

# THE CROSS-BORDER TERRITORIAL SYSTEM IN ROMANIAN-UKRAINIAN CARPATHIAN AREA. ELEMENTS, MECHANISMS AND STRUCTURES GENERATING PREMISES FOR AN INTEGRATED CROSS-BORDER TERRITORIAL SYSTEM WITH TOURIST FUNCTION

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**Abstract:** The external border of the EU and NATO is overlapping the state border between Romania and Ukraine, for a length of 440.1 km in a dominating mountain range of the Carpathians Mountains. By applying specific methods and tools we have identified in quantitative, qualitative and functional-systemic terms, the factors that determine and the items that compose the functioning mechanisms of the Romanian and Ukrainian border contiguous areas. There were considered: the geographical location; the natural morpho-structural aspects; the morphological support profile of the state border; the legislative and administrative framework; the routes and communication networks; the historical, social and cultural elements etc. Based on the results obtained, new strategies can be generated for transforming these areas into a cross-border territorial system with high degree of functionality. Such a system has an important role in the process of social and economic integration and elimination of the traditional functions of the political frontier generating juxtaposed territorial systems

**Keywords:** Carpathian Area, Romanian-Ukrainian borderland, territorial system, borderland functionality

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The Eastern external border of EU and NATO includes an important sector that coincides with the Romania and Ukraine inter-state border, legacy in the ex-socialist space of the Western external one of the Soviet space. The two contiguous territorial border systems in relation to the EU external border have experienced differentiated evolutions regarding the development and involvement in territorial structures of cross-border cooperation. If barriers to cooperation have succeeded in different ways depending on the regional and European political situation, in terms of the natural environment, as support of tourism activity, the opportunities are many and varied. This study aims to analyze the elements and mechanisms that can contribute to development in integrated system and the generation of a continuous travel space overlapping the Romanian and Ukrainian cross-

border territorial system, a possible model to be implemented in areas with similar features. In parallel, the natural and cultural heritage developed and adapted to a natural system with areas of interest of Northern Carpathians are elements that shape a context favourable for integrated cross-border tourism development prospects, on the EU external border.

## 2. ANALYTICAL FRAMEWORK

The Romanian-Ukrainian border, with a length of 649.4 km, part of the EU Eastern external border, consists of two sectors, a Northern one, supporting the predominant mountain paths, long of 440.1 km and an Eastern one of 209.3 km overlapped to the lower stream of Danube. The study is centred on the Northern sector and the area extension coincides with the contiguous border sub-systems defined by the width of equivalent NUTS 3 administrative-territorial units: counties in Romania and regions in Ukraine.

Thus, the Romanian-Ukrainian cross-border territorial system determined administratively (59 061 sqkm) extends to four counties in Romania (Satu-Mare, Maramureş, Suceava and Botoşani) on a surface of 24 261 sqkm (41.1% of the total area) and to three regions of Ukraine (Zakarpattia, Ivano-Frankivsk and Chernivtsi) on a surface of 34 800 sqkm (58.9 % of the total area) (Table 1). As for the territorial extension, it is an asymmetric system with a wider Ukrainian side, situation also generated by the incompatibility of the territorial-administrative systems of the two countries.

The natural environment, support of all elements, mechanisms and activities underlying the tourism development of a territory “*turistification*” (Cazelais et al., 2000) in the temperate zone, has a great potential, predominantly overlapping (more than 80%) on the Northern mountain area of Carpathian Mountains (Fig. 1), with altitudes over 1800 meters, descending in stairs towards West and East, to 200 m altitude in the plains. In the mountain area, the presence of intra-mountain depressions and valley corridors induces a variety of landscape whose tourist value is enhanced by the diversity and richness of features comprising the tourist resources, where the climatic, hydrographic and biogeographic ones are crucial in this respect.

In parallel, the political background has radically changed and diversified its conditions over

the past 20 years in the European continent (Lew et al., 2008). In this geographic area, the economic and political dynamics and the structural-space order are very obvious in the land occupied/freed by the matrix generated by the EU space “*dilatation*” and “*contraction*” of the non-EU, under the restriction of the area generated by the economy planned for the market economy.

Under these new conditions, marked by rapid succession of events, on a “*stressed*” background between globalization and regionalization, by continuously changing the role and weights of the state border functions with effects in amplifying the process of differentiation/fading of development gaps, the border areas are looking for applicable models and strategies to change them into cross-border territorial systems with the highest degree of functionality (Ilieş, 2010) and generating development.

### 3. METHODOLOGY

The information analyzed within this study comes from the authors' direct observations in the Romanian and Ukrainian study area over several years, and from official sources of statistical data such as national, regional and local statistical institutes in two states and the border police in Romania.

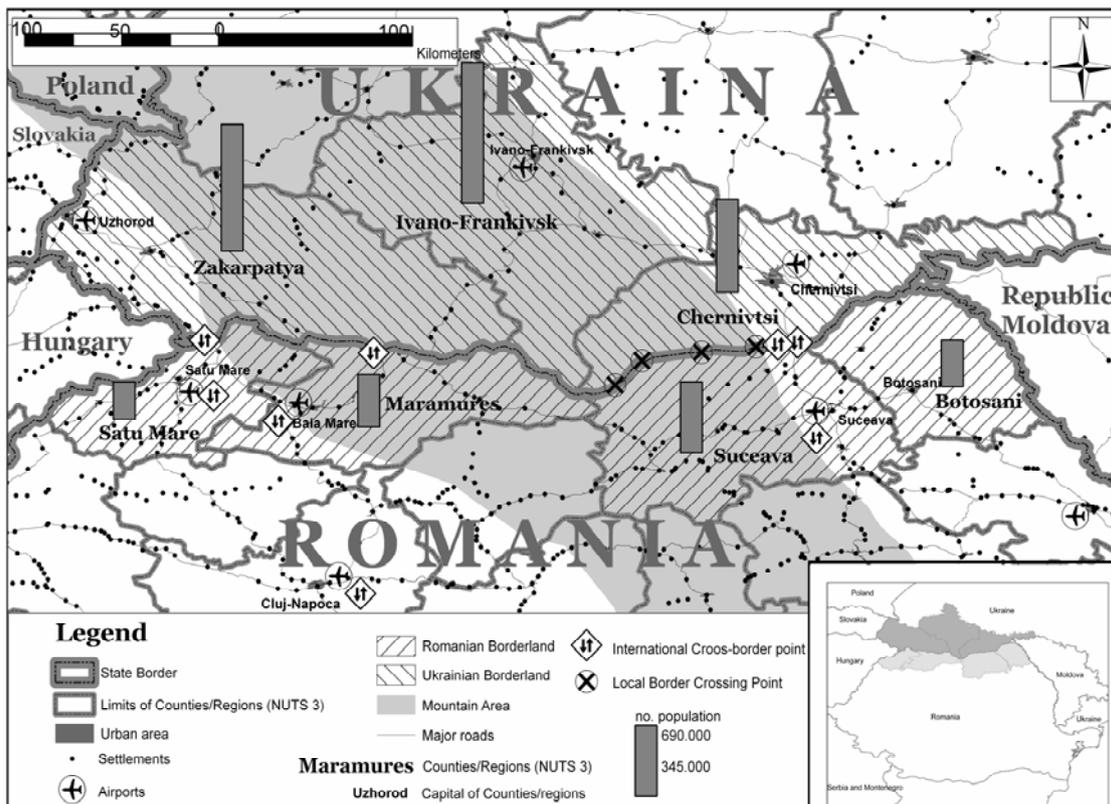


Figure 1. Peripheral position and structural and infrastructural characteristics of border areas composing the Romanian-Ukrainian cross-border territorial system (Northern sector) (Ilieş & Grama, 2010)

Using models already applied in other areas (Gunn & Var, 2002; Topaloglou et al., 2005; Ilieș & Grama, 2010) and identifying specific elements and mechanisms underlying their operation is the key to this approach focused on the EU external border, “*withdrawn*” in an area that inherits features of the former socialist system and on the Western boundary of the ex-Soviet space. Calculation of the attraction potential index (Muntele & Iașu, 2003) is relevant for comparing contiguous cross-border sub-systems. Promoting the idea of integrated tourism and generating functional cross-border territorial systems (Cunha, 1988; Ilieș et al., 2009), nuclei of regional development in peripheral areas, using principles, methods and tools tested in the specialized literature (Martinez, 1994; Tenhiälä, 1994; Hall, 2000; William, 2006; Timothy, 2002; David & Bujdoso, 2009; Prokkola, 2010) is the skeleton of a scientific approach that seeks to base answers to the three questions, where? why? and how? The diagnostic analysis, as a research method and organization and management tool provided to decision-makers in territory management, makes it possible to identify and highlight the predisposing and/or restrictive factors to the development of a tourist system integrated in the defined area.

In methodological terms, another important issue is to determine optimum operating parameters of a territorial system subject to management based on the characteristic elements of the tourism management concept, such as (Ciangă & Dezsi, 2007): modelling the territory subject to management compared to particular genetic factors; the action complexity regardless of the taxonomic rank; implementation of a systemic vision; designing convertible and multifunctional systems; a real quantitative and qualitative knowledge of attractive resources; professional assessment of the supportability limit of the natural environment beyond which the resulting imbalance leads to destruction of the system's operating mechanisms. Compliance with the logical approach by identifying answers to the questions where? why? and how? leads to positive results and hence to high functionality territorial systems. So that a cross-border system grafted on the external border of EU and NATO could become a model to be applied where contiguous cross-border subsystems have a unitary and systemic nature only in the light of the natural environment, with big differences in the level of development, the basic strategy should combine flexibility, differentiation and diversification (Câdea et al., 2003). The Logical Framework Approach (LFA) analysis provides: accuracy and relevance of the information needed by decision-makers a quick and efficient communication between the parties

involved (Ianoș, 2000) in the tourism development project.

Compared with the Slovak-Polish territorial system in the Tatra Mountains where until the inclusion in the Schengen area of the two states “*trans-frontier cooperation concerning environmental issues is very successful, the compromise on cross-border tourism is difficult to achieve*” (Taczanowska, 2004), in this part of the Carpathian Mountains, cooperation in environment (Ilieș et al., 2010) and especially tourism is at an early stage with a nature of juxtaposition, even if significant progress has been made “*inside*” each cross-border system.

#### **4. ELEMENTS, TOOLS, MECHANISMS AND STRUCTURES GENERATING PREMISES FOR AN INTEGRATED CROSS-BORDER TERRITORIAL SYSTEM WITH TOURIST FUNCTION**

Usually, in each state there are driving regions encompassing in a significant share the economic and political power of the territorial system politically defined and internationally recognized. Depending on the degree of decentralization of the state entity concerned and on the peripheral integration of border regions in structures determined by a peripheral relative position of the states concerned within EU, they may interfere or on the contrary can generate an exclusive competitive state. This position is lost only when the EU external border translates to the outside on a new support by including the Ukrainian state. Each wave of extension, as in the previous cases, also according to the “*recent history*” of the territory to be integrated, will generate cross-border systems with specific features, models applicable to similar situations. Facing new challenges, the most difficult stage to overcome will be the adjustment to a position “*on the edge of abundance*” (Lichtenberger, 2000), in contiguity with border systems marked by a line beyond which cross-border cooperation is difficult to adapt to already tested models. The systemic complexity is sometimes amplified by difficulties in matching administrative structures, the basic actors in implementing tourism planning and development strategies (Bramwell & Meyer, 2007). In most cases, in the area of these cross-border territorial systems on the outskirts of the EU, opening borders and increasing the population's international mobility is characterized by inconstancy (crossing with visa or without visa), all being reflected in the economic development and living standards of the population. This issue is also reflected by the attitude of the population residing in EU external border areas, and

where, due to general and specific security measures, people living on both sides of the border outline their ideas diametrically opposed in terms of social status and understanding of the concept of cross-border cooperation. For example, in the EU citizens' view there is an optimistic variant "*I can cross whenever I want and buy cheap from you*" while for those outside the EU there is a pessimistic variant "*I'm crossing whenever I can and sell cheap and sometimes illegally at your place*".

The Romanian-Ukrainian cross-border area falls in that category of peripheral (state) tourist destination with unused (latent) natural and cultural resources, due to the successive role, on the same current border segment, of the Romanian/Czechoslovak and Romanian/Polish contiguity in the Western half and inside the Romanian territory, Bucovina in the Eastern half (1920-1940), inside Hungary in the Western half and inside Romania in the Eastern half (1940-1944), the Romanian/Soviet (1945-1990) and Romanian/Ukrainian contiguity (after 1990), with a major role in shaping juxtaposed border systems, whose reflection in the territory was materialized by inconsistencies in the use, physical development, promotion and sustainable management of resources (Timothy, 1999). After 1990, reducing to a certain extent the restrictive role of the borders lead to the change of outskirts into areas of contact and cooperation, such as the Romanian/Hungarian cross-border system, in direct contact with the one analyzed. One of the successful global aspects of this kind of change is the increase in the number of international parks across or adjacent to the political border (Young & Rabb, 1992; Ilieş et al., 2010). An example of progressive and successful evolution in a complex area is that from the Slovak-Polish one from Tatra Mountains (Taczanowska, 2004), in the case of the Romanian-Ukrainian area, the inchoate version in the Carpathians through the two juxtaposed parks (Ilieş, 2008).

Generally, in cross-border cooperation the initiatives in this direction are usually faced with the same kind of problems, and therefore their settlement efforts can be concentrated as applicable models built with tools of the same type generated from similar problems (Taczanowska, 2004) such as: differences between legal statutes and administrative-territorial forms of organization with major implications for coordination and implementation of cooperation programs (Ilieş et al., 2009); barriers to communication and information generated by the juxtaposition of cultural and linguistic systems in particular; cultural and social differences that may cause closed/open communities with a high degree of non-favourability /favourability for collaboration;

economic disparities such as those generated by the EU external border.

In the same analytical context, another important aspect is the economic efficiency, in parallel with long-term environmental conservation (Murphy, 1994) and the good practice underlying the tourism sustainable development (Bramwell & Lane, 1993; Butler, 1999; Castaldini, 2008) based on principles such as: ecological integrity, efficiency, equity and integration-balance-harmony (Timothy, 1999).

On the basis of the development of systems of cross-border relations with high functionality there is the free movement of people and the ease of penetration of state border barriers. In this context, the area examined can be identified with one or more of the four types of cross-border relations between contiguous states, proposed by Martinez (1994): alienated (no relations); co-existent (minimum opening); interdependent (willingness between adjacent countries to establish cross-border network and partnership) and integrated (abolished economic and political barrier, free flow of goods and people) and developed by Timothy (1999), by identifying five levels of cooperation and partnership in tourism: alienated; co-existence; cooperation (by initial efforts between adjacent jurisdictions to solve common problems, particularly in terms of illegal migration and resource utilization); collaboration (work together on development issues and agree to some degree of equity in their relationship) and integration (partnership without boundaries and both regions are functionally merged).

Other important indicators in the analysis of cross-border areas are: density of border crossing points, support of the state border line (Ilieş et al., 2007), NUTS 3, 4 and 5 density in these areas, the average distance from the chief town and lower-level decision-making centres, ethnicity and religion etc. The administrative-territorial organization and the human resource in quantitative and qualitative terms, combined with a system of effective communication and transport routes are basic pillars in shaping systems whose functionality is derived directly from a geographical management (Ilieş et al., 2009) effectively applied. The typology of cross-border systems in relation to the EU external border also plays an important role in defining the functionality of defined cross-border areas. One of the most important pawns in developing the cooperation between the two countries is the national program of Ukraine's integration into the EU (September, 2000) in which regional and local levels are basic cells for the practical achievement of the activity of integration (Kyfyak & Nedelea, 2008).

The analysis of these elements and the use of appropriate tools are the basis for developing strategies for territory management and planning for tourism purposes in cross-border regime starting from local to national level and vice versa. Each part of a territorial system can be analyzed, interpreted and applied at the existing territorial-administrative structures with the amendment that the application of general criteria for space regionalization (Coccean, 2005) and the identification of mechanisms that ensure the establishment and functioning of territorial systems could group the structures identified by territorial units with high functionality degree, generating economic development. If the mechanisms of implementation of strategies determined at institutions and actors arranged hierarchically and horizontally (same-level actors and institutions) worked by applying the principle of complementarity generating mutual benefits, this strategy at implementation political-territorial systems (NUTS system) could be successfully applied. Therefore, we propose that in the steps for territory management and planning for tourism purposes in particular, in the form of cross-border territorial systems as an integrated part of an integrated type arrangement, increased attention should be paid to actors and institutions present in the decision network with ordering on the same level and hierarchically. In this context, the question is which is the optimal width of a border subsystem, which is the distance from the border inwards to where its effects are felt in social and economic level on the one hand and what is the distance from the border where the involvement of decision actors may have direct effects in shaping cross-border territorial systems?

#### **4.1. Contiguous border areas versus cross-border territorial system. Diagnosis analysis and determining factors in the functional systemic shaping**

Tourism planning and development is based on a key concept - the flexibility (Ciangă & Dezsi, 2007), and for cross-border territorial systems the typology of planning is based on the systemic level (Williams, 1998) where the change of a component causes disturbances in the entire system, requiring as a fundamental method to decipher the structure and understand its operation. Thus, the interdependence of the *four key* elements: *space* and *time* as the basis for development, *activities* and *communication* as tools for action and dissemination, generate guidelines in creating models for tourism development of a cross-border system that is able to

be implemented at different scales, aiming at different hierarchical levels of intervention from local to regional and international (Williams, 1998). For example, changing the role and functions of the border, the pace and dynamics of the phenomenon on an appropriate/inappropriate temporal segment causes profound structural-functional mutations of a border and cross-border tourist system.

In such an approach the qualitative and quantitative evaluation of the tourist system components, the interdependence relationships between them on the one hand and with the system on the other hand are based on: the geographical location; the relief morphology and the accessibility degree; climatic conditions; the communication routes system; connections with other systems and subsystems; quantitative, structural and qualitative characteristics of tourist resources; initiation of development of rural tourism activities; socio-economic and political conditions, etc. All these are elements that create a background favourable/unfavourable for enhancing and functionality of an integrated tourist system.

As starting points in building models of cross-border cooperation, we must understand the role of borders and mechanisms generating this role, generally restrictive for the application of an integrated management, but on the other hand, they can function as tourist attractions (Timothy, 1995a; 1995b). In this sense, the borders are constructed mentally and physically, politically, socially and culturally (Sofield, 2003) whose components, mechanisms and operating principles are required to be decoded and understood in order to be relocated in new integrated functional systemic structures.

The approach is successful if it is completed by accurate identification of potential advantages and limits in tourism development through: socio-economic development level; development level of the general and tourist infrastructure; evaluation of institutional and legislative elements; support of local and regional administration bodies; people mentality towards the tourist phenomenon; competitive phenomena characteristics, comparative advantages and practical aspects of capitalization.

The factors with major influence in the development of tourism in the region include: the geographical (absolute) and geopolitical (marginal; relative) position; natural and anthropic tourist resources; morphological profile of the border; ethno-cultural features; infrastructure of routes and means of communication and its connections; the border permeability degree; the legal framework and collaboration agreements; the degree of administrative decentralization and the decision

level of local and regional actors etc.

*The marginal position* specific to states in the former socialist system (12 EU member states) who have invested in infrastructure mainly in central areas, including tourism (Prokkola, 2010) led to lack of funds and administrative support for border regions (Korona, 1995) and their change into areas with predominantly military function. The resulting situation may now be an advantage for state outskirts, available for cooperation and enjoying a virgin environment, less exploited. Schengen enlargement is another favouring factor for the tourism industry in these areas “*forbidden for tourism and foreigners*” in the years of socialism. The Romanian border system in the area analyzed has a peripheral position in the North of Romania and East of the EU representing approx 10.1% of Romania's territory, while the Ukrainian contiguous border system is identified with the most advanced Western position of Ukrainian state, representing approx 5.8 % of the Ukraine's territory (Fig. 1; Table 1). Moreover, in psychological, *mental* terms – where the historic role and cultural traditions are juxtaposed or interfering - there is a desire for collaboration, and an important role in the territory studied is held by the presence of the Romanian community in the Ukrainian area and of the Ukrainian community in the Romanian area. The two communities, well outlined in the border areas of both states are the basic germs supporting cross-border cooperation and which are an important share in the total number of people passing the Romanian/Ukrainian border.

*The physical-geographical background* is a major factor in determining the functionality of contiguous border systems by morphology, orientation and morphometric features. For the mountain units partly included in the administrative territory of states, the defined border areas have a potential of cross-border interconnection dependent on the position of the state border line compared to the mountain chains orientation. Three major categories result (Ilieş & Grama, 2010):

- *Juxtaposed* (Fig. 2) -characterized by low interconnection generated by the relief morphology, structure and altitude and the state border support coincides with the line of great heights or with limits of hydrographical basins. In such cases the costs for the construction and maintenance of an infrastructure of appropriate communication and transport routes are extremely high and the benefit of tourism activity is extremely difficult to achieve;

- *Morpho-functional* (Fig. 2) with a high potential for interconnection, favoured by the natural environment morphology. The costs for the

development of an infrastructure of communication routes are significantly lower than the first category, enjoying lines with a long history.

- *Complex* (Fig. 2), resulted from combining, in an interstate border sector, the two categories above, and may be, to varying degrees, with successive multiple segments.

In all three cases, the border permeability in terms of human and goods mobility on the one hand, territorial extension, relief altitude and morphology on the other hand, are key factors in the development/limitation of cross-border relations. For the tourist infrastructure and for a tourist activity with a dominant leisure motivation, areas less travelled or included in the complex ones have a tourist attraction potential quite favourable compared to the areas with high concentration of habitations.

From this perspective, the Romanian-Ukrainian cross-border system falls in the category of the mixed type (Fig. 2), whose complexity in the development of cross-border relations mainly results in the international role (EU and NATO) of the border that it intersects, benefiting from a remarkable unused tourism potential. A huge benefit, generated by the border position of national peripheries of the two states, is the location of the two contiguous border areas in virgin natural areas (Timothy, 2001), favourable premise for developing natural parks in cross-border regime. Many of the frontier zones of the former Iron Curtain, which are essentially zones of untouched vegetation and wildlife, have now been designated as nature preserves (Timothy, 2000). The Carpathians Mountains belong to relatively small transboundary areas in Europe. In spite of its biogeographically unity, the mountain range is managed by three national parks: The National Parks Maramures Mountains and Rodna Mountains (Romanian part) and the Biosphere Reserve in Ukrainian Carpathians. The proposal of crossing the border in the Carpathian Mountains and offering ‘*new*’ trails to the visitors would be an attractive solution from the recreational as well as from the nature conservation point of view.

*The morphological profile of the border support line* generating the Romanian-Ukrainian cross-border system benefits from the strengths of a unitary mountain space of the Eastern Carpathians, which it intersects transversely, descending in stairs towards East and West at about 1800 m altitude in the central side, in plains of about 200 m high (Fig. 3) in the furthest sides. It sections in the same time three large hydrographic basins (Tisa, Siret and Prut). In turn, due to the geographical position they create a relationship of “*subordination*” of the area in the

lower basin compared to the upper basin. By studying it, we can locate the support routes of the elements connecting the two border areas.

Table 1. The characteristics of borderland systems, characteristics of border areas composing the Romanian-Ukrainian cross-border territorial system (Northern sector).

	Administrative Territorial Unit	Surface			Population		Capital	
		sqkm	%	% from Country	no	%	name	No inhab
A	Romanian borderland system	24 261,40	41.0	10.1	2 080 201	36.9		
1	Satu Mare	4 417.8			379 692		Satu Mare	115 630
2	Maramureş	6 304.4			521 791		Baia Mare	137 976
3	Suceava	8 553.5			712 348		Suceava	106 138
4	Botoşani	4 985.7			466 370		Botoşani	115 344
B	Ukrainian borderland system	34 860.0	59.0	5.8	3 553 300	63.1		
1	Zakarpattia	12 860.0			1 250 300		Uzhhorod	112 400
2	Ivano-Frankivsk	13 900.0			1 380 000		Ivano-Frankivsk	203 600
3	Cernivtsi	8 100.0			923 300		Cernivtsi	227 000
C	TOTAL	59 121.4	100		5 633 501	100		

Source: Romania. Statistical Yearbook, 2010; Regional Administration of State of Zakarpatska, Ivano-Frankivska and Chernivetska, 2009;



Figure 2. Juxtaposed, morpho-functional and complex models of cross-border area according with functional connection of contiguous Romanian/Ukrainian borderland (Ilies & Grama, 2010)

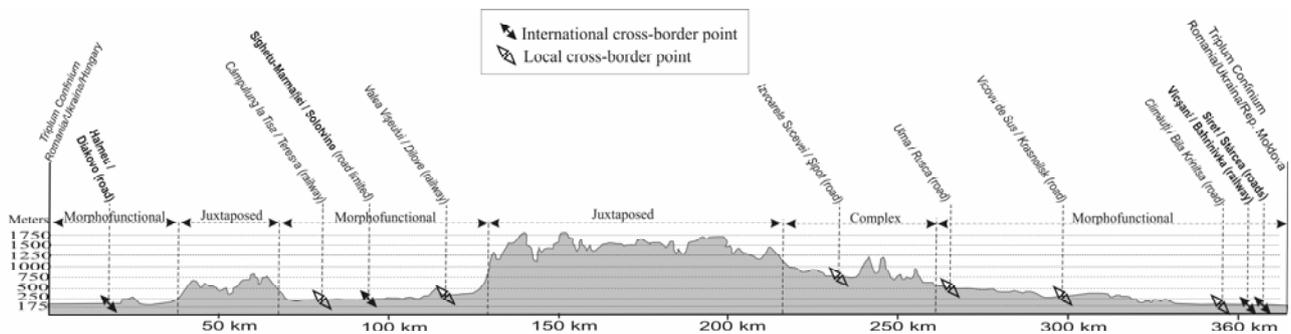


Figure 3. The morphological profile of the Romanian/Ukrainian border support line (Ilies & Grama, 2010).

*The border permeability* is the most important factor in the interconnection strategy of contiguous cross-border territorial systems in four aspects: *technical* – by the number of crossing points of the Romanian-Ukrainian border and their morpho-functional features; *legal* access facilitation /hindering (visas, bureaucratic formalities in the crossing points etc); *mental* – where the historical role and cultural traditions are juxtaposed and interconnected; *promotion* and *mass-media* – that can induce a favourable /unfavourable state of cross-border traffic for tourism purpose but also of tourists' security in an EU/non-UE contact area. Unfortunately, for the external border of EU and NATO, which includes the Romanian-Ukrainian segment, it is difficult to correlate (in the terms of time) the dynamics of planning and management of the infrastructure system with that of the sequence of border permeability degrees (from closed to open and vice versa and not always with a logical evolution) after unilateral political decisions of the two states, which, although geographically are located in the same European system, from a geopolitical and strategic view, are part of two juxtaposed systems.

Compared with the Slovak-Polish model in Tatra Mountains, where from 1999 an agreement between the two countries has been promoting conditional access, only of tourists from Slovakia, Poland and other 33 countries in the border area and its crossing in a single point (Rysy, 2500 m altitude) based on passport, within specified seasons and hours: July-September, 7 am–7 pm (Taczanowska, 2004), the area examined, such initiatives are at an early stage. If in Tatra Mountains the situation also continued after the accession of the two countries to EU (2004), it has radically changed by their inclusion in the Schengen area, but without major infrastructural changes, in the Romanian-Ukrainian area, after the collapse of the socialist system the measures were more restrictive. There was implemented the visa system that experienced several successive stages of application/waiving, currently being applied only by the Ukrainian citizens, but without any crossing points for tourists in the mountain area as such. Basically, in the same Central European space, cross-border systems are extremely heterogeneous in the functional aspect reflected in the tourism activity.

As regards technical and infrastructural facilities in a predominant mountain Romanian-Ukrainian cross-border area, divided by a 440.1 km long border, with a predominant terrestrial support combined with hydrographic arteries (Tisa, Suceava), the relations between the two border systems are facilitated by a number of 10 border crossing points, where 4 in international regime and

4 for local border traffic (Fig. 1 and 3). Statistically, there results a point of 110 km in international regime, and 55 km in international/local regime, virtually serving 5.6 millions of inhabitants, representing the population of the 7 administrative border units, as the main beneficiaries of this technical infrastructure and potential tourists.

Of course, the distribution of crossing points is also influenced by landscape features and by areas with high population density; the main factor generating tourist traffic is missing in the mountain area. This situation is similar in many respects with that existing 20 years ago between Slovakia and Poland, in Tatra Mountains.

The border crossing points themselves can be tourist attractions to the extent allowed by the legislation specific to border areas within the EU external border. For example “*the historic bridge*” built from wood (240 m long) which has a significant emotional load for the people in the area, connecting the city Sighetu Marmatiei (Romania) to Soltvino/Slatina (Ukraine) is such a tourist landmark (Fig. 4A).



Figure 4.A.) “*Wooden Bridge*” between Sighetu-Marmatiei (Romania) and Soltvino (Ukraine); B.) “*Iron Bridge*” between Teceu Mic (Romania) and Teceu Mare (Ukraine)

The value of this crossing point is enhanced by the presence at only 25 km away of the geographical centre of Europe (Austro-Hungarian and Soviet version), which is the only way in the Romanian space proximity to access this tourist landmark. Other example is the rest of “*the Iron Bridge*”, from Teceu Mic (Romania)/Teceu Mare

(Ukraine), destroyed during the Second World War period (Fig. 4B).

The cumbersome border-crossing formalities prevent people from visiting another country and move away the free flow of goods and services between the parties. *The legislation and passing agreements* signed by Romania and Ukraine, practically reflected in the visa regime, led to continuous reorganization of economic activities and people mobility focused on cross-border traffic and transit. “*The visa game*” has strongly reflected over tourism activities, generating according to the practical implementation of crossing freedom /restriction of freedom juxtaposed systems in periods with visa and early stages of integration in free crossing periods. And in the latter case, due to the application of a visa regime only to a border system (the Romanian area is accessible for Ukrainians only with a visa) from the two contiguous areas follows an asymmetric cross-border tourist system, in the benefit of the Ukrainian side (access region without visas) as tourist receiving area.

If Romanian citizens apparently have the advantage of moving freely in the Ukrainian space, in terms of tourism and infrastructure development and use and particularly of revenue growth from tourist services, the benefit is for the Ukrainian system receiving tourists, without restrictions. Moreover, price differences between the two border systems emphasize this imbalance in favour of the Ukrainian side, which, in the context of proximity tourism and by quality services may have a considerable improvement over the Romanian side. In many cases, however, as is the situation at the external border of EU and NATO, the control of illegal migration of people, goods, prostitution and drug trafficking are more important than environmental conservation or encouragement of the tourist function development in the area. However, in this case a huge step has been made by removing the wire fence separating Romania from the USSR and which was an important barrier to encourage the greater flow of wildlife, so that National Park “*Maramureş Mountains*” is in direct contact with the *Biosphere Reserve* in the Ukrainian Carpathians.

*Transports and network communications* is the base of tourism development, on whose quality and quantity are dependent the frequency and scale of activities specific to tourism and economy in general. As favourable factors are: the existence of pan-European corridors (V), 5 local airports and an infrastructure with a network suitable to local habitats, but all misfits for cross-border connections (Fig. 1),

being typical for juxtaposed systems. There is the question of costs required for upgrading the existing ones and building new structures. In general, older structures could be adapted to the tourist offer, with a slogan with significant psychological effects on the international tourism, such as: legacy of the socialist system – double railway (Fig. 5), USSR proximity etc, and their change into genuine tourist attractions in a virgin natural environment, unused precisely because of the political restrictions existing over time.



Figure 5. Double Railway System: European (normal, Romania) and ex-soviet (large; Ukraine) in the Romanian borderland.

*Contrasts and approaches in cross-border cooperation are based on social, cultural, historical and especially political-administrative elements.* Analyzing the history of this area we can also discuss about cultural and political approaches and differences. Depending on the interest of each party, social and cultural values can create bridges and in this case, the presence of Romanians in Ukraine and of Ukrainians in Romania, as recognized minorities, is a favourable approach premise. If in the international practice from a political standpoint, values, language and social practices that should be manifested through a symmetric interest by both parties in the Romanian-Ukrainian cross-border area, they are characterized by a parallelism in evolution and not by interconnection trends.

This situation is also largely due to administrative practices of each party and the degree of overlapping their objectives with the common ones. If as a rule, the mandate for international negotiations is the responsibility of right of national governments (Gaines, 1995), in most cases the local authorities have no right to coordinate international cooperation agreements and require approval from national governments. The capacity to implement conservation and tourism policies and programs usually works best on a local level, where the people

and administrators are more familiar with their cross-border neighbours (Gaines, 1995, Timothy, 2000). Examples in this respect are the practices in the two Euro-regions: Carpathian and Superior Prut.

In the same administrative context, another structural and political barrier to cross-border cooperation is the difficulty in matching territorial and administrative systems of both countries, in their capacity as determinant actors in developing local and regional development strategies on the one hand and cross-border on the other hand. Figure 1 is relevant in this regard by identifying: Counties (NUTS 3) and municipalities, cities, communes and villages (NUTS 5) in Romania; regions (NUTS 3); districts (NUTS 4) and towns (NUTS 5) in Ukraine. Every structure, regardless of the hierarchical position has a decision-making centre with a different degree of polarization determined on the one hand by the place in the hierarchy of decision and by tourist attractiveness on the other hand. The two elements jointly determine the degree of tourist management of an area and form the basis for integrated regional development strategies.

*Mass media* in general is a basic tool in promoting tourism activities, but in this case, and in general at the EU external border, territorial realities are distorted in many cases, based on speculation and without any real land information and documentation. In most cases, both in the Romanian and Ukrainian media, a story (more or less anchored in reality), usually with negative antisocial aspects, is taken over by all television channels and local and central media and widespread throughout the analysed space, generating the image of a space unsuitable for tourist destinations (antisocial phenomena, lack of individual security etc). Usually, mass-media participate in certain events after the fact, finding the consequences and thus, in order to better sell the information, scenarios non-compliant with the reality are fabricated and publicized, but never denied. Also, specific websites promote the two tourist areas separately, in a competitive form and very rarely is the complementary development supported, especially in the case of the same type of resources.

## 5. CONCLUSIONS

Combining the types of cross-border mobility with common characteristics identified in the border peripheral areas and applications that generated the typology of border areas, the Romanian-Ukrainian area falls within the category of those with high aesthetic values because of the relative underdevelopment compared to central areas, and material and cultural resources are used as a basis

for sustainable development of tourism.

Currently, in terms of potential tourist flows and capital inflows, the Romanian-Ukrainian contact areas are identified with an asymmetrical cross-border tourist system, with chaotic meanings, whose cause derives from the border permeability degree on the background of contiguous economic systems with large differences in development and therefore prices. This standing “conjuncture” is generating a lack of interest from investors for fresh capital. Unfortunately, the main problem of this “*model*” is the gradual amendment of rules and agreements. In a non-unified legislation, the possibility of rapid response of both cross-border systems to this kind of inputs centered on border security is reduced and very little based on identifying the mechanisms and tools of cross-border connection of contiguous territorial subsystems. The existence of a legislation favouring the population of border areas with little traffic permit is fading to a certain extent these discrepancies, resulting however in cross-border trade without effects in the tourist activity, which most often takes place at the limit of legality. Here is included first of all the tobacco and alcohol trafficking, from the Ukrainian area (lower prices) to the Romanian one.

A SWOT analysis includes as weaknesses in the development of tourism in the area analyzed, generated primarily by the juxtaposition of two border systems separate from the external border of EU and NATO: lack of harmonized regional strategies; low level of infrastructure, of tourism products and services compared to EU standards; lack of managerial capacity and participation in international partnerships; poor accessibility of the border; poor marketing strategy and promotion of border areas as tourist destinations; underdeveloped tourist information system etc. Unfortunately, with local border traffic, in these areas the consumption of cheaper and counterfeit alcohol and tobacco is developed, and to a lesser extent, due to public attitudes, gambling and prostitution, as a result of differing rules of legislation and tax systems (Timothy, 2002).

Applying the concept of sustainable development in border areas is a prerequisite so that natural and cultural resources could be used for a long time (Butler, 1999). This generates cross-border integrated systems, with mechanisms, tools and resources able to rapidly self-adjust in case of intervention of disturbing factors (primarily legislative) whose effect in the area is immediate, but highly perishable.

The Romanian-Ukrainian border can be considered a relict type, remnant of the

neighbouring with URSS, and which still inherits its structural and functional features, without being able to indicate significant progress in the Romanian-Ukrainian system compared to the Romanian-Soviet Union one. Therefore, unlike other EU countries in the region (Hungary, Slovakia and Poland) poor accessibility of the border are highlighted, low infrastructural development, and all these in the lack of harmonized regional strategies.

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