

The Systemic Location of Tourist Elements in the Integrated Spatial Planning. Case Study. The Outskirts of Bistrița Municipality

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Abstract: - The integrated spatial planning stands for a new concept in both urban and rural planning process. Yet, spatial studies poorly integrate tourism elements among the key issues of an integrated territorial approach. Our research highlights an example of inserting such tourist facilities in a study of spatial planning. Regardless the importance of tourism as an economic activity, but emphasizing on the importance of the appropriate use of land in the peripheral areas of a city, we underline the complex of opportunities proposed for the development, based on a systemic localisation of tourist areas, suitable in the case of Bistrita Municipality.

Key-Words: tourism planning elements, systemic location, integrated spatial planning study.

1 Introduction

Spatial planning studies have been introduced to diminish the discrepancies between the rules and realities implied by the planning of the built-up and the outskirts areas. Thus, this approach helps reducing the possible errors that may appear when projecting the development for both types of area and when identifying coherent key-answers for an appropriately functional integration of the entire analysed area. In the case of the General Urban Plan, study that includes the spatial planning of one settlement, be it village, town, or city, we may observe that, most of the times, references regarding tourism spatial planning are practically inexistent or rather scattered while they only refer to establishments for accommodation or restaurants. In the least cases, this level of spatial approach includes proposals with a view to complex tourist facilities that should provide opportunities for tourism activities. On the one hand, this may be the direct result of the lack of a proper culture of tourism spatial planning even at national level, tourism being considered an activity that can be practiced regardless precise locations, functionally integrated within other territorial structures. On the other hand, the economy represents the prime need for the functionality of an area, hence, tourist needs falling on the perspective side, therefore always postponed to be applied. This spatial planning policy, rather declarative than factual, has led to a weak insertion of tourist arrangements locally, consequently tourism activities being inadequately organized. Much more, there seems a tendency to agglomerate tourist facilities around major tourist attractions, while mass

and the recreational tourism remains quite inexistent at national level. In spatial planning, if there the correct systemic position of tourist facilities is established, there can be identified and introduced in touristic circuits establishments that do not carry certain valences firstly, but which can decisively contribute to the leisure and tourism offer of an area. The outskirts of Bistrița Municipality represent areas on which there are no such tourist arrangements; hence, starting from the analysis of the systemic location of such tourist elements, we identified, proposed and established several tourist locations and facilities that shall supply the urban population.

2 Spatial planning and tourism spatial planning

2.1 An overview of spatial planning in Romania

Spatial planning represents a contemporary strategic activity which in Romania is regulated by the Law no. 350/2001, to which we can add other various governmental regulations. Several practical aspects related to spatial planning are being adjusted by other laws regarding aspects such as: water, environment, land propriety, and forestry. However, the entire legislative set in the field sums up to more than 100 laws having direct repercussions on spatial planning process, which process has consequently been slowed down. Other official documents are added to the ones mentioned above: numerous development strategies, programmes,

master plans and operational plans, all including a large variety of strategic objectives, sectoral measures, programmes and projects, yet declarative, thus giving the local administrations and designers the chance to propose practical solutions to all local problems.

The liberalisation of the spatial planning process, which presupposes a change of responsibility from the design companies of the Ministry of Regional Development and Tourism to universities and companies with no experience in the field, represents another important feature that slows down the spatial planning process. This shift of responsibility made room for projects of low quality since many of the designers do not consider the innovation or the scientific background in their projects and approach them simply in financial terms. As a consequence, such projects either can not be put into practice because of their inadequacy to the local reality, or should be postponed because of financial or political reasons. This is also the case of tourism spatial planning, in which the process is generally based on the same legislative foundation, yet with no validation of tourism spatial planning, or of the systemic position of tourist elements.

2.2. The systemic position of elements in spatial tourism planning

The systemic position of elements for tourism development in an integrated spatial planning study implicitly lies in the identification and delineation of territorial units suitable for establishing the necessary infrastructure to perform tourism activities, such as: accommodation, eatery, leisure, curative spa, and information.

Setting up territorial units is based on *the type of areas* like mountain, sea, or resort, on *the specificity and characteristics of resources* like natural, cultural or historical, homogeneous or mixed, as well as on *their density and size*.

Therefore, by the delineation of territorial units, the aim is to establish *a typology and an optimal structure for the future localisation*. Territorial units can be classified as such:

a. Tourist objective: a sufficiently attractive element to justify the travelling of tourists (i.e. historical and archaeological monument, cultural or sports event).

b. Tourist site: the basic unit of tourist activity around which minimal tourist services are located.

c. Tourist village (town) or tourist centre: rural or urban settlement with a higher level of economic development; here, various objectives located inside or nearby can motivate any type of tourism activity. In terms of profile and functions they can be included in the following categories:

- ◆ exclusively or predominantly with tourist function;

- ◆ with a complex economic profile, tourism having a more or less predominant role, supplementary to the main economic activities.

d. Tourist Complex: not a very large surface area grouping several objectives and tourist sites with relative consistency (i.e. a common landscape element).

e. Tourist area:

- ◆ a large territory with a variety of landforms;
- ◆ several tourist sites, villages (towns) and complexes;
- ◆ regularity character - each territorial division has independent functions and relationships with others.

f. Tourist region:

- ◆ a very large surface area;
- ◆ economic activities are highly influenced by tourism;
- ◆ multiple and highly attractive resources.

This systemic structure of tourist elements has a matching approach in spatial planning:

a. Tourist objective planning is established by urban plans such as: GUP (General Urban Plan), PUZ (Zonal Spatial Plan), PUD (Detailed Urban Plan);

b. Tourist site planning is regulated by urban plans such as: GUP (General Urban Plan), ZSP (Zonal Spatial Plan);

c. Tourist village (town) or tourist centre planning is coordinated by the General Urban Plan;

d. Tourist complex planning is coordinated by ZSP (Zonal Spatial Plan), ICSP (Inter-County Spatial Plan), IUSP (Inter-Urban Spatial Plan), IPUD (Integrated Plan for Urban Development);

e. Tourist area planning is coordinated by CSP (County Spatial Plan) and ZSP (Zonal Spatial Plan);

f. Tourist region planning is coordinated by NSP (National Spatial Plan) and RSP (Regional Spatial Plan).

In accordance with this system structure, tourist elements must be properly placed in the content of planning studies and urban plans, therefore they becoming subject to proper planning in any case of rank. This approach would eliminate the existing errors in planning regarding tourist elements and would also create the framework for identifying optimal solutions in spatial development of tourist areas.

2.3 The systemic location of tourist elements in an integrated spatial planning study

The Integrated Plan for Urban Development (IPUD) corresponds to an intermediate phase in the spatial planning process, between the phase of ZSP (Zonal Spatial Plan) and the phase of GUP (General Urban Plan). The aim of this intermediate level (IPUD) is to study the integrated planning of the area on the outskirts of a city in accordance with the needs laid

down in the planning of the built-up area, taking into consideration that, according to The Law no. 350/2001 the General Urban Plan lays down the provisions for the planning of the built area, while the study on the outskirts of a settlement belongs to Inter-County, Inter-Urban and Zonal Spatial Plans.

The Integrated Plan for Urban Development (IPUD) includes a large variety of tourist elements which are subject to the planning process as they can satisfy people's tourist needs for leisure and sports. These needs become more severe in urban settlements with more than 50,000 inhabitants and progressively increase once with the size of the settlements.

The necessity to identify and plan this tourist elements on the outskirts of the cities and also of the rural settlements is a major priority as the people's need to relax and entertain for a short period of time of 1-3 days is increasing and requires tourist establishments located at short distances of about 1-5 km. This type of tourist arrangements is not expensive and needs small areas of only several hectares. Usually, the most preferred locations are those with high potential of landscape, associated with specific elements of morphology, hydrology, biology and ecosystem. All

along, the presence of anthropogenic elements with tourist potential increases the interest for such locations.

The Integrated Plan for Development on the outskirts of the city may therefore adjust the planning of tourist sites and objectives by including specific details so that they could be considered the support for future technical projects.

In order to give arguments in favour of the systemic position of tourist elements that an integrated plan should consist and in favour of the manner the planning proposals should be presented, we give the example of Bistrița a Municipality Spatial Planning Study elaborated by the same authors in 2008.

3 Elements of tourism planning in the Integrated Plan for Urban Development of Bistrița Municipality

Bistrița by its population size (86,000 inhabitants in 2002) is a medium sized city in the national hierarchy of settlements and has little economic specialization. Consequently, people's level of living is rather low which is reflected by their perception on leisure. If we compare

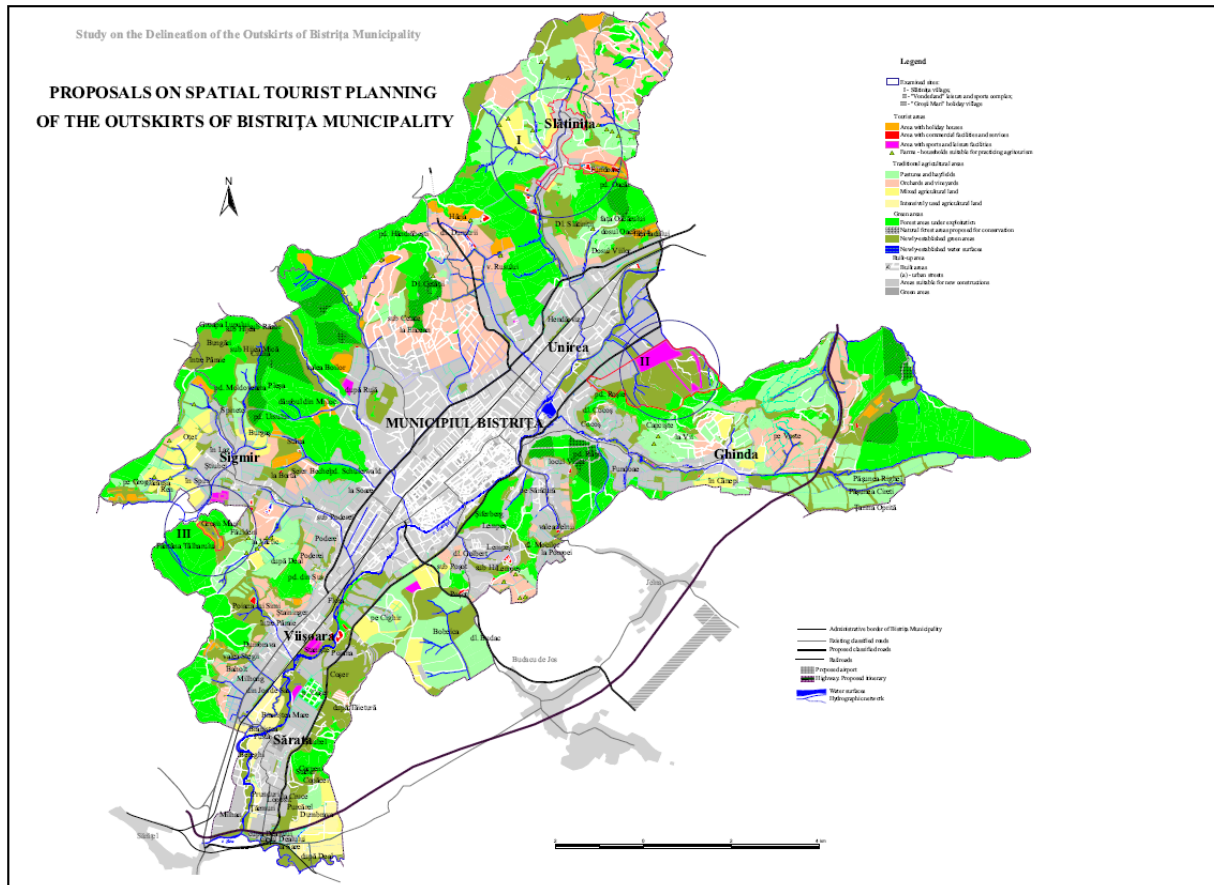


Fig. 1. Urban planning proposals regarding tourism on the outskirts of Bistrița Municipality

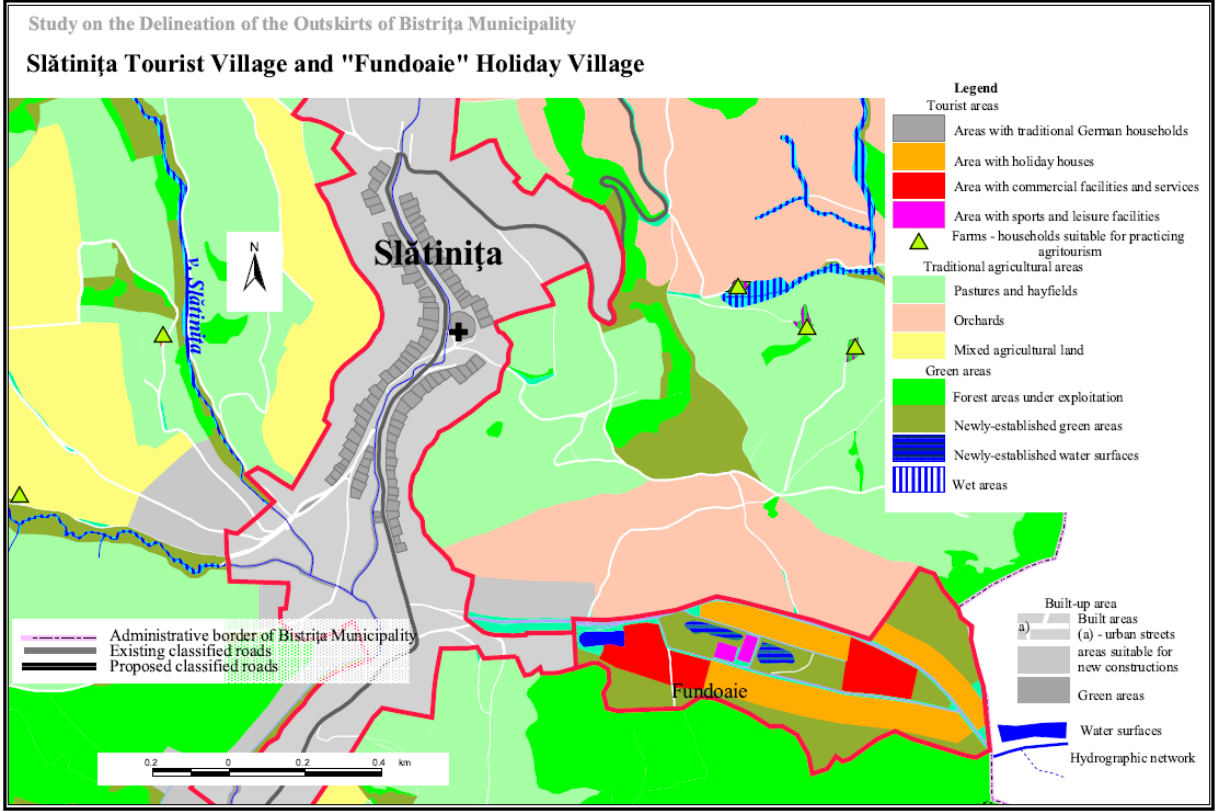


Fig. 2. Slătinița Tourist Village and „Fundoaie” Holiday Village.

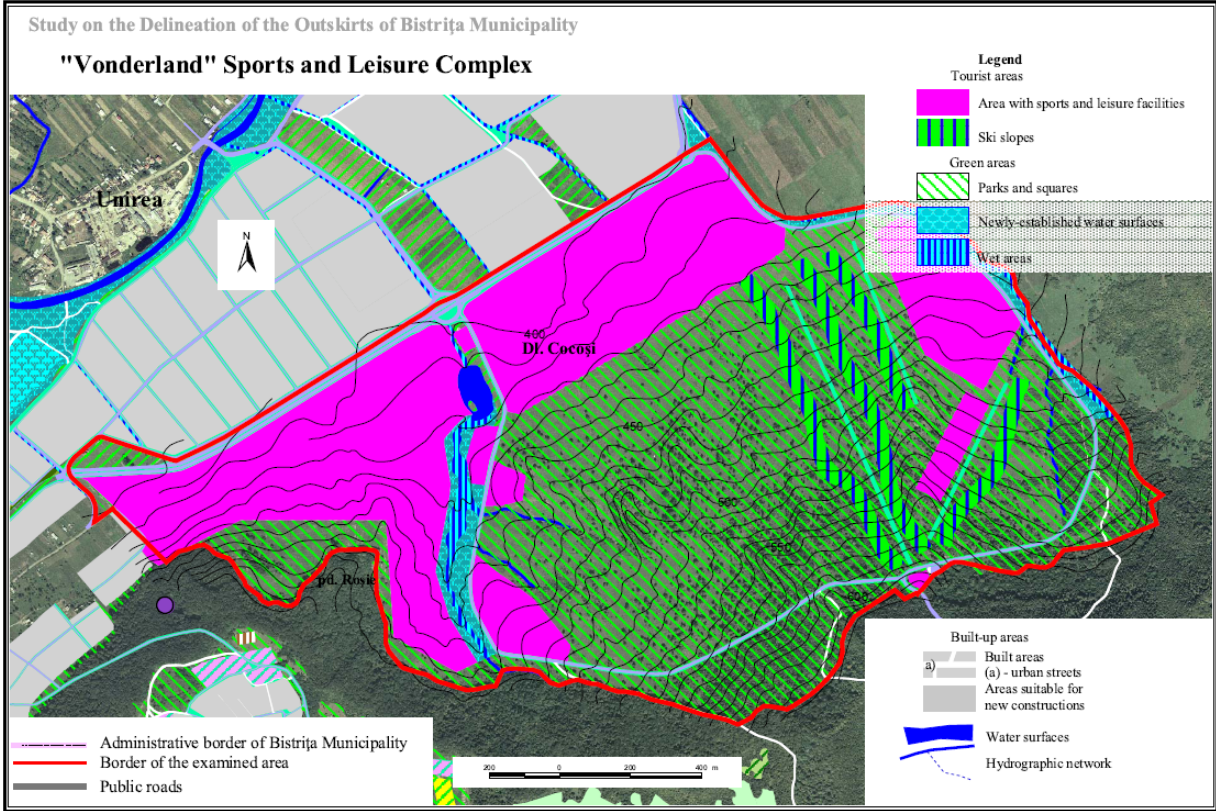


Fig. 3. „Vonderland” Sports and Leisure Complex.

and of people living in similar or lower-ranking cities and Bucharest, regarding this issue, we will see that: the population with higher average incomes in large cities will always prefer to spend their free time away from residence city, outside, in well-known tourist areas, while those living in medium and small cities, with more modest incomes are pleased by local options and offers. Therefore, in the area on the outskirts of Bistrița Municipality there have been identified and proposed several tourist areas (establishments) of which three are relevant (Fig. 1)

All these sites, identified from the analysis on multiple criteria, are primarily individualized by their geographical position and the typology of recreational offer generated by the proposed tourist facilities.

Tourist area no. 1 (tourist site and also tourist village) - a village and a tourist site, located in the South-eastern part of Slătinița village, are suitable for practicing rural tourism and agritourism. The rural characteristics of Slătinița village (of German origin) and the presence of few private farms, large areas with orchards and the traditional rustic landscape in the vicinity of Bistrița, specifically recommended the delimitation of this tourist village and proposed a tourist site located in the South-east area as a holiday village (Fig. 2).

Tourist area no. 2 – The leisure and sports complex also includes the construction of a new stadium

and ski slopes for practicing winter sports (skiing, sledging). The current sports facility of Bistrița Municipality is inadequate and outdated, highly needing a new sports complex for both professional athletes and the general public. The chosen location is outside the city with future possibilities for extension. The presence of steep hills and long slopes allowed the identification and spatial location of two supplementary ski slopes and related facilities. This new sports centre, which will include tourist accommodation facilities, will represent an attraction for young population of the city and suburban area of Bistrița Municipality (Fig. 3).

Tourist area no. 3 – „Groșii Mari” Holiday Village of Sigmir. In this case, the holiday village has a different theme, based on fishing practices, as compared to that of Slătinița, which is based on rural tourism and agrotourism (Fig. 4).

By setting up five water surfaces (ponds) for practicing fishing in the Valley of Groșii Mari, associated with the construction of several holiday houses and commercial facilities and services, this holiday village will attract numerous tourists for recreational fishing on weekends. Constructions like “holiday houses” and commercial facilities will be financially supported by public funds or partnerships, subsequently being used by renting. The water surfaces will also be finalized by public funds, subsequently a fishing charge being decided.

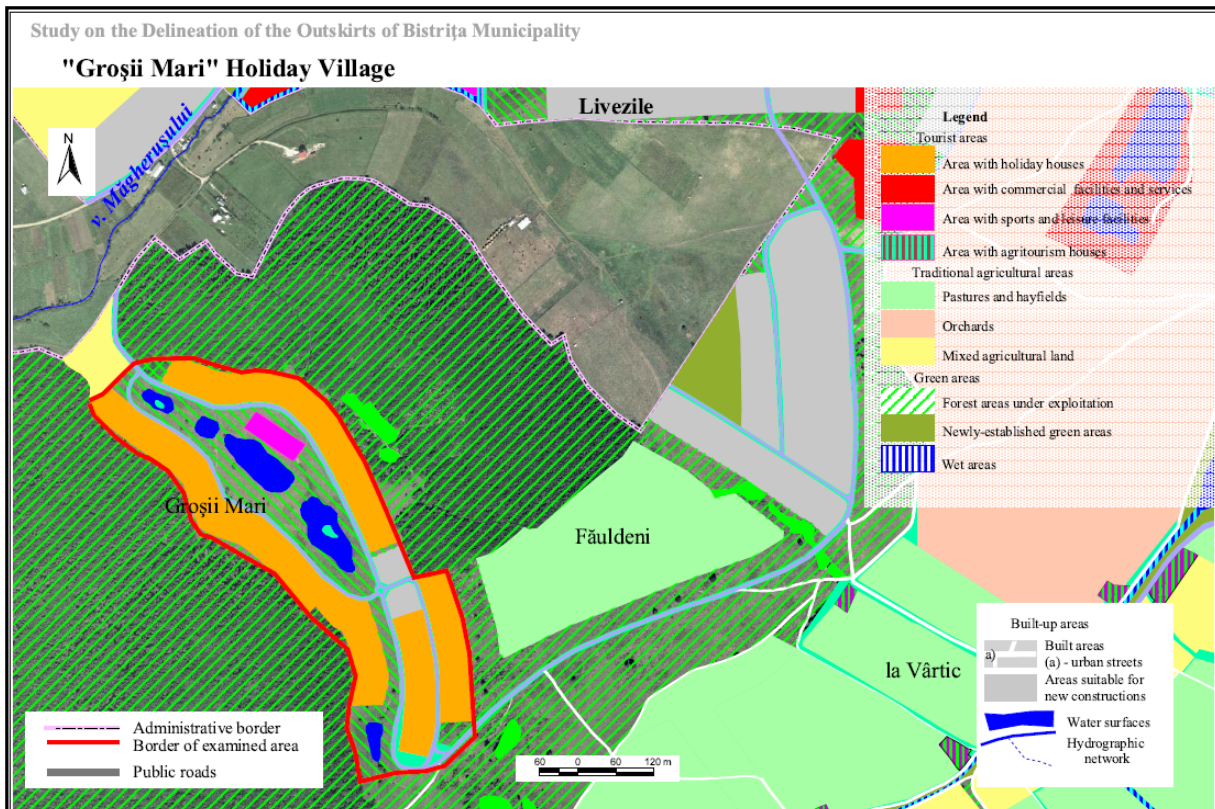


Fig. 4. „Groșii Mari” Holiday Village.

Besides these three tourist areas on the outskirts of Bistrița Municipality, there were also other tourist objectives and scattered sites proposed for development, considered to be suitable for recreational purposes, such as:

1. a wine farm with its own wine cellar, located in the Eastern part of Bistrița
2. a vegetable farm with agritourism guesthouse situated in the Sărata village
3. a holiday village situated on the Cușma hunting field.

All these proposals for tourist areas and sites on the outskirts of Bistrița Municipality comply with the rules of town planning and have already been approved; subsequently, there should be followed by the elaboration of Zonal Urban Plans to start the rehabilitation and construction of specific and technical infrastructure.

4 Conclusions

The multitude of regulations regarding the common spatial strategic planning in Romania and European countries challenge the public administrations to properly manage the land, inside and outside the borders of a city or village, and give optimal functionality to areas in accordance to their natural and anthropogenic potential. Much more, the attempts for elaborating such territorial analyses, which are considered the step towards sustainable development, are financially supported by the local budgets of the administrative-territorial units and other private or public bodies.

Since spatial planning studies involve strategies of development at different territorial level we may subsequently develop not only patterns for tourism development but feasible choices and answers for future social and economic coherent and rational evolution of the specified types of settlements, be them urban or rural.

Therefore, the identification, the delimitation, the quantifying, as well as the planning of tourist areas and sites on the outskirts of Bistrița Municipality was possible due to proper consideration of the systemic position of tourist elements within this spatial structure. This approach has also enabled the right attribution of tourist function to the locations identified and also proposed contributions to specific infrastructure and adequate equipment.

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