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CROSS-REGIONAL ITINERARIES AS A WAY OF TERRITORY COOPERATION: EUROPEAN AND RUSSIAN EXPERIENCES

Abstract. *Cross-regional itineraries have been proposed as national development tools for territories with some tourism potential that has been existing only within those territories. Certainly, cross-regional tourism projects provide a unique setting for specialists to analyze the opportunities, which tourism has to offer as development and transformation initiatives, but also to identify and acknowledge the existing limitations in such fragile environment. Despite this practical case, that is being observed today in Russia, only several studies about the meaning of cross-regional tourism cooperation inside the country have been previously published. Taking into account this research gap, a closer look at the link between tourism development and the opportunities and challenges, that tourism presents for regional transformation, has been proposed making local tourism industries more diverse. Also the link between theoretical ideas about cross-regional itineraries and practical development programs, designed by tour operators has been viewed. It is noted that mass tourism based on cross-regional itineraries could be possible, in case if it is accompanied by available tour operator's programs.*

Keywords: *cross-regional tourism cooperation, spatial sustainability, social innovation in regional spatial development.*

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МЕЖРЕГИОНАЛЬНЫЕ ТУРИСТСКИЕ МАРШРУТЫ КАК МОДЕЛЬ ТЕРРИТОРИАЛЬНОГО СОТРУДНИЧЕСТВА: ЕВРОПЕЙСКИЙ И РОССИЙСКИЙ ОПЫТ

Межрегиональные проекты позиционируются в качестве инструмента национального развития, создавая уникальную возможность для специалистов проанализировать потенциальные направления, которые целесообразно реализовывать в качестве инициатив с целью развития и трансформации индустрии туризма, учитывая при этом необходимость сохранения антропогенного баланса в территориальной туристско-рекреационной системе. В условиях роста межрегиональных проектов в практике туризма, который сегодня наблюдается внутри России, следует отметить низкую публикационную активность исследовательских проектов в научно-прикладном поле межрегионального туристского сотрудничества. Наряду с этим, гораздо более обширно проработан вопрос трансграничного туристского сотрудничества. В связи с чем основной фокус в настоящей работе направлен на изучение межрегиональных связей для диверсификации регионального туристского продукта внутри страны. Особый интерес представляет сравнительный анализ теоретических подходов к разработке межрегиональных маршрутов в России и туристских межрегиональных программ, разработанных туроператорами.

Ключевые слова: межрегиональное сотрудничество в индустрии туризма, пространственная устойчивость, социальные инновации в региональном пространственном развитии.

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Introduction

Cross-regional tourism cooperation is currently boosting considerable interest in terms of some ways of territorial promotion for regional tourism in Russia.

The aim of this study is to systematize foreign and Russian concepts and create some methodological and practical base for cross-regional cooperation.

This paper calls into a question: which of the effective European principles for cross-regional cooperation can be applied in Russia and what approaches Russia is following today in its cross-regional projects in tourism industry.

The key objectives of the author's research have been formulated as follows:

- 1) to observe a range of conceptual theoretical and practical issues of designing cross-regional cooperation in tourism;
- 2) to assess foreign experience of cross-regional tourism projects (focusing particularly on European experience);
- 3) to determine current conditions in Russia for cross-regional cooperation in tourism industry;
- 4) to create an approach that would help to assess different cross-regional routes to find common and unique features of such kind of networking.

Cooperation in tourism nowadays seems to be the way to support a notion of a national concept of domestic and inbound tourism. It is also the way for Russian regions to join forces to create a single regulatory framework, where strategies could effectively correlate to each other. These conditions would be used to evaluate and make a monitoring system to improve tourism sphere. At the same time, it is important to remember that building up of cross-regional routes requires the participation not only of state authorities of the constituent entities of the Russian Federation. The key segment in this process goes to a Tour Operator's community. In this case, it could be valuable for tour operators who are trying to find new formats of touristic product for more experienced and sophisticated customers, who have already visited Russian destinations presented in tourism market. It seems to be

reasonable to offer them well-known destinations, but in a new context and with renovated facilities, including adjusting areas that could be integrated and pertain to one common theme.

While creating complex routes (primarily technologically and conceptually) regarding cross-regional projects, one should understand that a department liaising and collaboration with executive authorities, experts and practitioners are strictly required in tourism industry. Only under such circumstances designing cross-regional projects that will be successfully implemented as a tourist product in domestic and inbound tourism market could be possible.

Significant worldwide experience in designing and implementing cross-regional itineraries can be used as illustrative examples of developing an algorithm for creating such projects in Russia. It should be rightly noted that Russia has developed several approaches in cross-regional cooperation formation inside the country. These include methodological recommendations from state authorities (governments), industry experts and representatives of the academic sphere. Considering general principles and similar features, the author concludes that representatives of all approaches point out the necessity to unite efforts focusing on cross-regional cooperation, and working out a single touristic plan, a single idea, and eliminating competitive thinking of territories in the framework of the general project.

Cross-regional projects in tourism industry have been considered as a chance to build up cooperation among neighboring countries for the last few years, as well as cooperation among several regions inside the country. Such projects were popular in Kaliningrad, Smolensk, Irkutsk Region, Republic of Buryatia, etc.

The conceptual background

A huge number of Russian and foreign concepts of cross-regional or cross-border tourism could be mentioned as the subject of research in many papers. At the same time most of these projects have analyzed such kind of cooperation among Russia and neighboring countries or different foreign countries. Such researchers as

D. Blasco, J. Guia, L. Prats, F. Durand, S. Stepanova, D.J. Timothy, T.H.B. Sofield, E.-K. Prokoka, J.H. Nilsson, L. Eskilsson & R. Ek, D. Ioannides, P.Å. Nielsen, P. Billing, K. Hartman, H. Faby, E.G. Kropinova, etc.^{1,2,6} [1-5, 7, 10-14] have contributed much to cross-border tourism. Analysis of publications on the research issues shows that the main topic is cross-border cooperation and few papers have been dedicated to cross-regional cooperation⁵ [6, 8, 9]. This is due to the different purposes of such projects. On the one hand, it could be mentioned that the aim is to develop tourism cooperation among countries and involve foreign tourists, and on the other hand, the task is to make national tourism inside one country

more diverse and to rise up interest of different kind of visitors.

Studying cross-regional cooperation approaches^{3,4,5,6}, as well as practical examples of cross-regional projects in tourism industry, the author tries to systematize the main postulates and to form the principles of cross-regional cooperation relying on the works of foreign and Russian researchers (Tab. 1).

Foreign experience of cross-regional cooperation in tourism has a longer history. In general, the comparative characteristics indicate similar principles and stages of route development. A fundamental difference is noted at the stage of coordination of cross-regional cooperation. In the

Table 1 – Projecting stages of cross-regional itineraries

	Foreign experience	Russian experience
Initial stage	Selecting regions	
	Geographical and market research (sociological survey methods, economic analysis of the industry, assessment of tourist potential, etc.)	
Formation stage	Sketching a Route	
	Creation of convenient infrastructure, involvement of other tourist facilities	Creation of thematic events, passports of tourist facilities, etc.
		Solving logistical problems
		Route test run-in
Negotiation stage	Establishment of associations, Coordinating centers, focal points for consolidated decision-making	Building partnerships, discussion at industry conferences
Implementation stage	Tour Operators Collaboration Campaign	Fame-trips for the tourism community
	Presentations and promotional tours along the route	Promotion, route presentation at all industry events
	Promotion through a membership	Work with DMC (Destination Management Companies)
		Involvement of national tour operators
General statistics	Active design of cross-regional and cross-border routes began in 1990	Most cross-regional routes have been established since 2010

¹ The European cycle route network Euro Velo (2021). URL: <https://ecf.com/> (Accessed on June 20, 2021)

² The Methodological Guide for the formation of competitive tourist routes in Russia (2016). URL: <https://turizmm.ru/10-07-06-2017.pdf> (Accessed on June 20, 2021)

³ Association of Tour Operators Russia (2021). Brand routes approved by the Expert Council of Russia Tourism. URL: https://www.atorus.ru/subst_import/routes.html (Accessed on June 26, 2021)

⁴ EU. (2020). Interreg C-Interregional cooperation. URL: http://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/en/policy/cooperation/european-territorial/interregional (Accessed on June 15, 2021)

⁵ Europäische Route der Backsteingotik (2021). URL: <http://www.eurob.org/1/4> (Accessed on June 15, 2021)

⁶ Green routes in Central and Eastern Europe (2021). URL: <http://www.greenways.by/> (Accessed on June 15, 2021)

development of European routes, in almost all cases, a coordinating council or association is created, which in the future, helps to introduce and promote the route. In addition, a significant difference should be noted: foreign experience is based on the creation of a special and convenient infrastructure at the first stage (but when Russian cross-regional projects are developed, logistics problems involving separate measures to identify certain difficulties are usually solved).

To get a clearer vision of these phenomena it is absolutely necessary to review the world's practical experiences of cross-regional tourism cooperation. World experiences in the designing, development and improvement of cross-border tourist routes consider the European Region to be a platform for the most successful projects and the most expressive network of cross-regional tourism projects^{3,4,5,6}. According to the author, the study of this valuable experience is extremely important and could contribute to the development of this concept in Russia.

The Euro Velo bicycle network which is operated by the European Cyclists Federation and consists of 14 routes covering 70 thousand kilometers could be mentioned as the most elaborated and, as a consequence, upscale cross-border project. Now, it could be noticed that the 45-thousand-kilometer-route has already been constructed and has already been used in tourism industry. Taking into account the modern practices, the Cross-European «Iron Curtain Trail» could be introduced as another example of cooperation for 20 countries from Barents to the Black Sea Region.

«Green travel routes», being widespread in the Central and Eastern Europe⁴ are multifunctional tourist routes, combining places of natural beauty, historical trade routes, and new facilities and activities, aimed at improving the environment. These routes are mainly represented by two transport schemes; they should be organized by bicycle or auto transport systems (networks). Some parts of the routes need trekking. The general options of itineraries, mentioned, and some

additional routes have been described in Table 1. The task was to compare the six European routes, mostly organized as cycling routes and to define if it is possible to find the real tours, operated by travel companies, as well as by governmental associations. In other words, could it be possible to find a real offer for all parts of the route created by authorities or will it be just a fragment of the route, which could be included in a package tour. It is the topic to think, because there are a lot of good theoretical ideas related to designing of cross-regional itineraries today, but in reality tourists couldn't find the appropriate package trips and use them.

As it is shown in the table, three routes could be considered as a real package holiday including «The Iron Curtain Trail», the green route «Krakow – Moravia – Vienna» and «The Amber Trail from Budapest and Krakow»⁴. The other routes are presented only in part or are even neglected in Tour operator's programs. Consequently, one of the problems is to promote these routes to the targeted audience. Mass tourism for these cross-regional itineraries could be possible, if the routes are included in available tour packages, and are not only declarative by character. Without any doubt, this is a safer way to travel, associated with the delegation of all organizational aspects of the tour. The same problem has been defined by the author who studied the World Heritage Journeys. According to UNESCO, in 2016 the task was to promote 34 World Heritage destinations across the EU. They designed four different thematic itineraries – *Royal Europe*, *Ancient Europe*, *Ancient Europe*, and *Underground Europe*. As for 2020 no Tour operator offered these routes, but the idea and content were really interesting and promising.

It is noteworthy that «The Iron Curtain Trail» is offered by European Tour operators today. Packages are offered as self-guided cycling tours, with much attention being given to sustainable tourism. A smartphone App is especially dedicated to younger audiences.

Table 2 – Cross-border International European projects

<i>Routes' Name</i>	<i>Involving countries</i>	<i>Extent, kilometers</i>	<i>Route's type by transport scheme</i>	<i>Operated by</i>
«The Iron Curtain Trail»	Norway, Finland, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Russia, Germany, etc.	10 400	Bicycle	the Council of Europe, <i>Tour Operators</i>
Green bicycle route – «The Eastern Carpathians»	Poland, Slovakia, Ukraine	1 695	Bicycle	Partnership Group «Green Bieszczady», Environmental Partnership Foundation
«The Pannonia Peace Trail» (original name «Via pacis Pannoniae»)	Serbia, Croatia	272	Bicycle	Green Network of Vojvodina – GNV, Organizacija za gradjanske inicijative – OGI, Centar za Mir, Nenasilje i Ljudska Prava – CMNLP, The Czech Environmental Partnership Foundation – CEPF, the Project for Public Spaces – PPS
The green route «Krakow – Moravia – Vienna»	Poland, Czech Republic, Austria	780	Bicycle, trekking and water	Association for Development and Regional Cooperation «OLZA», Association «Beskidy region», Stowarzyszenie «Region Beskidy» w Bielsku Bialym, Sacrosong Foundation Fundacja Sacrosong, <i>Tour Operators</i>
«The Green route Prague-Vienna»	Czech Republic, Austria	490	Bicycle, car, bus	Civic Association Prague-Vienna Greenways
«The Amber Trail from Budapest and Krakow»	Poland, Slovakia, Hungary	140	Bicycle	Polish Environmental Partnership Foundation, <i>Tour Operators</i>
The European Route of Brick Gothic	Denmark, Germany, Poland	1500	Car, bus, cycle	a non-profit association «European Route of Brick Gothic» originates from Professor Gottfried Kiesow idea

The «Eastern Carpathians» route was developed in the region, which consists of large areas of pristine forest, and several natural areas in Europe. Unique culture and old traditions are another attractive features of the area. Within this small, isolated region of Eastern Europe, three neighboring countries were united due to the nature and history of the Eastern Carpathians, providing the basis for cooperation and the establishment of a bridge between the European Union and Ukraine.

The *Pannonia Peace Trail* is the concept of creating green routes along the Danube River, the territory of the Republic of Serbia and the Republic of Croatia. The main value of this project is that it helps demilitarize this once war-torn region and

establish a communication bridge between the regions of Pannonia (Baranja and Slavonia) in Croatia and Vojvodina in Serbia.

Among the Routes of Central Europe, the green «Prague-Vienna» route could be specified as the most popular route in the Czech regions which were the first where cooperation between non-commercial and commercial offers started. This is a network of pedestrian routes between Prague, Tabor, Jindrichuv Hradec, Slavonica, Znojmo, Lednice Valtice and Vienna. Folk and music festivals are regularly held under the motto "Route of culture uniting Central Europe".

Of special interest is the «Green Krakow – Moravia – Vienna» route. Basically, this route is simple enough for cyclists, since it runs along a flat

surface or along small hills, where climbing and descending do not require much physical efforts. The itinerary includes cultural, natural and historical attractions, and some cities, which are in the UNESCO World Heritage List, such as Krakow, Auschwitz or Olomouc.

The «The Amber Trail from Budapest and Krakow» route runs along an ancient route that was used as a route for transporting amber between the Baltic and Adriatic Seas. This route is also maintained by travel companies. There are a lot of packages, for example, the Greenways Travel Club provides a tour for individual travelers for 1690 EUR per person (based on double occupancy).

As for Russian experience of cross-regional itineraries, everything started with «The Golden Ring of Russia» route created in 1967. This experience was connected with great Russian Historical Heritage Sites which attracted tourists. Much later, the creation of other cross-regional projects for example, «The Silver Necklace of Russia», which is the same as the Golden Ring tourist route, but all of its points are located in the north-west of the country. The Silver Necklace route reveals the uniqueness and authenticity of the Russian North including cities with centuries-old history and impressive national architecture, natural and ethnographic sights, including UNESCO World Heritage Sites. Today it integrates 11 Russian regions. The Golden ring of the Bosphorus Kingdom has been created in the South of Russia with the great itinerary Bosphorus Kingdom idea. Today it includes several different routes, including a segment of children tourism.

Having been famous in Russia for the last five years the concept of cross-regional cooperation in tourism is declared as a national concept of tourism development and promotion in the country. Since then a lot of tourism routes have been created. It has been recognized and accepted that Russian regions need to find new ways of promotion. Some regions in Russia especially those which are resorts area in peak season,

can even experience an active social movement with “over-tourism” aspects. In case of it, they need to re-imagine tourism as more sustainable and responsible industry that will eventually benefit all stakeholders: businesses, tourists, governments, destination communities and ecosystems. That’s why conceptualizing Russian tourism through a cooperation lens shifts attention towards its common perception and gives a new look at well-known destinations.

The Methodological Guide for the formation of competitive tourist routes in Russia for wider audience of Russian and foreign consumers was published in 2016. It was created by the Committee for the Implementation of the Import Substitution Program headed by the Expert Council for Tourism Development under the Ministry of Culture of the Russian Federation. The main purpose was to represent the pattern of special tourism itinerary in Russia in accordance to modern conditions and environmental opportunities. It gave the methodological algorithm and interpretation for cross-regional routes.

As it was determined in the Guide, **cross-regional route** is a tourist route (tour) passing through the territory of two or more constituent entities of the Russian Federation, promoting cultural, educational, historical, sports facilities of the region (s), the distinctive characteristics of which are: recognition, year-roundness, regularity, integrity, completeness, service standards. A cross-regional route is often referred to as a branded route.

In addition, having a remarkable feature this document provides pieces of advice about the ways how to integrate Russian regions and gives the common guidelines to do it. There are certain chronological frameworks of routes and conditions for tour operators to develop such tourist products and make a possibility of including radial excursions in the guide’s section called “Formation of cross-regional routes in Russia”. Potential outcomes could be differentiated at several blocks (Fig. 1).

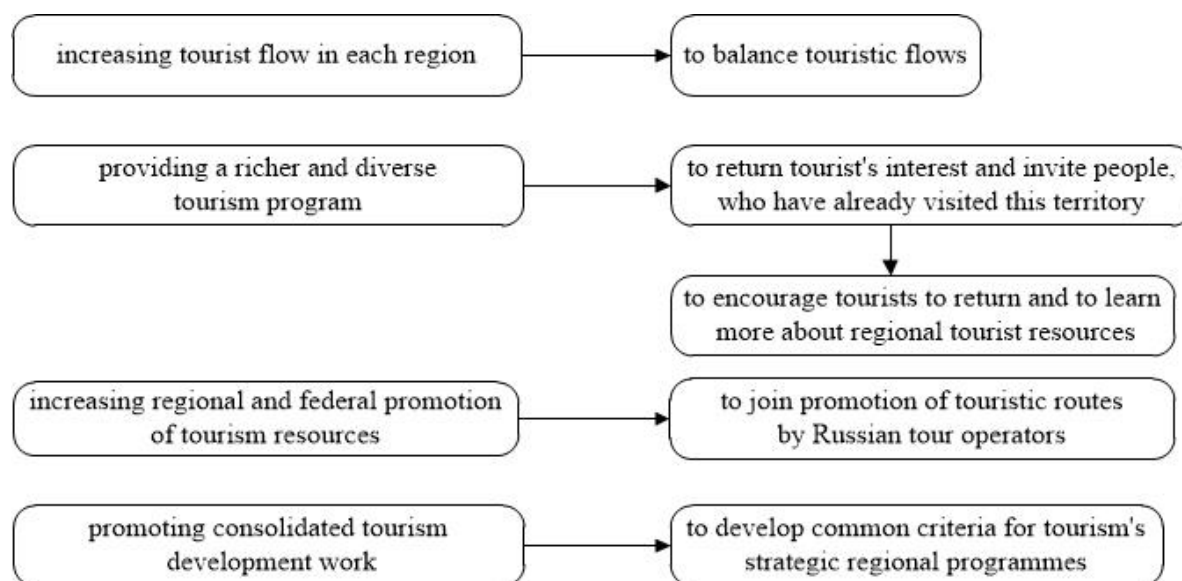


Fig. 1 – The major potential outcomes from cross-regional tourism cooperation⁷

Since The Methodological Guide was created, Russian regions started developing cross-regional itinerary cooperation. In most cases, these were routes presented at tourism exhibitions and public tourism events, were often only declarative, but they were not worked out by tour operators in Russia. At that moment only some DM (Destination Management) companies (i.e. Incoming Tour operators) started developing trips considering these routes. This situation has only recently changed when Russian tour operators found themselves in pandemic conditions. Today, such large Tour operators as «Musenidis Group» and «TUI» announced about their intention to create package tours on the basis of such routes as: "Golden Ring of the Bosphorus Kingdom", "Imperial Route," etc. Meanwhile, there is still considerable ambiguity between creating cross-regional itineraries and implementing these projects into practice by designing a group or individual trips.

Furthermore, in 2018 the scientific and geographical community in Russia joined cross-regional tourism cooperation. A key problem is that many theoretical and practical papers focus only on a particular region, and have a lack of integrated geographic and economic analysis and

ignore international experience.

Objectives and methods

The systematizing of scientific and methodological foundations for the cross-regional tourism projects creation required certain analysis of the theoretical base associated not only with the spatial organization of tourism, but also with the territorial organization of society as a whole. Theoretical analysis made it possible to specify the preconditions, which became the basis of further scientific and methodological work.

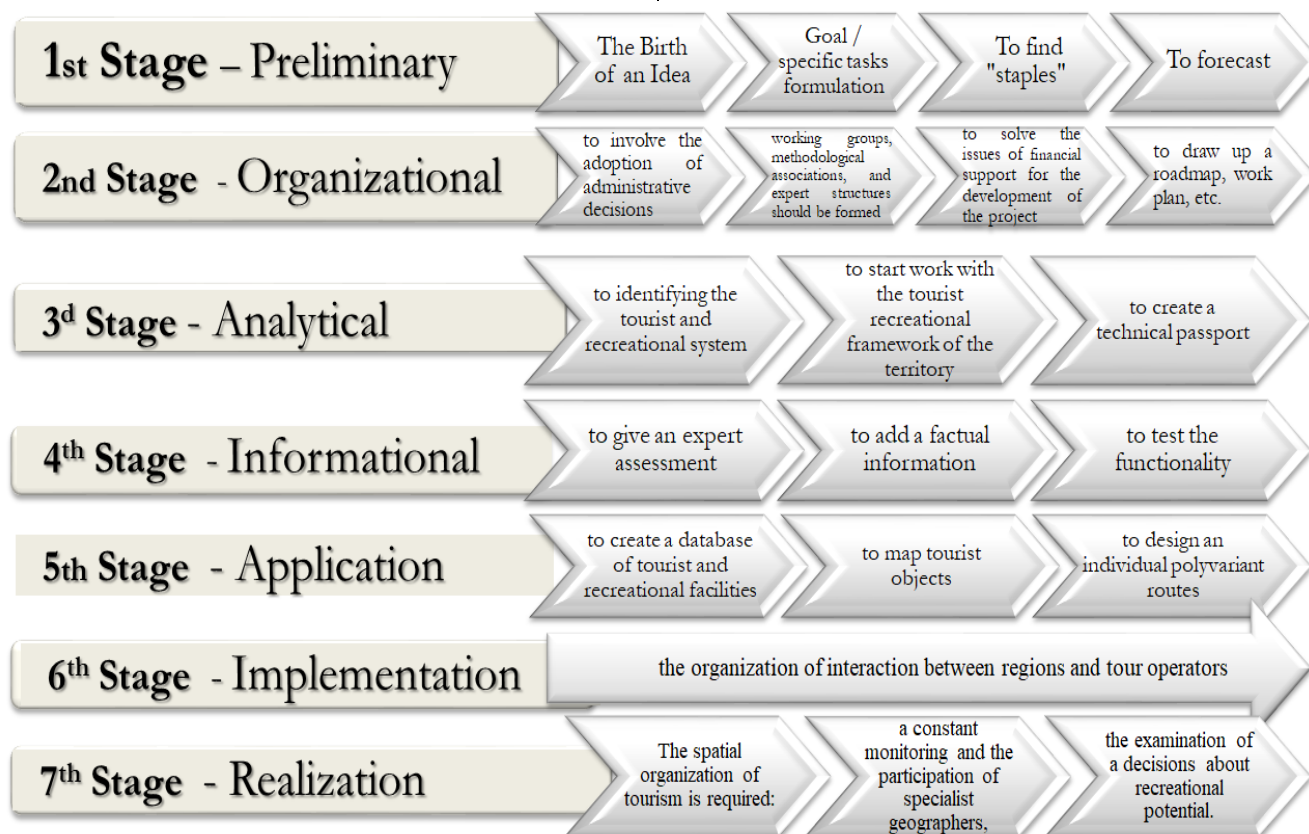
The Theoretical reflection of the scientific methods and stages of cross-regional tourist creation could be demonstrated by the «Western Facade of Russia» project. Studying the approaches of the Moscow, Saint-Petersburg, Kaliningrad and Smolensk scientific geography schools to the creation of cross-regional routes [6, 7, 8], the author concludes that it is the only project in Russia today that has a scientific and theoretical background that has formed the foundation for practical implementation. It could be considered as the first systematic study about cross-regional cooperation among all Russian scientific publications.

«Western Facade of Russia» is the result of

⁷ Compiled by the author from: The Methodological Guide for the formation of competitive tourist routes in Russia (2016). URL: <https://turizmm.ru/10-07-06-2017.pdf> (Accessed on June 20, 2021)

a geographical analysis of the spatial organization of tourism from the recreational geography point of view with the use of a geosystem approach. Nevertheless, the developed scientific and methodological foundations are largely universal by its

character and can be used (with necessary adaptation) for various tourism cross-regional projects. So it generates the interest to observe its logic activities. The scheme of the concept could be demonstrated below:



*Fig. 2 – Theoretical reflection of the necessary stages to build cross-regional tourism projects
(Compiled by the author from source [6, 8])*

Thus, these stages of cross-regional tourism project development make it possible to carry out work on creating a spatial background for effective tourism and recreational cross-regional activities. The technological background of the project could be an appropriate web-portal that allows to visualize the tourist space, systematize actual information, makes contact information convenient and accessible to tourists and, as a result, allows to design individual and group tourist routes throughout the project.

L. Mazhar and her co-authors [6] outlined the main idea that such projects should not be exclusive, but usual, suitable for the rest of Russian regions. It is important that perspective cross-regional tourism projects will not be "exclusive" in

terms of their formation stage and organizational and legal procedures, but they should become a "norm" based on the relevant administrative and legal foundations. At the same time, it should be noted that in terms of its touristic and recreational potential and the content of tourism activities, each of the cross-regional projects should be unique, which is initially determined by the features of geographical location, natural and historical and cultural heritage, as well as ethno-social and other features of the group of the regions.

Cross-regional tourism projects could help to unlock or to reveal the potential of the regions in a deeper way.

However, such "zoning" of tourism activities leads to the fragmentation of a single tourist and

recreational space. The situation is not so unambiguous. For example, at present historical and cultural cross-regional routes such as The Golden Ring, The Silver Necklace of Russia, The Russian Estates, The Great Silk Road, etc. are very popular, but they have shown the steady trend of tourism development at the regional level at the first stage of developing. The main problem was that each of these cross-regional routes was formed

according to its own rules, and was based on a specific vision of the situation and the interaction with neighboring regions, often built due to personal relationships between their leaders. Moreover, many issues of cross-regional interaction were resolved by the Federal Agency for Tourism (Russia Tourism). But today it should be noticed that the situation has changed.

Table 3 – Cross-regional Russian projects

<i>Name of the route</i>	<i>Involving regions</i>	<i>Created in</i>	<i>Designed by</i>	<i>Tourist product by Tour Operates tours</i>
The Golden Ring of Russia	5	1967	journalist Yuri Alexandrovich Bychkov	Yes
The Silver Necklace of Russia	11	2015	constituent entities as a result of All-Russian conference on the creation of a new historical, cultural and tourist project	Yes
The Imperial Route	21	2018	the Elisabeth-Sergius Educational Society Foundation (ESESF)	Partially
The Great Tea Route	10	2016	regional initiatives; a result of tripartite summit meeting during BRICS in Ufa, 2015	Partially
The Great Silk Way	15	2017	North Caucasus Development Corporation and Visit the Caucasus Foundation	Yes
The Golden ring of the Bosphorus Kingdom	4	2018	Members of the Tourism Development Commission of the Russian Civil Society – Hristofor Konstantinidi and Ivan Chaika	Yes
The Great Volga Way	14	2017	regional initiatives;	Yes
The Great Volga	8	2011	the authorities of the Ulyanovsk region with experts	Yes, cruise tours
The Eastern Ring of Russia	14	2016	constituent entities of the Russian Federation - participants in the Eastern Ring of Russia project	Partially, only some segment
The Western Facade of Russia	4	2020	V. Kotlyakov, Academician of the Russian Academy of Sciences (Moscow), Mazhar L., PhD, Chief Researcher of the Smolensk Scientific and Educational Center and others	Partially
The Russian Estates	12	2015	The coordination center "Russian Estates", "Association of Museum Workers", the Federal State Budgetary Institution "State Memorial and Nature Reserve" Museum-Estate of L. N. Tolstoy "Yasnaya Polyana"	Partially
The Red Route	7	2013	Government of Ulyanovsk region	Yes
The Patterns of the Russian cities	10	2014	Executive authorities of the constituent entities of the Russian Federation: Vologda, Vladimir, Ivanovo, Kostroma, Moscow, Nizhny Novgorod, Yaroslavl regions	Partially
The Siberian tract	9	2012	Association of Cross-Municipal Cooperation "Siberian Tract"	Yes

Results and discussion

It should be mentioned that Russia has had quite valuable experience in creating cross-regional routes. Currently, 14 cross-regional projects are being implemented in Russia. In accordance to state policy in Russia cross-regional touristic routes are implemented jointly with the Federal Agency for Tourism (Russian Tourism Organization).

Further the comparative characteristic of cross-regional Russian routes using a number of indicators has been provided by the author. The analysis of practical experience is of great interest. Thus, the main Incoming Tour Companies of the regions have been analyzed by the author to find tours related to cross-regional routes, which are the subject of research. No less interesting information involves the question: who was the creator of such tourist itineraries, that's why the characteristic contains the information about the developers.

As it could be noticed, that most of the itineraries from the table above are provided today by operator's tours. The table shows a good example of the practical implementation of package holidays including these tours. Some cross-

regional itineraries are only partially presented in current tours. It means that only a certain segment of the itineraries or a separate route is included in itineraries, being tours, created by Tour operators.

The study results allowed to prove that today, in Russia, more than 217 touristic routes are included in the network of cross-regional itineraries. The Golden Ring of Russia consists of 8 routes. The Patterns of the Russian cities consists of 40 routes. The Eastern Ring of Russia consists of 30 routes. The Silver Necklace of Russia consists of 27 routes. The Siberian tract consists of more than 25 routes. The Russian Estates consists of 20 routes. The Great Volga Way consists of 15 routes. The Great Volga consists of 6 routes. The Western Facade of Russia consists of more than 8 routes. The Imperial Route consists of 5 routes. The Red Route consists of 5 routes. The Great Tea Route consists of 5 routes. The Great Silk Way consists of more than 20 routes. The Golden ring of the Bosphorus Kingdom consists of 3 routes.

The figure 3 below gives a graphical analysis of the distribution of touristic routes included in cross-regional projects.



Fig. 3 – A number of touristic routes in cross-regional Russian tourism projects

The results of the comparative analysis of cross-regional touristic routes in Russia allowed the author to make the following conclusions:

1. Since the Central Federal District is the key macro-region of the country, with the capital of Russia (the city of Moscow) being located in it and having a large number of touristic facilities and developed transport infrastructure, it is the region that accounts for most of the tourist routes from the cross-regional network. Thus, it has been established that there are 28 routes in the Central Federal District and 90 routes are implemented together with other macro-regions of Russia.

2. The social function of tourism in Russia, which actively dominated in the pre-war years, begins to revive in state tourism development programs in the Russian Federation since 2011. At this time, vectors for the development of domestic and inbound tourism were also clearly specified. Such implementation contributed to the beginning of cross-regional cooperation in tourism within the country. When the state program "Development of domestic and inbound tourism was launched in the Russian Federation in 2011-2018," 12 cross-regional tourism projects were developed.

3. The main purpose of cooperative work on the creation of cross-regional tourist routes was to develop tourism infrastructure, and to increase flows of domestic tourists and to contribute to the economic development of the regions of Russia.

4. During the study of 220 touristic routes, it was concluded that 42 of them are brand touristic routes. The list of the Brand routes approved by the Expert Council of Russia Tourism Organization could be noticed here³. A feature of brand touristic routes is the positioning and promotion of the tourist potential of a particular region, a demonstration of its uniqueness and compliance with a number of fundamental criteria. Among them: the lack of a well-defined seasonal nature of touristic activity, a unified concept and integrity, the presence of a brand logo and symbols, compliance with the standards of tourism services, etc.

Conclusions

As a result, the scientific and methodological foundations have been systematized and the main constraints for cross-regional cooperation in tourism in Russia have been formulated. It has been underlined that the integrated geographical analysis must be the spatial background of the crediting cross-regional itineraries. The theoretical background must be a scientific and practical model of designing cross-regional itineraries which could be appropriate for the territory studied. The technological background must be modern interactive web-platform containing up-to-date information about recreation and tourism facilities in the project implementation area. The practical background must be provided by tour operators using package tours.

As the cross-regional project develops, it will be possible to include new facilities and new regions getting interested in improving the efficiency of tourism development. The first steps, along with assessing the touristic and recreational potential of the territory, should be associated with the formation and development of the tourist and recreational framework of the territory. Cross-regional tourism itineraries will contribute to the formation of a solid national tourism space.

The World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) confidently singles out the cross-regional project – The Great Tea Route, is of great prior nowadays in the Russian cross-regional project market. The main advantages of this route is its conceptual basis, the history of the 17-19th- century- caravan route between Russia, Mongolia, China and Alaska (USA). In the context of the transformation of the global tourism market during the COVID-19 pandemics, alternative types of tourism are of fundamental interest in development. For example, caravanning is a potential type of niche tourism, which makes it possible to lay a route in any region of the Russian Federation and abroad. Thus, understanding modern trends, opportunities are open for the development of cross-regional and international cooperation in tourism based on niche or special types of tourism.

According to the author, such types of tourism should be emphasized in the design of new cross-regional routes, since they have the necessary degree of flexibility, adaptability to the conditions of the tourist market and consumer demands, and they may also be characterized by a high degree of accessibility.

This year national project "Tourism and the hospitality industry" has started in the Russian Federation, which includes three federal projects

for the development of the Russian tourism industry in the domestic and external tourism markets. One of the tasks of the national project is to create accessible touristic routes. Some guidelines for specialists of the tourism industry have been proposed to continue the experience of designing tourist routes. At the same time, it should be realized that designing technologies should comply with the tools to introduce such routes into the practice of the tourism business.

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