment from Orlat, namely the second company based in Hațeg and the third company headquartered at the Râu Alb.</li> <li>▪ Granting border guards borderland estates.</li> <li>▪ Social and cultural emancipation.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ The region had a different administrative-territorial identity from the other Transylvanian territories which did not belong to the border regiments.</li> <li>▪ The residents had increased socio-cultural emancipation possibilities.</li> <li>▪ The region experienced real territorial development by equipping with various technical infrastructure.</li> </ul>
Local folklore	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ The distinctive elements are: women’s combing; shirt wrinkled to the neck; female girdle; male lamb hat; round hat; breastplate and coat with sleeves; wool coat etc.</li> <li>▪ Elements of folklore, secular and religious customs, folk songs etc.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ The folk costumes from the Land of Hațeg are all about simplicity and archaic character.</li> <li>▪ There are a few external influences (the existing ones are mostly of Banat origin).</li> </ul>
Traditional architecture of homes and households	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ The presence (depending on the relief) of the compact, dispersed, scattered villages, and shelters.</li> <li>▪ The main archaic type of household is the house with pantry and short porch.</li> <li>▪ Other specific types are: the house with pantry and long porch, the two-room house and long porch (without basement, with basement or cellar), the two-room house with separate access and long porch and ground floor, the two-room house with long porch, cellar and shed.</li> <li>▪ Among the annexes stand out the yard kitchen, with cooking and living functions.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ The Land of Hațeg village is quite specific, different from those in the neighboring regions.</li> <li>▪ The specific features are the existence of traditional households, consisting of houses with pantry, two rooms and a porch looking at the street.</li> <li>▪ The prevailing construction materials are wood, stone and brick.</li> <li>▪ Complementary specific features are given by the multitude of stone or wood roadside crosses, water mills, built granite fences.</li> </ul>

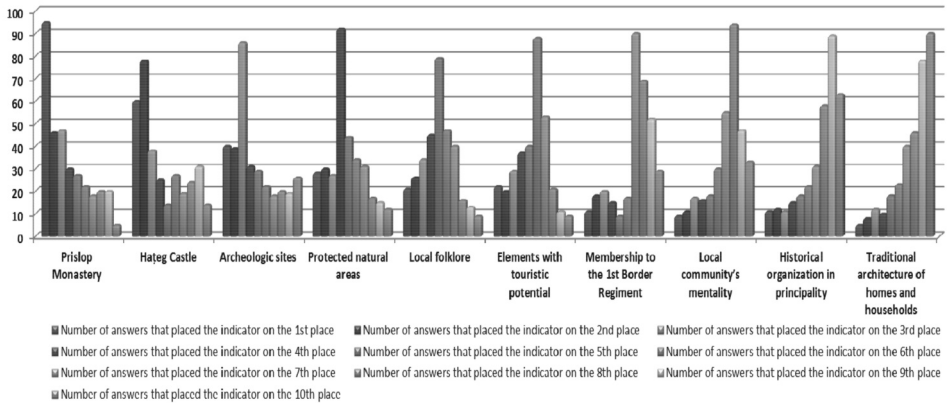
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Thus, in the view of the surveyed local respondents, there is another regional identity brand hierarchy. Prislop Monastery is in the first place and last comes the architecture of houses and households. The importance of each element of identity has been established (by each respondent) by assigning marks from 1 to 10, one meaning that a brand element is the most important and ten that is the least important in defining the regional identity.

FIG. 2. QUESTIONNAIRE ANSWERS REGARDING THE HIERARCHY OF IDENTITY BRANDS IN THE LAND OF HAȚEG



The local inhabitants validated (by positioning them in the top places) those identity brands that can contribute immediately to the development of the region and bring notoriety to it, especially by their ability to attract tourists (e.g. Prislop Monastery, Hațeg Castle, archaeological sites, protected areas).

The Prislop Monastery is considered the main identity brand of the Land of Hațeg by 95 respondents (more than 28%), who placed it first in the hierarchy, while only five respondents believe it should be placed last in the hierarchy (Fig. 3). The responses place the monastery in all hierarchical positions, namely: 46 respondents place it in the second place, 47 in the third, 30 in the fourth place, etc.

Knowing the spatial distribution of the answers, we can formulate a number of qualitative assessments, such as: the respondents who placed the monastery in the top places come from Hațeg and the neighboring communes, they know the magnitude of the pilgrimage phenomena of the last years, determined by the Arsenie Boca's tomb. The motivation of the respondents domiciled in localities near the monastery is related also to the advantages derived from the large number of pilgrims (e.g. accommodation and public catering establishments, the development of traditional local crafts, the restoration of the infrastructure, etc.). In contrast with this, respondents who did not grade highly this identity brand came from the communes that have competing tourist attractions (e.g. Sarmizegetusa), they are from remote communes (eg Baru, Pui) which do not benefit from the tourist phenomena generated by the monastery or have different religions (and are disturbed by the magnitude of the phenomena). Regardless of the number and territorial distribution of responses, the Prislop Monastery is today the main tourist attraction in the Land of Hațeg, most of them arriving from as far as Bucharest

(about 18%) and also from Hunedoara, Argeş, Prahova, Timiș, Arad, Bihor, Cluj and Sibiu counties (according to Hognogi 2016, 213).

FIG. 3. PRISLOP MONASTERY ANSWERS DISTRIBUTION

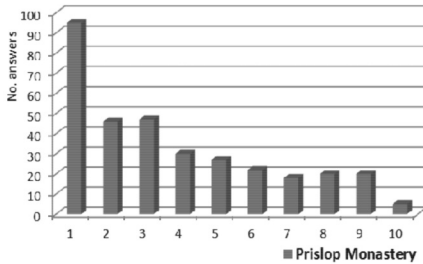
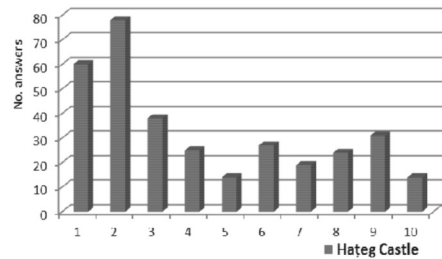


FIG. 4. HAȚEG CASTLE ANSWERS DISTRIBUTION



Hațeg Castle is a defining historical element of the Land of Hațeg and holds the second place in the hierarchy of regional brands, based on the respondents' opinions. Thus, a total of 78 responses placed it in the second place, while 60 respondents (18%) considered it to be in the first place (Fig. 4). At the same time, 14 people place it last, saying they have not heard of the existence and importance of this historic building, and this is somewhat justified because it (its ruins) is located about 4 km from the town of Hațeg on the territory of Subcetate village. The answers cannot be analyzed from the perspective of spatial distribution (they come from all the areas of the Land of Hațeg), but they require a qualitative approach. The respondents who consider that Hațeg Castle represents an important identity brand have higher education and are active in the educational fields. On the opposite side, there are the respondents from the rural area, with middle school education at the most and who have no knowledge regarding the existence and importance of the fortress for the analyzed region.

In the same interpretation matrix we should integrate the following answers, regarding the positioning of the next two territorial identity brands, namely the archaeological sites (third place) and the natural protected areas (fourth place). A number of 40 respondents position the archaeological sites in the first place, 39 place them second, 86 rank them third, while 26 respondents consider that they should occupy the last place (Fig. 5). In the case of protected areas, there are 92 answers that place them in the fourth place, while 28 people think they should occupy the first place (justified by the attitude towards the environment and the poignant civic spirit, to which one must add their scientific value), while twelve respondents consider them insignificant, placing them in the last place (Fig. 6).

The respondents which assigned them a superior hierarchical position generally had higher education and understood the scientific and cultural value of the archaeological sites and protected natural areas. They also believe that these two elements can promote the identity of Land of Hațeg on the long term. They base their opinions on the historical value of the archaeological sites, their uniqueness and scientific value, and also on the extensive territorial extension of the protected areas. On the other side (those

FIG. 5. ARCHEOLOGICAL SITES ANSWER DISTRIBUTION

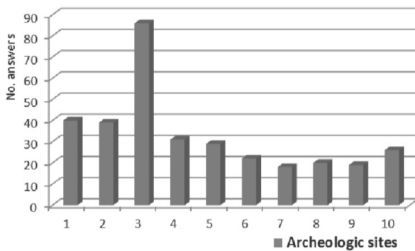
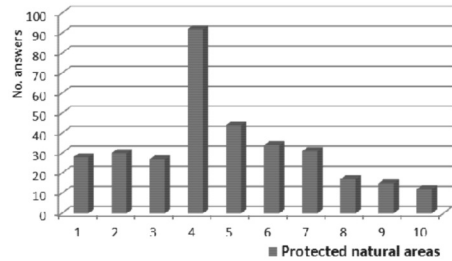


FIG. 6. PROTECTED NATURAL AREAS ANSWERS DISTRIBUTION



who consider these two elements insignificant) there are mainly rural respondents, middle school graduates who do not know the value and importance of historical or environmental protection elements, declaring themselves uninterested in these aspects. The territorial spatial distribution of responses does not reveal any association with specific geographical areas. Both those who value them and those who disregard them come from all areas of the Land of Hațeg.

The local folklore, placed fifth, is considered to be the most important regional identity brand by a number of 21 respondents (Fig. 7), most of them coming from rural areas and being over 50 years old. They are people who believe that the community heritage consists of traditional attributes and values, all novelties being rejected a priori. The fifth placement was determined by the 79 respondents, who believe that local folklore has a medium importance in defining the territorial identity of the region. On the other hand, 9 respondents do not attach any importance to this element, most of them are young and live in urban areas, they value other elements than those with a certain traditional cultural load.

FIG. 7. LOCAL FOLKLORE ANSWER DISTRIBUTION

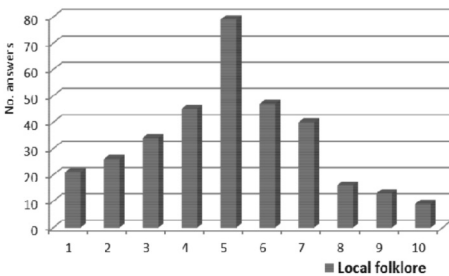
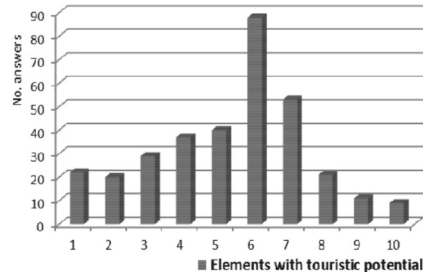


FIG. 8. ELEMENTS WITH TOURIST POTENTIAL ANSWER DISTRIBUTION



The elements with tourist potential, even if they are considered by most respondents to be important for the development of the region, due to the increased capacity to attract a large number of tourists, occupy only the sixth place in the hierarchy. A number of

22 respondents rank the region's tourist potential first, while 9 consider it insignificant, claiming they are overwhelmed by the large number of tourists whose main objective is the Prislop Monastery. The most important category (88 persons) place the elements with tourist potential on the sixth place, basically establishing its position in the final hierarchy (Fig. 8). This view is shared by all age and educational categories, as well as by both sexes, tourism being considered, in a generalized way, as a possible engine for the future development of the region. Conversely, the respondents who place the tourist elements in the top hierarchical places are from the localities that benefit from the large number of tourists, including from the perspective of personal interest (e.g. owners of guest houses, rental houses, restaurants, cottages). They come mainly from the localities of Râu de Mori, Sălașu de Sus, Densuș and Sarmizegetusa.

The seventh position in the hierarchy of identity brands of the Land of Hațeg is occupied by the element called the Membership to the 1<sup>st</sup> Border Regiment during the Habsburg period. Even though this was a defining element in the historical evolution and development of the region, we find that too few inhabitants know about the importance and the role played by this particular administrative-territorial form. We refer here to respondents with higher education, especially from the town of Hațeg, who ranked this element first (11 respondents place it first, 18 second and 20 in the third place). Most respondents in the rural area and with a middle school/high school education consider it an irrelevant element, but in some cases the lack of knowledge about this historical reality is really difficult to understand. As a result, 90 respondents placed it in the seventh place, 69 in the eighth place, and 29 in the last place (Fig. 9).

FIG. 9. MEMBERSHIP TO THE 1<sup>ST</sup> BORDER REGIMENT ANSWER DISTRIBUTION

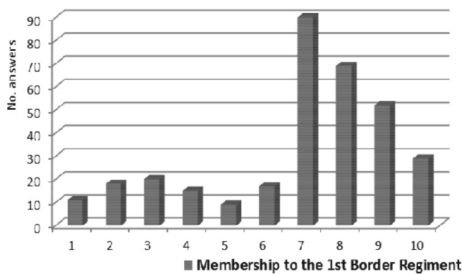
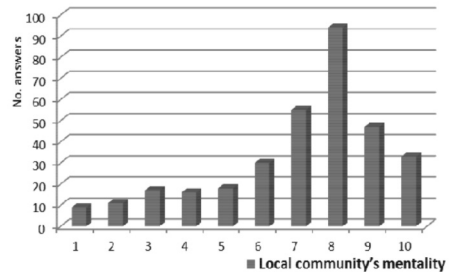


FIG. 10. LOCAL COMMUNITY'S MENTALITY ANSWER DISTRIBUTION



The local community's mentality, described in various scientific papers with particularly positive attributes (e.g., industriousness, honesty, hospitality, etc.), is not considered by the inhabitants of the region as a regional identity brand. Most of them state that each region can be defined by a set of positive and negative characteristics, and thus it occupies only the eighth hierarchical position (Fig. 10). The expressed answers can't be associated with a certain territorial distribution and/or a certain educational level. Thus, only 9 respondents place this item in the first place, while over 150 respondents assign it to the last places (94 respondents—eight, 47—ninth and 33 tenth). In essence, the respondents consider these specific features of the region's local mentality to be com-

FIG. 11. HISTORICAL ORGANIZATION IN KNEZATE ANSWER DISTRIBUTION

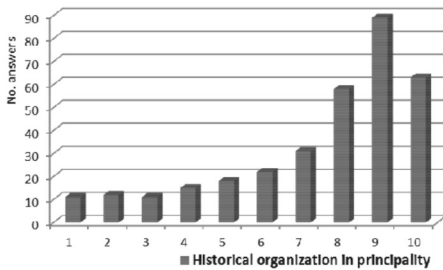
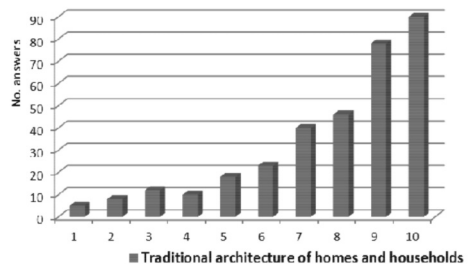


FIG. 12. TRADITIONAL ARCHITECTURE OF HOMES AND HOUSEHOLDS ANSWER DISTRIBUTION



mon to the entire Romanian space, and agree that the inhabitants of the Land of Hațeg borrowed some behavioral elements from the neighboring regions.

The last two positions in the hierarchy of the Land of Hațeg regional identity brands (Fig. 11 and Fig. 12) are occupied by the elements referring to the knezate (9<sup>th</sup> place) and to the traditional architecture of houses and households (10<sup>th</sup> place). They are considered insignificant by the vast majority of respondents, not necessarily for the same reasons.

On the organization in knezates, which was a defining fact in a certain historical period, the general public has little information, except for those with knowledge in the field, which explains the positioning of this element on the penultimate stage of the hierarchy. As an alternative, the regional architectural elements, visible at the level of homes and households, are generally considered insignificant by the respondents. They consider the regional architecture of houses and households to be insignificant compared with other regions of the country (e.g. Maramureș, Bukovina, Oltenia, Dobruja etc.), explaining the last position. Thus, in the case of the element concerning the organization in the form of the knezate, only 11 respondents (history teachers) consider it defining for the region, while 89 respondents give it the penultimate place and a number of 63 respondents rank it last. Regarding the last hierarchical element, the traditional architecture of houses and households, 90 people (over 27%) place it last place and only 5 of the total number of respondents assign it to the first place.

## Conclusions

**F**OLLOWING THIS comparative analytical approach, we must emphasize the fact that the Land of Hațeg is an entity with a distinct historical and geographical significance. Its identity features in the form of regional brands come from these two complementary domains. We can safely say it is the most historic “land” type region at the level of Transylvania and Romania.

Identity brands are common, both in the view of scientific literature and the regional community, which is fully justified by the quality of the two entities: scientists have

researched the region, highlighting its local values and key identity features, while the inhabitants of the Land of Hațeg know it intimately and have assumed and felt this land in detail, as part of their daily existence.

At the level of the hierarchy of identity elements (brands), there is a difference between the values ascribed by the scientific literature and the perspective of the regional community. Literature tries to be more objective, while locals, sometimes driven by their own interests, value those elements which can bring them immediate benefit (e.g. they place Hațeg Monastery on the first place because they benefit from the significant number of tourists). Probably, over the course of time, another element will contribute to the development of the region, and that will be considered the most defining one.

In both hierarchies, however, some elements remain in top positions. These are valuable elements that cannot be questioned, elements that give notoriety to this region and make it well known at national and European level (e.g. archaeological sites, protected areas, Hațeg Castle etc.).

Therefore, we consider our material is a plea for the national and European recognition of the Land of Hațeg, the arguments in this regard being sound. Sometimes, in some papers, the external perception of the region is more positive than the national one. According to the principles of the European Union, each element of specificity, existing in the 270 constituent regions, must be preserved, as it contributes to the universal identity heritage.

Finally, we consider that the analytical model proposed by us is a complex and complete one, and can be applied as an analytical approach to any other region. Without comparing and confronting the perceptions existing in scientific papers (about a certain region) with the perception of its inhabitants, the attempt to identify and hierarchize its main identity elements (brands) is partial and could be really biased.



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### **Abstract**

#### **Land of Hațeg Identity and Regional Brands**

The present paper, through its subject, proposes an analysis of the Land of Hațeg regional system identity state. This is accomplished by correlating the value of a set of indicators which have defining valences in terms of perception of the local community, regarding significant elements of this geographic space. From the perspective of the regional geography, the identity of a region derives from a mix of representative elements and interrelations, belonging to both the natural and the anthropic framework, which have the status of regional brands and can constitute the main elements of attractiveness for the territory in question. All the so-called “country”-type regional systems have a set of specific elements through which their personality and territorial individuality can be deciphered. The identity assessment of a region consists mainly in the analysis of those outstanding elements defined as regional brands. The more well-known and diversified they are, the more attractive the region, and it also presents more obvious development possibilities. Our research was based on the analysis of authenticity of the identity elements (brands) defined in agreement with the 12 scientific papers which were focused on the Land of Hațeg, and their comparison with the identity heritage of the territory, extracted from a 330 questionnaires survey of local respondents. The conclusions of the study highlighted the fact that the Land of Hațeg is a region with certain identity brands, especially historical, but their hierarchy is differentiated in the researchers’ view, compared to the current perception of the region’s inhabitants.

### **Keywords**

Land of Hațeg, brand, territorial identity, hierarchy, Sarmizegetusa, Prislop