

TOURISM – A STIMULUS FOR THE SOCIO-ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT OF MĂGURELE TOWN

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Abstract. *The town of Măgurele is a satellite town of the Municipality of Bucharest being situated in its south-western part. In the past years the town of Măgurele has undergone an extensive transformation process, fact which attracted a numerous population. Our study aims at emphasizing the peculiarity of Măgurele development in the context of highlighting the polarizing role of Bucharest Municipality. Moreover, the research has the objective of presenting the causes and the socio-economic consequences of the residential area expansion in Măgurele town. The research methodology had as a first step the application and analysis of questionnaire on a sample of 220 people who moved to Măgurele town between 2008 and 2020 in order to identify the causes which led to this. A second step was represented by the analysis of statistic data referring to the residential space and identification on site of the newly-built districts. Results show that the considerable expansion of Măgurele residential area was carried out by the movement of a relatively high number of young population (under 40 years old) coming from Bucharest Municipality. The causes which led to this situation are multiple ranging from Bucharest overcrowding to people's wish to live in a cleaner air environment. Furthermore, the status of scientific centre that Măgurele has received in the past years was also identified as a cause of residential area expansion. Our research is only in the beginning phase but we aim to observe in the future the phenomenon and its socio-economic implications.*

Keywords: *tourism, sociology, geography, economy, urban*

INTRODUCTION

Măgurele is located in the south-west of Ilfov County, directly neighbouring Bucharest municipality. Given the geographic position, in plain field, not particularly appealing nature wise, the touristic phenomenon is not very well represented in this small town (Grecu et al., 2019, Herman et al., 2014. However, if optimally exploited, the existing touristic potential could represent an alternative solution for the socio-economic development of the settlement. In the past few years, given its status of research centre, Măgurele is developing what we may call „scholarly tourism” (Ayeh et al., 2013; Casidy, 2018; Leung, 2013; Teodorescu et al., 2019).

METHODOLOGY

The present study is based on the inventory of the touristic potential of Măgurele Town. As a result, a classification of touristic landmarks was operated, considering their nature. Afterwards, an analysis of the touristic influx was attempted (Arbulú et al., 2021; Ducman, 2019; . However, given the fact that there is an intrinsically empirical approach to the touristic phenomenon in the area, which is not yet properly quantified, this analysis is not final.

Next, we made an analysis of relevant touristic landmarks in an attempt to identify procedures to maximise their value, so that they can contribute to the development of the town.

RESULTS

Following the inventory of touristic potential of Măgurele town, the existing touristic landmarks can be grouped in several categories, such as:

- Natural tourist attractions: the Argeş River Valley, the Sabar River Valley, the Ciorogârla River Valley, the Manoleasa Woods
- Anthropic tourist attractions, with the following sub-categories:
 - Religious buildings: „Holy Emperors Constantine and Elena” Church, Gherman Church, „Saint Ioachim and Ana” Church, the Grindure Monastery Ruins.
 - Scientific and educational touristic landmarks: Măgurele Laser (as part of the ELI-NP project), National Institute of Physics of the Earth, SmartLab Măgurele, Măgurele Science Park, Science and Technology Summer School.
 - Other destinations: The Oteleşteanu Mansion, the bust statue of Mihai Eminescu, the ancient surrounding fortifications of Bucharest city.

The touristic potential of Măgurele is poorly represented and limited to the valleys of the three rivers which cross the town: Argeş, Sabar and Ciorogârla (fig. 1 and fig 2). In the area adjacent to these bodies of water, especially in summertime, weekend tourism is on the increase; it is then that the river banks become improvised recreation areas (fig. 3). During the past few years, the poor infrastructure and lacking food supply system in the immediate vicinity of the town have contributed to diminishing of the tourism, while around the capital city numerous swimming places have

been built, absorbing all the tourists who could potentially choose the Măgurele area.



Fig 1. Argeş river valley



Fig 2. Sabar river valley

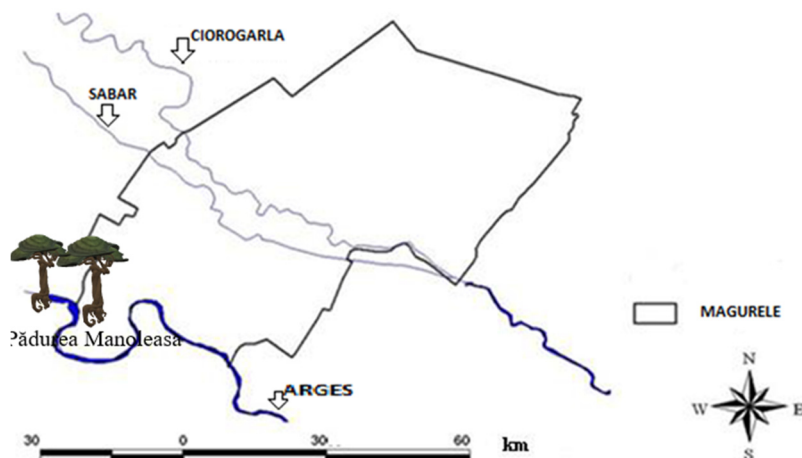


Fig 3. Map of natural tourist potential

The area of Măgurele town overlaps the area of former ancient woods – Vlăsiei Forest. Today, the area is largely deforested, but here and there still survive patches of woods originating from the ancient forest (Radoi et al., 2020; Dincă et al., 2015). With this respect, Manoleasa Woods is highly representative for the town; in the past, there also used to be a research institute of poplars (fig 4).



Fig. 4. The former Poplar Research Institute from Manoleasa Forest

The anthropic touristic potential is slightly better represented, and its landmarks can be grouped in several sub-categories (Prados-Pena, 2018; Teodorescu et al., 2020).

Firstly, we should point out the religious buildings, one of which is „Holy Emperors Constantine and Elena” Church (fig. 5). The latter can be considered a historic monument, as it was built between 1851-1853 by Ioan Otteteleşanu and was painted by Gheorghe Tăttărescu.

Another edifice and historic monument is Gherman Church, dating back to 1797, founded by Grigore Asan, the High Steward, and representing the oldest church in town (fig. 6).



Fig. 5. Church of the Holy Emperors Constantine and Helen



Fig. 6. Gherman Church

Moreover, the list of religious buildings is completed by „Saint Ioachim and Ana” Church (1818), and the Grindure Monastery Ruins, today an archeological site (Teodorescu, 2009).

Another category of anthropic touristic sights is represented by the scientific and educational sights.

One major sight from this category is the Laser from Magurele, at present being closed to public visits, although considered an important touristic sight (fig. 7).



Fig. 7. Production center - The Magurele laser

Another sight included in this category is the National Institute of Research-Development for the Earth's Physics. During recent years, this institute represents an active presence in the educational process of the young generations as regards behaviour during earthquakes; the institute also has a seism lab which simulates an earthquake and its effects (fig. 8).



Fig. 8. Earthquake lab

The list of touristic sights from the scientific and educational category is completed by Smartlab Magurele, an integral part of Magurele Science Park. The smart digital lab is, basically, a free educational centre, being open to all students, where children and teenagers are welcomed together with their teachers, kindergarten teachers and their parents in order to learn and experiment varied cutting-edge technologies.

The 3D modelling and printing, as well as robotics or VR/AR concepts are thus assimilated through play or based on small projects which stimulate imagination and creativity.



Fig. 9. *SmartLab*

Also this category includes the Summer Science and Technology School from Magurele, which is also placed under the patronage of Magurele Science Park. This addresses high school students and teachers teaching STEM subjects (Science, Technologies, Engineering, Mathematics). It has as an objective to stimulate the development of careers in the STEM domain, to reunite the best practices in the field and to actively involve high school students in research projects.

Considering all these objectives, in Magurele, a different kind of tourism was developed in recent years, that is school tourism (Pintilii et al., 2017; Zieba, 2016). Yearly, on the Different School Week there arrive coaches from all over the country bringing students and teachers to these extremely interesting and unique sights.

The touristic potential of Magurele is completed by other sites, such as: Otetelesanu Mansion, in which there was one of the first school for girls in our country, Mihai Eminescu's bust, a work by sculptor Mihai Onofrei, dating back to 1950, and the string of touristic sights is ended by the Fortifications around Bucharest, nearby Bucharest's ring road.

CONCLUSIONS

As one can notice, the touristic potential of Magurele is relatively poorly represented by natural sights, but it has a wide diversity of anthropic touristic sights. The status of research centre offers an advantage in developing educational tourism, which is not typical for any other city in the country, at least not according to the standards from Magurele.

The promotion of these unique touristic sights in our country might remove Magurele from the anonymity of Romanian tourism and might lead to the development of the city, also from a touristic point of view.

Our research is in its early stages and in the future, we wish to outline even more the importance of tourism for the development of Magurele and to identify the ways in which the city can be exploited to its true potential (Vasquez, 2016; Ziakas, 2016).

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