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The Features of Tourist Planning in the Romanian Carpathians

The stages of development

The Carpathian mountainous region has become a tourist destination and space for a specific tourist planning during the second half of the 19th century, when the first cores of mountainous and leisure tourist resorts were initiated and developed: Sinaia, Păltiniș, Semenic. It was the proof of Romanian reception of the European alpine tourist trends, and it had a variety of reasons, within the background of general economic and social progress of the country.

The development of the first mountainous-climatic modern resort (having in mind the present meaning of the word), Sinaia, which also became the first town-resort of Romania in 1885, is related to the choice made by the royal family. They chose the space near Sinaia monastery, at the foot of Bucegi Mountains, to become a royal summer residence. Along with the building of Peleş Castle, the future elitist resort was being built, as a leisure and climatic spa for the upper classes of the time (the politic, agrarian and industrial aristocracy), with private homes and villa-type accommodation units. The green space and leisure units were also planned, like the casino, a smaller copy of the one in Monte Carlo. This favourable concourse of events was supported by other objective factors: Bucegi Massif and Prahova Valley and their impact; the position not too far from the capital city, Bucharest; the railway Ploiești-Brașov used since 1879 (partially built since 1876); the modernization of the transcarpathian road Ploiești-Brașov, after 1870 passing through Predeal col, open to direct access from the 1821-1850 period.

The development of industry at Bușteni and Azuga, on the royal domain (wood processing, paper industry, glass industry, food industry) determined the development of settlements on Prahova Valley. Small cores of tourist planning were realized in these settlements, especially at Predeal, at the beginning of the last century, favoured by the neighbourhood of Brașov, a city with Saxon tradition for mountain tourism. In time, it will become the „competition” resort for Sinaia.

During this period, the tourist planning of the analysed geographical space advances up in Bucegi Mountains, by creating access paths, the first chalets at Omu and Peștera (in Ialomița basin), but especially by building the first mountain road between Sinaia and Bucegi Plateau.

This effort, of lesser importance and complexity, is also materialized in Cindrel Mountains, where Păltiniș resort (1400 m) was created in 1895, having access through Sibiu-Păltiniș road, and at Semenic, with

the involvement of Banat cities, especially Timișoara.

An important role in the development of mountain tourism and the arrangements of the Carpathian space had the tourist associations. They had their headquarters in the cities which have become the main emitters of mountain tourist flows until today: the Banat Alpine Club – Caransebeș, Transylvanian Carpathian Society (SKV) – Sibiu, the Romanian Tourists Society – Bucharest; the Carpathian Society – Sinaia.

During the period between the wars, mountain tourism and its specific arrangements are intensified and extended differently on the whole Carpathian space. The process of development after the Great Union of 1918 has a unitary conceptual character. Along with the intensification and modernization of arrangements of Bucegi-Prahova-Brașov area, which maintains even today its first position within the Romanian mountain tourism, several directions are to be mentioned:

- the development of new mountain resorts: Lacu Roșu (1931), Colibița, Cheia, Timiș, Sâmbăta, Muntele Mic, Stâna de Vale;
- the building of chalets in the mountains of main tourist attraction or located near cities emitters of tourist flows: Bucegi, Postăvaru-Piatra Craiului, Făgăraș, Retezat, Apuseni, Ceahlău, Rarău, Rodna;
- the realization of the first transcarpathian road, crossing the alpine area – the royal road (Transalpina), over Parâng Mountains, between Sebeș and Novaci;
- the correlation of the associative-tourism system, by grouping the efforts of arrangements, plans, promotion and popularization within the Romanian Turing Club, and the involvement of exceptional personalities in the tourist planning of several mountainous areas: M. Haret for Bucegi, I. Czarar for Apuseni;
- the founding of the first state organism to coordinate the promotion and planning of tourism: ONT, February 28, 1936;

Given the conditions of fundamental change regarding property after 1948 and the principles concerning the organization of economic activities, the mountain tourism has run through several significant stages:

- a period of drawbacks and stagnation until the 50s;
- the beginning of revigoration, marked by the creation of Poiana Brașov in 1951 and after;
- the massive implantation of hotel units in already known mountain resorts, such as

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Sinaia, Predeal, Bușteni and especially Poiana Brașov, which became the most modern Romanian resort;

- the establishment of tourism for mountaineering and winter sports, which determined the realization of specific superstructure (cable transportation, ski slopes) which advanced up in the mountains. One should emphasize the complex of resorts Poiana Brașov, Sinaia, Bușteni, Semenic, but also some wathering resorts which became multifunctional (Vatra Dornei);
- the creation of new resorts: Mogoșa, Borșa, Buzău, Izvoru Mureșului, Pârâu Rece, Băișoara, and the cores for future mountain and winter sports resorts (Piatra Fântânele-Tihuța, Harghita Băi, Bălea, Poiana Mărului, Râncea, Straja, Arieșeni);
- the improvement of road network superstructure, by modernizing the transcarpathian roads, to be rehabilitated in the near future, the realization of roads crossing mountainous regions of high tourist interest or representing shortcuts between mountainous tourist destinations (Transfăgărășan road, the segment between Chiril and Cămpulung Moldovenesc over Rarău, the slope road Izvorul Muntelui – Durău in Ceahlău Mountains, Poiana Brașov – Râșnov, Stâna de Vale – Beiuș Depression);
- the creation of cable transportation in some mountains, with emphasis on Bucegi-Prahova-Brașov region (the first Romanian funicular linked Văliug with Semenic, in 1942);
- the stimulation of tourist arrangements and planning in the area of dam lakes, which generated the creation of new resorts (Voineasa, related to hydroenergetic plans on Lotru, Beliș-Fântânele on Someșu Cald, Colibița);
- the neglect of mountain chalets, which maintained themselves at the same amount as in the inter-war period, when most of them have been built. Many of them became degraded in the decades to come and some of them even disappeared as a consequence of neglect (Bunloc, Bălea Lac, Suru, Ghețar Scărișoara etc).

The features of mountain tourist planning in the Carpathians

The resorts representing the dominant component of tourist planning are located at more than 500 m altitude, getting to over 1000 m in several cases (Predeal 1030 m, Poiana Brașov 1100 m, Stâna de Vale 1100 m, Semenic 1300 m, Păltiniș 1450 m) and having the possibility to reach 2000 m in the future (Bălea Lac, potentially the first high altitude and integrated resort of Romania).

Concerning **location**, the relief fragmentation imposed the option for the development of resorts and their grouping or association. The birth and development in time (over a century) is also reflected by their dispersion in the Carpathian space (with the exception of Bucegi-Prahova-Brașov concentration) and the some-

how random feature of genetic factors, not grouped in a global strategy of planning.

The models of tourist planning of the European alpine countries during the interwar period inspired the Romanian mountain tourism in concept and style. They have been afterwards replaced by a voluntarist conception marked by: crowding of the site; architectural monotony; the building of the same categories of accommodation units which are often reproduced in many resorts, without taking account of the different exigences of the customers; reduced degree of comfort (generally, the equivalent of two stars); small investments and not always carefully spent.

The approximately 30 resorts and cores of resorts have different positions within the mountainous space. They may be grouped into a number of specific categories (Berbecaru, I., Botez, M., 1977):

a) resorts developed at the periphery of the mountain unit. They form the most frequent category. The arrangements made in all three stages of development of the Carpathian tourist system (at a certain scale) are included. These are related to the existence of settlements, to which they are attached, or they contribute to the development of settlement cores, reaching often to urban ranks.

One may notice the existence of three situations which differentiate this specific type of location. The first category includes resorts at the periphery of the mountain unit, having a direct contact with it (Borșa-Maramureș). A second category includes those peripheral resorts, located at the outer limit, where tourist facilities are not in direct contact with the mountain, but are related to an important access road (Cheia-Prahova). The third category includes those resorts located at the inner limit along a valley which divides two highly attractive mountains, and at the same time they have access to complex and modern transcarpathian means of transportation and communication which allows a waterfall planning, including a succession of resorts (Sinaia-Bușteni-Poiana Țapului-Predeal).

b) resorts developed within the mountain unit, either along a valley (Durău-Neamț) or related to the dam lakes: Voineasa on Lotru, Beliș-Fântânele on Someșu Cald, Poiana Mărului on Bistra Mărului. Poiana Brașov is also included, being developed on a high altitude platform with relatively flat space, favourable for building. Some of these are located in cul-de-sac (unidirectional access) and it is impossible to go any farther by road or railway (Păltiniș, Muntele Mic, Semenic). Several other resorts have been in the same situation, initially with one way access, but they were consequently linked by new roads (Poiana Brașov, Durău, Stâna de Vale etc).

The features of mountainous climatic resorts planning

The size of the accommodation tourist basis (totalizing 34,000 places in the whole Car-

pathian region) at the level of mountain resorts oscillates between 100-200 places represented by isolated hotels or motels, potential cores for future resorts (Piatra Fântânele, Bălea Lac, Bistra Mărului, Stâna de Vale, Arieșeni, Băișoara), to 300-1000 places (Borșa 320, Semenic 410, Durău 625), 1000-2000 places (Bușteni 1600, Vatra Dornei 1500), 2000-3000 places (Poiana Brașov 2636, Predeal 2840) and Sinaia only concentrates more than 4200 places (Gabriela Țigu, 2001).

Together with the volume, the **structure of the receiving capacity** underlines the stress on more or less differentiated supply. One may notice that the recognized resorts have diverse categories of units: six for Sinaia, four for Bușteni, Predeal and Stâna de Vale, three for Poiana Brașov.

The tendency for implantation of *hotel units* having different comfort categories (predominantly 2-3 stars) must be remarked. They had a decisive contribution to the modernization of resorts after 1965. This is a feature for most of the resorts, especially for those developed in the last half-century (Borșa 100%, Poiana Brașov 90.4%, Durău 80.5%, Semenic 82%), but also for the „classic” resorts of Prahova Valley (Sinaia 57.7%, Predeal 46%, Bușteni 31.1%). Another aspect is the still important weight of *villas* within the resorts. They have established the reputation of Predeal 43.9%, Bușteni 36.2% and Sinaia 31.7% during the inter-war period and they grant an unique personality, perfectly integrated within the mountainous landscape.

One may add the *chalets* to these two basic categories. Because of their location, they belong to the mountainous space, but they might be often found in the resorts. The *camping sites*, are more recent categories, like *pensions*, *holiday villages* – bungalows and private *secondary homes*, which have been built on a large scale after 1990, not always respecting the laws in force or the norms stipulated by local plans.

A category belonging exclusively to the mountainous space is the *chalet*, located from the feet of the mountains to more than 2000 m in the alpine zone. It served to include the mountain in the „tourist area”. Almost 90 chalets totalize approximately 15% (5000 places) of the accommodation basis of the Carpathians, with an average of 56 places. They may be found in many mountain massifs, but there is a concentration in Bucegi, Piatra Mare-Postăvaru, Făgăraș and Retezat Mountains.

From the point of view of their location and concrete functions (Ciangă, N., 1997), several categories of chalets may be distinguished:

- chalets belonging functionally to resorts: Șuhard-Lacu Roșu, Clăbucet, Trei Brazi and Cioplea – for Predeal, Piscu Căineului, Brădet, Cota 1400 for Sinaia, Junilor – Poiana Brașov. They have been involved by getting nearer to the ski slopes;
- chalets located at the feet of the mountains

- penetration points and starting points for mountaineering and winter sports: Mogoşa-Gutâi, Muntele Roşu-Ciucaş, Dâmbu Morii-Piatra Mare, Sâmbăta, Cumpăna-Făgăraş etc;
- chalets lying on slopes, as intermediate points for accessing the high mountain area, but also bases for the practice of winter sports: Fântânele-Ceahlău, Diham, Gura Dihamului, Piatra Arsă- Bucegi, Poiana Secuilor-Postăvaru, Bălea Lac-Făgăraş, Pietrele, Răușor-Retezat etc;
- chalets located on mountain tops, in the alpine or sub-alpine areas: Dochia in Ceahlău, Postăvaru, Cristianu Mare - Postăvaru, Piatra Mare, Vârful cu Dor, Babele, Omu-Bucegi etc;

Concerning the communication potential for the Carpathians, the chalets may be classified in:

- chalets located in resorts, having direct access to road and railway networks;
- chalets accessible by means of cable transportation: Postăvaru, Cristianu Mare, Clăbucet Plecare, Cota 1400, Cota 2000, Vârful cu Dor;
- chalets having multiple access: by road, means of cable transportation and tourist paths: Bălea Lac;
- chalets accessible by tourist paths: Fântânele, Dochia - Ceahlău, Piatra Singuratică - Hășmașu Mare, Harghita Mădăraș, Ciucaș, Mălăiești-Bucegi, Curmătura-Piatra Craiului;
- chalets accessible by forestry and local roads or alpine roads: Rarău, Sfânta Ana-Ciomanu Mare, Miorița, Izvorul Dorului-Bucegi, Pietrele-Retezat etc.

The features of planning within the built-up area of resorts

The connection between the built-up area of climatic mountain resorts and the proper mountainous space is realized by diverse superstructure components, adapted to their functional profile. That is the reason why there is no clearcut division of zones with exclusive tourist activities within the built-up area.

One should first emphasize the kernels comprising accommodation utilities (hotels and villas, especially), leisure, green areas, all planned and built even in the first stages of development of the resorts. These made up the polarizing factors for the development of future urban settlements. Afterwards, residential areas have been built (as in the case of Predeal) or even industrial objectives (Bușteni, Sinaia, Azuga).

There were situations when resorts have developed having an exclusively tourist function, without generating the creation of a proper settlement, but belonging administratively to a town (Poiana Brașov to Brașov, Lacu Roșu to Gheorghieni, Pârâu Rece to Predeal) or a commune (Durău, Băișoara, Stăna de Vale).

The most typical example is that of Poiana Brașov, where the completion of the built-up area has been made on the principle of sec-

torial „scavenging” (from the North-Eastern kernel, erected with the occasion of Winter University Games in 1951, to the East and South at the contact with Postăvaru Masiv). The built-up areas of urban resorts are marked by a physiomic and stylistic heterogeneity, dimensionally dominated by hotel units and other categories, such as villas, which provide the touch of distinction and conservatism, to which one may add varied equipments and utilities having a tourist function. All these are integrated within planned green areas, organically linked to the nearby forestry areas, a fact which underlines the qualities of the environment.

Predeal, Bușteni and Sinaia resorts are remarkable from the point of view of the physiomy and the age of the stages covered in tourist planning by successive building of utilities. They are more than a century old, have a diversified architecture and a supply adapted to diverse demands.

On the other hand, the resorts developed in the last five decades are characterized by concentration of utilities, the dominance of hotel units having a capacity of several hundred places each, an increased degree of comfort, increased leisure opportunities, but a relatively monotonous physiomy. A specific example is Poiana Brașov.

There are also small climatic mountain resorts, which have been stimulated in their development by special natural landscape components: Borșa at the foot of Rodna Mountains, Cheia at the foot of Zăganu, Durău in Ceahlău Mountains, Lacu Roșu near the eponymous lake, Stăna de Vale at the contact between Bihor and Vlădeasa Mountains, Voineasa or Beliş-Fântânele, related to dam lakes, Soveja. They can be considered as small size arrangements having opportunities for extension given the increasing demands for mountaineering tourism and winter sports tourism.

The means of cable transportation and the ski slopes – impact components of tourist planning in the mountainous space

The means of cable transportation are the only superstructure category meant from the beginning to serve exclusively the tourist activities, being used to provide fast access to the mountain areas, especially to the planned, organized ski slopes. The first funicular has been built and finalized in 1942 at Semenic, this process being resumed once in while after 1950, with the occasion of the White University Games at Poiana Brașov. The action of proper endowment started in 1965, when the funicular at Predeal was given use for Clăbucet ski slope, then the funicular linking Sinaia with Cota 1400 in 1966, and the ski-lifts at Furnica and Vârful cu Dor in the same year, all belonging to Sinaia and Bucegi mountain space, and finally Kantzel and Ruia – Poiana Brașov, in 1968.

The year 1970 marks the beginning of substantial investments for the creation of means of heavy cable transportation – *cab-*

ins (at the same time with the erection of hotels in all mountain resorts). These raised a number of technical problems to be solved, but they also meant a higher impact on the landscape (Ciangă, N., Axente, Maria, 1966). Eight cabins are realized between 1970 and 1980, out of which three in Postăvaru-Brașov (Tâmpa in 1970, Poiana Brașov-Kanzel in 1971, Capra Neagră-Postăvaru in 1982), four cabins in Bucegi Mountains, linking Sinaia and Bușteni to this massif and its ski domain (Sinaia-Cota 1400 and Cota 1400-Cota 2000 in 1971, Bușteni-Babele in 1977 and Babele-Peștera in 1982), and only one in Făgăraș Mountains (between Bălea Cascadă and Bălea Lac in 1979). During the same period, other funiculars and ski-lifts are created in the same area, Bucegi-Prahova-Brașov (telegondola Poiana Brașov in 1977, the funicular at Valea Dorului-Sinaia in 1975, the ski-lifts Bradul-Poiana Brașov in 1971, Predeal 2 in 1973, Predeal 3 in 1977, Subteleferic in 1978, Camelia-Poiana Brașov in 1979. Outside this area, only one funicular has been erected, at Păltiniș, in 1972.

After 1980, the trend of extension for the practice of ski at the level of the whole Carpathian space determined the spread of means of light mechanical transportation (funiculars and ski-lifts) for a number of resorts and mountain massifs. Such was the case in 1981 at Vatra Dornei – funicular and ski-lift on the northern slope of Dealul Negru, Borșa – funicular and ski-lift on the northern slope of Știon Mountain in Rodna, Bunloc – funicular on the northern slope of Piatra Mare, Muntele Mic – funicular, Mogoșa (Maramureș) – funicular, Băișoara – ski-lift on the slope of Buscat Mountain. In 1986, investments have been made for funiculars at Sovata and Straja (on the northern slope of Vălcăni Mountains), funicular and ski-lift at Piatra Fântânele in Bărgău Mountains, ski-lift at Durău (Ceahlău), baby-ski-lift at Beliş-Fântânele and Parâng funicular.

Afterwards, there have been created only ski-lifts at Arieșeni and Stăna de Vale. The process ceased after 1990, with several small exceptions: Râncă, Vidra (Parâng) and Răușor (Retezat). At present, the maximum length of means of cable transportation is more than 78,300 m (the size for an average resort in the Alps). They have a simultaneous capacity of more than 36,100 persons per hour.

Concerning the physical and technical features (see the table in *Studia* 1/1996), there are differences between the three categories:

- for the *cabins*, the cable length varies between 4351 (Bușteni-Babele) and 573 m – Tâmpa; the difference of altitude between 1238 m (Bușteni-Babele, from 934 to 2172 m) and 320 m (Tâmpa, 640 to 960 m); the capacity, between 90 persons (Bălea-Cascadă – Bălea-Lac) to 20 persons (Tâmpa); the capacity per hour between 504 persons (Capra Neagră-Postăvaru) and 220 persons (Babele-Peștera), directly proportional to the capacity of the cabins, their number and the length of the route.

- for the *funiculars* (17): the longest ones link the resorts to the high mountain region. Vatra Dornei has the maximum linear extension of 2780 m in comparison to the high altitude funiculars serving exclusively the ski domain, such as Valea Dorului-Sinaia, 882 m. Concerning altitudes, the amplitude oscillates between 646 m for Poiana Braşov telegondola (the only one in Romania) and 231 m for Valea Dorului. They all have 2 seats per chair, except for the funicular Cota 1400-Sinaia. The transport capacity per hour is between 600 persons for Predeal 2 funicular and 190 persons for Sinaia-Cota 1400.

- the ski-lifts are the most numerous (40). They are located at the foot of the mountains, in direct contact with the resorts, in the middle part of the slopes and even in the alpine sector with terminus points at 2000 m and beyond (Cota 1400-Sinaia, Furnica, Vârful cu Dor). Their length surpasses only exceptionally 1000 m (Băișoara 1035 m) and the difference of altitude oscillates between 240 m (Păltiniș) and 23 m (Camelia - Poiana Braşov). The capacity per hour varies the most, between 1000 persons for the shortest ski-lift (Camelia) and 200 persons for Furnica-Sinaia.

These technical utilities have been created for a ski domain of a certain extension and features. This completes the planned hinterland of climatic mountain resorts, which often extend their area of influence over the entire surrounding mountain space.

Compared to the homonymous planned space of the Alpine mountain resorts, the total planned ski domain of the Carpathi-

ans is only approaching the size of an average mountain resort in the Alps. It sums a mere 380.8 ha of slopes, to which more than 34,200 persons may have simultaneous access.

From the point of view of its location and extension, the ski domain has mostly a longitudinal development on stretches along the slopes and less an areal development comprising entire slopes.

Usually, the ski slopes are from 1600-1700 m at start to the altitude of the resorts: 1000-1050 m at Predeal, 1400 m at Păltiniș, 1200 m at Semenic, 1000 m at Poiana Braşov, and most of the others below these values.

In the case of Sinaia and especially Buşteni, the ski domain has been planned and arranged in the upper third of the slopes and even in the area of the upper plateau, because of the presence of Bucegi-Prahova escarpment. The access is made by cabins and then by light means of cable transportation (funicular, ski-lift) or by the Sinaia-Babele alpine road. On the other hand, this feature had positive aspects: there was no need for clearing the forest in stretches as the ski domain is in the alpine and sub-alpine vegetation zone. A similar situation is encountered in the case of Păltiniș, Semenic, Muntele Mic resorts, regarding the creation of ski slopes outside the forestry domain.

Three resorts stand out from the ensemble of Carpathian arrangements and plans. Their utilities, especially for the practice of ski, logistically supported by means of cable transportation, approaches them to the small mountain resorts of the Alps. Sinaia stands out with 12 ski slopes of more than 15 km length and extended over 85 ha. Poiana

Braşov has the most balanced ratio between the accommodation capacity, the means of cable transportation and the ski domain. It is the closest resort to the Alpine ones, having 13 ski slopes of 13.5 km length, extended on more than 57 ha on the northern face of Postăvaru. The complex Predeal-Pârâu Rece comes third, its utilities being concentrated in two areas: Clăbucet and Pârâu Rece (Țigu Gabriela 2001, p. 157). Still very far away are the next resorts on this classification: Păltiniș, Mogoşa, Vatra Dornei, Azuga, Buşteni, Semenic, Borşa.

Analysing the correlation between the *accommodation capacity* (number of places) and the length of ski slopes, one comes to the conclusion that the minimum standard of 6m/place is accomplished only in the case of Păltiniș, with 276 places and 8.4 m/place. Poiana Braşov gets nearer the standard, with 5.12 m/place, then comes Sinaia with 3.56 m/place and Predeal 3.42 m/place. This happens because only a part of the customers of Carpathian resorts, especially the locals, are skiers.

The real situation of the arrangements made for winter sports comes out by reporting the hourly capacity of cable transportation means to that of the planned ski slopes. A result of more than one is given for most of the resorts: Poiana Braşov 1.3, Predeal 1.1, Buşteni 1.6, Borşa 1.9, Azuga 2.2, Izvoarele 3.9 etc. It demonstrates an underuse (or an oversize) of cable transportation as compared to the results of Sinaia 0.5, Păltiniș 0.3, Tihuța 0.28, which suggests a pressure in the demand for cable transportation in relationship to the ski domain which appears to be too extended related to the demand.