

DANURB – STRATEGY

**Report: workshops on the development of
tourism at the Danube Bend Micro-Region**



DANUrB

DANube Urban Brand

Interreg – Danube Transnational Programme

Report: workshops on the development of tourism at
the Danube Bend Micro-Region

MUTK

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Cover photo: Szepes Hajnalka

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1. Introduction

The goal of “DANURB (A Regional Network Building through Tourism and Education to Strengthen the “Danube” Cultural Identity and Solidarity)” project is utilising cultural and heritage values of settlements along the Danube, their development, and the enhancement of relations between various regions of the Danube.

Within the framework of the project, 39 governments, universities, development agencies and other organisations worked together to make the tangible or hidden, built or attached intellectual heritage of Danube regions more familiar to visitors and, at the same time, to make them an integral part of the lives of communities concerned. The project’s task was to map and evaluate sites and stories that are both attractive and valuable, as they serve as a means of creating a link between settlements across the Danube on various geographic scales. During the 2.5-year period of cooperation, new solutions – descriptive and evaluative methodology, a knowledge-sharing platform of partners, tourist applications – were introduced. On an experimental basis, values of individual communities were assessed at each settlement, as well as under-utilised but developing heritage elements, and active participants in the lives of communities. In addition, events were organized to bring cultural heritage and community scenes – especially the Danube – closer to residents (and visitors) of the region.

An important pillar of the joint work was the creation of a strategic framework that enables all settlements along the river to implement actions and expand local tourism development strategies based on cultural heritage and a networking of multiple settlements. One partner in the project, Pest County Government undertook the task of focusing on the latter issue, i.e. micro-regional cooperation. During the project, two pilot micro-regions – the upper section of the Danube Bend and Szigetzug, Csepel Island – were researched, plans were made based on community involvement, and a report on the present micro-regional level workshop was prepared.

An important foundation of the project was that options for tourism development and related advancement of settlements based on cultural heritage and local initiatives should be explored with the involvement of stakeholders. In the case of settlements of the Danube Bend, there were 2 workgroup meetings during the 16 months between the autumn of 2017 and the spring of 2019, supplemented by in-depth interviews, construction camps, site visits and other data-collecting methods. The Szigetzug Danube Days programme series provided special opportunities for common thinking and uncovering the local need for resources and external support.

The project was supported by INTERREG Danube Transnational Cooperation Programme.

2. The development method of MRSP – Micro-Region Strategy Planning

The DANuRB project covers the Danube River as a cross-border landscape unit further divided into small areas and micro-regions. The examination and analysis of the Hungarian sections, small regions and micro-regions clearly indicates that the string of the areas related to the Danube are often contact points of interconnected, additional roles as well. In the examined area, we find settlements with distinct images and functions which in past centuries complemented each other well. However, motorization – and also the domineering Budapest-centricity of Pest County – serves as a catalyst in the gradual disappearance of these unique features. This regional development approach focuses on the rediscovery of unique regional characteristics, and builds its basic strategy on those.

In terms of the Danube Bend, we encounter a long area of a line of settlements along the Danube, with the mountainous landscape in the background contributing to its unique image. The following settlements are part of the Danube Bend Pilot Program: the towns of Nagymaros, Visegrád and Szob, the villages of Dunabogdány, Kisoroszi, Verőce, Zebegény, Pilismarót, Dömös, Ipolydamásd, and Helemba in Slovakia.



Figure 1: "Szigetcsúcs" (Island Peak) and the Citadel, 1961 (Source: Fortepan)

It is important to emphasize that regional development requires a distinct approach to micro-regions made up of smaller settlements. In the field of tourism, the "visibility" of even medium-sized towns is relatively low, if we only think about the settlements and less about the sights and attractive themes in their catchment areas. Most sections along the Danube banks outside the capital are currently difficult to interpret independently as inspirational destinations for visitors. There are exceptions, of course, like Szentendre, Visegrád and Esztergom, and to a certain extent, Vác. In smaller settlements, it is further disadvantage that local businesses and governments have limited resources, not only in terms of the scale of investments required, but also of the tasks which need to be implemented for the organisation and facilitation of cooperation. As a consequence, local, community-based, networking initiatives, the mobilisation of local resources and the unique theme(s) which might attract potential visitors are of increasing importance.



Figure 2: Nagymaros and Visegrád (Source: Pál Dohanics, BME student, "The winter world of the Danube Bend"
BME Faculty of Architecture, Department of Urban Planning and Design, DANUrB document, 28.09.2018.)

The objective of micro-regional strategy is finding the overlapping identities of settlements in contact with each other and facing the same challenges, and renewing the appearance and utilisation of common heritage values in line with current possibilities and expectations. It is worth adjusting plans to future visions which highlight and preserve those common values, and find resources which might support this approach at the level of settlements and institutions, with special emphasis on the fact that these tasks must include local bottom-up initiatives and top-down proposals from businesses and institutions, and also the coordination of these two models.

The range of possible focus areas:



Figure 3: Focus areas of micro-regional development (source: authors)

Within the DANUrB project, those projects should be at the forefront which emphasize and support initiatives starting up and evolving from local sources, and are able to provide sustainable and renewable advancement in the tourism of the region.

Goals:	Tools:
The extensive and complex involvement of actors in the settlement.	Tools of economic development and incentive: regulators and support of stimuli.
Finding, communicating and emphasising possible interests and stakes, and constantly keeping them at a sufficient level.	Workshops with extensive social participation, aiming at the formulation of distinct action plans, with the wider objective of developing tourism value supply.
Identifying themes which might create and strengthen communities and interpreting them in relation to individual settlements.	Providing training and information, enhancing capacity.
Defining tasks and units of realisation, connecting them to interests/stakes.	Support and advice in tendering and application writing.
Sharing responsibilities in the successful implementation of tasks.	Providing quality insurance.
Joint assessment, highlighting results, rethinking, maintaining continuity and institutionalising certain tasks.	Aptness to receive volunteers, organisational competence, providing experts.
Organising and supporting regional and territorial marketing tasks.	Building a communications network, creating and providing platforms.

Figure 4: Goals and tools of micro-regional development (Source: authors)

3. Specifics and characteristics of the circles involved

It is important to determine the circle of those directly or indirectly affected by the project, because the key features of on-site initiatives are the following:

- bottom-up implementation,
- the presence of a strong civil background, and
- the participation of responsible, supportive people open to new alternatives.

Local governments and professional regional development organisations need to show an attitude of contribution, a willingness and ability to be inclusive, and in addition, should operate in an adequately flexible mode, with local regulation and the occasional financial support. One of the key assumptions of the DANURB project is that from among the values – inherited and contemporary, physically appearing and intellectual – only those have real potential for development which can be maintained by a group of stakeholders on a long term basis. Due to difficulties in coordination and cooperation at a micro-regional level, this engagement is not only an important requirement but also a necessary condition.

The practical implementers of the background to projects and programmes will be *local entrepreneurs and service providers who are willing to take the ultimate, individual and greatest risks*, thus it is indispensable for them to be embedded in the communities and have the support of communities for their activity. The areas and tools of this are:

- a predictable legal and technical environment provided by settlement designers and the urban development concept,
- developments in prospect, a supportive attitude and cooperation on the side of administrative units in the launching and the operating of ventures,
- ensuring mutual attention, and
- striving for partnership.

The integrators and intellectual leaders of the project and devised programmes might come from *governments, governmental institutions and civil organisations*. The realisation of these actions is quite complex, since well-organised and structured functional units have to be linked to the – volunteer-based and thus inherently loose – fabrics of the civil sphere which only get structured for activities serving well-defined goals with a supportive background structure.

The motivation of the two areas is also different: while one is driven by duties specified in contracts, the other one's motivation evolves from volunteering, and this unsolicited willingness needs sustainment and "cultivation". This latter aspect is especially important because the involvement of volunteers into the implementation of the individual projects might be crucial. In any case, we need to find an interest factor that ensures their presence in the long term. For this reason it is important to get to know actors who created and own already functioning services, programmes and other initiatives, and also their motivation – *why they started, what obstacles they faced in the lives of their settlements, what they missed, what their conclusions are, and what positive and negative experiences they collected during their work*.

The lessons learned at the four completed workshops of the **DANUrB Danube Bend pilot programme** show that the first and biggest task is to **establish, strengthen and maintain lively, every day and practical relationships between settlements on the two banks of the Danube**, competing with each other in many respects, but geographically relatively close to each other, but in relationships burdened by a lack of easy access and interoperability.

At the municipal level, a further task is the widening and maintaining of participation on a volunteer basis in the various programmes, as well as establishing the interests of participants and achieving local dialogue. The circle of those invited to the negotiations extensively covered the settlements, not only in geographical but also in social terms. Mayors, representatives of governmental institutions, NGOs, sports facilities, and local businesses were invited, altogether around 60 people from settlements of all sections of the Danube Bend. The location was in Nagymaros in both cases. Most of the participants came from Nagymaros or neighbouring settlements, and only few guests visited from the other side of the Danube.

In the region of the Danube Bend, the following groups, organisations, and individuals were present at the workshops:

- *Mayor of settlement, representatives of nationality governments:* Nagymaros
- *Governmental institutions:* Börzsöny Museum and Collection of Public Interest – Szob, MNM King Matthias Museum – Visegrád
- *Cultural and civil organisations:* Shipping Museum – Zebegény, Sigil Gallery – Nagymaros,
- *Entrepreneurs:* Hotel Silvanus – Visegrád, local restaurant and artisan entrepreneurs, Depo-Z Bt. – kayak-canoe rental service, water services of Nagymaros,
- *Organisations which are active in the micro-region but count as external experts from an institutional point of view* Börzsöny-Duna-Ipoly Regional Development Association, expert of DINP, Hungary NEXT, country brand workshop.

It is obvious that the building of an active community is a long process, so we found it a great achievement that there were so many enthusiastic and active participants at the events who pay close attention to the development of the Danube Bend. The picture that emerged from the discussions showed that common thinking and networking started in the micro-region, but these are still only initial, unstructured processes.



Figure 5: Regional development workshop - 1, Nagymaros Community Centre, 13.02.2019. (Source: authors)

Since the mapping of stakeholders was one of the core tasks of the project, it made a separate data collection about the possible stakeholders by BME- KÉK- Pest County and ECRS, 2018-2018). The results of this datasheets were carried out to identify their circle – a wide range of professionals, municipal and civil society representatives and local entrepreneurs with a greater role were contacted and invited into the workgroups. As is typical in small settlements, this micro-region was also characterised by individuals representing more organisations and circles involved and fulfilling multiple roles. The leader of an institution or an entrepreneur is often a government representative as well or might be a leading member of a civil organisation. This might mean a serious challenge in the collaborations of stakeholders, when it comes to defining roles and tasks, because the individuals in more functions often have to coordinate and harmonise conflicting interests and goals.

A further challenge regarding stakeholders is the fact that this is a target area of regional development, and this might bring about a significant overlap with the activities of already existing cooperation and supporting organisations (LEADER: Börzsöny-Duna-Ipoly Regional Development Association, HACCS). The utilisation of cultural heritage and the content and form of targeted regional cooperation organised around it might be different, with some overlapping, narrowed interpretation or coverage. At the same time, professional tourist organisations, tourism sector management and local tourist organisations put more emphasis on the regional embeddedness of the micro-region. Either way, parallel goals and opportunities deserve great attention.

Motivated, proactive stakeholders and the circle of potential partners can and should be determined by their activities rather than by their situation. The best initiatives are generally well-known by the wider community; such as festivals and sport events at Nagymaros, the Gourmet Basket initiative of Börzsöny, the Town Days of Szob, the FAKULT Association of Dunabogdány, and the Palace Games of Visegrád. At the same time, small-scale or early-stage initiatives have a relatively low public or even professional visibility, and uncertainty factors may occur as early as the assessment stage. An example of this is the difficult and complicated evaluation of under-

utilised heritage buildings. Therefore, one of the explicit goals of DANUrB is to prove that a one-time, experimentally organised programme is not enough to showcase the modes of deployment of a particular site or building.

This challenge is continuous, which greatly contributes to the uncertainty. A good example of this is when a new community site or programme is created by a non-local initiative. However, when a programme or service comes from an external source to the small-settlement environment, the – from an organisational point of view, seemingly external – initiative might catalyse more direct and serious engagement of locals, even the organisation of a micro-region level programme. This might be the "common cause" that brings settlements together. An external source of an idea or catalyst can also be a "professional" participant, the existence of which is, for example, a prerequisite for creating a nationally visible festival, and this is an opportunity worthy of attention not only on one occasion.



Figure 6: Regional development workshop 2, Nagymaros, Sigil Gallery, 12.03.2019 (Source: authors)

The most well-known sample project along the Danube, the creation and operation of the Ship-Mill of Ráckeve, which follows the same principles as the DANUrB project, presented important lessons for the Danube Bend pilot area as well. The project which endeavours to preserve and present a heritage element was established by the Ráckeve Millers' Guild, which has been responsible for the daily maintenance and operation of the mill since its establishment. The Ship-Mill is a prime example of a project which aims at a tradition-based renovation of an artefact chosen from the historical traditions of the settlement, resulting in wide-ranging cooperation, establishing long-term organic relations, becoming a tourist attraction, with a community in the background actively participating in its everyday maintenance. The project is more worthy of highlighting, because it represents the physical and spiritual appearance of the heritage, not only as a reconstructed object, but also as restored activity. It brought along strong positive feedback for the community, thus justified the amount of work invested.



Figure 7: *Ship-Mill of Ráckeve* (Source: authors)

In the micro-region of the Danube Bend, we can find different kinds of civil initiatives that show different results, due to local capacities and the range of participants. Common thinking has already started in several settlements, at times based on nationality or other sort of traditions, at other times based on common problems and thinking.

The Börzsöny-Duna-Ipoly Regional Development Association provides valuable support for these, as it launched several direct projects to facilitate communication and cooperation between settlements, and tried to strengthen local civil communities, such as:

- Ipoly Bank Folk Music and Dance Gathering – Szob
- Village and Town Days, preserving traditions – Szob, Ipolydamásd, Nagymaros,
- "Háztűznéző"¹ Programme, inducing cooperation between settlements, 2014
- Small-Region Civil Forum
- Civil events at Zebegény, Pumpkin Festival, Dance Halls, "Gőzgombóc" (Buttermilk Scone) Festival, "Gyüttment" (Upstart) Festival

There are no joint micro-region associations helping the evolvement of similar processes on the right bank of the Danube, those settlements are left to their own devices, and they started building relationships toward other directions. Dunabogdány, Kisoroszi and Visegrád are oriented towards the south, i.e. Tahitótfalu and Szentendre. Pilismarót and Dömös are located in the catchment area of Esztergom. Connections across the Danube are slowly emerging and becoming stronger. These processes are induced by a new kind of local undertaking spirit which aims at a primarily domestic, small-scale tourism representing a higher level of services.

However, it can be stated that no matter how obvious the possibilities may be, there is no well-defined regional association aiming at unity and dialogue in the Danube Bend, which could catalyse direct joint strategy formation, communication, lobbying activity or anything that would be able to act decisively and vigorously at the micro-regional level. The reasons for this are complex, and the situation is not made easier by the fact that the municipalities belong to two counties or several districts from an administrative point of view, and unfortunately, in many cases, they also have peripheral locations and roles.

¹ Háztűznéző („house visiting”) is a word describing the special visit payed to the family of the bride-to-be by the parents or family of the groom-to-be.

4. Strength and weaknesses of the region, opinions of participants

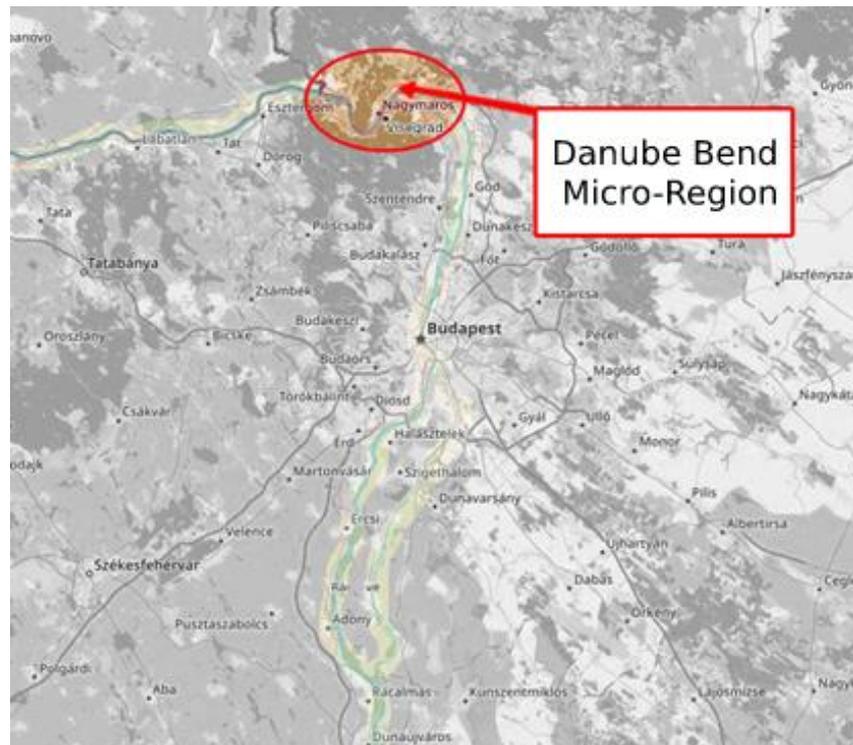


Figure 8: Settlements of the Danube Bend Micro-Region: Verőce, Nagymaros, Zebegény, Szob, Ipolydamásd, Helemba, Pilismarót, Dömös, Visegrád, Dunabogdány, Kisoroszi (Source: authors)

Population

The total population of the micro-region is 22450 people (01.2016), slightly increasing in the last 15 years (by almost 4% between 2001 and 2016), mainly due to the positive migration gap. The estimated number of holiday population is 18-20,000.

Visegrád (1840 people), Nagymaros (4750 people) and Szob (2587 people) have a rank of town, but their population varies significantly and is below the average of urban settlements. Their city rank originates from their past but is justified by their roles in the micro-region. Further prominent towns showing population growth are Verőce (3823 people) and Dunabogdány (3089 people). Pilismarót (2023 people), Zebegény (1228 people) and Dömös (1106 people) are settlements with a smaller and stagnating number of inhabitants. The population of Kisoroszi (963 people) is constantly growing.

Ipolydamásd has the fewest number of inhabitants in the region – 346 people –, but recently it was possible to launch social processes that resulted in a slow increase in population. Helemba is a Slovakian settlement with close geographical, social and historical connections to the settlements of the micro-region (mainly Ipolydamásd and Szob), thus it was also assessed as part of the pilot area. It has a population of 695 inhabitants, the number is not diminishing, and the village has a large ratio of holiday population (almost 100%), just like other settlements in the area.

All settlements have residential areas made up of holiday houses, almost of the size of the local residence areas, but the weekend-house segments are clearly separated in settlement pattern, located distinctly on hillsides or directly on the riverbank.

A unique feature in the region is the high index of old age (above 20%) – Zebegény, Nagymaros, Visegrád, Kisoroszi – and a detectable population growth at the same time. Characteristic of these settlements is the ever-growing presence of intellectual and retired inhabitants moving out of the capital. (Figure: population and population change of settlements concerned based on census data from 2016)

A significant proportion of the population has two residencies and commute to Budapest, Vác, Szentendre and Esztergom for work or education.

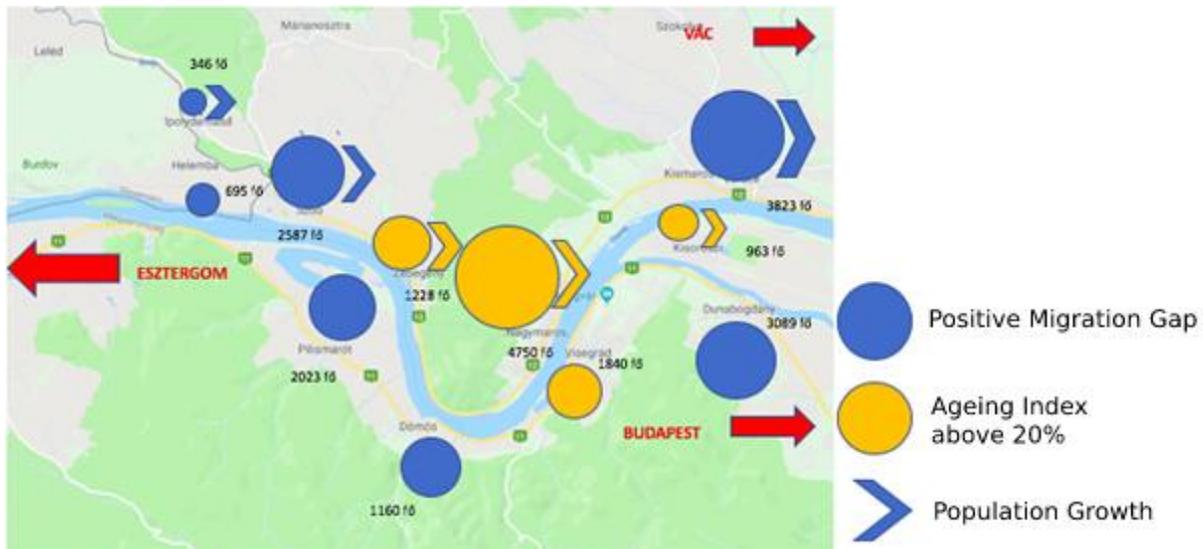


Figure 9: Population trends at the Danube Bend (Source: authors)

There is a recent tendency of more and more people choosing the area of the Danube Bend as primary or secondary residency because of the proximity of Budapest and favourable traffic conditions. As of yet, this is particularly evident on the Danube side of Vác, because railway development and the easily accessible motorway create preferential opportunities. People who have a so-called “second homes” here and live temporarily in these settlements mean a potential demand for services and products based on heritage, and in order to acquire them they do not have to communicate permanently from their primary homes. The “only” goal is to make them feel that the services in the region are valuable and attractive. As sort of indirect ambassadors, they might be able to reach further potential demand which otherwise could not be attained by regional service providers, individual settlements or cooperating partners.

Network of settlements, connections

The incorporation of the settlements into landscape and their network in the region is documented in the Report of Danube Band, carried out by BME Faculty of Architecture, Department of Urban Planning and Design, (2018).

The figure with the title “Areas of settlements located in the landscape” shows the settlements and recreation areas of the Danube Bend. It is clearly visible that large parts of Pilismarót, Dömös, Zebegény, Dunabogdány, Kisoroszi and Verőce are occupied by holiday districts, often not attached to the old territory of the settlement. The territorial connection of the two towns, Visegrád and Nagymaros, is also obvious, as these settlements are almost mirror images of each other. Zebegény and Pilismarót, and Dömös and Visegrád are connected to each other by their holiday district areas, while the relationship of Szob and Zebegény is more diverse – it is the connection between a town and its region, complemented by Ipolydamásd and Hélemba.

Finally, Dunabogdány, Kisoroszi and Verőce make up a unit through their water connections and the inclusion of holiday districts.

Areas of settlements located in the landscape (Danube Bend Report, BME, 2018)

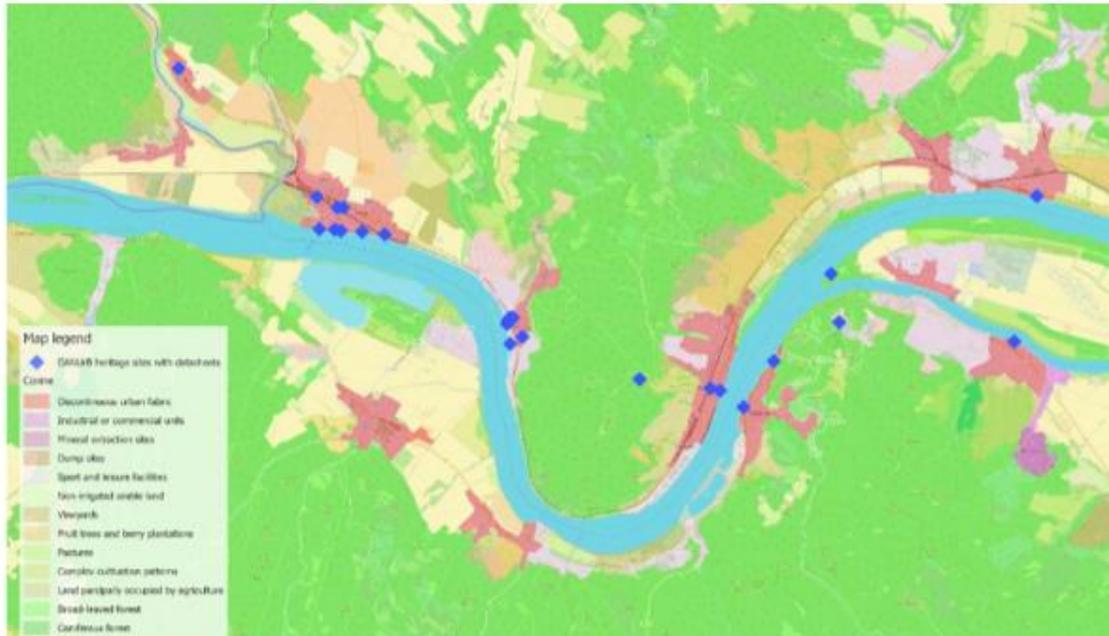


Figure 10: Areas of settlements located in the landscape (Source: Danube Bend Report, BME Faculty of Architecture, Department of Urban Planning and Design, 2018, DANURB document)

About the current relations discovered it can be stated:

- Visual connections between the two banks are strong.
- The networking system of settlements is incomplete, and although from a geographical point of view it might seem determined, it is not developed from the aspect of cooperation and tourism.
- There are no consciously developed, mutually supportive and complementary relationships in business and service sectors, either concerning the management and administration of settlements, or regarding population, information and economy.
- The two sides of the Danube are not easily inter-accessible at present, connections between banks are deficient, existing transport connections are slow.
- Horizontal relationships on either of the two sides are not formulated properly. Some vertical connections are to be detected, though (the line of Danube-settlement-hillside).

It seems that the geographic and settlement features mean opportunities and difficulties at the same time. The latter derives from urban management, while the former from the point of view of theme and programme organization. Currently it can be stated that the Danube separates instead of connecting.

Transport

Conditions for traffic on the left bank of the Danube are more favourable. The upgraded international railway line between Budapest and Szob, and further to Slovakia, operate at a

proper level of frequency (regular, scheduled timetables) and quality, and thus makes the lives of local inhabitants and visitors better. In addition, due to connecting bus lines and the M2 motorway, access by road is also satisfactory.

The right side lags behind the other one. There is no expressway in the vicinity, there are no proper cross-sections of roads, and there is no railway line on the shore either. This makes access to the settlements difficult and slow, especially at peak times: both on workdays and on weekends and holidays. This not only hinders the development of tourism, but also creates challenges in the everyday life of the local population.

For those arriving on roads, there are not enough stops, vantage points, and there are no sufficient and up-to-date parking spaces available.

A built-in, continuous bike path can only be found on the left side, but it would be necessary on the right bank as well, and the current path also requires development and expansion, especially regarding bike service points.

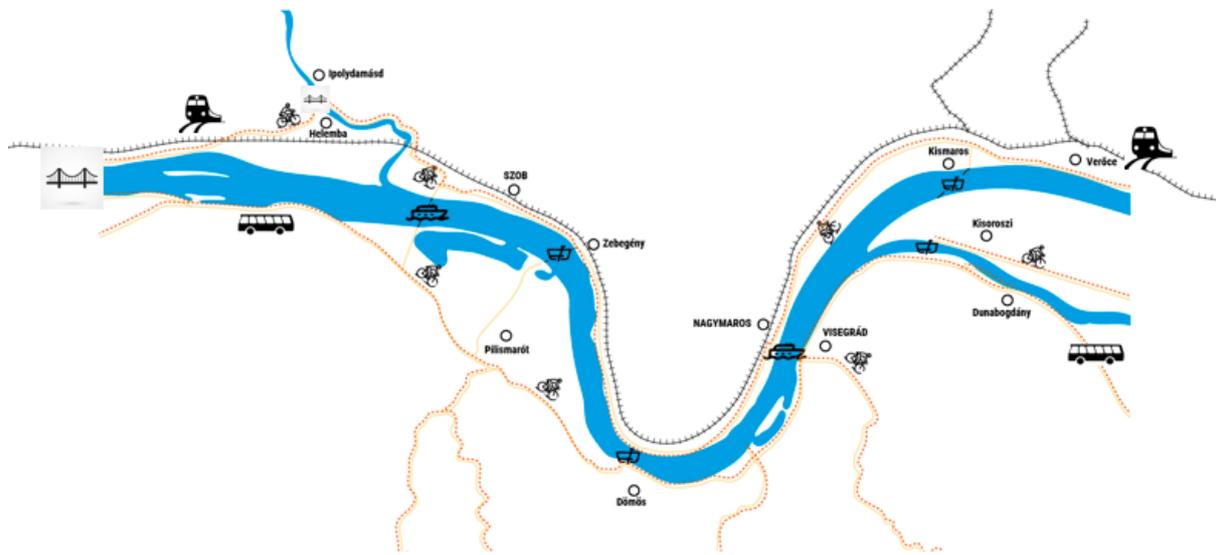


Figure 11: Networking connections in the Danube Bend Micro-Region (Source: authors)

Possibilities for shipping traffic on the Danube are not utilised. There are two ferries carrying cars between Visegrád, Nagymaros, Pilismarót and Szob. However, their operation during the winter is uncertain, not continuous. Crossing possibilities are provided by small boats at certain points (Pilismarót holiday district – Zebegény, Dömös – Zebegény outskirts, Visegrád, Szentgyörgypuszta – Kisoroszi). Their timetable is tailored to local needs, although in a rather limited way, so they do not really help the enhancement of crossing between the two sides, and they show significant seasonal uncertainty. There is an increasing supply of river tourist boats on the Danube, but they go slowly, so it is not always a competitive choice in covering the distance between the capital and Visegrád, compared to road or the railway.

All in all, it can be said that the existing transport services, though modestly, serve the mobility needs of the region's population, but development is not promoted and can be considered as a restrictive condition for tourism. During the development, it is necessary to think about facilitating better conditions of crossing between the settlements, especially in the area of public transport, which may involve a more intensive involvement of the private sector, by promoting the presentation of appropriate areas of interest and forms and the introduction of targeted support.

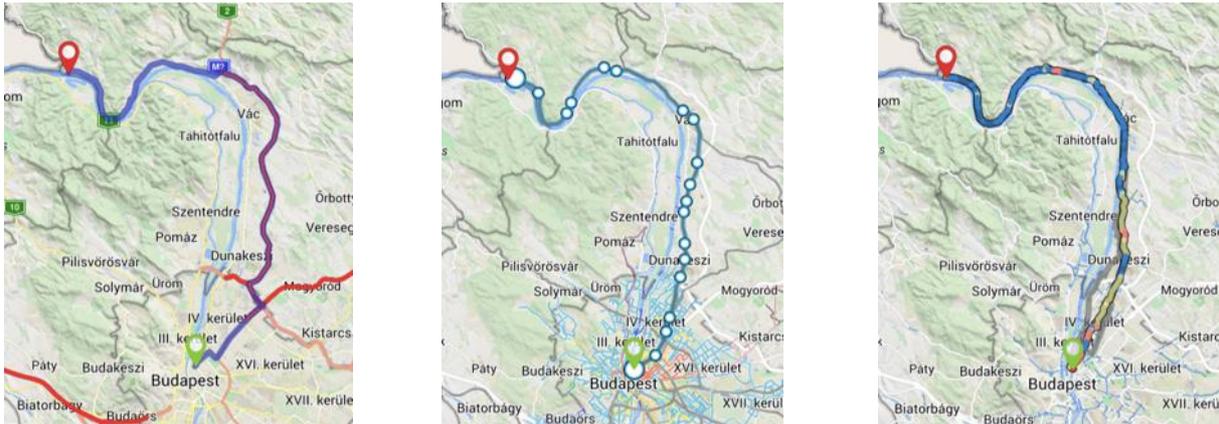


Figure 12: Budapest, Western Railway Station – Shortest route to Szob by car (1), railway connection (2) and a route plan for bikers (3). (Blue section: build-in bicycle path) – (Source: www.utvonaltervezo.hu)



Figure 13: Budapest, Southern Railway Station – The shortest route to Visegrád by car (1) and a route plan for bikers (2) – (Blue section: build-in bicycle path) – (Source: www.utvonaltervezo.hu)

Processes and opportunities in economy, tourism and business

A significant part of the working-age population living in these settlements commute to their workplaces in Budapest, Szob and Vác. In addition, more and more people launch ventures in the field of accommodation and hospitality services. In several settlements – Ipolydamásd, Helemba, Szob, Zebegény and Verőce –, the role of small-scale farming is getting more important, and the sales conditions related to local products have also improved.

Ipolydamásd has a role of ever-growing importance as an agricultural producer – especially in apple production, animal husbandry, mushroom growing –, and Helemba is getting more prominent with its vineyards and wine-growing.

There are no large production units in the region, but smaller industrial or service enterprises provide modest local employment. Some companies or industrial facilities can be considered significant, possess some heritage value and create image, although economically they are no longer important in the region:

- the mineral water plant of Visegrád,
- the quarry of Dunabogdány,
- the buildings of the fruit syrup factory of Szob, which ceased to work,
- the railway station of Szob.

There is no cooperation at a micro-regional level in terms of management, and there are no programmes of joint employment, supply or networks.

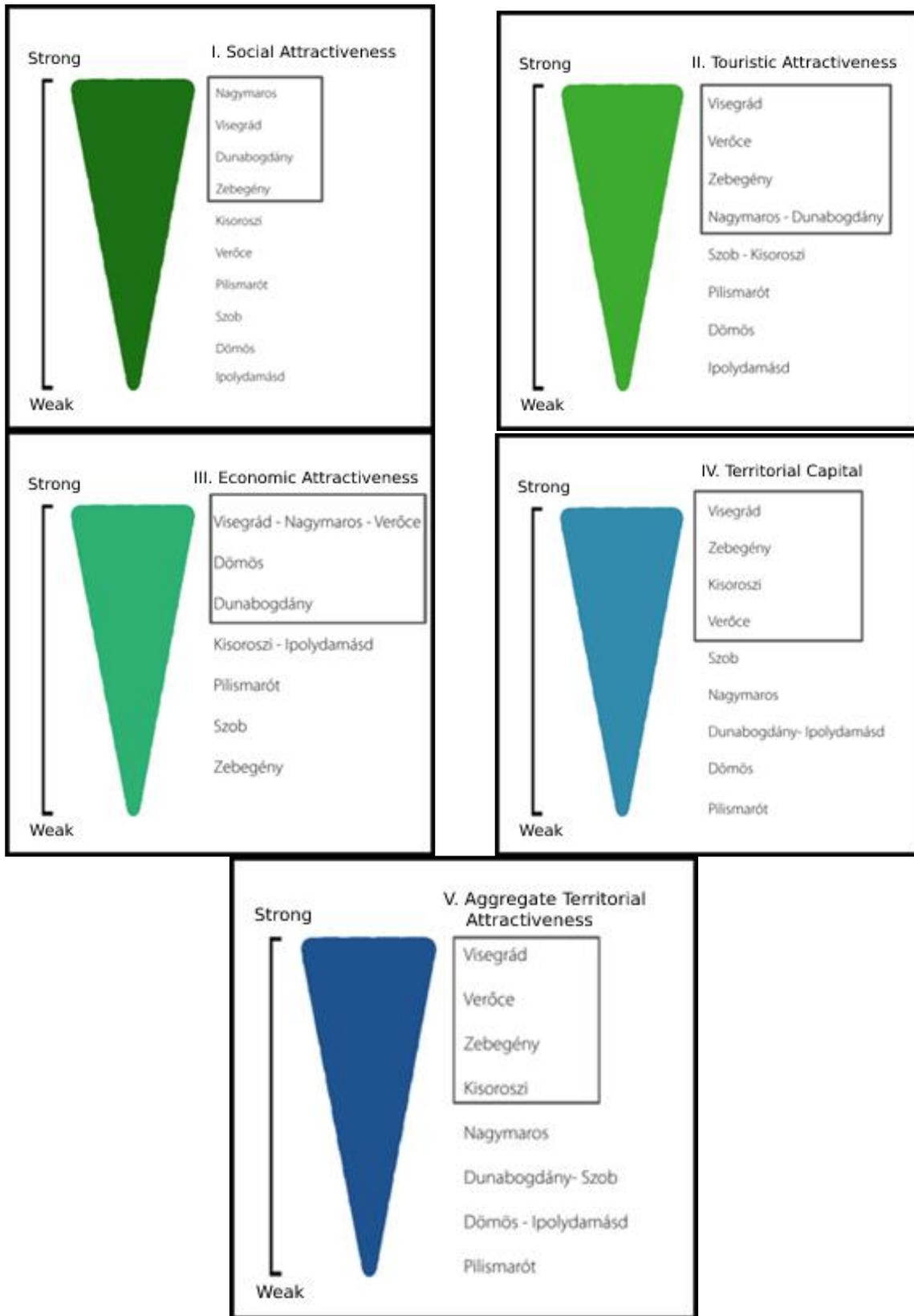


Figure 14: Territorial attraction test (Source: Lechner Knowledge Centre, Territorial Monitoring Research, 2017-2018. Domestic attraction platform, TAMP and Territorial Capital Research, research data of the Foundation for Publicity and Civil Society, 2017, Balatonfűzfő), authors' edit, Summary tables of research results, App. Nr. 1.)

The above series of graphics reflects the summary of data from a territorial attractiveness research and their assessment included in the appendix of the research. The analysis confirms the claim that the centre of gravity in the region are the twin towns Visegrád and Nagymaros, and the villages in their immediate vicinity.

The heritages and utilization of these are the key part of the territorial attractiveness. The datasheets contain information about the tangible and non-tangible heritages. (BME, KÉK, Pest County and ECRS, 2017-2018). These will be available on DANUrB Platform.

From a tourist point of view, Visegrád is the most prominent, both in terms of high-quality and organised presentation and availability of landscape, architectural and historical heritage, and the presence of additional services. Visegrád offers (wellness) accommodations which can cater for international demands as well. In addition, all settlements try to create accommodations on their own levels, smaller pensions and boarding houses opened in the past few years, and private facilities are slowly spreading. The plans of Nagymaros is outstanding among the development plans of the settlements in the region, as it believes that the appeal of sight and services offered by the city offer sufficient supply and attractive force for the development of tourism. Such an investment would probably contribute to a broad reinterpretation and development of the relations between the two opposite cities (Nagymaros and Visegrád). There is also a strong need for more modest accommodations in the area: hiking and group youth tourism represent a significant demand, which is currently catered for by tourist houses and camping sites whose supply and standard should also be extended.

All in all, it can be stated that the current accommodation capacity is lagging behind the demand and the level needed to the significant appreciation of the area. The same can be said about related tourism services, such as hospitality, sports boat rental, beach services, etc. Complex development of supply is needed for the region to exploit its existing capabilities.

Nevertheless, it is important to point out that the current supply of services does not reflect the temporarily appearing potential needs of the holiday population. Although these needs are seasonal, an expansion of demand can be observed in time, that is, the seasons are getting longer.

The development of tourism products and services may include horse riding, rowing, cycling, extreme sports (flying), hiking/nature-walking, visiting of spas, business tourism. The most important development goal is equalising the distribution of visitors in time, thus reducing seasonality.

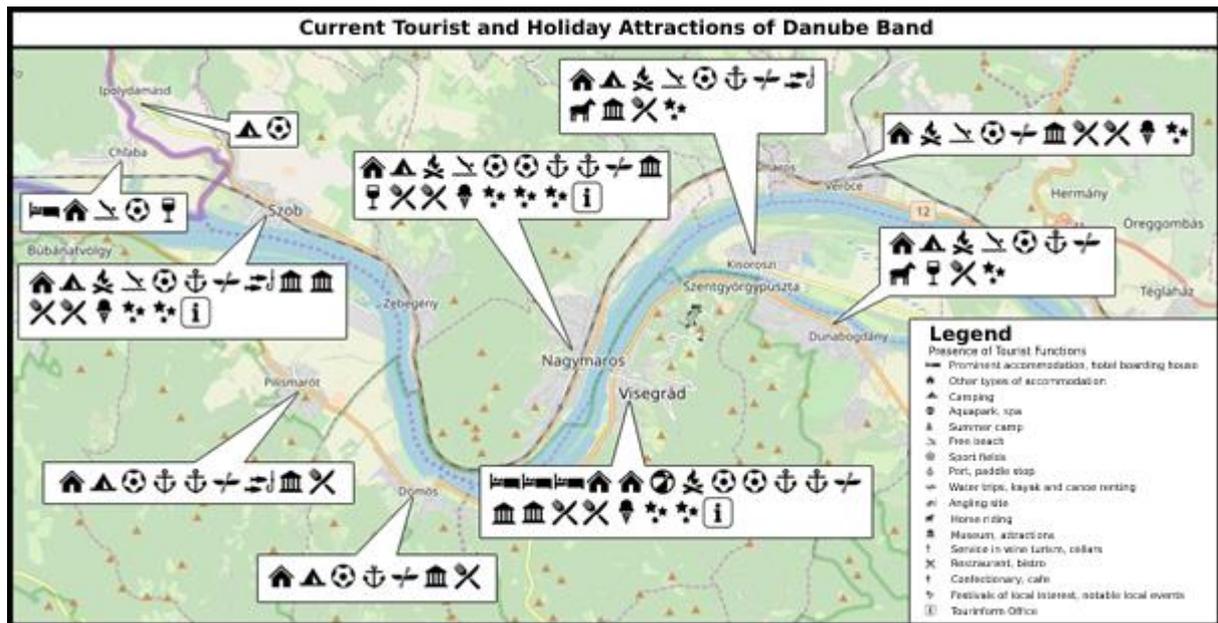


Figure 15: Current Tourist and Holiday Attractions of Danube Band (Source: own editing)

One key to the qualitative development of the micro-region is the level of services and standard of life the region can provide for the people living there. What are the goals of development in this regard? In order to meet the understandably high demands of international and domestic tourism related to the outstanding landscape and built heritage features of the Danube Bend, it is also necessary to create and ensure a high quality of local life. This is the only way for inhabitants living there to support the development of tourism, and have a will and ability to creatively contribute to it. Only if they feel good there, if they are satisfied and successful, can they become open-minded and good hosts.

Summary of settlements characteristics

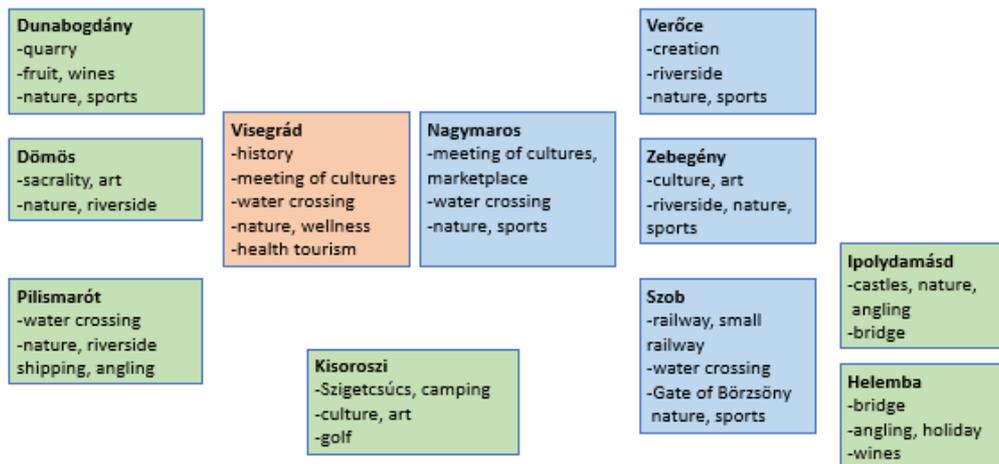


Figure 16: Summary of settlement characteristics (Source: authors)

Cultural, sport and tourism events of communities in settlements of the micro-region are not properly coordinated and connected, either thematically or in time, so there are a lot of tasks to accomplish, but also lots of unexploited opportunities. Leaders of the settlement are discussing these topics vigorously, and many meetings and negotiations have taken and are taking place. It is clear from the related documents of DANUrB's leading partner that more resources have recently been provided for the development of communication interfaces (e.g. Duna-Ipoly-Börzsöny Regional Development Association). Problem detection has taken place at a micro-regional level, and in the future, it is necessary to find the development tools of appropriate efficiency in order to apply proper structuring.

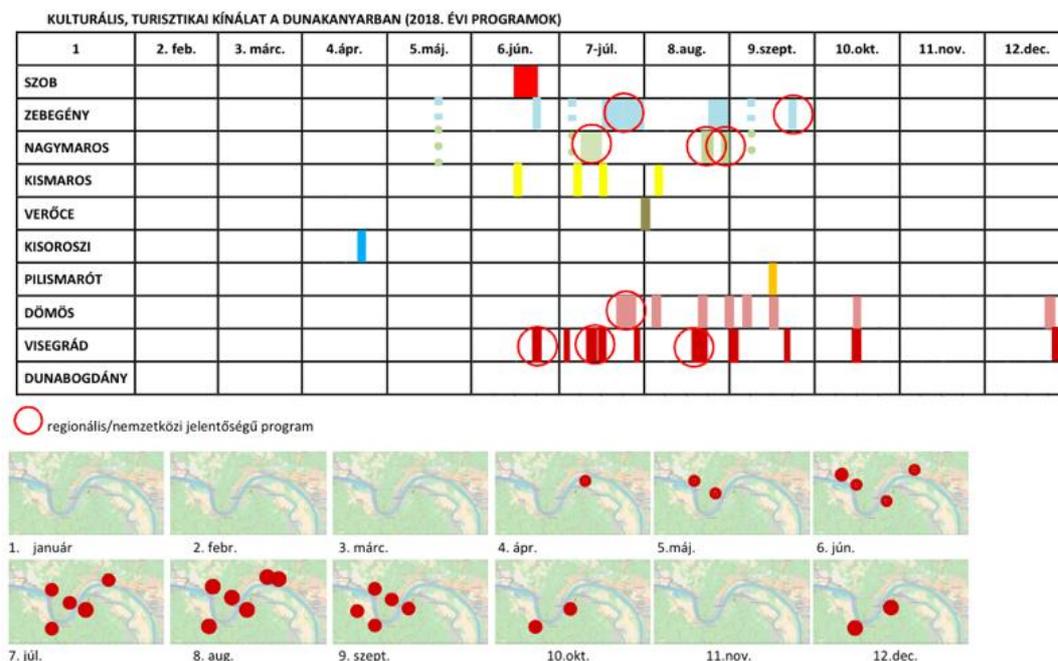


Figure 17: Time table about cultural and touristic offers at the Danube Bend in 2018 (Source: "The winter world of the Danube Bend", BME Faculty of Architecture, Department of Urban Planning and Design, DANUrB document, 28.09.2018.)

Values mapped STRENGTHS	Existing limiting factors WEAKNESSES
<i>Nagymaros</i> – centre of the micro-region, town, connections and traditions of V4, meeting of cultures, Swabian traditions, characteristic and tradition-preserving settlement image, education – forest schools, trade – market, reviving wine culture, catering, strong connection to the Danube, water crossing with car, sports, hiking, hills	There are various programmes and attempts, but there is no adequate collaboration and coordination.
<i>Visegrád</i> – historical small town, historical and landscape heritage, Swabian traditions, characteristic and tradition-preserving urban image, view of the Danube banks, V4 connections and traditions, meeting of cultures, reminiscences of the “Limes” route, water crossing for cars, wellness and health tourism, international tourism, Danube port, hiking, hills	The traditional rural life style of the locals has no connection to the expectations of holidaymakers and tourists, and for the time being there is no common field of interest, no real motivation and no receptivity towards each other.
<i>Szob</i> , micro-regional centre, town, Swabian traditions, railway station at the border, small railway stop, industrial traditions, gate of the Börzsöny, possibilities in education, trade and service, characteristic and tradition-preserving urban image, rich built and historical heritage, water crossing with car, strong connection to the Danube, water sports and angling	Some settlements have strong but small local communities, but their influence on the life of settlements and the organisation of their development is weak.
<i>Zebegény</i> – historical heritage, characteristic and tradition-preserving urban image, Swabian traditions, heritage of holiday districts, cultural and art events, vacation, water sports, angling, Danube bank and island, beach, port for small boats, lookout, hiking, wellness	There is no adequate infrastructure either on land or on the Danube.
<i>Verőce</i> – characteristic and tradition-preserving urban image, heritages of holiday districts, Swabian traditions, reminiscences of the “Limes” route, catering, Danube bank, beach, water sports, hiking, holiday, agriculture	The local historical, architectural, and landscape heritage, as a whole, and in connection to each other, is a major tourist experience, but their exploration and demonstration is immature and ineffective.
<i>Kisoroszi</i> – settlement on an island, hidden, rural, close to nature, “Szigetcsúcs” (Island Peak) experience, holiday, small boat traffic, water sports, angling, camping, culture, golf, island farming, reminiscences of the “Limes” route	Accommodation supply is poor in composition and quality.
<i>Dunabogdány</i> – expanding settlement, characteristic and tradition-preserving urban image, traditions in holiday district, Danube bank, beach, water sports, catering, reviving wine culture, vinery, fruit production, quarry, sightseeing flights, small boat traffic	Programs are not coordinated either in time or in terms of resource use and orientation
<i>Dömös</i> – characteristic and tradition-preserving urban image, sacrality, arts, hiking, small boat port, holiday	Existing transport infrastructure is not enough to reach the area properly and to explore it internally.
<i>Pilsimarót</i> – characteristic and tradition-preserving urban image, fragmented functions in areas, separation of residential and holiday districts, water crossing by ferry (with car), Maróti Bay, water paradise, angling, yacht port, camping, Danube bank, beach	There is a general lack of resources, money from tenders is unpredictable.

Figure 18: Strengths and weaknesses in the Danube Bend Region (Source: authors)

4. *Defining, comparing and assessing the goals of participating groups*

Similarly to other regions along the Danube, the Danube Bend cannot be treated as a single unit, and the situation is further complicated by the fact that the micro-region is strongly divided from an administrative point of view. Pilismarót and Dömös belong to Komárom-Esztergom County, while the other settlements belong to Pest County, and the settlements are connected to several districts and regional development associations. Government Decree 1550/2017 (VIII.18.) on the distinction of the Danube Bend as a priority development area and on certain developments to be implemented in the region, defines the Danube Bend area and – with regards to certain strategic development tasks in the period between 2017 and 2030 –, assigns the coordination of the touristic development of settlements to the Hungarian Tourism Agency, under the supervision of the Minister of National Development.

It is necessary to note that the territorial coverage specified in the aforementioned Government Decree defines the Danube Bend area (70 settlements) as a much larger geographical area, whereas this pilot study focuses on a much smaller micro-region. Further small towns and villages outside the specified territory of the Government Decree, are left to their own devices with regards to development, there is no coordination between them in development or management, even between settlements on the same riverside. Although the problems of the affected settlements are usually similar, in order to strengthen the creation and practice of cooperation, it is expedient to concentrate initially on smaller territorial units, while there is a need for continuous consultation to ensure matching to regional level. It is particularly important to create real, physical contact between the opposing river banks, and to strengthen undergoing processes. The proposed units of regional cooperation within the micro-region are:

1. Northern part: Szob - Zebegény – Ipolydamásd – Helemba – Pilismarót – Dömös
2. Middle part: Nagymaros – Visegrád – Zebegény
3. Southern part: Dunabogdány – Kisoroszi – Verőce

The *middle section* of the Danube Bend is the distinct tourist centre and destination of the micro-region, the developments taking place here and the tourism processes that start as a result of them affect the development and appearance of the whole region. The middle area mainly means the towns of Visegrád and Nagymaros, but Zebegény is closely linked to them visually and structurally.

The technical and tourist infrastructure of the *northern area* is underdeveloped, there are fewer job opportunities, agricultural connections are stronger, there is smaller receptive capacity, and there are more underutilised values waiting to be explored. Both sides of the river belong to the catchment area of Esztergom. After the creation of the bridge between Helemba and Ipolydamásd, this connection will be enhanced. More intense contact-making is necessary with settlements on the opposite bank of the river.

In the case of settlements of the *southern area*, the proximity of the capital is still decisive, but social and social relations with Szentendre and Vác are also strong. The settlements have a holiday district character, and a domestic, recreational type of tourism is also significant. The ferry service between Visegrád, Szentgyörgypuszta and Kisoroszi, and the bridge at Tahitótfalu provide access for Kisoroszi, which, in spite of its physical proximity, has almost no connection to Verőce on the opposite river bank.

The Danube Bend is an increasingly popular domestic leisure and tourist destination, and the turnover of restaurants on the river banks has tripled in recent years. The experience to be had in the area is getting more and more popular with young families from the capital, but the

settlements have a limited capacity to welcome them and cater for their needs. The high demand appearing at an average summer weekend is not currently provided for with the existing supply, either in terms of services or quality.

To sum up, the participants in the pilot area can be divided into several different groups in terms of goals, interests and approach to problems.

More levels of a goal system crystallised during the project, aligned to implicit timeliness. First, one objective in the near future may be **the partnership of settlements in communication, regarding, for instance, the presentation of already existing accommodations, then the enforcement of networking in other areas such as:**

- programme management,
- enhancement of accommodation supply,
- the presentation of already existing accommodations at smaller settlements,
- the establishment of attached services,
- the seasonal organisation of local transport,
- the maintenance of relationships, marketing communication and common brand management

In the first period, the main goal is to launch programmes which predominantly serve the needs of local – inhabitant and holiday – populations' needs and meet the requirements of guests arriving from the region at higher and higher standards. This process has already started, in several settlement events have been established and take place year after year, attracting more and more attention, with routines developing in their organisation. The experiences collected during the management of such local festivals, procedures, service chains, volunteer activities and trade profits evolving during the process might prepare the ground for **the second level of the goal system which leads to the creation of a programme series – a FESTIVAL – of national relevance.**

However, it is worth considering the reality of this, as the festival market is already quite saturated, and there are more sustainable alternatives to use already existing and accessible sources which might reduce the seasonality to a greater extent.

Opportunities were assessed on the basis of the evaluation (valorisation) topic-groups used in the DANUrB. The project areas and topics are the following:

Undervalued territorial elements that have a good connection to the Danube:

- **Unexplored secrets of the area** – research, discovering connections in architecture and objects, finding and presenting reminiscences of the “Limes” route (e.g. presentation of the Roman ark), diving archaeology, sacral places, analysis of local history, structuring of highlighted elements, museums near the border, cooperation between exhibitions locations in museums and at heritage elements, brand building. (Museum of Shipping History at Zebegény, Börzsöny Museum at Szob, Sigil Gallery at Nagymaros, Museum of History at Visegrád, Gorka Museum at Verőce, Szőnyi Memorial House at Zebegény, Duna-Ipoly Environment-Protecting Visitor Centre at Dömös, Radio Museum at Verőce, memories of literature history at Kisoroszi, memories of families and industrial facilities at Szob), brand management, ruins of Zuvár at Ipolytölgyes, Heckenast House at Dömös.) – Tangible and intangible datasheets, made by BME-KÉK-Pest County and ECRS, 2017-2018.
- **Preparing for the reception of active tourism** – development of sports areas (Nagymaros, Visegrád), paddler stops and the improvement of comfort levels of camping sites

(Dunabogdány, Kisoroszi, Zebegény, Dömös, Pilismarót, Szob, Helemba, Ipolydamásd), development and expansion of water tourism, even via cross-border connections – interest from Slovakia, involvement of the Ipoly and Garam rivers, finding and developing water sports receptive units – angling, water ski, yachts, sailing, kayak-canoe – Maróti Bay, area of Zebegény, Kisoroszi, Dunabogdány, enhancement of accommodation and service supply along biker stops, expanding starting and meeting points of hiker tourism, horse tourism, extending possibilities of horse riding, expansion of reception sites for horse races, development of sport aviation.

- **Quality improvement of ports and shipping** – updating existing service units and their visitor-oriented presentation, reception, parking, extension of schedules, facilitation of more intensive mobility between the two shores, improvement of the accessibility of the Yacht Club, facilitating catering and hospitality, widening experience programmes.
- **Strengthening relationships between the banks** – temporary opening of a utility tunnel for pedestrians and bikers, ferry connections, development of schedules, finding interests, building school networks – complementary profiles (forest school, art school, Waldorf, etc.), enhancement of interoperability, widening of parking possibilities, connecting beaches by boat, programme management, connections in catering.
- **Actualisation of artisan drinks** – hops production, beer brewing (Nagymaros, Verőce, Szob), revival of viticulture and winery, renovation of cellars (Dunabogdány, Nagymaros, Helemba), outlook from the border: wines of Upper Hungary, Nyitra, Érsekújvár, "pálinkavonal" (brandy line) – Visegrád, Pálinkamúzeum (Brandy Museum)
- **"Fecsképrogram" (Swallow Programme)** – incentives to help young people to stay in the region or move back, support in buying and restoring abandoned or old houses, supporting the establishment of young families – Visegrád, Zebegény, Ipolytölgyes, Szob, Dömös, Pilismarót.

Values which can affect the development of areas along the Danube, or where the proximity of the Danube enhances development:

- **Accommodation development on a broad spectrum** – thematic, e.g. wellness and family accommodation (hotels, pensions, private quarters, sites for retreating, camping and "glamping", guest houses for bikers), greater investment projects: Visegrád – Lepence, Nagymaros, Zebegény, Szob, and at other settlements rather private, smaller scale facilities can be established.
- **Development, attachment and networking of catering services and units** – diversified supply, more catering establishments on the river (barges and ferries at each settlement), organisation of a shared taxi (carpool) on land and water for the transport of the local public, the creation of guest experience, atmosphere management.
- **Development and networking of local markets** – local producers and craftsmanship, connecting and supporting artists, supporting the creation of "short supply chains", Produce Market at Nagymaros, fruit growing and processing, animal husbandry,
- **Enhancement of programmes for children** – adventure parks, creation of events and experience sites

Possibilities for networking, i.e. programmes that occur at several places and can be connected in theme:

- **Communication** – the creation of a regional website which symbolises regional thinking and supports its development, communication of thematic messages specific to the region, e.g. current locations on paintings – "Find it and discover it!", management of the Danube Bend brand, common information platforms, online applications – DANUrB Tour Evidence – Pocket Guide apps, blogs, creating and operating a regional Tourinform Office

- **Redefinition of railway stations** – as appropriate changing points, sites for changing for other tools, info points, local transport hubs, shared taxi stations, renovation of catering establishments, rethinking of supply. The location of railway stations is often unique and picturesque – Zebegény, Nagymaros. Not only local transport, but also information can be attached to it, and it reinforces the ability to receive and direct tourists.
- **Destination management** – the adaptation and application of its principles and methodology at a micro-regional level
- **Encouraging entrepreneurship, supporting ventures** – the local government as an organising force and main supporter, recognising the potential, roles, and defining attached tools.
- **Formulating experience programmes** – pilot trips, festivals, conferences, urban walks, markets, art courses, sport events, water events, diving archaeology
- **Regional brand management** – the competitiveness of tourism destinations derives from networking (thematic, oriented to consumers' habits, classic or discovering, trend-following and contrasting – encoded in call words). Simple primer chains can be included in the packages. Cultural tours, finding "marketable" stories. Urban walks programmes, pampering guests. Connecting values and identity – what kind of identities can we define? (Börzsöny, Pilis, riverside, hills, Ipoly banks, family histories from the 19th century). The most precious material today is content – people of today want to hear stories: classic, discovering and trend-following groups of consumers. (DANUrB Datasheets, made by BME-KÉK-Pest County-ECRS, 2018-2018)

The above list was compiled from the comments and feedback at regional development workshops and the results of local research. By nature, the list is not exhaustive, its expansion is not only possible, but also necessary. This heritage and elements related to it have currently potential and many are suitable to become emblematic elements of the region and creative attractive force through the activities of local communities.

During the valorisation process it is important to keep in mind that it is not enough to create an event based on a heritage element, as the event itself is a tool for experimenting with methods to facilitate the cultural values of communities, and an opportunity to cultivate unused or underused places. Valorisation which takes into account heritage aspects is only one form of scrutiny. The attractive force assessing methodology presented in the DANUrB Strategic Document also has to be applied to make it clear:

- at which level (local, micro-regional or regional) the heritage-related valorisation of assessed values defines the value, and another necessary parallel aspect is,
- the tourism-related assessment examining the existing or predicted future scope of the heritage value.

In addition, it is possible to examine, in parallel with possible development trends, what changes will/might occur in the attracting capacity of the heritage as a result of improvements. Whether it is content extension, facade renovation, a new event or any other kind of enhancement, it can bring about a result that the heritage element might step up a category in attractive force, even more levels, and will be able to attract visitors from distant areas as well. This analysis has not been completed in this current sample project. Some values extend local possibilities and involve a joint task of emphasising micro-regional presence, the improvement of local services, and the justification for the need of destination development, which, however, cannot be expected solely from the private sector.

There are further possibilities in some networking type of initiatives:

1. **Development of a bike path and a chain of services – specific stops, establishment of accommodations.** Earlier the Biker Danube Bend – Heart of the Danube Bend Group was strongly occupied with this, and they made a map showing the existing possibilities

in 2017. The plans for the two bike and pedestrian bridges of Szentendrei Island were created in 2018, and the first section of their implementation will be the building of the bridge between Dunabogdány and Kisoroszi.

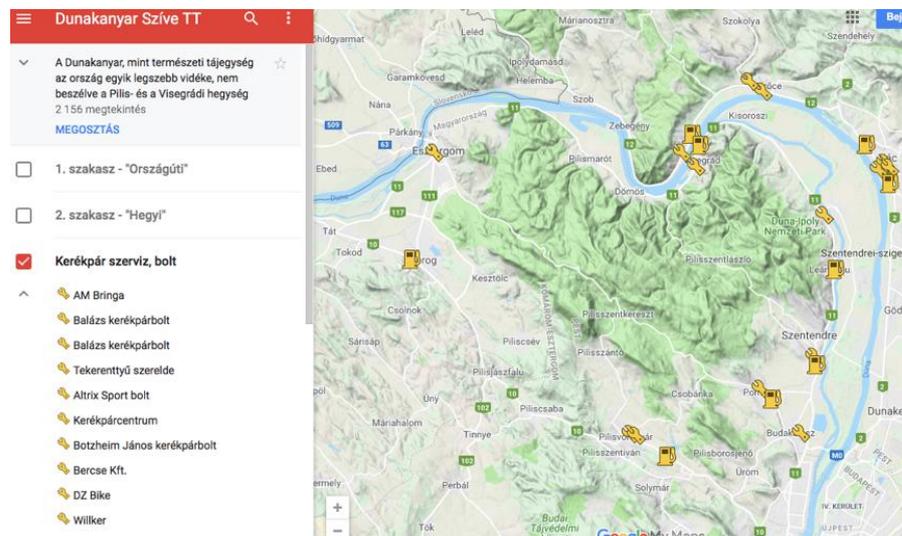


Figure 19: The map of the Biker Danube Bend – Heart of the Danube Bend Group about stops of bike paths, 2017 (Source: “Kerékpáros Dunakanyar” FB page)

2. The stronger connection between local farmers and local consumption as a development area is not directly related to tourism, but a good example of this is the enhancement of the so-called “short supply chains” (SSCs). The support of SSCs is one of the primary objectives of the Regional Development Programme.

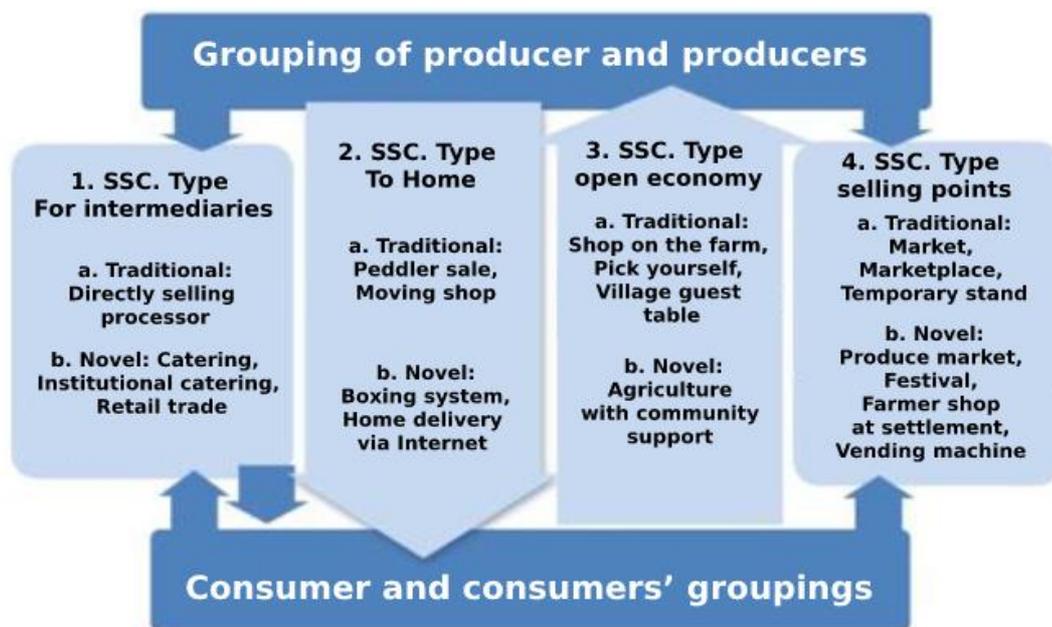


Figure 20: Concepts of SSC sin practice (Source: “Short Supply Chain Thematic Sub-Programme”, EMVA, Anikó Juhász)

SSC is not the only factor from regional development which might help heritage-based tourism and urban development and boost a multi-legged, diverse production and service background. Beyond food economy, it can be applied in cultural and community programs, craft industry and, in general, small businesses, decentralised energy production, and energy efficiency. From the point of view of this programme, it is important to emphasize that the sustainability of initiatives related to cultural values and

heritage also depends on the return on capital invested in venture opportunities and outcomes – even if in an indirect manner.

3. **The involvement in URBACT action planning urban network programmes** can help cities and their regions – the affected communities – to start their own action planning processes for smaller projects by learning good practices and relying on professional leaders. **Through partnership, many new items can be included in the methodological tools of the implementations.**
4. **“Gyüttment” (Upstart) project** – Gyüttment Festival is a great annual meeting of people restarting their lives in a rural environment, choosing environmentally conscious rural lifestyles and values, and adapting to the landscape. In 2018 it was held at Zebegény. The programme aims to be an organiser of “dreamers” at the countryside, dreaming about the countryside, with the introduction of new attitudes which intend to highlight the practice of an environmentally conscious and sustainable life, and herd its followers into a community which helps and educates its members, and provides new living conditions for them. At the same time, the project is a movement that increasingly engages young, responsible and environmentally conscious people who are looking for a renewable future in rural life – see also “Fecskeprogram” (Swallow Programme).



Figure 21: A chosen image element of the Gyüttment Festival project (Source: www.gyuttmetfesztival.hu)

5. **DUNAKANYAR GO** – an existing small business team which has or acquired local interests, and organised their offers into a network and attached services. Their thinking differs from the typical local mentality, and is strongly connected to ideas about modern, sustainable, eco-conscious development of tourism. An important segment of their target groups are inland tourists (so far mainly from the capital). They created a virtual space which local entrepreneurs can join too, and it has members like the ship-café at Nagymaros, the juice factory, and the beaches of Dömös and Pilismarót. Connections already function at a business level, and creators have discovered business interests. They would like to invite value managers like museums, cultural organisers, sport tool rentals, and those interested in the development of local transport.

It can be clearly seen that regional development and territorial valorisation tasks cover a large field and affects many areas. What they have in common is that for effective realisation there is a need for creative thinking, enterprises, the support of the civil sphere and governments, the networking of these, and also public support. This process can be reinforced by the cooperation of the settlements at a micro-regional level, which can support the orientation of enterprises by allocating tasks and capacity improvement shared by attributes and capabilities. Of course, this cannot be a stone-engraved principle, because the private sector's interest cannot be planned directly, but it can be turned in the right direction by introducing appropriate incentives. The regional rural development task is the definition of orientations corresponding to these divisions of tasks and the related tools, which should be implemented by a coordinated cooperation of the settlements.

To sum up, it can be stated that the organisations and individuals participating in the negotiations agreed in the following: the preparation and implementation of the above-mentioned step represent a diverse and package of tasks involving numerous actors. First and foremost, it is important to agree on the joint effort in work and regular dialogue, and it is essential to create an effective platform for this purpose.

The characteristics of potential participating actors can be summarised according to the following:

- *Local governments* which are not able to undertake and finance all steps, so they have to delegate some of tasks to the appropriate institutions and organisations – e.g. Tourinform Offices, museums, community centres, civil societies.
- *Civil societies and groups* which can enforce interest-balancing by maintaining and broadening guided dialogue.
- The invitation of *individual entrepreneurs* into the project should be the object of local governments and civil societies. There is a need for clearly defined incentives to bring them into position.
- For the sake of success, *external experts should be employed who can support these processes with an international outlook*, professional guidance, impact studies, and educational programs.
- The local regional development associations are the hosts of Leader tenders in the area, and have a great deal of insight into the content, strength and capacities of local business and governmental ideas on development. In the Danube Bend Region, the activity of the Börzsöny-Duna-Ipoly Regional Development Association is especially well organised, as they help and support applicants with well-developed strategic plans. It can be stated that in the tendering cycle of 2007-2013, several ideas were implemented – which gave effective support to the settlements in the themes brought forth by the present pilot project, and helped the evolution of local initiatives. At the same time, they put emphasis on the support of launching enterprises and the proper assessment of possibilities – thus, in the near future they plan to organise regional educational and counselling programmes.

5. Evaluation of the planning process, and formulation of conclusions to be drawn

The realisation of Danube Bend Pilot Programme posed a great challenge for organisers. The micro-region in question is theoretically an area with favourable conditions which could fulfil a much more important role in tourism than its current position, and turning seasonality into a maintained interest which is constant in time and space. Yet, many unexpected obstacles appeared during the work, for example, it was an important experience that the locals think of the Danube rather as a separator than as a connecting point.

In fact, we can sum up the possibilities and appearances of the mosaic-like tourist offerings of the region as follows: many components available, but they are not efficiently interconnected, do not complement each other well, and we often encounter under-utilised spaces, buildings and opportunities.

The purpose of our work was not to create an action plan, but to start common thinking and contact-making, and to draw attention to the possibility of coordination of different interests and approaches and the effectiveness of small-scale local thinking. Before any action could be implemented, it was very important to start and facilitate communication between the locals on this topic.

Achievements of the pilot project:

- an action area list was created
- a goal-oriented dialogue started between leaders of settlements
- specific programmes were defined which are manageable at regional level
- certain organisational and operational shortcomings came to light and the necessity of their elimination has become clear
- it became evident for participants that they need to enhance their communication tools
- the need was justified for specific developments, funding, awareness programmes, and the Börzsöny-Duna-Ipoly Regional Development Association is already making strategic plans.

Conclusions:

- Workshops proved to be useful, they are good methods to bring together regional actors and to start joint work, but the established dialogue is still very fragile, so further professional help is required.
- It is necessary to support the structural set-up of existing information and organising systems, as well as the appropriate adaptation to needs and the dialogue about them between parties. Difficult and serious conflicts can arise in this regard, unnecessary accusations, obstacles in task-assignment and commitment might arise.
- Providing county-level professional support is required to help local, self-supporting regional development.
- To achieve and upgrade the touristic visibility of the micro-region, the involvement of the professionals is required, when the time comes.

We summarised the directions and opportunities in the improvement of coordination, service and supply in the following list:

- creating events which facilitate local identity and community – cultural events and festivals based on the unique characteristics and human resources of the region
- amateur sport events adjusted to the technical and landscape conditions of the micro-region

- programmes in natural science, environmental studies, local history, art and design, summer camps, city games – e.g. fishing camps, water science, nature camps, etc.
- local business development and support programs, trainings, e.g. business development training, regular consulting, education in tender application writing
- the establishment of cooperative partnerships and associations in the field of accommodation, setting up quality assurance systems, creating a common advertising platform – e.g. common platform for local hosts, a system for the evaluation of rural accommodations
- the support of local primary producers, the creation of a market program, e.g. organising SSCs
- the approximating and balancing of the interests, habits and land use of holiday and resident population – e.g. cultural events at weekends, local produce markets, presentation and support of service companies, contact with holidaymakers' interest associations
- the improvement of beach usage and connections, life beside the Danube – expansion and enhancement of the experience – improvement of ports, e.g. organising slow contemplative walks, beach programmes, fishing competitions, shared breakfast
- facilitating relationships in communication and destination management by creating a regional platform, brand building – e.g. branding, common tourism platform, interlinking common programs
- building alternative transport services – e.g. local regular and chartered, target-oriented services, bicycle and small motorcycle rentals, small boat traffic, etc.
- creating interconnected programs and adjusting them to a network – e.g. designing water and land tours and routes, devising a ticket system, etc.

The tasks to be performed in addition to the above are:

- The tourist/marketing position of the micro-region should be reconsidered. Opinions of local communities and interest groups are valuable in this field, their suggestions could be used as foundations. At the same time, this is a very complex task, since market position should be based on an identity that is acceptable to everyone concerned, and can be interpreted for the potential demand as relevant and attractive at the same time. However, settlements, holiday districts and peripheries which are difficult to access due to their geographical (and transport) conditions, might become suitable to raise the level of recreational and tourist attractive force and the attendance of the micro-region through creative content management and communication. Thus they might be able to turn the disadvantages deriving from their “abandoned” conditions and slow accessibility into advantages. However, this requires not only the redefinition but also the expansion of the market position of the micro-region. In the eyes of the general public, the Danube Bend means the three settlements on the right bank – Esztergom, Visegrád, Szentendre –, and this is reflected in the mental maps of individual travellers and the predefined maps and programmes of travelling organisations. The micro-region can partially benefit from this general “Danube Bend” position, but it has to work on expanding this image with other settlements of the area. By strengthening the market position and attractiveness, the settlements and service providers of the micro-region can reach and acquire new visitors, and they can also increase the duration of their trips organised in the Danube Bend, and also the frequency of their returns. The following are among the positioning suggestions to be discussed in later stages of the project:

- Close-to-nature romance and "slow" life: products and areas based on this concept are drawn to "under-developed" regions and this rustic romance provides the framework for attractive force.
- The touristic positioning of the Danube Bend could be characterised by the "meeting of the rivers" feature, which again builds on real characteristics and represents positive content worth exploring – e.g. the exploration of the areas along the Danube, the Ipoly and the Garam.
- The meeting of the two hills beside the Danube is also a feature to be discovered by hiking tourists.
- The cooperation of the two banks has to be facilitated, as it can provide an opportunity to present the position of "mirror images" and message, e.g. presenting the two sides of the Danube in a parallel way from the direction of the water and from the point of view of settlements (practically, with the same speed and focus, but recording water shots and drone shots directed towards the two sides, etc.)
- At a different level of cooperation, through informing and involving the holiday population it can be achieved that home owners, as "volunteering ambassadors" bore news of heritage elements and (new) services.
- Event and travel organisers offering scheduled programmes should be presented with a value supply that they can include in their services, and the duration of a typically half-day-long Danube Bend visits can be expanded.
- For residents of and visitors from Budapest, a message has to be phrased which directly connects the Danube Bend to Budapest, and thus shortens the mental distance between the capital and the micro-region.
- It will be inevitable to have a second-round evaluation of the valorised elements in terms of tourism, which exceeds current attractive points, and calibrates which developments are able to reach heritage level and what segments of demand they could be attractive for (this is called product/segment matrix). However, it is also important to consider how event-centred the developments should be. Events can transform the lives of locals for a few days, attract attention from tourists and the media, but the maximised infra- and superstructure might not be able to withstand the sudden increase in load. For a few days, it is impossible to increase capacities and make them economically meaningful.
- Lifetime-planning is essential, especially in the case of events/festivals, as most of them have a foreseeable and predictable lifespan and life cycle. A year is to be expected in the life of each event when it becomes "exhausted" from the point of view of content, date or participants, and this experience is relevant to events of any level of attractiveness. That is why it is worth determining at the beginning the timing plans according to which a programme, event, attraction etc. should be regularly renewed, and make decisions according to those about its maintenance.
- All these decisions will of course require data as well, which means that the definition and operation of data-collecting methods and the analysis of monitoring systems which allow the understanding of processes is at least as important as developments.

Summing up the results of the planning process, we can say that the Danube Bend is an area with serious potential, but the cooperation of settlements and the networking of tourism services are essential for further advancement.

Appendix:

6. Creators of the work

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Photo: Stones on the Danube bank at Dömös (authors' own photo)