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Relation of tourism and competitiveness from the point of view of landscape planning in the Börzsöny and the Hanság

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Introduction

The nowadays so fashionable concept of competitiveness can be considered in the case of rural areas and landscapes as the ability of the stakeholders of the area for utilizing their landscape resources for enhancing life quality ensuring the requirements of sustainability. On the other hand nowadays tourism is the most characteristic landscape forming factor, the beautiful landscape is the most important tourist attraction. We are looking for the regional contexts of the tourism and the competitiveness in this study.

Background

The concept of competitiveness in rural development has three major aspects: 1. economic aspect (general: portion of economic sectors, features of entrepreneurs, investments, labor, business infrastructure, economic performance; primary sector: multifunctional in agriculture, productivity and diversification; tourism: tourist services, parameters of demand, employment), 2. environmental aspect (environmental quality, biodiversity, land use, natural and cultural values, green space system of the settlements, infrastructure) and 3. social aspect (population density, migration, education, employment, income, accessibility of public services, commuting, self-organizing capacity, co-operation, communication) (Bryden, 2003 and Filepné 2009).

The success of tourism destinations in world markets is influenced by their relative competitiveness. Crouch and Ritchie's (1999) approach to destination competitiveness focused on destination image or attractiveness. Crouch and Ritchie (1999, p. 146) have a model that postulates that tourism destination competitiveness (TDC) is determined by four major components: "core resources and attractions", "supporting factors and resources", "destination management", and "qualifying determinants". Enright and Newton (2004) argues that a proper understanding of destination competitiveness requires, in addition to destination or tourism-specific factors, the inclusion of such factors that affect the competitiveness of firms and other organizations involved in producing the tourism "product". So a destination is competitive if it can attract and satisfy potential tourists and this competitiveness is determined both by tourism-specific factors and by a much wider range of factors that influence the tourism service providers.

Goals and objectives

The landscape is attractiveness. Nature is the most important attraction for a lot of country perhaps. Since the early days of tourism, the landscape has played an important role in people's decision for holiday destination. Nowadays the people can make a choice hardly because the media confronts us with an ever more varied palette of images of landscapes. And this landscapes (= tourism destinations) compete for the tourists. It depends on their competitiveness which one attract more visitors (Mikházi 2009). Our aim is to define what kind of competitiveness factors imply in the case of the tourism destinations. We emphasize the factors which determine the landscape character. Finally we defined those landscape architecture tasks which ones lead to the right utilization of regional factors of competitiveness.

Method

We have chosen two frontier areas for field work, which have different conditions (Fig. 1.). All of them are kept in mind as a periphery in Hungary. Börzsöny is the northernmost part of Northern-mountain ranges. It is the popular tourism destination of the metropolitans: it is close to Budapest and is rich in natural and cultural values. The situation of Hanság is quite different and similar to Börzsöny. In spite of the area is situated in the most developed region of the country, it was always considered as a periphery. During the socialism the strictly controlled and closed border region, nowadays the lack of real centre and the lack of co-operation hinders the development of the settlements. Up till the 19th century the Hanság was a vast marshland. Due to the regulation works we can find just the remnants of the former wetlands.



Figure 1. The Hanság and the Börzsöny in Hungary.

At the selection of the areas we considered certain conditions important as boarder situation, existence of natural values of high quality, protected areas of national importance, spatial scale of 20-25 settlements. The similarity of these factors ensures

the similarity of the background conditions (from the point of view of economy and politics). So the differences in the competitiveness factors come up as distinctiveness inside the area.

We have adapted the competition factors defined by Crouch and Ritchie (1999) furthermore Enright and Newton (2004) to the Hungarian conditions. Considering the local specialties we highlighted the factors of local and regional tourism. As second principle for our application process we emphasized the representation of the landscape factors as a result of the importance of landscape of the surveyed areas.

We defined the new competitiveness factors for the two areas, reviewing statistic data and literary work and field survey. We grouped the specific factors according to the following main aspects: spatial characteristics, geographical situation, attractive factors, and economic factors.

The factors of spatial characteristics contain the most important data of the areas which ensure the similar background situation for the research. The aspects of geographical situation describe the regional connections and geographical conditions of the areas. According to Enright and Newton (2004) we defined two further factors: attractiveness and business related factors. We listed among the attractors the townscape, landscape character, national-regional-local cultural values (castles, museums, churches of special importance, Calvary/shrine, landmarks/remnants of former land use, cultural events, national monuments, cuisine/local products), natural (information points, network of nature trails, view points/visual appear, natural values or formations of special importance, geological formations) and special (dinkey lines, nature schools/visitor centers, ski-trucks, golf course, adventure parks, fields for exercises in forest, greenways) factors. We concluded among business related factors the quantity of accommodation, tourist services, cycling roads and services and the availability.

Results

After the literature survey of factors of economic and tourism competitiveness we have defined a criteria catalogue based mostly on landscape values and conditions. We consider it an important step because landscape is a base for tourism specific competitiveness but among the competitiveness factors it has not got proper importance up till now. The landscape is not just the sum of natural and cultural elements. As the landscape concludes the natural resources and all elements of societies using and shaping these resources since centuries: the architecture, traditions, forms of land use etc. So to say the landscape is compressing all conditions related to nature-culture, transportation-availability which are basis for tourism.

According to the spatial characteristic the area of Hanság is bigger and has a higher number of population. Both areas are characterized by depopulation, but in case of certain settlements we can witness outstanding growth of the population (for

example Börzsöny: Kismaros és Nagymaros, Hanság: Bezi). Significant parts of both areas are under Nature park protection. (29% of Börzsöny, 30% Hanság). According to the activity of the society and the number of NGO-s Hanság is stronger, but in both of them is the number of local organizations high. In the interest of preservation of natural values and enhance tourism the settlements of Börzsöny established six regional organizations while the settlements of Hanság created 5 organizations for rural development. (Table 1.)

Table 1. Comparison of available data

| | Börzsöny | | Hanság | |
|---|---------------------------|---------------|---------------------------|---------------|
| | Value | Qualification | Value | Qualification |
| Area | 62527 ha | | 67047 ha | |
| Number of settlements | 23 | | 22 | |
| Coverage of % National park protection | 29% | | ≈30% | |
| Population number | 31 570 | | 43 404 | |
| Population density | 50 person/km ² | | 64 person/km ² | |
| Number of NGO-s | 48 | Average | 85 | Outstanding |
| Number of enterprises | 144 | Average | 216 | Outstanding |
| Registered economic organizations | 4500 | Average | 6040 | Outstanding |
| Border crossing points | 9 | Significant | 2 | Average |
| Regional initiatives | 6 | Outstanding | 5 | Outstanding |
| Capacity of public accommodation establishments | 1008 | Outstanding | 181 | Average |
| Tourism nights of public accommodation establishments | 48607 | Outstanding | 11714 | Average |
| Capacity of private accommodation establishments | 761 | Outstanding | 203 | Average |
| Tourism nights of private accommodation establishments | 21232 | Outstanding | 10751 | Average |

Source: Compiled by the authors using KSH and TEIR databases

Considering the location, Börzsöny is in a much more favorable situation: it is located nearby the capital city, its 17 settlements form part of the Central-Hungarian Region. Furthermore it is connected by 9 border crossings with the neighboring Slovak Republic (two for cars and seven for pedestrians), which ensures a much more intensive social-economic relationship. Contrary to the Börzsöny Hanság is situated 130-150 km far from the capitol but closed to Sopron and Győr (centre of the Western-Danubian Region) and along the Austrian border. It is connected to Austria by two border crossings (one for cars one for pedestrians). Looking at geographical conditions Börzsöny is in a more favorable situation considering the preferences of Hungarian tourists (preferring the mountainous landscapes). The geographic conditions of Hanság (plain landscape formed by the water, with

remnants of landscape history) are still under evaluated and untapped from the point of view of tourism.

The attractors reveal the differences of geographic conditions, traditions and past of the two landscapes. These differences appear in the types of attractors. The settlements of Börzsöny are small and closed, the mountains hinder their spatial expansion. The most of the settlements of Hanság are characterized by spindle shaped structure; the streets contain wide green zones. In the marshy area of Hanság and Tóköz the landscape conditions were also primer in forming the settlement structure. People were looking during floods protected high grounds for churches so here the churches inspite of the average central location were built at the periphery of the settlements on high grounds. The region of Börzsöny is mostly characterized by relief with the dominant land use form of forests. The characteristic landscape elements are the geographic formations and wine cellars, castles, mines and milles. Hanság is a plain landscape varied by small canals and lakes. Originally the settlements were created on islands standing out from the marshland. In the pits of the marshland several small lakes were from which just a few remained.

From the cultural attractors the number of castles and country-seats is outstanding (19 db). Recognizing these cultural resources the movement of “Castles in Börzsöny” was launched in 2000. The objective of this program was to get people to visit as much castles as possible with the guidance of a special leaflet. On the whole 202 cultural attractor and 124 programs await tourists. According to the Figure 2. we have revealed one third less cultural attractors in Hanság. Up till now there has not been any tourist specific cultural program-package elaborated.

Börzsöny can be characterized by really rich and varied natural attractors which serve as a base and used by tourism. The region is netted by hiking routes; the national “Blue Line” hiking trail leads across it as well. It is rich in looking out towers and geologic formations furthermore we can find here one information point and six nature trails. The natural values of Hanság come from mostly the varied habitats of wetlands: wet meadows, marsh-meadows, muskeg, swamp-forests etc. The nature can be observed by three looking out and bird watching towers and one nature trail. Börzsöny is a much favored position from the point of view of special attractors: four dinkey lines, five nature schools, three ski-trucks, one field for exercises in forest, and two greenways are functioning in the region. In contrast to this we can find in Hanság one nature school (bird watching) and two visitor centers.

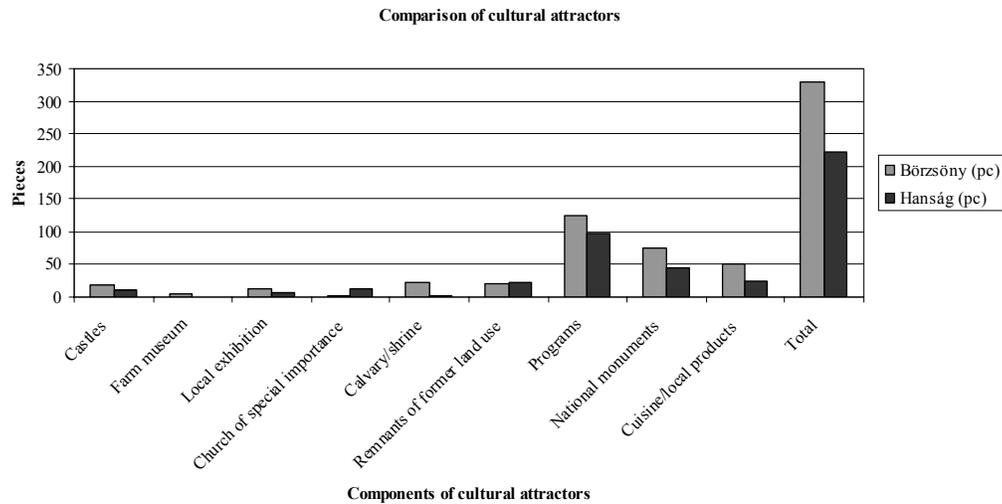


Figure 2. Comparison of cultural attractors of Hanság and Börzsöny

Firstly we examined the capacity of private and public accommodation establishments from the business related factors. In the region of Börzsöny there are 1769 registered accommodation establishments, where in 2008-ban 70 839 nights were spent by tourists. Although this number is half of the national average it is outstanding on regional level. In Hanság there are 384 registered accommodation establishment, where in 2008 22 465 nights were spent by tourists, which is 14% of the national average. These values are really low in both cases. The numbers show a stronger position for Hanság in the area of services (267 catering and 797 retailer unit) which is a little bit contradictory, in the region there are two small towns as well. The higher level of services is the result of greater population concentration. The settlements in Börzsöny are waiting the visitors with 180 catering and 271 other retail units, performing higher tourist results.

Both regions press cycling tourism so we analyzed the length of cycling roads (built and marked) and related services. For the conscious tourism base recreation planning serve as evidence the realized Greenway projects (*Duna-Ipoly Zöldút*/Greenway, *Örökségeink Útján Zöldút*/On the road of our Heritage Greenway), during which 160 km long cycling road was built or marked, which crosses 70% of the settlements. In spite of this there are just 5 suppliers (lender, repair shop) in the region. In Hanság is marked almost 160 km cycling route (mostly just marked), which is crossing 86% of the settlements, so almost the whole region can be explored by cycling. The number of suppliers related to cycling is higher here but it is not enough either.

Discussion and conclusion

Both regions are rich in natural and cultural attractors, both of them have outstanding treasures of different character. Looking at the number of economic organizations and enterprises the position of settlements of Hanság is better, which presume higher number of visitors, but in reality in Börzsöny higher turnover of visitors was registered.

The stakeholders of the area of Börzsöny recognized the opportunities of the landscape potentials and several ecotourism development programs have been launched. They formed the tourism resources into a competitiveness benefit. In Hanság thanks to the nature protection efforts of the last decades and the latest habitat rehabilitation programs the area is rich in natural and cultural values. Unlike to the Börzsöny the stakeholders of Hanság still has not recognized the potentials of landscape resources which was also hindered by the nowadays changing closed attitude of the National Park Fertő-Hanság.

In the following table we summarized the most important landscape planning tasks related to the recreational, cultural-educational, residential, cohesion functions of the landscape which are vital both from the point of tourism and competitiveness as well:

Table 2. Possible functions of the landscape

| Function | Examples | Requirements of landscape architecture |
|--|--|--|
| Preservation function — Preservation of biodiversity — Preservation of unique landscape values — Absorption of carbon-dioxide and other contaminants | — Areas under nature protection — Areas for water protection — Protection zones of industrial areas — Protection zones of residential areas | Spatial planning serving the protection of biodiversity: protection of biotopes mosaic like landscapes, ecologic corridors |
| Residential function — Ensuring quality of life — Integration of settlers | Settlements and green spaces | Satisfying social need and preserving architectural traditions |
| Cohesion function — Social integration, — Needs of elderly | Green spaces, community spaces, public buildings | Planning serving the needs of socialization and integration: comm. places, sport centers |
| Cultural-educational function — Preservation of local cultural values — Changing rural spaces for spaces of learning and discovery | — Areas for national monument preservation — Archeological sites — Unique landscape values — Historic landscapes | — Listing and preservation of values of regional identity — Landscape as a place for learning and discovery: thematic routes, study trails, visitor centers |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| <p>Recreational function</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> — Satisfying the needs of urban society: leisure, recreation, sports etc. — Harmonizing the needs of locals and tourists | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> — Thematic parks — Nature parks — Parkforests | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> — Preservation of the beauty and aesthetic value of the landscape — Community places presenting local heritage |
|---|---|---|

Source: Leader European Observatory [2001] and Ghimessy László [1984]

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