

MOUNTAIN LANDSCAPES IN THE UNESCO HERITAGE

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Abstract: This study represents an exploratory, but also synthetic, analysis of the mountain regions included on the World Heritage list as natural objectives, that was generated by the following question: how representative is the Carpathian mountain area on the UNESCO list of protected objectives? The results, by no means encouraging – only one Carpathian natural objective is under the above mentioned international forum’s protection, have led to the extension of the analysis to the European mountain regions and then, to a global level, grouping the objectives by climate areas. Besides the theoretical dimension of the study, its applicative valences reside in its value as a handbook or a conceptual guide, both for future research directions as well as for local or central administration, through the specific directions that should have as an objective: protecting as many natural objectives from the Carpathian Mountains, by including them in the UNESCO Heritage. This would constitute a guarantee of their “*preservation*”, while also being accessible to controlled touristic “*consumption*”, in order to not affect their originality.

Key words: UNESCO world heritage, mountain region, Carpathian Mountains, nature conservation, National Parks

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INTRODUCTION

The UNESCO World Cultural and Natural Heritage was initiated in order to protect and preserve some of Nature’s and Man’s most priceless creations during geologic and historic time. Out of the 890 such objectives selected so far, most (689) are human creations, basically only 176 are natural creations and an even smaller number, respectively 25, are mixed (natural and man-made).

Even if it’s about priceless natural and man-made values, a legacy that next generations should be able to take advantage of, WCNH’s objectives are too little known. On occasion of the survey we realised on a sample of 300 persons, no one could mention all the seven Romanian objectives included in WCNH or even more than three (and those mostly based on logic) and almost 50% couldn’t mention at least one.

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Starting from the mentioned reasons (WCNH's importance, the ignorance in this field etc.), we aim to present in this study:

- A short history of WCNH;
- The criteria on which the selection of natural objectives is based;
- Assessments regarding the representation of mountain regions in WCNH;
- Identifying possible natural objectives in the Carpathian Mountains that could be promoted in order to be included in the UNESCO World Heritage.

Also, this study represents an exploratory and synthetic analysis, essentialised and interrogatory, of mountain areas, classified on climate regions, that are already included on the UNESCO list, both individually (interpretatively) and in relation with others (comparatively).

METHODOLOGICAL ASPECTS

Putting together this study implied an established theoretical-scientific support (Cocean, 1996; Muntele and Iațu, 2003; Neguț, 2004; Neguț and Nicolae, 2005) in order to better fundament the objectives of this analysis, stated above. To this end it was necessary selecting and studying the specialty literature, besides which, a thorough analysis was given to the web portal in order to facilitate the decision regarding selection criteria of mountain areas included in the UNESCO World Heritage¹. To all of the above we can also add qualitative interviews carried out in different institutions.

The exploratory, but also synthetic character of the analysis required the research and thorough selection of mountain regions under UNESCO protection and focusing on the Carpathian area: why is this area not present with more natural objectives on the Heritage list?

The study's theoretical dimension resides in the interpretative and comparative analysis of mountain areas, generally classified on climate regions (however, other criteria was also used), and identifying the representation of the Carpathians.

The applicative valences reside in this study's value as handbook or conceptual guide for any researcher who wishes to develop similar studies, but also for the local or central administration, through specific directions, that should aim to: protect as many Carpathian natural objectives as they can by including them in the UNESCO Heritage. This would be a guarantee of their "*preservation*", while at the same time making them accessible to controlled touristic "*consumption*", in order to not affect their original characteristics, the specific details that make them so attractive (Neguț and Neacșu, 2008, pp. 9).

SHORT HISTORY OF WCNH

With the occasion of the 17th UNESCO conference, October 17th – November 21st 1972, in Paris, was legitimised the *Convention concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage* at which, over time, adhered 180 countries (until May 2010). The *Convention's* most original characteristic is considered to be uniting all the notions of protecting the nature and preserving cultural property, in one single document. UNESCO opened a *World Heritage List*, in which priceless natural and cultural objectives are enlisted, thus being under international protection. This Convention was, in fact, the natural sequel of a *book* series and previous conventions, starting with the *Venetian Charter* concerning the preservation and restoration of monuments and sites (from 1964).

The UNESCO convention, which began taking effect in December 17th 1975, defined important aspects such as: cultural heritage (article 1), natural heritage (article 2), who submits the objectives that must come under protection, respectively only the states in which they exist (article 3), creating a special fund for protecting exceptional heritage,

¹ <http://whc.unesco.org>

“World Heritage Fund” (article 15), to which any country, that signed the Convention, has access (article 19). According to the *Convention*, the *natural heritage* component of the World Heritage is defined as follows:

– *Natural monuments*: consisting of physical and biological formations or groups of such formations, which are of outstanding universal value from the aesthetic or scientific point of view;

– *Geological and physiographical formations* and precisely delineated areas which constitute the habitat of threatened species of animals and plants of outstanding universal value from the point of view of science or conservation;

– *Natural sites* or precisely delineated natural areas of outstanding universal value from the point of view of science, conservation or natural beauty.

For a better organisation and operation, UNESCO created the *Committee of the Cultural and Natural Heritage of Outstanding Universal Value*, composed by 21 members (with a mandate of 6 years, but most countries settle with 4 years, in order to allow other countries to become members), its composition having to ensure an equitable representation of different regions and cultures. At the Committee’s sessions participate, with a consultative vote, one representative from the *International Centre for the Study of the Preservation and Restoration of Cultural Property* (the *Centre from Rome*), of the *International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS)* and of the *International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN)*.

The World Heritage Committee operates the *World Heritage Fund*, which is constituted from the mandatory or voluntary contribution of member countries, donations from other countries, UNESCO and other organisations of the UN, nongovernmental organisations, private companies and individuals, money resulted from demonstrations and organised fund raisers for the World Fund. The fund ensures international assistance in this field: preparatory (establishing lists with susceptible objectives to be included in the World Heritage, conservation and administration project proposals etc.), advisory (for activities prior to accepting new objectives, but also after this moment, as well as training for those engaged in related activities), technical (supports, through material and expertise, activities of conservation, administration plans etc.), urgent (restoration actions taken to restore objectives damaged by natural disasters or inadequate human activity), educational. There also exists a coordinating centre (*Centre du Patrimoine Mondial/World Heritage Centre*), founded in 1992, with its headquarters, as UNESCO, in Paris.

SELECTION CRITERIA FOR NATURAL OBJECTIVES

In order to be included on the *World Heritage List*, the objectives must have an exceptional universal value and fulfil at least one of the 10 selection criteria:

vii. to contain superlative natural phenomena or areas of exceptional natural beauty and aesthetic importance;

viii. to be outstanding examples representing major stages of earth's history, including the record of life, significant on-going geological processes in the development of landforms, or significant geomorphic or physiographic features;

ix. to be outstanding examples representing significant on-going ecological and biological processes in the evolution and development of terrestrial, fresh water, coastal and marine ecosystems and communities of plants and animals;

x. to contain the most important and significant natural habitats for in-situ conservation of biological diversity, including those containing threatened species of outstanding universal value from the point of view of science or conservation.

The variety of the criteria taken into consideration for nominating natural and man-made objectives to be included in the World Heritage actually allows a large range of objectives: in the case of natural heritage, exceptional or representative creations to the Nature’s work, usually accompanied by man-made objectives.

ASSESSMENTS CONCERNING THE REPRESENTATION OF MOUNTAIN REGIONS IN WCNH

Overall, in terms of WCNH objectives, Europe stands out with over 40% of the total (followed by Asia and America); Australia is listed with 17 objectives (which is, of course, representative for one country) and Antarctica, for now, with none. In terms of mountain objectives, however, Europe is not so well represented, only having 15 such protected areas in 11 countries, including Romania; in addition, in the case of six of these objectives the cultural-anthropoc motivation prevailed instead of the natural one, as is the case of the four Romanian objectives (the Wooden Churches of Maramureş, the Dacian fortresses of the Orăştie Mountains, the villages with fortified churches in Transylvania and the Historic Centre of Sighişoara²), plus the city and lake Ohrid with its surroundings (Macedonia) and the Carpathian beech forests (Slovakia – Ukraine).

The comparative analysis of mountain regions represented in the World Heritage disclose the fact that Europe is least represented, only 15% of the European mountain area being currently under UNESCO's protection; comparatively, Southern and Central America and Asia have 58%, respectively 52% and Africa, North America and Australia have values of approx. 30% (Chape et al., 2008, pp. 66).

Regarding the purely natural objectives included in WCNH, we can observe that all of them gained the status of protected area in their countries (National Park, usually, Natural Park, Natural Reserve, monument of nature etc; some of them, even, reservation of the biosphere) before being listed in UNESCO's Heritage.

We can also observe that almost all the representative mountain relief and ecosystems were practically already selected and admitted in WCNH. However, this does not mean they are sufficient.

In an attempt to group them, we could distinguish several categories:

1. Natural objectives that thanks to their geographic position (usually in equatorial and tropical regions) and high altitudes stand out through an *important concentration of types of relief and a rich and various flora and fauna*:

Sangay National Park (Ecuador, 1983³, criteria vii, viii, ix, x⁴), centred on two volcanoes, one of them being its namesake and currently active, represents one of the most complex protected areas on Earth, illustrating the entire spectrum of ecosystems, ranging from tropical rainforests to glaciers; its isolation has encouraged the survival of indigenous species such as the mountain tapir and the Andean condor.

Kilimanjaro National Park (United Republic of Tanzania, 1987, criteria vii) and *Mount Kenya National Park/Natural Forest* (Kenya, 1997, criteria vii, ix), which thanks to their high altitudes, the two African massifs (5 895 m, respectively 5 199 m), reproduce the planet's climate-vegetal areas: ranging from tropical forests to lifeless glaciers and represent real living laboratories of the flora and fauna evolution.

Lorentz National Park (Indonesia, 1999, criteria viii, ix, x), located in the Indonesian part (Irian Jaya) of the great island of New Guinea, it is the largest protected area in South-East Asia (2.5 million ha) and it incorporates within its limits a large variety of ecosystems, ranging from tropical lowlands and wetlands (including marine ones, in addition to the previous two objectives) to mountain massifs covered by permanent glaciers; located at the meeting point of two colliding continental plates, the area has a complex geology; it also supports the highest level of biodiversity in the region and houses many species of rare animals.

Kinabalu Park (Malaysia, 2000, criteria ix, x), centred on the homonym mountain (4,095 m) on the island of Kalimantan, it has a very wide range of habitats, from rich

² The last two only if we include the Hollow Hills of Transylvania as part (internal hollow) of the Carpathians.

³ The year in which it was listed in the WCNH.

⁴ Criteria that was used to list this objective on the UNESCO WCNH list, detailed above.

tropical lowland and hill rainforest to tropical mountain forest, sub-alpine forest and scrub on the higher elevations. Designated as a “*Centre of Plant Diversity*” for South-East Asia and is exceptionally rich in species of flora (here exist more than half the families of all flowering plants in the world, out of which *Rafflesia*, with a leaf diameter of 170 cm), as well as avifauna (over 250 species).

Mountain objectives *characteristic to tropical regions*:

Morne Trois Pitons National Park (Dominica, 1997, criteria viii, x), centred on the 1424-m-high volcano known as Morne Trois Pitons, it houses, on a territory of only 70 km², spectacular natural landscapes (precipitous slopes, deeply incised valleys, lakes, post-volcanic manifestations etc.) and the richest biodiversity in the Lesser Antilles archipelago.

Tropical Rainforest Heritage of Sumatra (Indonesia, 2004, criteria vii, ix, x), occupies a huge territory (2.6 million ha), it includes three National Parks (Gunung Leuser, Kerintji, Seblat and Bukit Barisan Selatan) axed on the Bukit Barisan mountain range, also known as the Andes of Sumatra (maximum altitude in the volcanic peak Gunung Kerintji, 3 800 m), with many examples of outstanding scenic landscapes (caves, waterfalls, lakes – volcanic and glacial, fumaroles etc.). It conserves one of the most representative tropical forest areas on Earth, having great potential for long-term conservation of the biodiversity; there have been identified approx. 10,000 species of plants, over 2,000 species of mammals, 580 species of birds etc.

Central Suriname Nature Reserve (Suriname, 2000, criteria ix, x), comprises 1.6 million ha of primary tropical forest unaffected by man’s presence, with a high diversity of plant life (over 5,000 species of vascular plants) and fauna (jaguar, giant armadillo, tapir, giant river otter, approx. 400 species of birds etc.).

Australian East Coast Temperate and Subtropical Rainforest Park, until 2007 “*Central-Eastern Rainforest Reserves*” (Australia, 1986-1994, criteria viii, ix, x), located along the Great Escarpment mountain range, on the eastern coast of the Australian continent, characterised by strange shaped geological formations, volcanic craters etc., as well as a large number of rare species characteristic to the moist forest, all of these presenting scientific interest for the conservation of nature.

Okapi Wildlife Reserve (Democratic Republic of the Congo, 1996, criteria x), located in the North-East of the country, with spectacular waterfalls and other types of relief, it protects approx. One quarter of the tropical forest of the Congo river basin (second in size in the world) and it houses an extraordinary fauna of primates and birds.

Mountain objectives *characteristic to temperate regions*:

The Dolomites (Italy, 2009, criteria vii, viii), mountain massif located in North-Eastern Italy, a range in the Oriental Alps between the rivers Adige and Piave, built on a limestone type of rock, *dolomite*, (double carbonate of calcium and magnesium, with iron, manganese and nickel impurities), in which the rivers and erosion have created a specific and spectacular micro-relief; well arranged for mountaineering and ski (famous resorts of Cortina d’Ampezzo, Bolzano etc.).

*Madriu-Perafita-Claror Valley*⁵ (Andora, 2004, criteria v⁶), an area centred on a high mountain region (11 peaks over 2 500 m – Pic de Portelleta reaching 2 905 m), that form one of the few areas in Western Europe not touched by man (there is no settlement, no communication route with the exception of mountain paths); rivers and numerous

⁵ This area represents an exception in the mountain areas included in the UNESCO Heritage, because, although without permanent human presence now, it is listed as a cultural landscape, representing „a microcosm of the way its inhabitants have harvested the scarce resources of the high Pyrenees over the past millennia to create a sustainable living environment in harmony with the mountain landscape; the Valley is a reflection of an ancient communal system of land management that has survived for over 700 years”.

⁶ Criteria no. v defines a cultural landscape, namely: to be an outstanding example of a traditional human settlement, land-use, or sea-use which is representative of a culture (or cultures), or human interaction with the environment especially when it has become vulnerable under the impact of irreversible change.

streams, all forming gorges and waterfalls, many lakes (*estanys*), conifer vegetation (mostly pine) and alpine pastures.

Swiss Alps Jungfrau-Aletsch (Switzerland, 2001, criteria vii, viii, ix), located in the Bernez Alps, it represents the most glaciated part of the European Alps (538 km²), containing Europe's largest glacier (Aletsch) and a range of classic glacial features; several peaks around 4 000 m (Jungfrau, 4 158 m; Mönch, 4 099; Eiger, 3 970 m etc.); rich flora and fauna.

Surtsey (Iceland, 2008, criteria ix), small island in the Westmann Islands group, that was born in only 20 days after a submarine volcanic eruption in November 1963; it has a surface of 2.8 km², 600 m in length and 140 m altitude.

Los Glaciares (Argentina, 1981, criteria vii, viii), centred on the Andes Mountains (between 300 and 3 773 m altitude, the Fitzroy peak) it houses 15 glaciers (Glaciar Moreno, Viedma, Upsala, Mayo etc.), rocky mountain landscapes, areas of the large glacial lakes Argentino and Viedma, vegetation, especially the Southern beech (*Notho fagus sp.*) and a fauna with numerous rare or endangered species (guanaco, huem, chinchilla, Chilean stag etc.).

Nanda Devi and Valley of Flowers National Parks (India, 1988, criteria vii, x), centred on the highest Himalayan peak in India (7 818 m), surrounded by 70 smaller peaks, together forming one of the most spectacular mountain areas, with a landscape unaffected by human activity.

Te Wahipounamu – South West New Zealand (New Zealand, 1990, criteria vii, viii, ix, x), located in the Southern Island, it includes three National Parks (Westland, Mount Cook/Aorangi – located on the namesake peak, the highest in New Zealand (3 754 m) – and Fiordland, with glacial landscapes of rare beauty, fjords, old forests (some over 800 years old) and extensive of austral beech (*Notho fagus sp.*) and *Podocarpus*, rare fauna species, among which the *kea* (the only alpine parrot in the world) and *takahe* (the largest flightless bird in the world).

Yellowstone National Park (USA, 1978, criteria vii, viii, ix, x), the first declared National Park in the world (1872), situated on a high volcanic plateau (at an altitude of over 2 000 m) and several mountain ranges over 3 000 m, among which Gallatin Range (with Electric Peak, 3 343 m) and Absaroka Range (with Eagle Peak, 3 462 m). It is considered to be the National Park with the most varied and rich natural forms and phenomena, such as peaks, canyons, waterfalls, lakes, post-volcanic manifestations (fumaroles, thermal springs, geysers, mudpots etc.); plus a rich vegetation (partially destroyed by the great fire in 1988) and an extremely varied fauna (bison, black and grizzly bears, elks, stags, wolves, marmots etc., 237 species of birds, numerous species of fish and so on).

2. Objectives that emphasise *the complementary spaces of land and sea*:

Shiretoko (Japan, 2005, criteria ix, x), which occupies the Northern half of the Shiretoko Peninsula located in the North-East of Hokkaido, with volcanic terrain (maximum altitude 1 562 m, the peak Iō-zan), plus the nearby marine area; it provides an outstanding example of the interaction of marine and terrestrial ecosystems as well as extraordinary ecosystem productivity, largely influenced by the formation of seasonal sea ice at the lowest latitude in the Northern hemisphere. It has particular importance for a number of marine and terrestrial species, some of them endangered.

Pitons Management Area (Saint Lucia, 2004, criteria vii, viii), small protected area (2 909 ha), with two sections: a terrestrial one, with volcanic terrain of great variety (including fumaroles and thermal springs), and a marine one, mostly coral reefs and rich fauna. The most valuable part of the site is represented by the two spectacular mountain spires (Gros Piton and Petit Piton), which together with other structures, types of relief and geological, like the explosion craters, pyroclastic deposits, allow the full reconstruction of the origin and evolution for over 5 million years of a volcano associated with crustal plate subduction.

Greater St. Lucia Wetland Park (Republic of South Africa, 1999, criteria vii, ix, x), located in the North-East of the country, near the border with Mozambique, it is centred on the largest estuary system in Africa and presents a multitude of landscapes and biotopes: mountains, forests, meadows, coral reefs, extensive sandy beaches, seaside dunes, lake systems, swamps and other wetlands. It houses an exceptional biogeographical and landscape variety, from the marine environment to that of savannah and mountain forest.

3. Objectives that focus on *karst terrain*, rather numerous if we take into consideration those that were in fact included due to anthropic reasons (cave paintings, religious sanctuaries, traces of human habitation etc.), caves such as Altamira, Lascaux, Cueva de las Manos, Ellora, Elefanta and others. Out of those included in the WCNH only for natural importance reasons we remind:

Mammoth Cave National Park (USA, 1981, criteria vii, viii, x), located in the state of Kentucky, has the world's largest network of natural caves and underground passageways in the world (over 360 km explored and mapped); a huge network of vertical shafts on four levels; it is remarkable because of its grand and picturesque formations (halls, columns etc.), such as the King Solomon's Temple, the Pillars of Hercules, the Star's Room, the Bride's Shrine etc.

Škocjan Caves (Slovenia, 1986, criteria vii, viii), located in the famous limestone plateau, Kras/ Karst, with a length of 5.8 km (level difference of 209 m), it includes the largest hall/ cave in Europe (12 000 m²). Here, in the Karst plateau, the first research of the limestone relief (*karst terrain*) was conducted in the second half of the 19th century and was invented the term *doline*, named after the Velika and Dolina Hollows crossed by the Reka river, which disappears underground.

4. Objectives included in the WCNH mostly to place *under protection one or two elements of natural phenomenon*, but which in practice protect everything, such as:

Bwindi Impenetrable National Park (Uganda, 1994, criteria vii, x), located at the base of the Virunga volcano, and *Kahuzi-Biega National Park* (Democratic Republic of the Congo, 1980, criteria x), centred on the two namesake volcanos, for the *mountain gorilla*, an endangered species; the two areas house almost the entirety of this species.

Whale Sanctuary of El Vizcaino (Mexico, 1993, criteria x), located in the central part of the Mountain Peninsula of Baja California, in the perimeter of Ojo de Liebre and San Ignacio lagoons, it protects the *grey and blue whales*, but also the harbour seal, California Sea Lion, northern elephant seal and other marine species.

Wood Buffalo National Park (Canada, 1983, criteria vii, ix, x), the largest continental National Park in the world (4.5 million ha), situated in the Central-Western region of the country, South of Slaves Lake, it houses the only *forest bison* (*Bison bison athabasca*) herd in the world.

Komodo National Park (Indonesia, 1991, criteria vii, x), small volcanic island, uninhabited, in the Lesser Sunda Islands, that houses the giant lizard, known as the *Komodo Dragon* (*Varanus Komodensis*), a relic that has survived here for 5-6 million years.

Monarch Butterfly Biosphere Reserve (Mexico, 2008, criteria vii) stretches over more than 50 000 ha in a forested mountain region, at approx. 100 km North-West of Mexico City. The reserve is renowned for the most spectacular manifestation of insect migration, up to a billion monarch butterflies (the largest colony in the world) return here during winter (from far away Canadian territories), remaining a mystery how they remember the way back, after 8 months of migration.

Shirakami-Sanchi (Japan, 1993, criteria ix), located North of Honshū island, it represents the last virgin *Siebold Beech* forest that once covered the Northern part of the Japanese Archipelago.

Primeval Beech Forests of the Carpathians (Slovakia and Ukraine, 2007, criteria ix) represent the only natural objective in the Carpathians listed on the UNESCO Heritage

list, constituting a transnational serial property along a 185 km axis (from the Rakhiv Mountains and the Chornohirskiy Range in Ukraine, West along the Polonynian Range, to the Bukovské Vrchy and Vihorlat Mountains in Slovakia). These forests contain an invaluable genetic reservoir of beech and many associated species, incarnating the history and evolution of a terrestrial ecosystem of the genus *Fagus* in the Northern temperate region, after the last ice age.

Virgin Komi Forests (Russian Federation, 1995, criteria vii, ix), located to the North-West of the Ural Mountains, they protect, in an area of approx. 3.28 km², one of the most extensive areas of *virgin boreal forest* on the European continent, plus the tundra and mountain tundra vegetation.

Purnululu National Park (Australia, 2003, criteria vii, viii) presents a big scientific interest because it placed under protection a geo-morphological phenomenon only studied in the last few decades and yet not fully explained, respectively *the karst formed in sandy formations*. The phenomenon is well portrayed especially in the Bungle Bungle mountain range, where spectacular sculptural structures can be seen, at a scale, grandeur, colour and diversity of shapes unprecedented anywhere else on the planet.

Gros Morne National Park (Canada, 1987, criteria vii, viii), located on the Western coast of Newfoundland Island, centred on the homonym mountain peak, it represents one of the rare known cases in the world where deep *ocean crust* and *rocks of the earth's mantle* lie exposed.

Monte San Giorgio (Switzerland, 2003, criteria viii), located in the Southern part of the country, South of lake Lugano, at the border with Italy, is regarded as *the best fossil record of marine life from the middle Triassic Period*: reptiles (including dinosaurs), fish, bivalves, ammonites, crustaceans etc.

CONCLUSIONS

The critical and interpretative analysis of the geostrategic games on the natural gas market between Europe and Russia, regarding the diversification of transport and supply sources has led to the following conclusions:

UNESCO's World Cultural and Natural Heritage represents one of the most bold, beneficial and large scale actions meant to protect and preserve the most priceless creations of Nature and Men over the course of time. In only thirty years 890 objectives were included on the Heritage list. Sadly, the percentage of the nature's creations is rather small, both at a planetary level as well at a continental level.

The results of the comparative analysis regarding the mountain regions present on UNESCO's protected natural objectives list leaves looming the fact that if in the equatorial and tropical areas among the criteria used in the selection process prevail the last two – ix and x –, the temperate area is mostly classified after the iv criteria, more precisely either superlative natural phenomenon, or areas of exceptional beauty or aesthetic importance.

In the case of the Carpathians, one of the most important European mountain ranges, there is basically only one exclusively natural objective, the *Primeval Beech Forests of the Carpathians (Slovakia – Ukraine)*, the other five being cultural or mixed (Lake Ohrid and the surroundings, in Macedonia, the Wooden Churches of Maramureş, the Dacian fortresses in Orăştie Mountains, the villages with fortified churches in Transylvania and the Historic centre of Sighișoara).

It is required, we think, an identification of exceptional mountain areas, in terms of landscape and scientific interest, for which background studies should be conducted in order to be proposed to the political leaders, who in turn will forward them to UNESCO.

We assess, for example, that the Retezat and Rodna National Parks, already nominated, together with the Danube Delta, as biosphere reserves (the most important form of nature preservation, with the highest scientific value), should be promoted to be included in the UNESCO World Heritage.

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Submitted:
17.01.2011

Revised:
29.04.2011

Accepted:
03.05.2011

Published online:
06.05.2011