

REGIONS WITH INTEGRATED TOURIST ARRANGEMENTS. CASE STUDY: THE NORTH-WEST DEVELOPMENT REGION

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ABSTRACT - Tourist arrangements, the consumption of the tourist product, tourist demand are spatially and geographically structured and they lead to specific types and forms of tourism. The tourist and geographical regions have different potentials or a specialized potential. These regions are to be found at the contact between territorial units with mutual polarization and where there are double or multiple functional junctions. In the North-West Region, there are integrated inter-county, inter-region, or even cross-border touristic provision.

Key words: integrated tourist arrangements, the North-West Development Region

General Aspects. From the point of view of conception, taxonomy and the complexity of its interrelations, the integrated region is a development phase and an organizational form of the geographical space in functional regions, as development regions are to become.

The tourist component of integration is the result of several factors. The **physico-geographical** and the **anthropic factors** are the fundamental frames of this category. **Tourist provision** is an important premise, which creates the personality of a region. The structure, the volume, and the characteristics of **demand (tourist circulation)** depend on education, the availability of information, and the financial sources. They all have a permissive component.

The framing of integrated tourist regions and their arrangement in specific entities apparently contradict the theory of the inter-county, interregional, or border strips, which are characterized by continuity.

Tourist regions that have integral arrangements are evidently insular. They are characterized by cohesion around some multiple junctions of the administrative-territorial units, which frequently overlap the natural units or their great tourist potential components. (There are, of course, some notable exceptions to this rule, when the integrally arranged tourist region develops as a strip because the geographical conditions. A relevant example is the Black Sea seaside which is intensively arranged from a tourist perspective in Constanța County, and this process will extend to the north, including the lagoon and the deltaic seaside of the Tulcea County, or the cross-border strips).

Within this space framed according to the “puzzle” principle, a unitary and coherent arrangement-development policy may be applied. This policy is the result of increasing effort for the same goal: tourist provision and valorization in the context of sustainable development.

Regions with integrated tourist arrangements may become poles of attraction and organization models from the tourist spatial-functional point of view. The most relevant example is the Bucegi Mountains. It is the most representative for the Romanian alpine tourism where there is the most complex fourfold junction among Counties Prahova, Brașov, Dâmbovița, Argeș. This also represents the meeting point of two development regions’ macro-territorial structures. We must add that the Făgăraș Mountains, the Retezat-Godeanu mountain group, the Danube Defile have the same peculiarities. They are particularly impressive because of their mountainous landscapes favourable for tourism. The Danube Defile also has a cross-border impact arrangement potential.

There are two other potential entities with a comparable impact determined by their exceptional hydromineral-curative potential. One such entity is the row of depressions from the Eastern Carpathians. This row is in the mofette area of three counties, at the contact of the North-East and Central development regions. The other is the complex of unique religious cultural-historic sites at the contact of the mountains and the hilly region in Suceava and Neamț Counties.

The North-West Development Region consists of six counties (Bihor, Bistrița-Năsăud, Cluj-Napoca, Maramureș, Sălaj, and Satu Mare) that cumulate very diverse natural and anthropic conditions. Applying the tourist arrangement–development–valorising principle here leads to complex and diverse taxonomical, typological, and functional situations.

Tourist valorisation through local, county or North-West regional provision of different degrees may also be realized through a system of **integrated arrangements**, especially when geographical areas have valuable tourist potential on the territory of two or several counties.

The impact is multiple: tourist arrangement joint projects; increasing efforts to propose different programs and apply for funding through several programs (such as PHARE or SAPARD, etc.), the stimulation of development through tourism by the specific valorisation of some common tourist resources in neighbouring counties.

From this perspective, we can distinguish several taxonomic-hierarchical categories belonging to double or even triple tourist functional and potential junctions.

1. **Inter-county integrated tourist arrangements** in the North-West Development Region may allow the valorization of some tourist areas with valuable potential because of the uniqueness of their natural and anthropic components. In this category we may include the Codrul Region situated at the contact of the Maramureș – Satu Mare – Sălaj Counties whose main tourist attraction is anthropic.

Another relevant example is the Oaș Depression – the western part of the Maramureș Depression where these two neighbouring structural geographical components are united by the Huta low altitude “Gate.” The two “lands” with a valuable anthropic and, especially, original tourist potential are situated at a small distance from each other. They could be integrated in a tourist-arranged space of the low altitude Oaș Mountains (recreational tourism, winter sports tourism, week-end tourism, rural tourism, and secondary residence tourism).

A particular situation is the initiation of some tourist provision programs by two neighbouring counties where the areas are not congruent. In this category we include Satu Mare and Maramureș Counties with potential joint tourist arrangements and development programs (Luna Șes or Borșa).

2. **Interregional integrated tourist arrangements** imply marginal areas of the counties in the North-West Development Region and the counties of other development regions. These arrangements can lead to the appearance of some specific geographical-tourist entities of increasing national and international tourist demand.

This situation is typical to the central area of the Apuseni Mountains, which overlaps the superior hydrographic basins of the three Criș Rivers, the Arieș, and the Someșul Mic. The future National Park of the Apuseni Mountains will be situated here and will include, *in extenso*, “Moșilor Land” (“Țara Moșilor”), an area with a unique morphological-speleological potential and a unique mountain civilization centuries old.

The tourist arrangement policy will rely on two “poles.” One trend will be the valorization of the speleological tourist potential as a whole, but also focusing on the development of a triangle of caves according to international standards. This triangle will be from Urșilor Cave to Chișcău in Bihor County (the only cave in our country developed according to international standards). Scărișoara in Alba County and Valea Firii (Humpleu) in Cluj County are also part of this triangle. In a possible national hierarchy of caves according to their popularity and development, these two will follow Chișcău. The modern accommodation facilities and the communication infrastructure will organically unite the three most important developed caves. Thus half of the most important speleological spots/resources in the Apuseni Mountains will be included in a polarized tourist space of European importance.

The anthropic component is also extremely important. Rural tourism is developing especially in Cluj and Alba Counties and also in some settlements from the hydrographic basin of the Crișul Pietros in Bihor. In this respect, three tourist villages Casa de Piatră (Alba), Ic Ponor (Cluj), and Pietroasa (Bihor) could be

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individualized for speleological tourism, for tourists interested in the mountain rural civilization, and as holiday spots and entrance gate to the Apuseni Mountains.

3. **The integrated-interregional tourist arrangement** in the Rodnei Mountains supports the Maramureş and the Bistriţa-Năsăud Counties (in the North-West Development Region) and Suceava County (in the North-Eastern Development Region). This arrangement is remarkable because of the same bipolarity as discussed above. The Rodnei Massif has the most representative ice-alpine landscape in the Eastern Carpathians. It is also one of the three biosphere reservations in Romania and it is in the neighbourhood of intensely humanized and personalized areas, such as “Maramureşului Land,” “Năsăudului Land” and “Bistriţa Aurie.”

The united arrangement effort from the Rodnei Mountains, the tourist spas of Borşa and Sângeorz-Băi, and the neighbouring rural settlements in the three counties will become relevant if the peripheral road infrastructure is completed by reintroducing into the traffic circuit the medieval road over the Rotunda Mountain Pass between Şanţ and Cărlibaba.

4. **The integrated-interregional tourist arrangement** in the Căliman Mountains may lead to the co-operation of three development regions including the Bistriţa-Năsăud County (in the North-West Development Region), the Suceava County (in the North-Eastern Development Region) and the Mureş County (in the Central Development Region). Their objective is Căliman, the most representative Carpathian volcanic massif, and its neighbouring humanized areas: Bârgău, The Dornelor Depression, the Topliţa-Deda Defile. The tourist arrangement is favoured by three qualitative physical-geographical features, which exist in all the three counties: the mountain-alpine landscape; the lakes in the Bistriţa-Năsăud County (Colibiţa) and, in the near future, in the Mureş County (Răstoliţa), and the hydromineral sources. To all these; we must add the specific mountain rural landscape. These will induce arrangements generating specific types and forms of tourism, all of them stimulated by a favourable position potential.

5. **The integrated-cross-border tourist arrangements** will be possible in the near future by valorizing and increasing tourist demand.

In this context, the provisions could stimulate health tourism, pleasure tourism, and rural tourism. They will rely on the hydromineral resources in the counties of Bihor and Satu Mare, and on similar ones in Hungary.

A second such case is the Maramureş County – “Maramureşului Land” and the neighbouring county north of the Tisa River, in Ukraine. This is a joint project to be promoted. The project could valorize the anthropic tourist heritage, which has many special components that give it a unique unity (the Peri Abbey and the abbey to be finished at Săpânţa – Peri).

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