

## **THE FUNCTIONAL RESTRUCTURING IN THE URBAN-RURAL INTERFACE OF THE CAPITAL, BY THE DEVELOPMENT OF TOURISTIC ACTIVITIES**

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**Abstract:** The present study aims to achieve a spatial projecting of the functional restructuring in the urban-rural interface of Bucharest. Another aspect that was analyzed was the distribution of some disparities in the weekend and transit touristic phenomenon, emphasizing the aspect of this activity. Special attention has been paid for the alternative and the possibilities to develop local economies by touristic services. Another aspect that was taken into account was the pollution that affects all the rural-urban interface system. It was generally analysed by a systemic approach, thus allowing identifying the variable components, which let the decision factors interfere by means of decisional impulses, which may permit to diminish the impact on local communities. Achieving the present study was due to the necessity to develop some local communities in the urban-rural interface of Bucharest and to offer some possibilities of spending the spare time for the people of Bucharest and its surrounding areas.

**Key words:** urban-rural interface, tourism activities, functional restructuring, pollution, territorial disparities.

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### **INTRODUCTION**

The functional structuring of a space is represented by the existence of several functions within it and it is imposed by the more and more accentuated dynamic of the

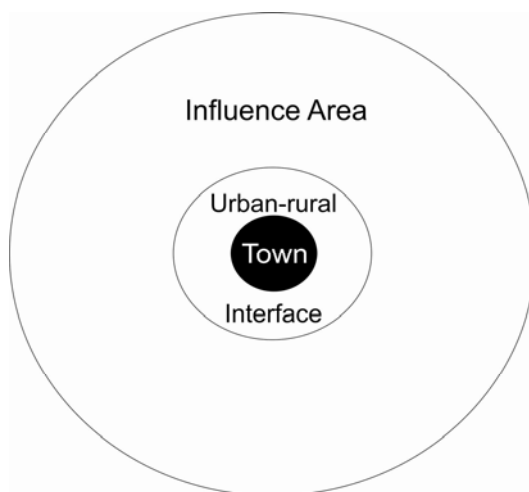
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activities in the last period. This is a characteristic specific for all categories of human settlements. In case of towns, each of these functions gets to individualise spatially in such a manner that, in the end, it imprints a dominant function to space. This detachment will have to be achieved in an integrated manner, the respective function trying not to disturb the activities of the other functions within which it integrates.

For some territories which dispose of a certain type of resources, one of the functions which can be considered dominant and well individualised is the touristic function. This function, in the context of the Globalisation of World Economy, exceeded even its status of simple function, the touristic phenomenon representing, at present, an independent branch of a state economy. This is influenced and may influence, at a certain moment, the other economic branches; it may produce an important dynamic at local scale, by the modifying of the budgets' values. At present, when the world economic crisis dominates most of the economies, the touristic phenomenon may represent an “*economic engine*”, which may balance and even compensate the descendant dynamic of the other economic sectors, which are in decline. The localising of touristic function at an urban-rural interface scale contributes to the amplifying of the effects upon development, predominantly at local scale and less at regional or national scale, this fact being in accordance with the particularities of the urban and rural, which this interface overlaps.

The urban-rural interface represents a space of relatively reduced dimensions, situated beyond the administrative urban limits of towns, being the component part of the urban influence area, with the most accentuated dynamic of the activities. It represents a transition area more or less obvious between the town and the surrounding rural area (Figure 1). Although, in the figure above, this space (the urban-rural interface) is presented to be concentrically around Bucharest, the practice demonstrate that it has different forms, according to the form of territorial administrative units, that make it up.



**Figure 1.** Spatial location of the urban-rural interface

Spatially localised, the urban-rural interface would overlap one or several localities rings, situated concentrically around a town (municipality), the distribution being somehow asymmetric, as they are distributed in a tentacular manner along the communication axes, especially road axes. From the point of view of connections, material and information flows which circulate from the town towards its surrounding area and vice versa, at the level of the interface urban-rural there are the most dynamic

changes. The degree of functional restructuring and space using from this territory, as well as the pressure applied upon natural environment are the highest, the more the town is situated in a superior position within the national urban hierarchy (the higher is its rank and size). Thus, the urban-rural interface represents an assembly of specific relationships in a society and its surrounding environment. These overlap a “*territory*”, although these inter-relations are exposed within an intermediate territory between both poles, generally referred to as peri-urban area (Delgado & Angeles, 2004).

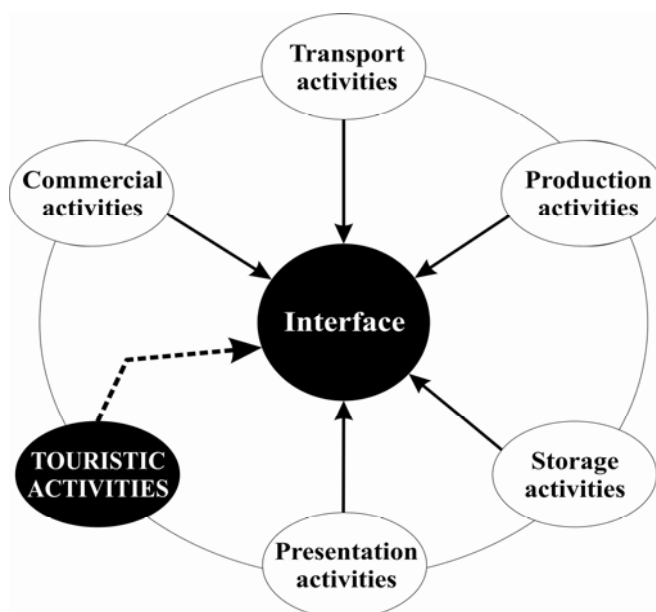
From the point of view of touristic activities, in the urban-rural interface weekend and transit tourism prevail, depending on the existent touristic resources, but also on the existent general and specific infrastructure. Although most of the times, at the level of an interface, the forms of short-time tourism prevail, these can play, in certain cases, an important role in economic development (Dissart et al., 2009). Spiriagevas (2008) reasoned that touristic development is chaotically structured, and it is not dimensioned in accordance with the particularities of economic-social, cultural and natural needs. An important role for the tourism in urban-rural interface is held by the transport infrastructure and especially the specific infrastructure, that could attenuate territorial disparities. The transport infrastructure is also used in different other purposes than touristic ones (Kordel & Senator-Bentkowska, 2009) especially if we refer to the urban-rural interface of a large town, where this is unfolded on one part and the other of a ring-road and it is crossed by numerous different road arteries which facilitate the connections with other towns from the national road system.

## METHODS

The systemic approach of the tourism, applied at the urban-rural interface, can offer a comprehensive picture about territorial disparities (Peptenatu et al., 2009). Urban-rural interface, among other forms of space structuring, is represented by the touristic activity, too. In this area, touristic phenomenon may be structured on two major plans, this thing being determined, on the one hand, by the nature of touristic resources existent within this space, and on the other hand by the specificity and typology of touristic infrastructure, which has developed and still develops, in the last period, depending on the so-said request of touristic services. Being a space, characterised by an accentuated dynamic of the flows from and towards the town, and by the presence of several functions, the touristic phenomenon is rather dimmer, but still enough present, as we do not speak about organised tourism, but rather of tourism practiced on each other's own. The major questions which result from the previous statement and which somebody could address himself / herself about the touristic phenomenon are the following:

1. Why does a touristic phenomenon appear at the level of a town's interface?
2. Which are the forms of tourism which are practiced the most often at the level of a town's interface? For the first question, the answers which were found could be as follows: the touristic phenomenon appears due to the existence of some short-time touristic resources (most of the time weekend tourism) nearby large towns. This form of tourism is meant especially for the inhabitants of the town, but also for those from the surrounding area of the respective town (either this metropolitan area, of influence, peri-urban etc).

At the same time, the same touristic phenomenon may appear due to the presence in the territory of a certain specific type of touristic infrastructure, which can be used by tourists, generally for a shorter period of time. It is about the infrastructure of touristic accommodation of motels, pension houses, cottages or touristic bungalows type (Figure 2).



**Figure 2.** The insertion of tourism activities

For the second questions, the main forms of tourism which can be practiced at the level of the urban-rural interface are represented by the weekend tourism (recreation or relaxing), determined by the variety of the existent touristic resources (recreation green spaces, water mirrors), but also by the transit tourism, the latter one being determined by the specificity of the technical-material basis of the tourism (inns, motels, cottages, touristic pensions), specific for a transit tourism.

Thus, if the first form of tourism is strongly affected by the seasonal character, as regards the second form of tourism it was noticed that the phenomenon of seasonal character is less present. If the duration of holidays and the financial possibilities of spending the free time (Buliung et al., 2008) do not form a determinant factor for the tourism activities, the high degree of pollution could constitute a restrictive factor upon the development of touristic phenomenon from the level of an urban-rural interface, on the one hand. Pollution may be the result of the intense traffic at the level of the interface road infrastructure, but it can also influence negatively the human activities nearby, by means of pollutant sources localized inside or outside the interface.

## RESULTS

With time, Bucharest, the largest town of the country, holding a capital rank, determined certain changes with the rural space around it, this aspect leading to a rather high influence and polarisation degree. Also, these relationships with the surrounding space led to the contouring of a similar urban-rural interface. In the last years, there can be noticed a high urbanisation degree around the capital and the exerting of a high anthropic pressure upon natural environment around the capital, by the large extension of the built urban space into the rural space. This thing gradually led to the dimming of clear limits between urban and rural, many times elements of the urban mixing with elements from the rural and less the vice versa.

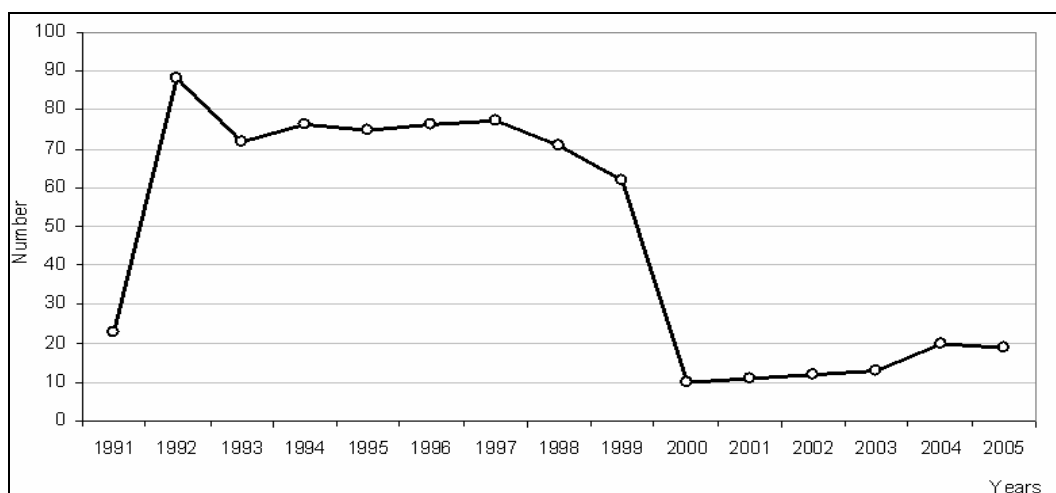
The capital surrounding space (urban-rural interface, but its entire influence area) dispose of touristic resources, meant for the diversified weekend tourism. From the forest

surfaces as the forests Băneasa, Snagov, Cotmeana, Pustnicu and the lake surfaces Snagov, Pantelimon II, up to anthropic resources meant for a cultural and religious tourism Snagov, Căldărușani, Cernica, Pasărea, Mogoșoaia, etc. thus, we can state that the urban-rural interface of the Capital disposes of touristic resources, situated either inside or outside it, consequently it disposes of a similar touristic circulation.

Still, the weekend touristic phenomenon from the urban-rural interface of the capital, as well as from the entire surrounding space, is characterised by a strong discontinuity, being somehow disturbed by the presence at relatively reduced distances, but outside its influence area of some touristic areas with national or even international vocation (Romanian or Bulgarian seaside of the Black Sea, the Prahova Valley and its surroundings), which attract, during the summer season, a large number of tourists from the capital and even from its neighbourhood (Pintilii et al., 2010).

From the point of view of the touristic infrastructure, in the urban-rural interface of the capital, this generally appears with an island aspect. As types of accommodation units, motels are predominant, as they are by definition accommodation structures with a touristic function localized along important communication arteries, meant for the request of touristic services for the transit tourism.

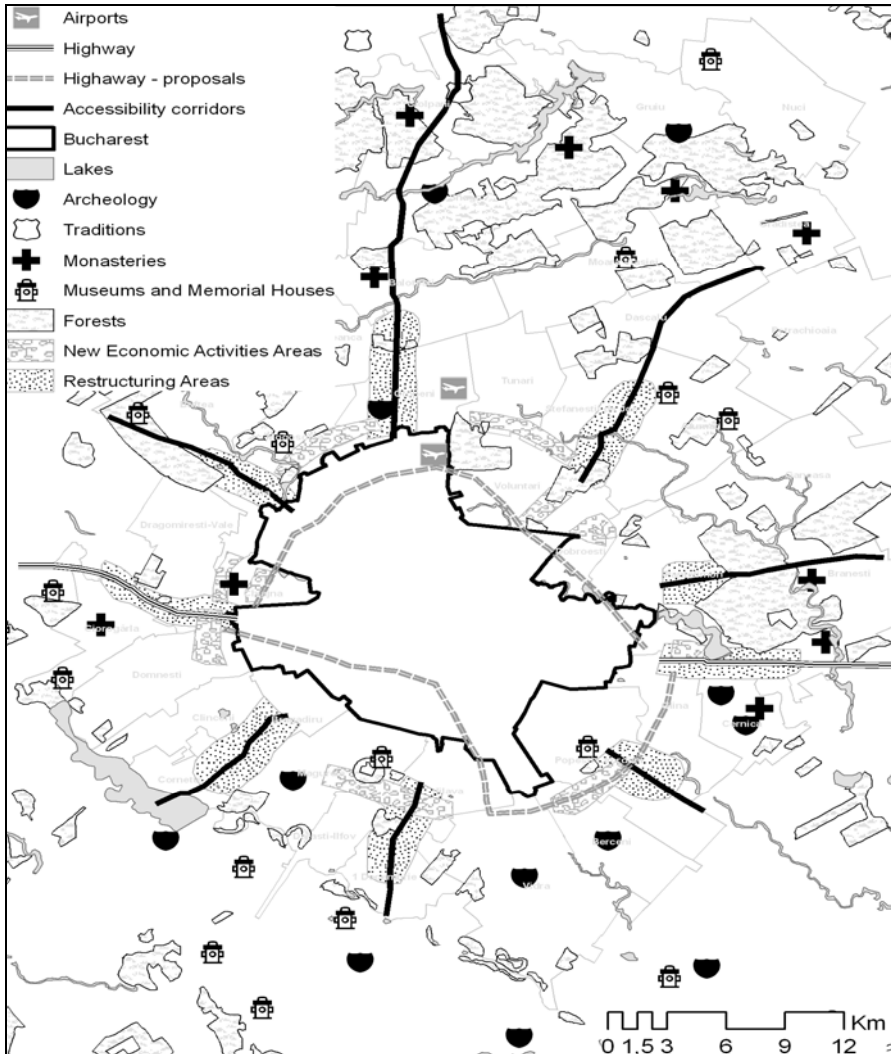
If we also consider the evolution, in number, of the touristic accommodation structures, in the Northern sector, the sector with the most accentuated dynamic of activities, we will notice that, after the year 1990, this is somehow contradictory. This fact is explained by the separation of big touristic units of centralized system in touristic units of smaller dimensions, after 1993 following a drastic reducing of those which became broke. After 2003, with the occasion of the large business development, the number of touristic accommodation structures recorded a slowly ascendant increase (Figure 3).



**Figure 3.** The evolution of the total number of accommodation units in the Northern sector,  
Data source National Institute of Statistics

The transport infrastructure is very well represented, most of the types of transportation, being localised at the interface level. For the air transportation, at the interface level, there are localised two airports, a national airport (Băneasa – Aurel Vlaicu) and another used for international traffic (Otopeni – Henri Coandă), for the terrestrial communication means, the road infrastructure is represented by the capital's ring road and the penetrating axes which facilitate its connections with the entire

country. The same type of infrastructure can be mentioned in the field of railways transports (a ring railway and several railway arteries which connect Bucharest with all compass points of the country). In the field of naval transports, the area totally lacks such infrastructures, although these proved to be less pollutant, and they could be subsequently developed by the recommencement of the construction works of the Channel Dâmbovița – Dunăre (Figure 4).



**Figure 4.** The touristic map of the urban-rural interface

An important aspect to be noticed in the functional restructuring of the analysed space is that of the increase of the pressure exerted by the new peri-urban residences (Figure 5). The aggravation of the problems related to the lack of space for new constructions which local communities within the interface have to face are more and more often felt. In this respect, new residential projects appeared around the capital. At present, due to economic crisis, strongly reflected in the real estate field, too, a part of these projects are largely abandoned.

Another present problem in the urban-rural interface is given by the pollution phenomenon, strongly felt, due to functional restructuring, but also to the pressure exerted mainly by the large city, especially upon green space.

Referring to the pollution of environment from the urban-rural interface, this differs, depending on the major pollution sources, most of these being localised in the Capital. The lack of a balance in respecting the environment legislation in effect determines profound transformations inside and outside the respective urban structure. A part of economic activities were localised in Bucharest in its adjacent space (industrial activities, storage activities etc). This fact determined an increase of road traffic, especially on the ring road of the Capital, where road infrastructure remained under-dimensioned, resembling to the infrastructure existent in the years 1990 (Peptenatu et al., 2010).



**Figure 5.** The explosion of the new post-December residential area

As pollutant activities (pollution sources), localised at the level of the urban rural interface, there can be first mentioned transports. Almost all categories of transports from the urban rural interface were identified as major sources of environment pollution, an activity which affects the touristic phenomenon and tourists, as well as the inhabitants with a stabile domicile in the administrative units from the analysed space. Thus, aerial transports proved to be the main source of phonic pollution. All airplanes which use the two airports, localised at the interface level, represent the main phonic pollution source. The noise produced highly exceeds the admitted value measured in dB, and the vibrations may affect, in time, the resistance structure of buildings, especially old buildings which are mostly represented by the private homes of local communities from the urban-rural interface. This type of pollution is frequent in the northern part of the urban-rural interface, where the most accentuated dynamic of airport activities is met. Road transports proved to be the most important sources of pollution with dust, suspension dusts and noxious gases (CO, CO<sub>2</sub>, Pb, etc).

The large number of population which transit the interface on their way to and from the Capital is proved by the large number of new buildings which were built, in the last period, at the level of the urban-rural interface. The daily road traffic to and from the capital in certain rush hours determines traffic jams, and regarding pollution certain compounds highly exceed the legally admitted limits. Even at the level of the ring road there can be noticed an increase of the level of particles in suspension.

The localising of some construction materials warehouses, but also of some small production units delocalised from the capital in its neighbourhood, led in time to the increase of the pollution degree in the interface between the capital and the adjacent space.

Analysing the degree of functional structuring of the urban-rural interface of the Capital, some projects can be separated, with multiple effects upon the functional structuring of the space from the urban-rural interface. These can be grouped as follows (Peptenatu et al., 2010):

Buildings built with residential purposes, among which there can be reminded: West Park, Belvedere Assembly, Rezidenz. These buildings have an important role in the pressure exerted upon environment, a part of these determining problems related to transport activities, by the creation of traffic jams and pollution with noxae or suspension dusts.

Offices buildings, in order to avoid a series of unpleasant aspects as the agglomeration in the big town, many firms localised their production activity as well as the activities related to office and staff nearby the capital, even in its interface, and the centre of gravity of some disfunctionalities was also moved with them. It is to be noticed, in this example, the offices buildings localised in the northern part of the capital, along the structuring axis National Road 1.

Buildings meant for commercial activities, in this category being included all hyper- and supermarkets nearby the capital (Carrefour, Real, Metro, Obi). These indirectly affect the environment from the interface, raising certain problems related to transport activities, as the agglomeration and pollution caused by the latter. The most intense activity, from this point of view, is met in the northern and western sector of the interface.

## **CONCLUSIONS**

As it could be noticed from the previous analyses, the urban-rural interface of the Capital disposes of sufficient touristic resources, but also of a general and specific infrastructure enough developed, so that it could maintain and develop a touristic phenomenon, especially of weekend and transit. This is able to contribute to the local development of the settlements situated within this space. Besides this form of tourism, having in view the neighbourhood of the Capital, as the biggest town from the national system of settlements and with all opportunities it offers, but also the variety of resources which the national system of settlements together with the influence area (between these two entities interposing the urban-rural interface) disposes of, in the future, local authorities might contribute also to the development of other forms of tourism, as business tourism, for example. From this reason, the necessity of setting up the metropolitan area of the Capital became more and more stringent, in order to facilitate its cooperation with the administrative-territorial units from the component of the future metropolitan area. The result of the setting up of this body would bring reciprocal benefits, both to the capital and to other settlements. It is wrong the opinion according to which, following the setting up of the Metropolitan Area of Bucharest, only the Capital could take benefit of. In



our opinion, this structure would have the role to balance the unbalanced development up to present, when the Capital developed by making poor the settlements around it. The external financing opportunities up to now, but also the future ones, might determine as in partnership with the component administrative territorial units of the future metropolitan area, the Capital could take part into the attraction of funds meant for development. One of the fields with a high development potential, by its multiplying effect in inducing development is tourism, too. Thus, setting up a Metropolitan Office for Tourism, or a Metropolitan Agency for Tourism justifies the necessity of applying some rational and at the same time coherent policies for development at the level of the urban-rural interface and more. By these structures, touristic resources from the capital and also from its influence area would be promoted by touristic programmes and offers both to internal tourists, and especially to the tourists from outside the country.

Another aspect which should be paid attention by the local authorities is that of spatial restructuring, by adopting certain coherent strategies regarding space restructuring. These must be done following the consultations with local communities (Szigethy, 2007). Most of the times, spatial restructuring comes together with the diminution of green space (a more and more attacked and vulnerable space, lately). Most of the times, the decision factors ignore the necessity of rebuilding them (Makhelouf, 2009).

Concrete action plans in the field of transport infrastructure consist of the modernisation of road routes, which make the connection of the capital with the adjacent space. This demarche can be fulfilled by our proposal to create some fluidity systems of traffic, of redirecting it, but also of broadening some road sections which are often crowded. This thing should be applied especially where the two highways A1 (Bucharest - Pitești) and A2 (Bucharest - Constanța) enter the Capital. Another proposal would be the materialization of the project which regards a connection between the two highways. In this respect, the construction of the suspended highway of the capital would be really necessary, especially for the users in transit. By fulfilling this last project, both the Capital and the settlements situated in its urban-rural interface would be spared of numerous problems, which have been multiplying lately, especially those related to pollution, car accidents etc. Also, the project which regards the changing of the Capital into one of the Danube harbours would be really useful for the tourists, the local ones as well as the foreign tourists. By the development of the improvements from the inferior course of the Argeș, numerous touristic objectives inside the country could be visited by foreign tourists. These could travel on the Danube by ship from the West of Europe to the Black Sea. On their way, they could land to Oltenița, and by the channel which would connect the capital with the Danube they could visit numerous touristic objectives from Bucharest or even for the neighbouring areas, reaching other touristic regions of the country, by the Prahova Valley.

All these mostly depend on the will and competence of local authorities to develop the touristic sector in Romania at European standards, to satisfy the requests of the most exigent categories of tourists.

### **Acknowledgements**

This work was supported by the strategic grant POSDRU /89/1.5/S/ 58852, Project Program for postdoctoral researchers in science education, co-financed by the European Social Fund within the *”Sectoral Operational Program Human Resources Development*

2007–2013” and the research project Territorial Management Based on Growth Poles Theory (UEFICSU-PNII-Ideas, 1950).

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Submitted:  
07.08.2011

Revised:  
19.01.2012

Accepted and published online  
31.01.2012