VISUAL IMAGERY AND LEARNING ABOUT CULTURAL LANDSCAPES DURING GEOGRAPHY UNIVERSITY STUDIES

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ABSTRACT

One of the most complex topics in Geography is linked to cultural landscapes. Although this concept has aroused the interest of scholars from different nations and the bibliography is diverse, among students there are still uncertainties concerning the meaning of cultural landscapes. Thus, at the Faculty of Geography, Babeş-Bolyai University, in Cluj-Napoca, Regional Planning and Development M.Sc. programme, the students had in their first semester a discipline named Cultural Landscapes, which provided the theoretical background using international references. For assessment, students were asked to transfer their knowledge into practice by realising a postcard with cultural landscapes of Cluj-Napoca city. This paper analyses the process of learning during solving the task, presenting firstly different views about cultural landscapes in geographical literature. The methodology used comprises the analysis of the process of learning, starting from discussions on the theory and going to the presentation of the task, the evaluation and the actual process of making the postcards undertook by the students. There were eight postcards realised in pairs which were assessed using an especially designed grid. The whole activity carried out by the students was analysed from a didactic point of view. It is demonstrated that, being helped by theoretical discussions during the courses, the students managed to understand the cultural landscape and, moreover, to put into practice what they had learned. Thus, they managed to achieve a different perspective for some familiar landscapes from the city, in which they had lived for about three years. This learning activity actually put the theoretical frame into another light and so the students had become more aware of the meaning of cultural landscapes by experiencing them on their own.

Keywords: *Geography higher education, photography, picture postcard, collage, competence, assessment criteria and indicators*

INTRODUCTION. PROBLEM DESCRIPTION AND MAIN RESEARCH QUESTION

This observational research was carried out during the 2018-2019 academic year, at the Faculty of Geography from Babeș-Bolyai University, Cluj-Napoca, Romania. The problem we wanted to solve started from our observation that, during the didactic activity with Geography M.Sc. students, they related to cultural landscapes based on their knowledge acquired very probably in pre-university education, placing the emphasis on unique elements and on the existence of tourist attractions. Thus, students observed the cultural landscape of Cluj-Napoca from the perspective of a tourist. This can be explained, to a certain extent, by the fact that most of the students who enrolled in this M.Sc. programme and, implicitly, took the course, came for university studies in this city. Still, all these students, being in their first year at the M.Sc. programme, have spent at least three years in the city of Cluj-Napoca.

At the discipline *Cultural Landscapes*, which they attended within the *Regional Planning and Development* M.Sc. programme in their first year, we tried to change the way they related to the cultural (anthropic) landscapes of Cluj-Napoca (and to cultural landscapes in general). To achieve this, students had to go through several training stages so that they entered into a deeper direct relationship with the landscape and did not position outside it, as tourists or as someone who assessed the "objective" landscape, considering mainly aesthetic criteria.

We placed the students inside the urban landscape from the beginning, because we asked them to take pictures of various cultural landscapes in Cluj-Napoca for about four months (October 2018-January 2019), choosing landscapes depending onthe recommended bibliography and their own experience as temporary or permanent residents of Cluj-Napoca (that meant that the photographed landscapes should have had meanings that were specific of each student, depending on his or her interactions with the city).

The aim of the course was to help students acquire autonomy, to enable them in forming and assessing their competences to identify the elements of cultural landscapes and to analyse and discuss their typology. Therefore, one objective was for students to understand the economic, social, cultural and political factors that contributed to the formation of cultural landscapes, through the case study of Cluj-Napoca.

In this applicative ascertaining or observational research, we investigated (1) the activity carried out by the M.Sc. students, (2) the postcards they created, the oral presentation and the written text which they presented, and based on them, (3) we realised a self-evaluation grid of their picture postcards collages and of their oral and written presentations, in order to optimize (a) the learning process (and representation of cultural landscapes), as well as (b) students' self-assessment and our assessment of their learning outcomes.

STATE OF THE ART

Theoretically and methodologically, we based this study on the geographical literature about cultural landscapes in general, especially on the compulsory one recommended for the lectures during the course of *Cultural Landscapes* (Bull, 2008; Cosgrove, 2008; Duncan, 2008; Hoskins, 2008; Jackson, 2008; Mitchell, D., 2008; Mitchell, W.J.T., 2008; Oakes & Price, 2008a, 2008b; Rose, 2008; Sauer, 2008).

Equally significant for our paper was the recent literature in the field of the sciences of education, focusing on studying cultural landscapes and on forming and assessing the competences related to this topic, especially the papers we authored so far on this topic (Dulamă et al., 2016b, 2016c; Ilovan et al., 2016; Magdaș et al., 2018; Sanislai et al., 2016).

On cultural landscapes in geographical literature

Landscapes have been depicted in various ways, but the most used practice is the pictorial one, focusing on visual representations of the environment where people lead their lives. No matter the perspective researchers have had on the study of landscapes from early 20th century to present, they have all agreed that the landscape is a "stylized form of communication" (Oakes & Price, 2008, Introduction to Mitchell, p. 165), hosting symbols and traces that testify societal development.

Carl Sauer (1889-1975) was among the first to influence strongly landscape studies, paying much attention to the "morphology of landscape". He underlined the interrelation between the objects that existed in the landscape and defined the landscape as "the unit concept of geography", characterizing "the peculiarly geographic associations of facts" (Sauer, 2008, p. 98).

He went on further to underline the dual nature of the landscape, physical and cultural:

> "[…] a land shape in which the process of shaping is by no means thought of as simply physical. It may be defined therefore, as an area made up of distinct associations of forms, both physical and cultural" (Sauer, 2008, p. 98).

Therefore, the landscape is dynamic; it undergoes changes in terms of its form, structure and function (Sauer, 2008, p. 98). Considering this, the landscape, according to Sauer (2008), is part of a larger system, where it interacts with other landscapes and it has its own identity. This identity is given by its components, relations to other landscapes and therefore it has limits (Sauer, 2008, p. 98).

It is Sauer's belief that the landscape is characterized primarily by internal organization and relates to other landscapes within the system. This definition resembles that of the geographical region, promoted starting with Paul Vidal de la Blache.

Sauer goes on to explain the significance of the physical forms for the existence of the landscape, mentioning that: "The physical qualities of landscape are those that have habitat value, present or potential" (Sauer, 2008, p. 100). These physical qualities or the physical contents is judged or assessed in relation to the anthropic: "the physical qualities of the area that are significant to man and in the forms of his use of the area, in facts of physical background and facts of human culture" (Sauer, 2008, p. 100). In this context, Sauer points out the specific way of Geography, in thinking about culture. For geographers, culture is defined in terms of anthropic impact on the physical environment, or on the habitat area: "namely, as the impress of the works of man upon the area" (Sauer, 2008, p. 100).

The habitat value of the landscape, of its physical components, is highly significant for Sauer's approach, arguing that the natural landscape "supplies the materials out of which the cultural landscape is formed" (Sauer, 2008, p. 104), supporting the study of "man's record upon the landscape", but without geographers' plunging into researching men's beliefs and customs (Sauer, 2008, p. 103). Concluding on Sauer's contribution, his focus on "the morphology of landscape" was supported by his historical perspective (Sauer, 1925).

Similarly, **William George Hoskins** (1908-1992) recognised the use of landscape history, being trained as a historian. He was included in the category of the conservative or of the "old" school in Cultural Geography, alike Sauer.

Like Sauer's, his geography was a descriptive one, the landscape was "a text from which to read the past" (Oakes & Price, 2008, Introduction to Hoskins, p. 106). So, Hoskins observed the landscape and its changes induced by industrialisation and urbanisation in England and described these changes in a fascinating and detailed manner, rendering his work as best known by "vernacular and landscape historians, and in the fields of landscape design and architecture" (Oakes & Price, 2008, Introduction to Hoskins, p. 106), where he was most influential.

Through his descriptions, he put forward the elements, structures and functions of the English landscape, in his famous book on *The Making of the English Landscape* (1955): "'busy' landscape, full of detail and movement" (Hoskins, 2008, p. 106, on the early English industrial landscape), with the factory as a landscape component.

John Brinkerhoff Jackson's approach to the landscape had also a historical perspective, considering it a record of man's traces and presence, "history made visible" (Jackson quoted in Oakes & Price, 2008, Introduction to Jackson, p. 153).

Along with C. Sauer and W.G. Hoskins, J.B. Jackson (1909-1996) was an "old" cultural geographer. He considered essential "first-hand experience of everyday events and places in constructing a meaningful landscape" (Oakes & Price, 2008, Introduction to Jackson, p. 154). His work influenced landscape architects and painters.

J.B. Jackson considered the landscape to be a player in the development of social life; it was not only the stage or the setting against which things happened, but the landscape helped in selecting the players and told them how to act (Jackson, 2008, p. 155). He defined the landscape as "a concrete three-dimensional, shared reality" (Jackson, 2008, p. 156), a "composition of man-made spaces" (Jackson, 2008, p. 157), realised/built as a:

> "[...] *synthetic space*, a man-made system of spaces superimposed on the face of the land, functioning and evolving not according to natural laws but to serve a community — for the collective character of the landscape is one thing that all generations and all points of view have agreed upon. A landscape is thus a space deliberately created to speed up or slow down the process of nature … [I]t represents man taking upon himself the role of time" (Jackson, 2008, p. 157).

In his book, "Discovering the Vernacular Landscape" (1984), J.B. Jackson provides the community of geographers with "a new definition of *landscape*: a composition of man-made or man-modified spaces to serve as infrastructure or background for our collective existence" (Jackson, 2008, p. 158). However, as underlined by Jackson himself (2008), he was loyal to the old-fashioned and "persistent definition of landscape: 'A portion of the earth's surface that can be comprehended at a glance'" (Jackson, 2008, p. 158).

C. Sauer, W.G. Hoskins and J.B. Jackson epitomize *the "old" Cultural Geography*, characterised by landscape analysis based on description, considered nowadays as quasi-scientific (Oakes & Price, 2008, Introduction to D. Mitchell, p. 159).

The 1980s brought a turn in "reading" the landscape and a profound transformation affected the British Cultural Geography (Oakes & Price, 2008, Introduction to Cosgrove, p. 176): landscapes could and should be read in multiples ways, according to the post-structuralist theory (Oakes & Price, 2008, Introduction to Cosgrove, p. 176), including multiple layers of meaning and symbolic places:

> "A revived cultural geography seeks to overcome some of these weaknesses with a stronger cultural theory. It would still read the landscape as a cultural text, but recognises that texts are multilayered, offering the possibility of simultaneous and equally valid different readings" (Cosgrove, 2008, p. 180).

At the core of this approach in Cultural Geography, there is the concept of symbolic representation, underlining that the contents of landscape is primarily dictated by the dominant culture, meaning that "social power is reproduced through the landscape" (Oakes & Price, 2008, Introduction to Cosgrove, p. 176):

> "Thus reading a landscape had become, in the work of many critical cultural geographers, an analysis of social power relations in all of their dynamic complexity (Oakes & Price, 2008, Introduction to Cosgrove, p. 177).

The "new" Cultural Geography within the study of landscape is represented by those who focused their research on the "landscape's representational and symbolic aspects" (Oakes & Price, 2008, Introduction to D. Mitchell, p. 159), such as Denise Cosgrove, Stephen Daniels, James Duncan, etc. These are critical cultural geographers, taking into account social change and making "their scholarship relevant to the community", during community-based action research and participatory approaches to present challenges (Oakes & Price, 2008, Introduction to D. Mitchell, pp. 159-160).

Don Mitchell explains the connection among the "old" and "new" schools of Cultural Geography, ascertaining that:

> "Much of the work in geography on landscape-as-ideology and -representation has developed as a reaction, and thus in partial opposition, to the older landscape-as-morphology school" (Mitchell, D., 2008, p. 162).

Denise Cosgrove defines ideology in the context of landscape studies:

> "[…] an image of the world consonant with their own experience, and to have that image accepted as a true reflection of everyone's reality. This is the meaning of ideology" (Cosgrove, 2008, p. 182).

In his "The Lie of the Land: Migrant Workers and the California Landscape" (1996), **Don Mitchell** (1961–) analysis the American landscape represented in John Steinbeck's *The Grapes of Wrath.* Mitchell distinguishes in Steinbeck's representation of the landscape between the beauty of the landscape and its ugliness. The beauty refers to the aesthetic pleasure of looking at the landscape, while the ugliness consists of the struggle that people participate at while making the landscape. Therefore, based on the existence of these two features of landscapes, he argues that "landscape must be understood as an interconnected relationship between view and production" (Mitchell, D., 2008, p. 160). The ugliness is strongly connected to the perception of injustice and unequal power relations in landscape making. Its construction and the landscape reality are not morally neutral. As such, because of the connection between landscape reality and landscape imagery, landscape was characterised by means of analysing the power relations it is imbued with.

Still, D. Mitchell points out the danger of concentrating only on the critical analysis of the landscape as "a relation of power, an *ideological* rendering of spatial relations" (Mitchell, D., 2008, p. 162):

> "Landscapes transform the facts of place into a controlled representation, an imposition of order in which one (or perhaps a few) dominant ways of seeing are substituted for all ways of seeing and experiencing. […] [T]he abandonment of the material world as an object of study in order to focus exclusively on the politics of reading, language, and iconography represents a dangerous politics" (Mitchell, D., 2008, p. 162).

On the contrary, geographers should maintain their interest "in the world outside language and symbolic structure, outside representation" (Mitchell, D., 2008, p. 162), in the reality. This is helpful in order to be able to contextualise landscape as representation. Otherwise, focusing on "disconnected images", on language and symbolic structure, is counterproductive in research on landscapes.

In his advocacy for keeping the balance between these two approaches on landscape (the traditional and the modern one–the latter taken to the extreme), D. Mitchell argues that:

> "[...] geographers should be able to build on the tools of both traditions to begin to explicate the nature of the connections between representations and materiality" (Mitchell, D., 2008, p. 162).

Concerning this, Mitchell explains the two ways in which landscape is produced: through labour and through representing the products of man's labour. Both production ways are subject to a system of control, involving domination from one part (those in power) and consent from the other (those with less power or the powerless) (Mitchell, D., 2008, p. 162). Thus, the definition of the landscape results as a mixture of materiality and representation of the respective materiality:

> "Landscape is thus a unity of materiality and representation, constructed out of the contest between various social groups possessing varying amounts of social, economic and political power" (Mitchell, D., 2008, p. 162).

Therefore, the insistence on contextualising the iconography of landscape in the morphological landscape. The ordered reality, according to Mitchell:

> "[...] develops as both a product of and a means for guiding the social and spatial practices of production and reproduction in an area" and "[l]andscapes, and landscape representations, are therefore very much a product of social struggle, whether engaged over form or over how to grasp and read that form" (Mitchell, D., 2008, p. 162).

The matter of ideology imbued in producing and then representing the landscape is caused by the fact that those producing or working to shape the landscape are often different from the ones who control and own the landscape production and representation practices (Mitchell, D., 2008, p. 162). The meanings transferred to landscape production and representation are built by the ones in power. As such, the aim of research on landscape representation would be to help us understand landscape and its relational character in the material world, then to understand how it is produced and reproduced, and, thirdly, how landscapes function in our society:

> "First, a theory of landscape representation and production must tell us what landscape is (how we understand 'landscape' and what its relations are to the material world). Second, it must explain how 'landscape' is produced as part of socially organized systems of production and reproduction (for landscapes in no way exist external to the functioning of society). Finally, landscape theory must specify the processes by which material landscapes and their representations function in society

(which is a different question than the second)" (Mitchell, D., 2008, pp. 162-163).

Moreover, Mitchell further clarifies the dual nature of landscape: (a) static (as a suite of things or product), and at the same time a symbol (or a representation) (Mitchell, D., 2008, p. 163) and (b) dynamic (as a social process) – material and undergoing constant change, a form which is masking the "facts of its production and its status as a social relation" (Mitchell, D., 2008, p. 163). Thus, the production and representation of landscape are closely connected to the geographical and historical context. The landscape is a product and witness of uneven power relations and of uneven development. It was objectified and rationalized (Mitchell, D., 2008, p. 164).

Don Mitchell sums up by defining landscape as:

> "[…] an uneasy truce between the needs and desires of the people who live in it, and the desire of powerful social actors to represent the world as they assume it should be. Landscape is always both a material form that results from and structures social interaction, and an ideological representation dripping with power. In both ways, landscapes are acts of contested discipline, channelling spatial practices into certain patterns and presenting to the world images of how the world (presumably) works and who it works for" (Mitchell, D., 2008, p. 164, 9).

William John Thomas Mitchell (1942–) also emphasizes the relationship between landscape and ideology when representing it. He underlines both that landscape itself, as a highly textured fabric of many places, is a representation and that representations of landscapes are in fact representations of representations (Mitchell, W.J.T., 2008, p. 169). W.J.T. Mitchell underlines that both the material landscape and its representations are media of cultural expression (Mitchell, W.J.T., 2008, p. 169). The materiality of landscape is already a representation in itself, it "is already a symbolic form in its own right" (Mitchell, W.J.T., 2008, p. 169):

> "Landscape is a natural scene mediated by culture. It is both a represented and presented space, both a signifier and a signified, both a frame and what a frame contains, both a real place and its simulacrum, both a package and the commodity inside the package" (Mitchell, W.J.T., 2008, p. 166).

W.J.T. Mitchell (1994, 2008) draws attention to the fact that there are many and varied factors that influence the representation of landscape: both internal (internal politics, national ideology, class ideology) and external (international and global phenomena and processes) (Mitchell, W.J.T., 2008, p. 167). A series of symbolic levels and representational ones overlap, while these are rarely transparent, because the representational practice, which is always intentional, is rarely overt (Mitchell, W.J.T., 2008, p. 167).

The landscape has moral, ideological and political contents, it is a product of social and economic transformation, significant due to its semiotic and aesthetic features. Therefore, the analysis of landscape, the interpretation of its features, should take into account its semiotic and aesthetic character (Mitchell, W.J.T., 2008, p. 166). The ambivalence of landscape "aesthetic delight" and "malicious intent" (Mitchell, W.J.T., 2008,

p. 168) is to be under researchers' scrutiny, especially in situations characterised by highly uneven power relations, when the perception and representation of landscape are part of a well state orchestrated process of manipulation.

W.J.T. Mitchell also points out that changing cultural practices result in hybrid landscape formation (Mitchell, W.J.T., 2008, p. 167). The matter of the old and new hybrid cultural landscapes has been discussed already in Romanian scientific literature, starting from the case study of Cluj-Napoca, authored by a group of geographers (Ilovan et al., 2018).

Gillian Rose (1962–), after taking notice of the "predominantly visual quality of landscape" (Oakes & Price, 2008, Introduction to Rose, p. 171), underlines that it is imbued with various power relations, not only of labour, but also of gender. And visual culture is dominated by "the masculine gaze that bestows ownership and control" (Oakes & Price, 2008, Introduction to Rose, p. 171).

Rose points out that the conceptualization of landscape as the "scene within the range of the observer's vision" (Rose, 2008, p. 172) has changed. Landscape is created at the intersection of culture and environment, where dynamic relationships between the two shape both of them. But, later on, landscape was not to be studied only on the basis of observation (a method characteristic of Geography), as Sauer and the "old" cultural geographers advocated for, but also on the basis of a specific way of seeing, an ideological device being necessarily employed (Rose, 2008, p. 172): "landscape is a way of seeing which we learn" (Rose, 2008, p. 172).

Landscapes are embedded in power relations and also the researcher's way of looking at the landscape may be an issue influencing its analysis:

> "[…] the gaze of the fieldworker is part of the problematic, not a tool of analysis. Indeed, they name this gaze at landscape a 'visual ideology', because it uncritically shows only the relationship of the powerful to their environment" (Rose, 2008, p. 172).

Diverse interpretations and truths are equally valid for the same representation:

> "[G]eographers are constituted as sensitive as well as objective scientists in their approach to Nature and landscape" (Rose, 2008, p. 173).

According to this discourse, Rose argues that:

> "[…] complex contradictions between and within (social-) scientific objectivity and aesthetic sensitivity disrupt cultural geography's claim to know landscape" (Rose, 2008, p. 173).

G. Rose demonstrates the multiple ways in which a painting, a representation of rural landscape, could be read. She focuses on one of them: that of uncovering power relations of gender (Rose, 2008, pp. 172-175), demonstrating "the nineteenth century Western hegemonic masculinist constructions of femininity, sexuality, nature and property" (p. 175) in a text that she concludes with:

"This discussion of the visual representation of women and landscape concentrated on the complex construction of images of 'natural' Woman as the objects of male desire" (Rose, 2008, p. 175).

Similarly, Denis Cosgrove emphasizes that "the significance of gender in the attribution and reproduction of landscape symbolism" has been ignored for a long time and underlines that:

"[t]he maleness and femaleness of public landscape remains largely an excluded subject for geographical investigation, for no other reason than that the questions have never been put" (Cosgrove, 2008, p. 185).

Therefore, public landscape can be researched also from the perspective of maleness and femaleness and identify the excluded landscapes from a gender-sensitive perspective.

Denis Cosgrove (1948-2008) has been one of the most influential cultural geographers who approached the landscape as a text that can be read, employing certain techniques. Cosgrove argues that human motivation is not just practical, but there is a series of factors that influence actions and daily behaviour, such as moral, patriotic, religious, sexual and political (Cosgrove, 2008, p. 178). All these influence our relations to the others or to places, so geographers should also consider them, when offering geographical explanations about the world we live in. The world is created and undergoes changes where such motivations are influencing or determining factors. This perception of the human motivation and driving factors in societal change determine Cosgrove to ascertain that "geography misses much of the meaning embedded in the human landscape" (Cosgrove, 2008, p. 178).

According to Cosgrove, cultural geographers studying the landscape should adapt to new social movements that are challenging the established dominant meaning and this adaptation would fail if geographers exclude culture and symbols from their research and scientific explanations of societal change (2008, p. 178). This preference of the geographers to focus on the tangible and the empirical in their explanation of geographical processes is based on the geographical tradition in research:

"We prefer to handle tangible, empirical materials, to interpret the world in the precise and measurable terms of practical necessity" (Cosgrove, 2008, p. 178).

This author emphasizes the geographers' task of making Geography an enjoyable science and its research likewise, the main reason being that geography is everywhere in people's lives:

"One of the tasks of geographers is to show that geography is there to be enjoyed" (Cosgrove, 2008, p. 178).

Considering that "the utilitarian functionalism of so much geographical explanation is the recognition of human motivation other than the narrowly practical" (Cosgrove, 2008, p. 178), Cosgrove proposes that geographers treat their science "as a *humanity* as much as a social science" (*Idem*). His argument is a compelling one: the landscape is "an intentional human expression composed of many layers of meaning" and therefore it

should be treated using "some of the interpretative skills we deploy in studying a novel, a poem, a film or a painting" (*Ibidem*).

The visible forms of landscape are influenced by both human knowledge and actions:

> "A consistent order and form can be imposed intellectually and practically across the external world" (Cosgrove, 2008, p. 179).

Cosgrove proceeds from the statement that "all landscapes are symbolic" (2008, p. 180), to explore the crucial role that symbols, situated within a certain culture, a certain historical and geographical context, have on our reading of landscapes as cultural texts:

> "To understand the expressions written by a culture into its landscape we require a knowledge of the 'language' employed: the symbols and their meaning within that culture" (Cosgrove, 2008, p. 180).

The main function of landscape, of its symbolism, is to reinforce the cultural specificity and norms of society:

> "[…] it still serves the purpose of reproducing cultural norms and establishing the values of dominant groups across all of a society" (Cosgrove, 2008, p. 180).

"[B]oundaries of behaviour and the appropriate codes of conduct" (Cosgrove, 2008, p. 180) are communicated through the ordering and forms of the landscape. The landscape ensures the legitimacy of the set of values it communicates through its symbolism, it exerts moral and social control over the communities it hosts (Cosgrove, 2008, p. 180). This function is obvious in the urban area because this is "the most highly-designed landscape – the city" (Cosgrove, 2008, pp. 180-181). Focusing on the ritual uses of the urban landscape, D. Cosgrove underlines that "[t]he taken-for-granted landscapes of our daily lives are full of meaning" (Cosgrove, 2008, p. 185).

James Duncan is also part of the landscape-as-text approach. In his applied landscape analysis of Kandyan Kingdom, Duncan examines the ideological landscape and the function it has in shaping rulers' and inhabitants' narratives about life and society, while legitimating political power through urban form:

> "These narratives were expressed in multiple media. The first medium was concrete, and its representation was iconic. It included various landscape features such as walls, ponds, canals, architectural detail, and the spatial relation of structures within the landscape. The second medium was language and its representation was metonymic. Objects within the landscape were denominated just as they were in the world of the gods. It is important to note that such iconic and linguistic representation was similar, for both allegorically transformed myth into landscape. The third medium was behavior and its representation was ritualistic. Here the king, his entourage, and the common people emulated the world of the gods or of the cakravarti. They reproduced the allegory in rituals acted out in the landscape, itself an allegorical representation of these narratives. Thus, repeatedly composed in these multiple media was a powerful statement about an allegedly powerful king" (Duncan, 2008, p. 188).

The landscape is "a highly complex, intertextual, and multivocal system of communication", formed of juxtaposed "iconic, linguistic, and behavioural symbols" (Duncan, 2008, p. 193). It has the function to reconfirm daily certain values and the attached narratives. The landscape is also used as concrete evidence of the norms (e.g. economic, social, cultural, political) in the society, and of its achievements across centuries.

People relate to and structure the space they inhabit through their senses, but touch, smell or taste have not been seriously considered in comparison to "the act of *seeing*" which is "paramount to constructing, experiencing, and understanding landscapes" (Oakes & Price, 2008, Introduction to Bull, p. 194).

In his study, "Sounding Out the City. Personal Stereos and the Management of Everyday Life" (2000), **Michael Bull** analysis soundscapes or landscapes made of music, considering the experiencing of places by those who listen to music while travelling through the city and accomplishing various activities in public and private spaces within the city. Sounds, similarly to images, mediate our daily lives and enable us to construct memories as well as our practices of remembering.

M. Bull's research falls in the category of contemporary Cultural Geography focused on the non-representational theory – an approach that takes our research beyond the visual, emphasizing instead "the emotional, performative, and multi-sensory nature of being-in-the-world" (Oakes & Price, 2008, Introduction to Bull, p. 195). Moreover, his research focuses on the body, as "an integral part of the landscape" (Oakes & Price, 2008, Introduction to Bull, p. 195), a hot topic and significant theory in contemporary Cultural Geography since the 1980s.

Sounds, according to M. Bull, "re-spatialize the users' experience" of place (Bull, 2008, p. 195), listening to music creates "a zone of intimacy" (p. 195), of harmonizing the environment to the user; the world, memories, the landscape are actively created by the user who listens to music during his or her encounters with places:

> "Just as representational space is transformed, so is the user's experience of habitable space" (Bull, 2008, p. 198).

Sound is influencing how experience is represented in people's consciousness (soundscapes):

> "The narrative quality that users attach to music permits them to reconstruct these narrative memories at will in places where they would otherwise have difficulty in summoning them up. Sound appears as the significant medium here" (Bull, 2008, p. 199).

> "Users' relations to representational space are transformed, enabling them to construct forms of 'habitable' space for themselves" (Bull, 2008, p. 199).

Meaning is ascribed to "those spaces that are perceived to be bereft of interest" (Bull, 2008, p. 199), creating personal narratives about landscape while accompanied by sound. Soundscapes are part of users "biographical travelling" (Bull, 2008, p. 199).

On forming and assessing competences in the literature of the Sciences of Education. Focus on cultural landscapes and visual imagery

In the didactics research in Romania, there were preoccupations especially for analysing the composition of photos and for comparing the content of a series of photographs (Dulamă, 1996, 2000), although in school textbooks and in Geography scientific literature there were photos of cultural landscapes (Dulamă & Ilovan, 2015, 2017). In recent didactics research, the importance of observing the photographed landscapes was emphasized (Dulamă, 2006), and later the completion of two steps was suggested, one of analysis and one of interpreting the content of photographs (Dulamă & Roşcovan, 2007; Dulamă, 2008).

For the students' competence formation, it is recommended to use checklists and provide feedback during task solving and after a primary assessment of students' results, in order to increase their level of competence (Dulamă & Ilovan, 2016). In addition, research presented the way in which the competence of perceiving and decoding a geographical landscape was formed (Popescu, 2010) and how to build and develop the ability to analyse and interpret a photo (Dulamă, 2010). Other studies analysed the way of exploring cultural landscapes within some discussion groups on Facebook (Dulamă et al., 2016a) and a grid to evaluate students' results was proposed. Moreover, geographical research focused on case studies on the territorial identity of historical urban centres (Ilovan et al., 2017).

MATERIAL AND METHOD

Cultural landscapes are cultural products, providing us with the meanings society inscribed in historic time. For instance, the city landscape is, from a geographical point of view, the centre of power, where the dominant culture in the respective society is expressed best. The city landscape has been the most rationalised, ordered, organised, and designed, usually during many historical periods. Human reason has left its imprint especially in the city and, therefore, the connection between the power and ordered landscape can be best researched in the urban area (e.g. political, social, economic power are written in the urban space).

Research design. This observational research was carried during the 2018-2019 academic year, at the Faculty of Geography from Babeș-Bolyai University, Cluj-Napoca, Romania. At the course of Cultural Landscapes (1st semester), from the *Regional Planning and Development* M.Sc. programme, one of the tasks received by the students was to realise in pairs an illustrated postcard of Cluj-Napoca. One of the requirements was that the picture postcard should have been a collage of cultural landscapes. M.Sc. students were also asked to take their own photos of the landscape and not

to obtain them from 3rd-party sources. Postcards had to be submitted during the last course (no. 14), followed by discussions about the final results. In order to accomplish this task, the students undergone a long studying process of cultural landscapes, structured on several stages.

a. Presenting and discussing theoretical and methodological aspects. At the first course, the professor (Dr. Oana-Ramona Ilovan) presented the Romanian industrial landscape topic, based on illustrated postcards (*cf.* Ilovan & Maroşi, 2018). The presentation was discussed with the students and they received the PowerPoint presentation for home study. Starting from this presentation of a landscape type based on images (photos from the postcards circulated during the socialist period of Romania, 1948-1989), the students were informed about the themes, course requirements and assessment.

b. Presenting the task. At this course, the students' grading was realised according to the information below:

- students' active participation at the interactive activity during the lectures, based on the readings recommended by the professor in the compulsory bibliography (Courses 2-11), (3 points);

- individual activity – realising a photographic essay of Cluj-Napoca, through cultural landscapes (each essay included 20 photographs taken by the student, between October and December 2018; each photo should have been titled) (Courses 12 and 13: presentation of the essays and discussions based on them) (3 points);

- team activity– realisation of an illustrated postcard (collage) for Cluj-Napoca, through cultural landscapes (Course 14 – presentation of postcards and discussions based on them) (3 points);

- 1 point ex officio.

The mandatory and additional bibliography (Brinkerhoff Jackson, 2008; Bull, 2008; Cosgrove, 2008; Duncan, 2008; Hoskins, 2008; Mitchell, D., 2008; Mitchell, W.J.T., 2008; Rose, 2008; Sauer, 2008; Oakes & Price, 2008a, 2008b) was presented at our first lecture.

In addition, it is important to mention that the creation of postcards came as a synthesis activity, after the students had realised the photographic essay. Therefore, the realisation of the postcards required work in several stages.

c. Explaining and discussing the creation of the picture postcard. Students were asked to create in pairs a picture postcard in the form of a collage, including at least four photographs of cultural landscapes of Cluj-Napoca, taken by themselves. The collages should have been titled and have aesthetic value.

d. Performing the task. First, students were involved in creating a photographic essay. The second stage was for creating the illustrated postcard.

Moreover, besides the two stages mentioned above (the one of selecting the photos for the essay and for the postcard and their assembly in a discourse which made sense/ which students could argue from the perspective of their personal experience with the space), the students had gone previously through another three stages:

- (1) research at home (based on the recommended bibliography, as for each class meeting the students had to read a specific text);

- (2) group discussions, including the professor, starting from the read material, during interactive lectures (explaining the concepts and perspectives of discourses on cultural landscapes, approached by the authors of the studied material);

- (3) field research – field trips while the students took photographs for the photographic essay and for the illustrated postcard.

e. The assessment included two phases:

- (1) professor's assessment of students' Cluj-Napoca postcards – the face-to-face activity;

- (2) professor's assessment of students' oral presentation of their postcard, during the oral exam.

In this study, we refer only to the assessment of the postcards. A criterion for grading was the existence of a visual coherent discourse for the respective postcard. In addition, the titles given to the postcards and, in some cases, the explanatory text written by some students revealed that the initial objective of the course had been achieved:

- to build the students' competence of analysing the landscape as a layered cultural product, whereas it is formed over time and records varied changes throughout the diverse periods in the development of a society;

- where students represented Cluj-Napoca only through well-known touristic objectives, the aim of the course was not fulfilled.

Participants. The experimental group was composed of 15 M.Sc. students from the first year at the *Regional Planning and Development* M.Sc. programme. Most of them had a stable residency in other settlements than Cluj-Napoca (the counties of Bistrița-Năsăud, Alba, Hunedoara, Arad, Neamț, Suceava, and Satu-Mare), three were from Cluj County, of which two from Cluj-Napoca Municipality.

The research material included eight postcards made by M.Sc. students, representing cultural landscapes of Cluj-Napoca.

Research methods. On the whole, this qualitative research was a case study. As methods of data collection, we used the participatory observation, the first author having the role of the professor and the second author being one of the M.Sc. students who took this course and solved the given tasks. The data obtained from the oral and written texts were subjected to the content analysis method. The postcards were analysed using visual methodology.

RESULTS

The results include two parts. In the first one, we present the postcards made by M.Sc. students during our course on *Cultural Landscapes.* The second one presents the self-assessment grid that we created starting from the bibliography and the students' products of their learning activity (i.e. picture postcards, written text and oral presentations).

Postcards made by M.Sc. students

In Figures 1-8, we present the postcards realised by M.Sc. students. Four of them were made in pairs, in a case we analysed two variants proposed by a pair, and five postcards were made individually.

Fig. 1.a. Cluj, a vibrant city

Fig. 1.b. Vibrant Cluj

Fig. 2. Greetings from Cluj

Fig. 3. Everybody's Cluj

Fig. 4. Cultural Cluj

Fig. 5. Cluj

Fig. 6. Cluj – "City of treasures"

Fig. 7. Cluj

1.Teatrul Naţional 2.Cazino. Lacul Chios 3.Klausen Burger Cafe 4. Piaţa Unirii. Biserica Sfântul Mihail 5. Catedrala Mitropolitană Cluj-Napoca, cu hramul Adormirea Maicii Domnului
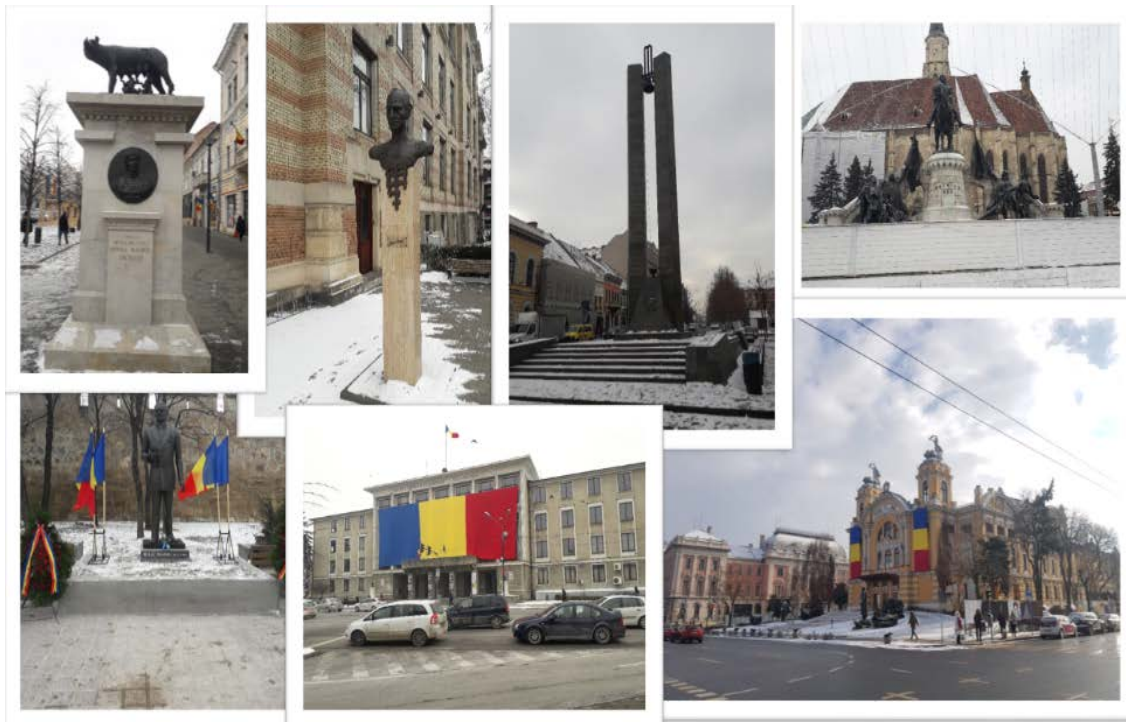
Fig. 8. Cuj-Napoca

The self-assessment grid

The self-assessment grid of collage postcards and of their oral and written presentations realised by students is presented in Table 1. The analysis grid has 10 criteria and for each criterion we have two or more indicators.

Table 1. The self-assessment grid for students' oral and written presentations of collage postcards

Criteria	Indicators	Yes
Identifying/selecting/representing cultural landscapes	associations of forms, both physical and cultural	
	landscape composition (elements), spatial structures (internal organization) and functions of the landscape (conditioning the use of the landscape)	
	landscape unity (coherence) and rational order or design	
Identifying/selecting/representing temporal features of the cultural landscapes	historical perspective	
	newly-introduced (contemporary) features	
Identifying/selecting/representing the typology of cultural landscapes /variety of the included cultural landscapes	dominant landscapes (ideological, historical, industrial, etc.)	
	alternative landscapes (residual, emergent, excluded)	
	vernacular landscapes (built by inhabitants using local resources)	
	official landscapes (imposed by the public authorities)	
Identifying/selecting/representing static and/or dynamic landscapes	static (as a suite of things or product)	
	dynamic (as a social process) (people's presence in the landscapes, means of transport, new buildings, traces of urban space renovation; diverse evolution stages: new landscapes and relict/old ones)	
Identifying/selecting/representing the functions of using/usefulness of the landscapes	utilitarian functionalism: the narrowly practical	
	use of the area (e.g. by the student, by others)	
	ritual uses of the urban landscape (residential, cultural, recreational, etc., proved by people's existence)	
	habitat value	
Identifying/selecting/representing multiple layers of meaning	beauty/ugliness of landscapes – strongly connected to the perception of injustice and unequal power relations in landscape making (e.g. clues enabling us to identify the intervention of political factors, of gender relations, of relations among the members of the society)	
	process of landscape creation/construction	

Identifying/selecting/representing the factors that influenced creating/constructing landscapes (semiotic and aesthetic features) – power relations of labour and gender in producing and representing landscapes	representations of people's needs and desires	
	the collective character of the landscape (created and used by people)	
	various social groups possessing varying amounts of social, economic and political power (hybrid landscapes)	
	internal factors (internal politics, national ideology, class ideology)	
	external factors (global phenomena and processes)	
	power relations of labour (economy, development related)	
	power relations of gender (adaptations of urban structure and functions to gender peculiarities; representing gender – urban symbols/constructions with men's and women's achievements)	
	influencing or determining factors: moral, patriotic, religious, political and sexual	
	relationship between landscape and ideology	
	human intervention and control of the forces that shape and reshape our world	
	showing multiple meanings of the same landscape (at a certain moment or in time)	
	specific way of seeing the landscape ("the landscape is a way of seeing which we learn" – Rose, 2008, p. 172)	
In-depth interpretation of landscapes	ambivalence of landscape: "aesthetic delight" and "malicious intent"	
	knowledge of the "language" employed in producing and representing landscapes: the symbols and their meaning within a certain culture	
	explaining the symbols of places and of the landscape itself	
Student's personal relation with the landscape/reflecting on the represented landscapes	visual and textual proof of student's experience of everyday events and places when solving the task (distant or intimate relationship)	
	underlining the identity of the represented landscape (e.g. naming the specificity of the landscape, giving a title to the created picture postcard)	
	critical analysis of the landscape	
	students' reflection on the included features of the landscape (written or oral)	
Observing professor's indications for realising the picture postcards	creating a collage of at least four photographs	
	photographs should be realised by the students themselves	

	compatibility degree of the photos	
	giving a title to the collage	
	title-collage accord	
	aesthetics of the collage (harmony of colours, or forms of the photographs representing material landscapes)	

DISCUSSIONS

Observations about the activity carried out with the M.Sc. students

In our activity, we adhered to Cosgrove's research advice in order to be able to decode geographically "the man-layered meanings of symbolic landscapes" (Cosgrove, 2008, p. 181). Moreover, we considered that:

> "Landscape is thus intimately linked with a new way of seeing the world as a rationally ordered, designed and harmonious creation whose structure and mechanism are accessible to the human mind as well as to the eye, and act as guides to humans in their alteration and improvement of the environment. In this sense landscape is a complex concept of whose implications I want to specify three: (i) a focus on the visible forms of our world, their composition and spatial structure; (ii) unity, coherence and rational order or design in the environment; (iii) the idea of human intervention and control of the forces that shape and reshape our world" (Cosgrove, 2008, p. 179).

That is why we asked students to descend in the field (the city of Cluj-Napoca), walk and take pictures based on their prior reflection on the places that are most significant for their relation to the city. So students were asked to make a selection and then give an interpretation of the photographed/represented city landscapes; during this process, they were in fact creating meaning attached to those landscape representations. They saw the landscape of the city from the inside.

The aim of the course was to enable students understand "the nature" of landscape: "already a representation in its own right" (Mitchell, W.J.T., 2008, p. 169). Students represented the cultural landscape (the material landscape) of Cluj-Napoca both for themselves and for an audience (professor and their colleagues). Thus, they could understand how social actors represent themselves and represent in different ways one and the same material landscape, how representations are produced (the target public of those representations and the reasons and practices behind them).

In addition, one of the objectives of the on *Cultural Landscapes* and of the task given to the students was to enable them understand how their cultural background influences their selection of cultural landscapes of Cluj-Napoca and their visual and verbal representation. This is important so that they do not take visual information for granted, but seek to uncover its meaning, symbols and intention. On the other hand, it was also significant for them to understand that their cultural background, active when realising

the representations of Cluj-Napoca, when "writing" their own narrative of the city using the photographical essay and then the picture postcards, was also active when perceiving the landscapes.

The professor wanted students to experience themselves the intention behind any representation of the landscape (i.e. while taking the photographs themselves). Students were asked to associate the cultural landscape with their memories of places and experiences in the city, because:

> "[...] landscape is itself a physical and multisensory medium (earth, stone, vegetation, water, sky, sound and silence, light and darkness, etc.) in which cultural meanings and values are encoded" (Mitchell, W.J.T., 2008, p. 169).

The focus on emotional geographies was a requirement for students when solving the task of taking photos of the landscape that had a personal meaning for their experience with the city. They had to look for those places that captured students' moods and emotions, commenting on "the ties between human life, love, and feeling and the invariant rhythms of the natural world" (Cosgrove, 2008, p. 179), creating thus their emotional landscapes.

Students were asked to pay attention to the power of naming both in their written and oral presentations and in the public space they researched:

> "Names are used to establish a metonymic relation, a bridge across which meaning flows like electricity between two poles" (Duncan, 2008, p. 193).

In addition, Duncan points out the crucial power that synecdochic elements have in the landscape, so students were asked to pay attention to the parts that make reference to the whole:

> "[...] synecdochic elements in the landscape stand for and attract to themselves the power of the larger allegorical whole" (Duncan, 2008, p. 193).

We considered Cosgrove's text on culture and symbolism in human landscapes (1989, 2008) and his assertion that:

> "By their nature alternative cultures are less visible in the landscape than dominant ones, although with a change in the scale of observation a subordinate or alternative culture may appear dominant" (Cosgrove, 2008, p. 183).

Then, we discussed his proposed typology of these alternative landscapes: residual (with little left from their original meaning), emergent and excluded (Cosgrove, 2008, pp. 183-185):

- *residual landscapes* – How meaning of the landscape changes dependent on different practices than the ones that produced the respective landscape (Cosgrove, 2008, p. 184).

- *emergent landscapes* – "We should not scorn the study of imaginative geographies, nor the use of real landscapes to anticipate future

cultures and social relations" (e.g. the American skyscrapers at a certain moment in the past, Olympic sports landscapes) (Cosgrove, 2008, p. 184).

- *excluded landscape*s – "In general women represent the largest single excluded culture, at least as far as impact on the public landscape is concerned" (Cosgrove, 2008, p. 184).

Students were asked to identify the alternative landscapes of Cluj-Napoca, besides the "classical" ones. Architecture has very powerful symbolic statements in the landscapes of Cluj-Napoca and students became aware of this through their field activity (walking through the city in search of symbolic landscapes, "classical" or well-known/ highly represented and alternative ones). Students had to link the landscape to the dominant reading of the place and to their experience. Some of them produced alternative landscape representations. This exercise was significant for them to be able to identify symbols, instances of dominant culture and of alternative cultures and discourses about the urban landscape. We asked them to be creative when choosing the landscapes they took photographs of, by first trying to avoid including only the best-known and traditional/conventional representations of the landscapes of this city.

At the same time, we told students that a balance should be ensured, because, as geographers, besides connecting to places to be better able to understand them, we also seek "critical distance" (Cosgrove, 2008, p. 181), so they had also to position themselves outside of the city landscapes. This meant that students had to move from one perspective to another one during the time spent solving the task of creating a picture postcard of Cluj-Napoca. That is the reason why students' collections of photographs are a mixture of conventional landscape representations and alternative ones (conventional meaning and alternative ones, based on each student's personal experience with the landscape).

Students realised the decoding of symbolic landscapes when presenting their products. Students presented their visual representations of cultural landscapes of Cluj-Napoca during an oral presentation they offered their colleagues and the professor, verbalizing explanations of their choices and of the significance of the photographs included in their picture postcards. Thus resulted the verbal representations of the visual ones. A further exercise would be to initiate them in decoding other's representations of landscapes.

Through their activity, students were involved actively in a process of reproducing cultural values and thus they contributed to keeping alive the symbolic landscape of Cluj-Napoca:

> "Such symbolic landscapes are not merely static, formal statements. The cultural values they celebrate need to be actively reproduced if they are to continue to have meaning. In large measure this is achieved in daily life by the simple recognition of buildings, place names and the like" (Cosgrove, 2008, p. 183);

> "[...] urban space combines with (often invented) tradition and patriotic references in order to celebrate 'national' values and present them as the common heritage of all citizens" (Cosgrove, 2008, p. 183).

Students also realised the subjectivity involved in working with picture postcards, with material landscapes and with visual imagery in general:

> "[...] indeed the interpretations we make of them tell us as much about ourselves and our cultural assumptions as about their original significance" (Cosgrove, 2008, p. 184).

The study of landscape, by deconstructing its multiple meanings, develops students' critical thinking: landscapes are not what they seem, but they should be read/analysed and understood. The meaning is not evident at a first "reading" of the landscape, because it is:

> "[...] a highly-textured place, with multiple layers of meaning... a symbolic place where a number of cultures meet and perhaps clash" (Oakes & Price, 2008, Introduction to Cosgrove, p. 176).

Moreover, recent research showed the crucial importance of landscapes as resources for territorial planning, place-identity creation and cohesive development (Colavitti, 2016, 2018; Havadi-Nagy & Ilovan, 2018; Ilovan & Maroşi, 2018; Markuszewska, 2019) and therefore students' mastering of the concept is crucial for their training and future jobs in the field of territorial planning and development.

Short observations about the postcards made by the M.Sc. students and about the oral and written texts they presented

The students were asked to identify various types of landscapes. The aesthetics criterion was present, but not essential. They were encouraged to search for the "ugly" urban too, not just for what was perceived as beautiful. But this was more evident in the photographic essay, because in the postcards, in the selection process, information from the students' cultural background was active: the postcards showed beautiful landscapes, they considered that postcards had to be a visiting card of the city. So any unpleasant landscape might have been automatically avoided and the harmony of representation in the collage was pursued (for instance, a student even used several software programmes to embellish photos).

Because students aimed to render the aesthetic qualities of landscape, therefore subjectively selecting what they considered or was considered to be "beautiful", a high degree of conventionalism was involved in the picture postcards they created. Students succeeded in producing conventional representations of landscapes and included conventional landscapes into their picture postcards, rather than offering a completely new and more subjective or alternative manner of seeing the living environment in Cluj-Napoca.

Landscapes are *quasi-objects* (Mitchell, D., 2008, p. 163, quoting Bruno Latour's concept): "they are not only material reality, but they are also an embodiment of the relations that went into building them". Don Mitchell transfers this approach to considering landscape a *quasi-object* because of "embodying all the multifarious relations, struggles, arguments,

representations and conclusions that went into its making" (Mitchell, D., 2008, pp. 163-164), and thus it is only logical that it structures our social reality (Mitchell, D., 2008, p. 164), our relations to the material reality and among people.

So, most often, instead of critically analysing the landscape, of understanding its meanings and critically challenging them, of challenging the power relations that produced the respective landscape, and its function, we end up either reproducing the landscape in visual representations or in verbal/written ones. This was also the case with students' representations of Cluj-Napoca in their picture postcards: students reproduced the landscape or former landscape representations; as a rule, they did not challenge its meanings and conventional representations. It may be also because they perceived the picture postcard as a conventional and conservative product (reproducing established, traditional representations of the urban area, in this case).

Students selected many landscapes hosting monuments. They created picture postcards celebrating iconic images of the city: the symbolic buildings and other type of constructions (with a memorialization function) are located in the city centre. These have the function of pointing out what the community is/should be proud of: they are "symbols of memorialization" (Oakes & Price, 2008, Introduction to Cosgrove, p. 177).

However, in students' picture postcards, certain social attitudes can be identified as well as the visual experience of students' everyday world. Their representation of Cluj-Napoca in picture postcards was celebrating their experience with the city. Some of them also expressed these in written text, accompanying the selected images:

"Cluj becomes a painting of generations, attitudes, statues";

"The horizon line under which a small town full of vivacity and complexity is carved";

"Elizabeth Bridge, a cold iron bridge, warmed by incurable romantics";

"And when all the longings [doruri] travel, few arrive at their destination";

"The best drink is served during the classes, on Piezişă Street!";

"It may seem hilarious, but one of my favourite places in Cluj is an intersection, which I rush through almost every day and evening".

Observations about the self-assessment grid of collage postcards and their oral and written presentations realised by students

The grid (Table 1) is a dichotomic one (Yes / No option) and it can perform the role of a checklist. It can be used in self-assessment or assessment (to verify whether each criterion was accomplished). The achievement of criteria and indicators is established by observing the images; the compliance to some of the criteria is confirmed by checking the pictures and oral and written texts; however, the accomplishment of certain criteria can be checked only on the students' written texts.

CONCLUSIONS

From the bibliography that students read for the course of *Cultural Landscapes*, they collected many ideas that synthesized various landscape features: the landscape is firstly a whole, it cannot be expressed by its constituent parts taken separately because it is more than summing them up. It includes physical and cultural components, which are expressed in space and time and moreover, which coexist and are interrelated. The two major elements that compose a landscape are the nature as the scene of human activities and culture as an agent of change that transforms the natural basis and leaves a certain footprint on it.

However, the natural environment reserves a note of originality, a last word expressed by the way it assimilates the anthropic interventions, this being associated with the footprint that offers the uniqueness of the landscape. Thus every landscape has its own identity, a specific shape and knowable boundaries, which delimit various types of landscapes. It is important to mention that every landscape has its own aesthetics, dictated by its internal organization, more or less understood by those analysing it.

Each landscape has its own history; depending on the stage of evolution, the landscapes can be new (created recently, with modern architecture) or relicts (those that have been preserved in an archaic form, slightly altered by the touch of modernity). In both situations, people are the ones who act as modifiers of the landscape, modelling it for their own pleasure and utility. In this case, the landscape fits people's desires and serves people's needs, being in a continuous transformation. Some landscapes are texts from which one can read the past, because they encompass several historical periods, several overlapping places, and so the scenery is a palimpsest.

The landscape also depends strongly on the person who reads it because each reader adds his or her emotions, thoughts, feelings, he or she mentally represents his or her landscape and realises connections between landscape imagery and landscape reality. The whole process has as a result a new landscape, a subjective landscape, which bears the author's signature. Therefore, at the end of our activity, students realised that "[l]andscape is in fact a 'way of seeing'" (Cosgrove, 2008, p. 179).

Besides the connotations offered by each viewer, the landscapes can intentionally conceal other aspects, which are only discovered by the more attentive viewers. For example, the landscape can be a "social hieroglyph", a symbol for the social relationships it hides. And not just social relationships (power, politics), but also gender relations (the way that gender is represented in the landscape). Each landscape communicates a certain set of values, which is expressed in a less obvious way, leaving the viewer the freedom to understand and interpret it.

Considering all these theoretical and methodological contributions brought about by international and national research to the concept of *landscape*, our teaching and learning approach to the cultural landscapes of Cluj-Napoca enabled us to develop, with the students, an activity and an assessment grid that improve professor-student interaction during lectures and seminars, as well as students' learning process.

Acknowledgement

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