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The progress of ideas

## **INTER-, TRANS - AND MULTIDISCIPLINARITY, AND SOME IDEAS OR REMARKS ON CULTURAL TOURISM**

### **Abstract**

The introduction to the paper presents the main differences between inter-, trans-, multi- and cross-disciplinary research, both at a general theoretical level, and finally in practical terms, in rural and mountain tourism. Then there follows the detailed presentation, which makes up the main section of the paper, starting from the work methodology and results in researches of an economic, statistical, econometric, sociological, demographic, psychological, anthropological, linguistic, ethnographic, folkloric and cultural integrative type, going on to the specificity of the various approaches in programmes, projects and tourism policy. The main question that dominates the whole main section and the conclusions of the article refer to the current position of Romanian rural and mountain tourism, and is complemented by a number of solutions that could improve and even intensify the upward process of economic development of Romania through the added agency of rural and mountain tourism.

**Keywords:** inter-, trans-, multi- and cross-disciplinary research, programme, project, rural tourism, mountain tourism.

### **1. Introduction**

Unidisciplinarity, in an open sense, without the intention to understand and explain everything related to one disciplinary field, is a natural and creative early stage of scientific knowledge. This general aspect is subject to a natural law of studying diversity in a homogeneous manner, or to the fact that the heterogeneity in the reality investigated in a scientific or disciplinary manner must be theoretically explained by homogeneity [Săvoiu, 2008]. The premises of the more and more intense development of the epistemology process are related to both the ontological nature of the sciences and disciplines separated from various areas of reality or specific universes composing their multiverse as a coherent set of a logical nature, and also of a general gnoseological essence, or, more specifically, strongly epistemological. The concepts inter-, trans- and multidisciplinary have a common origin, as noted in the conceptualization of the discipline and science, defining forms of antinomy of a multiverse of disciplines and sciences, in relation to unidisciplinarity, addressed in a limited, closed and slightly derogatory sense, as a unique, isolating discipline. This paper underlines the importance of these terms and the specific process to adequate inter-, trans- and multidisciplinary activities reunited in the tourism (focusing on mountain and rural tourism).

### **2. The concepts of inter-, trans - and multidisciplinary**

In both science and research proper, *interdisciplinarity* is basically the recognition of the fact that various scientific disciplines can operate efficiently only – or mainly – in interdependence, when trying to solve a particular issue, or gain a fresh, more efficient perspective on the topic under study. Some see *interdisciplinarity*, first and foremost, as a clear possibility of making up for the drawbacks of excessive specialization in science. A *discipline* is defined as “a branch of learning or instruction”, being more or less synonymous to the terms *area*, *branch of knowledge*, *field of study*, *specialty*, *subject*, and even *course*, *curriculum*. The number of the scientific disciplines currently referred to amounts to over 8,000 (as recorded by bibliometry).

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The origins of interdisciplinarity are multiple (and some historians of science argue that the need for interconnectiveness is as old as the Antiquity). Anyway, it is long since specialists have been convinced that traditional scientific disciplines are unable or reluctant to deal with some specific problems, e.g. technology as an object of study for anthropology and sociology. On the other hand, (comparatively) recent developments in research (mainly in technology, e.g. nanotechnology, but also in theoretical physics or humanities) have been harnessed to research activities. As a result, such new, unthought-of fields of research have appeared as bioinformatics, biomimetics, quantum information processing, sustainable development, etc.

So, in its simplest acceptance, the term *interdisciplinarity* means combining two or more academic disciplines into a single activity, such as a research project (rather than a domain), thus generating something new by crossing boundaries, and adopting a way of thinking that goes beyond such limits. Consequently, *interdisciplinary fields* or *domains*, or else *interdisciplines* emerged, which were basically *ad hoc* responses to the new needs and professions that appeared in the post-industrial world, shaped by crossing traditional boundaries between academic / scientific disciplines or schools of thought.

This superior type of cooperation can work either based on a bottom-up approach (when knowledge is shared by two or more disciplines, the concrete or theoretical results transcending and re-contextualizing the disciplines in question), or in a top-down investigative and integrative approach (when even the remaining fragmentation is amply reduced, in keeping with the systems theory); the latter approach is especially efficient in dealing with phenomena, issues, principles, frameworks and structures within the techno-sphere, the psycho-socio-sphere and the naturo-sphere, thus being able to facilitate *transdisciplinarity*, in both theoretical and applied debates and scientific researches.

As we can see, *interdisciplinarity* is a harmonized approach, which connects the open spaces or interstices lying *between* disciplines in a well-coordinated, coherent entity, providing a better scientific delineation and definition.

As a rule, three degrees of interdisciplinarity are recognized:

- a) applied interdisciplinarity (e.g. the methods of nuclear physics applied in medicine),
- b) epistemological or logic-related interdisciplinarity (e.g. transfer of neutrosophic logic or formal thought to law),
- c) interdisciplinarity generating new disciplines (e.g. transfer of physical models in the economy has led to the emergence of econophysics).

The dialectics of interdisciplinarity rests on interdisciplinary researchers being compelled to seek expert information with forefront specialists in disciplinary domains, while interdisciplinarity being the only feasible manner of circumventing excessive specialization – which can be questionable if not downright dangerous. The end result (i.e. the *feedback*) of such research collaboration transcending particular disciplines is new solutions, i.e. new information being added to the specific stock of knowledge and know-how of the various disciplines; so, the relationship between disciplinary and interdisciplinary researchers is mutually advantageous.

When merely used in educational contexts, the concept of *interdisciplinarity* implies pooling the individual, disciplinary approaches of the various researchers working on a project, trying to rethink them accordingly, to modify them so that they could deal with the respective issue more efficiently (the best, most familiar example is students being asked to perceive and study a given subject in terms of more than one traditional discipline, e.g. using water resources, when studied from the specific angles of geography, biology, ecology, economics, chemistry, and politics).

Though the term *interdisciplinary* was originally used in the fields of education and training pedagogy, the interdisciplinary approach is currently applied in solving new or neglected problems (e.g. global warming, crime, fighting AIDS, etc.) which cannot be solved without a thorough understanding of various scientific disciplines.

Interdisciplinarity has managed to connect and integrate a wide range of established disciplines, traditional fields of study, academic schools of thought, professions, technologies, together with the respective sets of perspectives, methods and epistemological systems, seeking to tackle and solve a common task. Most, though not all, the researchers, students, and teachers working in interdisciplinary projects or programmes are aware that the subject in question was

comparatively neglected or misrepresented in traditional (i.e. mainly disciplinary) approaches, academic curricula or programmes of research organizations.

*Interdisciplinary studies* are conducted as academic programmes or processes whose aim is to synthesize knowledge, skills, interconnections, perspectives and epistemology under an educational umbrella. They are instrumental in the study of certain subjects which, although having a fairly consistent focus, essentially need the complex point of view provided by a multiple disciplinary perspective, otherwise their understanding may be severely impaired. The study of tourism is certainly one of these subjects, just like studies of feminism, ethnic area studies, or studies of democracy. On the other hand, interdisciplinarity itself can become the object of special study, in an attempt to anatomize the manner in which human knowledge is segmented by the various disciplines, in an institutionalized framework. Such studies of interdisciplinarity examine various issues relating to the functioning of interdisciplinarity, the nature and history of disciplinarity, the future of disciplinarity and its natural complement, interdisciplinarity, especially against the backdrop of globalization, as well the future of knowledge in post-industrial society, while philosophy itself has, relatively recently, identified a new domain of philosophical reflection which seeks to answer epistemological and metaphysical questions about the status of interdisciplinary thinking.

There has been an evident, continuous increase in interdisciplinary research and teaching, and the number of BA degrees in multi- or interdisciplinary studies, awarded mainly in the industrialized Western nations, has soared thousand-fold. Most scientists and researchers agree that the 21<sup>st</sup> century is bound to be an era of interdisciplinarity rather than disciplinarity, in most problem-solving approaches. Of course there have been some attempts at fending off, marginalizing or avoiding interdisciplinarity by followers of traditional (academic) disciplines, who seem to grow apprehensive of a possible dictatorial domination of interdisciplinarity and transdisciplinarity. Unfortunately, some disciplinary experts accuse most interdisciplinary research of being rather “soft” (i.e. not sufficiently “hard” to have intrinsic, “scientific” rigor)<sup>5</sup>, or being overestimated, or else ideologically motivated.

Consequently, in many cases interdisciplinary research areas are, directly or indirectly, pushed towards becoming disciplines in their own right, e.g. cybernetics, biochemistry, neuroscience and biomedical engineering, domains that are sometimes even called “interdisciplines”.

On the other hand, *transdisciplinarity* designates a research strategy whose specific action implies crossing most disciplinary boundaries and barriers, generating a *holistic* approach. (The term *holism* is defined by dictionaries as “1) any doctrine that a system may have properties over and above those of its parts and their organization; 2) the treatment of any subject as a whole integrated system, esp., in medicine, the consideration of the complete person, physically and psychologically, in the treatment of a disease” (COLL); for instance, *bioinformatics* crosses the discipline limits of computer science / informatics and biomedicine. At other times, transdisciplinary endeavours simply use methods or concepts which were initially part of a given discipline, and were later adopted and widely employed by several other disciplines, such as ethnography, which used to be defined as a branch or field research (and even a set of methods) of anthropology dealing with the scientific description of individual human societies, and is currently used by many other disciplines.

By and large, *transdisciplinarity* is a higher form of interdisciplinarity, which entails concepts, methodology and language that tend to become universal (systems theory, information theory, cybernetics, phenomenological modelling, etc.). It is a fully integrative approach that combines specific sciences in a general context, transcending the classical boundaries of the standard discipline. Transdisciplinarity is by no means a new discipline or even a “superdiscipline”, but its contribution to the betterment of science and research lies in the fact that it can derive profit by delving into disciplinary research, while clarifying disciplinary aspects in a fresh, transdisciplinary manner. Transdisciplinarity is connected to what lies

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<sup>5</sup> A *hard science* is usually defined as “one of the natural or physical sciences, such as physics, chemistry, biology, geology, or astronomy” (COLL), and thus opposed to *soft sciences*, especially the humanities (i.e. “the study of literature, philosophy, and the arts”).

between disciplines or cuts across *disciplines*, and sometimes it is placed even above all *disciplines*.

The most comprehensive acceptance of the term seems to be the sense introduced by Jean Piaget in 1970 (“a unity of knowledge beyond disciplines”) [Nicolescu, 2002], which was subsequently taken over and adopted by the International Center for Transdisciplinary Research (CIRET), in 1987, then introduced as a central concept into the Charter of Transdisciplinarity (in November 1994).

In defining transdisciplinarity, Basarab Nicolescu uses the following methodological postulates: (1) the existence of levels of reality; (2) the logic of the included middle; (3) and complexity [Nicolescu, 2008].

This means, first, that the space between and beyond the various disciplines is not void, but pregnant with information. As disciplinary research deals with only one level of reality, of mere fragments of such levels, the advantage of transdisciplinarity is immense, in that it takes into account the whole dynamics of the multiple levels of reality interacting.

In much the same way, it can be a felicitous, fertile complement to both multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary research. At the same time, transdisciplinarity radically differs from both multidisciplinary (or pluridisciplinarity) and interdisciplinarity thanks to its very goal, which is the understanding of the present world.

What *transdisciplinarity* can also contribute to is further clarifying and minutely exploring a set of the basic assumptions that underpin the specific disciplines, thus emerging in new, more complex, re-contextualized knowledge (or a larger, more comprehensive truth), a process in which *synthesis* and *synergy* are the key-words – as particular disciplines tend to deal with, and analyze specific knowledge. (The dictionary definition of the term *synergy* is twofold “1) Also called *synergism*: the potential ability of individual organizations or groups to be more successful or productive as a result of a merger; 2) another name for *synergism* (sense 1)” [COLL, 1992].

From an operational standpoint, *transdisciplinarity* is about giving a framework for new research and organizing principles. It mainly seeks and supplies *new questions*, rather than trying to find new answers to old questions; it provides a new form / framework in which to place the discipline-specific content.

In most contexts concerning education, the terms *interdisciplinary* and *transdisciplinary* either go on a par, or are interchangeable, being conceived of as meaning practically the same thing. In some other contexts, though, they are attributed clearly separate meanings. Thus, *interdisciplinarity* is sometimes used in the sense “employing the methods of one discipline with another discipline of study”, while *transdisciplinarity* means “dealing with a particular issue both within and beyond discipline boundaries”, which can give the researcher or scientist the possibility of new perspectives.

The CIRET definition of *transdisciplinarity* distinguishes it carefully from interdisciplinarity. Unlike the former, *interdisciplinarity* (like *pluridisciplinarity*, in fact) lies in transferring the methods from one discipline to another, in which process research overflows disciplinary boundaries, while remaining within the limits of disciplinary research.

In transdisciplinarity, collaboration between participants is considered crucial: it is active, and affects the whole community interested in that type of research and its immediate or more remote objectives. Thus, various manners of knowing the world are incorporated and synergically boosted, finally generating new knowledge.

As a result of CIRET’s scientific efforts a new term, *multidisciplinarity*, was added to the already traditional terms *interdisciplinary* and *transdisciplinary*; it is also in education that the multidisciplinary perspective was introduced. The main contribution in this respect certainly belongs to Basarab Nicolescu, who considers that *interdisciplinarity* transcends the limits of particular scientific disciplines, while the main goal pursued remains within the framework of disciplinary research [Nicolescu, 1996; 1999]. In contradistinction, the object of study and research of *transdisciplinary* pursuits is placed between the particular disciplines, and also across the disciplines and beyond all disciplines. A multidiscipline then involves research of a topic through the agency of more than one discipline at one, e.g. studying feminism by a combination of literature, arts, economics, philosophy and mass media studies.

A slightly different (that is to say, a rather *specific*) acceptance of the word *transdisciplinarity* is frequently used in German speaking countries (i.e. *Transdisziplinarität*), which implies the integration of various forms of research, specifically involving certain methods for connecting knowledge in problem-solving. In the 2003 conference held in Göttingen, the quite numerous different meanings of *multidisciplinarity*, *interdisciplinarity* and *transdisciplinarity* were presented, compared and analyzed, in an attempt at making them meet as much as possible, without however excluding current usages.

Some of the staunchest advocates of inter- and transdisciplinarity go as far as maintaining that even the occasional confusions between the terms *interdisciplinarity* and *multidisciplinarity* (or even between *interdisciplinarity* and *multidisciplinarity*) may be seen as a confirmation of the huge scientific potential of transdisciplinarity.

According to Basarab Nicolescu, methodology of transdisciplinary, as well as, its three axiomes are outlined in an original *Manifesto of Transdisciplinarity*: a) ontological axiom; b) logical axiom; c) epistemological axiom and in other terms interdisciplinarity and transdisciplinarity involve transfer of methods from one discipline to another, and have three degrees [Nicolescu, 2002].

a) ontologically, in keeping with the essential unity of the various fields of study of science; transdisciplinarity ontologically involves natural systems (the quantum level, the macrophysical level, the cyber-space or temporal cosmic level, super-tails level), and social systems (the individual level, the geographical level, the historical and community level from family, to nation; the community level, cyber-space or space-time level, the planetary level, the cosmic level etc.).

b) epistemologically (scientific facts, concepts, judgments, ways of reasoning, laws, methods, theories, which are common to all disciplines); the study concept of the disciplines becomes more and more abstract and allows to establish the epistemological isomorphisms and homomorphisms of a science within another, in order to generate development;

c) logical level included middle, or fuzzy or neutrosophic logic of Florin Smarandache, 1995 mentions: being inside the standard interval  $[0;1]$ , or being outside the interval  $[0;1]$  or actually belonging to non-standard interval  $] +0, 1 +[$ .

Knowledge (culture), or what resists or remains after we... apparently forgot everything, and dissipates in nature and society according to different experiences, representations, descriptions, images, logical or mathematical formulations, etc. at different levels of objective reality and at different levels of subjective reality, too.

Following the three stages of development of scientific thinking, a set of paradigms, approached as combined networks, redefine, thoroughly trans-, inter- and multidisciplinary, the new aggregative concept or meta- or multiparadigm, as a modern, phased and adequate solution of exploring a number of complex phenomena from disparate perspectives, through methods and models with distinctly scientific origin, and provide help to theorists and practitioners, simultaneously, in the increasingly diversified fields of scientific research

The support of scientific thinking is rendered in this text as a result of its characteristic paradigm, on Feigl complex concept of multiparadigm [2004], and Wild & Pfannkuch process cyclicity paradigm, [1999, pp. 223-265] and the universal trend towards the methods and models as an idea of combining the two paradigms, with emphasis on methods and final models [Săvoiu, 2008].

*The new way of investigation, focused on the multiparadigm of modern scientific thinking, amplifies by methods and models of a purely scientific origin, the processes of inter-, trans- and multidisciplinary, contributing to the emergence of new sciences or developing the old tourism science. In this way an innovative multiparadigm of inter-, trans- and multidisciplinary is delimited in modern scientific research, under the impact of today's scientific thinking, which leads to a third-degree variation, nuance and cyclicity, which results in a scientific multiverse composed of distinct universes, exposed to principles characteristic of an increasingly holistic modern thinking of tourism.*

Consequently, a tentative extended typology of interdisciplinarity involves: a) inter disciplinarity of neighbouring areas (where methods and concepts of other disciplines apply); b) inter disciplinarity of problems (i.e. problems that require the collaboration of several disciplines); c) inter disciplinarity of methods and models (the methods of a discipline apply to

other disciplines, e.g. mathematics and statistics); d) interdisciplinary concepts (concept appertaining to various disciplines are applied to conducting research in a different disciplines).

A third concept has been added to this inter- and transdisciplinary context – that of *multidisciplinarity*. Multidisciplinarity is an additive approach, which aggregates knowledge from various disciplines (which however remain within their own original boundaries) on a certain subject of high degree of complexity, generating the best solution in the real world and combining different perspectives of the issues under study, whihc are solved in a complete manner and through disciplinary consensus. So, multidisciplinarity is the study of one part of reality by several disciplines simultaneously. Multidisciplinarity can be simple and complex.

Yet another related term is *cross-disciplinarity*, which designates the type of research and knowledge in which aspects of one discipline are explained in terms of another, e.g. studying the physics of music or the physics of human phonation, or the politics of literature.

*Cross-disciplinarity* is the approach which uses mixing, associating or combination; it represents the generic theoretical concept for all three previous theoretical delineations, combining any type of mixture or combination of disciplines; more recently, it has been particularized through the fact that it can explain and address aspects relating to a discipline through the terminology, the instruments and even the methods of other discipline(s).

Summing up, the following lexical sequences (i.e. prefixes and combining forms) define the overall picture of today's integrative and specialized system of human scientific knowledge and action:

- *inter-* (a prefix meaning “between” or “among”, as in *international*; or “together”, “mutually”, or “reciprocally”, as in *interdependent*; *interchange*; so, such associations intersect or connect);

- *trans-* (a prefix meaning: (1) “across”, “beyond”, “crossing”, “on the other side”, as in *transoceanic*, *trans-Siberian*, *transatlantic*; (2) “transcending”, as in *transubstantiation*; (3) “transversely”, as in *transect*; (4) “changing thoroughly”, as in *transliterate*; so, such associations sum up or integrate);

- *multi* (combining form meaning (1) “many” or “much”, as in *multiflorous*, *multimillion*; (2) “more than one”, as in *multiparous*; *multistorey*; so, such associations aggregate, combine all the perspectives, changing quality);

- *cross-* (combining form meaning “action from one individual, group, etc., to another”, as in *cross-cultural*, *cross-fertilize*, *cross-reference*; so, such associations generalize or translate).

Moreover, the various supplements to disciplinary approaches may be styled as: intra disciplinary, pluridisciplinary, hyperdisciplinary, metadisciplinary, integrated disciplinary.

One of the most useful contributions that transdisciplinarity can make to the betterment of research is discussing and trying to determine the very nature of the issue under study, as well as the most relevant questions that research must focus on. These may involve either knowing the system and the cause of the current problems, or knowing and defining the target, or knowing the way in which a problematic situation can be improved following a suitable transformation.

In transdisciplinary projects, disciplinary specialists interact by taking part in scientific dialogue, trying to recognize and appraise the equal share of each particular perspective, and to interconnect such perspectives and disciplinary angles. The main barriers in this co-operative, complex and superior process are, firstly, the fact that specialized concepts and terms are hard to equate and/or dovetail (they are, so to speak, incommensurable on account of their very specificity), and, secondly, the sheer amount of specialized information and domain-specific expertise involved in inter- and transdisciplinary projects. To surpass those obstacles, the participants in such projects must possess, in addition to their own field expertise and know-how, excellent capabilities of scientific association and transfer, no less than (the more human gifts of) moderation, equilibrium, empathy and mediation.

Transdisciplinarity has become the most important manifestation of sciences in their scientific universe, thanks to its concept of transculturality, which offers a methodology of dialogue (Basarab Nicolescu).

It is hardly debatable that, more or less recently, inter-scientific approaches, complexity, tolerance of views and flexibility have been interwoven into the (post)modern context of *modelling* and *globalisation*, to give a new interconnective synthesis, so much needed by today's society, in which audacious, even abrupt choice and decision-making (including epistemological

choice) no less than initiative (not only business-like or technological) are necessary, e.g. generating new ideas, research concepts, domains and models. On the other hand, modelling and generating new ideas, mainly abstract ideas, should not amount to a dictate of scientific abstractness, be it inter- or trans-disciplinary. It is no longer a matter of epistemology or technological and scientific progress, but a matter of human status: if people are but a statistical simulation, and their behaviour is going to be a model of hyperconformity, they will probably be victims of too abstract concepts and ideas, groping through a lack of action and relativistic irrelevancy. Similarly, globalization should (naturally...) be – or become – a source of *global* prosperity and power / empowerment. (In the context of globalization, it will be fair to admit that most of the people whose lives are enriched by jobs exported from more advanced societies do not complain about globalization, and think that those who are complaining are those who are losing money or prerogatives...).

### 3. Some ideas and remarks on cultural tourism as an inter-, trans- and multidisciplinary activity

Actually, the very history of tourism (seen as business, but not only that), features the need for interconnectiveness, complexity and nuance – so it seemed to us that the above hints concerning inter- and transdisciplinarity perfectly fitted that field of human activity. We think that disciplinary specialists should make their own contribution to qualitative changes, i.e. improvement, in tourism, too – mainly with respect to what is called *cultural tourism*. Also, we are absolutely convinced that, sometimes, it is quite appropriate for a specialist in a particular discipline to just form (and enunciate) his or her own opinion on issues in an area that is accessible to them (although they are not experts in it), or to which they are attracted, because there are chances that their opinion is likely to generate interesting ideas, fresh viewpoints or actual revelations, which can be fertile in research work (e.g. the linguist's or the etymologist's perspective of history or tourism economy). We should stress the need for quality-oriented approaches, since, in the new world that is being created under our eyes, the prevalence of information and *symbolic* goods (vs. the ordinary, material goods) is a reality; that is rather striking, in the last analysis, as traditionally we used to judge value in terms of material utility. Moreover, the world is steadily and ineluctably becoming a *global village*, in which everybody should feel at home. In the context, let us add that the worst “myth” circulated by today's world is that people who are not like us are unworthy or ridiculous, that differences weaken us, that there is not enough for all of us...

Tourism can be inter- and trans-disciplinarily connected with the cultural sphere via history, the arts, and even linguistics (or only etymology, conceived as part of historical or diachronic research). In the present context, *culture* is not only the “formal” manifestation of human spiritual existence (cf. such dictionary definitions as “1. the total of the inherited ideas, beliefs, values, and knowledge, which constitute the shared bases of social action. 2. the total range of activities and ideas of a group of people with shared traditions, which are transmitted and reinforced by members of the group: *the Mayan culture*” – COLL); customs, traditions and everyday ways can also be part of culture – and note-worthy as such. For instance, one of the most common hobbies today is cooking, and most tourists appreciate the „edible anthropology” that they can discover in distinct ethnic or cultural settings. When they travel to a foreign country, they will certainly want a local beer, not an international brand, and it is fun to compare Romanian *țuică* (“Romanian peasant plum brandy”) for example, with *arrack* (“a coarse spirit distilled in various Oriental countries from grain, rice, sugar cane, etc.”), and with its... etymological descendant, *raki / rakee* (“a strong spirit distilled in Turkey, Yugoslavia, etc., from grain, usually flavoured with aniseed or other aromatics”), or with *moonshine* (i.e. illegally distilled or smuggled whisky or other spirit) in the USA. (Cf. *linguistic tourism* – discovering lexical roots and their related *realia*, in different settings and cultures... When those *realia* are foods or specific national dishes, the encounter is all the more impressive, memorable and relevant... Or we could also think of *plurilingualism* and / through tourism... (Ironically – or not –, there are cases when the science of linguistics, i.e. its theories, mental grids, operational structures, etc., can represent an obstacle to learning foreign languages, whereas trying to understand, pick it up or even practise it in their native environment will more often than not pay off).

*Cultural tourism* is also – automatically or necessarily one should add – a type of *historical* tourism... Cultural tourism essentially means geography confronting history, but in a friendly way... And it is, as a matter of principle, the very opposite of the biased attitude according to which something coming *later* in the course of history is necessarily *superior* to its forerunners (i.e. *Posterior, ergo superior*). Unfortunately, one can see a whole lot of manifestations of the (self-styled) representatives of the “modern world” mocking at their “underdeveloped ancestors” – such as the condescending smile of the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> centuries at the “primitives” / the “barbarians” living in other historical epochs... (Even genuine admiration at their technological, cultural, etc. achievements is sometimes couched in words like, “Hey, these guys were not so stupid after all!”). In cultural tourism, a well-selling (niche) product can be, for instance, the ceramics specific to various regions or cultural areas, e.g. Horezu, Corund / Korond, Marginea, etc. (cf. their counterparts in other countries, closer to Romania, or even more remote geographically). Similarly, such cultural and tourist “brands” as the *Horezu Rooster* can form associative networks in Europe (e.g. Barçao in Portugal, or similar regions in France, Italy, Serbia, etc.).

Similarly, the concept of transhumance in Central and Eastern Europe can associate the various shepherds’ trails, from the Romanian Carpathians all the way up into the Tatra Mountains and Vlach Poland. Such tourist *trails* already exist in Europe and elsewhere, e.g. wine roads (as already existing in various countries, including Romania and the Republic of Moldova) or transhumance paths linking Southern France and Northern Spain. Likewise, it is conceivable to build an associative cultural tourist *Road of salt and mines*, going from Transylvania’s salt mines (and famous balneology resorts, such as Praid or Turda) to Hungary’s and Austria’s similar tourist sights and resorts; or the *Road of cheese* (Rom. *brânză* – which is, incidentally, the name of a nationally-famous cheese brand in Slovakia; cf. also the Italian *branzi* or Swiss *Bränsekäse*), going from Romania to Slovakia and the Ukraine; or the *Road of maize flour porridge* (Romanian *mămăligă*), going from Romania and Bulgaria up to Poland; or the Road of butcher’s products and pork sausages, going from Transylvania and Moldova up to Hungary, the Czech Republic, Germany and Austria etc.).

One can also imagine cross-boundary roads (or tourist “pilgrimages”) for holidays (e.g. Easter, Pentecost, Christmas, “Cuckoos” Easter, or vineyards’ *Trifun* in South Wallachia and Northern Bulgaria, etc.). Coming closer to the ethno-folkloric core, Romanian *Călușul* can be culturally and touristically associated with British *morris dance* (“any of various old English folk dances usually performed by men (*morris men*) to the accompaniment of violin, concertina, etc.; the dancers are adorned with bells and often represent characters from folk tales. Often shortened to *morris*” – COLL), and possibly other similar types of ritual dance all over Europe.

Some other conceivable cultural-historical theme tours based in (or associated with) this country can be: following the Celtic Trail in *Mittleuropa* (through Transylvania, Hungary, Austria); Saxon / German Forts and Boroughs in *Mittleuropa* (including Transylvania); mediaeval fortresses in historical Moldavia (Suceava, Hotin, Soroca, etc.).

Similarly, there can emerge cross-border Thracian tourism (associating, for example, Sarmizegetusa Regia in Transylvania, Panagyurishte in Bulgaria and Abdera in Greece); or cross-border Balkan-Romance tourism (associating, for instance, Ulpia Traiana Sarmizegetusa in Romania, Serdica-Sofia in Bulgaria, and Nish in Serbia).

Why only large cultural centres or rural areas with tradition, etc. should make the object of cultural tourism? Wouldn’t it be also worth visiting lesser-known towns and areas, for something a little bit different from their (cultural) sights proper (i.e. their “formal” cultural tourism component, e.g. museums, fairs, etc.), or for their night life, culinary tradition, etc.? Would it be worth making a tour of “traditional turn-of-the-century Bucharest”, or “vintage Bucharest”?; or a tour of provincial towns connected in a cultural circuit?... and so on, and so forth. Of course, there are also some challenging or quasi-insoluble questions about interconnectiveness to face; for instance, can sex tourism be regarded, in some regions, as cultural tourism as well? (Especially if one considers the issue in the light of the more and more prevalent type of consumerism to which tourism, too, is prone; actually, the very idea of consumerist business comes up against what cultural tourism should, as a matter of principle, start from: *slow tourism* – *slow* meaning, in this context, “de-materialized”, “spiritualized”, “human”, etc.).

Unfortunately – and also quite naturally, a number of related challenges and distortions can pose serious threats to the various interconnective (inter- or transdisciplinary) approaches to tourism, to the point of stifling their initiatives, or at least demeaning part of the credibility associated with them. The first category of such threats seems to be the worship of the overall lucrativeness of such projects or programmes. Consumerism, related or not to globalization, is another such drawback of cultural tourism. There is, for instance, tourism concerning, or via *shopping* (also called *retail tourism*, or even *retail therapy*); there is *adventure* tourism (although the question might justifiably and ultimately arise, *Whom does the peak really belong to, the climber or the traveller?*); but there is also plenty of what one may call *pseudo-adventure tourism*, i.e. the kind of adventure tourism that some super-rich people practise, involving overnight “accommodation” and “full board” in a tourist replica of the Auschwitz concentration camp...

Secondly, there is the danger of misdirected, manipulative or improper advertising. For instance, if you read some guidebooks written abroad about your own country, you will be surprised to find a lot of “new” or “surprising” details – though, to be fair, the adjectives *new* and *surprising* should not necessarily appear with the inverted commas)... It should however be added that, paradoxically, tourism, very much like the arts in fact, can render both the most accurate, and the most false image of a country and its people; unfortunately, in tourism, even poverty can be – considered and sold – as picturesque.

Sometimes tourist projects are not very ethical or well-meaning, to say the very least. For example, after trying – and even systematically experiencing – to do cultural tourism, ecotourism and ecumenical tourism, some tour-operators in Romania even considered turning to *electoral* tourism. Which is not to say that the various “indirect, manipulative” marketing strategies are not economically justifiable. Tourism (very much like cinema, in fact) implies marketing for and through well-contrived stories, e.g. Dracula’s castles, the outlaws (Romanian *haiduks*), the (pseudo)-Druids at Stonehenge, the “ghost-haunted” castles, etc. In tourist activities, even a defect can be turned into tourist advertising; for example, the progressive depletion of Lake Balaton was likely to generate a “children’s protection area” in local and international tourism (the children are allegedly safer now, because they cannot drown...). A *profitable tourist product* can very well be – especially if effectively and interconnectively advertised – the place where the Danube reaches final peacefulness before flowing into the Black Sea... There are even world-renowned tours of famous cemeteries (i.e. what the English-speaking nations, especially the North-Americans, call “the geography of Death”), e.g. Montparnasse, Père Lachaise, New Orleans – why not Sulina, as well?...

#### 4. Concluding remark

Inter-, trans-, and multidisciplinary as ways of interaction of modern sciences, and especially of their specific way of thinking, are able to induce formation trends and generate new sciences, with varying degrees of coverage with respect to the source or sciences origin, and to develop old science in new directions. Tourism is nothing else but pure and applied inter-, trans-, and multidisciplinary in the holistic reality as the mix of leisure, knowledge, creative recreation, mood, and self-healing spiritually and physically...

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