

TOURISM DEVELOPMENT AND CROSS-BORDER COOPERATION IN THE HUNGARIAN-ROMANIAN BORDER REGION

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Abstract: Tourism began to play an important role as a tool of development regarding cross-border cooperations after the change of the regime. A more efficient cooperation is needed to employ the potentials in tourism-related development of environmental endowments as well as the significant improvement in standards of other factors. The aim of the paper is to reflect the importance of tourism in cross border cooperation through the example of two border regions. The methodology is based on a quality and quantity analysis of a specific database and programs. We are experiencing more and more common tourism activities in both cases.

Key words: tourism, regions, Euroregion, cross border cooperation, Hungarian-Romanian border

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INTRODUCTION

Following the changes of regimes in Central Europe, research into border regions has been increasingly adverted. However, various suggestions of researchers came into light on the definition and role of borders. Below, an overview of the most relevant theories and functions of borders as well as on border studies will be given.

According to the theory by Haggett (1979), the features of border regions are connected to the development of borders. By the author, three types of borders are distinguished as subsequent boundaries, antecedent boundaries and superimposed boundaries. In case the border is demarcated after a given ethnic group is settled down and these coincide, subsequent boundaries are mentioned. When the border was established after the settlement and the ethnic group are adjusted to this line, the border is an antecedent boundary. When the border line does not fit into the ethnic group's line of settlement, such are superimposed boundaries.

Ratti's theory is based on the functions and the impact of borders (Ratti, 1993). By the author, closed, filtering and opened borders are distinguished. A closed border will fundamentally determine the given area's regional characteristics as a border with rather limiting features will intensify peripheral processes (Houtum & Van, 2000). As a consequence of long-term closedness, cross-border regions become, from the aspects of both geography and socio-economics, peripheral areas (Ratti, 1993). Such regions have basic features as transmigration, ageing and lower living conditions. Filtering borders have a role of filtering disadvantageous elements and by this protecting the region's own, internal economy and living standards (Hardi & Rechnitzer, 2003; Matlovicova et al., 2015). An unlimited flow of population, labour force, capital and services, the fall down of administrative limitations are achieved at opened borders, thus cross-border regions at both sides will satisfactorily develop making up an integrated economic area.

According to Nemes Nagy (1998), the meaning of borders in everyday life is related to a content of dividing line, end or the rim of something and by this includes peripheral features. Thus basically 4 important functions of borders are emphasized: division, connection, conflict and filtering that can be present in a concentrated, sporadic, linear and zonal form. The model by Martinez is based on the interrelationships developed between the two sides; his studies were primarily carried out at the U.S.-Mexican border (Martinez, 1994). According to this theory, alienated, co-existent, independent and integrated border regions exist. Their socio-economic features vary according to the intensity of such relations.

Frontier and boundary are distinguished by Mező. Frontier is an imaginary border zone where a given civilisation meets the area not yet influenced whereas a boundary (political border) will also include the area demarcated (Mező, 2000).

By Hansen and Ratti (1993), border regions are assessed as areas for which socio-economic life is significantly influenced by being situated in the proximity of an international border. Based on this, border regions found along a national border and in a peripheral situation characterized by centripetal forces towards the inner regions of the country as well as cross-border regions where the peripheral situation becomes central and connective and can be described by centrifugal forces are distinguished.

Border regions and cross-border cooperations in Europe are classified into three types (Sersli & Kiszal, 2000). The first type has been developed in a Western European environment and is exclusively a feature of this region with several common features as a relative backwardness (underdevelopment) to its environment, high unemployment within the country as well as underdeveloped infrastructure. Such are the French-Italian or the Spanish-Portugal borders. The second type is a somewhat modified version of the above with the difference being that problems originate, in general, in the

cross-border planning (environmental, infrastructural or border stations) deficiencies of the neighbouring regions. The third type includes countries either not only bordering EU countries or even themselves are not as such.

This type can be further divided into three subtypes. The first includes the border regions of nations classified as among the developed regions of the continent as e.g. Austria, Switzerland, Norway or Finland. The second subgroup, the so-called Central European type includes the border regions of the Czech Republic, Poland, Slovakia, Slovenia and Hungary, whereas the third one is the so-called Eastern European type with the Baltic States, the European member states of the former Soviet Union and the countries of the Balkan Peninsula). These areas can be described by peripheral features, they are basically the peripheries of the periphery (migration, ageing, high unemployment).

Almost one-third of the territory and 21.9 percent of the population of Hungary could be regarded as borderland in January 2012 (Figure 1). In general, these LAU-1 (former NUTS-4) microregions are backward areas in the light of the most important statistical indicators, because they are characterised by low population density and low level of enterprising spirit, significant out-migration and unfavourable income situation (Kovács & Bajmóczy, 2001; Bujdosó et al., 2011). The Hungarian-Romania border makes up 13% of total the borderline of Hungary (Baranyi, 2009).

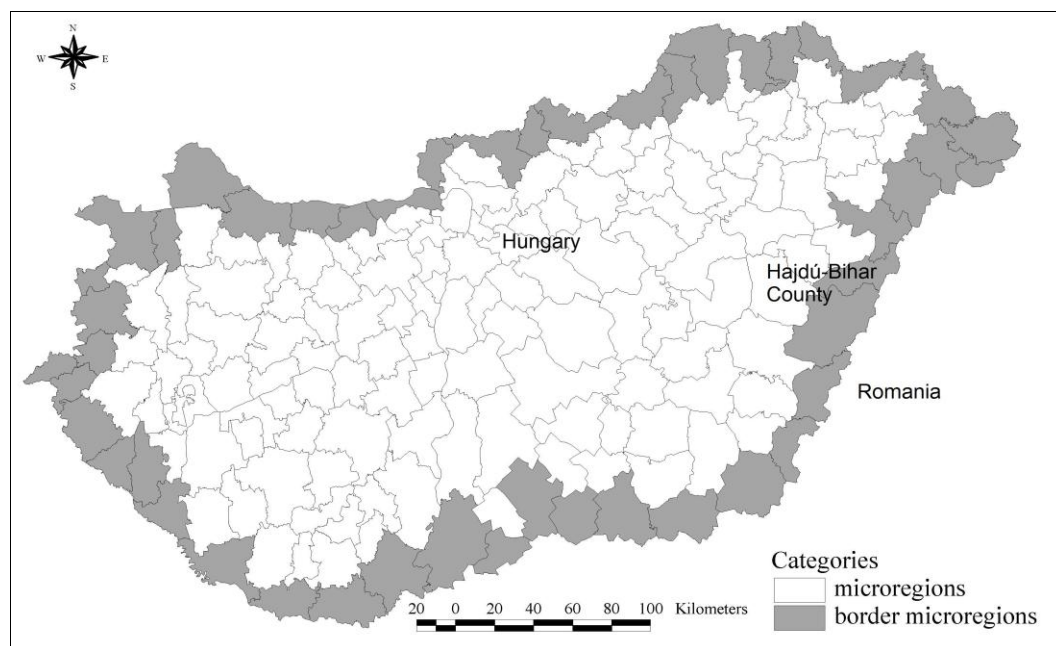


Figure 1. Border microregions in Hungary
(Source: edited by Bujdosó et al., 2011)

Lots of ideas came to light in order to resolve the peripheral situation, but most of them remained unsuccessful. At the same time, tourism and tourism development were regarded as a possibility to break out in every concept (Süli-Zakar et al., 2001; Michalkó, 2004; Dávid-Baros, 2007; Kozma, 2006, 2007; Dusek & Szalka, 2012, Péntes, 2013). Before clearing the importance of tourism in the cross border co operations theoretical bases have to be explained.

METHOD

This paper is partly based on former reserches and calculations conducted by the authors, on the other hand contains original works. The methodology used in this paper is based on a quality and quantity analysis of the specific database and programs which supported the tourism development in Romanian–Hungarian cross-border area. Hoover index as a type of correlation calculations was also used in order to explain the differencies and concerns of the surveyed border region. To sum it up, both synthetisation and analysis were used during the research.



Figure 2. The Hajdú-Bihar-Bihar Euroregion
(Source: Hajdú-Bihar Megyei Kereskedelmi és Iparkamara, 2003)

THE ROLE OF TOURISM IN THE CROSS BORDER COOPERATION GIVING EXAMPLES OF THE HUNGARIAN-ROMANIAN BORDER REGION

One of the most important and flourish cooperation among the Hungarian-Romania border is the Hajdú-Bihar-Bihar Euroregion so that the subject of our survey was this part of the border. The Euroregion can be found in the centre of the Carpathian basin on the Eastern part of the Plain, and is comprised of one county in Hungary and one in Romania (Kovács, 1990). The Euroregion occupies 13,775 square kilometres, 4.2% of the two countries, there are 1,170,642 inhabitants, which is 3.7% of the population of the two countries. Its population density is 84 person/quadrat kilometer, which is below the

national average. In addition the rate of the country population in Bihar County is higher, which indicates the higher proportion of urbanised areas in the Hungarian county of the Euroregion (Süli-Zakar et al, 2001).

The area of the Hajdú-Bihar-Bihar Euroregion is composed of two, well-distinguished parts, flat land and mountainous areas (Bujdosó, 1999). The hydrographic conditions of the area are characterized by the lack of large water surface rivers, then again it is relatively rich in man-made lakes and thermal springs. The natural flora and fauna of the region can hardly be observed in its originality (Dávid, 1999).

TOURISM IN THE EUROREGION

The tourism of Hungary has been characterized for a long time by the high number of international tourists and low touristic incomes. Nothing proves it better than the fact that our share of the worldwide tourist arrivals is 3-4%, however, that of the touristic revenues hardly reaches 0.5% (it is only 1% even with non-registered revenues). The tourism of the county started a relapse in the first quarter of 2010, primarily as the result of the events within the country and in the world, nevertheless it is favourable that the number of guest nights spent by foreigners increased by 14% compared to the previous three months.

The Romanian tourism has also been characterized for a long time by the high number of tourist arrivals and low touristic incomes compared to it. Nothing proves it better than the fact that their share of the worldwide tourist arrivals is 1.5%, however, that of the touristic revenues is hardly 0.5%. Concerning the amount of incomes the situation in Romania has been constantly worsening since the change of regime, though the number of foreign participants in tourism increases year by year. Regarding spending for the time being mostly tourists of low spending come to Romania. This indicates that the foundations of quality tourism have not yet been established.

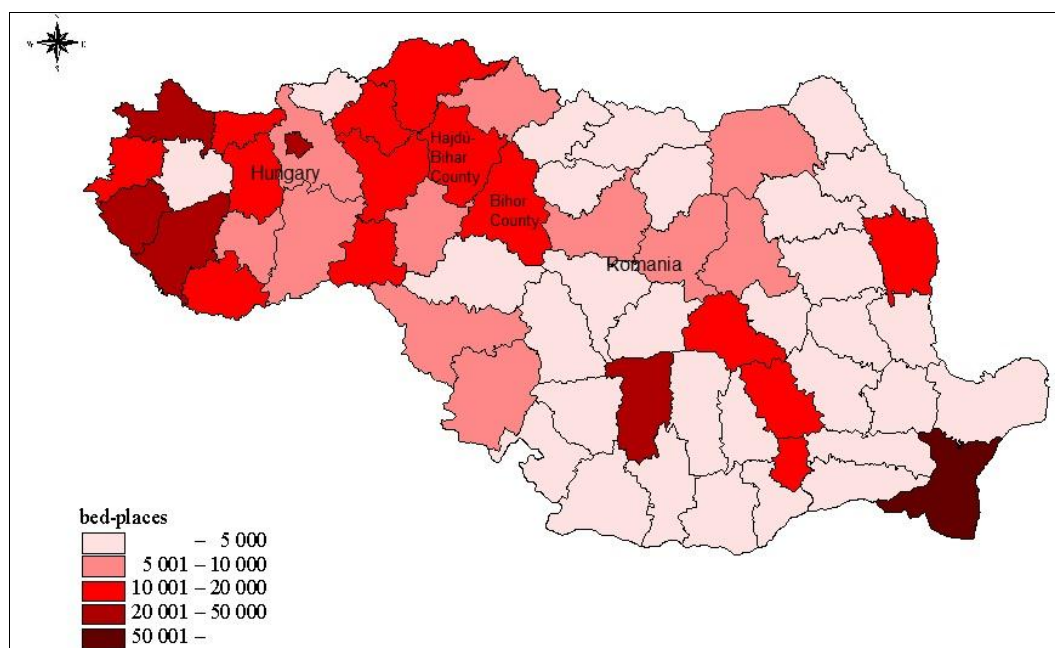


Figure 3. The number of bed-places in the Hajdú-Bihar-Bihar Euroregion
(Source: Bujdosó et al., 2009)

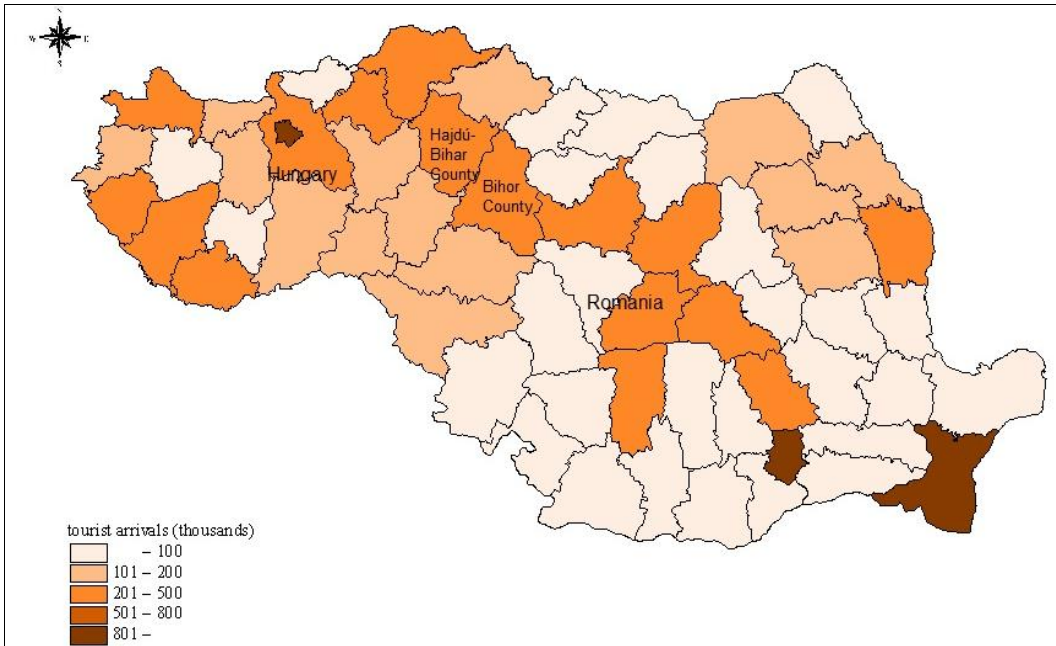


Figure 4. The number of tourist arrivals in the Hajdú-Bihar-Bihar Euroregion
(Source: Bujdosó et al., 2009)

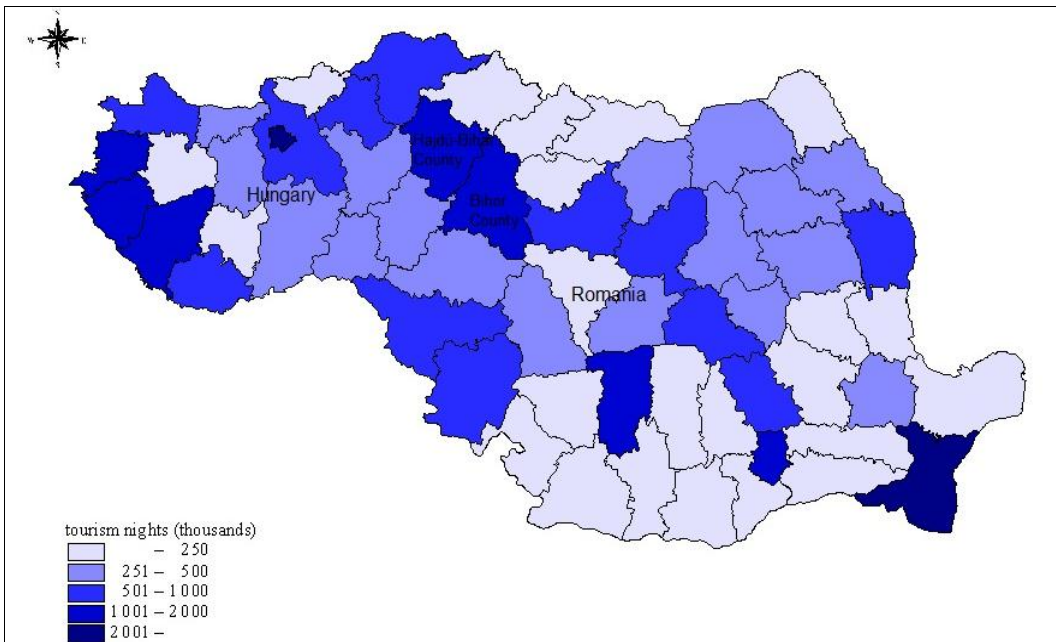


Figure 5: The number of tourism nights in the Hajdú-Bihar-Bihar Euroregion
(Source: Bujdosó et al., 2009)

According to the data of 2009 (the data were available for that year regarding both territories) both the counties of Bihar and Hajdú Bihar played very important

role regarding tourism in their own countries. Based on their bed-places, both the county of Bihor (10,455) and the county of Hajdú-Bihar (17,330) are at the fifth place in their own lands. Regarding tourist arrivals, another picture can be drawn. 300,000 guests arrived at the quarters of Hajdú-Bihar in 2005, by which data the county is at the sixth place. Whereas the number of the guests in Bihor was 216,000, this value was the ninth in Romania in the studied year.

Regarding tourism nights, the indicators show a slightly picture in both counties. Bihor with its 1,131,000 guest-nights is at the fourth place, while Hajdú-Bihar with 1,074,000 guest-nights is at the fifth. As far as the capacity utilization of commercial accommodation is concerned, it can be found, that both counties were at the fourth place in their countries in 2005. In this respect, the county of Bihor had a more favourable rate, which is only by 6.4% behind the county of Covasna, the best in Romania. The average capacity utilization in Hajdú-Bihar was 39.4%, which is by 22% behind Budapest having the most advantageous position in Hungary.

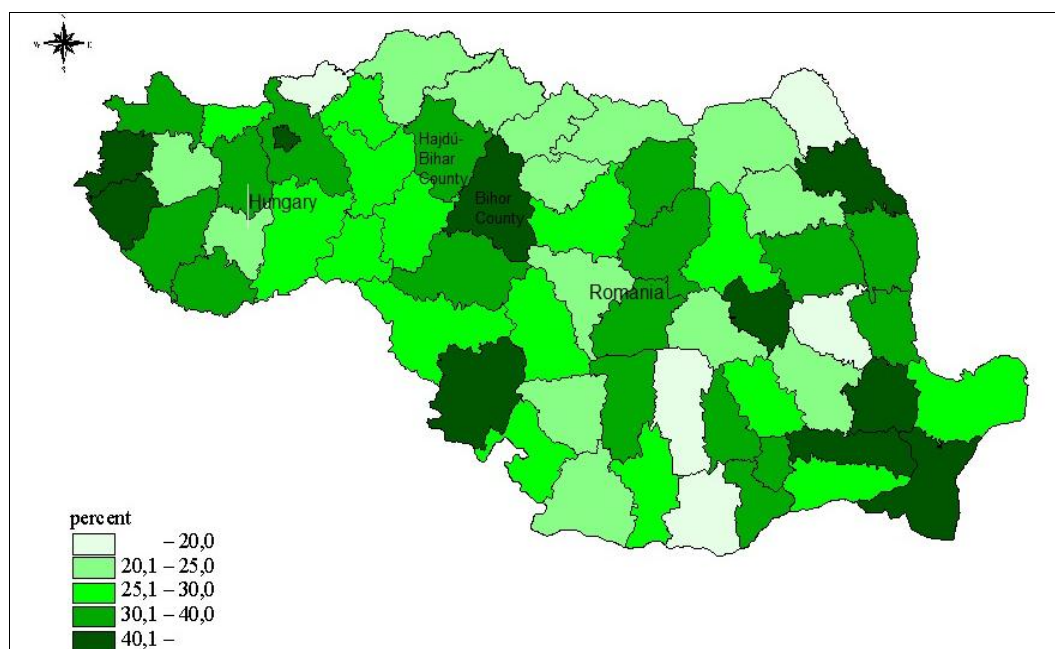


Figure 6. Capacity utilization of commercial accommodation in the Hajdú-Bihar-Bihor Euroregion (Source: Bujdosó et al., 2009)

Romanian–Hungarian Cross-Border Cooperation Frame began in 1996 with the PHARE CBC Programme which was extended to a border region between two candidate countries to EU integration (the period 1996-2003). It was followed by the cross-border co-operation program PHARE CBC, with Hungary-Romania Cross-border Co-operation Programme 2004 – 2006, respectively 2007-2013, which is supposed to meet the challenges and opportunities of the cross-border area, by capitalizing the previous experience (Ilies et al., 2011).

Another way to support the partnership between the border region was the INTERREG IV C Programme, a co operation area within the whole territory of the EU. Regarding tourism the set up of the authorities in the field of tourism, protection and promotion of the cultural and natural heritage can be mentioned as beneficiaries.

Within the framework of the South-East Europe Programme trans-national partnerships were created. The Romanian–Hungarian Cross-Border Co-operation Programme is continuing the crossborder co-operation programs Interreg IIIA in Hungary and Phare CBC in Romania, being implemented within a joint institutional structure by using joint funds, extending and developing the previous experience and results (Ilies et al., 2011).

SUPPORT OF TOURISM ON THE HUNGARIAN SIDE OF THE BORDER

Tourism is one of the most important tools of regional development. It plays an outstanding role in the alignment of underdeveloped areas like the Hungarian-Romanian border. This chapter deals with the distribution of the tourist supports obtained. The database of this analysis was based on the EMIR that contained the accepted touristic development supports of the NFT (National Development Plan), the ÚMFT (New Hungary National Development Plan) and the ÚSZT (New Széchenyi Development Plan).

This summary reflects the highlights of a survey conducted for the whole border region of Hungary (Bujdosó & Pénez, 2012). In this case only the microregions of the studied border will be analysed.

The Hungarian-Romanian border region covers 10 microregions with different development and tourist supports granted. As far as these territories are concerned the Gyulai microregion – and the tourist developments of the town Gyula – received the largest amount of development support (more than one billion HUF) from the NFT between 2004 and 2006 while Nyírbátori microregions received more than 2 billion HUF supports from the ÚMFT.

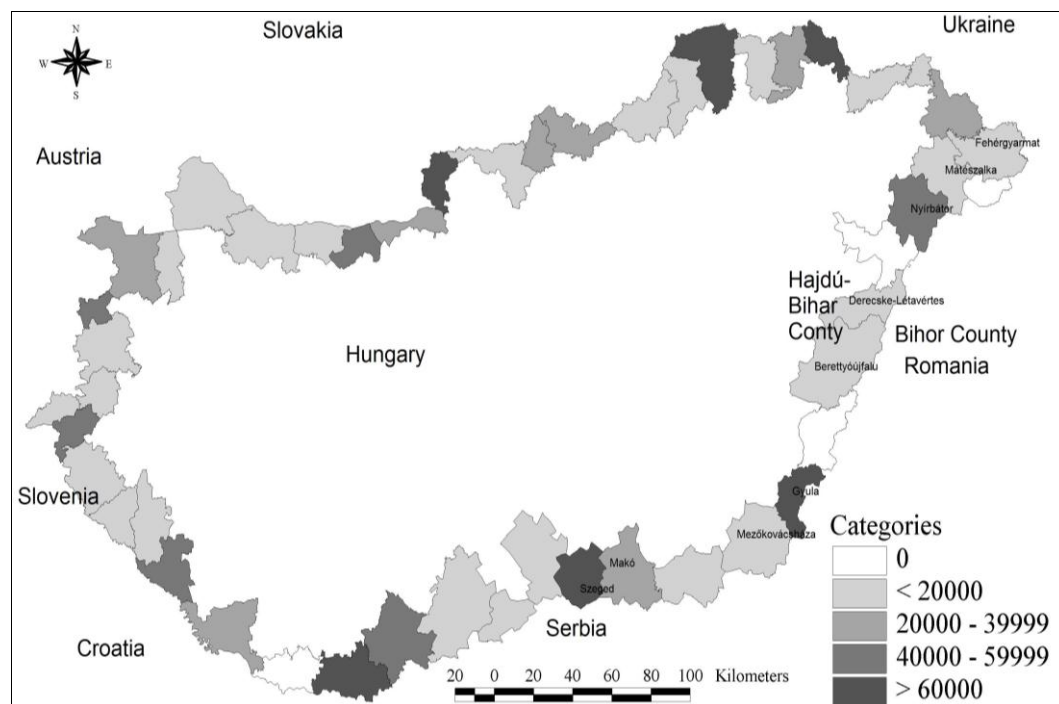


Figure 7. The total value of the touristic supports per capita in the border microregions of Hungary, 2011, HUF (Source: Bujdosó-Pénez, 2012)

The summarized supports per capita values of the two periods are illustrated by Figure 7. Polarized distribution of the resources can be seen that tends to represent significant spatial differences (Bujdosó & Péntzes, 2012). Four border microregions had no kind of supports from these applications. Most of them are backward along the Hungarian-Romanian border (the Csengeri, the Hajdúhadházi and the Sarkadi microregions). However, at the same time, the largest values of support can be found in this part of the borderland (the Gyulai microregion). According to Bujdosó-Péntzes the microregions can be categorised by the approved supports per capita and by the competitiveness besides the correlation-calculation (Bujdosó & Péntzes, 2012). The dynamical categories of competitiveness provide a mosaic-like pattern (Table 1).

Table 1. Border microregions categorized by the supports per capita and the types of static competitiveness

(Source: Bujdosó-Péntzes, 2012 (bold- microregion among the Hungarian-Romanian border))

Categories		Multi-factored advantage	Single-factored advantage	Single-factored disadvantage	Multi-factored disadvantage	Complex disadvantage
Without support	–	–	–	Csengeri	Sellyei	Hajdúhadházi, Sarkadi
<20,000	Encsi	Berettyóújfalui, Fehérgyarmati, Kiskunhalasi, Komáromi, Körmendi, Makói, Mátészalkai, Mosonmagyaróvári, Lenti, Szombathelyi	Kazincbarcikai	Balassagyarmati, Ózdi, Záhonyi	Bácsalmási, Bajai, Győri, Kapuvár-Beledi, Letenyei, Mezőkovács-házai, Nagykanizsai, Szentgotthárdi	Bodrogközi, Derecske-Létavértesi,
20,000-40,000	Abaúj-Hegyközi, Vásárosnaményi	Esztergomi, Sopron-Fertődi, Szegedi	–	Szécsényi	Barcsi, Salgótarjáni	–
40,000-60,000	Csurgói	Nyírbátori, Óriszentpéteri, Tatai	–	–	Kőszegi	Mohácsi
>600,000	Mórahalmi	Edelényi, Gyulai, Sátoraljaújhelyi, Siklósi, Szobi	–	–	–	–

Microregions with competitive advantage received financial support for their touristic developments. It is an interesting fact that most of the microregions with complex or multi-factored advantage, among others the 7 on the Hungarian-Romanian border region were in a backward situation. The touristic dynamism of these microregions arose from the low level of basic data in 2000 however the developments of the touristic indicators by 2008 were not significant which is reflected by their moderate positions of static competitiveness.

On the other hand, the tourism of these peripheral territories can be characterised by the higher participation of inland tourists that are less sensitive to the economic recession than the foreign visitors. Tourism is highly responsive to the changes of the

macroeconomic environment because the effect of the narrowing income of individuals and companies can be especially destructive on the touristic expenditures. The result of this negative process mainly affected the territories with developed tourism (e.g. by the absence of orders from the business sector) (Bujdosó & Péntzes, 2012).

CONCLUSION

Although the microregions among the Hungarian-Romanian can be regarded as heterogeneous from a touristic aspect and can be characterised by significant spatial disparities, the tourist potential of the Hungarian-Romanian border region is very important. The same problems being identified on both sides of the border: small dispersion of tourist activities, insignificant average tourist stay and the related spending (excluding shopping tourism), local destination are very little European and internationally known and finally a small share of tourism represent a sector in the economy (Ilies et al. 2011). According to the surveys both area play an important role in their own country concerning tourism however the development of the sector has territorial differences.

In the Hungarian side the homogeneity of supports did not decrease effectively by the end of the investigated period, but the concentration of resources preferring the developed areas partly melted. The resource-absorption capacity of the underdeveloped microregions is much lower than in the developed ones and most part of the backward territories primarily concentrate on the development of basic physical and human infrastructure (Péntzes et al., 2008, Péntzes, 2010, Radics et al. 2011).

We think that common tourism development programmes and projects would improve the competitiveness of the Hungarian-Romanian borderregion at the European Union level, stimulating at regional sustainable development.

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