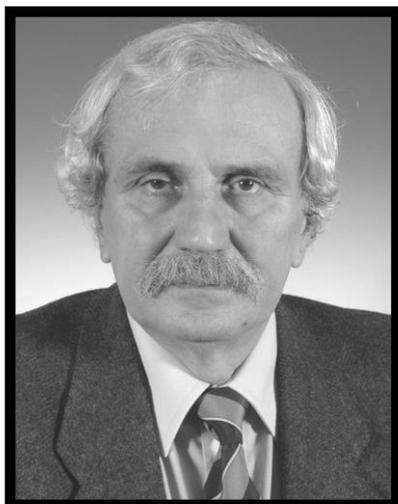


IN MEMORIAM

PROFESOR UNIVERSITAR DR. VIRGIL SURDEANU (1946-2018)



Unexpectedly and too early, on the seventh day of July this year, our colleague and friend, Prof. Virgil Surdeanu, left us for a better world. The Faculty of Geography from Cluj-Napoca and the entire Romanian geographic community were sadly announcing the loss of a very valuable man from a professional point of view, a perfect geographer and authentic specialist in dynamic geomorphology, a teacher elected for many generations of students and, above all, a noble MAN and an extremely warm and generous soul, a true model of dedication and devotion to those around.

Born on February 15, 1946, in Râmnicelu, Racoviță commune, in the eastern part of the Romanian Plain (near Ion Sion "the heat pole of Romania", as he often liked to emphasize), laid the foundations for his future career at "Ștefan cel Mare" highschool, from Râmnicu Sărat, Buzău County, which he graduated in 1963.

He has cultivated his vocation as a geographer at the Faculty of Biology, Geology, and Geography of "Al. I. Cuza", University of Iasi, graduated in 1968, when he passed the physical geography licensing exam. In 1969, after a brief experience of a teacher in pre-university education, he started his scientific research activity through he's inclusion in an extremely young, dynamic and passionate research group working in Pângărați (Neamț county), within the "Stejarul" resort for Geographical, Geological and Biological Research, belonging to the "Al. I. Cuza" University of Iasi, and which, shortly afterwards, was to assert itself as a true applied geomorphology school whose achievements have become unanimously recognized nationally and internationally. Since then, a considerable number of studies of scientific relevance and practical applicability have been focused on mass movement processes, slope dynamics (with particular regard to landslides and ravine evolution), fluvial modeling processes and sand morphology,

sedimentation and evolution of lacustrine basins, geomorphology research methodologies, with particular reference to geomorphological mapping, etc.

An important stage in the professional perfection of Prof. Virgil Surdeanu was the period when he elaborated (1972-1987), also at the "Al. I. Cuza" University of Iasi, his valuable PhD thesis dedicated to the problems of land degradation processes (especially those associated with landslides). This effort was to be crowned in 1998, shortly after publication, with the "Simion Mehedinți" Prize of the Romanian Academy, which attests to the high value of the results of his scientific work.

After completing the doctorate, the concerns of the scientific researcher Virgil Surdeanu expanded and diversified considerably in the respective direction, which eventually led to his assertion as a "first hand" specialist in the field of landslides. His high scientific probity is demonstrated by the impressive number of contracts and research projects (more than 40) to which he has contributed, several times as the topic responsible, in collaboration with actively involved institutions until the 1990s (Ministry of Agriculture, Ministry of Economy and Industry, Academy of Agricultural and Forestry Studies - ASAS, Institute of Pedological and Agrotechnical Research - ICPA, Institute for Constructions and Hydrotechnical Designs - ICPH) and others.

The 1990s marked an important change in the career of researcher Virgil Surdeanu with his involvement in higher education at the Faculty of Geography of "Babeș-Bolyai" University of Cluj-Napoca, where, quickly affirming himself as an authentic master, he occupied (in 1998) the highest academic position (professor), remaining at the same time the same keen and passionate scientific researcher, dedicated to geomorphological problems. Perhaps the years spent in Cluj were the most fertile period of his life from a professional point of view. As a dean of the Faculty of Geography, whom he served with love and devotion in two legislatures (2000-2008), vice-president of the Romanian Society of Geography, a doctoral adviser or a member of various specialized committees at national level, brought the bounty of grace, correctness and consistency to the good course of the Cluj geography in the last quarter of the century.

The results obtained in the scientific research plan in the "Cluj period" are more than conclusive, materializing in more than 200 studies and articles published almost entirely in magazines of great prestige and tradition indexed in international databases and more recently, in the ISI Web of Science. Of these, more than 50 have been published abroad (in US, France, Germany, Belgium, Netherlands, Poland, Italy, South Korea, Greece, Ukraine, Moldova, etc.).

He has also published a number of books as a single author or as a collaborator (11), with an appreciable number of chapters in books (18), and has contributed to the editing of more collective volumes in well-known country and foreign publishing houses.

Within these contributions, besides traditional concerns, Prof. Surdeanu went on to address some of the novelty issues at the time, such as the anthropology of the relief and its dynamics, the quality of the environment, the geomorphological hazards and the induced risks, the landscaping and the relationship with the relief and so on. The aforementioned concerns have taken on a number of research projects in which he was also involved in the "Cluj period" as a member or director (about 30 in number, all obtained through national competition and substantially financed by prestigious institutions such as the Romanian Academy, The World Bank, ISCIF Bucharest, CNCSIS, etc.) and in five of them he held the position of director.

Institutionally, Prof. Surdeanu's preoccupations for the promotion of scientific research have been remarked by the opening of new research directions regarding the natural hazards and risks, especially the geomorphological ones, the paleoenvironmental reconstructions by new methods and techniques (such as geodendronological, dendrogeomorphological, geophysical ones, etc.). In line with these concerns, new disciplines have been introduced that have considerably updated and diversified the curricular offer of the study programs provided by the faculty. In order to ensure the optimal conditions for the research and the dissemination of the obtained results, Professor Surdeanu established the *Research Center for Geographical Hazards and Risks*, accredited as a center of excellence in research at "Babeş-Bolyai" University. Through the center, the teacher, the director of the center, and its members, were involved in solving various demands from the local community related, in particular, to environmental issues and land stability.

Another exceptional contribution to the name of Prof. Surdeanu Virgil is the establishment, design and administration of the "Babeş-Bolyai" University's Practice Base from Baru Mare, Hunedoara County. Thanks to his efforts and dedication and the support he has enjoyed from the university and the faculty, this practice base is now one of the most complete, well equipped and hospitable in the national university space, hosting a wide range of scientific events and practical activities for student practice. However, it must never be forgotten that Prof. Surdeanu was practically the "discoverer" of this beautiful location at the foot of Retezat Mountains, and through his personal relations and his insistence on university leadership he made it possible for a former military unit to be transformed into an academic space and especially that its evolution and initial management were made according to the plans and vision of Prof. Surdeanu who wanted this institution to be, first and foremost, an opportunity in the service of student practice and at the same time of the top scientific research .

His ability to work and argue for his scientific expertise is also evidenced by his presence as a member in the scientific committees of several prestigious national scientific journals (six in number), indexed in international bases, the large number of citations in magazines and indexed books appearing in reference

publishers (on average, over 20 citations annually), qualifier as expert evaluator of UEFISCU, AUF, CNEAA, CNCSIS, etc. Under these conditions, in 2002, he obtained a fully justified degree of doctoral supervisor, since then and to date, with an appreciable number of doctoral students (over 30) whose theses, without exception, distinguished themselves by novelty, originality and scientific rigor, attributes induced, of course, to a great extent by the quality of the scientific assistance they have benefited from.

As a corollary of the above, Prof. Virgil Surdeanu has gained a well-earned prestige and recognition at national and international level. Evidence of this is holding the positions of vice-president of the Romanian Society of Geography (SGR) for 10 years (2002-2012), vice-president of the Association of Geomorphologists in Romania (AGR), for a period of 8 years (2001-2009) and then president for 2 years (2009-2011), as well as the numerous awards he was rewarded from the Romanian Academy, "Babeş-Bolyai" University, West University of Timișoara, etc. He has been a member of several international and national prestigious academic committees: „*Field Experiment in Geomorphology*” and “*Commission on Measurements Theory and Application in Geomorphology*” of the International Geographic Union (1979-1990); Corresponding member of the “*Mediterranean Erosion and Desertification Commission*” of the International Geographic Union (1992-1996); since 1994 a national delegate of this Commission; member of the “*Romanian Landslide Studies Group*” affiliated to the International Landslide Research Group (1990-2018), custodian of the International Geological and Ecological School of the Carpathians, Lvov (1993-2018), CNCSIS expert member (1998-2011), etc..

The loss of an authentic personality, such as Prof. Virgil Surdeanu, is undoubtedly amplified when evoking the human qualities of the missing person. Prof. Virgil Surdeanu was a very hardworking, tenacious, extremely rigorous and demanding man both with himself and with others. His ardent desire, meticulousness and his relentless insistence that all the works in which he was involved, both scientific and administrative alike, were impeccable from all points of view, made some of his colleagues sometimes perceive him to be somewhat awkward, chosen due to cutting edge language. In fact, all those who really know him know well that behind the tightening tone of his voice, there is a man with a pronounced sense of justice, and at the same time extremely good at heart and as sensible as possible. He did not tolerate compromises and superficiality, which he "charged" immediately without sparing, but equally promptly he had, when someone needed, a good advice or concrete help for everyone, always giving it in good faith and generosity. He had an out-of-the-way memory that allowed him to flawlessly argue in the scientific debates, evoking without problem a lot of authors and scientific papers not only from geomorphology but also from many other fields. His remarkable memory allowed him to satisfy his own sensibility and love of beauty. He could recite for hours poems by Toparceanu, Esenin (his favorites),

IN MEMORIAM

Eminescu and others. He was a cunning plastic art collector and enjoyed day by day reviewing his soul paintings on the walls of his home. He lived with a lot of intensity to see his family fulfilled and, of course, one of the greatest life joy - the birth of his three grandchildren.

His departure, as if too hasty and unexpected, left his family and many close people sad and grieving.

At the same time, through Prof. Virgil Surdeanu's passing away, Romanian Geography loses a devoted and inspired researcher and teacher whose overflowing personality, in particular, will remain embedded in its golden pages.

God rest him in peace!

Prof.dr. D.Petrea
Universitatea Babeş-Bolyai
Facultatea de Geografie