

THE TOURIST COMPLEX SPA *BĂILE FELIX-BĂILE 1 MAI* – PERSONALITY, DISTINCTIVENESS BY PROTECTION VERSUS DEPERSONALIZATION AND NONSPECIFIC BY GLOBALIZATION. CONCEPTUAL AND PRACTICAL ASPECTS REGARDING THE ROLE OF THE NATURAL AND ANTHROPIC SETTING IN TOURIST FITTING (I)¹

Dorina Camelia ILIEȘ

University of Oradea, Department of Geography, Tourism and Territorial Planning – CSAT,
1 Universitatii st., 410087, Oradea, Romania, e-mail: iliesdorina@yahoo.com

Ioana JOSAN

University of Oradea, Department of Geography, Tourism and Territorial Planning – CSAT,
1 Universitatii st., 410087, Oradea, Romania, e-mail: ioanajosan@yahoo.co.uk

Abstract: At society level where the reference points for heritage value and authenticity do not benefit from means and ways of advertising and awareness, at least at the level of promoting the non-authenticity, in the cognizant or incognizant perspective of globalization, the personality of tourist centers of old traditions is getting lost gradually, suffocated by elements without content and with catastrophic consequences in the long or medium run. In the present research, the case of the touristic complex spa Băile Felix-Băile 1 Mai, with a tradition of centuries in spa tourism, has gone through consistent changes of architectural style, structural-functional and especially aesthetic and landscape after 1990. Accommodation is the most dynamic part, as regards quantity and quality, of a large structural and functional diversity, while on the other hand the treatment and entertainment part is the least developed. Another aspect under analysis is the aesthetic-landscape feature, extremely dynamic and consistent, noticeable at the level of the entire complex by architectural diversity and eclecticism of constructions. Advertising of the spa represents an extremely important feature in present context where e-communication and the visual impact are current methods of advertising with major economic efficiency. Replacement of the local feature marked by distinctiveness with allochthonous elements specific to the process of cultural levelling (see the cultural globalization) is a contemporary phenomenon when it comes to contemporary tourist fitting, pregnantly reflected in the analysis. In this context the process of tourist transformation includes an important heaviness of elements which distort the distinctiveness of tourist fitting, in the end.

Key words: Băile Felix Spa, Băile 1 Mai Spa, tourist fitting, globalization, tourist landscape, tourist transformation

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General Consideration. In the Romanian political framework, the tourist mark has been dominantly conceived upon the capitalization of important natural resources, starting with ancient times and which generated the spa tourism. The thermal and mineral springs, with a large area extent in the plains and up to the mountains, were at the foundation of several renowned resorts and spas such as: Băile Herculane, Germisara, Băile Felix, Borsec, Băile Olănești, Călimănești-Căciulata etc., which in time and in parallel formed an architectural and morpho-functional heritage with a high level of distinctiveness. The progression of some ideologically differentiated historical eras (the pre-war era, the interwar period, the communist era, the post-communist era, the EU era etc.) and restricted by barriers with powerful marks at international level (world conflicts, the emergence of totalitarian regimes, revolutions more or less marked by violence etc.) is strongly marked in the dynamics, the structure and evolution of domestic and international tourism, in the distinctiveness and the heritage richness of tourist centers, of which and important part is constituted by resorts. The Băile Felix-Băile 1 Mai Spa complex, by its absolute geographic location and the relative geographic location determined by political conjunction which determined its affiliation to a certain political frame or political system with a certain ideology, has undergone profound changes of morpho-structural and aesthetic-landscape nature, more or less reflected positively in its development as an international /national tourist center. By taking this step, logically structured with objective answers (to such questions as “where?”, “why?” and “how?”) we aim to outline a functional tourist system by the identification, assessment, quantification, advertising and fitting of the elements and mechanisms which determine the functionality of the system to optimal parameters which ensure perspectives of development for a long or medium term. By advertising the term of geographic management we aim to demonstrate the efficiency of the geographic and scientific intercession based on complementarity and collaboration in everything related to integrated planning and fitting of the territory in general and touristic in particular. The advantage of the geographic intercession in the integrated touristic planning and fitting of the territory is mainly based on complementarity and the integrated contribution of the specialists belonging to a wide range of specialities (economics, constructions, architecture, technological engineering, arts, administration etc.) directly or indirectly involved in tourism.

Natural resources form an essential structural component in establishing the functionality of a touristic system. Thus, if we take into account a poor anthropic territorial system, it would be very obvious the relation of vertical interconnection between components which morpho-functionally reflect on the determined territorial system determined by “*relations of compensation, interconditioning and energetic co-operation, mass and informational, generator of systemic coherence*” (I. Ianoș, 2000, pp. 29). An important aspect taken into account regarding each component or element of touristic importance, capitalized or in stand-by, identified as a subassembly of a territorial subsystem or system, is the way in which it, by physiognomical or functional similarity, can be relocated and implemented into other structures characterized by the same type of features. In the case of the Băile Felix-Băile 1 Mai Spa complex we can include the sectorial analysis of geo-prospection, assessment and quantification of the natural resources in the perspective of a strong anthropic natural territorial system in which “*the connections between the territorial subassemblies and the forms of co-operation*” (Ianoș, 2000, p.31) should determine precise functions at the level of the touristic system under current analysis. According to our analyses and explanations, this type of systemic functionality can be influenced so as to reach normal parameters of adaptability by inputs of decisional nature and coherence in the implementation of the identified resources

(which are to be found in a homogeneous natural system) into an integrated functional touristic system. In other words, we have to go beyond sequential analysis, fitting based on components without projecting elements of connection to facilitate their integration into and with systems/subsystems of different ranks.

Following a geoprosporation of what a natural support is or an element that can become a point or sights in the touristic development, in the case of the Băile Felix – Băile 1 Mai Spa complex we can identify: morphology of relief determined by exposure to the contact between the western hills and the high plain of the Criş rivers reflected in the landscape by a positioning in multi-stage with the highest location on the eastern side of the Şomleu Hill (384 m alt.); the thermal water as the main resource and whose existence led to the emergence of the two spas; a favourable sheltering climate with oceanic influences; the presence of the unique flower *Nymphaea Lotus var. Thermalis*; forest which covers app. 40% of the area of the two spas etc. What is important in redefining the tourist function of the area under analysis is the game of the weight factor of the three characteristics: the top resource; the support for tourist activities motivated by another type of attractions; support for the actual tourist activity (Cocean, Dezsi, 2001, pp.13) to which, in the context of a process of tourist fitting, we can add the degree of limitation or extension of what we call a virgin and anthropic natural setting. In a similar situation to that of the elements which form the anthropic setting both as a supporting element and as an actual resource, so does the natural setting undergo a complex process of metamorphosis by changes of structural-landscape nature with profound consequences on the depersonalization of the natural setting as a supporting element of the tourist activities. In this sense we mention: the implementation of species of plants and arbors atypical of the area under analysis which tend to extend over large areas to the detriment of a landscape composed of local elements. This process takes place in an anthropic environment which tends to replace the natural one that undergoes a process of area limitation and homogenization of the species (fig. 1). It is a process that, by lack of specialists, unfortunately affects most of the tourist destinations in Romania, regardless of the geographic location.

Thus, a tourist fitting characterized by a high degree of functionality, determined by a high coefficient of harmony derived from collaboration of the parties, will need a special attention in the assessment of the spatial and structural dynamics of the natural systems in various stages of anthropic changes. More exactly, any center of tourist polarization (from point to resort or touristic region) will be able to aim to higher tourist potential based on the particularities of the supporting elements of the natural setting characterized by distinctiveness, density, degree of anthropic changes, weight factor of the local/allochthonous, limitation or area extension, substitution of elements, extension of the landscape under metamorphosis/anthropic changes to the detriment of the natural one etc. Any cut in a natural system or subsystem in a touristic area in order to extend the infrastructure can become a major danger to the entire touristic system unless one takes into account the ratio between natural and anthropic, local and allochthonous. Just like in the case of anthropic resources, although this aspect is less highlighted, in the case of natural resource, either as an element or support, we currently face the same effects specific to globalization.

The natural setting can generate hindrance to the development of a correct and honest tourism for the beneficiary. In most of the cases of analysis and quantification of the touristic resource of natural derivation, the morphologic variety can generate heterogeneous systems with increased potential of diversifying the tourist offer, whereas in the initial stage of prospectation, planning and touristic fitting, the morphologic variety can generate hindrance with negative consequences occurring in the stage of post-fitting. It is necessary that any touristic fitting is conceived as a subsystem of an integrated higher rank system where the tourist component can be affected by the economic one with local, regional or international consequences and the general financial reasoning can win over one that focuses on local particularities.



Figure 1. The New artificial elements of vegetation (palm trees)

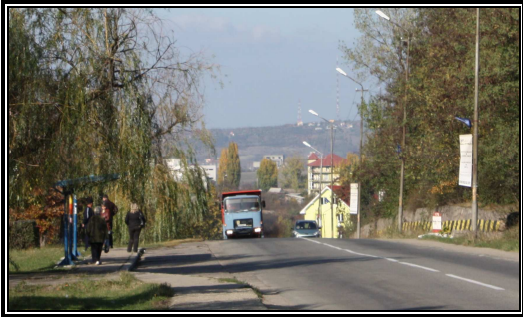


Figure 2. European rank road in the region and trucks



Figure 3 a. Old architectural style in Băile 1 Mai Spa



Figure 3 b. Old architectural style in Băile Felix Spa



Figure 3 c. Socialist architectural style in Băile Felix Spa



Figure 3 d. Socialist and post-socialist architectural style in Băile Felix Spa



Figure 3 e. Post socialist architectural style in Băile Felix Spa



Figure 3 f. Post-socialist architectural style In Băile 1 Mai Spa

The process of fitting by concatenation of each of the components of the entire area without taking into consideration that they might interact with other elements (as support or beneficiary) is a wrong approach, incomplete, unfinished and which will inevitably determine a tourist system whose degree of functionality depends on unpredictable exterior factors. A good example is that of the Băile Felix Spa where the plan of fitting and development did not take into account the morphological particularities of the landscape as a support for the roads. Thus, the route of E675 sections the touristic territorial system Băile Felix-Băile 1 Mai Spa and the uncontrolled development of the spa determined the presence of this road “within” the actual spa. Furthermore, the morphologic component, by its particularities, by conditioning of the longitudinal profile of the aforementioned road has negative effects by pollution on the main reason behind the emergence of a resort, that of physical and mental recovery in a less polluted environment (figure 2). This aspect is amplified by the administrative and decisional component of no limit to traffic, tonnage and level of pollution. It is an example by which are highlighted the lack of vision in some projects specific to certain periods of time which determined, right from the initial stage of project, the long and medium term development. It is a more technical way to see the landscape from the point of view of the tourist fitting of a territory, where the tourist potential must be analyzed and the barriers/limitations/ disadvantages that it can generate over a shorter or longer period of time. For the moment the financial advantages or the costs for tourist fitting require simple solutions whereas a fair geographic management implies a more precise and realistic correlation between short term advantages and disadvantages on one hand and medium and long term advantages and disadvantages on the other hand.

Example: in this case, due to the lack of area integrating perspective, most certainly the advantages generated by the route of a European rank road in the region are more important than the part that the Băile Felix Spa and its importance plays in the national economic system. The integrated tourist fitting of the territory can prevent as well the effects of such occasional factors, hard to anticipate in the stage of projecting the strategy of resort development. An exemplifying factor (extremely favourable to an area when it comes to economy, in the Beiuș Depression) is the emergence of Transylvania General Import-Export as a company and of thousands of trucks after 1990, which “are forced” to cross the resort daily on the only available route (E 675) which connects the production headquarters of the north-western company and several boundary points with Hungary.

Thus, the landscape, beside being a background and a tourist resource by its morphologic components, represents the foundation for infrastructure in particular, which implies knowing the advantages and disadvantages generated by its fitting.

Water – resource and support in tourist fitting. In certain cases, like that of the tourist complex under analysis, water by its characteristics can exceed the tourist potential of the landscape being the main reason for the development of the touristic system. Nevertheless, in the integrated tourist fitting of the territory this important resource must be approached under two aspects:

1. “since when?”, “for how long?” and “how much?” it can be used as tourist resource; one should take into account the many values of the healing usage and entertainment.
2. “from where?”, “for how long?”, “in what quantity?”, “what level of quality?”, “what are the costs?” it can sustain as an element-system of supporting of the tourist phenomenon.

In the first category, that of tourist resource (sometimes regenerative), the first place is taken by the quality aspect (natural, and the purpose of the anthropic factor and the anthropic changes is to protect and maintain its natural quality value), in the second case, that of touristic planning and fitting we also have the issue of quantity and that

related to costs of quality insurance. To these we can add an important aspect, of administrative nature, which usually is obvious in the dependence on the source of water necessary to sustain the fitting. For example, in the case of the tourist complex Băile Felix-Băile 1 Mai Spa, the water and sewage network managed by the administration of the township of Sânmartin, transports the drinking and then the effluent water from Oradea to the sewage-treatment plant of the city. Thus, in the absence of own water resources – support for the development of the tourist activity, by complex administrative actions, the two spas, although administratively belonging to Sânmartin, are dependant on the city of Oradea. In several cases in high tourist season the running water supply was cut in the two spas due to the lack of communication between the administrative structures of the two territorial units. This is another example which highlights the complexity of a touristic territorial system developed into a centralized system (before 1990) and currently being part of a bureaucratic-administrative mechanism sustained by a technological and technic support which generates relations of dependence atypical of a correctly planned territorial system with tourist destination.

Aspects of **climatic nature** are important in the tourist fitting, by its particularities different in latitude and altitude, and also when it comes to pollution in the case of an integrated territorial fitting. If the existence of a topoclimate favourable to leisure activities is identified in the action of prospectation, planning and territorial fitting as an element of favourableness, at the same time one must take into account the emergence in time of certain disturbing factors, usually of anthropic nature and which can negatively influence the touristic activity. An example is the placement of a thermo-electric plant on coal in the close vicinity of the tourist complex Băile Felix – Băile 1 Mai Spa (currently under conservation) in north-west, in a location extremely favourable to western air masses which can transport sedimentary powder and deposit it in the tourist area. Besides pollution by materials in suspension, in parallel there is an aesthetic pollution. Probably when placing this industrial edifice (in the 70s), its impact on the tourist complex (centuries old) was not taken into account.

The infrastructural anthropic component is the one that has undergone changes of structural and aesthetic nature. The tourist complex Băile Felix – Băile 1 Mai Spa as well as most of the resorts in the Romanian political space goes through a advanced stage of depersonalization, consequence of globalization by cultural levelling and especially due to the lack of an efficient and integrated management. From architectural point of view, we can basically identify three major periods which had an impact on the architectural personality: the pre-war period, the period between 1960-1990 and the post-revolution period (after 1990). In the case of the first two situations one can notice a certain architectural mark (style of constructions, fig. 3. a-f) specific to socialist era, both being characterized by representative architectural styles, whereas after 1990, under the influence of freedom of manifestation in any way possible, the tourist complex under analysis went through a complex process of depersonalization and infrastructural development out of proportion, losing touch with the territorial reality. The diversity of the architectural styles (fig. 3 a-f.), the extremely diverse colours and especially the chosen names are some of the elements which are most obvious and with major consequences in this destructive process on the medium and long term. Furthermore, it cannot be possible to identify in the territory the theoretic and legislative concept identifiable with certain elements of infrastructure (boarding houses, hotels, villas, huts etc.) placed within the tourist complex.

Conclusions. The tourist complex Băile Felix-Băile 1 Mai Spa, by this concise study regarding the personality, distinctiveness by protection versus depersonalization and non-specific by globalization shows the aim of the authors to draw attention on the understanding and the wrong implementation of some conceptual and practical aspects regarding the role of natural and anthropic setting in the integrated tourist fitting of the

territory. The natural component, even though in some cases of correct and balanced use is considered a renewable source, a major problem in the era of globalization is the depersonalization and the changes of aesthetic-landscape nature of the support-frame for tourist activities. The decrease of the green areas with arbor-like vegetation, the replacement of the local arbors with allochthonous species, the inefficient management of the water resource both as an element generating tourist offer and as a major element in sustaining the tourist activity, the placement of economic edifices generating pollution in opposition with air mass circulation and without knowing the climatic parameters and their part in the fitting of certain elements of infrastructure, and last but not least, the aesthetic and colour pollution of the constructions in the post-socialist era. This partial study is to be supplemented with others more detailed, with the purpose of being a textbook of learning how to avoid the uses and the negative effects, of which of great importance is the loss or inexistence of a specific personality on the tourist phenomenon in the medium and long run.

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