

Responsible Community Based Ecotourism Initiatives in Protected Rural Areas of the Balkans: Case Studies from Serbia and Croatia

Vesna Đukić¹, Ivana Volić^{1,*}, Sanja Tišma², Daniela Angelina Jelinčić²

¹Faculty of Dramatic Arts, University of Arts, Belgrade, 11000, Serbia

²Institute for Development and International Relations, Zagreb, 10000, Croatia

Abstract Assuming that community-based ecotourism as a form of alternative tourism must embrace individual initiatives within the community, this study compares ecotourism initiatives in rural communities of Serbia and Croatia. The aim of this paper is to analyze these initiatives and develop a model of responsible community-based ecotourism, which is possible to implement in protected rural areas next to the large cities and towns in the Danube basin in the Balkan region. Bearing in mind that the involving appreciation not only of nature, but also for indigenous cultures prevailing in natural areas as part of the visitor experience, this empirical research is primarily focused on the local initiatives aimed at the quality of the visitor experience of two protected rural areas – Ponjavica (Serbia) and Kopački rit (Croatia). The model was developed in order to guide future initiatives aimed at ecotourism development in protected rural areas of the Balkans, which can meet the needs of domestic and foreign tourists, providing the surrounding villages an image of attractive tourist destinations.

Keywords Responsible tourism, Community-based tourism, Ecotourism, Rural communities, Initiatives, Protected areas, Balkan, Danube, Serbia, Croatia

1. Introduction

This paper addresses the issues of responsible tourism, community based tourism, ecotourism and integrated management projects in the Balkan region, where currently there are no theoretically elaborated concepts from which some valuable theoretical outcomes would emerge. Additionally, the reason for the lack of theoretical studies of the above mentioned concepts can be found in the non-existent practice of tourism in rural areas, especially of its selective forms such as ecotourism. Although, there are legally defined protected areas, as well as prescribed ways of their use (which often include sustainable forms of tourism such as ecotourism and educational tourism), in reality some nature protected sites have only fundamental protection with no concrete measures implemented. Also, protection studies are often made without consulting and involvement of the local community and without assessing the situation on the field.

This paper examines the concepts of responsible community-based ecotourism, as well as the possibilities for its development in the Balkan region. Case studies that are

being analyzed are two localities in two neighbouring countries - Omoljica (Serbia) and Kopačevo (Croatia). Both locations contain a nature protected area within their territory as well as the cultural resources that are poorly evaluated and used. More broadly, the development and use of these resources should be harmonized with the concept of responsible tourism, while for further planning and management a community based tourism concept should be applied. This concept respects the natural and cultural resources and bases the tourism offer on their active use, with the participation of the members of local community in all phases of its creation – from planning to service providing and evaluation. Given that the subject of this paper are nature protected areas, the essence of ecotourism as a specific form of tourism should be considered and aligned with the above mentioned development concepts.

In the widest sense, *responsible tourism* is rooted in the concept of sustainable tourism development, which is described as 'paths of development that satisfy the needs and wants of present generations without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs' [1]. Sustainable development emphasizes the right of local people to take part in the decision-making process and to be consulted on activities likely to have an effect on their well-being[2]. Responsible tourism is a tourism management strategy embracing potential assessment (evaluation of the community attractions, visitor services, organizational

* Corresponding author:

volic.ivana@gmail.com (Ivana Volić)

Published online at <http://journal.sapub.org/tourism>

Copyright © 2014 Scientific & Academic Publishing. All Rights Reserved

capabilities, ability to protect resources, as well as marketing), planning (setting of priorities and measurable goals), management (protection and preparation for visitors), product development and marketing to bring about positive economic, social, cultural and environmental impacts [3], [4], [5]. Tourists as stakeholders in responsible tourism are rarely clarified by their effect on the ecosystem. Within the concept of responsible tourism, tourists with their ecological thinking assume responsibility for sustainable practice [6]. The importance of this concept for the development of local communities and the pronounced involvement of local stakeholders for the successful implementation of responsible tourism in rural areas of Europe was formulated in The European Charter for sustainable and responsible tourism [7].

Each year more attention is given to the scientific research devoted to these topics. Regardless of the number of papers related to specific areas of tourism development, environmental protection, local economic development and rural development, their interrelationships and mutual influences on development are seldom investigated. Some indications of possible cooperation and networking areas can be found in research related to sustainable tourism in protected areas, as in [8], [9]. Ecotourism is described as inter-sectorial approach to minimizing negative consequences for the environment and the possibility of strengthening local cultural identity, the segment to which cultural tourism is mentioned [10].

In the context of the protection of natural and cultural heritage for the development purposes, recent studies often mention local natural resource management and show popular choice of activities aiming at conservation of biodiversity, cultural identity and economic growth and development through service activities, mainly tourism [11].

Although *community-based tourism planning* has been a subject in developed countries in the last two decades of the twentieth and the first decade of the twenty first century, as in [12], [13], [14], [15], [16], [3], [17], [2], [18], [19], [20] there is not a significant theoretical work on this issue in the Balkans. The core of this concept lays in the community framework in tourism development. Such a framework 'allows for some form of local control and direction on the still business-oriented industry' [12]. It is based on a certain level of public participation which could be viewed as either 'involvement in a decision making process or benefits of tourism development' [14], or in the best scenario on the both premises. As in [15], planning for the community based tourism must involve community participation in tourism planning as 'a process of involving all relevant and interested parties (local government officials, local citizens, architects, developers, business people, and planners) in such a way that decision making is shared'. Building on this principle, later studies of community-based tourism have broadened the scope of the meaning of the term and they included a wide range of issues, among them ecological factors and local participation and democracy [16]. Thus, in an effort to

counter the tensions resulting from the more negative impacts from uneven/unplanned development, many researchers are suggesting that tourism-dominated/interested communities should plan their evolution more systematically, thereby taking into account residents' attitudes and perceptions about its growth at the outset [3]. The most comprehensive definition of community based tourism was given by the Thailand Community Based Tourism Institute, which claims that it is a 'tourism that takes environmental, social and cultural sustainability into account. It is managed and owned by the community, for the community, with the purpose of enabling visitors to increase their awareness and learn about the community and local ways of life' [21]. Institutional, operational and cultural limitations of the local community should be taken into account when planning CBT. However, local initiatives are crucial for achieving success as they stipulate whether the CBT becomes an acceptable model for different stakeholders in the local community [20].

Ecotourism, as the third conceptual aspect of this paper regards ecotourism as 'a sustainable form of natural resource-based tourism that focuses primarily on experiencing and learning about nature and which is ethically managed to be low-impact, non-consumptive and locally oriented' [22]. Some additional characteristics of ecotourism related to responsible project management were given by the UNEP and the World Tourism Organization. They include involving appreciation for indigenous cultures prevailing in natural areas, as part of the visitor experience; containing education and interpretation as part of the tourist offer; presence of small visitor groups organized by small, specialized and locally owned businesses [23]. Thus, ecotourism becomes the driver of local development through new entrepreneurial activities, particularly in the field of social entrepreneurship. Social entrepreneurship in rural areas may be the stirring wheel of social change, progress and prosperity [24].

In connection with community based tourism concept, WWF developed the concept of *community-based ecotourism* describing it as a form of tourism 'where the local community has substantial control over, and involvement in its development and management, and a major proportion of the benefits remain within the community' [23]. This organization further explains that the concept of community depends on local 'social and institutional structures', as well as on 'embracing individual initiatives within the community'. Having this in mind, WWF outlines some guidelines for community-based ecotourism projects regarding their quality. Those guidelines encompass the attention to detail at every level of tourist service; quality and accuracy of promotion and information since all visitors in this market are increasingly looking for a high level of information provision; authenticity and ambience since eco-tourists respond to genuine and traditional values and experiences.

Although it was mentioned that there are currently no

significant theoretical considerations regarding the responsible and community-based tourism, ecotourism and its development opportunities are nevertheless debated to some extent in Serbia [25], [26], [27], and some distinctive ecotourism destinations have emerged as well (Zasavica, Đerđap). Research studies on natural and cultural resources in protected areas and their potential for the development of tourism and for local development have been developed in Croatia in the last ten years. They mainly indicate that in most of the protected areas these development potentials are not recognized and are not used [28]. More recent attempts of interdisciplinary research in Croatia are related to the study of the components of sustainable tourism through the analysis of its environmental, economic, social and cultural dimensions, as in [29], [30], [31], and the connection between natural and cultural heritage for the development of tourism in protected areas [32]. These research studies were carried out in a smaller number of karst protected areas and do not provide a complete overview on the capacities of natural and cultural resources for development purposes. However, they indicate the necessity of involvement of local communities in the protected parks projects, including the areas located outside of the territory of the parks. In this sense, the potential of greater area is considered in terms of tourism, while cultural programs are not isolated, but are connected with the programs of other sectors, such as sports and recreation, ecology, education and entrepreneurship.

As the number of these destinations is extremely small, given the number of protected natural areas in both countries, this paper aims to create a draft model for the development of responsible community-based ecotourism in rural communities in the Balkans, which are located in the protected lowland areas near the Danube (or other large rivers) and large cities and towns as the outbound tourist centers. In this respect, the paper is based on empirical results of two case studies aimed at investigation of a contemporary phenomenon of community-based ecotourism within its real life context. Case studies are presented by the two mentioned local communities:

Omoljica village (close to the major tourist generating centers: Belgrade as capital and industrial town and Pančevo as administrative center of the Southeast Banat Region, Autonomous Province of Vojvodina, Republic of Serbia); on Omoljica territory there is a protected natural park Ponjavica and strict nature reserve Omoljička ada situated on the left bank of the Danube;

Kopačevo village (close to the town of Osijek in Croatian part of Baranya, between rivers Drava and the Danube, Republic of Croatia) in the area of nature park Kopački rit.

These communities were analyzed through multiple sources of evidence and other methods used in order to explore the potentials, as well as the degree of the community-based ecotourism development in Serbia and Croatia, which are aimed at achieving quality through authenticity based on genuine and traditional values and experiences, as in [23]. In this respect several research methods were used – observation, content analysis, narrative

inquiry and comparative analysis of relevant documents.

2. Presentation of the Research Results

This paragraph would present results of the research conducted in two communities with an aim of generating a unique acceptable model for development of similar destinations near large emitting zones in the Balkans.

The research is based on a comparative analysis of two case studies in Serbia and Croatia, on the protected natural heritage sites - Nature Park Ponjavica in Serbia (together with the village Omoljica) and Nature Park Kopački Rit in Croatia (together with the village Kopačevo).

In addition to the case study as research method that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context and in which multiple sources of evidence are used [33], there are other four methods that were used in the research as well:

1. Observation: qualitative field research note-taking method aimed at collecting data about present situation in rural community and current state of nature and culture with an emphasis on the organized ecotourism initiatives aimed at changing their current state.
2. Content Analysis of the initiatives presented on websites and social networks in last three years (2011-2013). The analysis encompasses integrated research, interpretative and promotion projects in the both of the communities, regardless whether they come from civil, private or public sector.
3. Narrative inquiry: structured interviews with stakeholders including public, civil and private sector with an aim to design a map of stakeholders, understand their positions based on concrete activities and to collect their answers on questions about strength, weaknesses, possibilities and threats of ecotourism in protected areas.
4. Comparative analysis of data presented in relevant documents and data collected through field research.

2.1. Case Study of Nature Park Ponjavica Located in Village Omoljica (Serbia)¹

According to the Proposal for Protection of Nature Park Ponjavica, this park is characterized by 'a variation of habitats in natural and semi-natural condition representing the last remains of the formerly large water and swamp complex diluvial area of the Danube river, as well as refuge for the species' [39], whose habitats were destroyed during water regulation. Ponjavica also represents an ecological corridor connecting torn remains of the primal vegetation along the current of Ponjavica river with the ecological corridor of the Danube. Those characteristics can incorporate this Park into Ramsar 'wetlands' [31], ten of which exist in

¹ The research was conducted as a part of international project of the University of Arts in Belgrade *Investigating Cultural Sustainability* realized as a part of COST Actions IS1007 (European Cooperation in the Field of Scientific and Technical Research).

Serbia. However, this possibility was not utilized, even though by acquiring of an international protected status, tourist activity would be significantly altered.

From the standpoint of legislation in the field of nature conservation in Serbia, in the Proposal, it was recognized as a protected area with local significance, which until recently did not have an international dimension. Tourism is mentioned as one of the possibilities of sustainable use by means of 'increasing of diversity and volume of ecotourism and ethno-tourism, as well as improved tourist offer, whereby as its possible forms the following are listed: ecotourism, fishing tourism, excursions, educational tourism and cultural event tourism' [39]. This implies the orientation towards local tourism market of the two closest and biggest emitting destinations. As a result of the geographical location of this protected area, these are: the capital of Belgrade (distance 22 kilometers, 1,5 million inhabitants) economic and cultural center of South Banat – Pančevo, as one of the most polluted towns in Serbia (distance 15 kilometers, 75.000 inhabitants). Due to the way of life in these places and high level of pollution of its environment, population has a need to enjoy preserved natural setting, which provides quality and authenticity of experience, yet due to the lack of promotion and attractive tourist offer, most people are not aware that such need can be fulfilled in their immediate surroundings. Therefore, the basic research question upon which case study Omoljica is based is – how to steer the local initiations towards creation of tourist offer and attractive products and services that can draw in domestic and foreign visitors?

As the basic characteristics of Nature park Ponjavica are associated with the Danube river, which has international significance, as well as the fact that a part of the international bicycle path "Eurovelo6", through which around thousand cyclists pass on their way to confluence of the Danube river into Black Sea [34], goes through the Park, even now from the standpoint of ecotourism, the Park has an international dimension.

Bearing in mind that indigenous cultures prevailing in natural areas are the basic characteristic of ecotourism, international film festival on village life Žisel, held in Omoljica since 1970, contributes to the international activity of this protected area. By means of cinematic art, it bears witness to the unique cultural relationship between inhabitants of Omoljica and nature, demonstrating the synergy of nature and culture, that is natural and anthropogenic factors, using arts as its means. On the other hand, it points out to the international perception of Omoljica from the standpoint of filmmakers worldwide, who participate in the competition of this festival with their films. However, local community still does not recognize this event as a development potential of ecotourism. Since its foundation in 1970, Žisel has not been supported by town's tourist or cultural policy, it has neither stable sources of financing, nor promotional channels [35]. Even though in its first years, as an only film village in the entire former

Yugoslavia, the festival attracted thousands of visitors and tourists, in the last few years it is interesting only to filmmakers, whose films in the competition, as well as small groups of local population. This is the main reason, why a group of young inhabitants of Omoljica started the initiative for International Volunteer Camp Sunflower to be held immediately before the start of the festival, so that the local and international volunteers could have time to help in the organization of the festival Žisel, as well as its promotion and cultural program. Such events represent a true basis for community-based ecotourism, initiated and developed by the local community [36].

All of the above, despite defined local significance of the Park from the standpoint of nature conservation, attracts the visitors from all over the world, which assigns characteristics of international ecotourism center to the Natural Park Ponjavica and village of Omoljica. On the territory of this village community and its closest environment², other cultural historical values exist that have not been identified in the conservation study, thereby its developmental function has not been considered at all. Pump station on the regional hydro system Nadel in Ivanovo, built in 1897, is among them and it has not been included in the conservation regime yet, even though due to its value, it was recommended for a conservation status, as an industrial-technical heritage³. Two machine mills, typical for Vojvodina and wider region, have been preserved, which were built during industrialization of the village between 1910. and 1930.

They have been classified as industrial-technical heritage⁴, representing a way of life and work of the village population, which was primarily agricultural in the past, owing to the exceptionally fertile soil of the diluvial area of the Danube. Written history of the 18th and 19th century testifies of the fertility of the soil, when Omoljica was an important geostrategic point on the border of Austro-Hungarian Empire. It is recorded in this period that „fertility was colossal to the degree that the spreading of the manure was damaging [37]. Along with industrial-technical heritage, in the vicinity of protected Natural park Ponjavica, alongside Nadel channel, a

² There are 6.518 inhabitants living in Omoljica, the majority are Serbs; villages with significant ecotourism potentials, which have not been turistically activated, are located in the close environment of 20-km diameter: Banatski Brestovac – a part of Nature Park Ponjavica spans to its territory, Stačevo, known for its eponymous early Neolithic site Starčevo grad, which landed its name to all similar sites in Balkan – Starčevo Culture. What is special about Vojlovica is that an Orthodox monastery from 14th century is located on its territory, now surrounded by plants of Pančevo Oil Refinery. Protected natural monument Ivanovačka ada is located in village Ivanovo on the bank of the Danube.

³ Data gathered in the interview with the Associate of the Institute for Protection of Cultural Heritage, Jasmina Vujović and Sonja Zimonjic, M.Sc, Director of the Museum of Science and Technology; interviews were conducted as a part of the research for this paper on April and May 2013 with an aim to understand their attitude regarding meaning and significance of the industrial-technical heritage directly related to natural heritage of protected areas.

⁴ Data from the file of the Museum of Science and Technology in Belgrade, acquired in the interview with the Director, Sonja Zimonjic, M.Sc, conducted as a part of the research for this paper, May 24, 2013.

„miraculous“ spring with healing water is located, which Omoljica inhabitants used in the first half of 20th century to cure various diseases. Numerous accounts regarding this custom and beliefs were not recorded⁵, which is why younger generations of Omoljica inhabitants and visitors to this village are not familiar with it, even though the spring still exist. Not far from it, one of the oldest Orthodox Christian temples in Vojvodina is located, built in 1780, in which liturgies are held and it participates actively in the religious life of the Orthodox population of Omoljica. In this church, various Patron Saint days of the village inhabitants are marked, which being a unique custom are included in the List of intangible cultural heritage of Serbia, closely associated with the social and economic development of local communities. In the domain of intangible heritage, hospitality and cinema tradition lasting over a century are significant for the development of ecotourism in village Omoljica. In order to honor the memory of it, two commemorative plaques were displayed in August 2012, upon the initiative of a village chronicler and founder of festival Žisel. First marks the hundredth anniversary of the moment, when electrical current aggregators were acquired, while the other - 100 years since the first cinema in this part of Banat region started operating. The plaques were displayed on the location of former Seleši Hotel, which was widely famous for its innovations in the beginning of 20th century [38]. However, none of these physical artifacts and intangible heritage is neither protected by law, nor the means of its usage is prescribed, which demonstrates the lack of awareness about the significance of cultural heritage for the development of village Omoljica and other village communities on protected areas in Serbia. The only exception is recently renovated Ethno House on the fringe of the village race track. Citizens of Omoljica always loved horses, which is why there is a race track in the village, where races are occasionally held. Ethno house of the Equestrian Club, closed to the public, is an old border patrol house from 1900, decorated like typical Panonian house of the 19th century, however it is not intended for tourists, but exclusively for the needs of Equestrian Club.

Regarding the initiatives in ecology, private enterprise BIS-Recycle Centre is advocating the action for the clean-up of Ponjavica river bed, on which organic sludge has been depositing for decades. This action has not been carried out because of the lack of funding⁶, even though the quantity of dead biomass exceeds the possibilities of dissolution and due to that the thickness of sludge continues to rise [39]. Further delay of this action is damaging Ponjavica river, known as a typical pond area of a very good quality in the oasis of untouched nature, close to the capital, famous among practitioners of sports fishing [40]. On the other hand, there

were no initiatives for the preservation of strict nature reserve Omoljička ada on the river island on the Danube, which despite getting conservation status in 1966, now is left out of all preservation plans on this area. Whereby, nearby village Ivanovo received conservation status as a natural heritage Ivanovačka ada⁷, Omoljica lost its status as a nature reserve, which did not cause any reaction of the local community or interest groups, despite this destination being a traditionally favorite vacation spot for inhabitants of Omoljica.

Unlike mentioned ad-hoc initiatives, Association of Environmentalists Ponjavica⁸, handles all the aspects of ecotourism on the protected area of Omoljica in a comprehensive and long-term manner. Its long-term integrated management project (2012-2017) is aimed at creating a consistent and coherent concept of viable community-based ecotourism in Omoljica. It is comprised of three different, yet connected groups of activities ensuring quality and authenticity of ecotourism: research of natural and cultural potentials for education (of visitors, local population, policy makers, scientific and expert community), interpretation of heritage, functioning as a preparation of destination for visitors and promotion, aimed to attract visitors. The research begun by investigation of development potentials and opportunities of village Omoljica, whereby the results were presented on the scientific conferences and published in journals [41], in order for scientific community to get acquainted with the problems of the development of this village, on whose territory protected nature park is located.

Based on the results, project has been continued with an interpretation of the forgotten intangible heritage by means of popular narratives, published on the website of the Association, in the form of a short story⁹. The goals of these stories are education and raising awareness of local population on the natural and cultural values, redefining of identity of protected area and making of the recognizable spirit of the place [42] that can attract local visitors. The stories, published on the website of the Association¹⁰, are structured in a way that each represents a particular topic from village life (barn, cinema, water, mulberry tree, Žisel, soil, mill, Nadela, etc.), reconstructed from written sources or memories of local population. Besides being suitable for

5 As a part of the research for this paper, local Lj.K. was interviewed, who claimed that she was cured from scabies as a girl, on this spring, interview held on February 1, 2013.

6 Interview with the company's owner Jovica Bozic, conducted on June 19, 2013.

7 In the Study of Protection of natural monument Ivanovačka ada, as a significant natural heritage, previous Decision on Protection from 1996 was enclosed, which related to Omoljička ada and it has been renamed Ivankovačka ada in the new Study, without an explanation, Institute for Nature Protection of Serbia, Novi Sad, 2008, Annex 1.

8 The Association was founded in June 2012, upon initiative of several young Belgrade citizens, with an aim of promoting of healthy lifestyle, ecotourism and similar tourist niches, as means of safeguarding the environment and sustainable development of local community; Association Founding Document. <http://www.ponjavica.org.rs/o-nama/skupstina/osnivacki-akt> [Accessed on May 15, 2013]

9 Stories on Omoljica, Association of Environmentalists Ponjavica <http://www.ponjavica.org.rs/o-omoljici/price> [Accessed on May 15, 2013]

10 Stories on Omoljica, Association of Environmentalists Ponjavica <http://www.ponjavica.org.rs/o-omoljici/price> [Accessed on July 30, 2013]

guided tours, its purpose is to motivate local population to participate in the development of ecotourism on the area of their village. This is particularly significant, since village school and library were not designed as memory institutions [41], due to which locals do not know their past, they lack awareness on the natural and cultural-historical values of the village and its attractiveness for domestic and international visitors. By their education and subsequent inclusion in the development of ecotourism, a conflict can be prevented, which can occur when locals do not feel the benefits of such development. The interpretation has been continued by the creation of tourist paths that include the most significant natural and cultural localities in Omoljica village. They were conceived as a map by which walking, bicycle and canoe tours can be organized and it will be placed on the website of the Association and available to each visitor of Nature park¹¹.

As a part of promotion, the Association set up an interactive web presentation containing diverse and rich content, intended for the local population and visitors. Website has been active since June 28, 2013 and it got 1200 visits in less than three months. In the poll 'How do you like our website?' 97% of visitors marked it as excellent¹². Along with the website, Facebook page of the Association has been opened and it got 143 fans in three months. To sum up, bearing in mind that Nature Park Ponjavica is an unknown tourist destination, the statistics shows that domestic visitors are beginning to recognize its natural and cultural values. With an aim of attracting visitors to Nature Park Ponjavica, the Association organized three gastronomic and sports-recreations events in the summer of 2013 (making of mulberry brandy, from the last remaining trees, in the traditional manner, according to the old recipe; photo safari by canoe on the river Ponjavica; a contest in making of the fish pot that is a part of celebration of village *slava* Preobraženje). Along with the website, these events with approximately 150 participating visitors from Belgrade, Pancevo and Omoljica also contributed to the promotion of local ecotourism values and attracting of visitors from the two closest tourist destinations with the highest emission potential. The number of visitors was in accordance with the ecotourism principles that this alternative form of tourism is organized for small groups of visitors in order to prevent dangers to the environment and prevent socio-cultural damage, due to high number of tourists.

In the following period, as a part of preparation of the destination for visitors, the Association is planning the restoration of the vineyard cottage, which is 100 years old, that would increase lodging capacities for visitors. The problem of all realized, as well as planned activities of this

NGO is sustainable funding, since all the funds invested last year were acquired from sponsors and individual donations of the Association founders. Even though the Association applied on three public competitions for funding in culture and tourism, none of the projects received state support – on both republic and province level. This demonstrates that the Government and responsible ministries do not recognize development potentials of ecotourism, even though activating natural and cultural heritage can contribute to the attractiveness of Serbia on both local and international ecotourism market.

Numerous potentials are located in the area of Nature Park Ponjavica and village Omoljica: for ecology, rural tourism, events, culture, religion, sports – hunting and fishing, which have not been activated for tourism or integrated in a unique tourist product, despite the fact that it's attracting many visitors. The lack of top-down initiatives of administration of both Republic and Province, as well as local authorities, aimed at planning of ecotourism and similar tourist products (rural, cultural, heritage, event tourism, etc.) adds to this conclusion. The research shows discrepancy in regulations, applied in the study for protection of Nature Park Ponjavica and its attractiveness for domestic and foreign visitors. Certain number of bottom-up initiatives of civil and private sector (evaluation of the community attractions, visitor services, organizational capabilities, ability to protect resources, as well as marketing) can be noted. Most of it is short-term, ad-hoc in nature, whereby there is only one bottom-up integration management project, conducted by the recently founded Association of Environmentalists Ponjavica. Even though Omoljica municipality participates in most private and civil sector initiatives, public sector lacks the vision of the development of the village on the protected area and management plan of Nature Park Ponjavica, adjusted with the existing civil and private initiatives in ecotourism. From the standpoint of responsible tourism, it demonstrates that public utility company DVP Tamiš Dunav, as a caretaker in charge of managing Nature Park Ponjavica, lacks planning that would define priorities and measurable aims for the future development, based on which destination management, product, services and marketing to bring about positive economic, social, cultural and environmental impacts, could be developed and offered to the visitors.

2.2. Case Study of Nature Park „Kopački Rit“ Located Near Village Kopačevo (Croatia)

According to the Nature Protection Act of the Republic of Croatia [43] nature is the fundamental value and one of the most significant development resources. According to this Act, Nature Park is a vast natural or partly cultivated area of land and/or sea with features of international and national importance, with a marked landscape, with educational, cultural, historical, tourist and recreational values. Economic and other activities that do not threaten its essential features and roles are allowed in Nature Park.

The development of Kopački Rit Nature Park is defined

11 Data gathered in the interview with the President of the Board of Association of Environmentalists Ponjavica, Zoran Dojcinovic, conducted on August 18, 2013. in order to find the reasons why the civil sector undertakes certain activities to improve situation in the field of community based ecotourism.

12 News <http://www.ponjavica.org.rs/vesti/obavestjenja/25-vest-1> [Accessed on September 24, 2013].

by a number of key strategic documents: County Development Strategy of Osijek-Baranya County 2011-2013 [44], Management Plan of Kopački Rit Nature Park [45] and the Regional Plan of Kopački Rit Nature Park (2006).

Kopački rit Nature Park is situated in the northeastern part of Baranya, on the natural floodplain of European significance. Due to its natural values, Kopački rit was designated on the List of Ramsar areas in 1993 – as the wetlands of international importance [46]. In 1989, Kopački rit was also included on the list of Important Bird Areas (IBAs) for bird protection, their habitats and global biodiversity that guides people on the sustainable usage of natural resources. Furthermore, when Croatia accessed the European Union, Kopački rit has become the part of the Natura 2000 network.

In addition to its natural heritage, the area of Kopački rit and the surrounding villages is also known for its rich cultural heritage – there are settlements and fortifications from the Roman era, the old and the new castle Tikveš, the baroque Eugene Savoy castle from the 17th century and religious objects, in particular the Christian Reformed Church, as tradition says, constructed on the church built by the Gauls in the fourth century.

In the proximity to the park there are several villages where the population is mainly engaged in agriculture, forestry and hunting. On the western edge of Kopački rit, there are settlements Bilje, Kopačevo, Lug and Vardarac. Wider area of the Nature Park includes the City of Osijek and Beli Manastir, municipalities of Čeminac and Darda, and the settlements Tvrdavica and Podravlje.

The village of Kopačevo is situated 4 km east of Bilje at the edge of the Kopački rit Nature Park. Kopačevo has about 500 inhabitants, mostly Hungarians. According to archaeological findings Kopačevo area has been inhabited since the second millennium BC. In the northern part of the village, the Romans built a settlement and a fort to defend themselves from the Barbarians. In the past, the entire Kopačevo earned its living from fishing. As a memory of those days, in early September each year *Fishing days* are organized, serving seafood and game dishes. Today the inhabitants of Kopačevo are mostly engaged in gardening, evidenced by numerous greenhouses. In the center of the village there was the Kopački rit Zoological Museum which was founded by naturalist and taxidermist Josip Majić, and today, there is a collection of fishing tools and old tools homestead. Tourism is slowly evolving and the population fits the old architecture in new ethno tourism facilities largely owing to the fact that Kopački rit is a protected area and that in recent years there were considerable investments in visitor infrastructure and tourist facilities in the park itself. Tourist offer of the Park includes [45]:

- Visit to the reception center located near the village Kopačevo, which is considered the main entrance to the Nature Park. There, the traditional values of the region are interpreted, emphasizing the value of the Pannonian architecture and films on the natural values of the area that is not available for visits are shown;

- Visit to the Special Zoological Reserve by boats (total capacity of 125 seats) which in favorable water level conditions float down the channels of Čonakut and New Channel. During the ride the ecological values of the entire Park and its flora and fauna are interpreted;

- Walking on the nature trails - Sakadaš, Veliki Sakadaš, Old Elm and paths in the complex Tikveš castle, offering the possibility of education in addition to the stay in beautiful nature;

- Visit to the site of Tikveš castle complex with the interpretation of its cultural, historical, natural and landscape values;

- Cycling - Kopački rit is becoming more popular destination for bike tourists and cyclists from all over the world. Riding through the parts of the Danube route and Pannonian peace route that partly go through Kopački Rit enables the experience of unspoiled nature. There is the Internet corner for all the visitors who come to the park by bicycles;

- Recreational fishing is a product of high potential whose development should be carefully directed in accordance with the principles of environmental protection. Within the Nature Park, recreational fishing is allowed in certain zones (Danube canals, pumping station Zlatna Greda, Vemeljski dunavac and Danube river);

- Birdwatching is one of the most attractive programs for lovers of bird fauna;

- Canoeing through Kopački rit;

- Overnight stay in bio-ecological station for all those who want a holiday in the countryside, away from the bustle of the city and looking for a real pleasure surrounded by the sounds of the forest;

- Organizing conferences on various topics in the conference hall of the bio-ecological station, capacity of 100 seats.

There are several special events in the park, which attract more tourists each year, like *Fairy nights*, the *Day of Eugene of Savoy castle*, *Fishermen's Days in Kopačevo*, and *STRAW* - land art festival that brings together artists who make sculptures from straw, thus combining the cultural and traditional heritage, using natural resources and promoting the principles of sustainable development.

Interesting contents attract an increasing number of visitors from Croatia and abroad. Over the last few years around 34000-40000 Croatian and foreign guests visited Kopački rit [45]. Recognizing the potential, local population began to engage in ecotourism (eg. Eco-house Orlov put, Eco-center Zlatna Greda). Zlatna Greda is the first eco-tourist agency in Croatia, founded in 2006, and owned by Green Osijek - the Association for the Protection of Nature and Environment. The Association Green Osijek is very active in this area. Through the ISLAND 2010 project (Sustainable tourism and environmental education in Kopački rit Nature Park) it initiated and conducted training of students and residents about the development of ecotourism, as a model that conserves natural and traditional values of the area.

In the scope of the cross-border cooperation, Osijek – Sombor project (2005-2006), in which Green Osijek, the City of Osijek, Green Network of Vojvodina and Sombor municipality participated, institutional relations were established, the bicycle route was constructed, concerts, youth camp and sporting events were organized. Another such project was “Development of cross-border tourism in the middle Danube region” (2007-2009) in cooperation with the Tourist Board of Osijek - Baranya County, the Tourist Board of Osijek and the City of Sombor. The last in the series of such projects is the project “Strengthening local capacity for Natura 2000 and the Nature Conservation (2008-2009), in cooperation of the Association Green Osijek, Department of Biology, the Regional Development Agency and the Croatian Society for the Protection of Birds and Nature.

The implementation of an ecotourism project that connects the mountain and lowland regions of Eastern Slavonia and Baranya began in April 2013. “Two rivers, one mountain - new ecotourism products of Drava, Danube and Papuk” is a project which was designed and conducted in partnership of the Association for the Protection of Nature and Environment Green Osijek, National Park Danube-Drava and Nature Park Papuk. The project is co-financed by the European Union through the IPA CBC Hungary-Croatia with a goal of ensuring a sustainable model of economic development and natural resource management in the region along the Mura-Drava-Danube by the introduction of new eco-tourism products and cross-border cooperation.

The very concept of ecotourism is relatively new in the Croatian tourism sector, but the potential for its development in protected areas is very high, particularly because of the diversity of natural and cultural heritage within and near parks.

Kopački rit is set in strategic documents of the County as one of the key bearers of development that will link regional attractions to a unique tourism product. It requires the interaction of the entire region and its local population. Such synergetic effect will raise regional competitiveness and achieve the main goal – strengthening of a regional prosperity.

Thus, the necessity to create and develop tourism product that will suit the concept of rural tourism which integrates cultural, rural, eco, sport, hunting, adventure, scientific, religious, theme, ethnic, convention, transit and other selective forms of tourism, and the bearers of development should be local and regional tourist boards and all subjects participating in the creation of a tourism destination. Kopački rit should serve as the hub of the overall tourist offer of Osijek-Baranya County.

The development vision of Nature Park Kopački rit opted to become a mainstay of community development based on the sustainable use of natural and cultural resources. In this direction, Kopački rit has made significant progress in the development of tourism programs in recent years and in the cooperation with the local population and the inclusion of

their tourist offer to the Park's and the surrounding area's offer, as well as in the joint organization of various traditional events. The shifts are largely the result of the connection of the Park with the local community, tourist boards and NGOs. The importance of the NGO Green Osijek should be emphasized, which initiated a series of international projects and raised funds for capacity building of the local community for sustainable development and community-based tourism.

However, there are still a number of challenges - from significant investment in infrastructure to the evaluation of existing cultural heritage and the creation of new tourist attractions and supply. It should also be noted that there is a need for further training of the employees of the Park, as well as of local people interested in the development of ecotourism. Since the economic crisis in this region impoverished the population even more, European funds are the right way for new breakthroughs. The cross-border cooperation, networking and exchange of knowledge and skills in the Balkans are a way for common sustainable living, while preserving the natural beauty and cultural heritage.

3. Discussion and Modelling

As it can be concluded from the analysis of the case studies, the two natural sites of similar geographic features in the two neighboring Balkan countries, Serbia and Croatia, have similar treatment in terms of national legislation (both areas are protected as a nature park). However, the difference is that Kopački Rit formally possesses international features as well (Ramsar area, Important Bird Area and part of the Natura 2000 network), which adds to the recognition and its protection and use capabilities. Nature park Ponjavica actually attracts tourists thanks to the international Festival Žisel and international Eurovelo6 bicycle route.

Both protected areas, while enjoying national protection, cannot be considered the areas of developed community-based ecotourism in its complete form. Although some of the predisposition are respected (involving individual initiatives, existence of the authentic atmosphere), there is a lack of fulfillment of the other predispositions in order to be able to speak about the concept as a whole. Also, there are differences between Ponjavica and Kopački rit, which are reflected in the following:

- Development of Kopački Rit is defined in terms of a number of national policy documents, where it is being mentioned as one of the key players of regional development; on the other side Ponjavica is the subject of two documents – one is the Revision of the protection studies and the other is a Feasibility study of developing ecotourism in protected areas of Vojvodina. Both studies are only partially engaged with the development of ecotourism. In the case of Ponjavica management plan has not been adopted yet.

- Kopački Rit is developed in line with the top-down initiatives that are important for setting clear strategic

directions, while Ponjavica is left exclusively to the activities of individuals and civil society organizations that are implementing their activities, achieving a certain level of visibility which is still insufficient for destination's promotion of a greater effect. On the other hand, the existence of such initiatives is important because they represent an actual strength and capacity that may be important in the development of tourism, especially in its development based on consulting and cooperation with the community.

– In conjunction with top-down initiatives, there have been noticeable investments in recent years in Kopački Rit that were aimed at improving infrastructure and tourist facilities, while everything what was done in Ponjavica reflects an effort of individuals and civil sector without any systemic institutional support. In this regard, there is still a lack of basic infrastructure and tourism investment that would encourage the development of community-based ecotourism.

– In Kopački Rit there have been recognized initiatives of individuals and civil society organizations, while making efforts to empower them in establishing cooperation with local tourist organizations. On the other side, individuals, associations and organizations (as mentioned before) are the only ones operating, so that at this site greater involvement of local government, authorized park custodian as well as the state should take place, which could lead towards linking a bottom-up activities with the national institutional framework required for the establishment of the community-based ecotourism concept.

– The headquarters of the NGO Green Osijek in Croatia lies outside of the protected area, while in Serbia the seat of the Association of the environmentalist Ponjavica is located in the nature park, so it is closer to the citizens of local community. Common to both organizations is that initiatives are driven by nature lovers who live in nearby urban centers, although some of them originate from protected areas. Thus, they are introducing innovative entrepreneurial solutions to the rural communities. Those solutions could contribute to the social, economic and cultural development of the village.

– The Danube, which flows through the Balkans, presents the greatest development potential as seen in 'The EU Strategy for the Danube Region', but protected nature parks on the banks of the river have not yet recognized the advantages of its geostrategic location and development opportunities contained in the various forms of cooperation.

Current structure of stakeholders and their initiatives in both nature parks is depicted in the following comparative table:

Table 1. Comparative stakeholder initiative analysis

Ponjavica
International level
– Eurovelo6

<p>State level (public sector)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Museum of Science and Technology (research and registration of the industrial-technical heritage in Omoljica) – Institute for Nature Conservation of Serbia – Fund for environment protection of the Republic of Serbia (co-funding of the projects) <p>State level (civil sector)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Young researchers of Serbia (voluntary camp organization)
<p>Provincial level (public sector)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Provincial Institute for Nature Protection – Provincial Secretariat for Urban Planning, Construction and Environmental Protection – University of Novi Sad, Department of geography, tourism and hotel management (project of Feasibility study) in cooperation with Provincial Secretariat and Fund for environment protection of the Republic of Serbia.
<p>Municipality level (public sector)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – City of Pančevo (resolution of Nature Park protection, appointment of a guardian – DVP Tamiš-Dunav, financial assistance) – City public water management company Tamiš-Dunav (mid-term protection and development plan for Nature Park Ponjavica) – Institute for Cultural Heritage Preservation Pančevo (no initiatives so far)
<p>Local community level (public sector)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Local office (installation of memorial plaques) together with the civil initiative of a community chronicler – House of culture (festival Žisel) <p>Local community level (private sector)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Recycling center BIS (sludge extraction) – 'Fisherman's daughter' restaurant – Households that produce domestic food specialties (white cheese, brandy, pork products etc) <p>Local community level (civil sector - NGO)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Association of Environmentalists Ponjavica – Riding club with Ethno house and racetrack – Hunting and fishing club's restaurants
<p>Kopački rit</p> <p>International level</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – World Wildlife Fund – European Commission (IPA projects) – Coca-Cola Company
<p>State level (public sector)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Ministry of Environmental and Nature Protection, Republic of Croatia – State Institute for Nature Protection – Croatian Waters, public company – Croatian Forests, public company – Kopački rit Nature Park
<p>County level (public sector)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Osijek-Baranja County – County agency for nature protection management, Osijek-Baranja County – Tourist Board of Osijek-Baranja County
<p>Local level (public sector)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – City of Osijek – Settlement of Tikveš – Settlement of Kozjak – Settlement of Kopačevo – Settlement of Podunavlje – Osijek tourist board <p>Local level (private sector)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Kormoran restaurant – Orlov put, eco farm – Zlatna greda, eco center <p>Local level (civil sector - NGO)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Green Osijek, association for nature and environment protection – Slama, association – Čuvari tradicije princa Eugena Savojskog, association

To conclude, in the case of Nature Park Ponjavica it is obvious that different levels of territorial jurisdiction are present. On the one hand, there are state and provincial activities reflected on legislative regulation and occasional funding. On the other hand, there are efforts of individual initiatives in the local community with a number of activities financed by their personal means. Represented as local government, Municipality of Pančevo is the weakest stakeholder in terms of protection, management and funding, and until it takes a more active role in the maintenance and development of continuous strategic activities none of the activities at local community level could be expected. In the case of Nature Park Kopački Rit, public sector is the most active on all three territorial levels (state, county and local) due to its recognition in a number of key strategic national documents. As a result of strategic efforts of the state and continuous activities on its affirmation, Kopački Rit is also included in international projects and activities of the international associations which enable its development in a wider regional and global framework.

The perceived similarity between the two above-mentioned destinations is reflected in the underdeveloped system of participation and inclusion of larger number of local initiatives in decision-making, planning and management. Bearing in mind that it is a tendency of almost all destinations in the Balkan region, we cannot talk about the omissions of these two sites. It is rather

the state that should be involved in order to achieve a real community engagement in decision-making process regarding tourism development, not only the involvement related to the benefits from the tourism industry. In doing so, the exchange of experiences, knowledge and skills in the management of local development which is based on similar natural resources and partly similar cultural heritage in the analyzed areas of the Nature Park Ponjavica and the Nature Park Kopački Rit regardless of different countries, Serbia and Croatia, in which they are located, is a prerequisite for rapid adoption of the concept and a successful application of community-based ecotourism practices.

The purpose of this paper is to develop a model of responsible community-based ecotourism which could be implemented in protected rural areas in the proximity of the large cities and towns in the Danube basin in the Balkan region. The community based tourism model based on the examples of initiatives in Serbia and Croatia represents a sectional view of activities in the area of rural development in a local community where it originates due to the protected cultural and natural heritage of that particular region and newer innovations in tourism implemented in the last few years by the local community. As shown in Figure 1, traditional and customary activities, new initiatives and the existing resources are connected in this model through integration of the top-down and bottom-up approach for deliberation and strategic planning of local development.

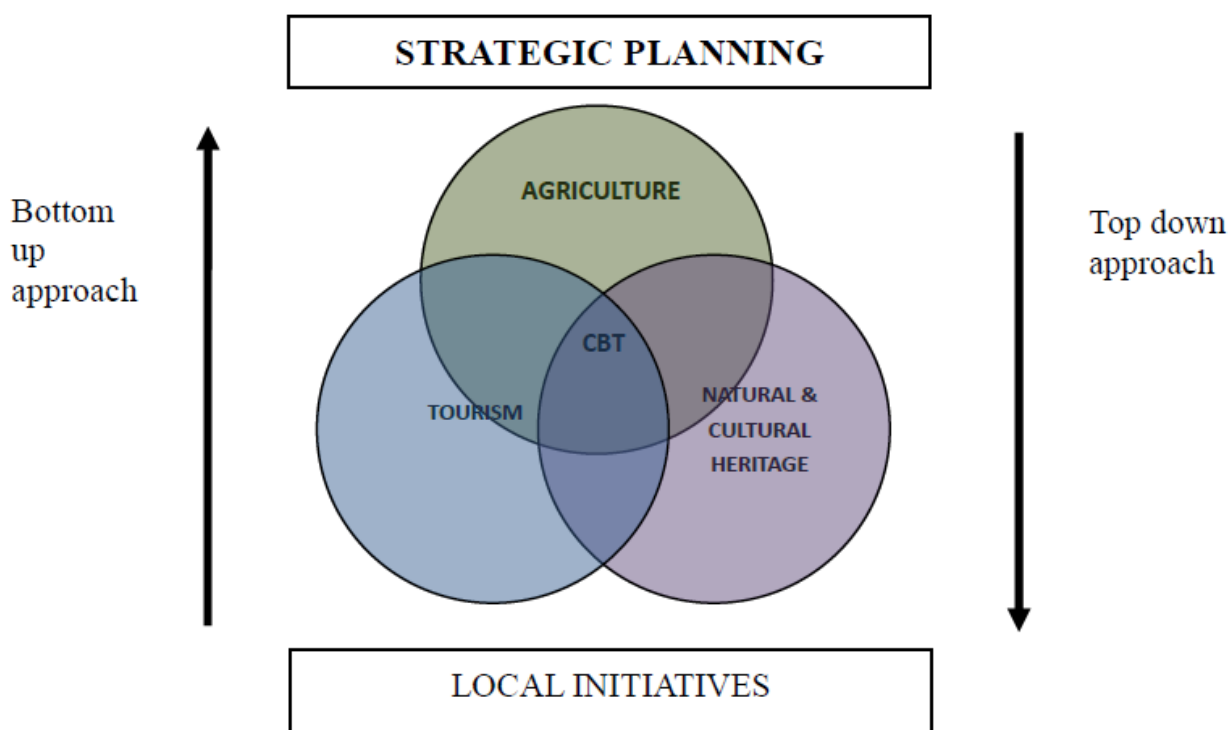


Figure 1. Community based model applicable in rural areas of the Balkans (Source: Authors)

The main guidelines for modeling must be adapted to each local context where applied. First, for the successful design of a responsible community-based ecotourism destination, the characteristics of the particular destination should be in line with the international strategy documents, national development strategies and, of course, local development and planning documents. Furthermore, in order to develop a destination in line with this concept it needs to include (in addition to the relevant documents) all the efforts of individuals and organizations on the site, so to supplement the provided plan with the bottom-up activities without which there cannot be a development of a successful community-based ecotourism destination. Unified actions of the state and local governments, as well as individuals and groups at the local level, should be interwoven throughout all stages of the development of destinations and products - from resources mapping through products creating, promotion, sales and use of revenues. It is of particular importance that revenues stay in the community and that the authenticity of the environment and the local traditional values are not violated. Also, very significant matter in setting the model is a creation of measurable instruments that may (in addition to the number and satisfaction of visitors and tourism revenues) also measure community satisfaction regarding the tourism development. It is very important not to allow uncontrolled development of tourism, as well as to leave the opportunity for changes if it turns out to be the wish of a local community.

4. Conclusions

Though the terminology is relatively new, the concept of community-based ecotourism is essentially the concept that is most responsible for all the aspects of a community in which it takes place – nature, culture and its socio-economic status as well. This concept entails people's commitment to use all available local resources and to trigger development and prosperity through local initiatives.

The tendency in the development of eco-tourism in the Balkans has been primarily focused on the protection and use of natural resources, with an emphasis on limited visits of natural heritage and its interpretation. In order to create a community-based ecotourism, a culture of the local community appears as an important factor. It is necessary to connect the culture with the natural resources in order to create complex images so that visitors could be able to develop an awareness of the community and the local way of life. Thus, local values are emphasized and a certain kind of pride of local community members of their own culture could be created, which is a prerequisite for strengthening local cultural identity. In addition to connecting natural and cultural heritage in order to meet requirements of tourism, entrepreneurial development component is often present in rural areas. Entrepreneurial development is particularly evident in social innovation and as a result it has a new

social capital that becomes the outcome and a key factor for local development.

Institutional support in both cases starts from a strategic framework at a national level which is rarely familiarized with the intersectoral cooperation and connectivity and which observes the concept of CBT partially through the sphere of the environment, nature, culture and rural development. The situation is somewhat better at the county level in Croatia and in the province of Vojvodina, which have integrated development strategies and which identify cross-sectoral cooperation as a basis for development.

Analysis of the two destinations with similar characteristics indicated the situation and the problems they encounter, and the general conclusion that can be drawn is that the successful operation of community-based ecotourism destinations needs the support of state and local governments, because in this way the institutional framework is being set and strategic planning of destination is being provided. The highlight of these examples is the existence of local stakeholders' initiatives that have participated in the preparation of strategic documents at the local level and have ensured planning niches for their initiatives.

It is necessary to involve the individuals, groups and organizations in the local community in the planning and implementation of the strategy, because they are closest to the situation on the field and have a sensibility for the analysis of the capacity and capabilities at the local level. Although it requires some work on the creation of particular mechanisms, the cooperation of local authorities and other members of the community must be enabled. Moreover, the local authorities must have a high level of functionality in order to produce adequate outcomes useful for planning. Feedback from the members of the community and research are of great importance for understanding the success of this concept, as well as the constant effort to establish and maintain the quality of the original values upon which the development of tourism in the destination began. Of course, despite these relatively universal drafts, any planning of community-based ecotourism destinations should be adapted to the local context and conditions of the community. Meanwhile, this model which has developed on its own accord and separately in two different places in the Balkans and that we have presented in this paper can serve as a good example for other rural areas in the region.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We would like to thank Provincial Institute for Nature Protection (Vojvodina, Serbia) and Vladimir Stojanović, *associate professor at the Department of geography, tourism and hotel management, University of Novi Sad*, for providing us the relevant documents.

REFERENCES

- [1] World Commission on Environment and Development. Our common future. Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1987.
- [2] Wisansing, J., 2008, Towards community driven tourism planning: a critical review of theoretical demands and practical issues, AU-GSB e-Journal, 1(1), 47-59.
- [3] Reid, D., Mair, H., George, W., 2004, Community tourism planning: A self-assessment instrument, Annals of Tourism Research, 31(3), 623-639.
- [4] Department of Environmental Affairs and Tourism of South Africa. (2003) Responsible tourism handbook. [Online]. Available: <https://www.globalnature.org/bausteine.net/f/5801/Tourismhandbook.pdf>.
- [5] National Trust for Historic Preservation. (2011). Four steps of successful and sustainable cultural heritage tourism. [Online]. Available: http://culturalheritagetourism.org/resources/documents/FourStepsDefinitions2010_000.pdf.
- [6] Lóránt, D., Tünde, A., Responsible Tourism and Tourism Ecology, Foruem geografic. Studii și cercetări de geografie și protecția mediului, Year 9, No. 9/2010, pp. 191-196.
- [7] Summary Report of the Consultation on the European Charter for Sustainable and Responsible Tourism, European Commission. Enterprise and Industry Directorate-General, Service Industries, Tourism Policy, Brussels, October 2012.
- [8] Wood, M.E., 2001, Ecotourism and sustainable development, UNEP Industry and Environment, 24(3-12).
- [9] Eagles, F. J., McCool, S. F., Haynes, D. A., Sustainable tourism in protected areas: guidelines for planning and management. IUCN Gland, Switzerland and Cambridge, UK, 2002, 183 pp.
- [10] Wood, M.E., Ecotourism: principles, practices and policies for sustainability. UNEP, Paris: 2002.
- [11] Kiss, A., 2004, Is community-based ecotourism a good use of biodiversity conservation funds? Trends in Ecology and Evolution, 19 (5), 232-237.
- [12] Murphy, P. E., 1983, Tourism as a community industry, Tourism Management, September, 180-193.
- [13] Haywood, M., 1988, Responsible and responsive tourism planning in the community, Tourism Management, June, 105-118.
- [14] Simmons, D. G., 1994, Community participation in tourism planning, Tourism Management, 15(2), 98-108.
- [15] Timothy, D. J., 1999, Participatory planning, a view of tourism in Indonesia, Annals of Tourism Research, 26(2), 371-391.
- [16] Richards, G., and Hall, D., Ed, Tourism and sustainable community development. London: Routledge, 2000.
- [17] Beeton, S. (2006) Community development through tourism. [Online]. Available: www.landlinks.com.
- [18] Okazaki, E., 2008, A Community-Based Tourism Model: its Conception and use, Journal of Sustainable Tourism, 16(5), 511-529.
- [19] Murphy, P., Tourism: a community approach. New York: Methuen, 1985.
- [20] Salazar, N.B., Community-based cultural tourism: issues, threats and opportunities, Journal of Sustainable Tourism, Vol. 20, No. 1, January 2012, 9-22.
- [21] The Thailand Community Based Institute, cbt-i. (2012) Community Based Tourism. [Online]. Available: <http://www.cbt-i.org/2012/travel.php>.
- [22] Fennel, D., Ecotourism: an introduction. London: Routledge, 1999.
- [23] WWF International. (2001) Guidelines for community-based ecotourism development. [Online]. Available: http://www.wildlife.org/Resources/Docs/WWF_2001_Community_Based_Ecotourism_Develop.pdf.
- [24] Situmorang, D.B.M., Mirzanti, I. R., Social entrepreneurship to develop ecotourism, International Conference on Small and Medium Enterprises Development with a Theme „Innovation and Sustainability in SME Development“ (ICSMED 2012), Procedia Economics and Finance 4 (2012) 398-405. Available: www.sciencedirect.com.
- [25] Popesku, J., Menadžment turističke destinacije [Management of a tourist destination]. Belgrade, Serbia: Univerzitet Singidunum, 2011.
- [26] Stojanović, V., Pavić, D., and Minučer, M., 2008, Korišćenje prirodnih potencijala ritova u Vojvodini i odnos prema ideji održivog razvoja [Use of natural resources of wetlands in Vojvodina according to the sustainable development concept]. Zbornik Matice srpske za prirodne nauke [Anthology of Matica srpska for natural sciences], 115, 109-116.
- [27] Stojanović, V., Lazić, L., Pavić, D., Panjović, B., Košić, K., Dragin, A., Stankov, U., Jovanović, M., Pantelić, M., Stamenković, I. and Ivanović, M. Studija izvodljivosti razvoja ekoturizma u zaštićenim prirodnim dobrima Vojvodine (sa posebnim osvrtom na Ramsarska područja) [Feasibility study for development of ecotourism in protected areas of Vojvodina (with special reference to the Ramsar areas)], Novi Sad, Serbia: Prirodno-matematički fakultet [Faculty of natural sciences], 2011.
- [28] Tišma, S., Maleković, S., Zaštita okoliša i regionalni razvoj: iskustva i perspektive [Environment protection and regional development: experiences and perspectives], Zagreb, Croatia: Institut za međunarodne odnose [Institute for Development and International Relations (IRMO)], 2009.
- [29] Marušić, Z., Tomljenović, R., Stavovi i potrošnja posjetitelja nacionalnih parkova i parkova prirode u Hrvatskoj [Attitudes and expenditures of visitors to national parks and nature parks in Croatia], TOMAS Nacionalni parkovi i parkovi prirode [National and nature parks], Zagreb, Croatia: Institut za turizam [Tourism Institute], 2006.
- [30] Kramarić, Ž., Tišma, S., Ozimec, K., Demonja, D., 2006, Analysis of ecotourism development potential in protected areas in the Republic of Croatia and recommendations, Croatian International Relations Review, 12, 105-119.
- [31] Malić-Limari, S., Vrednovanje parka prirode Medvjednica s obzirom na biljni pokrov, reljef i učestalost posjetitelja [Evaluation of Nature Park Medvednica with respect to vegetation, relief and frequency of visitors], Magistarski rad [Master thesis], Zagreb, Croatia: Prirodoslovno-matematički fakultet Sveučilišta u Zagrebu [Faculty of natural sciences, University of Zagreb], 2009.

- [32] Jelinčić, D. A., Tišma, S., 2010, Linking Cultural and Natural Resources for Tourism Development in Protected Areas in Croatia, *Geoadria*, 15(2), 327-341.
- [33] Yin, R. K., Case study research: Design and methods, Newbury Park, CA: Sage, 1984.
- [34] Department for Village and Rural Development, City of Pančevo. [Online]. Available: http://www.pancevo.rs/Podrska_lokalne_samouprave_Panceva_razvoju_seoskog_turizma-1-1-2176 [Accessed on May 2, 2013].
- [35] Djukić Dojčinović, V., Rural Tourism and development in Vojvodina: The animation of Tourism-Cultural Relationships. In: *World future, Culture and development: European Experiences and Challenges special issue*, ed. by Ervin Laszlo, 33(1-3), 189-198, 1992.
- [36] Lifestyle – urban guidebook for Pančevo (2013) International Volunteer Camp Sunflower. [Online]. Available: <http://www.pancevolifestyle.rs/index.php/lifestyle-magazin/magazin/173-medunarodni-volonterski-kamp-sunflower>.
- [37] Mileker, S., Istorija banatske vojničke granice [History of Banat military border] 1761-1873. Pančevo, Serbia: Istorijski arhiv [Historical archive], 2004.
- [38] Radio Television Pančevo (2012). [Online]. Available: <http://rtvpancevo.rs/Vesti/Lokal/omoljani-obeležili-dve-stogodinjice.html>.
- [39] Pokrajinski zavod za zaštitu prirode [Provincial Institute for Nature Protection], Predlog za stavljanje Parka prirode „Ponjavica“ pod zaštitu kao zaštićeno područje III kategorije [The proposal to protect the Nature Park "Ponjavica" as a protected area of III category], Novi Sad, Serbia, 2012.
- [40] River areas of Serbia. [Online]. Available: <http://revirisrbije.com/centar-za-promocije/predstavljamo/ponjavica-divlji-%C5%A1arm-banatske-oaze>.
- [41] Djukić, V., 2013, Upravljanje duhom mesta: studija Parka prirode Ponjavica [Spirit of the place management: study of Nature Park Ponjavica]. In: *Čitalište*, 22, 2013., ed. by Gordana Stokić Simončić, Novi Sad, Serbia: Filozofski fakultet [Faculty of philosophy].
- [42] ICOMOS (2008). Quebec declaration on the preservation of the spirit of the place. [Online]. Available: <http://whc.unesco.org/uploads/activities/documents/activity-646-2.pdf>.
- [43] Nature Protection Act of the Republic of Croatia. [Online]. Available: http://narodne-novine.nn.hr/clanci/sluzbeni/2013_06_80_1658.html.
- [44] County development strategy of Osijek-Baranya County 2011-2013. [Online]. Available: [Županijska razvojna strategija Osječko-baranjske županije 2011. - 2013, http://www.obz.hr/hr/index.php?tekst=972](http://www.obz.hr/hr/index.php?tekst=972).
- [45] Management Plan of Kopački Rit Nature Park. [Online]. Available: <http://www.kopacki-rit.com/zastita.html>.
- [46] Ramsarska konvencija o močvarnim staništima [Ramsar convention on wetlands], http://www.ramsar.org/cda/en/ramsar-home/main/ramsar/1_4000_0__.