

## Collections of Vedute

### Preserving the Historic Heritage of the Transylvanian Cities

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**Abstract:** *Veduta*, artistic style<sup>th</sup> that revolutionized the 18th century art, due to the influence of the Venetian School of Painting from Italy, became also well-known in Transylvania, region of nowadays Romania, representing “a beneficial Eastern spatial extension of the Renaissance and Age of Enlightenment”. (CIANGĂ 2012, p. 672). These urban views contain relevant details regarding local conditions of living, geographic position, city walls, or the structure and colors of the buildings, some of them missing today. These details compared with the present situation can lead to a retrospective study over the physiognomy of Transylvanian urban landscapes. These urban views are found well preserved in collections such as: *Gheorghe Sion* from Cluj-Napoca, *The Cabinet of Print Works and Drawings* in Sibiu and other museums of art from Transylvania. In my research project I wish to highlight the importance of the urban view, veduta, as a source of information with great documentary value which allows completing the historical and geographical data from a novel perspective belonging to the image creators. Its artistic and documentary value, which gives the possibility of learning the history of the cities may lead to the individualization of a cultural tourism, of specialized knowledge, but it may also lead to a tourism meant for the general public, having a virtual characteristic, of an open source type.

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**Keywords:** veduta, Transylvania, cultural heritage, collections

#### Introduction

*Veduta*, artistic style dedicated to the representations of the popular European cities, started to impose itself in 17th century through Dutch painting, and reached its climax in the 18<sup>th</sup> century due to the influence of the Venetian School of Painting.

This artistic approach influenced, as well, the representations of the urban landscape from Transylvania, region of nowadays Romania. The Habsburg rule allowed the *import* of the artistic influences from Central-Europe. (MESEA 2011, p. 39) Also, the printing techniques would be a very important spreading factor of these cultural and artistic influences, leading to an increased level of popularity of Transylvanian cities.

(PUNGĂ 2009, p.15-50)

The study of these artistic urban representations could be valuable for groups of specialized knowledge or general public, like those who want to learn the history of the cities.

## Objectives

The topic of Transylvanian *vedute* covers a wide range of scientific interests, being already exercised through historic and artistic analyses. The present study, dedicated to the cities and to the Transylvanians urban views, intends to emphasize the stages of urban evolution of this region, from a geographical, historical and artistic perspective. It could be an interesting approach to connect and compare the statistic data with the *reality* of the vedute representations. It also could be possible to detect specific patterns in the urban landscape evolution that conducted to its preservation or destruction.

The historical heritage of the Transylvania's cities could be under threat from wrong human actions but also due to the lack of awareness regarding the preservation of it. Creating a public images database, a virtual archive, with the vedute of the most depicted cities from Transylvania could represent a first step in raising awareness. This database, could serve also to the development of a cultural tourism meant for the general public, accessible to anyone due to the new digital technologies.

## Case study

The study is focused on the topic of *veduta*, as an artistic approach of the Transylvania's cities of the 18th and 19th centuries, in time of Habsburg Empire and Dual Austria-Hungarian Monarchy.

There were identified collections of vedute in the main cities of Transylvania (Cluj-Napoca, Sibiu, Braşov, Alba Iulia) and they were classified taking in account the following criteria: chronology, authors, graphic techniques and themes. Among the richest collections are *Gheorghe Sion* at the *Lucian Blaga* Central University Library of Cluj-Napoca and *The Cabinet of Print Works and Drawings* of the Brukenthal Museum from Sibiu. Also the other Transylvanian national museums of art and the National Archives, with their subsidiaries, host some of the oldest specimens.

Presently, almost 300 urban views have been analyzed (Tab.1 and Fig.1), performed in various artistic techniques: painting, drawing, printing, in colours or monochrome, the most popular process being aquatint and lithography.

No.	City	County	Number of Vedute
1	Abrud	Alba	1
2	Aiud	Alba	1
3	Alba Iulia	Alba	33
4	Aninoasa	Hunedoara	1
5	Avrig	Sibiu	1
6	Băile Tușnad	Harghita	1
7	Bălan	Harghita	1
8	Bistrița	Bistrița	18
9	Blaj	Alba	2
10	Brașov	Brașov	34
11	Cluj-Napoca	Cluj	46
12	Dej	Cluj	3
13	Deva	Hunedoara	6
14	Dumbrăveni	Sibiu	3
15	Făgăraș	Brașov	5
16	Gheorgheni	Harghita	1
17	Gherla	Cluj	5
18	Hunedoara	Hunedoara	8
19	Jibou	Sălaj	1
20	Mediaș	Sibiu	7
21	Miercurea Ciuc	Harghita	2
22	Odorheiu Secuiesc	Harghita	3
23	Orăștie	Hunedoara	1
24	Petroșani	Hunedoara	1
25	Râșnov	Brașov	2
26	Rupea	Brașov	3
27	Sebeș	Alba	4
28	Sibiu	Sibiu	64
29	Sighișoara	Mureș	11
30	Sfântu Gheorghe	Covasna	3
31	Tălmaciu	Sibiu	3
32	Târgu Mureș	Mureș	13
33	Turda	Cluj	4
34	Zalău	Sălaj	1
<b>TOTAL</b>			<b>293</b>

Tab. 1 – The cities represented in urban views and the number of their representations

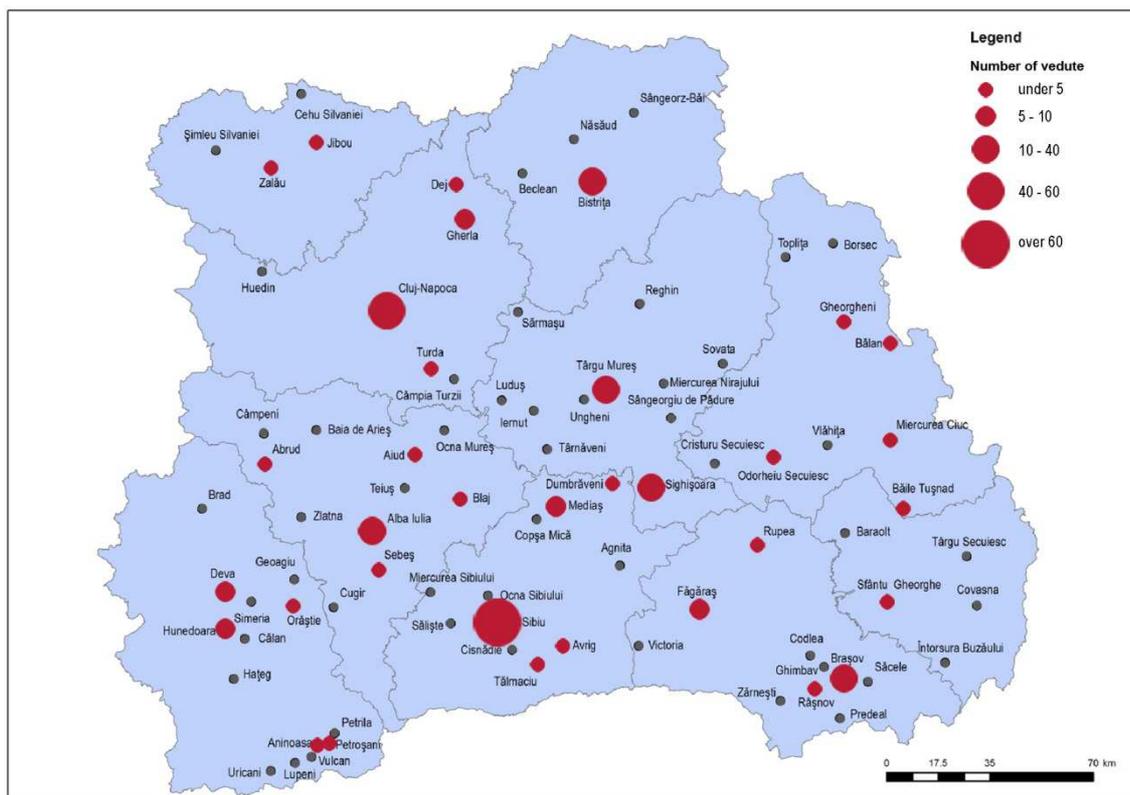


Fig. 1 – Cities depicted in vedute and the frequency of their representations (Copyright: Iulia Ciangă)

## Methodology

The evolution stages of the Transylvania's cities were highlight (Fig. 2, Fig.3, Fig.4) using organized hierarchies of attestations, numeric evolution of the population and structure of the main ethnic minorities of the settlements that later became cities (ERDELI and CUCU, 2005).

The analysis is still ongoing, especially in old monographs, maps and also international vedute collections regarding the appearance of the Transylvanian cities in time.

The analysis will be conducted through means of comparison of old graphic representations with the nowadays reality sketched by the author. A complex field research will be performed in order to have a better understanding of the differences between the two.

## Analyses

Urban settlements are an essential component of Transylvanian habitat, starting with Dacian-Roman antiquity to the present day, through the current conformation of the urban system.

In terms of territorial development, Transylvanian space reflects the configuration of some real urban systems. In this regard, it stands out Transylvanian inter-Carpathians annular alignment of some cities, developed at the contact of the peripheral region of Transylvania Plateau with the marginal region of Transylvanian Depression, stimulated by the evolution of the transportation network and the position on the major rivers: Cluj, Gherla, Dej, Bistrița, Reghin, Odorheiul Secuiesc, Făgăraș, Sibiu, Sebeș, Alba Iulia, Aiud, Câmpia Turzii, Turda.

This area is connected, from east to west, by two others alignments of the cities from the Mureş Valley and lower Arieş river-Târgu Mureş, Luduş, Câmpia Turzii and along the river Târnavă Mare-Cristuru Secuiesc, Sighişoara, Mediaş, Copşa Mică, Blaj.

Also, that annular alignment, pericarpatic, is doubled to the east by an intra-section of cities along the groove depression Giurgeu-Ciuc-Braşov of the Eastern Carpathians (Carpații Orientali)-Toplița, Gheorghieni, Miercurea Ciuc, Sfântu Gheorghe, Braşov.

It should be noted that most of the settlements-cities have acquired their status in successive stages, in different historical periods, persisting and evolving as non-urban settlements, many centuries before. This development over a long period reflects the conformation of urban network of Transylvania, differentiated as physiognomy, geo-demographic size and functions.

For this reason, it is necessary for this study analyzing this issue based on several considerations, such as the age as settlements of the current cities, using attestation criteria; geo-demographic development based on official statistical data, starting with 1857s population Census up to the present; ethnic composition of major cities as constituent community that had essential contributions, in the 18th century until the middle of the last century, to the establishment of the urban landscape that represented the main concern of the vedutist approach.

### **The age of settlements (future cities) from Transylvania using attestation criteria**

Documentary attestations confirm the existence of settlements in Transylvania starting with early 11th century, although their real existence has been proven in most of the cases, archaeological, starting with many centuries ago, in some situations since ancient Daco-Roman period and even Neolithic Age.

After the Mongol invasion, (1241), the village fairs begin to be attested in the official documents, where differentiation of crafts from agriculture contributes to individualization of craftsmen, more numerous in these places than in ordinary settlements. (CUCU 1970, p.189)

The concrete analysis of information regarding the settlements in Transylvania (SUCIU 1968) leads to very interesting conclusions related to the stages of development of the future cities' network. Their sequence shows a tendency of grouping on centuries and epochs, with a certain regularity concerning their territorial distribution, their age decreasing from west to east, following the direction of the conquests performed by Hungarian kings in Transylvania.



1966, 1977, 1992, 2002 and the information derived from Statistical Yearbooks from 2008, 2009, 2010 presenting statistical information for each of the years preceding their publication.

Thus, for a period of 152 years (1857-2009) there is a consistent increase in the urban population of Transylvania, from 295169 to 2533313 inhabitants (8.6 times during this period).

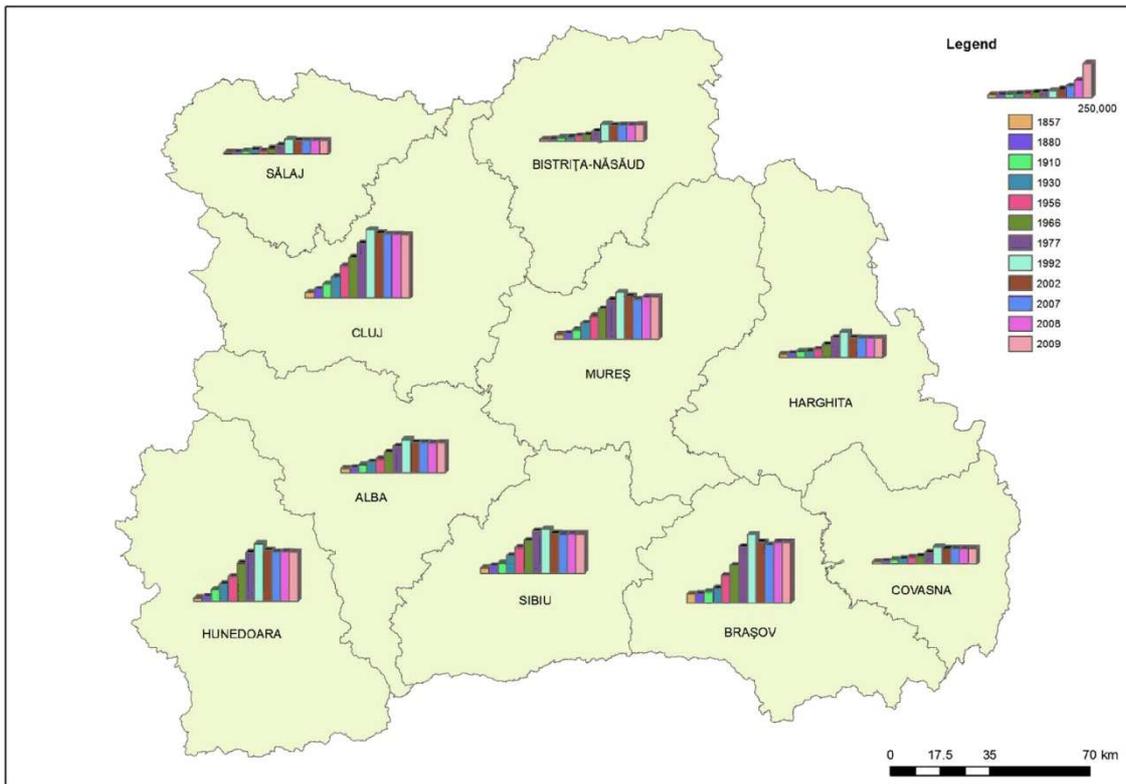


Fig. 3 – Evolution of Urban Population in Transylvanian's Counties (Copyright: Iulia Ciangă)

This growth is driven on the one hand by the contribution of the local population and alien population coming from different areas, on the other hand also due to the change of status of a dozens of villages, in cities. The interval of 1966-1977 recorded the most significant urban population growth, with an medium annual rhythm of growth of 55351 inhabitants, determined by the period of maximum industrialization in Romania, which largely polarized the active population from the rural to the urban areas. It is also added the effect of temporary law of banning abortion, with concrete effect in the period 1967-1969. Mitigate the effects of these two factors is found between 1977 and 1992 (when is recorded the maximum of urban population between 1857 and 2009), with a medium annual rhythm of growth reduced to about 36490 inhabitants. Starting with the census of 1992, when for the first time, considering all country, was registered a negative value of the population (0.6 per thousand), there is a general decrease in the urban population from 2839552 to 2533313 inhabitants, between 1992-2009, with a medium annual rhythm of population decrease of -18014 inhabitants. This unique fact in the postwar Romania period, valid for the whole country, with a wide-impact over the urban population in Transylvania, was determined, on the one hand, by the process of deindustrialization leading to the phenomenon of re-emigration from the urban to rural areas, reduction of natural increase (in terms of decreased fertility and increased mortality), plus the growing phenomenon of external labor migration.

Influenced by historical, social, political and economic factors, these trends led gradually to a differentiated urbanization for the cities, counties and whole Transylvania.

The degree of urbanization (county level) highlights Hundoara (with the highest share of urban population, 76,74%) followed by Braşov (73,55%), Sibiu (67,70%) and Cluj (66,62%). Sălaj (41,14%) and Bistriţa-Năsăud (37,97%) had a slower evolution. The other counties have the urbanization degree around the average level.

### Evolution and ethnic structure of urban population in Transylvania

Very important in establishing specific urban landscapes were the communities which created, by focusing in certain areas and carrying out activities, residential-functional landscapes, with features that testify their direct involvement.

Among them: Transylvanian fortified towns, *the burgs*, creation of German communities, the towns and cities with crafting and commercial functions on Mures Valley, from Giurge-Ciuc Depression, north of Brasov Depression, Alba Iulia Depression and Turda specific to Szeklers-Hungarian community, plus the involvement of dominant Romanian communities, since the Middle Ages up to the present, in cities such as Blaj, Năsăud, Alba Iulia (partly), Braşov (partly) and many cities with the status of the urban settlement from modern period until today.

This analyze highlights the particularly complex, with interesting developments, often surprising, regarding the share of population of the main ethnic communities, according the censuses of 1857, 1910, 1930. Option for their analysis considered the fact that, between 1850-1866 was the most liberal period of the social life in the provinces of the Habsburg Empire, including Transylvania and the 1857s Census is based on a methodology taking into account the concrete reality of time, undistorted by the politico-historical factors. In this census there was only the religion evidence that could be corroborated in this paper with the ethnic one. Based on religious affiliation can be distinguished: Romanian community belonging to the Orthodox and Greek-Catholic religions; Hungarian community belonging to the Roman Catholic, Reformed and Unitarian religions; German community to Evangelical religion, and two other communities, the Jewish one, belonging to Judaism and Armenian community.

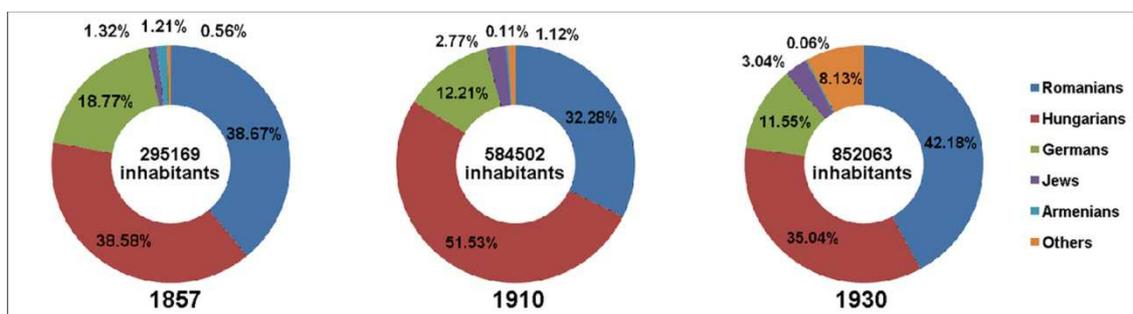


Fig. 4 – Ethnic structure of Transylvanian urban population in 1857, 1910 and 1930 (Copyright: Iulia Ciangă)

The 1910s Census, referring among others to the ethnic and religious affiliations, introduced a specification that changed, often subjective, in favor of the Hungarian community, the reality regarding the affiliation to an ethnic community, namely, considering the ethnicity using the maternal language criteria. In this context,

communities such as Jewish and Armenian cease to appear as ethnicities, being present just like religions. Therefore it was considered useful to make corroboration between religion and ethnicity and not between mother tongue and ethnicity.

The 1930s Census is the one that presents the real picture of geo-demographic components (compared to Census 1857) of the Greater Romania.

The focus on these three censuses was motivated by the fact that the situation of the ethnic communities of the 1857s Census is reflected in the urban built landscape, from the "beginning" to the middle of the 19th century; the 1910s Census shows, considering previous accumulations, the influence of the Hungarian dualism component in building a rich construction fund, institutional and private in major cities of Transylvania; the 1930s Census shows the reinstatement of the Romanian community and its role in urban dynamic of the last part of the modern era, reflected in buildings of public interest, with emphasis on major religious buildings, of great importance for the community.

The recorded and processed information, using ethnic criteria, shows a differentiated increasing of population for the key communities (Romanians with an increase of more than 3 times, Hungarians over 2.8 times). The growth in this period was slower for the German community, only 0.56 times.

Similar with the evolution of the population, also for the ethnic structure analysis were taken in consideration all the cities of 2009. More than half of them have acquired the status of urban center during the 20th century and in the first decade of the 21st century.

Thus, information recorded in the three censuses include many rural settlements that became later cities. It is known that during the medieval and modern period, including also the 1930s Census, the majority of the rural population (including settlements that later become cities) belonged to the Romanian community.

Analyzing other two large communities, the Jews and Armenians, are found different trends: in the first case there is a steep increase of over 7 times, while for the second case, Armenians, decrease from about 4000 people in 1857 to 500 in 1930.

## Results

Sibiu is the city with the most numerous urban views (Fig.1). Due to its flourish commercial and cultural life, its geographical position, at the intersection of the main European routes, also the permanent relations with the Nord-European world of the local community, allowed, during the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the propagation of artistic models like *vedutism*, but also started to inspire more and more the local artistic community. These influences lead in time to the appearance of awareness towards urban heritage.

Following Sibiu, Cluj-Napoca is the second most frequent depicted city. In the third category are included other ancient famous settlements like Alba Iulia, Braşov, Bistriţa, Târgu Mureş and Sighişoara. The majority of the cities have less than 5 representations.

It can be noticed the tendency of grouping by centuries of the settlements (future cities), the western cities being the oldest. The majority of the cities have their origin in the 13th to 15th centuries. (Fig. 2)

The population increment leads to the urban built space development and to the functional and physiognomic diversification. (Fig. 3)

The influence of ethnic communities is visible in the physiognomy of the urban landscape from the early beginning till the middle of the 19th century. (Fig. 4)

## Conclusions

The Transylvanian urban system is remarkable due to its complexity, maybe the most complex from Romania. On the territory of Transylvania developed all the possible generations of the cities, from the Antiquity till today, the present urban landscape being the result of the overlapping historic stages.

The evolution of population for Transylvanian counties, and especially for the cities, is closely linked to the geo-demographic, socio-historical and economic conditions of the cities, but also to the differentiated importance they held it over time.

The complex evolution of the ethnic groups it is notable in the modern period in Transylvania, certifying the inherited result of the pre-1850s conditions and situations with immediate effect on structures, functions and urban physiognomy.

Veduta reveals itself as a source of information with a great documentary value. Due to the conservation exigencies, these works of art are displayed only occasionally for the public. Also, the inestimable materials from the private collections represent an uncharted territory, remaining unknown both for the public and specialists. (SABĂU 2005, p. 352)

For a better understanding and promotion of Transylvania's urban heritage it would be necessary to be created a virtual archive of these images accessible to a larger audience.

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