Landscape development and land use change in traditional cultural landscapes – evidence from the peripheries of Europe

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by

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“Akinek a szíve fáj, vígasztalja ez a táj.”

Gyimesi falvédő.
Summary

The present cumulative dissertation comprises four research articles dealing with different aspects of landscape development and land use change in two marginalized regions of Europe. In order to explore the limitations and potentials regions with traditional cultural landscapes face in their regional development and which changes the landscapes undergo in the process, two case study regions were investigated exemplarily. Gyimes in the Eastern Carpathians of Romania and Las Hurdes in Extremadura, Spain, were chosen to test three initially formulated hypotheses.

Firstly, it was assumed that traditional cultural landscapes in Europe today have been preserved due to reasons that can be generalized across the continent. The first set of research questions dealt with what these reasons are and whether the remaining cultural landscapes of Europe have a common denominator. Secondly, the empirical fact that many of the traditional cultural landscapes in Europe are facing changes and decline, was supposed to occur mainly due to outside influences. Taking Gyimes and Las Hurdes as concrete examples, the ongoing changes and their underlying reasons were explored, questioning whether the land use systems that once created the landscapes still persisted. Thirdly, out of the various outside influencing factors two were isolated – regulatory policies and the outside perception – and it was attempted to draw casual relationships from the sources of these influencing factors to their impacts on the field level.

The investigation was carried out using literature review, a questionnaire survey of tourists, an interview survey of households and expert interviews for data collection from 2006 to 2010. The generated data was then utilized for a livelihood analysis of households in Gyimes and Las Hurdes and a policy analysis of the regulatory framework of agricultural, rural and regional development policies aimed at the regions.

It could be shown that the studied traditional cultural landscapes have survived due to isolation, difficult site conditions for agricultural production and a population that often differed from the surrounding national mainstream. The biased outside perception that characterized both regions in former times, continued to play a role in their current development. This observation was more evident in the case of Gyimes, where inhabitants reacted to the expectations of Hungarian tourists and started to arrange the landscape according to the outside perception.
The complex land use systems that once created the still visible landscape features were in decline and losing complexity and importance as a source of income in both regions. A small number of households continued with agriculture, mainly for household consumption, and only a fraction of them invested in modernized forms of production. The households that were found to most likely maintain the traditional cultural landscape were also frequently the ones not eligible for any rural development support. The assumption was made that Las Hurdes, where agricultural transformation had taken place decades ago, could be a future scenario for Gyimes as regards the shift away from the primary sector, land abandonment and simultaneous agricultural intensification and depopulation leading to the loss of the traditional cultural landscape.

The analyzed policies affecting the regions have not been able to stop these developments, although they were partly specifically aimed at them, as in the case of Spanish rural development programs. CAP direct payments were found to have mainly negative impacts on Gyimes and Las Hurdes, together with a few positive indirect ones. Rural development measures on the other hand had a slight positive effect that was difficult to quantify.

Finally, the conclusion was drawn that European rural development policy would best be able to support marginalized rural areas if restructured and aimed more specifically at areas in real need of public support. Taking into account global agricultural challenges and the fact that rural development today requires much more than the support of agriculture, the present study finally suggests a reorientation of agricultural policy in favor of bottom-up, regional solutions that combine traditional production systems well adapted to local site conditions with modern technology to provide local livelihoods, good quality food and ecological sustainability.
Zusammenfassung


Es konnte gezeigt werden, dass die untersuchten traditionelle Kulturlandschaften aufgrund von Isolation, ungünstigen Standortbedingungen für landwirtschaftliche Produktion und einer in vielen Fällen vom nationalen Mainstream abweichenden Bevölkerung überlebt haben. Die vorurteilsbehaftete Wahrnehmung, die beide Gebiete charakterisiert hatte, spielte weiterhin eine Rolle in ihrer jetzigen Entwicklung. Diese Beobachtung war eindeutiger im Falle von Gyimes, wo Einwohner auf die Erwartungen von ungarischen Touristen reagierten und begannen, die Landschaft entsprechend der äußeren Wahrnehmung zu arrangieren.
Die komplexen Landnutzungssysteme, die einst die immer noch sichtbaren Landschaftsstrukturen geschaffen hatten, waren im Rückgang begriffen und verloren an Komplexität und Bedeutung als Einkommensquelle. Eine geringe Anzahl von Haushalten führte die Landwirtschaft vor allem als Subsistenzwirtschaft fort und nur ein Bruchteil investierte in moderne Formen der Produktion. Die Haushalte, die der Untersuchung nach am ehesten die traditionelle Kulturlandschaft erhielten, waren auch oft diejenigen, die keinerlei ländliche Entwicklungsförderung erhielten. Die Annahme wurde gemacht, dass Las Hurdes, wo die landwirtschaftliche Transformation vor Jahrzehnten stattgefunden hatte, ein mögliches Zukunftsszenario für Gyimes darstellt, hinsichtlich der Verlagerung weg vom Primärsektor, der Landnutzungsaufgabe mit gleichzeitiger landwirtschaftlicher Intensivierung und der Entvölkerung, die zum Verlust der traditionellen Kulturlandschaft führt.

Die die Regionen betreffenden analysierten politischen Maßnahmen konnten diese Entwicklung nicht aufhalten, obwohl sie teilweise explizit dafür gemacht wurden, wie im Falle der spanischen ländlichen Entwicklungsprogramme. GAP Direktzahlungen hatten hauptsächlich negative und einige positive indirekte Auswirkungen auf Gyimes und Las Hurdes. Maßnahmen der ländlichen Entwicklung hingegen hatten der Untersuchung zufolge einen geringen positiven Effekt, der schwer zu quantifizieren war.

Letztlich wurde die Schlussfolgerung gezogen, dass ländliche Entwicklungspolitik marginalisierte ländliche Gebiete am besten unterstützen könnte, wenn sie umstrukturiert und gezielter an Gebiete mit einem realen Bedarf an öffentlichen Hilfsleistungen geleitet würde. Vor dem Hintergrund der Herausforderungen globaler Landwirtschaft und der Tatsache, dass ländliche Entwicklung heutzutage viel mehr erfordert, als die Unterstützung der Landwirtschaft, schlägt die vorliegende Arbeit abschließend eine Neuorientierung landwirtschaftlicher Politik vor. Regionale Lösungen, die traditionelle, gut an lokale Standortbedingungen angepasste Produktionssysteme mit modernen Technologien verbinden und lokale Einkommensquellen, qualitativ hochwertige Nahrungsmittel und ökologische Nachhaltigkeit sichern, sollten gefördert werden.
List of publications

This dissertation is based on four different articles that are referred to in the text by roman numbers. The idea and the research design for all articles were developed jointly by Prof. Dr. Werner Konold and Katalin Solymosi, while data collection, data analysis and manuscript writing was carried out solely by Katalin Solymosi.

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AEM</td>
<td>Agri-environmental measures</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CEE</td>
<td>Central and Eastern Europe</td>
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<tr>
<td>CoR</td>
<td>Committee of the Regions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DFID</td>
<td>UK Department for International Development</td>
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<tr>
<td>EC</td>
<td>European Commission</td>
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<tr>
<td>EEA</td>
<td>European Environmental Agency</td>
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<td>ESU</td>
<td>European Size Unit</td>
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<tr>
<td>EU</td>
<td>European Union</td>
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<tr>
<td>EU-12</td>
<td>The 12 new member states that joined the EU in 2004 and 2007.</td>
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<tr>
<td>EU-25</td>
<td>The 25 member states of the EU until January 2007.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EU-27</td>
<td>The 27 member states of the EU in 2011.</td>
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<tr>
<td>CAP</td>
<td>Common Agricultural Policy of the EU</td>
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<tr>
<td>DG</td>
<td>Directorate General</td>
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<tr>
<td>FAO</td>
<td>Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations</td>
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<tr>
<td>GDP</td>
<td>Gross Domestic Product</td>
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<tr>
<td>GVA</td>
<td>Gross Value Added</td>
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<tr>
<td>ha</td>
<td>hectare</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HNVF</td>
<td>High nature value farming</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IDS</td>
<td>UK Institute of Development Studies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LEADER</td>
<td>Liaison entre actions de développement de l'économie rurale</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LFA</td>
<td>Less Favored Areas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NGO</td>
<td>Non-governmental organization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OECD</td>
<td>Organization of Economic Co-Operation and Development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RD</td>
<td>Rural Development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SLA</td>
<td>Sustainable Livelihoods Approach</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UAA</td>
<td>Utilizable Agricultural Area</td>
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<tr>
<td>UNCTAD</td>
<td>United Nations Conference on Trade and Development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UNESCO</td>
<td>United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization</td>
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<tr>
<td>WTO</td>
<td>World Trade Organization</td>
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Introduction

The EU with its currently 27 member states presents a heterogeneous mixture in various aspects: languages, cultures, mentalities, policies, forms of cultivation, site conditions and cultural landscapes. On the regional level, within state boundaries and crossing these, the diversity even accelerates.

This small scale diversity is in danger. In the course of globalization today there is leveling on all scales: Dialects and whole languages disappear easier since the media is present everywhere and people are more mobile; whole areas are made more efficient – the land being developed, consolidated, standardized – in order to be able to keep up with the global market. Where this is not possible, migration starts towards urban centers or other countries, the cultural landscape becomes desolate as a result of missing cultivation. All of these processes take place everywhere in Europe, marginalized areas are affected more severely, however. Peripheral regions are characterized by the fact that their economy and infrastructure are underdeveloped because they lie out of the range of economic, scientific and other kinds of interest by the centers of power. Additionally, these regions have often been inhabited by minorities or marginalized groups of society (e.g. landless farmers) who were seen as a problem rather than an opportunity by governments during decades.

Despite these circumstances, regions dominated by traditional cultural landscapes still exist in Europe. Land uses that were widespread two to three generations ago are either still practiced there or their traces can be detected in the landscape. They have survived for various reasons and are facing dramatic change now. These changes not only threaten traditional agricultural systems and associated livelihood strategies that usually require a medium intensity input (high intensity systems would be mechanized ones requiring a lot of energy input from outside of the system such as fuel and fertilizer per area unit, very low intensity systems can be extensive grassland or abandoned land at the extreme end). But the loss of traditional land uses in many cases also leads to loss of biodiversity and structure diversity (Sirami et al. 2010), a decline of habitats with greatest environmental interest (Martínez et al. 2010), and the loss of aesthetic values (Lindemann-Matthies et al. 2010) and symbolic meanings of traditional cultural landscapes to society (Antrop 2005).
Two regions where traditional agricultural land use systems have been largely preserved until recently were selected for this study to investigate in case studies how, to what extent and due to which underlying reasons the changes are occurring. The assumption was made that landscape changes occur mainly due to changes in land use and that these are primarily reactions to outside influences. Influencing factors from outside of a marginalized area can be divided into political, economic and socio-cultural ones, with the single largest political influencing factor in Europe being the European Union’s Common Agricultural Policy (CAP). The outside perception of a marginalized region can also be seen as an influencing factor and was the second aspect investigated for this research project.

The structure of the present dissertation is as follows. The first chapters will give a short introduction to the research objectives and hypotheses, the theoretical background, the case study areas Gyimes and Las Hurdes and the methods used for data collection and analysis. The results chapter contains the four publications that the dissertation is based on. The findings are divided into

I. possible indicators for indentifying traditional cultural landscapes in Europe;
II. the outside perception of marginalized regions as a potential driver of change;
III. changing livelihoods in Gyimes and their impact on the cultural landscape; and
IV. suggestions for an improved rural management policy derived from case study experience in the research areas.

In the discussion chapter the key findings are outlined with reference to the initial three hypotheses and further research possibilities are suggested to expand on each major result. To conclude, the situation of marginalized European landscapes is put in the context of global agriculture and the challenges it will face in the future.
Research Objectives

The main objective of the research project was to explore the limitations and chances regions with preserved traditional cultural landscapes face in Europe today, regarding their regional development and maintenance of their cultural landscape. To investigate this systematically, the topic was broken down into three hypotheses and related questions.

- **Hypothesis 1**: Some traditional cultural landscapes have been preserved due to certain reasons that can be generalized on the European level.
  Questions: What are these reasons? What is the common denominator of remaining traditional cultural landscapes in Europe?

- **Hypothesis 2**: These regions are undergoing changes that alter the current landscape character, mainly owing to outside influencing factors.
  Questions: What are these changes? To what extent are the land use systems that once created the currently visible landscape features in use today?

- **Hypothesis 3**: Two main components of the outside influence are policies and the perception of outsiders.
  Questions: What are the concrete impacts and consequences of these two factors? Can a causal relationship be drawn from the source of an influencing factor to its impact on the field level?

The hypotheses were tested using two case study areas fulfilling the criteria of isolated and traditional cultural landscapes and references to other regions found in literature. The research design is illustrated in Figure 1.
Figure 1: Schematic outline of research setup with case study areas embedded in the EU context, arrows indicating induced changes within the regions.

After proving the hypotheses and answering the research questions it was possible to describe the potentials and limitations the research areas and similar regions in Europe face when it comes to the question of their future. The research project aimed at formulating practicable suggestions for the better management of these landscapes. With this last step of investigation, the present study went beyond a strict research approach and provided space for the practical application of its findings on the policy level.
Theoretical background

The concept of landscape

Landscape – both the object of investigation and a concept in itself – stood at the center of this study. The initial assumption was that landscapes in general are embedded in the wider social, economic and ecological realm as functional entities that have a sufficient degree of intrinsic homogeneity to be studied as units. The scientific meaning of landscape has changed considerably during the past few decades, shifting from a strictly geographical area bound concept to more holistic notions that also encompass non-visible and value-laden elements of landscape and focus on subjective human perception (Keisteri 1990, see article I). While one could distinguish between scientific, applied and humanistic approaches in contemporary landscape study (Jones 1991, see article I), this distinction is not made here.

The concept of landscape differs between cultures and changes over time (Drexler 2006, Keisteri 1990). A clear distinction between natural and cultural landscapes is questionable, above all in Europe (Raith 2006). There is only a gradient of human impact that can be categorized.

Where this impact is visible or invisible in the form of values and meanings (Jones 1991), the term cultural landscape is used in three ways, according to the UNESCO World Heritage Convention: landscapes intentionally created by man; natural monuments protected for their associative meanings for particular cultures; and organically evolved cultural landscapes (UNESCO 2008, Annex 3). The latter category could be applied to almost all of Europe, therefore it is useful to refine the term ‘traditional cultural landscape’ for the purpose of this study. The Institute for European Environmental Policy (IEEP 2007) defines these landscapes as derived from historic land use methods where the dominant landscape characteristics are the result of a locally adopted management approach. Often, traditional cultural landscapes have features that support aesthetic value and ecological functions.

It should be pointed out that a traditional cultural landscape is not an absolute term, but a variable. Commonly, tradition is defined as a ritual, belief or object passed down within a society from one generation to another, still maintained in the present, with origins in the past. This idea can be applied to land uses and the resulting landscapes as well, but it is obvious that what we perceive as historic and in a way unique today was not what people perceived fifty years ago. “Uniqueness in the aesthetical sense is to be redefined constantly. Usually it is attributed to the state of the landscape that is about two generations past (Wöbse 2002: 142).”
Due to the multidisciplinary nature of the study, a combination of theories was needed to grasp the spatial, functional and social dimensions of landscapes. Regional development and multi level governance were the concepts taken from regional science and political science to describe the embeddedness of landscapes in the wider context. They were considered apt for combination since both allow the representation of multiple actors and levels of action or influence and can explain the complex interactions a territorial entity faces in a broader setting. For an overview of the conceptual framework of this study see Figure 2.

As will be explained in the following, the concept of regional development was used to define and categorize exogenous and endogenous factors to the development of a landscape; whereas the theoretical framework of multi level governance was used to describe political influences (one of the four influential spheres in Figure 2) shaping the landscapes in question.
Landscape and regional development

The focus of this study was not to assess the economic development of the case study areas, but rather describe local economic developments (traditional multifunctional land uses and the changes these are undergoing) as inducing landscape changes. The idea of dividing development factors into exogenous ones which originate externally to the area and are transferred to it on purpose or randomly (e.g. infrastructure installed by external authorities); and endogenous ones which arise and develop within the area (e.g. local natural resources), was taken from modern local development theories (Capello 2009).

The empirical fact that economic development normally occurs with a high degree of spatial variability created the research and policy field of regional development to investigate the geography of welfare and its evolution and to address its unequal distribution. Theories conceptualizing local development are based upon an understanding of space as diversified within a region, with micro-territorial and micro-behavioral interactions taking place in relation to macroeconomics (Capello 2009). Development in this sense is endogenous, that is, “fundamentally depending on a concentrated organization of the territory, embedded in which is a socio-economic and cultural system whose components determine the success of the local economy (Capello & Nijkamp 2009:6).” Regions have a local economy with entrepreneurial abilities, local production factors (labor and capital), relational skills of local actors and a decision making capacity that enables them to both profit from and react to transformations at national, international and global levels (ibid.).

In regional economics, regions are the space where economic activity arises, grows and develops (Capello 2009). For the purpose of this study the concept of region in an economic sense can be replaced by the concept of landscape – as defined in the previous chapter – and analyzed with a framework that incorporates elements from economic regional growth models and adds factors relevant for a holistic view of landscapes such as ecological and social preconditions. Landscapes can be seen as territorial entities where development occurs due to endogenous and exogenous factors that partly also influence and presuppose each other. Rural landscape change in Europe has been largely driven by agricultural transformation (Jongman 2002) that in turn was induced by macroeconomic developments and economic instruments like subsidies and taxes (IEEP 2010, López-i-Gelats et al. 2011), technical means (Schneebberger et al. 2007), socio-cultural changes (Antrop 2005, Palang et al. 2000) and by policy, in particular the CAP (Acs et al. 2010, Tappeiner et al. 2003). Climate change as a determining ecological factor is expected to play a role in the future (FAO 2009). In this study, these influencing spheres were divided into factors outside the landscape systems and factors intrinsic to them. Endogenous factors (site conditions, local economy and society, local political stakeholders and networks) set the framework within which a region or landscape co-develops in the global context, where ecological, political, social and economic factors influence wider areas (Figure 2).
Regional development in the EU

During the integration process of the EU, and especially after the two enlargements in 2004 and 2007 leading to a drastic increase in regional disparities, regional development theories became ever more important and gained political relevance. Besides triggering scientific interest and new theories on spatial development, new normative principles related to regional development evolved, making territorial cohesion one of the key strategic principles of the EU (Capello & Nijkamp 2009).

In the global political and cooperation for development context, the terms regional and rural development are frequently used to mean the same. As a policy approach, both are targeted at specific areas, rather than for example sectors (e.g. agricultural policy). While regional development is the provision of aid and other assistance to regions which are less economically developed, rural development in general is used to denote the actions and initiatives taken to improve the standard of living in non-urban areas, the countryside and remote villages. Economically less developed areas largely overlap with rural areas in many countries and regions worldwide. Since the primary sector usually plays an important role in these regions, one main focus of regional or rural development policies has been agriculture and other land uses (OECD 2006).

In the European context however regional development and rural development are separate policies with different corresponding funds and administrative bodies within the European Commission. The Directorate General for Regional Policy’s (DG Regio) main goal is to reduce disparities between the levels of development of regions and countries of the European Union through infrastructure and IT projects, the transfer of know-how between regions and countries, and investments in employment and competitiveness (DG Regio 2010). The EU’s rural development policy on the other hand is part of a sectoral approach, the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP). Overseen by the Directorate General for Agriculture and Rural development (DG Agri), the policy is organized around three priority areas: improving the competitiveness of the agricultural and forestry sector; improving the environment and the countryside; improving the quality of life in rural areas and encouraging diversification of the rural economy (Council Regulation (EC) No. 1698/2005).

Independently of the distinction of policies within the European Commission, in this study the political term regional development refers to policies and actions targeted at the economic, social and ecological development of deprived regions. Since the case study areas are both economically less developed and rural, the terms regional and rural development are used as synonyms, unless otherwise specified, especially in article IV.
Theoretical background

The governance concept underlying this study

The concept of governance arose as a reaction to changing political practices and realities towards the end of the 20th century. Phenomena like globalization and the rise of networks called for a concept that encompassed growing interdependencies between state, economy and society on all levels from local to international and acknowledged policy processes going beyond territorial, functional and sectoral categories (Benz 2004a). Governance both describes the observed adaptation of governing bodies to the altered political environment and denotes a conceptual, theoretical representation of co-ordination of social systems and mostly also the role of the state in that process (Pierre 2000).

In the broadest, institutional sense governance can be defined as “the setting of rules, the application of rules and the enforcement of rules” (Kjær 2005: 10). Depending on the context, various more detailed definitions exist when relating governance to public administration (Rhodes 1997), international relations (Rosenau 1995), comparative politics (Hyden 1999) or economic governance (World Bank 2000). The common core of the usages is that governance is going beyond government, including state as well as non-state actors who manage complex policy making structures such as hierarchies, markets, networks and negotiations (Benz 2004a, Kjær 2005). The governance concept has become a major tool to analyze system characteristics (polity), decision making processes (politics) and the policy level in the EU (Eising & Lenschow 2007).

Landscape and multi level governance

For the investigation of political influences on selected regions/landscapes in this study, the concept of multi level governance was regarded as helpful as a starting point. The term was established to describe the growing importance of institutions on different spatial scales and political levels (and transcending these) in Europe as opposed to the traditional state centric model (Marks et al. 1996, Marks & Hooghe 2001). While first focusing on relations and interdependencies between regions, states and supranational bodies (ibid.), multi level governance started to deal with the shift of power to the regional and supranational levels parallel to the decline of political importance of national state bodies during the European integration process (Eising & Lenschow 2007, Kjær 2005). But the conceptual categorization into territorial policy levels does not assign higher importance to any level involved (Benz 2004b). Processes on the regional level, the subject of regional governance (Böcher 2008, Fürst 2004), are embedded in the multi level governance framework which includes political structures and processes connecting different levels (Benz 2000).
While multilevel governance is an established approach to current political setups, it is criticized for its lack of evidence in practice. Benz (2004a) recognizes that the aforementioned interactions of governance only exist under the umbrella of a given hierarchy by national states. The concept overestimates the role of non-state actors that due to structural and financial difficulties do not participate in the policy-making process equally on all levels (Kooiman 2005). Some argue that multilevel governance in the EU can only be found in cohesion policy (Kjer 2005) and many agree that this policy area is the major example for the concept in practice (Auel 2003, Benz 2003). Regional cohesion policy in the EU aims at counterbalancing economic development discrepancies between the regions and makes regional stakeholders the conflict parties of resource allocation through integration in the negotiation process (Benz 2004b). Nevertheless, as can be observed with the Committee of the Regions (CoR) and the many regional representations in Brussels, regional stakeholders often merely play a consultatory role or act as lobby groups not included in formal policy-making processes (see for example the Cooperation agreement between the European Commission and the CoR, CoR 2005).

Apart from regional policy, the CAP was in the main focus of the dissertation project, due to the importance of the primary sector for the research areas. Since agricultural policy is an area where European national states have transferred a lot of authority and legislative power to the EU level, it was seen as helpful to recognize hierarchic aspects of governance and focus on the state and institutional core of multilevel governance and not too much on processes and networks (multilevel vs. network governance, Eising & Lenschow 2007). Kooiman (2005:118) suggests the term hierarchical governance to express that “hierarchy is still the most common attribute for public governing bodies” that exercise top-down governance through steering and control.

In the present study the deductive approach of describing existing policy realities in the research areas was chosen, without assuming a multilevel character of governance in all policy areas. It is debated whether multilevel governance is a theory or not and whether it can explain causal chains between structures, processes and policy results (Benz 2007). But as a descriptive-analytical framework, multilevel governance with a focus on hierarchies was regarded as suitable to assess the outcomes of agricultural, rural development and regional development policies in Gyimes and Las Hurdes. This allowed focusing on top-down, state-led steering mechanisms like legislation and distribution of public services – which prevail in the first pillar of the CAP and in most of RD policy – and at the same time recognizing bottom-up and horizontal stakeholder interactions like LEADER or cooperation between regions. The method of policy analysis was used to carry out the analysis of influencing policy factors and the effects they had on the research areas.
Case study areas

Two regions representing concrete examples of traditional cultural landscapes still in use today were selected: Las Hurdes in Extremadura, Spain and Gyimes in the eastern Carpathian Mountains, Romania. Indicators were developed to determine what kind of landscapes can be called traditional cultural landscapes in Europe and form parts of possible traditional landscape ‘hotspots’ (article I).

Apart from these indicators dealing with the isolation, difficult site conditions for agriculture and a population that differs from the national average (e.g. minorities), the case study areas were selected for the following reasons:

- They represent traditional cultural landscapes in two very different geographical, socio-cultural and political settings. One important aspect was that of Spain being a relatively old EU member state (since 1986) and Romania a new one (since 2007).

- They represent traditional cultural landscapes at different stages of development: Traditional agriculture still affords a source of income in the Carpathians, whereas in Las Hurdes it has lost this role. Therefore less of the traditional structures are actually in use.

- Because of the different stages of development the Spanish Las Hurdes represents a potential future scenario for the Romanian Gyimes.

- Their known history of discrimination, both positive and negative, by the outside society (visitors, scientists and decision makers) which lead to a certain regional image. The investigation of the role of this regional image in tourists’ perceptions today is described in article II.

- The practicability of research, as the author was able to communicate with the regional inhabitants in their native languages.

The research areas are described thoroughly in each article with a slightly different focus. Therefore, this chapter shall only give a first introduction and describe the current prevailing land uses and policies aimed at rural areas in the respective countries. See Table 1 for general agricultural data of Romania and Spain.
Table 1: Agricultural land use data for Romania and Spain

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Land cover types</th>
<th>Romania</th>
<th>Spain</th>
<th>EU</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>agricultural area as share of country/EU totals</td>
<td>56,6%</td>
<td>53,0%</td>
<td>43,0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UAA under LFA</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>81,3%</td>
<td>55,4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UAA under Natura 2000</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>24,0%</td>
<td>10,5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Predominantly rural areas as share of country/EU totals</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>EU-27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>total area</td>
<td>59,3%</td>
<td>46,1%</td>
<td>56,6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>population</td>
<td>45,9%</td>
<td>13,3%</td>
<td>23,7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GVA</td>
<td>33,8%</td>
<td>10,7%</td>
<td>16,6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>employment</td>
<td>42,2%</td>
<td>12,0%</td>
<td>21,4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economy within predominantly rural areas</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>EU-25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>employment rate</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>58,9%</td>
<td>61,0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>share of employment in non-agricultural sectors</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>84,7%</td>
<td>86,2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>farmers with other gainful activities</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>30,0%</td>
<td>35,1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>adults with medium or high educational attainment</td>
<td>N/A¹</td>
<td>36,2%</td>
<td>70,9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>participation of adults in education and training</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>8,9%</td>
<td>9,5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Farm structure</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>EU-27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>share of farms with UAA &lt; 2 ha</td>
<td>65,2%</td>
<td>27,6%</td>
<td>48,4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>share of farms with ESU &lt; 1</td>
<td>78,0%</td>
<td>10,0%</td>
<td>46,7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>share of holders &gt; 64 years</td>
<td>44,2%</td>
<td>31,4%</td>
<td>32,7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>average UAA per holding</td>
<td>~7 ha²</td>
<td>25,4 ha</td>
<td>12,6 ha</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sources: EC (2011a,b), EEA (2006), Eurostat (2009a,b, 2010), RuDi (2008a,b)

¹ The numbers available for intermediate and urban areas (71,6% and 84,5%), which are well above the EU-25 average (RuDi 2008a), suggest a high percentage for predominantly rural areas as well.

² Official numbers vary between 3,5 ha (EC 2011a) and 11 ha (Eurostat 2009a).
Las Hurdes, Extremadura, Spain

Fifty three percent of Spain’s area is under agricultural land use, which is predominantly located in intermediate rather than rural areas (Eurostat 2010b), with the average farm size being 25.4ha (Eurostat 2009). The primary policy targeted at rural areas in Spain is the rural development policy defined on a regional level by the autonomous communities. Yet only 13.8% of total agricultural expenditure in 2009 went to the development of rural areas, while 71.2% were spent for direct payments to farms (EU-27 average is 22.5% versus 67.0%, EC 2011b). Nationally overarching priorities in rural development are the fight against depopulation of rural areas, the improvement of the environment and the maintenance of quality of life through diversification and local capacity building, as set out in the Spanish Rural Development Framework (EC 2007a).

In Extremadura the regional priorities for the current period until 2013 are in line with these, focusing on improved competitiveness of the agri-food sector, promotion of sustainable agriculture and forestry and the search for new economic opportunities in the rural areas (EC 2007b). These aims seem justified yet challenging with rural areas covering 98.5% of the region’s territory, 88.7% of the population living there, a GDP per capita only about 60% of the EU average and an unemployment rate of 17.2% (all numbers as of 2007, EC 2007b). A large proportion of the unemployed can be found in the primary sector and includes a group of about 65.000 day laborers benefitting from a special unemployment aid for the agrarian sector (abbreviated AEPSA) that was specifically designed for Extremadura and Andalucía Communities in 2000, continuing the rural employment plan from 1984 (Junta de Extremadura 2000).

Compared to the regional figures, Las Hurdes shows an even more problematic situation from the socio-economic point of view (see Table 2 for basic information). The population of around 7 200 has been declining since the 1980s and local authorities see no end of this trend. The few employment opportunities in the region require mainly unqualified labor and can be found in construction, the services sector and to a lesser extent in agriculture (Mancomunidad de Las Hurdes 2011).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 2: Administrative data on Las Hurdes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>area</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>population</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>site conditions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>agriculture and economy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sources: Mancomunidad de Las Hurdes (2011), INE (2011)
The agricultural sector has very much changed in Las Hurdes during the past few decades. Traditional agricultural land uses are not practiced for economic reasons anymore; the land use systems have been intensified where possible or given up. Today the few people remaining in the agricultural sector are either employed by agribusinesses, often outside the region and on a seasonal or even daily basis, or do it solely for (semi-) subsistence. Products such as olives, cherries and goat cheese are sold although they only generate small income. Honey is the only economically viable product (ADIC-Hurdes 2008).

Traditional land uses in Las Hurdes include agricultural production in irrigated terrace gardens and tree orchards in addition to beekeeping and animal husbandry. The harsh climate and site conditions had forced people to create a highly adapted cultural landscape that enabled integrated use of the whole range of natural resources. All elements of the traditional agricultural landscape – terraces and dividing walls, paths, buildings, canals – were built from the local schist stones (Hernández et al. 2006). The human impact on the traditional cultural landscape decreases with growing distance from the village centers (see Figure 3).

Figure 3: Sketch of a typical Las Hurdes village with surrounding cultural landscape.
Gyimes, Harghita and Bacau Counties, Romania

56.6 percent of Romania’s area is used for agriculture and an additional 32.8% fall under semi-natural land cover classes, mainly in the Carpathian mountains and hills (EC 2011a, EEA 2011). Rural areas – about 60% of the national territory – play a major role for the country’s economy since 45.9% of the population live there and 42.2% are employed in agriculture and forestry, numbers that are significantly higher than in other EU member states (EC 2011a). Despite its dual structure with large commercial farms on the one hand and very small holdings hardly reaching the semi-subsistence level on the other hand, one of the biggest challenges of agricultural production in Romania is the low productivity (EC 2008).

In light of this, rural development comprises a very high 71% of total agricultural expenditure (EC 2011a), with the priorities to 1) transform and modernize agricultural production and processing; 2) improve competitiveness while ensuring environmental sustainability; and 3) facilitate the movement of labor out of agriculture into other sectors and ensure adequate economic and social conditions for the rural population (EC 2008).

In Romania, there is no specification of the rural development policy on regional level, therefore in Gyimes, set on the county border between Harghita and Bacau, the same policies apply as everywhere in Romania. The small scale structures and traditional multifunctional land uses in Gyimes fit well into the national picture, where a large majority of farms are below the size of 2ha Utilizable Agricultural Area (UAA) or one European Size Unit (ESU). 95 percent of beneficiaries receiving direct aid countrywide can be found in the lowest aid category of up to 500 Euros annually, which is true also on the regional level for Gyimes. The fact that over 44% of beneficiaries are older than 64 years can be applied to Gyimes as well (all numbers from 2007, EC 2008).

Table 3: Administrative data on Gyimes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>area</th>
<th>approx. 600km²</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>population</td>
<td>13 991 inhabitants in 3 communities, largest community Gyimesbükk with 5 340 inhabitants slightly declining population between 55.1% (Gyimesbükk) and 98.9% (Gyimesközéplok) ethnic Hungarians</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>site conditions</td>
<td>- 5°C medium annual temperature</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- 700-1200mm annual precipitation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- altitude 700-1665m asl.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- relatively fertile soils only in floodplains</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>economy and agriculture</td>
<td>- agriculture mainly on subsistence level, mainly dairy products</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- few local employment opportunities</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Traditional agriculture in Gyimes is multifunctional, the narrow floodplain is used for gardening and cropland while dairy farming is done on the steep slopes, dividing the hills into meadows and pastures for cattle (see Table 3 for basic administrative data and Figure 4 for a scheme of the cultural landscape). At higher elevations transhumant sheep herding takes place, and some patches of coniferous forests remain (Ilyés 2007). Agriculture is still a source of employment for a large proportion of the population, although it does not generate a formal income and is losing economic importance, especially since Romania entered the EU in 2007. Milk is marketed in small quantities, but wood is really the only feasible commodity in the region, often harvested illegally.

Figure 4: Geographic distribution of different land uses in the cultural landscape of Gyimes.

Socio-economic developments that have started in the last third of the 20th century have brought a change to the traditional land use system. The highly regulated EU dairy market, low agricultural output prices, open borders that allow migration and improved opportunities in nearby urban centers all lead to less agricultural activity in the region and to abandonment of the least favorable patches of land farthest from villages. Major landscape changes take place along the main road (Ilyés 2002).
Methods

In the research project a combination of socio-empirical methods was applied to prove the three hypotheses and answer the research questions. The data collection consisted in literature review and a survey of tourists and households in the two research areas using questionnaires and interviews, complemented with expert interviews on the regional and EU level. The obtained survey data were qualitatively and quantitatively analyzed. A livelihoods analysis was done on household level and a policy analysis on regional level. A detailed description of methods shall follow below and is given in the respective article chapters for each step of research. For an overview of applied methods see Table 4, page 23.

Literature review

A literature review was conducted to gather information on the research areas in general and on land uses and land use history. In order to get a thorough overview and because scientific literature on both regions was scarce also non-scientific literature was considered. Valuable information was found at the following institutions:

For Las Hurdes
- Documentation Center, Pinofranqueado
- Local Action Group Las Hurdes – ADIC Hurdes, Caminomorisco
- University of Extremadura, Department for Agriculture and Forestry, Plasencia
- National Library of Spain, Madrid

For Gyimes
- Pogányhavas Microregion, Csíkszereda
- Szekler Museum of Ciuc, Csíkszereda
- Research Institute of Ethnic and National Minorities, Hungarian Academy of Sciences, Budapest
- Corvinus University, Budapest
Questionnaire survey of tourists (article II)

The goal of the tourist survey was to find out how current visitors perceive and use the landscape. The questions asked were identical in both regions, apart from a few altered questions referring to specific regional landscape features. The questionnaire survey had the aim of reaching as many visitors as possible to deliver quantitative data. It was combined with qualitative in-depth, semi-structured interviews with a few selected tourists and participant observation in order to gain a deeper insight into visitors’ landscape perception. This way a balance between highly and lowly structured communication; written, oral and observing as well as quantitative and qualitative survey methods was obtained (Atteslander & Cromm 2010).

The polls were carried out during the tourist season of 2009 from March/April to beginning of October. In the case of Gyimes, complementary data was used from a survey in 2006, when participants of an annually organized weeklong summer camp on local folk culture were asked using the same questionnaire (Solymosi 2008). During the summer camp a simple random sampling was achieved through handing out a questionnaire to nearly every participant above the age of 16. In practice, it was not possible to carry out a simple random sampling during the tourist season of 2009. The questionnaires were placed at the most visited hotels and campsites of the regions and the tourist information center in Las Hurdes. Visitors staying at one of the hotels or visiting the information center had a higher probability of filling out the questionnaire (convenience sampling, Bortz & Döring 2003). See Table 9 in article II for an overview of the applied tourist surveys.

Interview survey of households (article III)

The household survey design was based on information from the literature review and on knowledge gained during previous stays in the research areas. Since inhabitants were more eager to talk than to write and in Las Hurdes many respondents were practically illiterate, it was decided to carry out interviews rather than distribute questionnaires. This time consuming approach did not allow for a large sample size, therefore one representative village in each region was selected to carry out a full survey. The selected villages were Horcajo in Las Hurdes, part of the municipality of Pinofranqueado, and the side valley of Antalokpataka in Gyimes, belonging to Gyimesközéplok community. Their proximity to main infrastructure, their small size, and the opportunity to reside on site and communicate with all inhabitants in Hungarian or Spanish respectively made the full survey feasible.
Every household in Horcajo and Antalokpataka was revisited as necessary until the interview could be conducted with an adult household member. The original questionnaire was filled out by the interviewer on site and contained open, rating and multiple choice questions related to the satisfaction with life in the region, the economic situation of the household, past and present agricultural activity and the perceived influence of the EU (see the full list of questions for Gyimes in Table 10 in article III). Semi-structured interviews, which continued from one to several hours, were conducted and interviewees could expand the themes as they wished.

This qualitative approach was extended to a few households belonging directly to Pinofranqueado and Gyimesközéplok and to households in neighboring villages (Castillo, Las Erías) and side valleys (Sötétpataka). Thus it was possible to determine whether the findings for Horcajo and Antalokpataka could be generalized for the whole of Las Hurdes and Gyimes or whether they described a specific situation. These households were selected by a multiple random sample.

The data from household interviews were interpreted using a livelihoods analysis (SLA, see below) and a content analysis according to Mayring (2010) to deliver complementary information going beyond the livelihood analysis grid for the analyzed households in Horcajo and Antalokpataka. The questions concerning attitudes and opinions that were asked in all of the surveyed households also outside of the selected villages were evaluated quantitatively.

**Expert interviews (articles II, III, IV)**

The expert interviews carried out for this study can be regarded as what are called elite interviews in political science. In this form of interview, the target group is very specifically restricted to a few persons and the balance of knowledge is in favor of the respondent (Burnham et al. 2004). Elite interviewing is an explorative, non-standardized, individualized survey method to obtain information about topics that are best described by stakeholders deeply involved in decision making processes. Due to its open character, it often provides a more complex and comprehensive understanding than other forms of data collection. The interview technique was semi-structured, or focused, with the interviewer already having a lot of previously gathered background knowledge that defined the set of discussed topics (Johnson & Reynolds 2005).
Interviews were conducted on the local and regional levels first, with stakeholders having insight into, and influence upon processes in the research areas. On each level and for each region two experts were chosen. Secondly, interviews were conducted with three European Commission administrators in the Directorate General for Agriculture and Rural Development responsible for the Spanish and Romanian rural development programs. The information obtained from the experts represented highly informed, personal interpretations of events and processes. They were used as background information to judge whether empirically generated field data were plausible or not and to gather insight that was not accessible through written documentation.

Livelihoods analysis (article III)

The household data obtained in Antalokpataka and Horcajo, was analyzed following the concept of sustainable livelihoods approaches (SLA). Owing to the research design data were available for the entire communities respectively, allowing to draw a holistic picture of livelihoods on the very local level. So far, only the results from Gyimes have been published and form part of this thesis.

Originating from the development theory, livelihoods approaches offer a way of thinking about the objectives, scope and priorities for development, placing people and their priorities at the centre of development. The approaches were designed to achieve poverty reduction so that the poor themselves are able to build upon their own opportunities, supporting their access to assets. The original SLA concept and framework adopted by the UK Department for International Development (DFID) in the late 1990s has been altered and extended by different organizations to suit a variety of contexts, issues, priorities and applications (ELDIS 2010).

“Livelihoods approaches are based on a conceptual framework to aid analysis of the factors affecting peoples’ livelihoods, including:

- the priorities that people define as their desired livelihood outcomes;
- their access to social, human, physical, financial and natural capital or assets, and their ability to put these to productive use;
- the different strategies they adopt (and how they use their assets) in pursuit of their priorities;
- the policies, institutions and processes that shape their access to assets and opportunities; and
- the context in which they live, and factors affecting vulnerability to shocks and stresses (ibid. 2010).”
SLA was seen as an ideal way to assess livelihood realities in the research areas due to the method’s flexibility enabling the inclusion of various income sources, stakeholders and levels of influence. Carney (1998) describes the key strengths of SLA as follows:

- It projects a realistic picture of rural life, taking into account the multiple income sources and range of survival strategies (including various types of migration) that most rural households adopt.

- It recognizes the importance of multiple actors in both the private and the public sectors and at all levels of administration.

- It includes national and international linkages and the effect these have on people’s livelihoods. The approaches emphasize the importance of macro-level policy and institutions to the livelihood options of local communities and individuals.

SLA was designed for flexible application at different scales (Scoones 1998) and is indeed used by international donor organizations for country level or policy framework analyses down to household level surveys (Hussein 2002). For this study, the household level was considered the scale best suited to understanding the rationale of individual stakeholders and assessing the impacts of land use changes on the landscape.

One of the main uses of SLA has been to determine the sustainability of a rural livelihood (Scoones 1998). For this study, however, the SLA was used as an analytical tool to assess households’ livelihood strategies in a holistic way. Although the focus of the survey questionnaire was on agricultural activity – until now the main livelihood strategy of the majority of households in the region – the applied survey method facilitated the collection of information on alternate sources of income.

The original sustainable rural livelihood framework looked at how, in a particular context, a certain combination of livelihood resources result in the ability to follow a particular combination of livelihood strategies (e.g. agricultural intensification or expansion, diversification, migration) and the outcomes. Institutional processes affect the basic assets and the resulting strategies chosen and determine the achievement (or not) of outcomes (Scoones 1998: 4).

Within this framework, households were described and grouped according to the livelihood strategies they chose, which in turn depended on whether and to what extent they had access to different assets or resources. The assets analyzed in this study were taken from the DFID framework (ELDIS 2010) and adjusted slightly to the local circumstances.
The category ‘political capital’ was included in the list of assets in Gyimes because it was seen as crucial for the region; how household members perceived their role as an ethnic minority in Romania on the one hand and as relatively new members of the EU on the other hand. Table 11 in article III summarizes the analyzed assets with corresponding survey methods.

**Policy analysis (article IV)**

Policy analysis asks what political stakeholders do, why they do and what effect they produce. In order to successfully pursue a goal, a political stakeholder has to have the following information on the political problem in question:

- The historical dimension of the problem: how did it occur?
- The context dimension: under what circumstances is the problem to be solved?
- The comparative dimension: what alternative solutions are there?
- The normative dimension: how are the solutions rated towards general goals and values?
- The legal dimension: what procedures and instruments are there to solve the problem and what is the legal framework?
- The technical dimension: how can the problem be solved practically and what are the obstacles? (Schubert & Bandelow 2009)

In policy analysis, as opposed to questions of classical political science or political problem solving, policy is the constant variable, whereas political institutions (polity) and processes (politics) determine the circumstances as independent variables (Schubert 1991). Based on this framework, the process of integrated policy analysis according to Dunn (2004) was adopted in the present study using the gathered data from the previous steps of investigation. In a first step it was determined that the current policies for rural development in Europe posed opportunities for improvement that could be attained through public action and therefore were identified as a policy problem. Secondly, the observed policy outcomes were assessed looking at the consequences of implementation of past and present rural development policies in the case study regions. It was not always possible to determine whether an outcome was actually an effect of the analyzed policy or of something else, which is frequently the case in policy analysis (ibid.). Further on, expected policy outcomes were forecasted for policies designed to solve the problem, which in this case were the policy scenarios discussed by the European Commission in 2011 for the CAP reform (EC 2010). In addition to the proposed solutions, own suggestions were elaborated to represent the preferred possible policy solution of the problems the concrete case study areas faced. This way the study combined problem finding and solving, as well as retrospective and prospective policy analysis (Dunn 2004).
### Table 4: Overview of applied methods for data collection and analysis

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Method</th>
<th>Topics</th>
<th>Applied in</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Data collection</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Literature review</td>
<td>- landscape history, land uses, economic and social parameters of Gyimes and Las Hurdes</td>
<td>all articles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- landscape types, landscape evolution in Europe</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- policy framework for rural areas in Europe:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- policies targeted at rural areas on EU, national and regional level</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- regulations affecting agriculture and other land uses in Gyimes and Las Hurdes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- policies not targeted specifically at agriculture or rural areas but affecting these</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Questionnaire survey of tourists</td>
<td>- tourists’ landscape perception in research areas</td>
<td>article II</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interview survey of households</td>
<td>- perception of quality of life in research area</td>
<td>article III</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- economic situation of household</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- land use and land use change of household</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- agricultural activities of household</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- perception of EU influence on research area</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expert interviews</td>
<td>- local level</td>
<td>articles II, III, IV</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- regional level</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- EU level</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Data analysis</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Livelihoods analysis according to SLA on household level in Gyimes and Las Hurdes</td>
<td>- analysis of livelihood assets</td>
<td>article III</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- analysis of livelihood outcomes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Qualitative content analysis of household interviews</td>
<td>information complementing SLA</td>
<td>article III</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quantitative analysis of tourist questionnaires</td>
<td>outsiders’ landscape perception</td>
<td>articles II, III</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- inhabitants’ perception of local situation (see “Trends and attitudes” section in article III)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Policy analysis</td>
<td>- policy problems</td>
<td>article IV</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- observed policy outcomes</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- expected policy outcomes</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- recommended policies</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Results

I. Indicators for the identification of cultural landscape hotspots in Europe

Abstract

Hotspots of traditional cultural landscapes in Europe can be found in locations which meet a specific set of characteristics. These characteristics were defined in a study based on literature review, content analysis and two case studies conducted in peripheral regions of Europe. The preconditions for hotspots of traditional cultural landscapes seem to be geographic, economic, infrastructural and political isolation, marginal agricultural land and often a population that differs from the surrounding national mainstream. These indicators are exemplified in two case studies. Based on field work carried out in Las Hurdes, in Spain, and Gyimes, in Romania, I argue that the factors that once enabled unique cultural landscapes to emerge are also those that nowadays help to preserve them as islands or hotspots in a globalized, and increasingly more uniform world. Finding and monitoring these traditional cultural landscape hotspots in Europe is the first prerequisite for systematically studying and eventually protecting them. But existing inventory, monitoring and policy approaches have not been designed for this purpose and hence are not fully able to identify regions with traditional cultural landscapes. The indicators presented in this study can be used to identify such regions.

Introduction

Hotspots, a term commonly used in many disciplines including geology, computer science, biology and arts, pinpoint areas of uncharacteristically high or unique activity within a region of low, or normal activity. In this paper I propose the use of this term to denote regions of high or unique traditional integrated farming activity—with associated values such as agricultural biodiversity, knowledge systems, food and livelihood security and cultural significance (GIAHS 2009a)— as cultural landscape hotspots within a larger region of standard activity. Analogous to the biodiversity hotspot concept (Myers et al. 2000), cultural landscape hotspots are regions where exceptional concentrations of endemic cultural landscape elements are declining at a dramatic rate. Globally, such regions would include, for example, the Andean agriculture system in Peru or terraced landscapes in China combining wet rice fields and fish farming (GIAHS 2009b). In Europe, the Transylvanian basin and the Carpathian Mountains in Romania present examples of different cultures maintaining, by force or by choice, their traditional agricultural systems within south-eastern Europe where collectivization of agriculture during the communist era transformed the landscape on a very large scale.
Why did highly valuable and diverse traditional cultural landscapes, which are now researched for their ecological and social values—be it the Apuseni Mountains inhabited by Romanian Motzs (Rusdea et al. 2005), the Hungarian Székler settlements in eastern Transylvania (Gnädinger et al. 2006) or the ethnically distinct Csángó population in the Gyimes valley (Solomosi 2008)—survive here and not elsewhere?

This question could be better answered if such landscapes were systematically identified and studied. Although in Europe landscapes with high biodiversity or regions that are economically deprived by virtue of their geographical location are being mapped, unique cultural landscapes have been overlooked. Furthermore, an integrated inventory that combines all features of traditional cultural landscapes is non-existent. In this study the preconditions which enable hotspots of traditional cultural landscapes to occur are elaborated to assist the identification of such regions in Europe.

Methods

Definitions currently used to describe landscapes of all types were reviewed and filtered to find a common basis for indicators which may be used to describe traditional cultural landscapes. As a basis for this study, a review of the various existing definitions of traditional cultural landscapes was undertaken to obtain a working definition for this study. The schematic structure of the research is shown in Figure 4. Broad-scale definitions of different landscape types in international use were narrowed down step-by-step to the very specific category of traditional cultural landscape. The circles highlight the goal, which was to identify indicators for traditional cultural landscapes.

Two regions representing concrete examples of traditional cultural landscapes still in use today were selected: Las Hurdes in western Spain and Gyimes in the eastern Carpathian Mountains. The criteria for the selection were indicators developed in this study, in addition to the following reasons:

– They represent traditional cultural landscapes in two very different geographical, socio-cultural and political settings.

– They represent traditional cultural landscapes at different stages of development. Traditional agriculture still affords a source of income in the Carpathians, whereas in Las Hurdes it has lost this role and has become a pastime. Therefore less of the traditional structures are actually in use.

– Because of the different stages of development the Spanish Las Hurdes represents a potential future scenario for the Romanian Gyimes.

– Their known history of discrimination, both positive and negative, by the outside society (visitors, scientists and decision-makers) which lead to a certain regional image.
The practicability of research, as the author was able to communicate with the regional inhabitants in their native languages.

Figure 5: Steps towards more precise landscape type definitions.

The methods of historical landscape analysis (Schwineköper 2000, Rippon 2004), unstructured interviews with experts (e.g. other researchers, NGO and administrative staff) and structured interviews with the inhabitants of the regions (Bryman 2008) were used in field studies. The focus of the socio-empirical survey, combining qualitative and quantitative methods, was to determine the current role of traditional agriculture and the factors influencing land use changes.

Description of Study Areas

The two case study areas lie in opposite directions, virtually at the western and eastern borders of Europe (Figure 6). Despite very different political and economic settings in these countries and ongoing changes in the landscape, both regions still preserve large parts of their traditional cultural landscapes because traditional agriculture is still practiced.
Figure 6: Position of study areas Las Hurdes, in western Spain, and Gyimes, in central Romania.

Traditional land use in Las Hurdes, a system of three to four valleys in the northern Extremadura of Spain, includes agricultural production in irrigated terrace gardens and tree orchards in addition to beekeeping and animal husbandry. The harsh climate and site conditions have forced people to create a highly adapted cultural landscape that enables integrated use of the whole range of natural resources. All elements of the traditional agricultural landscape—terrace and dividing walls, paths, buildings, canals—are built from the local schist stones (Hernández et al. 2006). Agriculture is still carried out at a subsistence level by many inhabitants, and products such as olives and cherries are still sold although they generate small income. Honey is the only economically viable product. Las Hurdes is the only administrative unit in Extremadura where emigration still takes place because income earning opportunities for the young are limited to public aid/community service and seasonal jobs in agriculture or in construction (ADIC Hurdes 2008).

In Gyimes, the easternmost valley of the eastern Carpathians in Romania, the narrow floodplain has traditionally been used for gardening. Dairy farming is done on the steep slopes, dividing the hills into meadows and pastures for cattle. At higher elevations transhumant sheep herding takes place, and some patches of coniferous forests remain (Ilyés 2007).
The traditional cultural landscape is typical of the Carpathian region. Wood is the dominant construction material, the style of housing reveals characteristics of the local Csángó culture, which is a Hungarian speaking ethnic minority. Agriculture is still the major source of employment for a large proportion of the population, although it does not generate a formal income. While only milk is marketed in small quantities, there is little machinery available and the topography makes any form of intensification almost impossible. The young seek employment in urban centers or abroad, which leads to abandonment of the least favorable patches of land farthest from villages. Major landscape changes occur along the main road in the form of modern architecture (Ilyés 2002). Gyimes has been administratively divided since the 1960s, with the southern part belonging to Harghita county and the northeastern part to Bacau county.

The characteristics of the two cultural landscapes are summarized in Table 5.

**Table 5:** Characteristics of the two case study regions Las Hurdes and Gyimes.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Categories</th>
<th>Las Hurdes</th>
<th>Gyimes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Geography</td>
<td>- westernmost province of Spain&lt;br&gt;- northernmost administrative unit of Extremadura&lt;br&gt;- far away from an urban center&lt;br&gt;- poor public transport&lt;br&gt;- valleys</td>
<td>- easternmost province of former Hungary&lt;br&gt;- easternmost part of Carpathians&lt;br&gt;- far away from an urban center&lt;br&gt;- valley with side valleys</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Site conditions</td>
<td>- 14°C medium annual temperature&lt;br&gt;- 900-1800mm annual precipitation&lt;br&gt;- altitude 800-1200m&lt;br&gt;- poor, strongly structured soils&lt;br&gt;- narrow valleys, steep slopes</td>
<td>- 5°C medium annual temperature&lt;br&gt;- 700-1200mm annual precipitation&lt;br&gt;- altitude 700-1500m&lt;br&gt;- fertile soils limited to floodplains&lt;br&gt;- narrow floodplains, steep slopes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>History</td>
<td>early settlement, conserving land-use practices no longer used elsewhere</td>
<td>relatively late settlement, conserving land use practices no longer used outside Carpathian region, not collectivized during communist era</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Land use</td>
<td>- gardening&lt;br&gt;- orchards&lt;br&gt;- goat pasture/forestry (competing land uses)&lt;br&gt;- apiculture</td>
<td>- forestry&lt;br&gt;- pasture (sheep and cattle)&lt;br&gt;- gardening&lt;br&gt;- hardly machinery use</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 5 continued.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Structure</th>
<th>very small-scale</th>
<th>small-scale, many margins and linear structures</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Economy</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- subsistence agriculture</td>
<td>- subsistence agriculture</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- seasonal work</td>
<td>- seasonal work abroad</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- public benefits</td>
<td>- emigration</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- still low emigration</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- new seasonal immigration</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Policy</td>
<td>targeted development policy through EU and Spanish public funds</td>
<td>specific policies not known, EU programs beginning now</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Culture</td>
<td>rich local culture</td>
<td>ethnic minority of Csángós</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perception</td>
<td>- long history of social marginalization</td>
<td>special role for Hungarians because of its former border position until 1919</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- stigmatization as the third world of Spain until 1970s</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Theoretical Background on Landscapes**

The concept of landscape differs between cultures—even within Europe—and changes over time (Drexler 2006, Keisteri 1990). In general it can be stated, that “the geographical concept of landscape was used more in the sense of area in earlier times, whereas nowadays emphasis is placed on the subjective human experience of a landscape” (Keisteri 1990: 42). The range of possible interpretations for landscape has broadened from a strictly geographical area, bound and visible, to more holistic notions that also encompass non-visible and value-laden elements of landscape. Jones (1991) defines three approaches to contemporary landscape study: a scientific approach examining everything visible in an objective way; an applied approach concerned with selected landscape elements with a certain value; and a humanistic approach investigating symbols that are meaningful for social groups in a subjective way.

Here, this distinction is not made. While it might be useful to adhere to a strict geographical approach while distinguishing cultural landscapes from other landscapes, it becomes apparent that an objective refinement of the cultural landscape categories (Figure 4) is not possible. Both the allocation of given values to particular cultural landscapes by different groups and the way locals perceive their landscapes provide an ‘associative value’ (Zimmermann 2006) which plays an important role in defining cultural landscapes.
Cultural Landscape Definitions

Is there such a distinct category as cultural landscape? Are not all landscapes cultural landscapes? Raith (2006: 209) states that: “the distinction between cultural and natural landscape is questionable today (above all in Europe) since the earth has been colonized completely. [. . .] And even if one has left no traces, the territories are mapped and therefore scientifically domesticated, and photographed and painted and therefore aesthetically and mentally seized.”

As landscapes are ever-changing and dynamic, there is no real boundary between nature and culture. There is only a gradient of human impact. Thus, traditionally the term cultural landscape has been defined as a surface influenced by human activity that is in some way visible. To the visible aspects, one can add certain values accompanying the characteristics or elements of such landscapes, or meanings that they carry for certain groups of people (Jones 1991).

The 1992 UNESCO World Heritage Convention adopted this line of thinking and defined landscape as a value to be protected, and indicated three main categories for the term cultural landscape. Apart from landscapes intentionally created by man (e.g. parks) and natural monuments protected for their associative meanings for particular cultures (e.g. Uluru), the third category, the organically evolved cultural landscape, is of particular interest here: “This results from an initial social, economic, administrative, and/or religious imperative and has developed its present form by association with and in response to its natural environment. Such landscapes reflect that process of evolution in their form and component features. [. . . Within this, the subcategory of [. . . ] continuing landscape is one which retains an active social role in contemporary society closely associated with the traditional way of life, and in which the evolutionary process is still in progress. At the same time it exhibits significant material evidence of its evolution over time (UNESCO 2008, Annex 3).”

Definitions for Traditional Cultural Landscapes

In broad terms, the above definition could apply to almost all landscapes in modern Europe, not just to those regarded as diverse, unique and beautiful, the three characteristics commonly used to legitimize nature conservation in accordance with the German Federal Nature Conservation Act (BMU 2002). The Institute for European Environmental Policy (2007: 10) defines traditional agricultural landscapes as “typically derived from historic—frequently family and/or subsistence-style—farming methods where the dominant cultural landscape characteristics are the result of a traditional or locally adapted approach to management. In general, these farming systems are characterized by the presence of farmland features, whose distribution will be regionally and/or locally specific, which contribute to the landscape’s aesthetic qualities as well as to supporting its ecological integrity.”
Ecological functions can be measured objectively, but aesthetic qualities are highly subjective and change over time. What people find beautiful and archaic in a landscape or “uniqueness in the aesthetical sense, is to be redefined constantly. Usually it is attributed to the state of the landscape that is about two generations past” (Wöbse 2002: 142). In other words: we tend to like and value cultural landscapes where time seems to have stood still.

**Results - Findings from Literature Review**

To identify potential preconditions for traditional cultural landscapes today, literature on five case studies in Europe, including Central and Eastern Europe (CEE) (Gnädinger et al. 2006, Michelin et al. 2007, Norderhaug & Sickel 2007, Pegel, 2007, Rusdea et al. 2005) and six articles discussing general features of traditional cultural landscapes (Altieri 1990, Palang et al. 2006, Paracchini et al. 2007, Plieninger et al. 2006, Vos & Meekes 1999, Zimmermann 2006) were analyzed. Eleven categories suitable for describing landscapes were defined. Based on these categories, a content analysis of the articles was made, summarizing, simplifying and generalizing statements made by the authors (Table 6).

**Table 6: Characterization of traditional cultural landscapes.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Summary of content</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Landscape characterized as</td>
<td>Normative descriptions: valuable, diverse, traditional</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Objective descriptions: with high nature value, biodiverse, habitat diverse, pre-industrial</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Areas referred to as: landscapes, farming systems, land-use systems, farmland</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Geography</td>
<td>Some sort of environmental constraint, in areas less suitable for biomass production, in marginal agricultural land, often mountainous areas, peripheral regions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>In CEE: areas that were not suitable for collectivization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Climate</td>
<td>Climate constraints</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Biology</td>
<td>High species numbers, high proportion of semi-natural vegetation</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Table 6 continued.

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>History</strong></td>
<td>Preserving land-use practices typical for the region from former times, areas documenting interaction between humans and nature. In CEE: abrupt political changes during the 20th century led to frequent reinterpretation of landscape meaning.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Land use</strong></td>
<td>Multiple uses, e.g., trees-crops-grazing or just extensive grazing → resulting in a particular combination of elements</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Structure</strong></td>
<td>(very) small scale, diverse, many producers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Economy</strong></td>
<td>Although agriculture is the dominant land-use form, its contribution to formal income is minimal, mainly subsistence level, reliance on other (seasonal) income, migration and/or public funds</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Policy</strong></td>
<td>In western Europe: very targeted policy in form of agricultural, nature conservation, agri-environmental or rural development schemes. In CEE: no targeted state policy so far, beginning of bottom-up change through cooperation projects (Romania) or relatively new policies aiming at developing tourism, environmental protection or income generation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Culture</strong></td>
<td>Often regions with distinct culture or strong traditions, knowledge about environment incorporated in culture, landscape formed according to culture; landscape documenting heritage. In CEE: often regions with ethnically different population from national majority</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Perception</strong></td>
<td>Perceived as peculiar, special; tourist region; important part of heritage/identity that has to be kept. CEE: ethnic identity of inhabitants plays an important role; (western) perception as regions were time stood still about 80 years ago</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The summary in Table 6 reveals certain patterns in cultural landscapes. Differences between traditional cultural landscapes in Western Europe and CEE countries were evident in the categories ‘History’, ‘Policy’, ‘Culture’ and ‘Perception’. Additionally, a summary of the geographical attributes of such landscapes showed that, in CEE, traditional cultural landscapes occurred in regions where topography prevented the introduction of socialist collectivization. Moreover, authors adopted different expressions to refer to the described areas. Some adopted subjective terms such as diverse or valuable, whereas most adopted more objective expressions like biodiverse, pre-industrial or high nature value (although all are used in a positive context).
The findings showed that traditional cultural landscapes/farming systems found in areas of Europe where environmental and climate constraints make agriculture marginal and limit biomass production (Table 5) represented traditional cultural landscape hotspots. In reality, all other factors were directly or indirectly related to the geographical and climatic situation. High species numbers and habitat diversity presumably resulted from a land use highly adapted to the natural conditions. The traditional economy has resulted from the environmental conditions, which are relatively unfavorable compared to surrounding areas. The culture and traditions were still present in many of these regions because they were geographically isolated from the social and technical modernization processes. Today’s policy decisions and outsider perceptions have also tended to be influenced by the peripheral role these regions have played.

The following preconditions were found to determine the existence of traditional cultural landscape hotspots:

a) isolation (in geographic, economic, infrastructural, political, cultural terms)

b) a geographical setting difficult for agriculture

c) inhabitants (made) ethnically and/or socially different from the national mainstream

In reality isolation was also found to be the reason for the latter two preconditions for traditional cultural landscapes. The areas were economically poor because they were isolated; they were inhabited by people different from the national majority because, in the course of history, the remoteness of the region often attracted marginalized parts of society or because isolated communities maintained values that were lost elsewhere. Furthermore, in the past, the centers of power showed no interest in these regions.

The general indicators for traditional cultural landscapes were applied by way of example to two hotspots in Europe: Las Hurdes in western Spain and Gyimes in the eastern Carpathians.

**Findings from Case Studies**

Although differences in climate, geographical setting, land uses and social characteristics of the inhabitants between the two study areas were found (Table 5), the nature of these categories was similar in both: climatic or geographical factors constrained agriculture, land use in each region was highly adapted to these conditions, and the local population differed from the national mainstream. All three indicators found to influence the existence of traditional cultural landscapes were present in Las Hurdes and Gyimes (Table 7).
### Table 7: Traditional cultural landscape indicators applied to Las Hurdes, Spain and Gyimes, Romania.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>indicators</th>
<th>Las Hurdes</th>
<th>Gyimes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a) isolation</td>
<td>++</td>
<td>++</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b) difficult geographical setting for agriculture</td>
<td>++</td>
<td>+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c) inhabitants different from mainstream</td>
<td>(+)</td>
<td>++</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Key: + applies, ++ strongly applies, (+) partly applies

An analysis of historical landscape change and interviews of inhabitants and experts showed that these three factors, in particular, were key indicators for the longer persistence of the traditional cultural landscape structures. It revealed the following trends:

- Changes occurred faster in the better developed areas within the regions: along roads, railroad tracks, close to local centers.
- Changes occurred faster within parts of society with access to modern communication and infrastructure.
- Landscape changes occurred mainly where a degree of rationalization of agriculture was geographically possible: floodplains and slopes suitable for cultivation with machines.
- Stakeholders who were aware of the regions’ identities were most likely to protect traditional lifestyles, old-fashioned agriculture, local products, etc., and therefore indirectly promote traditional cultural landscapes. Such stakeholders were, on the one hand, elderly inhabitants who have no experience of other lifestyles and, on the other hand, local elites, local individuals returning to the communities and also new residents from outside representing a modern, more dynamic part of the population.
- Traditional structures were most likely to persist where agriculture was still a source of income, which occurred mostly in the poorest families and in the aging part of the population.
- Economically privileged families either sought other sources of income (through better education, possibility of travel, etc.) or, if they decided to stay in agriculture, they invested in machinery and land expansion and therefore changed the traditional structures.
- Changes occurred faster where families industrialized agriculture and received EU funding for this purpose.
A comparison of regional development and the status of traditional agriculture in these regions to neighboring regions with similar conditions showed that:

– In both cases, mountainous topography led to these hotspots. Regions nearby or neighboring Las Hurdes, like Valle del Jerte and Sierra de Gata in northern Extremadura, also comprised partly preserved cultural landscapes. However, in these regions, faster changes might have occurred because they were easier to exploit for tourism.

– In both case study regions changes occurred more slowly than in the neighboring plains to the south in Spain, and the east and west in Romania.

– The impact of the ethnic minority in Gyimes on landscape change in this region was difficult to assess. According to the local administration in Gyimesközéplök (Harghita county), allocation of public funds to communities depended on the composition of the county assembly. During periods when the Democratic Union of Hungarians in Romania (RMDSz), the largest political party of ethnic Hungarians in Romania, participated in the county government, they saw their situation as favorable. The north-eastern part of Gyimes, which belongs to Bacau county with the Romanian local administration in Gyimesbükk, was economically poorer. Thus landscape changes due to infrastructure development, new construction and machinery use have been slower.

Finally, in a comparison of the two regions to assess whether isolation, difficult geographical setting, or a community ethnicity different from the national mainstream helped conserve traditional landscape structures in Las Hurdes and Gyimes, it was found that:

– Romania was politically far more isolated than Spain until it joined the European Union in January 2007. The collapse of small-scale dairy farming in Gyimes and other rural areas in Romania after 2007 when EU standards were introduced provides evidence for political isolation as a ‘protector’ of traditional land use practices. The integration into a common market and political sphere has created competition and the need to rationalize existing land use practices.

– More than two decades of targeted national and European development programs in Las Hurdes, a deprived area of Spain, has accelerated landscape changes in this region (road construction, development of local centers, construction of public buildings, support of new businesses, etc.). In Gyimes such activities have not taken place.

– Changes occurred faster in the region where people had more access to modern machinery and infrastructure, in Las Hurdes more than in Gyimes, because they could alter an unfavorable difficult geographical setting to introduce effective, more industrialized agriculture.
In general, changes away from traditional land uses and employment in agriculture occurred faster where infrastructure development provided inhabitants with easier access to urban centers. In this case, people tended to seek nonagricultural jobs both in Gyimes and Las Hurdes, although in Las Hurdes this process began much earlier and has led to land abandonment.

In general, Las Hurdes has experienced more change in its traditional cultural landscape than Gyimes, due to both intensification of agriculture on suitable land parcels and abandonment of inconvenient patches, which has led to a less varied landscape. Assuming a linear development, Las Hurdes has reached an advanced stage of traditional cultural landscape transformation, whereas, in Gyimes, this process has just begun.

**Discussion: Evidence from Other Parts of Europe**

An assessment of current developments in other traditional cultural landscapes may indicate the importance of the three above-mentioned indicators. Where do archaic cultural landscapes prevail in Europe? Where are the threats of a globalized world stronger and the effects more pronounced? One example might be the dehesas in south-western Spain and eastern Portugal. These agro-silvo-pastoral systems “could be considered as a trans-frontier landscape between Spain and Portugal, since the montados of southern Portugal (Alentejo) are very similar landscapes” (Pérez Soba et al. 2007: 370).

Like complex traditional agricultural systems everywhere in Europe, the dehesas have been undergoing dramatic changes. Due to changing needs of the population, land use has also changed, resulting in higher energy input per unit area (machinery, mineral fertilizers), a decline in the number of shepherds and in transhumance livestock management practices, and migration to urban areas. These changes have not occurred homogenously across the region, however. The dehesas systems are located in areas less favorable for agri- or silvicultural activities, like irrigation programs or reforestation, and have remained in their traditional state. This suggests that the factor ‘unfavorable geographical conditions’ represents a major protector of traditional cultural landscapes (Pérez Soba et al. 2007).

The changes on the more isolated side of the border are less severe. The area of traditionally managed montados is economically poorer; the average farm size is smaller and eastern Portugal is less popular with tourists for deer hunting than western Spain. Thus the region’s agriculture retains many of its traditional features. “In relation to the neighboring Spain, which had similar characteristics some decades ago, the decline in small farms is much lower in Portugal. In the same way, the level of persistence of the traditional land use systems, both the intensive small scale and the extensive large holdings, is still high. Farmers are neither well organized nor well informed, have low education levels and their capacity for restructuring or innovation is poor (Pinto-Correia et al. 2007: 396).”
The Scottish Highlands and Islands region provides another example in Europe. This region has long been regarded as a classical periphery, even a problem region of Europe (Turnock, 1974) because of its isolation, the distance to markets and lack of economies of scale. At the same time the northern and western parts of Scotland are the home of organically evolved, rare cultural landscapes based on extensive grazing. The present agricultural landscape and settlement pattern had largely been established by the end of the nineteenth century with mostly mixed farms “rearing sheep and cattle, using horses for traction and growing a range of crops of both cereals and roots” (EFNCP 2009).

While targeted state policies, strong business partners and local entrepreneurs have brought economic growth and infrastructure development to the region during the past few decades, the most isolated corners of the region could not participate in this development. Northern Scotland and the Western Islands still have higher transport costs than the rest of the region, which makes the creation of new employment and a positive population development nearly impossible. The classical periphery status has been overcome only in the local urbanized centers (Schmied 2004). The traditional cultural landscape prevails elsewhere because of isolation and the strong connection of farmers to their land (Bignal 2008).

Another example of how interest from centers of power, or the lack of it, can influence the development of traditional cultural landscapes can be found in the Alps. Peripheral mountainous valleys in the Alps were intensely developed as economic opportunities in tourism or mining arose. Valleys with little potential for economic development kept their traditional structures for much longer time periods. Zimpel (1958: 365) defines three causes of infrastructure development in the Alps: first, the political and economic exchange in the alpine region between complementary valleys; second, cultural and economic exchange between countries to the north and south of the Alps resulting in connecting infrastructure; and third, the exchange of goods and services between the Alps (energy output) and neighboring regions (import of products, including tourism). Using Grisons canton in Switzerland as an example he shows that valleys lying apart from such ‘interest routes’ faced far less change during the past few centuries than those that were affected by infrastructure. “In addition, the expansion of transportation must be seen as directly responsible for giving up subsistence agriculture. Growing traffic loosens, parallel to its intensity, the dependence of people on their local and natural resources (Zimpel, 1958: 283).”
Thus the dehesas and montados on the Iberian Peninsula, the Scottish Highlands and Islands, the peripheral valleys of the Swiss Alps, the eastern Carpathians in Romania, and the mountainous regions of northern Extremadura in Spain, all represent traditional cultural landscape hotspots. They once evolved through land uses adapted to challenging site conditions, and kept many of their characteristics by virtue of their location in relatively isolated areas of Europe. Additionally, the inhabitants are often culturally and/or ethnically different from the majority of the national population, and often have cultivated a strong regional identity. Within the regions, traditional cultural landscapes prevail most probably where the original setting permits only slow and slight changes.

Conclusions

The two regions where the case studies were conducted are examples of traditional cultural landscape hotspots in Europe. This study showed that the preconditions that once created these highly adapted agricultural systems in geographically challenging areas are also the preconditions for their survival as hotspots today. Development trends in different regions of Europe show that the three indicators, isolation, difficult geographical setting for agriculture, and the presence of communities with a cultural identity that distinguishes them from national mainstream populations are the main ‘protectors’ of such landscapes nowadays.

To systematically identify and study these landscapes would be the first prerequisite to protect them in some form. Existing European scientific and political initiatives, for example, the High Nature Value Farmland concept (Andersen et al. 2003) or the category of Less Favored Areas (European Commission 1999) used in regional development, are already partly taking into account traditional cultural landscapes, although measures for their protection have not been specifically developed. These initiatives are either not sufficiently well defined, contain insufficient detail, or rely on observations carried out at too large a scale to fully cover traditional cultural landscapes as defined in this article. If the political aim is to raise awareness of traditional cultural landscapes as values worthy of protection, a screening method combining different regional aspects is recommended: it should cover areas that are structurally and economically isolated, that are geographically marginally situated for agriculture and that are inhabited by ethnically or culturally different communities. Such an approach would help localize traditional cultural landscape hotspots in Europe.
Once the hotspots are defined, the question arises whether these regions have a future as traditional cultural landscapes where agriculture is practiced or will lose their present character due to either intensification or land abandonment. Are some regions even “lost regions, where no innovators are found who try to create future” (Berlin Institute 2009: 33)? If this is the case, as in some areas of Eastern Germany (Berlin Institute 2009), or if innovators are unable to create solutions to maintain the present status of population and land use, and therefore cannot halt the transformation of the traditional cultural landscape, as in Las Hurdes, protection efforts for such landscapes may be in vain.

Yet, defining hotspots of cultural landscapes may help direct the limited resources to their protection. As in biodiversity conservation, the identification of certain traditional cultural landscapes worthy of prioritized protection due to their uniqueness and vulnerability could result in a more effective protection strategy. One could identify the cultural landscape hotspots in Europe, or even localize areas within them where traditional structures are still dominant, and conserve these through appropriate management as remnant traditional cultural communities for their historic cultural value. This strategy would require a whole new field of cultural landscape research, among other things, to define ‘endemic’ or regionally typical landscape elements and borders of hotspot regions as well as determine criteria for the recognition of a traditional cultural landscape as a hotspot.
II. Landscape perception in marginalized regions – the outsiders’ view

Abstract

Using the concept that landscapes are ideas formed by viewers about their physical surroundings, this article examines visitors’ landscape perceptions of two peripheral regions of Europe: Gyimes in the Romanian Eastern Carpathians, and Las Hurdes in the Northern Extremadura of Spain. Both are characterized by exceptional, historically-evolved cultural landscapes and a population that culturally or ethnically differs from the national mainstream surrounding them. Based on literature review, expert consultations, and a questionnaire survey conducted in the research areas, I conclude that due to historical developments, socio-economic settings, and ethnic differences, the outsiders’ view of these landscapes can be strongly distorted. In the tourist, misinformation and wishful thinking create a “mental map” that does not represent reality. I also note that along with having a possible impact on inhabitants’ landscape perception and their strong regional identity, the outsiders’ view might influence policy decisions and therefore the general development of a region.

Introduction

Landscapes are different for everyone who looks at them. They convey a meaning to us depending on our personality, our situation, and our cultural background. Factors like sunshine, the smell of hay, or a previous bad experience in a similar setting all determine the inner picture we form of a particular landscape.

Nevertheless, some landscapes have developed such a strong image in the course of history that they trigger a collective reaction from the outside society towards them. Gyimes in the Eastern Carpathians and Las Hurdes in Extremadura are both such landscapes. For very different reasons, they have become projection screens for the national societies they belong to. It can be stated that these subjective readings culminated in the view that Las Hurdes was the least “Spanish” part of Spain and Gyimes the most “Hungarian” part of Hungary.

The aim of this study was to give a short overview of the image creation process in the two research areas to date and to check whether these images are still present in the gaze of the tourists who visit them today. As the largest outsider group with direct contact with the landscapes, tourists were chosen as a research subject because their landscape perception was assumed to best represent the outsiders’ view. The survey method was socio-empirical, with expert consultations and a questionnaire survey carried out in both regions.
The research areas were chosen for the following reasons:

- They represent peripheral, geographically and infrastructurally isolated regions where the cultural landscape is still in a state that appears to the viewer to be traditional.

- The goal was to have an example of both a negative and a positive landscape image. Gyimes has developed a positive image during the past few decades, especially since the end of the communist era in Eastern Europe. It is now the carrier of real Hungarian authenticity for outsiders (see e.g. Kürti 2001). Las Hurdes, on the other hand, has had a history of being perceived negatively since the 1920s, when it became known through a documentary by Spanish director Luis Buñuel (Mendelson 2005).

- The regions were chosen due to the ability of the author to communicate with the inhabitants and the majority of the visitors in their native languages (Hungarian and Spanish).

This article will first introduce the basic concepts and working definitions used in the study. After a brief description of the methods, the results will be presented in two sections—one for each research area, with a description of the history and visitors’ present-day landscape perception. Finally, the potential impact of this outside view will be discussed, including an assessment of whether it influences concrete policy decisions on the local or regional level.

Theoretical background- Definition of landscape perception for this study

How the value of a landscape evolves personally for the viewer is a complex process. The incoming impulses are constantly and holistically processed and pass through a multi-layered evaluation filter that always depends on the according psychological system (Hellbrück and Fischer 1999). This is called perception. Just like perception in general, landscape perception is influenced by different factors that can be categorized according to Rudolf (1998: 102) as follows: First, individual differences among the members of a species within the genetic framework. Second, factors that are part of the individual’s milieu, such as cultural influences, including trends and Zeitgeist; social factors; and personal interests. And third, situational factors like previous knowledge and current mood. The result—the mental map of the landscape—does not have to correspond with reality and can be extremely distorted due to prejudices, expectations, specific aims, etc. Korff (2005) introduces a holistic concept of landscape perception that unites affective/aesthetic, utilitarian, and cognitive components. According to the different influential factors that filter or transform the information in the perception process, we can identify three layers of this multilayer evaluation of the landscape (Figure 7):
1. Emotional perception
2. Utilitarian perception
3. Cognitive perception

Figure 7: Multi layer model of landscape perception according to Korff (2005)

**Uneven landscape perception**

The landscape perception of an individual or of a homogeneous group is rarely balanced in the sense that it equally represents all three layers of perception. Many people, like farmers and forest owners, for example, tend to have a more utilitarian attitude towards their surroundings. Bieling and Schraml (2003) found that farmers owning forest in Baden-Württemberg, Germany who depended on it for income generation clearly had a stronger preference for forest types dominated by coniferous trees than did forest owners from a non-agricultural comparison group. Coniferous trees are generally regarded as more productive and their valuation by farmers increases with increasing farm sizes, again showing the link between tree preference and income potential.
In a more general investigation of landscape perception in France, different groups were asked what they associated with the term landscape. Adults, tourists, and especially new residents said harmony and beauty was what first came to their minds. Farmers stressed livelihood and freedom. The aesthetic concept of the first groups clearly differs from the professional view of the farmers who see the landscape as a space for entrepreneurship that can be modeled according to their needs. Thus Buijs et al. (2006: 375) conclude: “the way people perceive landscape seems determined by their functional ties with the landscape and the social praxis in which they encounter the landscape.”

According to the model, in every individual, the layer of perception which dominates is that which best relates to the individual’s needs regarding the landscape. The farmers see their surroundings predominantly in a functional, aim-oriented way. For tourists and other groups using the landscape as a leisure environment, the emotional layer prevails. The layers neither compensate each other nor are they equally represented.

**Landscape as a projection screen**

Across different cultures we can observe the phenomenon of using landscapes as a space upon which to project certain ideals and imaginations. Büttner et al. (2006) present a collection of so-called “national landscapes” that play a specific role for a nation’s identity and have therefore been mystified, in some cases for centuries. In other words, during the course of history “some landscapes were highlighted because they were considered as essential in the building of the nation and the shaping of its culture” (Claval 2007: 88). Others show how landscapes can almost ideally satisfy the need of modern societies to find a place of belonging and home (Spiegel 2001), therefore constructing idealized imaginative homelands, as the Hungarians do with Transylvania (Kürti 2001). According to researchers adhering to “post-modernist landscape culturalism,” (O’Keeffe 2007: 9) landscape is a medium of exchange, a communication device between humans and nature, the self, and the other (Mitchell 1994). Landscape is a product of mindscape. The projection of ideals and imaginations upon the scenery, as in the construction of national landscapes for example, is in itself a part of the landscape (O’Keeffe 2007).
Working definitions of image and outsiders

A region can have an image just like a person, an object, a brand, an institution, or a nation. In her work on the creation of national images, Böhme-Dürr (2000: 30–41) gives an overview of what the term signifies:

- Images are more or less conscious anticipations of perception that search for suitable information. New information is filtered according to whether it fits into the image. Therefore every kind of perception is also influenced by images and the image itself is difficult to change.

- Images are social constructions that are triggered by early experiences or first impressions and develop through communication.

- Images are holistic and take into account several characteristics, not just a single one like stereotypes.

For this study, the image of a landscape is considered to be the collective “mental map” as defined above, the inner impression or collective opinion that a majority of people have of Gyimes or Las Hurdes. This overall impression is a subjective category and does not have to coincide with the objective reality.

As Knudsen et al. (2008: 1) argue, “there is a multiplicity of insider and outsider meanings” in viewing a landscape. Different actors interpret every place differently. But who are outsiders in this context? As the term suggests, an insider occupies a system whereas the outsider does not. However, it is difficult to define exactly what it means “to occupy a system.” Does looking at a landscape mean to occupy it? Does walking through it? Does working the land? Does being born in it, or reading about it, or making decisions about it? Cosgrove (1984: 19) states that “for the insider there is no clear separation of self from the scene.” So the distinction between one group and another can be seen as completely dependent on the meaning the place carries for the person in question.

The problem is that this can only be found out after interviewing that person. A local business manager for example, who had studied in an urban center and returned to the region for a living, can have a very distanced and abstract view of the landscape. On the other hand, a visitor who spends a very long time in a region and feels at home there might lose the sense of separation of himself from the scene.

To make the distinction beforehand, a very pragmatic approach was chosen for this study: everyone with no permanent residence in the research areas was seen as an outsider. Within the outsider group, tourists were defined as people living outside of the research areas who spend limited time there as part of their free time.
Methods

For an overview on the history of the research areas and the current overall socio-economic situation, a thorough literature review was carried out in university libraries in Germany, Hungary and Spain, and also in historical archives and local information centers in the regions themselves. Given the lack of strictly scientific information on the regions due to their peripheral character, basically all printed or online information available was reviewed.

This approach was combined with data gathered in the field through socio-empiric survey methods in 2006 and 2009 in Gyimes and in 2009 in Las Hurdes. The goal of the socio-empiric survey was to find out how current visitors perceive and use the landscape. The questions asked were identical in both regions, apart from a few altered questions referring to specific regional landscape features. A questionnaire survey with the aim of reaching as many visitors as possible to deliver quantitative data was combined with qualitative in-depth, semi-structured interviews with a few selected tourists in order to gain a deeper insight into their landscape perception. Table 8 lists the questions included in the questionnaire, indicating the question type.

Table 8: List of all questions included in the questionnaire

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Type of question</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>General information</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Birth date, place of residence, nationality, educational level, profession</td>
<td>open</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Formulated questions</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. How often have you previously been to Gyimes/ Las Hurdes?</td>
<td>3 given answers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. For how long will you be here?</td>
<td>open</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. With whom are you here?</td>
<td>4 given answers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. How did you hear about Gyimes/ Las Hurdes?</td>
<td>8 alternate answers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. What was the main reason for your visit?</td>
<td>5 alternate answers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. What are you planning to do in Gyimes/Las Hurdes?</td>
<td>9/10 alternate answers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Write down the first three words that come to your mind when thinking about the landscape in Gyimes/Las Hurdes!</td>
<td>open</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. If here for the first time: How much does the landscape fulfill your previous expectations?</td>
<td>normative scale of 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Following things are different:</td>
<td>open</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. How much do you like the landscape in Gyimes/Las Hurdes?</td>
<td>normative scale of 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.1 What do you especially like?</td>
<td>open</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.2 What do you not like so much?</td>
<td>open</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Table 8 continued

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Response Options</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>11. How does the landscape in Gyimes/Las Hurdes seem to you?</td>
<td>14/13 alternate answers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. Do you recognize any “typically Hungarian/Spanish” elements in this landscape?</td>
<td>yes/no/I don’t know.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12.1 If yes, which are these?</td>
<td>open</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. Do you think there are landscapes similar to Gyimes/Las Hurdes elsewhere?</td>
<td>yes/no/I don’t know.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13.1 If yes, where?</td>
<td>open</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. In your opinion, which factors influence today’s landscape in Las Hurdes?</td>
<td>9 alternate answers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15. And which factor is the most important?</td>
<td>open</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16. In your opinion, how much does human activity influence the landscape in Gyimes/Las Hurdes?</td>
<td>normative scale of 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17. How much do you know about</td>
<td>normative scale of 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- the cultural heritage of Gyimes/Las Hurdes?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- the history of Gyimes/Las Hurdes?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- the nature/environment in Gyimes/Las Hurdes?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19. How much are you interested in</td>
<td>normative scale of 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- the cultural heritage of Gyimes/Las Hurdes?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- the history of Gyimes/Las Hurdes?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- the nature/environment of Gyimes/Las Hurdes?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20. Which of the following statements about the landscape in Gyimes/Las Hurdes do you agree with?</td>
<td>agree/disagree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>See figure 5 for Gyimes and figure 10 for Las Hurdes.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21. Which of the following statements on the future of Gyimes/Las Hurdes do you agree with?</td>
<td>agree/disagree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>See figure 6 for Gyimes and figure 11 for Las Hurdes.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22. What was your most beautiful experience in Gyimes/Las Hurdes?</td>
<td>open</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In Gyimes, the same questionnaire was used twice: first in 2006 during a weeklong summer camp that takes place annually and is organized for visitors interested in local folk culture, and later again in a survey targeted at all visitors of Gyimes during the tourist season of 2009. During the summer camp in 2006 a simple random sampling was achieved through handing out a questionnaire to nearly every participant above the age of 16. During the tourist season of 2009, it was not possible to carry out a simple random sampling.
The questionnaires were placed at the most visited hotels and campsites of the regions and the tourist information center in Las Hurdes. Visitors staying at one of the hotels or visiting the information center had a higher probability of filling out the questionnaire (convenience sampling, Bortz and Döring 2003: 404). During the 2006 study phase, participant observation of the visitors to the summer camp was also conducted. An overview of the survey methods used can be seen in Table 9.

**Table 9: Socio-empiric survey methods of this study**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Survey method</th>
<th>Gyimes</th>
<th>Las Hurdes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Quantitative self-service questionnaires</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- type of questionnaire</td>
<td>Self-completion questionnaires with open, closed and multiple choice questions</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- language of questionnaire</td>
<td>Hungarian</td>
<td>Spanish, English</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- universe</td>
<td>all visitors to the regions</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- sample</td>
<td>2006: all participants of the summer camp (about 200)</td>
<td>all tourists who stayed at least one night at one of the three hotels (number unknown)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- sampling/ distribution of questionnaires</td>
<td>2006: simple random sampling, questionnaire handed out in person</td>
<td>convenience sampling, questionnaires left at the two campsites of the region and the tourist information center</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- number of questionnaires distributed</td>
<td>2006: 120, 2009: 100</td>
<td>170</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- number of respondents</td>
<td>June 2006: N=81, April-September 2009: N=35</td>
<td>N=66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Qualitative semi-structured interviews with selected visitors</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- time frame</td>
<td>one week in June 2006</td>
<td>Four weeks in May 2009</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- type of questions</td>
<td>face-to-face interview with open questions</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- selection of interviewees</td>
<td>interviewees selected to represent different age classes and nationalities.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- language of interview</td>
<td>Hungarian, English</td>
<td>Spanish, English</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- number of interviewees</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant observation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- time frame</td>
<td>one week in June 2006</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- technical details</td>
<td>observation of summer camp tourists as a participant of the summer camp</td>
<td>.....</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The Gyimes case: description of study area

The Gyimes is a valley in the easternmost part of the Carpathians. It has been situated in the middle of Romania since the 1919 treaty of Trianon when Hungary lost large parts of its territory. The area has about 14,000 mostly Hungarian-speaking inhabitants in three widely dispersed communities. The majority of them are the so-called Gyimes Csángós, an ethnic minority whose culture has both Hungarian and Romanian influences. The Csángós have been the subject of debate between politicians and scientists in both Hungary and Romania. Hungarians claim that they are a long-ago separated part of the nation preserving ancient Hungarian cultural traits in an isolated setting. Romanians state that they are actually “magyarized” ethnic Romanians.

Until the 18th century, the Gyimes valley was sparsely populated because it formed part of the border region with military presence under Austrian rule. Roth (2003: 93) notes that the area was uninhabited “aside from robber bands, deserters and people evading taxes,” and also provides an explanation for the wild, romantic image Gyimes has had from then on: it was a region few people ever visited, in a tormented region between great mountains, right next to the enemy. After a century of growing settlements and land colonization, intensification of agricultural activities, severe degradation at the end of the 19th century and population again declining within the last few decades (Ilyés 2000, 2001), Gyimes still retains the same image: It is described as “mysterious lands” (Várádi & Löwey 2001: 7); “This land of creeks today still seems to be a romantic world” (Vofkori 1998: 86).

Although Gyimes nowadays is a well-known destination for Hungarians seeking to experience the roots of their culture in an archaic setting, the tourist infrastructure is barely developed. According to most of the guidebooks, the natural scenery and local architecture are worth a visit, but the main attractions of the region are “folk art and poetry and the tradition of folk dances” (Vofkori 1998).

Tourists’ landscape perception in Gyimes today

The findings of the 2009 questionnaire survey supported the landscape perception trends that became visible through the 2006 study of the dance camp participants (Solymosi 2008). The typical visitor to Gyimes was young (largest age group 25–34 years, followed by ages 15–24), had a high educational level (62% of respondents having at least a university degree), worked in the academic field (students, teachers and academics made up 62% of respondents) and lived in Hungary (82% Hungarian citizens, 78% Hungarian residents). The average tourist stayed for one week (62%, less than one week 23%), was accompanied by family or friends (together 84%), and had first heard about the region from relatives or friends (48% of responses).
The main reason for visiting was the folk culture of Gyimes (54%), followed by the beauty of the landscape (21%) and historical monuments (10%). The top three activities were excursions into nature, visiting the 1,000-year-old border, and socializing with locals. For a large majority, the Gyimes landscape completely met their previous expectations (78% of responses, Figure 8) and they liked the landscape very much (92%, Figure 9).

**Figure 8:** Percentage and number of responses to the question “How much does the landscape meet your previous expectations?” N=65=100%, first-time visitors only.

**Figure 9:** Percentage and number of responses to the question “How do you like the Gyimes landscape?” N=116=100%.
Asked if they could recognize any typically Hungarian elements in this Carpathian landscape, half of the respondents said yes (Figure 10). Apart from mentioning architecture and land use patterns as typically Hungarian elements, a number of them stated that language, religion, or the folk culture were Hungarian landscape elements that they could recognize in Gyimes.

![Hungarian landscape element recognition](image)

**Figure 10:** Percentage and number of responses to the question “Do you recognize any typically Hungarian landscape elements in this landscape?” N=116=100%.

Figure 11 summarizes the findings. The tourists were given a number of statements within the questionnaire and requested to indicate which ones they agreed to. Visitors to Gyimes perceived the cultural landscape as interesting; they appreciated the local forms of agriculture and thought they were worth being promoted. What is noteworthy is the second column in Figure 11 that shows the role of the “Hungarian factor” in the landscape. For visitors, a large part of the attractiveness of the region was due to the fact that Hungarians lived there. Only 32 people stated that the beauty of the landscape would exist if another ethnic group inhabited Gyimes.
Another set of statements was offered only to participants of the 2009 survey, this time focusing on the future of Gyimes, the importance of agriculture for the region, and the possible connection between local land uses and local culture (Figure 12). Almost every respondent wanted the landscape to stay as it was and expressed regret about the loss of traditional land uses. Interesting for the scope of this study was the high percentage of agreements with the statements that local forms of land uses were an important part of local culture and that without agriculture, the character of the region would be lost. On the other hand, very few visitors gave opinions in favor of modernizing the local agriculture.
Figure 12: Number of responses to the question “Which of the following statements do you agree with?” N=35=100% for each range.

The last open question of the questionnaire, in which participants indicated their most beautiful experiences in the study area, was answered by all but four participants. The largest proportion of answers referred to experiences related to nature and landscape and to encounters visitors had with locals. An overall positive attitude of the visitors towards their travel destination, mentioning the local food, customs, hospitality and being in close contact with nature or enjoying tranquility, prevailed.

Apart from these general statements, some participants stressed the emotional importance Gyimes played for them as a place of identity and belonging:

– “Every time I experience this I feel Hungarian again.”
– “The people living here in the middle of Romania have kept their Hungarianness and live together peacefully with other peoples, Romanians, Roma …”
– “[To see] the world’s most wonderful Hungarian community at 800 km from the Trianon Hungarian border, [living in] dignity, respecting the 14th century’s marvelous culture […]”
– “the sacred character, the spirit of the place”
– “I was able to return to my beautiful 1,000-year-old homeland.”
– “chatting with the local Hungarians”
– “seeing all the Hungarian high schools, attending church ceremonies in Hungarian”

The Las Hurdes case: description of study area

Las Hurdes is an administrative unit with about 6,000 inhabitants in five communities within the Spanish province of Extremadura. It is a region peripheral in every respect: it represents the northernmost part of its province and that province is itself remote, bordering Portugal to the West (Trueba 2006). The traditional cultural landscape consists of small pattern of terraces and linear structures. It is valued for its biodiversity and traditional land uses like beekeeping (Hernández et al. 2006). It is comparable to Gyimes in its remoteness as well as in its geographic condition of being in a mountainous area, which adds to the peripheral character. But the histories of perception of these two areas could not be more different. Ever since eighteenth-century travelers published the first chronicles on Las Hurdes, the region suffered from the existence of a “black legend” or leyenda negra (García-Moro 1986, Trueba 2006), which often referred to biological characteristics of the population. Of the negative, stigmatized characteristics available, nothing was left out: analphabetism, diseases, alcoholism, poverty, incest, and many more were attributed to the inhabitants, often by scientists who had never visited the region (García-Gómez 2005).

The continuous creation of a negative image culminated in the late 1920s and 30s, when a series of documentaries focused on Las Hurdes as an exotic and strange place within Spain. Luis Buñuel’s film “Las Hurdes—Land Without Bread” was censored by the newly elected conservative government shortly after its release in 1933 with the argument that it was degrading to Spain. This was the starting point for the political instrumentalization of the region during the following years. Both political sides used the film and photos taken in Las Hurdes to validate their messages and criticize the opponent. For the nationalists, “Land Without Bread” was an affront to the leftists, focusing on the misery of a region and not mentioning positive aspects like the rich folk culture. The communists used the film to criticize public policy in the region, accusing the government of having neglected this region of “Spain—Republic of Workers,” as a book focusing on Las Hurdes by the communist politician Érenburg (1932) was titled. Buñuel’s answer to nationalist criticism—“As for folk dances, those trite expressions of misplaced nationalism, Las Hurdes didn’t have any.”—clearly shows how the condition of Las Hurdes was interpreted in an ideological way (Mendelson 2005).
Las Hurdes had also become a site for forced expatriation starting from the nineteenth century. Changing regimes sent oppositional politicians and activists there to get them out of the way. Well-known cases in Spanish history are the banishments in 1932 of Dr. Albañina, a nationalist activist, and the political exiles of two members of the General Union of Workers (UGT) in 1968 (Domínguez 2007).

The numerous visits by the Spanish royal family over the course of history were a powerful sign of the special role of Las Hurdes for Spanish society and evidence of the attention it received. Alerted by the report of Dr. Gregorio Marañon on the severe sanitary problems of the region (Goyanes et al. 1922), the first visit by King Alfonso XIII took place in 1922. As a direct result of this journey, the first institution in charge of the development of Las Hurdes, the “Real Patronato de Las Hurdes” was created (Domínguez 2007). From then on, different development plans were implemented and managed to obtain positive results for sanitation and infrastructure, but also ambiguous results such as the reforestation in the 1940s.

Nevertheless, the region’s image only started to improve when a special government plan was initiated after a devastating diagnosis of the overall living situation in Las Hurdes in 1975 (Trueba 2006). Again, the royal family played an important role in channeling public attention towards the region, continuing to do so until 1998 when King Juan Carlos responded to a petition by the local government and made his second visit to Las Hurdes. Thanks to the efforts of local authorities and national media coverage, “a new image of the county is created” (Domínguez 2007: 106).

Tourists’ landscape perception in Las Hurdes today

The typical respondent to the survey was middle-aged (with the largest age group being 25–34 with 23%, closely followed by age groups 35–44 and 45–54), had either a university (42%) or a high school (29%) degree (24% gave no answer) and lived in Spain (85% Spanish citizens, 92% Spanish residents). Many of the respondents were longtime visitors who had been to Las Hurdes more than twice (62%) and usually stayed less than a week, typically a weekend (48%), accompanied by their families or partners (71%). Forty-two percent of the visitors first knew about Las Hurdes from relatives or friends and went there mainly because of the beauty of the landscape (55%). Interestingly, six people stated that they had come to Las Hurdes because they had always wanted to know this place that was talked about so much. For 12%, history was the main reason for visiting.
The top three activities included going for walks, hiking, and other activities (just relaxing, bathing, fishing). For a large majority (65%), the landscape of Las Hurdes completely met their expectations (Figure 13) and they liked the landscape very much (64%, Figure 14). Those who did not like the landscape as much mainly cited the devastated forests and signs of forest fires as their reasons.

**Figure 13:** Percentage and number of responses to the question “How much does the Las Hurdes landscape fulfill your previous expectations?” N=45=100%, only first-time visitors.

**Figure 14:** Percentage and number of responses to the question “How much do you like the landscape in Las Hurdes?” N=66=100%.
As asked if they could recognize any typically Spanish elements in this Extremadura landscape, more than half of the respondents said yes (Figure 15). Apart from mentioning architecture and settlement patterns as typically Spanish elements, a number of them stated that gastronomy, the vegetation, and especially the types of trees were Spanish landscape elements.

![Spanish landscape element recognition](image)

**Figure 15**: Percentage and number of responses to the question “Do you recognize any typically Spanish landscape elements in this landscape?” N=66=100%.

The following figure illustrates which of the statements about the landscape of Las Hurdes gained the most appreciation amongst the participants of the study (Figure 16). In this question, one important aspect of the image of Las Hurdes was included: the historical background and the notion that the region used to be very poor. Note that many respondents agreed with both of two contradictory statements, e.g. whether the landscape of Las Hurdes seemed completely unique or whether very similar landscapes could be found elsewhere. In another related example concerning history, 53 people stated that the traces of hard times could still be detected in the landscape of Las Hurdes and 40 people agreed with the statement that the traces of this history could no longer be seen.
In Las Hurdes, as in Gyimes another set of statements on the future of the region and the role of agriculture and traditional land uses was also included in the questionnaire. Although the phenomenon of participants agreeing with contradictory statements could be observed, the tendency of agreements and the five most popular statements were the same as in the Gyimes case (Figure 17).

**Figure 16:** Number of responses to the question “Which of the following statements do you agree with?” N=66=100%.
Figure 17: Number of responses to the question “Which of the following statements do you agree with?” N=66=100%.

Conclusions: are there possible consequences for the landscapes?

The landscape perception of tourists in Gyimes, the outsiders’ view, is an example of emotional landscape perception formed through specific socialization, positive prejudice, and wishful thinking. Landscape perception here can be seen as part of a collective process of construction of a mystified space.

Although Gyimes tourists’ landscape perception might have negative impacts on the region it also shows a positive bias towards the landscape. At home, the visitors imagine Gyimes to be a paradise-like romantic place in the middle of nowhere, where Hungarian people still live in harmony with nature and manage to keep their rich folk culture alive amid an ocean of surrounding Romanians.
This is also the image conveyed by current guidebooks, e.g. Vofkori (1998). And that is exactly what they perceive once they are there. Negative aspects of the landscape are recognized by some visitors. In the questionnaires, the most frequently mentioned disturbances of the landscape are the general pollution of the environment, mainly by garbage; the heavy traffic along the main road; and the decrease of forested area due to logging. But this recognition does not detract from the overall positive picture: Almost all respondents say they like the landscape very much and that it (almost) completely meets their expectations (Figures 8 and 9).

Gyimes tourists see traditional land uses as an important, characteristic, and not at all outdated aspect of the region and do not wish to see any major changes such as modernization (Figure 12). Interestingly, however, very few visitors mention “modern processes” as disturbing the landscape and no one clearly articulates, as a negative aspect, the fact that the traditional cultural landscape is threatened. Processes seen by scientists as the main dangers to traditional landscape patterns, mainly land abandonment and intensification of land uses, among others (Ilyés 2002, Solymosi 2008), are not perceived or defined by visitors as such.

For Las Hurdes, the picture is not so clear. As the literature review has shown and as described above, in Las Hurdes a mostly negative prejudice existed towards the region for a long time. This negative image, however, is no longer present in today’s tourist view, or at least is not openly articulated. During qualitative interviews, some visitors stated that they had heard about the bad reputation of Las Hurdes and were surprised to find it so “normal.” Even if this negative image is no longer present, the past perception still provokes reactions. While authors in former times lamented the hard living conditions and poor sanitation of the villages, resulting in malnutrition and disease (e.g. Goyanes et al. 1922, Legendre 1927), contemporary researchers are quick to state the opposite. “Despite fifty years of previous attempts aimed at developing the Las Hurdes region, the diagnosis in 1975 showed a critical situation […]. Nowadays the situation has changed owing to important investment in infrastructure,” is how Trueba (2006: 618) introduces his chapter on Las Hurdes and the different development plans that it has seen since the 1920s.

Despite also referring to development accomplishments other than infrastructure — acceptable community equipment, quality agriculture, marketing of regional products, good quality offers for tourists, institutional strengthening—the main emphasis is clearly on the newly built access roads that bring the “fresh and clean air of human relations.” García-Gómez (2005) goes even further in his ethnographic essay on the region, stating that “Crossing Las Hurdes today is just like doing it in any other part of Extremadura, Castilla, or Aragón: asphalted highways that facilitate the coming and going of its residents, the “jurdanos,” and above all the visitors; new villages built on the ruins of the “black architecture” made out of slate shingles; fresh and vigorous blood.”
The message of both is that nowadays Las Hurdes is completely normal, just like any other part of Spain. “Las Hurdes ya ‘no’ es diferente (García 1994).” No more misery in the form of narrow roads or dark little huts made of the regional rocks, but airy gateways of communication and fresh blood everywhere. This is hardly an objective picture. Technical and economic progress is exclusively regarded as positive and aspects of the traditional cultural landscape are not sentimentally cried about when lost. This view is represented in the following statement of a local politician: “The truth is that there are still many visitors who come to Las Hurdes with a ‘safari’ spirit, camera in hand to capture the images that Buñuel already immortalized years ago and that today are impossible to reproduce despite the intention of some to manipulate the wide angle […]. Even some ‘ecologistsarcheologists’ show their disapproval of the ‘intolerable’ advance of progress that destroyed their photography and magnificent practical lessons they had prepared […]. What have you done with the paths that had been here? Whose idea was it to asphalt these roads? And the alquerías [small settlements surrounding the larger villages]? Where are the alquerías? What a pity for Las Hurdes! The politicians took them! Well yes, we took them; the people do not have goiter anymore; the roads that access Las Hurdes are nine meters wide; running water reaches all houses; the villages have electric light; there are cultural houses, libraries, retirement homes, pools, hotels, campsites, restaurants, etcetera; and, if that was not enough, the cooperatives have started an interesting process of commercializing honey and pollen, two of the riches of the region” (Rodríguez Ibarra 1993: 51–52).

The following sketch shows the schematic circle of landscape perception and its consequences as viewed by the author for the Gyimes case (Figure 18).
Figure 18: Influence of the outsiders’ view on the Gyimes landscape.

Although this process is dynamic, with reinforcing effects between the elements of the circle, it can be interpreted as starting with a tourist interpreting the scene (number 1). The outsider creates/possesses a mental map of the landscape based on the input he receives. The mental map is both a part of the meaning of the landscape itself and at the same time a version of the landscape as represented for the viewer. Therefore it has an influence on the existing reality. In the Gyimes case, this influence involves favoring positive aspects of the landscape over the negative ones and leaving marks and expectations. Overall, a positive prejudice towards the landscape and its people prevails.

The study also showed that (some) inhabitants realize the nature of the outside view and try to react to it (number 3). Local elites, who have the means, try to appeal to this special view by offering tourists programs that strengthen their one-sided perception, e.g. Hungarian folkloristic evenings or excursions to an historic site that shows past Hungarian presence. In this way, the outside view strengthens ethnic prejudices against Romanians as well as a one-sided interpretation of much-debated historical events and drives otherwise neutral locals towards emphasizing the Hungarian, partly nationalistic, aspects of local historical sites in the long term (Solymosi 2008).
These changes are surely slow, subtle, and difficult to measure or even detect, but the signs tourists leave in the Gyimes landscape clearly show the direction: In one of the villages, Gyimesbükk, a graffito on a railway station depicting the outline of Greater Hungary could be observed until the station’s recent renovation, as well as many small Hungarian flags left around the border stone on the former Hungarian-Romanian border.

For Las Hurdes, it remains to be seen whether the inhabitants recognize the value attributed to their cultural landscape by scientists and some tourists. Another question is how the insiders’ attitude will influence the landscape and if there will be any developments comparable to the scenario presented for Gyimes.

The Las Hurdes case also shows that the image of a region can create concrete action by political stakeholders. Having long been the eyesore of Spain, with living conditions that were perceived as being on par with a developing country, the region became, as described by the social scientist expert on Las Hurdes, Barroso-Gutiérrez (2008), the “bad conscience of the politicians.” In order to demonstrate good will and support for the poor, Spanish kings visited the area several times and created huge public interest. Different ministries became involved, creating special development plans for Las Hurdes and investing public funds—this way demonstrating political power and effectiveness. Because of its negative image, Las Hurdes was made an example of by powerful elites.

Summary

Landscape perception is a complex matter, with the resulting image received by the viewer dependent on a variety of individual, cultural, and situational factors. The filter that the incoming information has to pass through within the human mind can be roughly divided into cognitive, a utilitarian, and emotional layers. As examples from various studies show, the perception of a landscape is never balanced, but the viewer emphasizes certain aspects of the surroundings according to his background, which results in the dominance of one of the layers of perception. The two case studies in this article demonstrate special cases of this imbalance, namely a certain bias that exists in the approaching outsider. In the case of Gyimes, this is a positive bias due to a long history of documenting the region and its inhabitants as upright and highly interesting keepers of ancient Hungarian culture in a foreign environment. The example of Las Hurdes shows that the opposite is also possible. The region was famed for centuries as the third world of Spain and this image only changed substantially in the 1970s.
For Gyimes there is evidence that the inhabitants of the region start to adopt the outsiders’ view, try to satisfy it, and, though as yet very subtly, also start to arrange the landscape according to outside expectations. The research conducted on the topic of Las Hurdes is not yet extensive enough to detect such tendencies. Literature review and expert consultations show, however, that the negative image is still present in an indirect way — authors mention it only as a counterpoint to emphasize the positive situation of today. More on-site research on the actual consequences for the two landscapes will follow.
III. Diversified incomes, simplified landscapes: changing livelihoods in Gyimes and the impact on the cultural landscape

Abstract

In today’s Europe, where agricultural landscapes reflect both the intensification of land use and abandonment of agricultural practices, very few traditional cultural landscapes remain. Despite the relative isolation of these rare landscapes, which visually reveal traces of traditional land uses, they are also undergoing constant change. Households have adapted livelihood strategies that were dominant up until the last third of the 20th century to integrate alternative sources of income. In this study, household interviews were conducted in one community of the Gyimes region in the Eastern Carpathians, Romania. The household data collected was analyzed using the sustainable livelihoods approach (SLA). Based on the findings it is shown that livelihoods in Gyimes have become more and more dependent on non-agricultural income, and that this shift is changing the cultural landscape into a more uniform one with simplified land use systems.

Introduction

Much contemporary research highlights the high risk of losing traditional cultural landscapes in Europe, which characteristically represent small-scale agricultural activities with little external input (Pedroli 2007; Tzanopoulos & Vogiatzakis 2011; Palang et al. 2006). Land use systems that typically require a medium degree of human input (Plieninger et al. 2006) are threatened by both intensification and land abandonment. This phenomenon can be observed for land use systems ranging from the dehesas in Portugal and Spain to the semi-subsistence farms in the Carpathians: in areas suitable for intensification and/or infrastructure development, small-scale or extensive land use systems are replaced by large-scale ones with high energy input per unit area. Furthermore, farming areas that are no longer “profitable” are abandoned. The result is often a less diverse, homogeneous landscape. This can have negative impacts on biodiversity, as in the Mediterranean region where land abandonment has become a major threat to biodiversity (Sirami et al. 2010) and can negatively influence aesthetic valuation by visitors who often prefer a diverse, species rich-looking landscape (Lindemann-Matthies et al. 2010).
Nevertheless, some areas with highly diversified agriculture remain, mainly in peripheral regions of Europe. The Eastern Carpathians is an example often given of a region where very small-scale agriculture can still be found – an agriculture that has created a structurally extremely variable landscape with high land use and species diversity, and aesthetic value. However, can these systems still be considered functioning systems, i.e. systems in which current land use practices continue to maintain the current state of this landscape? Or are these landscapes, even here, rather relics with households changing livelihood strategies to ones which will radically alter the future appearance of the regions?

One region, in which this question applies, is the predominantly Hungarian-speaking region Gyimes (or Ghimes3) in the Romanian Eastern Carpathians. Due to its relative isolation in geographical, economic and social terms, and site conditions unfavorable for industrialized agricultural activity so far, the regional landscape patterns still reflect traditional land uses.

Despite the visible traces of small-scale, highly diversified agricultural activity, the landscape is in a constant state of change: traditional land uses are continually declining or given up completely and economic activity of the community is shifting away from the agricultural sector. The questions underlying this study were whether the land use systems that created the current cultural landscape here are still practiced and, if so, at what intensity. The goal was to investigate what groups in the study area still adopt multifunctional land use practices and why. Conversely we asked why those households who had given up or reduced their agricultural activity had done so, and what other income options they had found. The state of traditional land uses in Gyimes was reviewed in a livelihood analysis carried out in one community which also revealed alternative livelihood strategies of households in the region today.

**Description of study area**

In this study, the Gyimes region was defined as the area used by the three communities Gyimesbükk/Ghimeş Făget, Gyimesközéplok/Lunca de Jos and Gyimesfelsőlok/Lunca de Sus in the Romanian Eastern Carpathians. Geographically, the area is delimited by the Tatros/Trotus River catchment area in the Csík/Ciuc mountain range, where the valley bottom is between 700 and 900 m a.s.l. and the highest peak, the Tarhavas, at 1665 m a.s.l.. The average annual temperature is 5 °C and annual precipitation ranges from 700 to 1200mm (Ilyés 2007).

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3 The geographical names will be stated both in Hungarian and Romanian first. Later in the text, only the Hungarian expression will be used for easier readability.
The regional geology mainly comprises Carpathian sandstone overlying deeper layers of crystalline schist. Along the Tatros and Hidegség/Valea Rece valleys, where the three communities are mainly situated, the floodplains comprise quaternary alluvium. Relatively fertile soils can only be found alongside the rivers, up to 2 km wide in places, and on neighboring terraces because steep slopes inhibit deep soil development elsewhere (Dobos 1939, Ilyés 2007).

Settlements are typically dispersed, also in the side valleys (patakák, sing. pataka in Hungarian), and the villages are characterized by inhabited parcels surrounded by gardens and fields with relatively large spaces in between. This settlement structure has been transformed over the years into villages lining the main access roads, which have almost completely merged. According to the last official census in 2002, there are 13 991 inhabitants in total, with 5 340 living in Gyimesbükk, 5 227 (5 240 according to information from the local administration) in Gyimesközéplok and 3 424 in Gyimesfelsőlok respectively (Romanian Census Database 2002). The two communities Gyimesfelsőlok and Gyimesközéplok are under the administration of Harghita County, whereas Gyimesbükk has been part of Bacau County since the 1950 administrative reform (Solymosi 2008).

Within Gyimes region, the side valley Antalokpataka/Valea lui Antalok was selected for the household survey (Figure 19). It belongs to Gyimesközéplok community and officially had 253 inhabitants in 1992 (latest community census; Romanian Census Database 2002). This population statistic strictly refers not only to Antalokpataka, but also to the adjoining settlement, called “Sijeallja” in Hungarian, which is situated closer to the main road on the alluvial plain (houses upper right in Figure 19). The official number of households is unclear since they were not assessed in the census. As a reference, house numbers indicate 80 registered properties for Antalokpataka and Sijeallja together (numbers 300 to 380).

Of these inhabitants, 100% claim to be Hungarians and Roman Catholic. In this regard, Antalokpataka is not representative for the whole of Gyimes region where Hungarians represent the majority but coexist with Romanians and Roma in varying ratios, and both the orthodox and catholic religions are practiced, particularly in Gyimesbükk. Nevertheless, due to its position within the region – relatively close to the main road, but not directly alongside it and belonging to the central community – it was assumed that Antalokpataka would represent the diversity of livelihoods encountered in Gyimes. In Antalokpataka the entire range of livelihood strategies, ranging from traditional multifunctional land uses to diversified sources of income including migration can be found, which describe the situation in the research area.
Figure 19: Satellite image of Antalokpataka, the linear settlement with roughly West-East orientation, and neighboring houses of Sijeallja in the upper right corner. Tatros river, parallel rail tracks and main road visible in the lower right corner, Source: Google 2010.
Methods

Data collection

The data for this study were collected in a literature review and in interviews. Through the literature review, broad information was sourced to gain general information about peripheral cultural landscapes and the development of traditional land uses in Europe. Background and categorization of landscapes, including the study area Gyimes have been described in detail in Solymosi (2011). Both scientific and non-scientific resources were reviewed to obtain information specific to Gyimes.

Despite the willing assistance of the local administration in Gyimesközéplok, very limited statistical information on inhabitants of the region was found.

The household survey design was based on information from the literature review and on earlier knowledge gained during previous stays. After a pre-test in three households, a multiple random sampling approach was adopted to survey Gyimesközéplok. In addition, one side valley representative of Gyimes was selected to conduct semi-structured interviews in all households.

This side valley, called Antalokpataka, belonged to the Gyimesközéplok community. Its proximity to main infrastructure, its size, and the opportunity to reside on site and communicate with all inhabitants in Hungarian (researcher’s native language) made the full survey feasible. Every household in Antalokpataka was revisited as necessary until the interview could be conducted with an adult household member. The original questionnaire, written in Hungarian, was filled out by the interviewer on site (Table 10). Open interviews, which continued from one to several hours, were conducted so that interviewees could expand the themes as they wished.

This effective qualitative approach was extended to a few households belonging directly to Gyimesközéplok which were closer to the main road and to the neighboring side valley Sötétpataka. Thus it was possible to determine whether the findings for Antalokpataka could be generalized for the whole of Gyimes or whether they described a specific situation. Households in Gyimesközéplok and Sötétpataka were selected by a random sample.

Participant observation was also used to investigate the interrelationships between households and the community networks. For this, the researcher participated as much as possible in the daily life of the neighboring family, carrying out tasks such as grocery shopping and assisting household members with preparations for an imminent wedding.
Table 10: Interview questions of the household survey carried out in Gyimes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Type of question</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>General situation in Gyimes</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. How satisfied are you with your personal life in Gyimes?</td>
<td>Normative scale of 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. What are the positive aspects?</td>
<td>open</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. What are the negative aspects?</td>
<td>open</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. How good is the economic situation in Gyimes compared to other regions in Romania?</td>
<td>Normative scale of 5 with don’t know option</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Why do you think so?</td>
<td>open</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. How good is the economic situation in Gyimes compared to other regions in Europe?</td>
<td>Normative scale of 5 with don’t know option</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Why do you think so?</td>
<td>open</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Do you have any ideas about how the situation in Gyimes could be improved?</td>
<td>open</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. What will Gyimes be like in 10 years?</td>
<td>open</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Do you envisage any other or new employment opportunities apart from the ones that you have right now?</td>
<td>Yes/no</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. If yes, which ones are these?</td>
<td>open</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. Are these options for you personally?</td>
<td>open</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Why?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. How did your household’s economic situation change during the past 5 years?</td>
<td>4 given answers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Agriculture in Gyimes</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. In your opinion, how important is it to keep agriculture alive in Gyimes?</td>
<td>Normative scale of 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15. Why?</td>
<td>open</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16. In your opinion, what could politicians do to encourage people to continue agriculture in Gyimes?</td>
<td>10 alternate answers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17. What would encourage young people to stay in Gyimes?</td>
<td>7 alternate answers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18. Do you know any official agricultural advisory bodies here in Gyimes?</td>
<td>Yes/no</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19. If yes, can you please tell me something about it?</td>
<td>open</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20. If yes, how useful is it for your household?</td>
<td>Normative scale of 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21. Why?</td>
<td>open</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22. Which of the following statements do you agree with?</td>
<td>Agree/disagree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>See Figure 5.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 10 continued.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Agricultural activity</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>23. What is your household’s main source of income?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24. Please give an approximate overview of your agricultural goods and size of land!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25. What are the main reasons for you to continue agricultural activity?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26. If you could choose, which sector would you prefer to work in?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27. Please indicate how the following activities in your household changed during the past 10 years! See Figure 2.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28. If some activities decreased, why was this?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29. If some activities increased, why was this?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30. Within agriculture, which are the most feasible goods or services?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>The EU and Gyimes</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>31. In your opinion, does the EU have an influence on Gyimes?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>32. If yes, how strong is this influence?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>33. If yes, which aspects of your life does the EU influence, in your opinion?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>34. In your opinion, does the EU influence local dairy farming? Has anything changed since 2007?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35. If yes, which are these influences and changes?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>General household data</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Year of birth, place of birth, sex, educational level and residence status in the region of every household member.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Data analysis - SLA**

Answers to the questionnaires were analyzed for different purposes. In Antalokpataka, where household data were available for the entire community, the concept of sustainable livelihoods approaches (SLA) was used. Originating from the development theory, livelihoods approaches offer a way of thinking about the objectives, scope and priorities for development, placing people and their priorities at the centre of development. The approaches were designed to achieve poverty reduction so that the poor themselves are able to build upon their own opportunities, supporting their access to assets. The original SLA concept and framework adopted by the UK Department for International Development (DFID) in the late 1990s has been altered and extended by different organizations to suit a variety of contexts, issues, priorities and applications (ELDIS 2010).
“Livelihoods approaches are based on a conceptual framework to aid analysis of the factors affecting peoples’ livelihoods, including:

- the priorities that people define as their desired livelihood outcomes;
- their access to social, human, physical, financial and natural capital or assets, and their ability to put these to productive use;
- the different strategies they adopt (and how they use their assets) in pursuit of their priorities;
- the policies, institutions and processes that shape their access to assets and opportunities; and
- the context in which they live, and factors affecting vulnerability to shocks and stresses (ibid. 2010).”

SLA was seen as an ideal way to assess livelihood realities in Gyimes due to the method’s flexibility enabling the inclusion of various income sources, stakeholders and levels of influence. Carney (1998) describes the key strengths of SLA as follows:

- It projects a realistic picture of rural life, taking into account the multiple income sources and range of survival strategies (including various types of migration) that most rural households adopt.

- It recognizes the importance of multiple actors in both the private and the public sectors and at all levels of administration.

- It includes national and international linkages and the effect these have on people’s livelihoods. The approaches emphasize the importance of macro-level policy and institutions to the livelihood options of local communities and individuals.

SLA was designed for flexible application at different scales (Scoones 1998) and is indeed used by international donor organizations for country level or policy framework analyses down to household level surveys (Hussein 2002). For this study, the household level was considered the scale best suited to understanding the rationale of individual stakeholders and assessing the impacts of land use changes on the landscape.

One of the main uses of SLA has been to determine the sustainability of a rural livelihood (Scoones 1998). For this study, however, the SLA was used as an analytical tool to assess households’ livelihood strategies in a holistic way. Although the focus of the survey questionnaire was on agricultural activity –until now the main livelihood strategy of the majority of households in the region – the applied survey method facilitated the collection of information on alternate sources of income.
The original IDS sustainable rural livelihood framework looked at how, in a particular context, a certain combination of livelihood resources result in the ability to follow a particular combination of livelihood strategies (e.g. agricultural intensification or expansion, diversification, migration) and the outcomes. Institutional processes affect the basic assets and the resulting strategies chosen and determine the achievement (or not) of outcomes (Scoones 1998: 4).

Within this framework, households were described and grouped according to the livelihood strategies they chose, which in turn depended on whether and to what extent they had access to different assets or resources (see results section). The assets analyzed in this study were taken from the DFID framework (ELDIS 2010) and adjusted slightly to the local circumstances in Gyimes. The category ‘political capital’ was included in the list of assets because it was seen as crucial for the region; how household members perceived their role as an ethnic minority in Romania on the one hand and as relatively new members of the EU on the other hand. Table 11 summarizes the analyzed assets with corresponding survey methods.

**Table 11**: List of assessed assets in Gyimes households with corresponding survey methods.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>asset</th>
<th>How assessed?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Human capital</td>
<td>level of education, opinion on welfare system</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>skills, knowledge, health and ability to work</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social capital</td>
<td>assessed on community level and through expert consultations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>informal networks, membership of formalized groups, relationships that enhance cooperation, etc.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Natural capital</td>
<td>agricultural capital of households: number of animals, area of land</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>natural resources such as land, water, forests, livestock</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical capital</td>
<td>on village level: state of roads, proximity to schools, train stop, main road; existence of piping, health care producer goods assessed on household level (machinery)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>infrastructure, such as roads, water, sanitation, schools, information technology; producer goods</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Financial capital</td>
<td>income sources and changes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>financial resources including savings, credit, and income from employment, trade and remittances</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Political capital</td>
<td>Perception of EU, perception of local, regional and national administrations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>the power and capacity to influence decisions, based on knowledge and access to institutions</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In many cases, information obtained from the households, for example the residential status of family members, contributed to various asset categories. The fact that one or two members of a household migrated abroad seasonally or had a steady job in the nearby city influences the human, social and financial capital. Even the political capital can be enhanced if a family member has access to more information and has contact to different types of people through work away from home. Therefore the delimitation between asset categories was not strict and the attribution of information to categories was handled in a flexible way.

**Data analysis – survey of trends and attitudes**

In addition to the analysis of livelihoods with SLA in Antalokpataka, the questionnaires completed in all sampled households (Antalokpataka, Sötétpataka and Gyimesközéplok together) were used to draw a more general picture of land use trends, knowledge and attitudes of the population. For this, answers to all questions except question 24 (Table 10) and general household data were analyzed, including an agree/disagree type question in the semi-structured interviews (question 22 in Table 10), which comprised nine statements on agriculture in the region.

**Results**

**Traditional Livelihoods in Gyimes**

Today the predominant cultural landscape in Gyimes is the result of mixed land use practices which have evolved since the first permanent agricultural settlements were established towards the end of the 18th and beginning of the 19th century (Vámszer 1977). Land development followed stepwise, beginning with forest clearing for grazing grounds and eventually used as meadows for harvesting hay once or twice a year once this land became more fertile. Some areas were fenced and fertilized for the establishment of small gardens and field crops. Temporary summer lodgings became self-sufficient farms that operated all year round. The land use patterns today, with its interlinked forest areas, freshly cleared pastures, older pastures with signs of erosion, hay meadows and crops and gardens closer to the houses, still reflect the original settlement patterns (Solymosi 2008).
After various phases of further settlement and expansion, the forests were pushed back to the hilltops and steepest slopes by the beginning of the 20th century. The resulting ratio of open to forested land has since determined the landscape (Ilyés 2001). As Ilyés (2007) describes in his study on the historical evolution of the Gyimes cultural landscape, the quite complex livelihood strategy that had developed by this time consisted of various livestock husbandry, haymaking and cropping activities typically in up to 4-5 different locations that were used seasonally. Families would commonly remain at the main farm in one of the side valleys from mid January to mid March, and then begin to move to grazing areas at higher altitudes with their cattle, sheep and horses.

This traditional livelihood strategy lost complexity during the course of the 20th century. The number of animals per household and the household size itself declined, so that a reduced work force upheld the traditional mixed land use practices in only two to three locations. The pastures with temporary lodgings farthest from the permanent farm were abandoned by the 1950s (Ilyés 2007).

According to Ilyés (2007), and to information obtained in 2009 from various household land use histories in this survey, by the end of the 20th century many families had reduced their farming activity to the main farm maintaining only one summer site for grazing and haymaking. Alternative income sources in nearby industries (mainly wood in Gyimes) or administration (e.g. railway), mainly obtained by the heads of households, reduced both the necessity to maintain remote patches of land and the work time available for agricultural activity.

Livelihoods in Gyimes today

But what is the situation today? The 55 respondents of the survey - 30 women and 25 men with an average age of 50 - were almost all born in Gyimes (2 respondents elsewhere in Romania, and one in Hungary). The majority, 35 people, had completed an elementary education, and only two respondents had a university degree. The surveyed inhabitants had lived for an average of 39 years in their homes, where they were interviewed, and lived in average households of four residents.

When asked how their different agricultural activities had developed during the past ten years, the majority of respondents stated that they kept less livestock than before. This trend was most pronounced for cattle (Figure 20). “Kalibázás” – the temporary use of summer lodgings – and forest management were activities that almost 50 percent of respondents had never practiced. Of those remaining, 24, and 15 respondents respectively had reduced these activities during the past ten years.
The results show that gardening and haymaking were the only two categories in which most households had maintained their activities. In these households, more respondents saw an increase in the activity hired agricultural labor abroad, the only livelihood strategy which had not decreased or remained unchanged. Additionally, however, hired agricultural labor was by no means a widespread income option in Gyimes.

**Figure 20**: Responses to the question: "How have the activities of your household developed during the past 10 years?"; N=55=100% for each column.

In the interview, the respondents were then asked to explain why some of their activities had decreased or increased. The most frequent reasons for reducing livestock husbandry were that it was no longer feasible (15 responses), or the respondent was too old to continue the activity (11 responses). Seven respondents had sold their forests or other areas, and five had less manpower available in the household, which had forced them to reduce their livestock and kalibázás. In some cases the changed circumstances led the household to discontinue an activity, often kalibázás, completely; in others the activity was reduced to a subsistence level, e.g. keeping only one milking cow instead of three or four. The few respondents who mentioned any increase in activities, claimed working abroad the best income opportunity, or identified wood as a good saleable commodity and had therefore increased their wood harvesting and forest management activities.
Answers to the question, what the household’s main source of income was, support this picture (Figure 21). Only eleven interviewees out of 55 stated that agriculture was either their sole source of income or the main source but complemented with income from other sectors. Of those seven who earned complementary incomes, six said their agricultural income was complemented by a pension after employment as hired labor in either industry or the service sector.

**Figure 21:** Responses to the question: "What is your household's main source of income?"; N=55=100% for each row and in total.

As reasons of their agricultural work, most respondents (39) identified self-sufficiency, followed by the statement that they had no other choice (14 responses). Notably, four people were continuing their activities in order to maintain the cultural landscape; two households did so as a hobby. Other reasons included: “this is my profession, what I grew up with” (three responses); “because I like it” (two responses); “because I have nothing else to do”; “to have something to spend my pension on”; “subsidies for mowing”; “to break free” (one response), and “neither work alone nor agriculture alone could secure my income” (one response).
Thus agriculture is no longer a major source of income, but a supplement. Respondents’ answers, when asked whether they saw income options for themselves apart from the present ones, were divided equally (28 and 27 answers respectively). Those who did see alternatives mostly mentioned the wood industry or tourism as possible income sources. Interestingly, some inhabitants lamented the lack of local job opportunities for women in general, pointing out that most available opportunities were too labor intensive and too physically demanding (e.g. agriculture, wood industry, construction industry). Despite the decreased agricultural activity illustrated in the previous paragraphs and the high number of people who perceived no alternative sources of income for themselves, the majority of interviewees indicated no change in the household’s income over the past five years (31 answers). Fourteen said their situation had worsened, and only ten that it had improved.

**Trends and Attitudes**

Forty-six respondents thought it was either very important or important to keep agriculture alive in Gyimes. The reasons mentioned most frequently for this were that agriculture was still seen as the economic basis for the region and that the production of local food for self-sufficiency was important (12 statements each). Ten respondents highlighted tradition as a reason for continuing agriculture, stating that agriculture should be upheld because it had always been conducted in Gyimes. The good quality of local agricultural products was the main argument for agriculture in Gyimes for five respondents, while four saw it as the only local opportunity that could generate income for a large number of people. In the opinion of three respondents, agriculture in Gyimes was important because it provided food for the market or the world in general, and it had such value in itself that everything should be done to keep it alive in order to prove and demonstrate this value. Those few interviewees who did not attribute great importance to agriculture mainly stated that they thought it was no longer economically viable, that nobody was left to do it, and that it was hard work.

Asked their opinion about what could be done at the political level to encourage people to continue agriculture in Gyimes, most respondents called for state intervention (Figure 22). The idea of price subsidies for agricultural products gained even more approval than the general subsidies paid currently. All other options listed in the questionnaire received far less agreement from respondents. Fifteen people thought support for better marketing opportunities for agricultural products would be of help for local farmers, while only nine said that receiving advice about forms of cooperation would improve their situation. The latter option raised skepticism in the light of past bad experiences of many during the socialist era with collective forms of agricultural marketing. Other options mentioned were to restrict agricultural imports in order to protect the local market and to support investments leading to added value through a local processing industry.
Results

Figure 22: Responses to the question “In your opinion, what could politicians do to encourage people to continue agriculture in Gyimes?”; N=55=100% for each row. Multiple answers possible.

The fact that only five respondents saw agricultural advice as an option to encourage local agriculture (Figure 22) is reflected in the answers to questions 19 and 21 as well. Eighty percent of respondents were aware of an advisory service at the mayor’s office in Gyimesközéplok, but more than half (44 respondents) found it either not so useful or not useful at all (30 answers overall). Firstly, knowledge about local agricultural extension of the majority of inhabitants interviewed was limited to the location of the office (24 of the 44 yes-responses) or knowledge of distributed subsidies (13 responses). The reasons for its perceived irrelevance to the households ranged from the fact that they had never been there, through to the comment that experienced farmers needed no advice, or the recognition that they were ineligible due to their small farmland area.

For a holistic picture of the role of agriculture in the region, respondents were asked to agree or disagree to a set of statements reflecting different perceptions people might have about agricultural land uses (question 22 in Table 10). The results (Figure 23) clearly show that the importance of agriculture for Gyimes inhabitants is much wider than just economic. Almost all respondents agreed that without agriculture the character of their region would be lost and that local land use forms were an important part of local culture (50 and 44 agreements respectively). Despite this, 46 expected agricultural activity to decrease in Gyimes no matter what happened, but 41 considered it a pity at the same time that traditional land uses were vanishing. Only eight respondents felt that land use forms were similar elsewhere.
The different reasons for the positive or negative responses are not represented in the graph. Yet, virtually everyone agreed to the statement on machinery use for example, claiming it was almost impossible to use machinery in Gyimes due to the site conditions, whether they want modernization or not.

![Opinions on Gyimes](image)

**Figure 23**: Responses to the question: “Which of the following statements do you agree with?”, N=55=100% for each row.

From the final block of questions almost 80 percent of respondents recognized EU influence on Gyimes region; 29 out of these 43 felt the influence was either very strong or strong. Those perceiving a weak or very weak EU influence mostly identified only the low agricultural subsidies they received.

Almost all of the respondents who recognized an EU influence in Gyimes identified agriculture as one area of influence (Figure 24). Far fewer respondents saw any influence on other aspects of life. During the interviews, the three most frequent influences mentioned were negative, namely a weakening of the agricultural sector, higher living costs and fewer job opportunities. Other influences mentioned were: more work opportunities abroad (four responses), easier travel and easier contact with Hungary, social disparities, a lower living standard, more foreign products and the perceived EU attempt to expand its market to the East, less overall security and, finally, introduction of water management in parts of Gyimes (two responses).
Asked more specifically, 42 respondents saw an EU influence on local dairy farming, with newly introduced high quality standards and regulations being the most frequently observed changes (22 and 16 responses respectively). Others noted that sales prices had fallen (7), that there was the need to use machinery now (6) or that the production of a single farmer was now insufficient (5). Other observations included a general weakening of the dairy sector, less marketing opportunities, and the opinion that local products did not sell well on the EU market. Two respondents saw the dairy market polarized and social disparities growing due to the EU influence.

Despite all of this, people mainly replied positively to the question, “How satisfied are you with your personal life in Gyimes?” Generally they were either very much or at least partly satisfied with their personal lives in the region (Figure 25). On the other hand 16 inhabitants said they were either not very, or not at all satisfied.

The top five positive causes of satisfaction interviewees raised were family, home and neighbors; having employment; a comfortable retirement life; a good environment and the nice landscape. The most frequently mentioned negative aspects of life in Gyimes were economic problems (two respondents said they were forced to leave due to this), lack of local employment opportunities, the fact that agriculture no longer represented a viable income option and personal reasons.
Results

Figure 25: Responses to the question: “How satisfied are you with your personal life in Gyimes?; N=55=100% for each row and in total.

When asked to compare the economic situation in Gyimes to other regions in Romania and Europe, respondents’ prevailing sentiment was that of relative economic underdevelopment (Figure 26). Compared with other Romanian regions, this opinion was less pronounced and the largest group of respondents (24) felt the situation was similar to elsewhere in the country, eight claiming it was even better. When it came to a comparison with other European regions, the majority of respondents stated that the situation was either bad or very bad, many building on experiences in Hungary. A notable number of people could not answer this question because they had never been abroad as they said.

Figure 26: Responses to the questions: “How good is the economic situation Gyimes compared to other regions in Romania/Europe?”; N=55=100% for each row and in total.
Livelihoods in Antalokpataka today

![Map of surveyed households in Antalokpataka](image)

**Figure 27:** Map of surveyed households in Antalokpataka with corresponding household numbers used in the livelihood analysis: only residential houses shown; house numbers in parentheses not surveyed; crossed houses not inhabited; R = researcher’s house; grey dashes outline the contour line 900 m asl.

Some households could not be interviewed (numbers in parentheses in Figure 27) because they were either unavailable due to their work situation (households 6, 10, 16) or they did not want to talk for long (households 21 and 22). Nevertheless, some basic information, such as residential status in the region and income sectors, could be obtained from and about them. These five households were not included in the livelihood analysis below. The household categories formed and the underlying indicators are shown in Table 12.

**Table 12:** Household categories in Antalokpataka. HH = household; household number refers to household number given in Figure 14.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Household category</th>
<th>Main indicators</th>
<th>No. HHs</th>
<th>HHs portrayed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Multifunctional farming households | • multifunctional agriculture main source of income,  
                                   | • kalibázs (still using the summer lodging)                                     | 4       | HH 7          |
| Modern farming households        | • Dairy farming main source of income,  
                                   | • agricultural activity had increased in the past ten years                     | 1       | HH 13         |
Table 12 continued.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mixed income households</th>
<th>main source of income not agriculture</th>
<th>10</th>
<th>HH 2, 8</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Retired households</td>
<td>pension main source of income</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>HH 3, 25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-landowning households</td>
<td>No, or very limited agricultural capital and property</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>HH 26</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1. Multifunctional farming households

For the purpose of this livelihood analysis, the term multifunctional farming shall be defined as a type of land use mix that most resembles the way agriculture was carried out in the research area until the end of the 20th century, as described in the section ‘Traditional livelihoods in Gyimes’. Even these few households have simplified their land use strategy nowadays and use up to two sites during the year to accommodate their livestock and undertake related activities such as haymaking or gardening for subsistence. The main farm is situated typically between 900 and 1000m above sea level, while the summer lodging is at around 1200m. In early May, either the entire household or just the head of household moves with their 3-5 cattle and other animals to higher elevations to make use of the meadows and grazing grounds there.

Household 7 is one example of a traditional farming family. The couple was born in 1953 and 1959 in Gyimes, where both attended elementary school. Their older son, born 1980, had formed his own household recently, while their younger son, born 1987, lived with them. They stated agriculture as their main source of income, which is supplemented by the head of household’s pension, and food vouchers that the younger son received as part of his salary at a car repair shop in Csíkszereda.

At the time of the survey they owned 3 head of cattle, 8 sheep, which they took care of but shared with their oldest son, 1 pig, 20 chickens and a horse. A bull was slaughtered later in the year for the younger son’s wedding, leaving only a cow and a calf for future land use. They owned about 8ha of pasture, 8ha of meadows, 0,30ha of cropland and about 8ha of forest. The cropland was also shared with the older son. Although they saw agriculture as their household’s main source of income, they mainly produced food for household consumption, and because they claimed to have no choice.
They maintained that the only agricultural activities that had not decreased during the previous ten years were gardening, keeping sheep and chicken. Everything else had decreased due to the fact that it was no longer feasible. The man said he had decided to quit the kalibázás the year before, but that he kept doing it “because his heart was pulling him there”. He usually went up to the summer lodging end of May and stayed there until September 29th (St. Michael’s day). The sheep were given to a shepherd and taken to uphill pastures at Naskalat Mountain from mid April to beginning of September and kept close to the main farm during the rest of the year.

Their knowledge about the situation in Gyimes and the rest of the world showed that they had access to information, partly due to the fact that two household members had been to Hungary for seasonal work a few years before. Their preferred sources of information were Hungarian television channels; regional newspapers were consulted very irregularly. They were aware of the local agricultural advisory service at the mayor’s office and received subsidies both for their areas and cattle, but they found it little help. They saw subsidies as a somewhat humiliating form of state support and would have preferred to be able to market their products at a fair price.

2. Modern farming household

Household 13 was the only household in Antalokpataka found to be practicing a modern form of agriculture for income generation. The young couple, born in 1982 and 1984 in Gyimes and living together with the man’s parent who were born in 1955 and 1957, had been investing in the family farm since their marriage 4 years earlier. At the time of the survey they had a modern barn with a milking machine and kept 8 milking cows plus 2 calves. The livestock was kept inside all year and fed with hay from the 20ha of meadows and additional bought feed. This way they could produce approximately 130 liters of milk daily, which they sold for about 3 000 lei a month (equaled ~710 Euro at the time of the survey in April 2009). Apart from dairy farming they kept 3 sheep, a pig with piglets and cultivated 0.2-0.30ha of cropland for household consumption.

They were happy that agriculture was their income source because they felt that with jobs in the city they could earn only half of their current income and they perceived it as an advantage to be able to stay at home. Having a secondary and a tertiary education, they were interested and well informed about the agricultural trends in Gyimes and elsewhere. They regularly attended courses at the agricultural extension office and found them helpful. The subsidies they received per hectare and livestock units were seen as a minor but welcome income supplement. They were aware that in other parts of Europe subsidies were higher and site conditions better for agriculture, but were very satisfied with their personal situation in Gyimes nevertheless.
Although their situation was relatively privileged in the region, they saw the problem of small-scale farmers, mainly the low sales prices and the poor marketing opportunities. They recommended subsidies, helping the farmers to get organized and better agricultural advisory services as a solution and felt that it was very important to keep agriculture alive in Gyimes in order to have good quality local products. They used machinery themselves but acknowledged that, for others, it was almost impossible to intensify agricultural production due to the difficult relief and fragmented land ownership.

3. Mixed income households

Because of the often difficult delimitation of categories, this group was ultimately the largest and most heterogeneous. This category comprised all households whose main stated income was not agriculture or a pension. Although this category overlapped with `Non-landowning households´, these mixed income households, despite having no agricultural land as capital, had another major source of income that placed them in the higher income range. To represent the variety in this group, two households are described.

Household 8, comprising a couple born in 1955 and 1961 and their children born in 1979 and 1992 in Gyimes, all having secondary education, earned its income from the man’s pension, the woman’s employment in Csíkszereda and agriculture. Although agriculture was not a major source of income, their agricultural activities were relatively high with 23 sheep, 3 pigs, 4-5 chickens and a horse, 40ha of pastures, 7ha meadows, 0,8ha cropland and 4-5ha of forest.

Similar to the multifunctional farming household, described above, they also gave their sheep to a shepherd and in turn received about 8kg of cheese during the summer. In the hope of rising meat prices, they were trying to increase the flock. Yet, they no longer kept milking cows together with their parents because it was no longer feasible. The production of food for household consumption was the main reason for continuing selected agricultural activities.

The head of household’s perception of EU’s impact on the region was very negative. He saw the local dairy market destroyed and his family’s financial situation weakened. His main problem consisted of low sales prices for agricultural products and very limited job opportunities in the region. In order to encourage farmers to continue with agriculture and young people to stay in Gyimes, he suggested massive state support for creating jobs outside agricultural primary production. He found the local advisory service little help because he felt that experienced farmers like him did not require additional training.
Household 2 had moved to Csíkszereda 33 years earlier, and since lived from casual labor. The couple (born 1961 and 1964, with secondary education) saw themselves forced to move away from Antalokpataka although they would have preferred to stay. They returned every weekend and stayed on relatives’ property. Their opinions were strong and negative: they were not satisfied with their personal situation at all, found the economic situation in Gyimes similar to elsewhere in Romania but much worse than in other parts of Europe and did not see any positive trends in the region or alternative income options. Their household’s economic situation had worsened during the past 5 years.

Although they were not permanent residents of Gyimes and had never practiced any form of land use, they thought it was very important to keep agriculture alive in the region, mainly for the good quality local products. They found the relation between the high quality local milk, which in their view fulfilled organic standards, and the low prices it received an extremely distorted development and they were furious at being forced to buy more expensive, poor milk produced elsewhere in the supermarket. For them agriculture formed part of the region’s character and they also found it a pity that traditional land uses were gradually disappearing.

The two households described from this group represent two extremes in agricultural activity and residential status in Gyimes. While household 8 still relied on agriculture for subsistence, revenues and area-based subsidies, household 2 had other sources of income. All members of household 8 lived in Antalokpataka and all but one commuted to Csíkszereda for education and work. They tried to improve their economic situation mainly through local solutions such as increasing the number of sheep. Household 2 on the other hand had chosen migration as a livelihood strategy to solve their economic problems and had changed employment sector and place of residence. There were many other livelihood models between these two extremes, for example, sometimes only one or two members of the household migrated or changed employment sectors, whereas sometimes households migrated seasonally, leaving their agricultural activities to relatives or neighbors.

4. Retired households

Although the households in this category mainly lived from a pension, their financial situation varied. Depending on whether they could make a comfortable living from the pension and household members’ supplementary incomes or not, agricultural activity also played different roles. While some saw it as a necessity for survival, others enjoyed it as a pastime. Therefore two households at each end of this range are described here.
For the couple in household 3, each person born 1943 in Gyimes and had an elementary education, livestock keeping was a necessary supplement. The woman tended the 3 cattle, 3 pigs and 15 chickens alone or with the help of neighbors since her husband had been in hospital. Their agricultural capital consisted in 3ha of pasture, comprising (1ha forested), 2ha of meadows, and 10are of cropland. She said she was continuing these activities to maintain their self-sufficiency, and because she had no choice. She had never had a summer lodge and had reduced the number of livestock because it had become physically too demanding.

On the other hand, the oldest member of household 25, born 1947 in Gyimes, stated that he was practicing agriculture mainly as a hobby and to “break free”. He had studied architecture and had then returned to work for the local administration and finally retired where he was born. His main source of income was his pension, but he received support from his son. He did not see agriculture as very important for the future of Gyimes because he felt it was impossible without state aid. He saw his son’s (an IT expert who commuted to Csíkszereda to work) and his own biography as an example of young people being able to stay in the region, even with a university degree.

All of his household’s agricultural activities had decreased during the past ten years. He kept two cows, two pigs and took care of 10ha of pasture (5ha forested) and 3ha of both meadows and cropland. He also still maintained a summer lodge but mainly to pass his summer holidays there and take the grandchild from time to time.

Both households had good access to information and services because they had younger relatives employed in the nearby city. This not only resulted in financial support but also in a broader knowledge about local politics, working conditions, and education and health care institutions in the county capital. The latter household was the only one in Antalokpataka with internet access.

5. Non-landowning households (with limited income)

In Antalokpataka only two households were found, which owned no land or very little cropland respectively. These households were also at the lower end of the income scale since they received little or no additional income from agriculture, no agricultural subsidies, produced little or no food for their own consumption, and received no revenues from the forest.
Household 26, with the parents born in 1959 and 1962 and the two daughters in 1984 and 1986, all in Gyimes, had only one pig, a few chickens and 10 are of cropland where they cultivated potatoes and vegetables for their own consumption. The parents had given up agriculture completely a while ago and the children worked seasonally abroad. At the time of the survey the younger daughter was employed in Hungary for agricultural work, while the older one had just returned and was looking for temporary work in Gyimes. The members of this household were very dissatisfied with their personal situation and did not know how to improve the situation. They saw neither job opportunities nor a future in the region.

Nevertheless they found it was very important to keep agriculture alive in Gyimes because it was the local economical base. Interestingly, they said it would not be better if more farmers could use modern machinery because that would reduce the possibility for finding temporary hired labor in the region, an option that was used frequently by the two daughters when they were at home.

The other household in this category, household 4, stated that they had never practiced agriculture or possessed land. When the head of the household had had more time, they had kept pigs and sheep but now that he worked in the wood industry, even this activity had ceased.

Both of the households in this category stated that the situation was better for farmers in the region because they had a better economic basis and in addition received subsidies per area and livestock unit. Household 26 found this unfair as it polarized the local community; those who already had more than average, got more. The households knew about the local extension services but did not find it useful at all.

In Antalokpataka, with the exception of household 4, all households had relatives in the region and they frequently jointly used agricultural areas and/or livestock, or supported each other in different ways. There were no professional networks such as farmers’ organizations in Gyimes. The agricultural advisory service run by local administration in Gyimesközéplok provided mainly basic information on EU subsidies and organized the occasional training course. The few milk collection places that remained along the main road close to Antalokpataka were managed directly by creameries in Harghita County and did not enhance the marketing power of single farmers in the region.
Infrastructure in Antalokpataka was restricted to a main road and limited telecommunications and education and health care facilities. The main road was a poorly maintained gravel road that had been renovated in the spring of 2009. Its use by wood harvesting trucks from a nearby sawmill was perceived as very problematic and damaging. Most households owned mobile phones; many had given up their landline phones as they were uneconomic. A kindergarten and an elementary school were located along the main road and were used by families with children in Antalokpataka. Older children were sent mostly to secondary schools in Csíkszereda by train because the secondary school in nearby Gyimesfelsőlok was not well regarded. Health care was provided by only one general practitioner for the whole Gyimesközéplok community. More severe medical problems had to be addressed in Csíkszereda and further afield.

Discussion

The livelihood analysis describes a very diverse picture of existing livelihood strategies in Antalokpataka today. The situation is far from the widespread use of multifunctional agriculture that has been described in literature for Gyimes up until the last third of the 20th century. The dominant type of livelihood today is one with multiple sources of income incorporating migration strategies.

Agriculture continues to lose its importance. Of the five land use categories with the largest impact on the cultural landscape due to their extensive area or complexity – cattle and sheep husbandry, haymaking, kalibázás, and forest management – three have declined significantly (Figure 20). The decrease in two activities, kalibázás and forest management, which 50% of respondents stated they had never participated in, shows that this trend must have been occurring in previous generations already. The livelihoods analysis shows that, in Antalokpataka, all but the modern farming household had reduced most of their agricultural activities. Generally, once a household’s land ownership fell below a certain area – about that needed to sustain one milking cow – its agricultural activity ceased completely.

The only households still relying on agriculture as a main source of income in Gyimes were found at each end of the income scale: the relatively low income households that had either retired or with no owned land, who had no choice but to continue more or less multifunctional land use practices; and the few modern high income households, who had the capacity to invest and expand their dairy farming activities. Of the 55 households surveyed in the region, only two belonged to the latter group.
Of the small group of households continuing agricultural land use, an even smaller group does this in a way that supports the traditional cultural landscape structures with its mosaic of small-scale land use areas. The ‘multifunctional farming households’ comprise the one group adopting the greatest number of traditional land uses, although in a less intensive, less complex way.

A comparison of land use of a multifunctional farming household in Gyimes today with a typical land use strategy in the last third of the 20th century, or even with land use in the first third of the 20th century, indicates a dramatic decline in the number of different sites used annually and the change in, and overall complexity of agriculture. The direct effects are fewer summer lodgings and fewer spring and fall pastures maintained by grazing and mowing. Indirectly, fewer support structures such as fences, paths and gardens for subsistence close to the summer huts, for example, are maintained.

An effect which is not portrayed in the data on land use is that of less transhumance sheep keeping in higher altitudes. As illustrated in Figure 5, only 10 out of 55 respondents kept the same amount of sheep as ten years earlier. During the interviews, many households said they kept the few remaining sheep close to the main farm year round because, firstly, it was no longer worth passing them to a shepherd and, secondly, there was only one shepherd left in Lövész/Livezi at the southern end of the Gyimes valley, who took the sheep to Naskalat Mountain during summer. This indicates that transhumance sheep keeping may be abandoned in the near future in Gyimes, which may have a large-scale impact on the cultural landscape as sheep pastures above the forest line disappear.

According to the interviews conducted, one of the main reasons for declining agricultural activity is the EU’s influence and associated macroeconomic trends. Most people perceive the influence on the region as very strong or strong, or sense a major influence on the agricultural sector and in particular on the dairy market. This influence is considered negative, with high standards and new regulations making small-scale dairy farming almost impossible. Current payment schemes and general agricultural policies in the EU do not tend to support the traditional cultural landscape in Gyimes; quite the contrary. Respondents saw sales prices for agricultural products, especially dairy products, drop and, at the same time, general living costs rise. The most frequent reason given for reducing certain agricultural activities was that they were no longer economically feasible.

Apart from economic aspects, the study clearly showed that traditional land uses in the region also carried social and cultural values for inhabitants. Almost all respondents agreed that without agriculture the character of Gyimes would be lost, and 44 went as far as stating that agriculture was an important part of local culture. The described land use changes, therefore, might induce a feeling of loss of traditional values as well as of familiar scenery.
The main findings on changing livelihoods and their impact on the current state of the traditional cultural landscape can be summarized as follows:

- Agriculture is losing importance as a source of income and is performed increasingly at a subsistence level or given up completely.
- Households that continue agriculture include the poor, the traditionalists, the retired (mostly doing it out of habit or as a pastime) and the innovative who have money.
- Of these, only the traditional multifunctional farming households maintain the traditional cultural landscape.
- Only the very poor or the relatively rich and innovative households rely on agriculture as a main source of income. In the long run, only they will continue agricultural land use, leading to both intensification and land abandonment.
- The importance of income from other sectors, and particularly from outside the research area, has been growing strongly.
- Land use strategies of multifunctional farming households do not stop the trend towards a more simplified and homogeneous cultural landscape with less small structures and a coarser landscape mosaic.
- The decrease of agriculture is seen as problematic by the majority of people and they feel that other traditional land use values as well as economic ones should be recognized.

Land use changes have impacts that go beyond a simplified and homogeneous cultural landscape. Kalibázás is not just a land use, but a lifestyle as many interviewees stated. The head of household 7 clearly said he would miss going up to his summer hut with the animals, this feeling of having a self sufficient lifestyle there, far away from everything. He maintained the lodging for nostalgic not economic reasons. Another example is the decline of transhumance sheep keeping. If this disappears, not only will the sheep pastures, shepherds’ huts, fences, watering places, paths and diffuse forest edges disappear, but also the shepherds, the special dog breeds and, in the long run, the tradition of consuming sheep products, like cheese, meat, wool and leather in Gyimes.
On the other hand, some farmers expressed the opinion that, from the point of view of property sizes, the region is unable to provide agricultural income for the current number of households. Due to the local inheritance tradition in which the property is split between all descendants, many patches have simply become too small to sustain an entire household. The households who have more area than they necessarily need do not sell because they consider the prices too unfavorable. The households possessing no land, however, cannot afford even those patches available for sale.

Conclusion

If the current trend prevails, the traditional cultural landscape will disappear in Gyimes. Outside influences, such as the EU’s current common agricultural policy and macroeconomic trends, have enhanced this trend. If there is political will to keep a region like Gyimes alive and thriving, policies need to be designed to provide direct benefits. In the case of the traditional cultural landscape, this means that the type of livelihoods that keep this landscape alive need to be maintained and supported. As this study has shown, the multifunctional farming households fulfill this role best.

But what policies are needed to support multifunctional farming households in peripheral regions like Gyimes? In view of the ongoing CAP reform process, special attention should be given now to addressing how such regions, might be supported better in the future. The latest communication from the European Commission on this topic (EC 2010) gives three broad options for a future CAP design with the main focus on becoming greener and more pro-innovative. The EC’s notion of introducing special measures for small farmers, channeling a fairer amount of support towards new member states or strengthening agri-environmental schemes combined with training would all favor a region like Gyimes. Some additional recommendations that evolved from this study are listed below:

- The current EU agricultural subsidies based on area and livestock units are negatively perceived by inhabitants. To support all farmers who contribute to the landscape mosaic, payments should be based on other indicators. One option may be a complexity index; the farmers who maintain the typical local mix of different animal species (cattle and sheep) and the spatial distribution of their activities between at least two sites annually should receive more support than those who manage less complex systems.
- The introduction of very strict ecological production standards including feed and/or identification of origin labeling would favor multifunctional farming households provided they receive training and support. The modern farming households rely on imported feed for their cattle, and would not be able to access this type of support, but would benefit more from traditional agricultural support as it is paid now.

- One should explore the possibility of exponentially decreasing subsidies, paying less per unit area as farm size increased. Although certainly politically challenging, such a support scheme would support all active farmers in the region but favor the smaller farmers more.

- An incentive could be given to small producers and also those who feel their agricultural production is not valued by society by replacing direct payments with price subsidies.

- By applying the delimitation of Less Favored Areas (LFA) within EU member states and restricting certain support for these areas, regions such as Gyimes would be favored and competition with agriculturally more productive areas reduced.
IV. From rural development to management of regions: supporting marginalized rural areas in Europe through better policy design beyond the CAP

Abstract

Based on the assumption that the European Common Agricultural Policy is a major determining factor in shaping marginalized regions with traditional land use systems, this study examines past and current policy influences in two selected case study regions in the Romanian Eastern Carpathians and the Spanish Extremadura. From a literature review, household surveys and policy analysis, the manner in which current policy design affects the studied regions is outlined. The case study areas are representative of marginalized rural regions throughout Europe that experience a shift away from the agricultural sector and face demographic change and economic challenges. The observed agricultural transformation and resulting land use changes are described first, exemplifying the process of simultaneous agricultural intensification and land abandonment typically occurring in traditional land use systems. The concept of multi-level governance is then used to embed the case study landscapes into the political framework at EU level, focusing on hierarchical structures and policy impacts. It reveals that the effects of CAP direct payments are more indirect than direct, mainly due to the support of larger farms in neighboring areas. Rural development measures were just setting in in Romania at the time of research, whereas in Spain they had not been able to halt negative developments. It is argued that under the three policy scenarios discussed by the European Commission, a status quo is expected to enhance current trends, while the other options promise slight improvements in the regions studied. To conclude the policy analysis suggestions are made for the management of marginalized rural areas in the light of the ongoing CAP reform, developing arguments in favor of a territorial and regionalized rather than a sectoral and centralized approach to rural development.

Introduction

The ongoing EU CAP (Common Agricultural Policy) reform opens up the debate about future policy design in a field that comprises 41 percent of the EU’s budget (EC 2010b). European agriculture is facing the global challenges of a growing world population and food insecurity, scarce natural resources, climate change and questions of equity between developed and developing countries when it comes to trade in agricultural commodities (FAO 2002). At the same time agriculture in Europe is the single largest manager of natural resources, with over one third of the EU-27 area declared utilized agricultural area, or an average of 43 percent agricultural land use across Member States (Eurostat 2010).
The overall decrease in number of holdings with the simultaneous rise in farm size (ibid.) implies a growing number of high intensity, high input, and very productive systems and at the same time decreasing number of small scale or extensive systems that are frequently multifunctional and deliver multiple public goods while having lower productivity. For this latter type of agriculture the term high nature value farming (HNVF) is used to indicate that due to their characteristics – usually poor site conditions, low fertilizer input, little machinery use, many dividing structures like field margins, walls, fences and hedges and a high proportion of land in a semi-natural state – these systems are high in biodiversity (Baldock et al. 1993, Beaufoy & Marsden 2010). HNVF tends to occur in areas where isolation and difficult conditions for agriculture enabled the survival of traditional land use systems (Solymosi 2011). The CAP reform may present an opportunity to obtain better recognition and support for traditional land use systems in marginalized areas.

The phenomenon of disappearing traditional land use systems in Europe is widely addressed in current research (Marini et al. 2010, Palang et al. 2006, Pedroli 2007, Tzanopoulus & Vogiatzakis 2011). It is regarded as problematic due to the decline in biodiversity and other ecological functions associated with traditional farming (Marini et al. 2010, Sirami et al. 2010), and the loss of aesthetic value attributed to traditional cultural landscapes (Lindemann-Matthies et al. 2010).

The Common Agricultural Policy in the EU has a strong, determining influence on the agricultural sector and “it both directly and indirectly affects the vitality of rural households and the economy of rural areas as a whole (EC 2011c)”. While direct payments and market measures are aimed at the entire primary sector, Rural Development Policy (RDP), the so called second pillar of the CAP, is the major policy targeted at rural areas (RuDi 2011). This study outlines how current policy design affects marginalized rural areas, generalizing findings from two selected case study regions that represent marginalized areas elsewhere in Europe.

Building on the case studies, literature review and policy analysis, this study suggests that a better policy would be possible through a shift away from an overarching notion of rural development to that of rural management. Rural management could be seen as a bottom-up approach designed at the local to regional level, tailored to the overall needs of a given region, not just the primary sector. On the one hand, indirect effects of agriculture would have to be taken into account and attributed an economic value. Such a policy would include measures already in place under the second pillar of the current CAP such as support for origin labeling, specializing in niche markets, rural tourism and training for local farmers. On the other hand an improved policy would also value the delivery of landscape and environmental amenities and support non-agricultural sectors in an area based approach.
Results

Research areas and methods

Two regions in peripheral areas of Europe that can be defined as traditional cultural landscapes were chosen to carry out case studies. Traditional cultural landscape in this context describes a multifunctional land use system highly adapted to local site conditions that have evolved throughout the history of human settlement in these regions and was created and maintained due to isolation, difficult site conditions for agriculture and a population that was different from the surrounding mainstream (Solymosi 2011). Usually in Europe these are either small scale systems combining horticulture, arable crops, animal husbandry and the use of other natural resources like the forest or they consist of mainly extensive grassland, sometimes combined with seasonal agriculture and the use of trees (IEEP 2007). Especially, but not exclusively in Central and Eastern Europe, many of the land holdings in such regions are managed on a subsistence or semi-subsistence level and are typically small, family run farms with minimal market participation (ENRD 2010).

Gyimes in the Romanian Eastern Carpathians and Las Hurdes in the Spanish Extremadura belong to the category of regions with very small-scale systems with plots typically less than 1 hectare and farming households barely achieving partial subsistence. The commonality of these two research sites is their relative isolation until recently and their mosaic pattern of land use that makes the best use of the scarce natural resources available locally. They are both in mountainous terrain where soil conditions and steep slopes do not allow broad-scale intensification of agriculture. Table 1 provides summary data for these two regions.

**Table 13: Information on case study areas Gyimes and Las Hurdes**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Gyimes, Romania</th>
<th>Las Hurdes, Spain</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>area</td>
<td>approx. 600km²</td>
<td>approx. 508 km²</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>administration</td>
<td>on the border between Harghita and Bacau Counties</td>
<td>in Comunidad Autónoma de Extremadura</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>population</td>
<td>13 991 inhabitants in 3 communities, largest community Gyimesbükk with 5 340 inhabitants slightly declining population between 55.1% and 99.8% ethnic Hungarians</td>
<td>7 276 inhabitants in 6 municipalities, largest municipality Pinofranqueado with 1 654 inhabitants declining population numbers due to an ageing society, declining birth rate and strong outmigration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>site conditions</td>
<td>- 5°C medium annual temperature</td>
<td>- 14°C medium annual temperature</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- 700-1200mm annual precipitation</td>
<td>- 900-1800mm annual precipitation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- altitude 700-1665m asl.</td>
<td>- altitude 800-1200m asl.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- relatively fertile soils only in floodplains</td>
<td>- poor, strongly structured soils</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 13 continued.

| local economy | agriculture mainly on subsistence level, mainly dairy products few local employment opportunities | 67% of dry cultures are olives, growing importance of cherry production dominance of seasonal and non-qualified work |


The two regions were observed during the years 2006 to 2010 and a farm household survey was carried out in each region. In Gyimes and Las Hurdes 55 and 41 respondents respectively were interviewed about their economic situation, their agricultural activity and goods, their satisfaction with life in the region and their perception of EU policies in structured interviews. In one representative community in each region, a livelihood analysis was conducted with data collected from 28 households in Gyimes and 21 households in Las Hurdes. The data was complemented by qualitative information from semi-structured interviews carried out with local (two interviewees in each location), regional (two interviewees in each location) and EU policy experts (three interviewees).

A qualitative policy analysis was conducted using the data generated from the household surveys, the expert interviews and literature review. The observation and interview methods and document analysis were integrated in accordance with the interpretative approach to policy analysis (Yanow 2007). The multi-level governance model provided a framework to look at interactions between policy stakeholders from the regional to the EU level. In particular, top-down mechanisms such as the regulatory framework of the CAP which included rural development programs (RDPs) at the national, or in the case of Spain regional, level were analyzed. However, regional networks and bottom-up policy approaches such as LEADER were also incorporated into this analysis where they were found relevant for the policy making process.

Those support policies (e.g. rural development programs, subsidies), regulatory policies (legal obligations) and advisory systems (training, information, etc.) particularly in the agrarian sector, but also in other sectors, assumed to have an effect on the study areas were assessed at the regional level. The major focus of policy analysis was on the CAP, which consists of direct payments and market measures under the first pillar; and rural development in four thematic “axes” including LEADER under the second pillar, delivered through national RDPs by member states.

The detailed results of the household survey in Gyimes will be published elsewhere. The present study focuses on identifying possible impacts of the current CAP and other policies on land use change in the two regions and deriving general suggestions for an improvement of policies aimed at peripheral rural areas in the EU based on the findings.
Results

Observed agricultural change

The major agricultural change in Gyimes lied in the diminishing importance of the sector for income generation and employment. The majority of households analyzed derived their formal income from jobs in industry or the service sector, often in urban centers nearby, or from a retirement pension. Agriculture played a marginal role for income generation and was mainly continued to provide food for household consumption or for other non-economic reasons. Almost all households had reduced their agricultural activity, especially livestock numbers, during the past 10 years because it was no longer feasible or because the working capacity of households had declined. The factors most frequently mentioned as affecting economic feasibility of local agriculture were declining milk prices and marketing problems.

In Las Hurdes, similar changes took place around 30 years ago. The trend towards non-agricultural sectors becoming increasingly important economically and socially, that could be observed in Gyimes now, was more advanced in Las Hurdes. While 52 percent of the working population was employed in agriculture in 2006 (ADIC-Hurdes 2011), mostly seasonal contracts requiring no qualification were offered by large cooperatives and businesses (Mancomunidad las Hurdes 2011). Market-oriented small-scale farming was non-existent. Out of 21 households analyzed, only one household earned an independent income from a family business. All other households relied on state support in some form, either receiving a pension or an agricultural unemployment aid offered by the regional governments in Extremadura and Andalucía. A major problem in Las Hurdes was the ongoing depopulation, and ageing of remaining inhabitants of the region (ADIC-Hurdes 2011).

Observed land use changes

In Gyimes severe land use changes, which were related to the changing role of agriculture, were evident at the time of research. The traditional multifunctional land use system was progressively simplified by either abandoning certain land uses (such as sheep herding); abandoning certain patches of land (mostly the remote or less fertile areas); reducing land use intensity (for example keeping less livestock on a given area); reducing the overall complexity of the land use system (less rotation of pastures and meadows moving the animals fewer times per year); or less use and marketing of products.

The number of livestock has declined dramatically in Gyimes during the past few years according to local farmers and regional experts. In the dairy sector, therefore, a decline in agricultural activity combined with the effects of simplified land use systems had led to land abandonment. Un-utilized patches that lay fallow for one to two seasons were overgrown and forest succession had commenced.
On the other hand, a trend towards intensified land use was observed. Two of the 55 households surveyed in Gyimes had invested in agriculture during the past five years to increase milk production. Part of the investment consisted of buying meadows from neighboring farms and hence increasing farm size. This has lead to a more homogeneous landscape in these areas, which previously had had five to six owners with plot ownership distinguished by borders of fences, hedges, cut and linearly rearranged ant hills or paths and where the plots were mowed at different times and frequencies. These expanding farms purchased machinery and constructed stables to keep more livestock and process more dairy products faster. The cows were kept inside year round and local hay was supplemented with imported feed. This specific change in land use resulted in more unused pastures in the region.

In Las Hurdes, the abandonment of traditional multifunctional agriculture commenced around the 1970s and was therefore in a more advanced state. Today, of the once complex land use mosaic, mainly only the gardens near smaller villages remained. Gardens further away and olive groves and chestnut tree orchards were used to a lesser extent, leading to overgrown terraces and a deterioration of the supporting infrastructure like stone walls, canals and paths. The decline in goat-keeping may have various impacts on the cultural landscape: less grazing changing the vegetation in the “monte” (shrubs and trees) area and a reduced distribution of nutrients by moving animals.

Currently, the establishment of new tree orchards with machinery to rework the land was the single most visible land use change replacing traditional small-scale terraces. Rain-fed olive groves that had been cultivated in Las Hurdes traditionally were increasingly substituted by economically more feasible cherry plantations that need irrigation and put pressure on the scarce water resources in the region. Other land use changes included large-scale tree plantations conducted by the state forest administration and infrastructure development close to the local centers.

A reverse trend to land abandonment could be observed. Local elites and new residents had purchased abandoned agricultural land to produce food solely for household consumption. Two out of 21 surveyed households in Las Hurdes said they had begun or continued horticulture in their village because they found it was healthier and cheaper than buying the produce and they enjoyed it as an outdoors pastime. Another two households had moved to Las Hurdes from outside of the region permanently; one household had bought property and were renovating old houses, the other had purchased and maintained holiday residences in the area. These two households were contributing to the maintenance of traditional buildings and some agricultural infrastructure.
Observed impact of the past and current CAP and other policies

In Romania, the development of rural areas became only a priority after 1990. The privatization and restitution of land, which followed, created a small-scale, scattered farm sector (RuDi 2008). Since Romania entered the EU in 2007, experts and local farmers saw the collapse of the dairy market in Gyimes as a direct impact of this step, since most of the family businesses could not fulfill the new hygiene requirements for sheep and cow milk. Respondents in Gyimes perceived agricultural payments arising from CAP as polarizing in the local community because only farmers received benefits. Since payments were based on area and livestock units, the larger farms, which were mostly also the more competitive ones, received more than the small farms. Multifunctional family farms found the direct payments helpful but minimal.

Impacts of the Romanian rural development policy in Gyimes (second pillar of the CAP) were less visible at the time of research and certainly not yet measurable. Experts at the European Commission said that policy delivery lagged behind in Romania and will need to be assessed at a later stage. While they said that the design of the Romanian RDP addressed well the problems of the agrarian sector (structural fragmentation, low degree of farm diversification, low degree of locally added value and off-farm employment in rural areas, low investments capacity of small farmers, lack of farmers’ organizations, weak market power of producers), the administration faced the general problems of member states that focused on axis 1 and 3 measures. The funds for these measures were more difficult to spend since they frequently required business plans and co-investments by the farmers, two factors that discriminated against farmers with little training and difficulty accessing bank loans. Small farmers, in general, were less prepared to apply for measures that they would have profited from most, although the national RD strategy was specifically aimed at them (MARD 2009).

As regards LEADER (axis 4) EU administrators pointed to the fact that in Romania it was a very new idea to give money and decision power to local authorities who then had serious problems of spending public funds in time. The bottom-up approach of local action groups (LAGs) was in a very initial stage yet. From the point of view of the EC, regional and local administrators often did not have profound know-how and experience with the programs they implemented, since governmental change in some CEE member states frequently brought radical changes in policies and staff, leading to lost expertise.

It was observed that compared to their administrative capacity, Romania possibly had too many different measures in their RDP that could have been narrowed down or consolidated. Public procurement was seen as a national problem, since intermediaries for the delivery of measures such as training were not providing adequate services. With rural development policy in its current design (MARD 2009) gaining momentum, one impact of the CAP in Gyimes could be the improvement of the administrative and organizational situation.
In Spain there is a long history of CAP and ex-post-evaluations of the rural development programs. It is one of the member states that adopted the LEADER approach enthusiastically and extended it to include axis 3 measures like supporting local tourism and entrepreneurship (RuDi 2008c). The common evaluation questions and output indicators defined at the European level (EC 2000) show the effect of the policies but do not allow conclusions about their impact or their additionality. In Las Hurdes, the local action group identified positive effects of rural development policy since 1996 in the creation of local jobs and the enhancement of quality of life in the region (ADIC-Hurdes 2008).

The effects of direct payments on Las Hurdes were difficult to assess and could only be estimated. Those who profited directly were the few farms and agribusinesses in the region receiving direct payments, and the seasonal workers employed by subsidized enterprises mostly outside Las Hurdes. Traditional small-scale holdings were not eligible for support. Indirectly, subsidies going to large agribusinesses inside and outside Las Hurdes reduced the competitiveness of smaller holdings in the region.

In both Gyimes and Las Hurdes the surveyed inhabitants perceived major influences of EU policy besides the agricultural policy. The benefit most frequently mentioned was the opening up of labor markets and better opportunities to seek work abroad, which enhanced permanent outmigration of the regions and, in the case of Gyimes, seasonal work migration to Hungary and Western Europe.

Infrastructure development was another factor mentioned in Las Hurdes. While it was not clear for inhabitants where the investments came from exactly, they recognized the construction and improvement of roads and the establishment of medical and social services as positive. Many of these projects were funded by different funds under the European Regional Development Policy, namely the Cohesion Fund, the European Regional Development Fund, the European Social Fund among others, and were supplemented by national co-financing.

Influences on rural areas in other sectors can include environmental regulations (e.g. water quality), welfare, transport and communication, and policies aimed at enterprises. One policy with a major benefit in Romania was a program introduced in 2005 to subsidize bank credit to stakeholders who had previously had limited access in order to stimulate the uptake of agricultural investment measures by smallholders (RuDi 2008a). Furthermore, in Spain, a social welfare program specifically for Extremadura and Andalucía (Plan de Empleo Rural) started in 1984. It has continued under different names since, designed to curb agricultural unemployment (Mora 2002) and has been providing income for a large number of households surveyed in Las Hurdes.
The multitude of mechanisms outside the regulatory framework that have an impact on the policy process in these regions could not be systematically assessed and were not in the focus of the present study. Nevertheless, a horizontal aspect not involving formal policy making stakeholders was seen as crucial for the overall social and economic development in Gyimes. Experts and inhabitants alike frequently linked regional development to private networks and institutions in Hungary and the Hungarian speaking community in Transylvania. Opinions differed about whether being a Hungarian ethnic minority in Romania was an advantage or disadvantage. Positive factors emphasized by stakeholders included money transfers from relatives or friends living abroad and the fact that various Hungarian civil society organizations provided financial support in Gyimes (e.g. the secondary school in Gyimesfelsőlok sponsored by a foundation based in Budapest and the Hungarian Catholic Church). Tourism, which mainly comprised Hungarian visitors interested in the local culture (Solymosi 2011b), was seen by many as both an important economic factor and an opportunity for social and cultural exchange. Some inhabitants and local and regional experts found that their minority status was a disadvantage in a country with limited public funds. They felt neglected by official programs and saw other regions favored through allocation of funds and strategic categorization as priority areas for public action.

**Discussion: predicted outcomes with ongoing policy**

In Las Hurdes, rural development policy has been exploited to the fullest potential. The local action group is active and has taken initiatives to improve the situation. Investment in tourism, regional infrastructure, nature protection, and the local health system has occurred and micro enterprises have been supported to create jobs. Yet the population decline has continued, inhabitants are strongly dependent on the national welfare system and local small scale agriculture with the associated cultural landscape has been lost to a large extent. Although positive outcomes may have been achieved, the aims of Spanish rural development strategy were not fully reached (MARM 2009). Recognizing the failure of past RDP in many marginalized regions of Spain, the government launched an integrated national rural development program, complementing the sectoral approach by the EC. The strategy paper lists Las Hurdes as one of 105 rural areas nationwide given highest priority (8 in Extremadura) for economical, social and environmental revitalization (MARM 2010). The holistic and territorial approach may benefit Las Hurdes, but since the program commenced only recently, the effects will have to be assessed at a later stage.
Direct payments have had a predominantly negative direct effect on both case study regions so far, resulting in less competing power of small farmers. Nevertheless, some farmers in Gyimes may profit from the full phasing in of direct payments completed by 2012 in EU-12. The overall income of farmers in these member states is predicted to grow steadily and approach the EU average by 2020 (EP 2010). In addition, there may be some positive indirect effects on the local economy in Las Hurdes. In Gyimes, agricultural input and output transactions take place on a low spatial scale: agricultural jobs are predominantly local apart from seasonal work abroad, employment on farms is restricted to family members, and products are marketed regionally if at all. In Las Hurdes, the high percentage of community members employed in local seasonal agricultural work suggests that inhabitants depend on large agribusinesses for income. These are located mainly in the plains to the south, and in turn profit from direct payments.

The land use changes described above, the trend towards either intensification of agricultural activity or land abandonment will probably continue in Gyimes and Las Hurdes under the present CAP scenario. The general tendency of structural change into higher concentration of productive factors on fewer farms is expected to continue throughout rural Europe and will be stronger in marginalized regions (EC 2011d). These processes lead to a more homogeneous landscape on a large scale and to the loss of biodiversity in agro-ecosystems (EEA 2010). Under the present CAP, Gyimes will most probably develop towards the current situation found in Las Hurdes, whereas the latter will become more depopulated with economic and social activity restricted to local centers, and a few new residents choosing alternative lifestyles. This scenario affirms case study findings from other rural areas in the EU (EC 2011d, RuDi 2010).

In general it can be stated that rural development policy as it is now, cannot counterbalance the predominantly negative effects of the first pillar of the CAP on marginalized regions like Gyimes and Las Hurdes. Nor is RDP in marginal rural areas of high nature value sufficiently sensitive to the historical and socio-economic local conditions, especially in the new member states. Gordon et al. (2009) point out that while education and training, the development of off-farm employment and the provision of micro-finance among other measures would be the tools suggested in development literature to support marginalized regions, these are not in the primary focus of RD policy in the EU. The disappointing performance of rural development funding in many marginal areas can be explained by a combination of the limiting factors of poor governance, fragmented institutional arrangements and weak social capital with the fact that agriculture alone cannot deliver rural development (RuDi 2010).
Predicted outcomes with alternative policy options discussed by the EC

The European Commission is currently redesigning the CAP and three options have been publicly communicated so far (EC 2010). In addition to the status-quo (option 1), the other two options suggest a shift towards a stronger second pillar of the CAP and a stepwise phasing out of direct payments.

Gyimes would profit from the change in direct payments under option 2. A “more equitable distribution of direct payments between Member States and a substantial change in their design (EC 2010:14)” would mean more money for small multifunctional households if the payments consisted of a basic rate serving as income support, a compulsory additional benefit for agri-environmental action, and an additional payment to compensate for specific natural constraints. Furthermore, agricultural households would profit from the suggested new scheme for small farms and the capping of the basic rate, and may be tempted to stay in business with a better relative market position. The composition of direct payments under option 2 would also benefit Las Hurdes, although to a lesser extent. Here, very few family farms remain and the local economy relies increasingly on non-agricultural sectors.

Option 3, with no direct payments in their current form but a basic reward for environmental public goods delivered by farms and compensation for some natural constraints in the first pillar would benefit traditional multifunctional households in Gyimes in a similar way to option 2. The limitation of rural development to climate change and environmental aspects would deprive the region of aid for restructuring and innovation and the enhancement of regional or local initiatives – a policy that has had positive effects in marginalized areas in the past, but could for example receive funds from European regional funds in the future (ECIPE 2009). For Las Hurdes one needs to take into account the economic dependency on regional agribusinesses described above. A large-scale survey of the multiple impacts of the CAP on rural economies (CAP-IRE) indicates an 8 percent decline in the employment of seasonal workers throughout rural Europe under an abolished CAP scenario. All policy scenarios differing from the current CAP and tested by the study had negative effects on part time workers, women and non-family workers (EC 2011d).

Conclusions – derived policy suggestions

Rural Europe used to be completely dominated by agricultural activity. This led to the equation “rural = agriculture” and vice versa (Diakosawas 2006), which in remaining traditional cultural landscapes is still the case to a limited extent. Nevertheless, agricultural change is omnipresent today, and even in the remotest rural areas, the share of agricultural employment and income is decreasing. In traditional cultural landscapes this leads to the challenging situation, that in order to maintain the system, a sector (agriculture), which on the one hand dominates the landscape but on the other hand is a small economic factor, needs to be supported.
One solution could be to make the sector in question economically feasible again and use its indirect effects. In the case of small scale, (semi-) subsistence land use systems, this means either maintaining the underlying factors that once created these systems or turning them into revenue creating factors. This could be achieved by promoting regional marketing close to the producer, origin labeling and locally added value; rewarding farmers for keeping up agriculture in difficult site conditions (e.g. on steep slopes, in high elevations); and promoting measures to preserve the local cultural heritage (e.g. architecture) and sustainable regional tourism.

The actions could be combined in special support schemes for strictly delimited regions. These could be a set of agri-environmental measures (AEM), training, small farmer support, quality management and diversification schemes. Many of these already exist but would have a stronger impact when applied in packages. As suggested by Marini et al. (2010) for an Italian alpine region, rewarding farmers with very targeted AEM for continued land utilization on the patches that are most likely to be abandoned can positively contribute to maintaining a complex cultural landscape.

The support of all inhabitants of marginalized regions, not just the (registered) farmers should be considered. One of the great challenges in Romania is the fact that an estimated 3.8 million households, or 91 percent of small-scale farms, are defined as `subsistence´ and do not meet the basic prerequisites for registration and do not contribute to the market (RuDi 2008). They have very few opportunities of accessing funds under the current Romanian RDP since their farms are too small for axis 1 and axis 2 measures (MARD 2009). Yet this category of farms was predominant among the surveyed households in Gyimes that continued with multifunctional agriculture. Due to the difficulty of distributing benefits to not registered farms, the high transaction costs of reaching a large number of small farms, the frequent reluctance of small farmers to cooperate and the high age and limited education of many subsistence farmers, supporting these households would mean an administrative challenge (RuDi 2010b). But it would give recognition to the major actors maintaining the cultural landscape in marginalized areas. In Las Hurdes representatives of the local action group considered giving financial incentives to people willing to move to the area and start a business there for the benefit of the local economy (ADIC-Hurdes 2008).

At the national level, a better targeting of aid to areas in question would favor marginalized regions. The existing less favored areas (LFAs) approach, part of axis 2 rural development policy, could be used to delimit areas receiving rural development funds more stringently. Currently, 57 percent of the agricultural area in the EU is declared as LFA (EC 2011c) in the three categories mountain areas, intermediate LFA and areas affected by specific handicaps. These include regions with far less structural problems than Gyimes or Las Hurdes.
Especially intermediate LFAs were subject to criticism by the European Court of Auditors (2003) due to lack of coherence between LFA delimitation and rural development objectives, the extreme diversity of the criteria used by the Member States for designating areas and insufficient targeting of aid (IEEP 2006). The current revision of the scheme provides an opportunity to direct rural development funds better to marginalized areas. Both Gyimes and Las Hurdes would especially profit if the option was chosen to link “the support to agriculture in areas affected by natural handicaps to the preservation of high nature value farming systems defined on the basis of common criteria” (EC 2009).

Rural development policy, even if targeted more specifically at needy regions and delivered through sensible measure packages that reach all inhabitants of marginalized regions, will not be able to solve problems caused by policies targeted at other regions and sectors. For marginalized areas to be more competitive again, other more productive agricultural areas should not be put at an additional advantage through CAP direct payments and market measures.

A holistic management of marginalized rural areas rather than the current rural development, which is tied to agriculture, could incorporate the above recommendations. To a limited extent, the LEADER approach incorporates components of a holistic rural development, or “integrated rural development (ILE)” as defined by the German Ministry for Agriculture (BMELV 2005). But LEADER acts within strictly defined limits and can only apply the measures available in the rural development framework. According to Giessen (2010) it would be worthwhile considering incorporating integrated rural development into European Cohesion Policy, where the multi-level governance character of policy allows regions to take a more active role in decision making and operational design. Agricultural policy alone will not solve the problems of these regions. Regional policy, market incentives and an educational strategy, among others, will all need to target specific support at peripheral regions with high environmental and cultural values. Trends like demographic change or the increasing interlinkage of global agricultural markets cannot be managed by sectoral approaches. The above-mentioned Spanish National Rural Development Program is a step in this direction.

As this study has shown, marginalized areas with traditional cultural landscapes may have common characteristics, but their situation and context is very different, requiring tailor-made management solutions. The management of peripheral areas at the regional level would allow local stakeholders to take decisions that go beyond the scope of the current CAP. Studies show that no matter what scenario is used to forecast future land uses in Europe, agricultural land cover will probably decrease (EEA 2007), especially in marginalized areas (Audsley et al. 2006), and that a polarization of land uses in rural areas can be expected under a liberalized agricultural policy (Valbuena et al. 2010). The question should be: which of these regions are worth protection at all costs?
Discussion

Key findings and possible further investigation

A general review of scientific literature on marginalized landscapes and the two case study experiences could show that traditional cultural landscapes in Europe have survived mainly due to three basic factors: 1. isolation, 2. site conditions that limit biomass production and 3. often a population that differs from the surrounding society. All three factors are relative and can change over time. A region with poor infrastructure that does not attract the economic, political and scientific interest of the centers of power in a given country can be economically relatively well developed when compared to regions in other countries. Site conditions like poor soils or high altitude, that made agricultural activity difficult in the past, can be turned into revenue creating factors when local economy turns from the primary to the tertiary sector. (This can be observed in some alpine valleys that have turned into centers of tourism.) And finally a population that has been socially marginalized in the course of history – which happened both in Las Hurdes and Gyimes – can gain new recognition by new stakeholders, like it is the case with Hungarian tourists visiting Gyimes.

Due to the complexity of outside influences and the constant changing character of landscapes in general, the initial hypothesis that landscape development in marginalized regions can be generalized on the European level could not be proven. With a much higher number of case studies in various eco-zones in different countries, in landscapes with different land use systems, a landscape development theory for marginalized areas could be attempted in the future.

The second hypothesis, stating that traditional cultural landscapes are undergoing fast and dramatic changes today, could be partially affirmed. The livelihood analysis in Gyimes showed substantial changes in land uses that had shaped the traditional cultural landscape. Almost all surveyed households progressively simplified their agricultural activities by either abandoning certain land uses (such as sheep herding); abandoning certain patches of land (mostly the remote or less fertile areas); reducing land use intensity (keeping less livestock on a given area); reducing the overall complexity of the land use system (less rotation of pastures and meadows moving the animals fewer times per year). Some agricultural products that had been once marketed were used for household consumption (milk products, beef) or not at all (for example wool). Livestock numbers have decreased during the past few years in Gyimes and elsewhere in the Carpathians and this will most probably lead to a change of the current landscape pattern.
In Las Hurdes, landscape changes did not occur in such a fast and dramatic way during the research period. The survey on the landscape perception of inhabitants, evidence from expert interviews and livelihood analysis of households all revealed that traditional agriculture did not play an important role in the region any more. Transformations now taking place in Eastern Europe had happened here a few decades ago and simultaneous land abandonment and agricultural intensification have left the traditional cultural landscape as a relict rather than a living system. If the current trend prevails, the still visible traces of past land uses will soon disappear.

The assessment of changing land uses and induced landscape transformation was done in a qualitative-descriptive way. This allowed in-depth understanding of the driving forces of agricultural change and left space for exploring the perception of the role of agriculture and the landscape by inhabitants. With this method it was not possible to systematically monitor the location and scale of ongoing changes. It would be an interesting option to combine these findings with geographical information obtained from satellite images and aerial photographs from an extended time frame to assess land cover changes in the research areas in a quantitative way. With the help of GIS data, statements could be made for example about the dimension of impacts that policy induced land use changes like the abandonment of dairy farming have on the landscape.

The assumption that social and political influences are two main categories of outside influencing factors for the development of a region or landscape – the third hypothesis – is supported by regional development theories. It was not argued that these factors were more important than others (macroeconomic developments or climate change for example) or that outside factors had a greater influence than endogenous ones. The focus was on two specific factors within the social and political realms: firstly the outside perception of the landscape, and secondly policies and regulation aimed at the research areas. The political factor was chosen because experts agree that marginalized rural areas in Europe are mainly dominated by rural development, or more generally, agricultural policies. The perception factor already played a role in choosing the research areas, that both have a history of discrimination by the outside society, and was regarded as an interesting factor that has been scarcely researched so far.
It could be shown that the outside perception of Gyimes and Las Hurdes did play a role in the development of the regions and continues to do so. In the case of tourists in Gyimes the conclusion could be drawn that outsiders influenced the landscape they perceived with their expectations and by emphasizing positive aspects, ignoring negative aspects and leaving marks. The insiders on the other hand reacted to this by adopting the outsiders’ view, trying to satisfy the outside expectations and arranging the landscape according to these expectations. For Las Hurdes it was shown that the region’s negative image until the middle of the 20th century was one of the driving factors of state-led regional development programs targeted at improving the local situation.

As regards the European Common Agricultural Policy and related policies, the impacts on land use systems and the associated cultural landscapes in Las Hurdes and Gyimes were manifold. The policy analysis showed that support for marginalized regions with traditional cultural landscapes was not a major priority of European regional and rural policies so far. Positive influences for the regions mainly stemmed from rural development measures (2nd pillar of the CAP). Nevertheless it was found that the actors maintaining the traditional cultural landscapes – in most cases senior inhabitants, non-registered farmers or (semi-)subsistence farmers – were often not eligible for any benefits at all. The CAP direct payments (1st pillar) on the other hand had more indirect effects in that they weakened the market power of small farmers. An indirect benefit was that of seasonal agricultural workers from Las Hurdes and Gyimes finding employment in other regions or countries in agribusinesses supported by direct payments.

Based on the findings the suggestion was made to orientate support for marginalized areas or for rural areas in general more towards the way European Cohesion policy is currently organized. It could be a research question for the future whether marginalized areas like Gyimes and Las Hurdes would profit from a policy setup that followed more strictly the principles of multi-level governance, with local and regional decision making levels enabled to interact with higher decision making levels and among each other.
The global dimension

As this study has shown, Gyimes and Las Hurdes, despite being marginalized areas, are part of the currently highly subsidized European economy and experience ambiguous influences from it. On the one hand they receive some kind of institutional aid, be it in the form of EU rural development funds, agricultural direct payments, regional funds, a national social welfare program or infrastructure development co-financed by the local government. They survive as part of the system that as a whole is seen as problematic for various reasons.

The European agricultural framework has been one of the systems subsidizing an increasingly industrialized sector in a group of developed countries that has had negative impacts on weaker economies through market distorting measures like direct income support to farmers and export subsidies. Although under reform, the CAP does not fully comply with the requirements set out in the WTO Agricultural Agreement (The topic is addressed by the so called Doha round negotiations and has not come to a conclusion as of March 2011, WTO 2011). Many environmental and social NGOs, development organizations and economic analysts argue that this system will have to change in order to meet global challenges (e.g. AgrarBündnis 2011, BUND 2010, OECD 2006, UNCTAD 2010). Agriculture is facing a world population expected to rise to close to 10 billion in 2050 with a continually high number of undernourished people in developing countries and rural poor. The increasing volatility and general rise of commodity prices on the world market affect farmers and consumers everywhere (FAO food price index 2011). A high production of wheat, rice, sugar at lowest prices in developed countries and emerging economies stands against a very little productive agricultural sector in developing countries facing these protected markets. Climate change and scarcity of natural resources are expected to worsen the vulnerability of livelihoods and may enhance social tensions in regions already threatened by food insecurity (FAO 2002).

On the other hand, traditional cultural landscapes emerged from land uses highly adapted to local site conditions and once widespread across Europe. They can be seen as islands having survived surrounding agricultural intensification due to their isolation and other circumstances. These small scale systems have possibly survived in Europe despite all the subsidies and development programs aimed at them and especially at surrounding areas. They have been able to provide economic, social and environmental amenities on the regional level and are at the edge of extinction because a mislead political framework has been imposed on them. UNCTAD (2010) for example calls for a paradigm shift in global agriculture away from a uniform, high external-input-dependent model to a “regenerative” agricultural system:
“Such a system (consisting of a mosaic of sustainable production methods) continuously recreates the resources it uses and achieves higher productivity and profitability of the system (not necessarily of individual products) with minimal external inputs. Regenerative systems will marry local knowledge and seed/livestock varieties with modern agricultural techniques and extension services and give a pro-active role to small-scale farmers; it will be knowledge- and labour-intensive rather than agro-chemical and energy-input-intensive.”

The above reads as a description of traditional multifunctional farming in Gyimes and Las Hurdes, paired with new technologies and training. A shift towards such a system rewarding farmers and other natural resource managers for providing public goods would upgrade the political importance of traditional cultural landscapes in Europe (ECIPE 2009, IEEP 2009).

Whether traditional cultural landscapes will be seen as an unnecessary luxury of European welfare and a subsidized agricultural sector and therefore a problem, or will be recognized as a possible solution to global challenges, will be a political decision. The future of Gyimes and Las Hurdes will largely depend on this decision. The current land use changes that were investigated for this study should be seen with this background in mind.


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List of Articles Reviewed for Content Analysis in publication I


