

Alicja Krzymowska-Kostrowicka

TOURIST REGIONS AND TERRITORIAL RECREATION SYSTEMS

The analysis of spatial structure of tourist and recreation phenomena on both, micro- and macro- scale is one of the basic tasks of the geography of tourism. The methodology of the detailed analysis has already been worked out whereas there is no adequate system of methods in the field of macro-scale spatial studies. This was caused by many factors: the ambiguity of basic concepts used in general regional studies — especially the concept of a region and regionalisation, the diversity of tourist and recreation phenomena as such and the lack of adequate research methods which would permit a thorough analysis of the whole problem.

The concept of a tourist-recreation region has not been specified yet. A review of approaches towards it comprising a survey of definitions was presented in a collective study *Problems of Terminology in the Geography of Tourism* (1976). It can be concluded from the opinions expressed there that a tourist region is a spatial formation with no clear delimitation criteria.

Before discussing the difficulties in the regional tourist studies, let us concentrate first on their present situation in the field of economic and geographical sciences. In spite of the abundant literature on the subject, the concept of a region has not been specified clearly enough. Generally speaking, a region is a part of a given territory determined by a number of characteristics. They make the region a spatial individual only from the point of view of the criteria in the classification.

In economic geography, there are many definitions of a region, often entirely different in approach. K. Dziewoński (1967) distinguishes three basic meanings of the term „region”: as the means of research, as the means of action, and the subject of study. These essential differences were frequently ignored and this led to numerous misunderstandings and inconsistencies in regional studies.

This paper concentrates on the third meaning of the term „region”: it will be discussed here as a subject of study. Having limited the

scope of the meaning, one still faces a variety of definitions reflecting diverse attitudes expressed by the particular authors.

Apart from the differences in the definitions of a region, there are also some common elements there, such as, stress on the connections between the region and its surroundings (i.e. other regions), hierarchy of the structure of regional configurations where the state is the highest category and considering specialisation to be the region's denominator and the determinant of interregional boundaries.

Thus the criteria denominating a region are as follows: its inner structure reflected in specialised function, the nature of its relation to other regions and the whole country's economy, the place a region occupies in the hierarchy of spatial configurations and its uniqueness in time and space. The latter feature distinguishes regions in a strict sense from spatial groupings based on typological classification and not occurring in the continuous way. Another difference between regions and typological units is that regions usually have names of their own. Distinguishing between individual (specific) regions and typological units (typological regions according to D. Grigg, 1965) is of considerable importance for geographical studies mainly because of different scientific procedures applied in both approaches. It should be pointed out that they are equally valuable and complement each other. Regional studies concentrate on finding out the differences making the individual character of spatial structure as a whole, whereas typological studies stress similarities of one denominator, or a group of them taken as a criterion of classification.

The basic difficulty in revealing regions (regions in the strict sense can only be revealed, not delimited) lies in selecting truly relevant criteria that objectively denote region's inner structure on the one hand, and correct finding out the course of boundaries delimiting the particular regions on the other. Only if these two requirements are met is the revealed spatial unit going to be a genuine, geographical and durable unit.

Dividing an entire territory into regional units is the basic requirement of regionalisation in the strict sense. This condition includes additional limitations sometimes questioning the applicability of this approach, especially in respect of the determinants that occur as points or as isolated spatial groupings. In such cases one can either arbitrarily join "empty" areas into particular regions or distinguish a category of regions with zero value. Another possibility is to omit them altogether, but then the requirement of "no remnant" division would not be met and the following description will be closer to typological than regional approach. A conclusion appears that regionalisation in the strict sense

can only be applied when the regionalised phenomena cover more or less densely the whole area.

All the above remarks about the general theory of regions also point to the difficulties in the attempts at tourist-recreation regionalisation. They explain indirectly the reasons of poor progress in the theory and methodology of these studies not only in Poland, but nearly in the whole world.

It should be considered first of all if tourist-recreation regions can really exist, and if so, how they can be defined. Do spatial recreation structures that can be revealed and not arbitrarily determined, occur objectively? Can they be defined as actual regions? Is a remnant division of a country into touring-recreation region possible or not? And finally, is spatial typological classification perhaps the only procedure possible in geographical-recreational studies?

The basis for tourist-recreation regionalisation should be tourism and recreation themselves, and not the external conditions (such as natural environment or the attractiveness of scenery) which would lead to yet another regionalisation (natural or landscape) and not to regional variation of the phenomenon of tourism. Since economic criteria are external in relation to the realisation of social needs they cannot be applied here either. All this concerns regionalisation procedures based on the current data because the natural or economic criteria can be applied as equally valuable basis for drawing conclusions when revealing potential (future) regions.

It is clear that although applying regionalisation in the strict sense is possible in touring-recreation studies, it brings along many theoretical and methodological problems. Spatial and typological procedure is much easier and equally valuable from the viewpoint of its scientific value.

The heterogeneity of tourist-recreation phenomena and their inner complexity caused that methods and techniques based on the general systems theory were relatively early applied in geographical and tourist studies.

Generally speaking, a system is an intentionally defined set of elements and their interrelations which all together describe the features of the whole set. It must be pointed out here that an object should be distinguished from the system because each object (a definite recreation estate, for example) can be an element of the system, but it cannot be described as a whole by the use of a single system. The system is made of its structure, i.e. its elements and their interrelations, independent variables of the "inputs" describing the influence of the system's environment on its structure and of dependant variables of the "outputs"

depicting the effects of the system's functioning. The interactions of the elements in the system vary in their nature, intensity and significance. There is no system but only a set of autonomic objects or phenomena if there are no such interrelations. Every open system (only such systems occur in geography) is functionally connected with its specific environment. The environment provides a continuous flow of information on the one hand (independent variables of the "inputs") and is continuously affected by the inner functioning of the system on the other.

Space was introduced as the system's inherent feature when adapting the system approach in geographical studies. The objects of the analysis are not systems as such, but spatial (territorial) systems, that is, for example, territorial production, territorial population, rural, cultural or natural systems. Territorial recreation systems (TRS) are systems of this kind in the geography of recreation.

The territorial recreation system can be defined as an open, dynamic and material system with purposeful conduct meant to achieve the desired relations between the conditions and effects of recreation (with many incidental purposes and limitations taken into account) and occupying a territory defined by the intensity of relations. The territoriality of the system can be incomplete (when only the area of recreational function is considered) or complete (the area where the holiday makers live and work is taken into account). As the given definition implies, the territorial boundaries cannot be delimited *a priori*. Their course can be found out only when the character of interrelations and the extent of TRS are examined. Only the results of completed research manifest the significance of the particular variables that in turn determine which factor or a group of factors is leading in TRS; thus this factor (factors) cannot be predetermined.

There are two complementary approaches to TRS studies. In the first one, TRS is treated as a "black box" and everything that goes on inside the system is omitted. The attention is focused on relations between the input and output variables and a whole group of input-output methods is applied. As a result, the effects of recreation in TRS and preliminary delimitation of boundaries are relatively early discovered. The whole procedure is therefore similar to typological regionalisation.

In the second approach TRS is conceived as the so-called "white" or "translucent box". The attention is focused on the interrelations inside the system. Consequently, one can study and describe the mechanisms according to which a TRS works and thus foresee the outcome of the disturbance in its homeostasis. The knowledge of the system's mechanisms also helps to steer it in a rational way. Apart from the

input-output methods (applied in the study of the relations at the system's lower organisation level), there are also taxonomic-numerical, matrix and many other methods employed.

Finally, the differences and similarities between the regionalisation studies and the geographical system approach should be discussed. Both approaches aim basically at the same goal, that is, at studying both, the causes and the nature of spatial differentiation of the analysed phenomena, or in other words, at studying the organisation of geographical space. Regionalisational studies focus, however, on structural differences (expressed by varied models of space filling and space usage), whereas the interrelations of the structure's elements (not the structure itself) are of the main interest to the system approach. The character of the interrelations among the elements, their intensity, directions and variability in time depict the territorial system and its style of functioning. The location of the elements of the structure in space is significant only to the extent it influences the functioning of the whole.

It can only be indirectly inferred from the results of regionalisation studies whether a given spatial structure is functionally efficient (or if not, to what extent it is affected by disfunction) and how to optimize it for definite purposes. On the other hand, the results of the system studies directly answer these questions.

Regionalisation (both, proper and typological) is by its nature based on some predetermined factors that, in the scientist's opinion, describe the character of space and divide it into more or less homogeneous territorial units. If different parameters of geographical reality are considered, the spatial picture of regional differentiation is automatically changed. The system approach permits (thanks to its holistic attitude) the functional analysis of the whole set of variables. It also helps to select regional differentiation determinants *a posteriori* and not *a priori*.

Territorial recreation systems, similarly as tourist regions can only be revealed, and not delimited. The main difference between the two discussed types of spatial approaches is that TRS's are more labile and changeable in time; they resemble regional-typological units in this respect.

Both these theoretical and methodological approaches towards recreational-spatial studies that are only very briefly presented in this paper, do not exclude each other; on the contrary, they are complementary. When combined, they contribute to a coherent paradigm of geography of tourism or recreation.

REFERENCES

- Bertalanffy von L. 1973. *General Systems Theory. Foundations, Development, Applications*, New York.

- Canter L.W., Hill L.G. 1979. *Handbook of Variables for Environmental Impact Assessment*, Ann Arbor.
- Dziewoński K. 1967. "Teoria regionu ekonomicznego" [Theory of Economic Region], *Przegląd Geograficzny*, No. 39, Warszawa
- Grigg D. 1967. "Regions, Models and Classes", in: Chorley P., Haggett P., (eds) *Models in Geography*, London.
- Haggett R. 1980. *Systems Analysis in Geography (Contemporary Problems in Geography)*, Oxford.
- Klaasse L.H. Paelinck J.H.P., Wagenaar S. 1979 *Spatial Systems*, Rotterdam.
- Krzybowska-Kostrowicka, A. 1980 *Terytorialny system rekreacji. Analiza struktury i charakteru powiązań* [Territorial Recreation System. Analysis of Structure and Character of Connectivity], Ossolineum, *Prace Geograficzne* 138.
- Preobrazhenskyi, W.S. 1975. *Teoreticheskiye problemy rekreacyonnoy geografii*, Moskwa.
- "Problemy terminologii w geografii turystyki" [Problems of Terminology in the Geography of Tourism], *Zeszyty Naukowe Uniwersytetu Jagiellońskiego* vol. 179, *Prace Geograficzne* vol. 42, Warszawa, Kraków 1976
- Weinberg G.M. 1975. *An Introduction to General Systems Thinking*, New York.
- Wedenin Y.A., 1982. *Dynamika terytorialnykh rekreacyonnykh sistem*, Moskwa