

## THE EXPLOITATION AND OPPORTUNITIES OF TOURISM POTENTIAL OF REGIONS LAGGING BEHIND IN SOUTH-TRANSDANUBIA

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### **Abstract**

#### **The exploitation and opportunities of tourism potential of regions lagging behind in South-Transdanubia**

If we have a look at the „negative regions“ or in other words the regions lagging behind in Hungary, we can distinguish between external and internal peripheries. The external peripheries are associated with border areas, the internal ones with agricultural activities. In these micro regions unemployment rate is above the national average, income position is below the average, the share of foreign capital and entrepreneurial activity is low.

Those micro regions facing the problems of bordering areas can be found at almost every bordering areas except for the western region, while the ones facing the sectoral problems of agriculture dominated areas (internal peripheries) can be highlighted in South-Transdanubia (Baranya, Somogy and Tolna counties), or North East Hungary (Hajdúság).

Most of these regions though are rich in natural and cultural resources (national parks, protected natural areas of course due to their bordering function they have not been disturbed by economic activities) which may offer opportunities for tourism. The appearing problems of development include the poor infrastructure of the towns and villages, the higher than average ratio of poverty ridden residential areas and the low standard of community services and public utilities.

In our study we chose two micro regions with characteristic features to demonstrate the problem on a micro regional level.

#### **Key words**

lagging regions, tourism potential, opportunities, exploitation

## 1. Introduction

The lagging regions of Hungary usually consider tourism as a source for social-economic and political development. Planning documents were carried out everywhere, but on the other hand no considerable realisation is experienced so far. Despite of this the areas lagging behind can only utilise their tourism potential only at a low efficiency. That is why the main question or key problem of our research was: How can tourism act as a development generating factor and fulfil its expected regional development roles?

In order to research the topic we chose two micro regions from the South Transdanubian Region (Barcs micro region and Marcali micro region) where we believe tourism could act as a development factor. We also think that it can also act as a multiplier factor to the surrounding micro regions. We experienced furthermore adequate state and local sources for development in the researched areas so tourism can (or could) effectively act as an economy-generating factor.

Both micro regions are found in Somogy, a traditional county with rich historical and cultural background. Out of the two micro regions, Barcs is border positioned and Marcali lies south from the background areas of Lake Balaton.

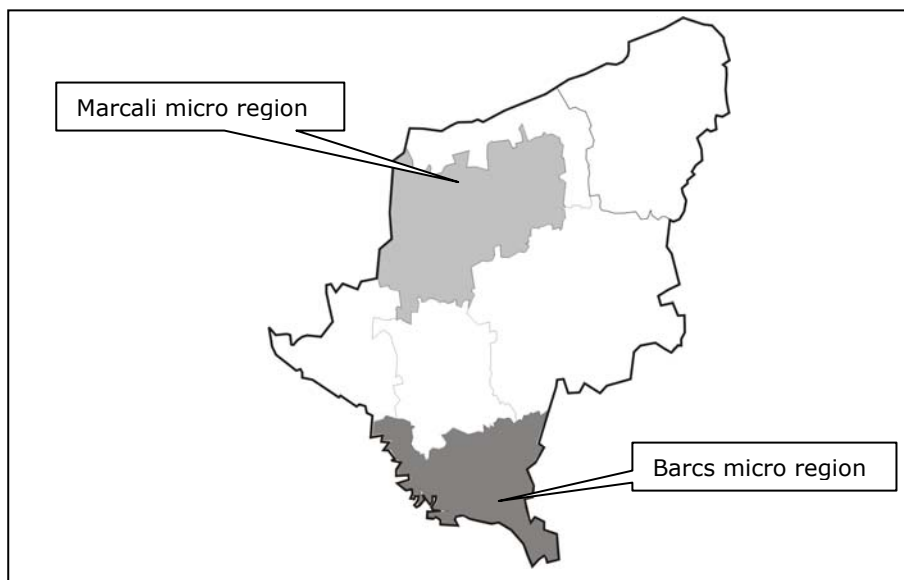


Fig. 1: The Position of the Marcali and Barcs Micro region in Somogy County.  
Source: Somogy Megye Turizmusfejlesztési Konceptiója 2003.

## 2. Characterisation of the Economy of Hungary and the South-Transdanubian Region

In the spatial structure of Hungary both compensating and difference increasing processes can be experienced from the 1990s. There is an unfortunate procedure experienced, as we have a look at the spatial-development differences of the country that the socio-economic differences increased from 1990 onwards. There has been a significant change in the spatial structure as well as we could distinguish between positive/developing regions and regions lagging behind the national average.

The favourably situated regions benefit from their geographical positions as they do tend to be found on the western borders (1), large cities (2) or at the dynamic axes (3) (the Budapest – Győr –Mosonmagyaróvár – Sopron (Bratislava – Vienna) line and the Budapest – Székesfehérvár – Balaton axis) of the country. At these regions the share of foreign capital and entrepreneurial activity is high, the employment rate is above national average and unemployment rate is lower. Sp in the level of the regions, the east-west and the centre-periphery structure seems to be more strengthened. The economic structure of the country is characterised by a reverse direction development spiral where the most developed areas are Central-Hungary, followed by Western-Transdanubia and Central-Transdanubia, then South-Transdanubia and South-Plains at the same development level and Northern-Plains and Northern-Hungary are the least developed regions.

On the micro regional structure the strengthening of differences was experienced in the past years. In spite of that in more than half of the least developed micro regions a certain close up process can be detected, the micro regions with the worst indicators had less absolute development than the national average. The lagging regions are concentrated in the North-West and in South-Transdanubia. Their chances for close up are worsened by them being an external or internal periphery and their hard accessibility. In South-Transdanubia a Letenye-Sárbogárd economic fault can be detected detaching the region from the developed areas.

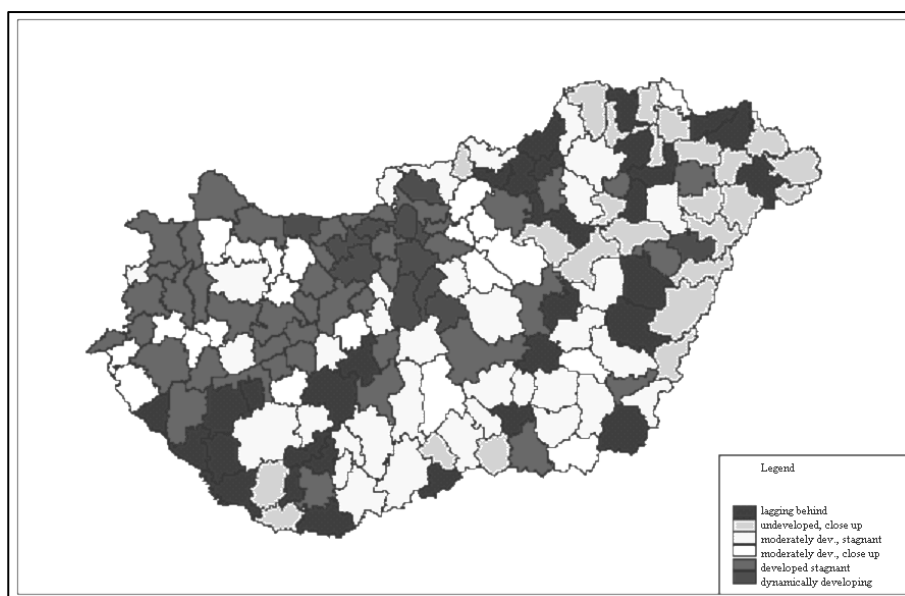


Fig. 2: The Change of Economic Spatial Structure in Hungary 1998-2002.  
Source: OTK, 2005.

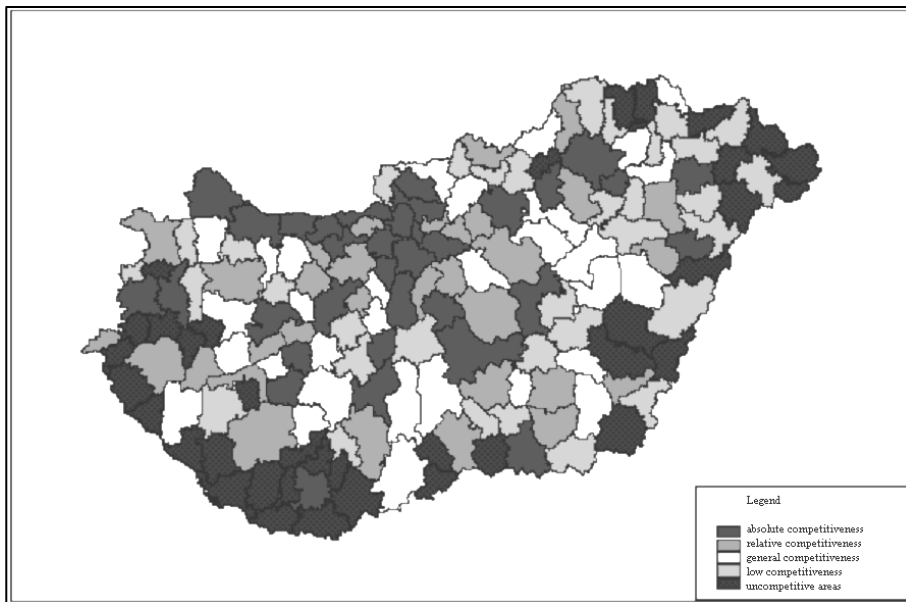


Fig. 3: Competitiveness of the Micro Regions, 2002.  
Source: OTK, 2005.

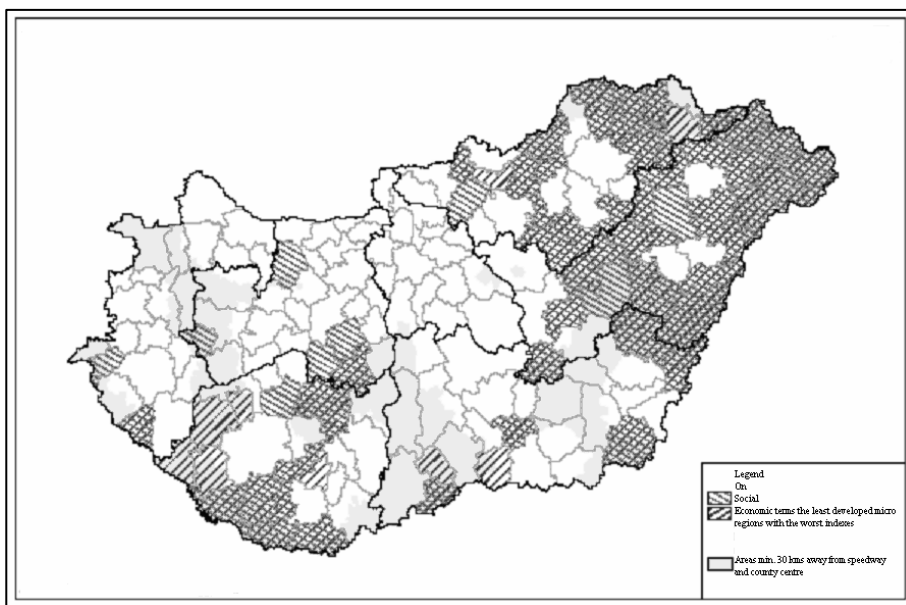


Fig. 4: Lagging Regions and Peripheries.  
Source: OTK, 2005.

### 3. The Main Features of the Tourism of Somogy County

If we have a look at Somogy County there is a double judgment from the perspective of its tourism industry. So on the one hand we can state that the majority of its tourism is provided by the southern shores of Lake Balaton, but on the other hand the internal areas have only slight results produced. So concerning statistical data, the county has an excellent emerging position both in the region and the country as well, but without Lake Balaton even Tolna County exceeds Somogy, based on the bednight statistics.

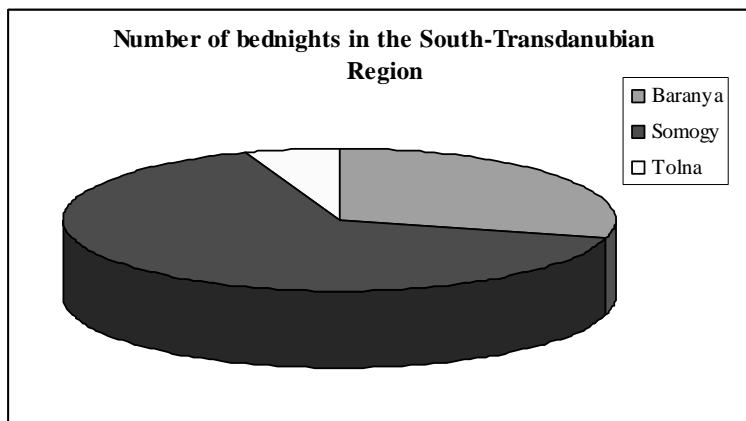


Fig. 5: Number of bednights in the South-Transdanubian Region.

Source: KSH/CSO, 2005.

The main tourism product of Somogy County -Lake Balaton- according to its product lifecycle it is mature. The 2003 Tourism Development Concept of Somogy County highlights the significant supply for ecotourism, health tourism and sport and cultural programs in connection with the Lake's supply side. The main idea and message of the Concept is that innovation is urgently needed to renew the attraction. Other tourism products with importance in the county are its natural features, ethnic traditions and cultural-gastronomy festivals.

The areas involved in this research are concerned in ecotourism and health tourism where both these product types strengthen and complement each other. The prospected guests have basically different features but also possess a value identity due to demand of quality services. The spatial effects have well observable signs concerning tourism development in the juvenile/introductory period.

It is especially outstanding at the Marcali micro region with one of the most important festivals (Nagyszakácsi festival of Royal cooks) of the country based on local (bottom-up) initiatives.

The Regional Operative Programme of the South-Transdanubian Region out of the tourism zones of Somogy County highlights as a primary region the South of Balaton and its background areas. Also belong to this category the Villány-Siklós area and Pécs and its surroundings. Secondary core area is Kaposvár and its surroundings and the areas along the Danube. The areas around the Drava river belong to the tertiary zones.

Central areas Tourism Products	South- Balaton	Pecs and its surroundings	Villány- Siklós- Harkány	Along the Danube	Kaposvár and its surroundings	Along the Drava	Inner South- Transdanubia
Health tourism							
Water and active tourism							
Equestrian							
Cycling tourism							
Hunting, angling							
Golf tourism							
Ecotourism							
Rural tourism							
Wine and gastronomy							
Cultural tourism							
Conference tourism							
Festivals							
Innovative products /Thematic parks							

Fig. 6: Product - central areas matrix.  
Source: South-Transdanubian ROP/Dél-Dunántúl ROP.  
Dark areas: products of primary importance  
Bright areas: products of secondary importance

#### 4. General Economic Features of the Sample Areas

##### The Barcs micro region

The micro region is positioned in South-west of Somogy County, bordering region to Croatia. Its inner road system is underdeveloped, needs a wide range of renewal. Although there is a favourable capability, the lack of cycling routes is experienced in the area. One of the most important hiatus of the micro region is that although River Drava is navigable there is no water traffic along the river.

The only city of the micro region is Barcs. Apart from the Hungarian majority, a considerable amount of three nationalities live there: Gypsies, German, Croatian. The city's ratio of employees is under the county average and also there is a low efficiency of the economic branches.

The commerce sector was strengthened from the 1990s when the shopping tourism between the Croatian and Hungarian border reached its blooming, but by the time of the Millennium this process also was confined due to the economic and financial changes.

##### The Marcali micro region

The micro region as a whole shows an average or under average development position. Alike the other reviewed micro region the only economic centre is Marcali. The major firms' profile of the city is engineering, conversion of timber, garment trade, food industry and building industry. The ratio of the tertiary sector is also according to the county average. Both commercial and catering industry grew in the last decade.

Apart from Marcali, according to its economic data, Kéthely can also be mentioned.

## **5. Tourism Position of the Researched Areas**

### **Barcs micro region**

Considering the tourism potential of the micro region on the whole we can state there are favourable natural features for tourism but slight, unfavourable results are experienced as well. The area's tourism relies basically on the Danube-Drava National Park and its mainly ecotourism supply. Added tourism supply is the Thermal Spa of Barcs, and agrotourism functioning only seasonally and at a low utilisation rate.

There is also a lack of tourism suprastructure, with only a minimal level of accommodation capacity. Proving this fact Barcs has only one hotel with 46 beds. The other important settlement with private accommodations is Csokonyavisonta where there are 162 units with 516 beds.

Annual guests of the micro region are around 3500, bednights around 15 000. The strong concentration of accommodations can be experienced in the micro region.

One of its most important supply is the Thermal Spa of Barcs which truly serves as a spatially dynamising tourism supply. In the last years nearly 2 billion HUF investment was carried out in order to improve the quality and infrastructure of the spa. Due to this nowadays a sportpool, a 300 m<sup>2</sup> of spa pool, a 475 m<sup>2</sup> of „experience pool“ and some other new investments were carried out.

Despite of these favourable effects we have to declare that future service and quality improvement and expansion needed to furthermore fulfil the dynamising role of this spa. The health tourism function of the micro region is also strengthened by the thermal spa of Csokonyavisonta and Babócsa

### **The Marcali micro region**

An unfavourable situation of the micro region's tourism industry, that it is irregularly developed, with a very much mosaic like supply side. The spatial and regional development factors of tourism is only locally predominating, there is no broad and comprehensive regional developmental factors experienced.

The favourable areas of tourism in the micro region are mainly the areas near Lake Balaton. This area partly serves as accommodation and also a hiking-walking area to the main tourism zone. Speedway No. 68 is an important axe of the region's traffic. Out of its settlements of course Marcali is outstanding with 65% of all bednights of the micro region. The only hotel of the micro region is situated here which is also a very much unfavourable situation. Apart from hotels private accommodation is to be found at almost every settlement, with a statistic of about 1500 bednights/year.

The other supply factors of the micro region are the Boronka area, Mesztegyő and Nagybjom. In the Boronka nature protecting zone youth and professional tourism is carried out mainly under ecotourism. Ecotourism is also generated in this area by the nearby Small Balaton and Balaton.

The areas accommodations favourably take advantage of the nearby health spas as well (Zalakaros, Hévíz etc.) providing cheaper accommodations for the tourists. In this are it is also to be mentioned that many houses are owned by foreigners, which is again a negative factor for any incomes of the locals.

Apart from Marcali we have to highlight Mesztegyő with its nationwide famous special Hungarian cake festival (Mesztegyői rétes fesztivál), also Nagybajom with its thermal spa, but first of all Nagyszakácsi with the gastronomy festival of Royal cooks.

This festival is a unique supply factor of the area gathering around thousands of tourists who are interested in Hungarian gastronomy and cuisine but only one occasion per year. Although the infrastructure (ovens etc.) could serve for more festivals and programs unfortunately until now there is no intention to widen the range of supply of the festival or of the settlement.

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### **IZKORIŠČANJE IN PRILOŽNOSTI TURISTIČNEGA POTENCIALA MANJ RAZVITIH POKRAJIN V JUŽNEM PODONAVJU**

#### ***Povzetek***

Manj razvite pokrajine v južnem Podonavju kažejo dvojnost. Lahko bi govorili o zunanjih in notranjih marginalnih pokrajinah. Značilnost prvih je obmejna lega, medtem ko je za druge značilna agrarna usmeritev. Za oba tipa pokrajin je značilna nadpovprečna brezposelnost, podpovprečni dohodek na prebivalca in nizka stopnja tujih gospodarskih vlaganj. Podobni procesi so značilnost večine obmejnih regij na Madžarskem, razen zahodnega dela. Notranje marginalne pokrajine – predvsem na območju Južnega Podonavja in severovzhodne Madžarske – se srečujejo s strukturnimi problemi kmetijstva. Po drugi strani pa so ta območja bogata z naravnimi danostmi (naravni parki, zaščitena območja), kar ponuja nove priložnosti na področju turizma. Poseben problem predstavlja tudi slaba infrastrukturna opremljenost marginalnih pokrajin.