TENDENCIES IN THE CLASSIFICATION AND HIERACHIZATION OF TOURISM RESOURCES

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ABSTRACT. – Tendencies in the Classification and Hierarchization of Tourism Resources. The present study aims to emphasize the similarities, but also the deep differences between the concepts of classification and hierarchization, especially when it comes to their applicability. Apart from the theoretical notions, a model of hierarchization is added at the end of the study. It is created based on the four indicators proposed by SPNT that are discussed in this paper and it also refers to indices of tourism supply and demand, used in order to intersect the study more with the economic side of tourism. The results of the study are illustrated through the application of the model created to Neamț County.

Keywords: classification, hierarchization, tourism resources, tourism potential.

1. INTRODUCTION

The matter of tourism resources classification has quite a long history, representing one of the main aspects approached by the old school in the field of tourism. Many writers proposed different models of tourism resources classification created in accordance with their own views. The necessity of these classifications is obvious, because the tourists as well as those who invest in tourism in order to create products have to know what they deal with. But what all these classifications lack is the emphasis on the value of tourism resources, better said, their differentiation according to the criterion of the importance they can have in the eyes of the tourist. Therefore, the starting point of this study is the wish to highlight the fact that too little has been insisted upon hierarchization compared to the attention given to classification, its purpose being to emphasise the ways in which tourism development can benefit from the organization into successive ranks of the ''natural and anthropogenic environment's components, which due to their qualities and particularities are acknowledged, submitted and exploited through tourism''(Government Decree no. 58/1998).

Being given the fact that nowadays tourism plays an important role in economy, a hierarchization of the tourism resources can be the answer to the multiple problems the investors, as well as the tourists, are confronted with. From an economic point of

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view, the utility of a hierarchy comes from the fact that it can help establish priorities of investments in tourism, as knowing the areas that are worth investing is essential for the success of a business in tourism. For tourists, on the other hand, such a ranking of tourism resources would mean a better management of their holiday time, because if they are provided with a list of the "top attractions" at their future destination, they could organize their trips in a manner that would assure the best consumption of the products they are offered.

2. DEFINITIONS AND CONCEPTS

Defining the main components of the tourism phenomena proves to be a difficult task, given the diversity of opinions of those interested in the matter. The elements of interest for this study, such as tourism potential or tourism resource, have many different definitions in the geographical literature. On the other hand, processes like classification or hierarchization, which will be clarified for our research, do not change their general meaning when applied to tourism approach.

For example, in the Romanian literature, tourism potential is seen as

Fig 1. The components of tourism potential.
Source: Bulai (2013)

"the sum of natural, historical-cultural, social-demographical and technical-economic components […] which present tourism exploitation possibilities and give certain functionality for tourism" (Glăvan, 2006). Other scholars' definition sees it as "the sum of possibilities that the natural and social environment can provide for the tourism activities, no matter if they are used or not for these purposes" (Muntele, Iaţu, 2006). Apparently similar – both definitions emphasize the role of natural and cultural conditions of the destination in further development perspectives of the destination – the first scholar point out that tourism potential is a sum of identifiable elements whilst the following ones point on the immaterial vision of potential seen as possibilities of interaction between different elements.

Both approaches are synthesised in fig. 1 (Bulai, 2013) which represents a theoretical model in which tourism resources, social-economic context and the material base of tourism appear as constituent elements and criteria of the tourism potential.

A more intriguing definition presents the tourism resources as "tourist attractions suitable to be visited, on one side, and raw material that can be directly exploited in tourism activities, on the other side" (Glăvan, 2006). Through this definition it is suggested that a resource, either natural or anthropogenic, can be an attraction in itself (such as a cave, mountain or historical monument) or an element that is able to determine or even
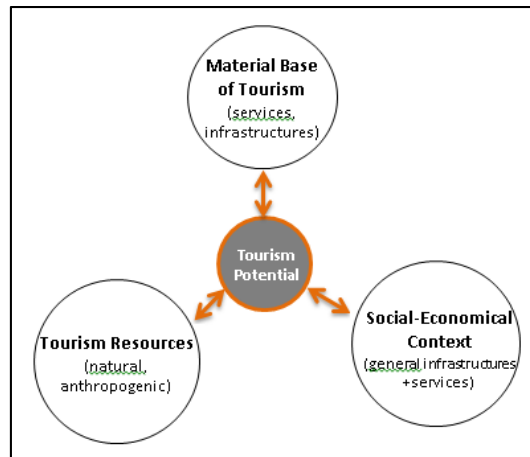
enhance one place attractiveness either by its capacity to generate a tourism product or by the stakeholders' capacity of further developing and capitalizing it. In this case, snow or mineral waters, for example, are essential for the development of a ski resort or spa facility, of course, if stakeholders have the interest and means to develop it while there is a certain level of demand for it. Thus, tourism potential can be redefined in new terms, as the beneficial relationship between the potential cost of investment in a resource and its capacity to generate further benefits.

Either if we talk about defining them as natural or anthropogenic or about creating other elaborate groups based on the relationships that exist between them, tourism resources have always been classified with the purpose of delineating tourism areas or emphasizing the different types of tourism that exist and the way tourists relate to them. The need of classifying them is also related to their different contributions to the level of tourism potential or to their level of actual capitalization and thus, generation of benefits.

The verb "to classify" means to "arrange or organize according to class or category" (Cambridge Dictionary, 2014). In any classification (as act or process), the central element is the criterion, as the connecting base of all the elements to be organized. The choice of the criterion is up to the author of the classification, which makes it quite a subjective work. The risk lies in the lack of comparability between different geographical elements or aspects and the poor instrumentalization of the process. Many scholars in the field of Tourism Geography tend to use classification as an end in itself as tourism resources are classified in numerous and multiscalar ways but without emphasizing the importance of the differences (Glăvan, 2006; Muntele, Iaţu, 2006).

A process that uses the criterion as a fundamental base is hierarchization, derived from "hierarchy", which represents "any system of persons or things ranked one above another"(Cambridge Dictionary, 2014) and has religious roots, the Greek term "hierarchia" referring to the celestial hierarchy and to the ecclesiastical one (The Catholic Encyclopedia, 2014).

The process of "hierarchization" can be more subjective than the "classification" but despite its lack of objectivity, a hierarchy proves to be more efficient than a classification due to the simple fact the studied elements (the natural or cultural resources in this case) are ranked to one another, presenting the idea of a scale of importance, while assigning the resources to classes only helps to connect the ones that have something in common, without revealing the differences that exist between them when it comes to their value.

In tourism studies, models of hierarchization could be applied in many ways, from the star ratings of the accommodation structures to the ratings given by tourists themselves on different travel websites (Trip Advisor, 2014). The criteria used for the two hierarchies above are very different, especially concerning their level of subjectivity, because while hotels are ranked according to some strict standards, ratings that the tourists give are purely subjective, based on the emotions they have experienced at the destination and on their own perception on attractiveness.

3. FROM TOURISM RESOURCES CLASSIFICATION TO HIERARCHIZATION

In the geographical literature, the terms classification and hierarchization do not have the same frequency of occurrence, the tendency of creating hierarchies being far less used than the one of proposing classifications of the tourism resources. One obvious reason for this is the vast amount of work required for the creation of a model of hierarchization, which could hardly be done with the elimination of any shred of subjectivity.

Fig. 2. Classification of natural tourism resources.
Source: Glăvan (2006)

There is not, therefore, a universally accepted model of hierarchization, through which the tourism resources, and by extension, the tourism regions from all over the world, could be evaluated comparatively with the purpose of deciding upon their different levels of importance.

This paper will present some of the tendencies manifested in tourism studies with regard to the classification and hierarchization of the tourism resources, insisting upon the higher utility of hierarchization, but also on the connection between the two methods.

Some scholars (Glăvan, 2006; Swizewski, Oancea, 1977) propose models of tourism resources classification through the complex structure of natural tourism potential, which refers, in fact, to the resources provided by nature that "present an interest for tourism and can be exploited through tourism and technical development". In his work, Glăvan (2006) manages to enumerate the natural elements that can attract tourists and, therefore, can be transformed into tourism products, but he also admits that "natural tourism potential components participate unequally and differentially to the composition of the tourism potential", introducing in this way the idea of a necessary hierarchization, but without taking a step in this direction.

Figure 2, which illustrates the classification made by Glăvan (2006) reveals, therefore, an image of what nature puts at disposal of tourism, but their presence on the same level does not leave room to any appreciation of one of the elements as being more attractive to tourists than the others. We face, as stated before, an array of elements brought together by the fact that they all belong to nature and they all represent potential attractions that can be tourism products or can be turned into tourism products.

The classification of tourism resources facilitates the elaboration of a typology of tourism types, its necessity resulting from "the applicative side of the geography of tourism, from practice, which imposes the realization of scientific studies of the typical features, of the relations between the types of tourism phenomena" (Swizewski, Oancea, 1977). Although not a classification of the tourism resources, which represents the

subject of this study, the classification that will be presented as it follows relies on the knowledge of the categories of these resources. Based on the components provided by the natural and anthropogenic environment, Swizewski and Oancea differentiate the structural tourism types, identifying 6 main types: mountainous tourism, health tourism, sport tourism, cultural tourism, commercial tourism and pilgrimage tourism. This typology is determined by the existence of a wide variety of components, such as mountains, mineral waters, sports competitions, cultural monuments, fairs and exhibitions or religious sites, but it is still incomplete, being obvious, for example, the omission of the sea tourism, which represents, without a shadow of a doubt, one of the main types of tourism nowadays, if one refers to the number of tourists it attracts.

When talking about a typology of tourism, Swizewski and Oancea (1977) argue that its theoretical and practical importance "has a scientific side, a didactic side and a practical-applicative side in the economy of tourism, being given the fact that, this way it is open the path of exploitation of new territories where the economy of tourism can and must compensate the insufficiency of other branches of economy". Still, the typologies proposed are not exactly the best ways of insisting on the practical importance, but only on the theoretical one, this being just a first step in the direction of getting acquainted with the economic side of tourism. Therefore, for example, these typologies do not highlight the areas where there are enough resources, from a quantitative and qualitative point of view, which could have compensated "the insufficiency" just mentioned. The best way of emphasizing these regions is through the elaboration of a system that ranks the attractions to one another by evaluating their tourism attractiveness, which allows a comparison between the resources based on their importance.

The models of classification described above are the root of the attempts that have been made until now to create systems of hierarchization, those who tried to attribute scores to the components that are considered as parts of the tourism potential, starting in their attempts from already existing models of classification.

A model of hierarchization, that could be of interest for this study, and that, first of all, classifies the elements to be taken into consideration, before including them into a hierarchy, is the one realised by the SPNT or Spatial Planning of National Territory (2009) (in Romanian – "PATN" – "Planul de Amenajare a Teritoriului Național").

The SPNT proposes an evaluation of the tourism potential of the territorial units of Romania, using its own methodology, created by relating to four main indicators: natural resources, cultural resources, tourism infrastructure and technical infrastructure. For each of the variables contained by these indicators it has been established a score (table 1) based on a methodology that the authors did not clarify or motivate. This score has two different compounding methods – a fixed value according to presence or lack of a feature or represents a percentage of the maximum score that has been obtained by the best classified territorial unit. Table 1 only synthesises the maximum value for that resource or class of resource, in order to give an idea of the relative importance given to them. By summing up the indices, the SPNT identifies a value of tourism potential for each territorial unit.

This method of evaluation has the advantages of creating a system that can be applied at a national scale and of taking into consideration all the elements that represent a premise for tourism development. The chosen indices suggest, where the

tourism potential is seen as a sum of tourism resources (a vision close to that of Glăvan, 2006, and Neguț, 2004) - natural and anthropogenic resources and general and tourism infrastructure, which are included in the social-economic context and the material base of tourism that appeared in the graphical representation presented before.

Anyway, this model is prone to criticism, a main drawback being the "disproportions in scoring each index, under- / over-representations of certain indicators or lack of taking into consideration new tourism attractions or facilities" (Iațu, Bulai, 2011). One notices first the difference between the scores received by the tourism and general infrastructure, as it is difficult to understand why the lowest score corresponds to the first one, when the existence of accommodation structures, first of all, but also of the leisure and treatment facilities is an essential condition for the existence of any tourism destination.

Another disadvantage of a hierarchy resulted from this methodology is the fact that the summing of the values of all the indices with the purpose of determining the tourism potential may hide the particularities, and therefore the deficiencies of the analysed areas. For example, in figure 3, both Roman and Ceahlău are represented as areas with a high tourism potential. Nonetheless, the tourism indicators are very different. In Ceahlău the natural resources are significant, with a score of 15, due, first of all, to the topography represented by mountains, while Roman is characterized by a score of 4 at the same category. What the second territorial unit compensates with is the score it receives for general infrastructure, 24 out of 30, which, without being as important as the

Type	Variables	Basic Indicators	Max pt.
Natural Resources (max. 25p)	Natural environment	Relief/Topography	4
		Geomorphology	1
		Vegetation	1
		Wildlife	1
		Waters	1
		Landscape	2
	Natural factors	Mineral spa waters	10
		Therapy lakes	
		Therapy mud	
		Mophets, sulphurous	
	Protected areas	Biosphere reserves	5
		National parks	
		Natural parks	
		Other reserves	
Cultural Resources (max. 25p)	Historical monuments	Archaeology	8
		Architecture	
		Monuments	
		Memorials	
	Museums	Museums/ Public collections	9
	Arts and crafts	Traditional events, customs, handcrafts	8 or 4
	Cultural institutions	Philharmonics, orchestras, choirs etc	8 or 4
	Events	Festivals, holidays	0 /4
Tourism infrastructure (max.20p)	Lodging	Hotels, guesthouses, camping, campsites, motels, bungalows, etc.	7
	Treatment	Installations	5
	Conference halls	Conferences, congress, exhibition halls	6
	Leisure facilities	Ski slopes Cable transportation	1
	Other leisure facilities	Golf courses, water-ski entertainment parks, horse riding, beaches	1
General infrastructure (max. 30p)	Accessibility to transport network	Harbour /Airport	1/5
		European road	5
		National road and/or railways	5
	Household equipment	Running water, sewerage	5
		Natural gas	4
	Telecom	Mobile phone coverage, Landlines	5

Table 1. Variables and indicators used in the evaluation of tourism potential (adapted from SPNT document, 2009)

existence of the tourism resources themselves in the activity of tourism, has a great influence on the final image of the distribution of areas with high tourism potential. It is then difficult to assess the consequences of such appreciation of scores for the future

investments (capitalization and overall further development) and that will make the object of further discussions. When thinking of an investment in leisure tourism (leisure is still perceived by many as the core-motivation for tourism), Ceahlău will be chosen by most of investors, while only some investors in business facilities will choose Roman. When looking at statistics, in 2013, in Ceahlău municipality, a total capacity of 1332 beds have produced 29016 overnight stays while in the municipality of Roman only 324 existing beds have produced 34788 overnights. Of course, small rural guesthouses in Ceahlău have a difficult monitoring system of statistical data (so the actual numbers are a lot higher) but still, this shows us that further discussion is needed when dealing with terms like Tourism Potential.

Another criticism that can be brought to the SPNT methodology is the fact that the attractiveness of the cultural resources is not contextualized, for example all the monuments have received the same score, without being differentiated by the criterion of their historical importance.

This method has also another two other weaknesses: "First, summing up natural and cultural resources might not be relevant as their degree of impact on the territory (such as visitor overnights or currency incomes) is completely different. Second, a resource (i.e. mountain gorges or a protected area) does not always need tourism infrastructures (such as accommodation facilities) on the same territorial unit as their significance for tourism often relies on their relative isolation or wilderness" (Iațu, Bulai, 2011).

Fig. 3. Tourism potential score in the territorial units of Neamț County. *Data source:* SPNT (2007)

When assessing tourism attractiveness, we may also use online hierarchization, which nowadays plays an essential role in the decisions the tourists make. There are travel websites with databases on destinations where people write reviews and rate the places they have visited, their scores being a clear image of how tourists make their own hierarchies, relevant and useful, indeed, for giving the following potential tourist an image of the choices he has, but with one main drawback: their deep subjectivity.

We choose as object of analysis the website TripAdvisor©, through which more or less experienced tourists contribute to the creation of the image of most of the tourist destinations of the world, by two apparently simple actions: reviewing and rating. Nonetheless, not as simple are the consequences these actions can have upon the future tourist flows in the reviewed areas, because the image the reviewers create can be either positive or negative, which translates as either a rise in the number of tourists that visit a certain destination, or, on the contrary, a decrease.
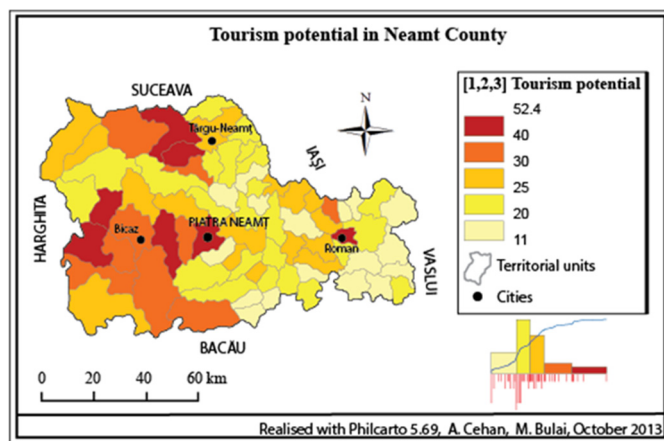
It all depends on the impression a certain destination, hotel or restaurant made on the reviewer himself, the top-rated attractions being decided not based on the number of reviews they receive, which could also give an idea of the number of tourists that visited a certain destination, but on the rating the reviewers gave to the element analysed.

The method that literally determines the creation of a hierarchy is that of the rating, through which every evaluated component receives a rank, but the impact the description made has on the future tourist qualifies these reviews as methods of subordinating the destinations to one another too.

Besides deciding over the rating, by relating to a scale that goes from "Terrible" to "Excellent" and sharing your "first-hand experience", as a reviewer you can also offer technical details about what you chose to review, such as whether a fee is perceived or not, the length of the visit or the facilities the attraction owns.

To the credibility of the ranks the destinations have, comes the information about the reviewers, which refer mainly to the experience they have, seen in the number of reviews they wrote, but, more important, in the number of "helpful votes" that are connected to their names, this being in fact the proof of the relevance of the hierarchies created and of their utility, because having their review seen as helpful means that they had potentially a strong influence over the tourists trip plans.

The drawbacks of this kind of hierarchization are found in its subjectivity and in the fact that it does not cover all of the tourism regions with all their destinations and tourism structures. The first disadvantage comes from the fact that anyone can become a reviewer, sharing his own experiences and presenting the destinations seen through his eyes making it impossible for that person to keep a high level of objectivity. It may, therefore, be also a matter of chance for a destination to be highly ranked, for if the reviews for a certain destination come mostly from people who happened to have some bad experiences at the place, especially when there are not many reviews posted, the average of the ratings will lean towards the inferior limit of the rating scale. The anonymity of the reviewer could also encourage the ill-intended people, who could create a distorted image of the destination, hotel or restaurant for personal reasons, or could determine, for example, the accommodation structures to "buy their customers' good opinion", even if this good opinion is not founded on good services and experience.

As for the second disadvantage, the hierarchies created are not complete due to the fact that not all the destinations, hotels or restaurants from a certain region are taken into consideration, this aspect being dependent on the travel experience of the members of the website. More precisely, a destination may not appear as an attraction from a given region on the website only because none of its members (as previous travellers to that region) wrote a review for it by different potential reasons – type of destination, type of tourist, penetration of TripAdvisor into some markets etc. This aspect may compromise the accuracy of the ranks given to the destinations.

From all the aspects exposed above it is obvious that the importance of classifications in tourism cannot be denied, because before deciding that one tourist attraction is more important than another, or, more precisely, that it has a higher level of attractiveness, the knowledge of the tourism resources that are at the base of all

tourism activities is essential. But what can be criticized is the absence of more attempts of ranking tourism resources to one another in order to give an exact image of the actual situation in tourism and subsequently, a more accurate assessment of tourism potential of different territories.

This image could mean a better understanding of which resources are the most attractive, and therefore it can reveal the areas with the highest tourism potential, a step that can be useful for the prioritization of investments in tourism. This prioritization would apply, more exactly, in the cases when, for example, either there will be regions with significant resources, but with a low representation of the tourism or/and general infrastructure, or areas where the score is high for all the indicators, but they are simply not catching the attention of the tourists, which suggests, as well, the existence of a problem. In both cases the investments are not just necessary, but also desirable for the investors, because these regions would not be lacking tourism attractiveness, but only appropriate infrastructures to sustain the tourism activities around the natural or anthropogenic resources, or, in the second situation, adequate advertising.

Not less important, hierarchies are "instruments of decision" for tourists, bringing to their knowledge which the "must see" attractions are, and, in general, how much a destination is worth being visited.

The aspects presented above introduce the idea that the number of tourists that visit these attractions is relevant in the creation of a hierarchy of the tourist attractions, because the importance of a destination is decided, after all, with reference to those it is addressed to, MacCannell defining the tourist attraction as a relation between the tourist, the destination to be seen and the elements of information about the destination.

Starting from MacCannell's definition (cited by Moreau, 2001) and from the ideas suggested above, that valuable tourism resources and well developed infrastructures are not always equivalent to top-visited destinations, we made an attempt of illustrating the importance of the hierarchization in tourism, and moreover the importance of correlating the indicators taken into consideration by SPNT with the number of tourists attracted to a certain destination.

4. NEW HIERACHIZATION OF TERRITORIAL UNITS IN NEAMŢ COUNTY

In order to highlight the economic importance of hierarchies in tourism industry and to show that a connection between the tourism supply and demand indicators is more relevant in illustrating and evaluating the attractiveness of a territory, we created a model of hierarchization that takes into consideration not only the four indicators chosen by SPNT, but also two demand indices: arrivals and overnights. The result of the correlation we made was a hierarchical ascending classification (a hybrid between classification and hierarchy), through which groups were formed based on the similarities between the territorial units with regard to the analysed variables. Each group is characterized by an average for each variable. The average is different in every case from the general average, calculated by taking into consideration the scores from all the territorial units of the county.

The choice of the region to be analysed was determined by the diversity of the territorial units with concern to their tourism potential, as Neamț County is characterized by a wide variety of ways in which the mentioned variables interact.

The mapping of resulting hierarchic classes emphasizes the main advantages of this method, the most important one being the fact that it gives the possibility of ranking the territorial

Fig. 4. The hierarchical ascending classification of the territorial units in Neamț County. *Data source:* SPNT 2007, INSSE.ro

units using more than one criterion, the correlation between all the supply indicators and some of the demand ones revealing a regionalisation of tourism features of the county. It is easy, therefore, to notice the particularities of every territorial unit, by analysing the profiles of classes, which represent a method of comparison between the classes on a general level, but also by referring to every variable in particular.

The comparison between the classes, and inclusively, the decision upon their positions in a hierarchy could be most easily done, in this case, by analysing the classes two by two, as they are almost opposite to one another. A first group of two consists of classes 1 and 2, corresponding to Tourism Centres, such as Piatra Neamț, Târgu-Neamț, Ceahlău and Bălțătești, respectively, to the Interstitial Areas with no tourism perspectives. These will be, obviously, the top and the last categories in the hierarchy, the first one being characterized by high scores in the case of all the indicators, while in the second class there is not even one variable with the value over the county's average, the communes from this class representing the areas of risk in tourism investments.

Classes 3 and 4 are similar when it comes to their position on a hierarchical scale, but each of the classes is characterized by its own "tourism fingerprint", being, in this aspect, opposite to one another. The group of Highly Attractive Accessible Destinations, in which Bicaz and Roman are included, benefits from some tourism resources, but their advantage comes from their highly developed technical infrastructures and access, which corresponds to an important number of arrivals and overnights.
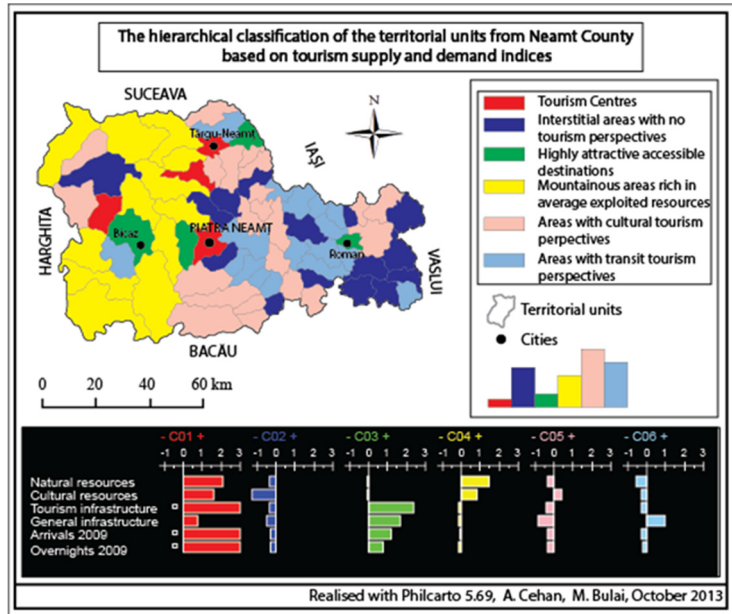
This situation may only suggest that in many cases, the tourist attraction itself does not have to be extraordinary, as long as the destination is efficiently represented by technical and tourism-specific infrastructures. On the other hand, the destinations belonging to the class of "Mountainous areas rich in average exploited resources" can be noticed mainly in the West of the county and they are, as their name says, first of all, characterized by natural resources, whose value is not adequately exploited, this lack of exploitation, suggested by the low number of arrivals and overnights, being caused by poor tourism and technical infrastructures, but, at the same time, being also the factor of the absence of these infrastructures. This means that while not having some of the mountainous regions of the county on the list of the most visited destinations could be a consequence of them being hard to reach destinations, their lack of publicity, which prevented them from coming into tourists attention, could also be the one which portrayed these areas as worthless of investments.

The last two classes illustrate the cases of the areas with almost no tourism activities, these classes sharing a similar low position in the hierarchy and including areas with a moderate risk of investment. Although the tourism perspectives are close to being non-existent, in both cases there are possibilities of future development that could be taken into consideration. Class 5 has the advantage of some cultural resources, which could benefit from a higher level of interest from the investors or potential visitors and could generate future tourism products. The proximity of the tourism centres and of the attractive regions may play as strength, as main tourist flows could be diverted towards these areas of lower, but not insignificant attractiveness.

On the other hand, the strength of class 6 is represented by the general infrastructures, the little tourism activities practiced in the region being based on the proximity of the main road axes. It is clear, therefore, that these are areas with transit tourism perspectives, the next step in their development being to invest in the tourism-specific infrastructures, as the transit tourism by definition only seeks to offer accommodation facilities for tourists who have to travel a long way to their tourism destinations.

Therefore, the model of hierarchical ascendant classification analysed above does not only refer to what an area has to offer, but it also correlates the offer with the number of tourists attracted by it. This may also reveal the level of management of tourism resources and the efficiency of capitalization. Another utility of this method comes from the fact that, as it can be observed when compared to the map on which is represented only the tourism potential, through hierarchization results a more homogeneous image of the county, being easier to identify areas of possible cooperation in tourism, as can be noticed Tazlău Valley (southern county), belonging to class 5 or Bistrița-valley axis (crossing the county from Northwest to Southeast) which is part of class 6. These areas are, therefore, characterized by values of the tourism offer and demand and having the same deficiencies means that they have, more or less, the same possible alternatives of development. Thus, collaboration between these territorial units may be a solution for all the parties concerned.

5. CONCLUSIONS

Being given the emphasis that has been placed on these aspects before, it will suffice to reiterate that a system of subordinating the tourist attractions is not only a method of presenting the current situation concerning the tourism offer and the way tourist relate to it, but it is also a tool that may be of help in predicting the future of tourism in a certain region. Moreover, this has an important role in designing its future, as knowing what position a destination has in a hierarchy is essential for figuring out how it could accede to the top of that hierarchy.

Our study emphasises that there is an excessive use of classification nowadays in the Romanian geographic literature and a need to instrumentalize it by hierachization in order to effectively transform it into tools of decision and means for prioritization of investments in tourism (especially for public investments).

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