



# Silhouette of the City - Historical and Architectural Landmarks

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## Abstract

*The present work is part of the doctoral research, in which we aim to study the cores represented by the cult buildings included in the UNESCO heritage and those of major importance for the silhouette of the city, part of which is also included in the List of historical monuments in the county of Suceava in 2004. Although the main landmarks of the territorial evolution of the city of Suceava are provided by the cult edifices, at the same time, the knowledge of some valuable civil and royal monuments that bring new elements in shaping a broad and edifying image on the science of building in our country. Suceava had an evolution of the urban form of a somewhat concentric nature (sometimes with tendencies towards the shape of a quadrilateral) around an initial nucleus (around the Mirăuți metropolitan church), with subsequent extensions being added (in two phases, depending on the churches founded in the 15th-17th centuries), which became necessary as the city grew. An important role in shaping the physiognomy of the current landscape is also played by the relief of the city of Suceava and its surroundings. The exploitation of the features of the relief by placing monumental buildings for aesthetic or ideological reasons (the Royal Court, the churches, Alexandru Lăpușeanu's tower), on heights, the contrast of scale between the monuments and the great mass of city buildings, the specific conditions of the development of human agglomerations, were the factors that have led to the crystallization of a complex silhouette of the city of Suceava, where witnesses of the medieval and modern era merge more or less harmoniously with the dominant contemporary ones (tower blocks).*

**Keywords:** urbanism, morphology, historicity, architectural landmarks

## 1. Introduction

Urbanism, as the organisation of the functions of collective life, has as its essential objectives the occupation of the land and the organisation of urban texture. The relationship between inhabited, uninhabited and traffic areas is dictated by the economic and social environment. Internal urban structures are at the same time a social legacy of collective mentalities perceived at the local level at various stages of time, embedded in geographical space in the form of traces of material culture. This built space with a certain physiognomy and texture bears the mark of a more or less distant past, unevenly destroyed or modified, but always present. Historical centers with monuments and architectural ensembles that are well-defined and historically constituted over time are closely linked to internal urban structures, whether open or enclosed with fortifications (the essence of the form is concentrated in two essential directions: horizontally and vertically). In this sense, urban morphology is also concerned with the continuity of architectural images, expressions of human collectivity, whose historical value is coupled with an aesthetic-artistic and utilitarian one. The need to preserve old buildings as documentary evidence of past civilisations is due to the importance that has been attached to the scientific method initiated in the last century with regard to historical studies. [1].

The result and coexistence of all these buildings created over the past centuries is the very foundation of the modern foundation of our cities and is equivalent to a victory of the built, organized space over the prevailing geographical environment. Natural continuity in the urban space means neither the destruction nor the indiscriminate preservation of all that is old but, on the contrary, an integration between what is new and what is useful as material or spiritual value in the existing. [2].

## 2. Geography of the City of Suceava

Before analyzing the urban specificities illustrated by the evolution of the city of Suceava over several centuries of existence (from 1388 to the present), it is necessary to define diachronically the geographical framework and as far as possible to reconstruct it. (Figure 1.)

The territory of Suceava municipality is located in the north-western part of the Moldova Platform and fully reflects the structural ensemble in which it is integrated.

In defining the relief of Suceava, a main role has been played by the hydrographic network, in particular the continuous lowering of the base level of the Suceava River. The Suceava river valley was part of the first generation of valleys with a consistent character, due to its development in the sense of the inclination of the geological layers. According to its depth and its tributaries around the city, the valleys and micro-depressions and structural plateaus and ridges were shaped. The general orientation of the main interflaves as well as of the Suceava valley is NW-SE, according to the monoclinical geological structure. The altitudes of each interflave decrease in the same direction. Seen from the Citadel Hill, the whole set of heights descends in steps towards the axis of the main Suceava River valley. (Figure 2.)





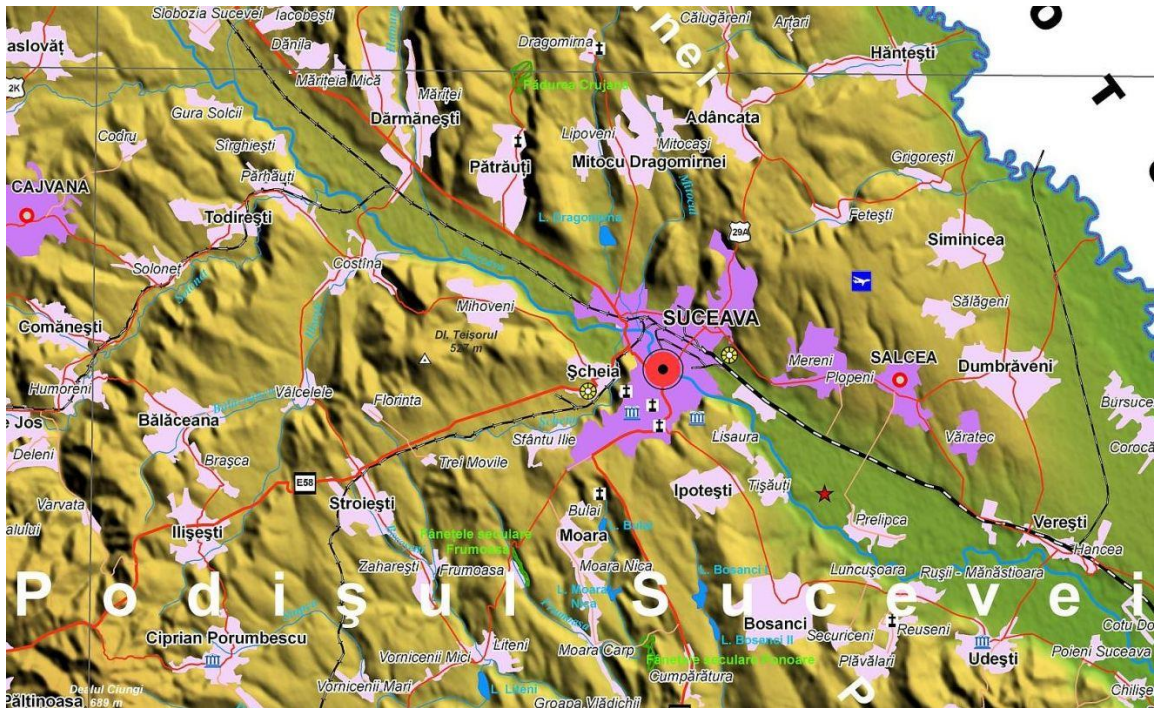


Fig. 3. Geographical map of Suceava's territory

The concept of organizing the geographical space in which Suceava's hearth evolved, involves numerous historical, geographical and practical aspects. Thus, we can distinguish between a natural organisation of space, in which the relief is the basic dominant feature, and an anthropic organisation of space, in which the dynamic element is the human community. [1]

### 2.1 The Spatial Configuration Of The City Of Suceava

The geomorphological conditions of the area and the typological conditions of the localities that were incorporated into the city (Tătărași, Areni and Sf. Ilie) played an important role in determining the spatial configuration of the city centre and its perimeter shape. Thus, depending on the relief forms that formed the basis of Suceava's built-up area, it is possible to classify the locality as a complex settlement in which the older rectangular and areolar forms (15th-17th centuries) are combined with the more recent tentacular ones (19th-20th centuries), which fit in perfectly with the topography of the area..[1] (Figure 4.)



Fig. 4. Plan of the city of Suceava in the 17<sup>th</sup> century

The centrality of the collective space resulting from the conditions of location on the edge of the structural plateau of Zamca hill was characterized until 1970 by monocentricity, characterized by almost equal distances to travel between the center and the periphery (Zamca, Areni and Ițcanii Vechi). This topographical situation was well intuited in the document of 1761, which stated that the fair (market) was "in the middle of the town, as they were then; that is, from the Royal Courts upwards, next to the Royal Church, St. Dumitru, and further upwards, over the Armenian Church". [6]

Structural plateaus are considered in all works[5] that refer to the city of Suceava and its surroundings as particularly representative forms for the Suceava plateau. With the exception of the north-western part, the entire built-up area of the town is set

on a structural plateau with a slight south-eastern slope. Initially, the settlement occupied the Zamca and Citadel plateau (15th-19th century), later extending to the area of the hill of the Cross in the village of St. Ilie (20th century).

Suceava, as a settlement prior to the reign, had a fortification as a military support point, consisting of a palisade and a defensive ditch (end of the 13th century and first half of the 14th century) [7]. Being the only known fortification in Moldova at that time, it had the role of protecting the settlement that had concentrated its settlement on an area of about 3-4 ha, around the Mirăuți church. [8]

The existence in Suceava of a fortified settlement with a palisade and a defensive ditch should be interpreted in the sense that this settlement began to lose its rural character at the end of the 13th century and to go through the early stages of the process of transformation into an urban agglomeration (pre-urban phase) [9].

Around 1377 a restructuring of the urban space began: the old fortification of the settlement, which enclosed a territory too small for the new royal residence, was abandoned and a large wooden building was erected on a dominant site [10], which served for a while as the seat of the reign, until the erection of the Citadel was completed. [11]. The wooden manor house formed the first core of the manor court, exerting a centripetal action both on the orientation of the street network and on trade, by closing and establishing the market around it. In the area of the Court, the noble houses were later grouped together quite closely, forming a real noble district. The presence of the Court of Suceava [12] stimulated the development of crafts and the concentration of merchants in the city of Suceava, going beyond the pre-urban phase and moving towards a specific urbanism.

The establishment of the court meant an important centre from where the remaining villages of the reign were administered in the region [13] and at the same time it represented the most important military core of the Moldavian reign.

The existence of a dense network of rural settlements around Suceava (more than 30 settlements documented at the end of the 14th century and the beginning of the following century) [14] within a radius of 15-20 km was a strong economic base for the future city and a demographic reservoir of first importance in revitalizing urban life. Thus, throughout the Middle Ages, the city was characterised by a demographic and economic advance that lasted until the end of the 17th century.

## 2.2 The Reason For The Placement Of Monumental Buildings

The gradual occupation, over time, of this land by the built environment of the settlement, represented by dwellings and monuments, the plastic relations born from the mutual exploitation between the characteristics of the relief and the constructions it bears, have given the contact between the implant and the environment a determining character for the shaping of the urban specificity in various historical stages. Decisive in this respect was the accumulation of specific architectural features, which shaped a specific urban profile that places it between the traditions of Eastern and Western urbanism. [1]



Fig. 5. City of Suceava in the 19<sup>th</sup> century (St John Monastery in the centre of the image)

The use of the relief by placing monumental buildings for aesthetic or ideological reasons (the court, churches, Alexandru Lăpușneanu's tower) on heights, the contrast of scale between the monuments and the great mass of city buildings, the specific conditions of the development of human agglomerations, were the factors that led to the crystallization of a complex silhouette of the city of Suceava, where witnesses of the medieval and modern era blend not always harmoniously with contemporary dominants (tower blocks). (Figure 5.)

## 2.3 Street Connections In The City Of Suceava

An element whose implications can be found in the most diverse aspects of the realities concerning the genesis of Suceava is undoubtedly its geographical position in relation to the network of trade routes and their integration into the international trade circuit. Suceava was situated at an old ford, namely where the great transcontinental road that ran along the Siret cut through the water of Suceava. Thus, in the 14th century, the routes of connection and trade were justifiably established, which multiplied the basis of the future city's existence by their functions of bringing material goods.

The struggle for the control of the international trade route coincided with the final stage of the process of the city's genesis and the foundation of the state. In the second half of the 14th century [15] there was a shift from the Tatar road (via Tatarica) - whose trade with the East was centralized, with the Black Sea, through Poland and the North Pontic steppe - to the Moldavian road (via Wallachia). (Figure 6.)





Fig. 6. Commercial road and the map of Romania

The Moldavian road appears in the earliest records as being very attractive, but, like the Tatar road, it has caused rivalry between the merchants of Kraków and Meberg for the right to use it. [16]

The central position of Suceava, in relation to the road routes coming from Poland (Lwow) and Transylvania (Bistrița), was an argument for the reign to prefer this residence to the Siret. Thus, the Moldavian road from the Siret valley, descending from the north from Poland (Lwow), passed through the fords of Chernivtsi, where there was a bridge across the Prut, to Storoiineț, Mihalcea, and from there to Vicov and Rădăuț and, on the course of the Suceava, reached Suceava. [17] [18]. Another road from Chernivtsi went along the valley of Derehului to Cuciu Mare, Sîrcea, Hliboca, crossed the Siret water on a walking bridge that was above the town of Siret and, through Bahrinești, Dornești, reached Suceava (later this road was called the Chernivtsi road or the Iancului-Vodă road). [19]

From Suceava, the Moldavian road branched into two: one branch went over the terrace between the Suceava and Siret valleys to Roșcani, and from there to Joldești; another branch passed on the right of Suceava, through Bosanci, Udești, Liteni, where either through the ford or over the bridge at Vericicani it also passed to Joldești (it was later called the great road). From Joldești, the Moldavian road continued on the left of the Siret, passing through Tudora, Lespezi, Lunca, Mircești, Săbăoani, to Roman, after which the road followed the right bank of Siret. The Moldavian road had numerous branches [20], most of which, in the northern part of Moldavia, had connections with Suceava. Towards Transylvania, from Suceava, the main road [21][22] started, passing through Areni, Liteni, on the course of Moldavia, Humor, Moldovița, Cîmpulung Moldovenesc, Iacobeni, in the valley of Bistrița, where the road forked in two: one branch followed the valley of the Bistrița Aurie, at Cîrlibaba, crossed the Rotunda pass at Șanț, on the valley of the Someșul Mare and reached Rodna; another branch started from Iacobeni on the course of the Bistrița up to the confluence with Dorna, from where it continued on the valley of Dornișoarei, over Bîrgău, into the valley of Străjii, and then continued on the course of Bistrița up to the Bistrița Citadel. On this route from Suceava to Bistrița, also called the Suceava or Bistrița road (or the road from above) [17], the connection was made via Liteni, Lămășeni with the town of Baia. Another road from Suceava to Baia, also known as the "big road of Suceava" or "old road" [17], passed through Bunești, from here along the valley of Moldavia it reached Roman (the road to Baia) [22] [23].

This convergence of trade routes made Suceava the obligatory crossing point for all or most of the most valuable goods traded in Moldova or transited through its territory. Suceava assumed the function of a meeting place and the main customs office, mandatory for all international trade relations in Moldova. In this way the city became not only a local but also an international market, which later (15th-16th century) played an important role in its development.

### 3. Conclusion

In conclusion, the logic of Suceava's organization in relief, the coherence of buildings - spaces - territory, tributary to the medieval activities of representation, trade, defense, was naturally incorporated into the contemporary city. Parts of the urban silhouette, partially recognizable in the new structure, remained. Our doctoral research follows this spatial transition, with identity implications.

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