





RESEARCH ARTICLE OPEN ACCESS

Wounded Place-Based Memories in Romania: Towards Social Justice for the Deportees in the Bărăgan Area

Remus Crețan¹  | Alexandra Georgiana Băluță¹  | Ioana Satmari²  | Alina Satmari¹ 

¹Department of Geography, West University of Timișoara, Timișoara, Romania, Romania | ²Department of Communication and Public Relations, West University of Timișoara, Timișoara, Romania, Romania

Correspondence: Alina Satmari (alina.satmari@e-uvf.ro)

Received: 12 June 2025 | **Revised:** 20 November 2025 | **Accepted:** 22 November 2025

Funding: The authors received no specific funding for this work.

Keywords: Bărăgan deportation | memory politics | Romania | social justice | wounded place-based memories

ABSTRACT

Recent studies urge deeper debate on memory and social justice in postcommunist Central and Eastern Europe. One of the harshest events in communist Romania was the deportation from the Romanian-Yugoslav border to the Bărăgan Plain. By analyzing 27 interviews from www.deportatiinBaragan.ro, we examine how memories of deportation unfolded. Most trauma stemmed from the adaptation of the deportees to the hostile Bărăgan environment. Many deportees died; survivors suffered illness, carried trauma, and struggled to adapt on returning home. As the postsocialist state has done little to address these wounded place-based memories, the study suggests social justice steps that could help heal the memories.

1 | Introduction

Wounded place-based memories closely connect to specific locations (Alderman and Dwyer 2004; Hoelscher and Alderman 2004; Philo 2005; Till 2005; Till 2012; Till and Kuusisto-Arponen 2015; Tumarkin 2005). Those who experienced past traumas in certain places can directly share such memories (Philo 2005), carry them across generations as transgenerational memories (Varan and Crețan 2018), or pass them as postmemories to younger generations (Crețan and Doiciar 2023). Today, people preserve most of their memories in dedicated museums (Crețan et al. 2018; Light et al. 2019; Light et al. 2021) or share their truths on digital platforms. However, to recognize and heal such traumatic memories, social justice measures must address past injustices (Ciobanu 2011; Stan 2013).

One of the major traumatic memories in Romania is the Bărăgan deportation. In 1951, the communist regime ordered 10,000 people from the Romanian-Yugoslav border deported to the Bărăgan Plain in southeastern Romania (Marineasa and

Vighi 2004). The regime considered undesirable people from the border area (bourgeoisie, ethnic groups) to be enemies. This border area was known for its multi-ethnic diversity (Rotaru et al. 2023). People living within 25 km of the border were forced to leave their homes and move to the Bărăgan Plain (Vultur 1997). After four years of struggling to adapt to harsh environmental and living conditions, some people died in Bărăgan. Most survivors returned to their homelands but carried wounded place-based memories (Sarafolean 2001).

In this paper, we explore two main research objectives. First, we analyze the significant dimensions of wounded place-based memories among those deported to the Bărăgan Plain. Second, we evaluate how postsocialist social justice measures can address and help heal these traumatic memories, aiming to prevent similar practices from repeating. We focus our analysis on traumatic moments and identify experiences related to the deportation process. Alongside our qualitative analysis of 27 interviews, we use statistics on over 1,500 recorded deaths during the deportation period (Rusan 2011).

This is an open access article under the terms of the [Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivs](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/) License, which permits use and distribution in any medium, provided the original work is properly cited, the use is non-commercial and no modifications or adaptations are made.

© 2025 The Author(s). *Population, Space and Place* published by John Wiley & Sons Ltd.

To address our objectives, we pose two specific research questions. First, what are the defining features of both collective and individual memories regarding the Bărăgan deportation, and how are these features manifested? Second, how is trauma from the Bărăgan deportation experienced and articulated through wounded place-based memories, from the period of forced displacement, through adaptation in the Bărăgan Plain, and upon return home? Finally, we discuss specific social justice measures that postsocialist Romania still needs to implement and highlight their healing potential.

Through this study, we bring new insights into the field of memories and social justice by adding wounded place-based memories and trauma for deported people, as well as Romanian memories of the communist past. If previous memories of state-led violence in Central and Eastern Europe revealed more details on nation-state issues (Light and Young 2015; Young and Light 2016), there are very few academic studies on memories of domestic deportation in the former communist states of Central and Eastern Europe. We contribute to these studies by foregrounding the harsh conditions of forced migration and the challenges of adaptation to an unfriendly environment. We also contribute to the existing literature on Romanian deportations to Bărăgan (Sarafolean 2001; Calestru 2006; Ilovan et al. 2025; Mirciov 1998; Milin 2003; Marineasa et al. 1996; Marineasa and Vighi 2004; Spijavca 2004; Števin 2004; Vultur 1997) by adding a deeper understanding of memory work related to these deportations. Finally, this paper contributes to Population Studies, in particular to the deportation/forced migration and detention literature (Gibney 2008; Anderson et al. 2011), by offering new insights into migrants' lived experiences (see also Bloch and Schuster 2005; Eastmond 2007; Lietaert et al. 2015). Therefore, we try to better understand the nature of the Bărăgan deportations through place-based memories and experiences of deportees. The so-called deportation turn (Gibney 2008) illustrates the shift in the discourse from detention and deportation as "exceptional measures in crises" or "essential" state instruments of migration control towards recognizing the cruelty of deportation and its "abnormal" actions (Bloch and Schuster 2005).

The paper proceeds as follows: first, we present our selected literature on wounded place-based memories, deportation sites, and social justice; next, we detail the study's methodology and data. We organize our results around the moments of deportation. We draw ensuing discussion and conclusions in the final section.

2 | Wounded Place-Based Memories, Deportation Sites and Social Justice

In recent decades, researchers have focused on memories of victims of violence and their stories of past events reflecting political violence (Alderman and Dwyer 2004; Hoelscher and Alderman 2004; Till 2005; Legg 2007; Jones and Garde-Hansen 2012; Till 2012; Drozdowski et al. 2016). Traumatic events often leave individuals who experience them feeling traumatized. People narrate these events as rituals for the general public interested in that specific tragic history (Tyner et al. 2014).

Recent debates about the geographies of memory highlight the significance of space in memory formation and shaping. Memory can be grounded in "wounded places" (Till 2012) or traumascapes (Tumarkin 2005). These spaces can include dense areas affected by forced displacement and social trauma usually created by state-led violence. The symbolic power of these spaces comes from their connection with buildings, urban and agricultural spaces, and transport. They reflect the wounds of dominant power (Till 2012). Following Till's concept of wounded memories, we draw attention to the contested nature of these places - the visible and invisible scars in their materiality.

The state narrative and its materiality, like statues and other forms of remembrance, or their absence, and the counter-memories tied to deportations, are also important. Spaces of memory become arenas of political struggle due to the dynamics of memory work and the tensions between state-sponsored and alternative counter-memories (Light and Young 2015; Young and Light 2016). Such counter-memories use practices to contest dominant state-led narratives, seeking to reclaim historical agency from institutions that view their experiences as invisible. Memory of violence uses many frameworks to challenge dominant historical accounts. These alternative recollections reflect lived experiences. This resistive tool prevents historical forgetting, as memories of state-led forced migration emerge under systemic injustices and generate claims for justice (see Crețan and Doiciar 2023). Even after violence ends, conflicts over past narratives persist. Therefore, representation of past events becomes contested, as social disputes about memory and claims to truth arise (Jelin 2003). As traces of past violence, conflict, and repression remain relevant to both present and future audiences, people in areas affected by major conflict or repression may find the recent past emotionally charged and open to multiple interpretations.

Place-based memories commemorate certain events and could contest established institutional representations of the past (Hoelscher and Alderman 2004). Such commemorations illustrate the broader implications of wounded place-based memory, which can lead to social change by reshaping public consciousness around historical memories of displacement. Consequently, memories of deportation can honor communities' past struggles whilst also inspiring political action. The transformative power of collective memory in relation to forced migration is evident in the observed changes. The role of cultural memory of forced migration/deportation is essential for a deeper understanding of civil resistance in the contemporary world.

The shared dimension of memory intersects with the production of space, and memory and place produce perspectives for modern identities (Hoelscher and Alderman 2004, p. 348). Furthermore, the social construction of memories of deportations is an important consideration, given that these memories legitimize their role in reshaping collective identities. The history of deportations could be shared through memories to promote solidarity and the quest for transformative justice and peacebuilding from below.

The nature of memory within deportations also includes selective remembrance. Activists may choose to remember

certain aspects of past events. Those memories are among the harshest they have ever lived through. This process of memory selection serves as a struggle for recognition and legitimacy. They do not reveal only the political landscape of forced migration but also a curated lived experience and identity in public space. This aspect can include feelings of fear of deportation and adaptation to the new landscape, as well as fear of death.

Memory and identity related to migrants' lived experiences (see also Bloch and Schuster 2005; Eastmond 2007; Griffiths 2012; Lietaert et al. 2015) have become increasingly important. Therefore, we seek to understand the nature of the Bărăgan deportations through wounded place-based memories of the deportations. As Gibney (2008) argued, we live in a time of deportation turn. The political discourse instrumentalizes deportations as measures in times of crisis. Banalization and normalization of migration control are obvious nowadays (Bloch and Schuster 2005).

On the other hand, the multiple places (origins, destinations, in transit) of deportation have already been presented in previous studies (Moran et al. 2012; Round 2006), to which "wounded memories" are vividly attached. Relevant to this literature is distinguishing between the physical (environmental) and human (social) dimensions imprinted in these memories. A distinction might also be made between clearly event-based memories (the soldiers coming to the fields, the push into the cattle truck) and ones that are more scene-based (the sense of an ongoing struggle with dust, wind, and aridity).

Important studies of the traumatic past and its memories have been addressed by many other scholars (Aleida Assmann, Svetlana Boym, Maryanne Hirsch). For instance, Assmann (2010) argues that individual memories become collective through social interaction and shared narratives, mediated by language, images, and texts. Assmann proposed four distinct types of memory - individual, social, political, and cultural - and emphasized that collective memory shapes identity by establishing shared meaning within a group and is maintained through institutional communication and fixed "figures of memory" such as rituals and monuments (see also Assmann 2008). On the other hand, Maryanne Hirsch (2008) introduced the concept of postmemory for the younger people who did not experience first-hand traumatic events of the Holocaust. For Romania, Bărăgan deportations were among the most traumatic memories that the younger generation still remembers (Crețan and Doiciar 2023). Interestingly, Boym (2002) study of postcommunist nostalgia remains emblematic of memories. Therefore, "nostalgia is a sentiment of loss and displacement, but it is also a romance with one's own fantasy." (Boym 2002, p. xiii). Svetlana Boym distinguishes between two forms of nostalgia: restorative and reflective. If "restorative nostalgia manifests itself in total reconstructions of monuments of the past, reflective nostalgia lingers on ruins, the patina of time and history, in the dreams of another place and another time." (Boym 2002, p. 41). Certainly, postsocialism can influence how memories are shaped. The emergence of cyberspace and globalization, along with the challenges Romanian society faced as it transitioned from a communist to a capitalist system, led to postsocialist traumatic memory reappearing as a defense mechanism.

Social justice is the form of justice that a new political regime must recognize for past traumatic events under a previous political system. The reaction to such wounded memories depends on the current society's attitudes to past violence, because issues of reconciliation are important for the younger generation. However, there has been limited attention to whether social justice instruments "work" or have an impact on broader society (Bonacker and Buckley-Zistel 2013; Bunselmeyer and Schulz 2020; Duggan 2010; Gready and Robins 2020; Hamber et al. 2010).

Research on Central and Eastern Europe's communist memory focused more on how historical representations legitimized communist authoritarianism and the role of the nation-state (Light et al. 2002; Forest et al. 2004; Light 2004; Young and Light 2016). Less has been addressed about memories of how the former communist state had actions of forced migration and deportations (Crețan and Doiciar 2023). Consequently, examining the nature of memory formation through traumatic population displacement and to identify how people's personal connection to place could serve as the basis of memory recollection are relevant because it is a need for a better understanding of memory of the socialist past through 'letting memories speak' (Light and Young 2015, p. 241; Young and Light 2016), more specifically to unraveling the nature of (socialist) memories under state-led actions (see Tismaneanu 2008; Stan 2013). Therefore, truth-telling about the Bărăgan deportations is an important avenue of research. Given Romania's recent history of conflict and human rights abuses, the necessity for processes of social justice, restorative justice, and the consolidation of respect for past atrocities has been identified (Ciobanu 2011; Stan 2013).

3 | Historical Context of Deportation to Bărăgan

In some conflictual geopolitical situations, the aim of relocating people might have been to push unwanted people over the border, chasing them away altogether, rather than relocating them to other parts of the state territory. However, this is not the case of Bărăgan, where "undesirable" people were deported to a remote arid area of Romania.

In the aftermath of the Second World War, Romanian authorities implemented a series of measures to impose the political power of the newly established communist regime (see Crețan et al. 2023). The exercise of control over the population was achieved through the implementation of various policies, including imprisonment, surveillance, and forced relocation, such as the deportation of the population to the Bărăgan Plain, which is regarded as one of the most extensive operations of this kind in communist Romania (Oprea 2002).

On the night of 18–19 June 1951, approximately 12,791 families (around 44,000 people) were taken from border localities in the Banat region (in the counties of Mehedinți, Caraș-Severin, Timiș, and Arad - Figure 1) and deported to the eastern part of the country, to the counties of Ialomița, Galați, and Bărăgan (IICCMER 2020). The operation was officially justified by the need to "secure the western border," in the context of deteriorating relations between the Soviet Union and Yugoslavia after the Stalin–Tito split (Deletant 1999). In reality, the deportation aimed to displace communities deemed politically unreliable -

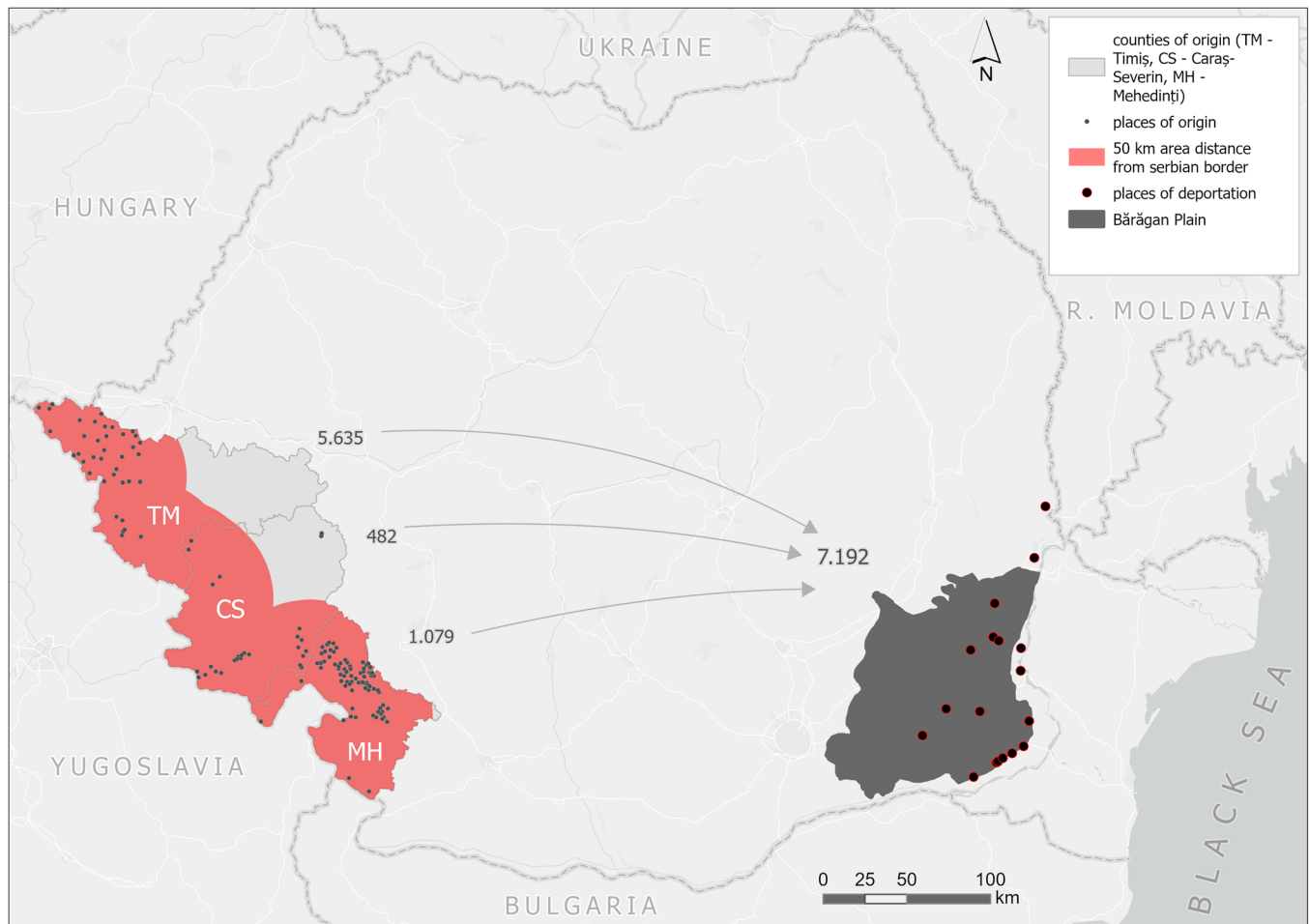


FIGURE 1 | Number of deportees to Bărăgan by counties.

mainly ethnic minorities (Serbs, Germans, Bulgarians), former landowners or “chiaburi” (wealthy peasants), sympathizers of historical political parties, members of nonorthodox religious denominations, and relatives of regime opponents (Vasile 2015).

The relocation area - the Bărăgan Plain - is known for its extreme continental climate, characterized by scorching summers and harsh winters, as well as its underdeveloped infrastructure. The deportees were abandoned in open fields, given a small plot of land, and forced to build their own shelters. In time, over 18 improvised settlements were established (Figure 2), later referred to as “new villages” (IICMER 2010). Living conditions were deplorable: the lack of potable water, hygiene, medical services, and adequate food led to a high mortality rate, particularly among children and the elderly.

The relationship among these spaces, as reflected in deportee testimonies from Bărăgan, is one of rupture, uprooting, and painful redefinition of ‘home.’ Excerpts highlight a dramatic cycle in which each space is marked by traumatic experiences that destroy ties with the previous one: the space of departure, the journey, the destination, and the return. Testimonies start with a sudden, violent break from ‘home,’ which no longer signifies safety but a scene of fear and violence. Next comes the space of the journey, a non-space of suffering and human degradation; freight wagons symbolize depersonalization,

transforming travel into a survival ordeal and confirming the regime’s brutality. This phase destroys the hope that deportation was merely a move, marking the transition from everyday life to survival.

Once arrived, the destination area in Bărăgan is described as hostile and resource-limited. It is the primordial space, the space before any human action: space zero. It symbolizes the open plains, the Bărăgan emptiness - the place where deportees were thrown from trains, homeless and without landmarks. Space zero is devoid of cultural and natural references, an extension of suffering, a place where each day is a fight. Hope fades here, time becomes daily agony, and the connection to the past is broken entirely. Space zero becomes a metaphor for total insecurity and the elimination of pre-existing social or physical structures. It is a space of chaos and absolute vulnerability, where the only certainty is uncertainty.

The final space, the return home, is not a triumphant comeback but a confrontation with the destruction left behind. The found homes are ruins - ‘all broken,’ occupied by others, with charred floors and missing windows. Returning requires extra physical and mental effort to rebuild not just a house but a life. The relationship with this space is one of repair. It is a space of recovery but also of accepting that the past cannot be erased, and although survivors physically return, ‘home’ has been irreparably changed.

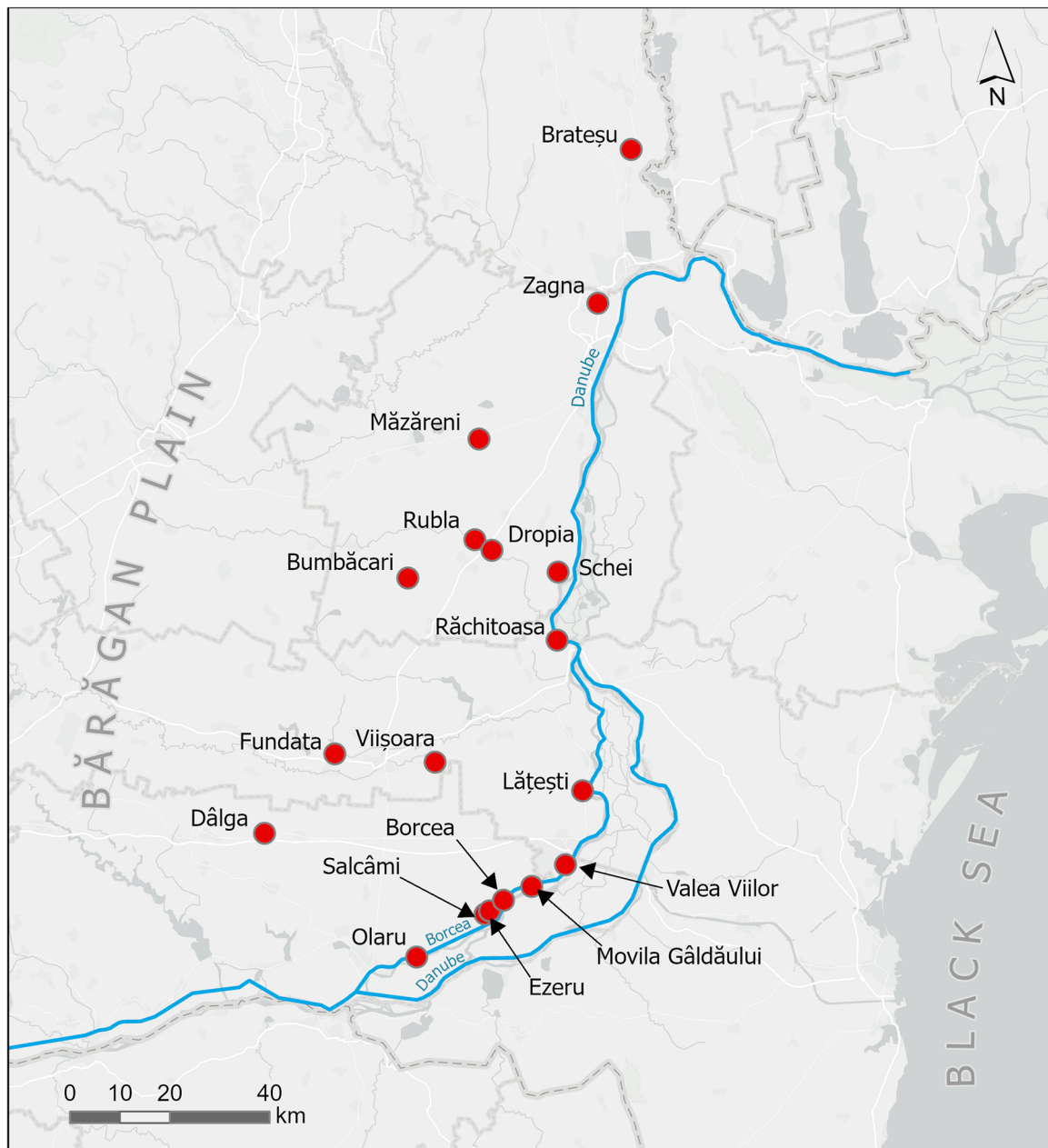


FIGURE 2 | Sites of deportation in the Bărăgan Plain (1951–1955).

In addition to the material hardships, the deportation had a profound psychological impact. Survivors' accounts, collected through various oral history projects, highlight the trauma of uprooting, social humiliation, and the pain of isolation (Vultur 1997). Moreover, the silence imposed on this episode - both publicly and within families - contributed to a form of intergenerational trauma that remains difficult to quantify.

Summing up, there were three kinds of places related to traumatic memories: (1) the place of origin, from which the people concerned get deported, (2) their places of destination, where they end up being resettled, and (3) the places through which the people are hurried on their sorry deportation routes (i.e., the train wagons that so often carry the people being deported). The latter aspect has also been highlighted in other similar contexts. Moran et al. (2012) presented a

reconstruction of the spaces of such wagons as experienced by Russians being exiled to the Gulag, to the so-called 'penal peripheries'. The author presents not only the wounded places of origin and destination but also those of return to places of origin, with the difficulties in reintegrating into their original settlements/homelands.

The social and political context for deportees being permitted to return home was based on the communist Decree 6100 and 6200 of 1955. Many deportees in Bărăgan could not afford to return home to the West after 1955. A similar point was made by John Round's (2006) study haunting accounts of released Gulag internees staying in the frozen North: many could not afford to travel back east across Russia; many were too scarred, mentally and physically, to anticipate being able to cope anywhere but in the old Gulag lands.

Although the deportation officially ended in 1955, the reintegration of those who returned was extremely difficult. Many were marginalized, denied access to employment or higher education, and found their homes either occupied by other citizens or confiscated by the state. Only after 1989 did the Bărăgan deportation become the subject of historical research and memorial recovery. Initiatives such as those led by the Institute for the Investigation of Communist Crimes and the Memory of the Romanian Exile (see IICCMER 2010, 2020), as well as large-scale oral history projects (Vultur 1997) have successfully brought survivors' voices and the complexity of this historical experience back into public awareness.

Briefly mentioning current attitudes and political actions in postsocialist Romania is also important. The Romanian state takes little action to remember the wounded memories of the deportees. There is a monument dedicated to the Bărăgan deportees in Timisoara's Park of Justice. Other monuments are created only at the local level by the local authorities and families of the deportees. Besides the website www.deportatiinBaragan.ro, a few other Romanian websites mention those traumatic events.

In this context, the present article proposes a dual analysis: a qualitative analysis of the affective narratives of those who survived this traumatic episode and a quantitative analysis of mortality among deportees.

4 | Methods and Data

This analysis employs a mixed-methods approach based on qualitative/oral history data stored on the Timisoara library's website, as well as on data extracted from the works of Marineasa and Vighi (2004) and Rusan (2011). If the library's website includes interviews, some historical facts, and data about the deportation to Bărăgan, Marineasa and Vighi's (2004) and Rusan (2011) books offer important data (i.e., ethnicity of deportees, number of people in relocation sites, number of deaths) based on their ethnographic works related to the Bărăgan deportation. These data were invaluable because there are no official records of the Bărăgan deportations in Romania.

The selected data enabled us not only to provide a historical and geographical context for the deportations but also to explore in depth the emotional and social impacts on the deportees.

Mixed-methods approaches help address issues that neither qualitative nor quantitative methods could address alone (Clifford et al. 2023; Ivankova et al. 2006). Suppose statistical data, as part of quantitative methodology, enables us to understand the dimensions of a geographical process. In that case, interview methodology offers respondents the opportunity to express their voices and share their experiences throughout the research (Clifford et al. 2023).

For the cartographic component of the analysis, a vector data set available through the *geospatial.org* platform was utilized. These data were processed and graphically represented in ArcGIS Pro. The cartographic analysis involved both gradual and proportional classifications to visualize the number of deported families

and the share of different ethnic groups. A 50 km buffer zone along the border with the former Yugoslavia was established to underscore the geographic distance and isolation of the deportation sites from their areas of origin (Figure 3).

Quantitative data on the number of deported families and their ethnic composition outline the temporal-historical and spatial-demographic framework (Figure 4).

The qualitative data originate from the digital archive of the "Eugen Todoran" Central University Library in Timisoara, specifically from the special collection *Biblioteca Memoriei – Deportati în Bărăgan* (www.deportatiinbaragan.ro). The archive, coordinated by Associate Professor Dr. Smaranda Vultur, contains interviews with individuals who lived through the deportation and survived this collective trauma. These oral testimonies constitute the foundation of the qualitative component of this study.

For the selection of interviews, a quantitative criterion was applied: the number of deaths recorded in various deportation localities (Rusan 2011). The archive documents nearly 1,700 individuals who died during the deportation period, including their names, ages, places of origin, and locations of death. The data were collated into an Excel file, thereby facilitating the creation of a ranking of deportation sites by the number of recorded deaths.

The 27 interviews in this study were selected from the top three Bărăgan localities with the highest death tolls: Olaru, Răchitoasa, and Valea Viilor. Throughout these areas along the Borcea branch of the Danube, 2,002 families were deported, making up about 28 per cent of all deported families. We noticed some inter-area similarities and differences in these deportation sites. Most people in Olaru were Banat Romanians; in Răchitoasa, Germans were the majority; and in Valea Viilor, Serbs were the majority. During deportation, 115 people died in Olaru, 120 in Răchitoasa, and 128 in Valea Viilor, accounting for 22% of over 1,600 recorded deaths (Rusan 2011).

The audio recordings of the interviews total 1,373 min, and the corresponding transcripts amount to 130,505 words.

Interviews were conducted after the collapse of communism in Romania, specifically in the 1990s. Certainly, the effect of the passage of time on people's memory and recollections of events and experiences from their distant past. First, during communist times these people were not allowed to speak freely about their traumatic experiences. Second, the democratization of Romanian society and the turmoil of the 1990s, as Romania transitioned from communism to capitalism, could have affected the interviewees' memories.

For the qualitative data, the methodology employed was that outlined by Braun and Clarke (2006). The thematic process was informed by inductive reasoning, with the groundedness and density of the codes serving as the fundamental principles. Three overarching themes were identified, alongside a set of key emotional states deemed essential to understanding the deportation experience: fear, suffering, courage, brutality, solidarity, confusion, death, favorable conditions, and trauma. In accordance with the

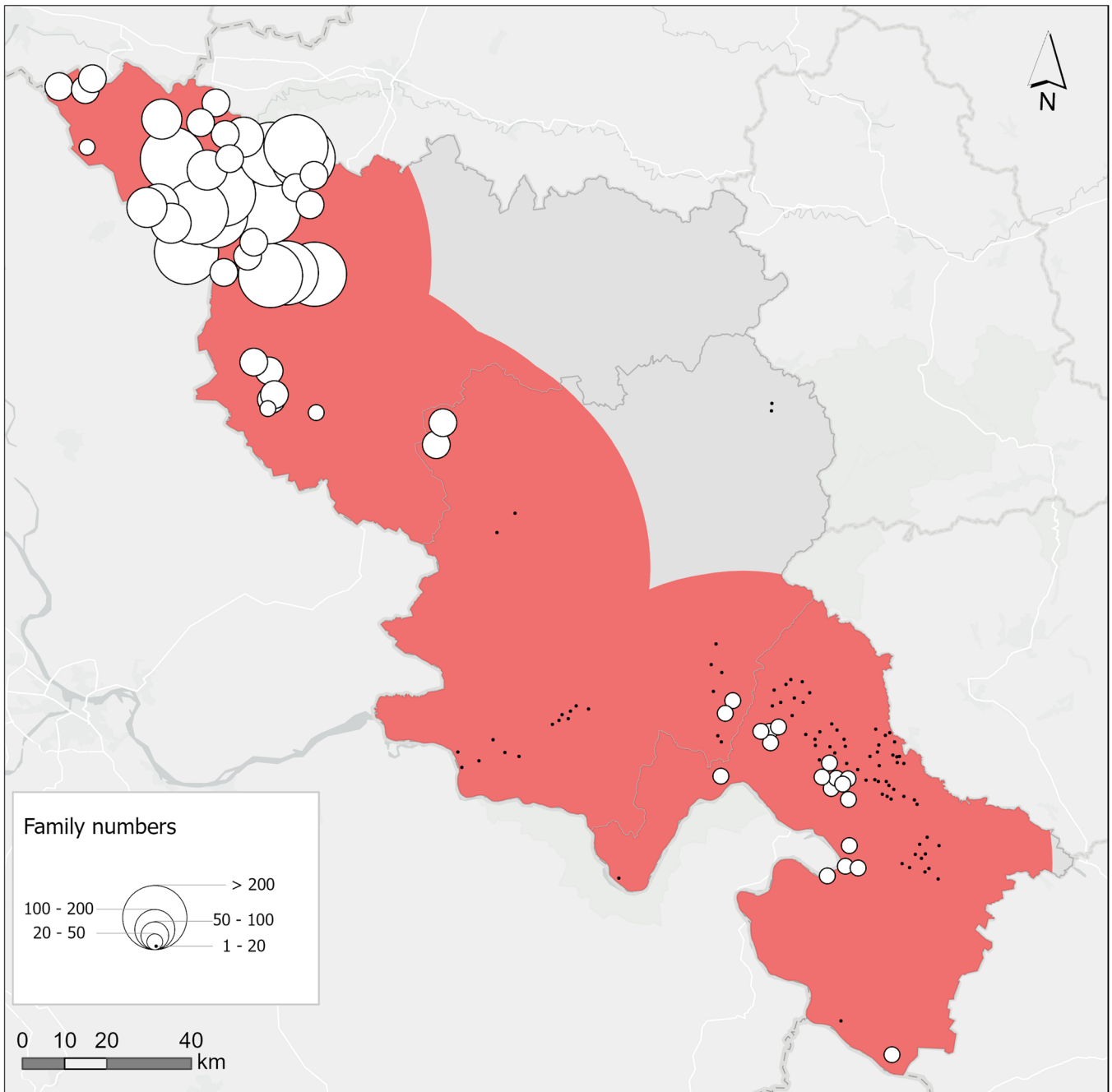


FIGURE 3 | Total number of deportees in the Romanian-Yugoslav border area. (Source: Marineasa and Vighi 2004).

categories aforementioned, quotations pertinent to the study's objectives were extracted from the interviews. Each quotation was selected to illustrate one or more of the emotional states previously defined. The three identified themes are as follows: uprooting traumatic memory when deportation started, memories of the life experiences in Bărăgan, and the trauma of returning home.

To ensure respondents' anonymity and maintain analytical coherence, each interviewee was assigned a unique code consisting of their initials, gender, and age (Table 1). Each quote was then coded according to the dominant emotional state it reflected, facilitating the systematic organization and interpretation of the narrative material.

Through this approach, the analysis combines the objective dimension of statistical and cartographic data with the subjective and human dimension of personal memory, offering a complex understanding of a phenomenon whose traumatic effects are still profoundly felt.

Indeed, besides the advantages of the methods that we used in this study, there is the limitation of using archived interviews from a website platform. Even if we had not conducted personal interviews with people facing deportation to the Bărăgan area, the data we used were extensive and relevant to the aims of this study. Another limitation of the study is the subjectivity of the researcher coding the data.

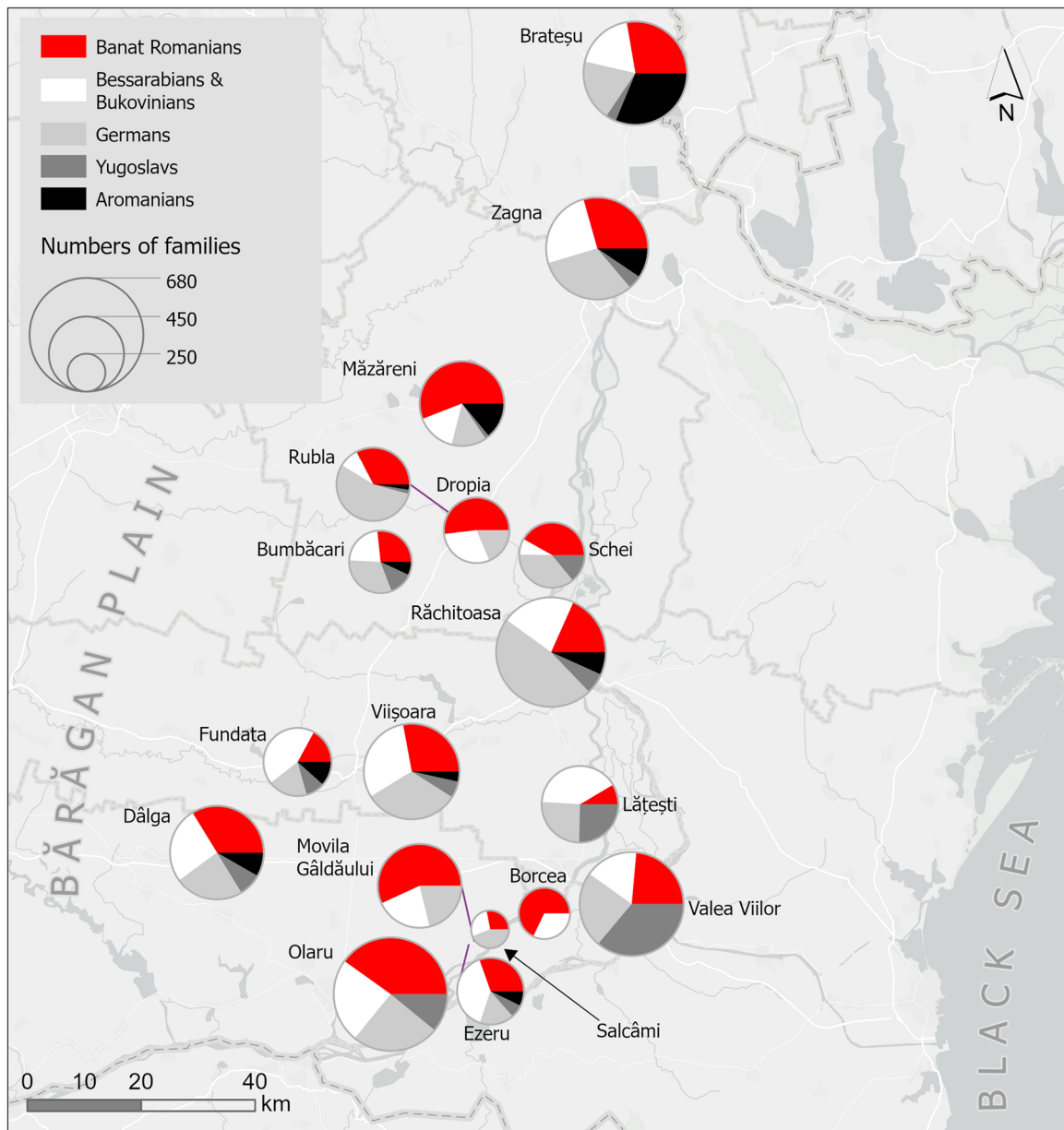


FIGURE 4 | Ethnic background of deportees in the villages of the Bărăgan area. (Source: Marineasa and Vighi 2004).

We acknowledge that our researchers' identities and backgrounds (e.g., ethnicity, race, gender, social class, education, cultural context) are not separate from the research we conduct but are embedded within it. We also took into consideration all ethical considerations for this study. The principles that guided our research were to ensure that our study is responsible, respectful, and valid. Therefore, our social identity as researchers did not influence the results of this study, but we paid attention to the roles identity, context, and space played in determining our positionality.

5 | Results: Bărăgan Deportation Memories as Socially Constructed Traumatic Narratives

The analysis of deportees' narratives reveals that memory of the traumatic event is not a passive record of individual experience, but a constructed, shared social narrative. The findings indicate

that the recollection of the deportation process and the subsequent life in Bărăgan is structured around collectively reinforced emotional and thematic constructs, suggesting the trauma is re-experienced and solidified through a social-cognitive framework of collective suffering and resistance. Drawing upon Assmann (2010) framework, these individual memories have become collective through social interaction, generating shared meaning that solidifies the group's identity in opposition to the repressive state.

5.1 | The Uprooting: Fear, Confusion, and the Disruption of Social Order

The onset of the deportation is consistently recalled through an affective lens dominated by fear. This emotional theme was the most intense and frequently referenced across all interviews, suggesting its anchoring role in the collective trauma memory. Fear is not presented as a rational response to a specific threat,

TABLE 1 | Characteristics of the interviewees.

ID	Deportation site	Gender	Age of interviewees when deportation started	Code of interviewees
1	OLARU	M	39	OJIM39
2	OLARU	M	31	OMAM31
3	OLARU	F	34	OREF34
4	VALEA VIILOR	M	35	VVLAM
5	RĂCHITOASA	F	39	RMBEF39
6	VALEA VIILOR	M	37	VVLAM
7	OLARU	M	39	OJIM39
8	OLARU	M	31	OMAM31
9	RĂCHITOASA	F	8	RDMF8
10	RĂCHITOASA	M	19	RHIM19
11	RĂCHITOASA	M	19	RHIM19
12	VALEA VIILOR	F	18	VVRIF18
13	VALEA VIILOR	M	30	VVDAM30
14	RĂCHITOASA	F	39	RMBEF39
15	RĂCHITOASA	M	39	RCPM39
16	RĂCHITOASA	M	19	RHIM19
17	OLARU	F	14	OHVF14
18	OLARU	F	23	OMMF23
19	OLARU	F	29	OTSF29
20	OLARU	M	23	OBGM23
21	OLARU	F	29	OTSF29
22	VALEA VIILOR	M	9	VVSM9
23	RĂCHITOASA	F	29	RRAF29
24	VALEA VIILOR	M	33	VVLAM
25	RĂCHITOASA	F	8	RDMF8
26	RĂCHITOASA	M	16	RDDM16
27	RĂCHITOASA	F	17	RPZF17

but rather as a pervasive and omnipresent element that fundamentally reshapes the deportees' reality, moving beyond immediate physical danger to a profound ontological insecurity. This aligns with the concept of "wounded memories" (Till 2012), where the violence of the state - embodied by armed forces and sudden arrests - was instrumental in dismantling the pre-existing sense of social safety and predictability. The trauma is rooted in the sudden, violent intrusion of the state into the private sphere, marking a defining event-based memory (Round 2006) of physical violation and terror:

We were walking, tucking our shirts into our underwear, picking peas, and the guard came with his rifle, suddenly you'd see the gun behind us. We, children, were terrified to death.

(I6, Male, 37 years, Valea Viilor)

I remember my mother wanted to dash into the garden to pull out some potatoes to take with us on the road, and a

soldier pointed a bayonet at her and told her not to move. He must have thought she was trying to escape.

(I25, Female, 8 years, Răchitoasa)

At three in the morning, we were suddenly faced with soldiers and civilians who told us we were under arrest, and that by 8 a.m. we had to be at the train station...

(I26, Male, 16 years, Răchitoasa)

This initial destabilization is further underscored by the theme of confusion, which reflects a more profound psychological and social rupture. The state's deliberate lack of explanation or defined destination reduced individuals to passive objects of an arbitrary system, a crucial element in the construction of their victimhood narrative. The forced journey in cattle wagons became a powerful metaphor for unpredictability and loss of control, transforming the transportation infrastructure into a "traumascape" (Tumarkin 2005) that reflects the wounds of a dominant power (Till 2012):

I was about 17–18. There were rumors we'd be taken to the Soviet Union. They loaded us into cattle wagons at Variaș. We asked where we were going, and they said: "Nobody knows. Wherever we stop, that's where we stay."
(I12, Female, 18 years, Valea Viilor)

Collectively, the memories of the departure frame the event as a total, unannounced break from everyday life, serving to retrospectively justify the subsequent emotional and physical turmoil as an unavoidable consequence of state brutality. These recollections are part of the selective remembrance (Light and Young 2015) of the harshest lived moments, chosen by the narrators to underscore the urgency of their quest for recognition and legitimacy.

5.2 | Life in Bărăgan: Suffering, Brutality, and the Emergence of Solidarity

Memories of life in the Bărăgan plain transition from acute fear of the initial displacement to a chronic, enduring condition of suffering. This suffering is not presented as a transient emotional state but as a persistent structural feature of exile, deeply embedded in the daily routine and physical environment. The testimonies characterize this period by its uninterrupted nature and multifaceted origin, linking profound emotional distress to the severe deprivation and forced labor. This period highlights the power of place-based memories (Hoelscher and Alderman 2004), where the arid, hostile Bărăgan becomes a contested geography of memory (see Young and Light 2016), perpetually scarred by the communist regime's actions.

The memory of suffering is intrinsically tied to the intentional infliction of hardship and humiliation by the authorities, demonstrating the institutional nature of the trauma and reinforcing the victim's narrative against the dominant state representation:

It was tough for me to endure the humiliation they subjected us to in Bărăgan. They threw us into a cotton field. The next day, they came back and told us we were in the wrong place; the real plot was a few meters away.
(I21, Female, 29 years, Olaru)

The forced construction of rudimentary housing on an inhospitable, arid landscape further cements the memory of suffering as a physical and emotional burden, representing a scene-based memory (Round 2006) of continuous struggle against the environment and the state's indifference:

In 1951, I gave birth to a child on 10 May. Then, on 17 June, I was taken away, with my child and everything. They dropped us in a stubble field... and we were forced to build a house. A pitiful little house made of dirt... We didn't even have water.
(I23, Female, 29 years, Răchitoasa)

The theme of brutality reinforces the image of the state as a continuous threat. Recounted memories highlight the physical presence and intimidation tactics of the Securitate and military, rendering the environment a constant surveillance state, which is a powerful demonstration of political violence:

The courtyard was full of soldiers with bayonets on their rifles...
(I17, Female, 14 years, Olaru)

...a Securitate officer was at the gate and he wouldn't let me leave... He pointed his weapon at my chest and said: "You're not allowed to leave!"
(I18, Female, 23 years, Olaru)

Furthermore, the memory of death - from disease, harsh conditions, and violence - functions as a powerful, shared signifier of the total loss of human dignity. The graphic descriptions, particularly the recurrent motif of corpses being subjected to decay and rats, transform specific locations (e.g., cellars) into collective sites of horror and memory anchors, which serve as the fixed "figures of memory" Assmann (2010) transmitted across the community:

When we went down into the cellar, out of curiosity, we saw down there corpses of people over which rats were walking, over their feet.
(I10, Male, 19 years, Răchitoasa)

Juxtaposed against the state-imposed suffering and brutality is the memory of solidarity. This emotion is recalled not as an innate trait but as a necessity and an active, collective form of resistance against the imposed isolation and hardship. This theme underscores the social nature of survival, in which shared adversity transcends pre-deportation ethnic and regional divisions, forming a powerful counter-memory that challenges the dominant state-led narrative by asserting human agency and resilience (see Young and Light 2016).

People struggled. But they were very united, whether they were Germans, Serbs, or Romanians... all were innocent, all suffered the same.
(I13, Male, 30 years, Valea Viilor)

We were together, a big family... And we helped each other with whatever we had... there was no hostility between us, we were all the same, with the same tears and the same hopes.
(I14, Male, 39 years, Răchitoasa)

The emergence of solidarity in these recollections represents a re-establishment of social cohesion in the face of the state's attempt to atomize the population. Therefore, the memory of the Bărăgan experience is constructed not only as a record of trauma but also as a testimony to the resilience of human social bonds, effectively promoting the quest for transformative justice and peacebuilding from below by centering the victims' shared experience.

5.3 | The Trauma of Return: Stigmatization and the Loss of Social Belonging

The narratives reveal that the traumatic experience was not bound by the return date but instead transitioned into a prolonged phase of social trauma and institutional betrayal. The memory of returning home is overwhelmingly characterized by

rejection, stigmatization, and material alienation, demonstrating the state's continued punitive role long after physical displacement ceased. This continuous post-deportation suffering highlights the persistent nature of "wounded memories" (Till 2012), which endure even after the physical violence has ended, creating ongoing conflicts over the "truth" and justice (Jelin 2003).

Their designation frames the deportees' memory of their return as "political enemies" or "suspects," an official label that denied them fundamental rights and economic reintegration, transforming the victims into outsiders and underscoring the failure of social justice to address past state violence (see Bonacker and Buckley-Zistel 2013):

We returned to the commune, having no other options. [...] At that time, we were considered 'against someone,' I think we were seen as political enemies, and I couldn't get a job anywhere.

(I1, Male, 39 years, Olaru)

We were not recognized, and even though we worked very hard in life, we had no rights.

(I3, Female, 34 years, Olaru)

The physical and material losses including destroyed homes, stolen possessions, and untilled fields are remembered as the remnants of the state's violation, engendering a profound sense of loss and betrayal. More critically, the social environment failed to reabsorb them, cementing the feeling of being in a world that "no longer recognized us". This alienation is a core element of the social construction of memory of forced migration, demonstrating how the trauma leaves enduring scars on identity and community belonging, far beyond mere physical displacement. The victims were, in effect, experiencing the deep-seated sentiment of loss and displacement that Boym (2002) associates with nostalgia, though in a non-romanticized form:

When we returned, we received nothing; the house was destroyed and needed repairs... Soldiers lived in our house first, then some gypsies stayed there, it was awful.

(I4, Male, 35 years, Valea Viilor)

When we came back, we found nothing... It felt like we had been driven out of one world and left in another that no longer recognized us. Even people didn't look at us the same. We were forcibly taken away, but when we returned, it seemed like we were the ones at fault.

(I14, Female, 39 years, Răchitoasa)

This final stage of trauma uncovers the social construction of identity after deportation. The ongoing stigmatization and lack of official acknowledgment of their suffering made sure that the trauma stayed as scars on both personal and collective identities. By emphasizing these emotional memories, the stories act as a powerful form of civil resistance and a vital effort to "let memories speak" (Light and Young 2015; Young and Light 2016), offering the needed historical context for restorative justice

processes and the strengthening of human rights awareness within postsocialist society (Ciobanu 2011).

6 | Discussion and Conclusions

This study examined the nature of memory formation through traumatic population deportation in the socialist state of Romania, identifying how people's personal connection to place and these memories could serve as the basis for postsocialist social justice.

As place-based memories indicate specific social constructs which are represented by the written or verbal and visual transfer of historical and social events that a specific human community lived through, consisting of things and places (Alderman and Dwyer 2004; Jones and Garde-Hansen 2012; Legg 2007; Till 2005), it is evident that historical and socio-political circumstances shaped traumatic memories and identities of the deported people.

People's personal connection to the deportation sites serves as the basis of harsh and wounded memories. The power of place is not always pleasant to remember. Therefore, how deported people remember the place-based wounding of lives is relevant, as traumascapes encompass spaces of everyday living and suffering (Philo 2005; Tumarkin 2005).

Memories of the harsh socialist era are not new (Forest et al. 2004; Light and Young 2015; Tismaneanu 2008). If previous studies of memories of specific events in socialist Germany and Russia (Forest et al. 2004), or Romania (Ciobanu 2011) show more issues related to the nostalgia of the socialist past in Central and Eastern Europe, our study highlights that place-based memories are tightly connected to place and are unfolded as counter-memories against the official or state-led shaping of socialist memories (Young and Light 2016). Besides a total refusal to remember the harsh political decision in state socialism (Ciobanu 2011; Tismaneanu 2008), more studies are needed on the traumascapes memories of state-led socialism and on place-based wounded memories (Crețan and Doiciar 2023).

Till's concept of wounded memories includes the contested nature of these places, or the visible and invisible scars that can be read in the materiality of the places discussed in the Bărăgan area. Moreover, the state narrative and its materiality (statues, monuments, or absences) – or the counter-memories related to the deportations are also important. Institutional communication and fixed "figures of memory" such as rituals and monuments Assmann (2010) connected to Bărăgan need to be more materialized in Romania.

The concept of postmemory, introduced by Maryanne Hirsch (2008), is important for younger people who did not experience the Bărăgan events. As reflected in other previous works (Crețan and Doiciar 2023), the Bărăgan deportations are among the strongest traumatic memories left to the youth. Furthermore, as Svetlana Boym (2002) argues, there is a difference between restorative and reflective nostalgia. If the first calls for the total reconstruction of monuments of the past, reflective nostalgia is based on the ruins of memory and history.

Memories are usually associated with migrants' lived experiences (Bloch and Schuster 2005; Eastmond 2007; Lietaert et al. 2015). As we live in a time of deportation turn (Gibney 2008), we have to set aside those political discourses that instrumentalize deportations as banal and normal, simply because different means of migration control are now obvious (Bloch and Schuster 2005). Therefore, we have to fight for "never again" in restorative justice related to the experiences of deportees. Moreover, the multiple places of deportation (from origins, destinations, and in-transit migration) are similar to those in previous studies (Round 2006; Moran et al. 2012). We should distinguish between the physical (environmental) and the human (social) dimensions of these memories. Event-based memories (the soldiers coming to the fields, the push into the cattle truck) and ones that are more scene-based (the sense of an ongoing struggle with dust, wind, and aridity) are important in the Bărăgan case. Similar studies on deportations in Gulag spaces of the Soviet Union are also relevant in the context of disciplined mobility and carceral geographies (Round 2006; Pallot et al. 2010; Moran et al. 2012). The harsh transportation wagons, as well as the extreme poverty of deportees in the Gulag sites, such as the city of Magadan, are similar to the Bărăgan case. However, in our case, most people came back home from the so-called 'penalty' spaces.

Bărăgan memories are shaped nowadays by the democratization of the Romanian society. During communism, interviewees were not allowed to speak about their trauma, but these memories are presented now under the political conditions of postsocialism. As these memories have emerged from the transformations undergone over postsocialist time, we notice that they are subjective, selective, symbolic, and even contradictory, shaped by traumatic contexts. In this context, Bărăgan memories are shaped by time, trauma, and retrospective interpretation, and three aspects of debates could emerge: how memory transforms over time, how trauma shapes narrative reconstruction, and how postsocialist conditions influence the act of remembering.

First, memory evolves over time through reinterpretation, new historical evidence, and emerging social values. Memory is not static. Instead, it is a socially constructed process by which individuals and groups reshape the past and perform it through retelling and discussion of the traumatic past.

Second, trauma shapes the narrative reconstruction of memory. Fragmented memories make sense of overwhelming experiences and could challenge negative beliefs; therefore, integrating the trauma into a broader narrative that includes resilience and agency. This reconstruction of traumatic memory is part of healing the past, allowing individuals who passed through a traumatic event to move from being defined by the event to being a survivor who has integrated the experience into a more complete life story. Articulating the experience of the Bărăgan deportation helps survivors make sense of overwhelming emotions and reactions, turning the deportation events into more manageable stories. Such sharing of stories can create a sense of community and connection with others who have similar experiences, reducing feelings of isolation. Finally, putting emotions into words and creating a narrative structure helps survivors understand and regulate their feelings.

Third, the postsocialist political and socioeconomic environment shapes the wounded Bărăgan memories through the interplay of nostalgia, forgetting, reinterpretation of the past, and the creation of new memory frameworks. The effects of communist state repression and propaganda continue to shape public and private memories in postsocialist Romania, creating a fractured and contested understanding of history. The socialist state manipulated emotions, leading to a loss of confidence in individual memory and a tendency towards forgetting. In postsocialism, events such as the coronavirus period, as well as the emergence of the far-right (i.e., the Alliance of Unity of Romanians), influence some citizens to continue silencing specific memories and imposing the past on others.

To sum up, a significant divide exists between those who experienced socialism and those who grew up afterward with only mediated memories of the period. Some memories are often dismissed as naive or ideologically biased, but they offer a crucial lens for understanding how (post)socialist subjectivities were formed. However, groups who suffered during the Bărăgan deportation reinterpret their history to create a sense of belonging and purpose in the new postsocialist world.

As our results highlighted, the experiences of the Bărăgan deportation are mostly connected to trauma from the very first announcement of the forced migration, to the adaptation to the new Bărăgan land, as well as the stigmatization upon coming back home. So, not only was the trauma of leaving home difficult, but also the trauma of reintegrating into the landscape of home. As the recent socialist violent past was an emotive site of memories, it has multiple interpretations of trauma. Therefore, we need to recognize these complex memories and allow for a more nuanced interpretation of state-led events.

Social justice is based on truth, justice, reparation, and guarantees of non-recurrence and provides a complete framework for addressing the legacy of the Bărăgan deportations. It involves recognizing state responsibility and victims' suffering; seeking accountability and moral redress; restoring dignity through reparations, memorials, and education; and ensuring non-recurrence through institutional reform (Bonacker and Buckley-Zistel 2013; Duggan 2010; Gready and Robins 2020). Together, these pillars transform memory into responsibility. For Bărăgan survivors, social justice means moral repair, institutional renewal, and a collective commitment to human rights and preventing future state violence. Although there are a few memorials dedicated to the people who died and suffered deportation in the Bărăgan area, there is no specific museums that recollect all those harsh memories. In this regard, the postsocialist social justice is important to peacebuilding and reconciliation for the Bărăgan deportation. By now, the post-socialist state of Romania resonates too little with actions for remembering the wounded people in Bărăgan. On the other hand, the Timisoara Central Library testimonials archive could be mobilized to create a permanent exhibition featuring images, quotes, and interpretative plaques that could heal the trauma of the Bărăgan deportees.

Indeed, this study has some limitations. Although we analyzed interviews with people deported to the Bărăgan, a larger survey could be conducted with families who suffered deportation

there. In this way, we can see how postmemories unfold for new generations.

Future research can focus on understanding the ecological memories of the Bărăgan deportation or on how land use in the forced-migration area was preserved in deportees' cognition. Moreover, comparing different forms of forced migration in socialist Romania (i.e., the Bărăgan deportation with the forced workers at the Danube-Black Sea Canal) and examining how these memories are shaped in postsocialism could also be relevant.

Acknowledgements

We want to thank the editor and the three anonymous reviewers for their excellent feedback on our paper. Special thanks go to Smaranda Vultur for giving us permission to use the archived interviews from the website www.deportatiinbaragan.ro freely. Finally, we confess we did not use any AI tools in this paper to generate ideas. Only the English of this paper was proofread through advanced Grammarly software.

Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

References

- Alderman, D., and J. Dwyer. 2004. "Putting Memory in Its Place: The Politics of Commemoration in the American South." In *World Minds: Geographical Perspectives on 100 Problems*, edited by D. Janelle, B. Warfand, and K. Hansen, 55–60. Kluwer Academic.
- Anderson, B., M. J. Gibney, and E. Paoletti. 2011. "Citizenship, Deportation and the Boundaries of Belonging." *Citizenship Studies* 15, no. 5: 547–563. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13621025.2011.583787>.
- Assmann, A. 2010. "Re-framing Memory: Between Individual and Collective Forms of Constructing the Past." Accessed 24 September 2025. <https://www.kops.uni-konstanz.de>.
- Assmann, A. 2008. "Transformations Between History and Memory." *Social Research: An International Quarterly* 75, no. 1: 49–72. <https://doi.org/10.1111/10.1353/sor.2008.0038>.
- Bloch, A., and L. Schuster. 2005. "At the Extremes of Exclusion: Deportation, Detention and Dispersal." *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 28, no. 3: 491–512. <https://doi.org/10.1080/0141987042000337858>.
- Bonacker, T., and S. Buckley-Zistel. 2013. "Introduction: Transitions From Violence - Analyzing the Effects of Transitional Justice." *International Journal of Conflict Violence* 7, no. 1: 4–9. <https://doi.org/10.4119/ijcv-2945>.
- Boym, S. 2002. *The Future of Nostalgia*. Routledge.
- Braun, V., and V. Clarke. 2006. "Using Thematic Analysis in Psychology." *Qualitative Research in Psychology* 3, no. 2: 77–101. <https://doi.org/10.1191/1478088706qp063oa>.
- Bunselmeyer, E., and P. Schulz. 2020. "Quasi-Experimental Research Designs as a Tool for Assessing the Impact of Transitional Justice Instruments." *International Journal of Human Rights* 24, no. 5: 688–709. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13642987.2019.1672663>.
- Calestru, V. 2006. *Martiraj în Bărăgan (Martiraje to Bărăgan)*. Editura Demiurg.
- Ciobanu, M. 2011. "Rewriting and Remembering Romanian Communism: Some Controversial Issues." *Nationalities Papers* 39, no. 2: 205–221. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00905992.2010.549472>.
- Clifford, N., M. Cope, T. Gillespie, and S. French. 2023. *Key Methods in Geography*. 4th ed. Sage.

- Crețan, R., and C. Doiciar. 2023. "Postmemory Sits in Places: The Relationship of Young Romanians to the Communist Past." *Eurasian Geography and Economics* 64, no. 6: 679–704. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15387216.2022.2052135>.
- Crețan, R., T. O'Brien, C. I. Varan Țenche, and F. Timofte. 2023. "Legacies of Displacement from the Iron Gates Hydroelectric Project." *Journal of Settlements and Spatial Planning* 14, no. 2: 67–77. <https://doi.org/10.24193/JSSP.2023.2.02>.
- Crețan, R., D. Light, S. Richards, and A. M. Dunca. 2018. "Encountering the Victims of Romanian Communism: Young People and Empathy in a Memorial Museum." *Eurasian Geography and Economics* 59, no. 5–6: 632–656. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15387216.2019.1581632>.
- Deletant, D. 1999. *Romania Under Communist Rule*. Center for Romanian Studies.
- Drozdowski, D., S. De Nardi, and E. Waterton. 2016. "Geographies of Memory, Place and Identity: Intersections in Remembering War and Conflict." *Geography Compass* 10, no. 11: 447–456. <https://doi.org/10.1111/gec3.12296>.
- Duggan, C. 2010. "Editorial Note." *International Journal of Transitional Justice* 4, no. 3: 315–328. <https://doi.org/10.1093/ijtj/ijq023>.
- Eastmond, M. 2007. "Stories as Lived Experience: Narratives in Forced Migration Research." *Journal of Refugee Studies* 20, no. 2: 248–264. <https://doi.org/10.1093/jrs/fem007>.
- Forest, B., J. Johnson, and K. Till. 2004. "Post-Totalitarian National Identity: Public Memory in Germany and Russia." *Social and Cultural Geography* 5, no. 3: 357–380. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1464936042000252778>.
- Gibney, M. J. 2008. "Asylum and the Expansion of Deportation in the United Kingdom." *Government and Opposition* 43, no. 2: 146–167. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1477-7053.2007.00249.x>.
- Gready, P., and S. Robins. 2020. "Transitional Justice and Theories of Change: Towards Evaluation as Understanding." *International Journal of Transitional Justice* 14, no. 2: 280–299. <https://doi.org/10.1093/ijtj/ijaa008>.
- Griffiths, M. 2012. "Anonymous Aliens? Questions of Identification in the Detention and Deportation of Failed Asylum Seekers." *Population, Space and Place* 18, no. 6: 715–727.
- Hamber, B., L. Sevcenko, and E. Naidu. 2010. "Utopian Dreams or Practical Possibilities? The Challenges of Evaluating the Impact of Memorialization in Societies in Transition." *International Journal of Transitional Justice* 4, no. 3: 397–420. <https://doi.org/10.1093/ijtj/ijq018>.
- Hirsch, M. 2008. "The Generation of Postmemory." *Poetics Today* 29, no. 1: 103–128. <https://doi.org/10.1215/03335372-2007-019>.
- Hoelscher, S., and D. H. Alderman. 2004. "Memory and Place: Geographies of a Critical Relationship." *Social & Cultural Geography* 5, no. 3: 347–355. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1464936042000252769>.
- IICCMER. 2010. Raport de Cercetare: Deportarea în Bărăgan 1951–1956 (IICCMER Report: Bărăgan Deportation 1951–1956), Bucharest.
- IICCMER. 2020. Satul Românesc în Comunism 1945–1989 (The Romanian Village during Communism), Bucharest.
- Ilovan, O. A., C. F. Dobre, and V. Zotic. 2025. "The Traumas of Bărăgan and Siberia: Identity, Place Attachment and Resilience in the Deportees' Life Stories." *Balkanistic Worlds* 1, no. 2: 9–25.
- Ivankova, N. V., J. W. Creswell, and S. L. Stick. 2006. "Using Mixed Methods Sequential Explanatory Design: From Theory to Practice." *Field Methods* 18, no. 1: 3–20. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1525822X05282260>.
- Jelin, E. 2003. *State Repression and the Labors of Memory*. University of Minnesota Press.
- Jones, O. and Garde-Hansen, J. 2012. *Geography and Memory: Explorations in Identity, Place and Becoming*. Palgrave Macmillan.
- Legg, S. 2007. "Reviewing Geographies of Memory/Forgetting." *Environment & Planning A* 39, no. 2: 456–466. <https://doi.org/10.1068/a38170>.

- Lietaert, I., E. Broekaert, and I. Derluyn. 2015. "The Lived Experiences of Migrants in Detention." *Population, Space and Place* 21, no. 6: 568–579. <https://doi.org/10.1002/psp.1861>.
- Light, D. 2004. "Street Names in Bucharest, 1990–1997: Exploring the Modern Historical Geographies of Postsocialist Change." *Journal of Historical Geography* 30, no. 1: 154–172. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0305-7488\(02\)00102-0](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0305-7488(02)00102-0).
- Light, D., R. Crețan, and A. M. Dunca. 2019. "Education and Post-Communist Transitional Justice: Negotiating the Communist Past in a Memorial Museum." *Southeast European and Black Sea Studies* 19, no. 4: 565–584. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14683857.2019.1702619>.
- Light, D., R. Crețan, and A. M. Dunca. 2021. "Transitional Justice and the Political 'Work' of Domestic Tourism." *Current Issues in Tourism* 24, no. 6: 742–754. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13683500.2020.1763268>.
- Light, D., I. Nicolae, and B. Sudit. 2002. "Toponymy and the Communist City: Street Names in Bucharest, 1948–1965." *GeoJournal* 56, no. 2: 135–144. <https://doi.org/10.1023/A:1022469601470>.
- Light, D., and C. Young. 2015. "Local and Counter-memories of Socialism in Postsocialist Romania." In *Local Memories in a Nationalizing and Globalizing World*, edited by Beyen, M. and B. Deseure, 221–243. Palgrave. https://doi.org/10.1057/9781137469380_11.
- Marineasa, V., and D. Vighi. 2004. *Rusalii '51 - Fragmente din Deportarea în Bărăgan (Pentecost '51 - Fragments of the Bărăgan Deportations)*. Editura Marineasa.
- Marineasa, V., D. Vighi, and V. Sămînță. 1996. "Deportarea în Bărăgan." In *Destine, Documente, Reportaje (Deportation to Bărăgan - Destinies, Documents, Reportages)*. Timisoara: Editura Mirton.
- Milin, M. 2003. *Sărbii din România în Golgota Bărăganului (Serbs of Romania in the Bărăgan Golgota)*. Uniunea Sărbilor din România.
- Mirciov, R. 1998. *Lăgăru de Deportări Pentru Familiile de Bulgari din Banat (The Gulag of Deportations for Bulgarians in the Banat Region)*. Editura Mirton.
- Moran, D., L. Piacentini, and J. Pallot. 2012. "Disciplined Mobility and Carceral Geography: Prisoner Transport in Russia." *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers* 37, no. 3: 446–460. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1475-5661.2011.00483.x>.
- Oprea, M. 2002. *Banalitatea Răului. O Istorie a Securității în Documente 1948–1989 (The Banality of Evil: A History of the Securitate in Documents, 1948–1989)*. Polirom.
- Pallot, J., L. Piacentini, and D. Moran. 2010. "Patriotic Discourses in Russia's Penal Peripheries: Remembering the Mordovan Gulag." *Europe-Asia Studies* 62, no. 1: 1–33. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09668130903385366>.
- Philo, C. 2005. "The Geographies That Wound." *Population, Space and Place* 11, no. 6: 441–454. <https://doi.org/10.1002/psp.400>.
- Rotaru, M. A., R. Crețan, and A. N. Ianăș. 2023. "Ethnicities in Post-Communist Romania: Spatial Dynamics, Fractionalisation, and Polarisation at the NUTS-3 Level." *Land* 12, no. 6: 1133. <https://doi.org/10.3390/land12061133>.
- Round, J. 2006. "Marginalized for a Lifetime: The Everyday Experiences of Gulag Survivors in Post-Soviet Magadan." *Geografiska Annaler: Series B, Human Geography* 88, no. 1: 15–34. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.0435-3684.2006.00203.x>.
- Rusan, R. 2011. *Morți Fără Morminte (Those Who Died Without Graves)*. Fundația Academia Civică.
- Sarafolean, S. 2001. *Deportații în Bărăgan 1951–1956 (People Deported to Bărăgan 1951–1956)*. Editura Mirton.
- Spilavca, E. 2004. *Munci și Zile în Bărăgan (Works and Days in Bărăgan)*. Editura Fundația Academică Civică.
- Stan, L. 2013. *Transitional Justice in Postcommunist Romania: The Politics of Memory*. Cambridge University Press.
- Ștevin, S. 2004. *Descuț prin Propriul Destin (Barefoot through its own Destiny)*. Editura Mirton.
- Till, K. E. 2005. *The New Berlin: Memory, Politics*. University of Minnesota Press.
- Till, K. E. 2012. "Wounded Cities: Memory-Work and a Place-Based Ethics of Care." *Political Geography* 31, no. 1: 3–14. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.polgeo.2011.10.008>.
- Till, K. E., and A. K. Kuusisto-Arponen. 2015. "Towards Responsible Geographies of Memory: Complexities of Place and the Ethics of Remembering." *Erdkunde* 69, no. 4: 291–306. <https://doi.org/10.3112/erdkunde.2015.04.01>.
- Tismaneanu, V. 2008. "Democracy and Memory: Romania Confronts Its Communist Past." *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 617, no. 1: 166–180. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0002716207312763>.
- Tumarkin, M. M. 2005. *Traumascape: The Power and Fate of Places*. Melbourne University Press.
- Tyner, J. A., J. F. J. Inwood, and D. H. Alderman. 2014. "Theorizing Violence and the Dialectics of Landscape Memorialization: A Case Study of Greensboro, North Carolina." *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* 32, no. 5: 902–914. <https://doi.org/10.1068/d130>.
- Varan, C., and R. Crețan. 2018. "Place and the Spatial Politics of Intergenerational Remembrance of the Iron Gates Displacements, 1966–1972." *Area* 50, no. 4: 509–519. <https://doi.org/10.1111/area.12387>.
- Vasile, C. 2015. *Viața Intelectuală și Artistică în Primul Deceniu al Regimului Comunist (Intellectual and Artistic Life in the First Decade of the Communist Regime)*. Editura Humanitas.
- Vultur, S. 1997. *Istorie Trăită - Istorie Povestită. Deportarea în Bărăgan 1951–1956 (Lived History - history Storytelling. The Bărăgan Deportations 1951–1956)*. Editura Amarcord.
- Young, C., and D. Light. 2016. "Multiple and Contested Geographies of Memory: Remembering the 1989 Romanian Revolution." In *Memories, Place and Identity: Commemoration and Remembrance of War and Conflict*, edited by D. Drozdowski, S. de Nardi, and E. Waterton, 56–73. Routledge.