THE POSSIBILITY OF SUSTINABLE DEVELOPMENT OF RURAL TOURISM IN PROTECTED WETLAND DIVICI – POJEJENA, CARAŞ – SEVERIN COUNTY

POSIBILITATEA DEZVOLTĂRII DURABILE A TURISMULUI RURAL ÎN ZONA UMEDĂ PROTEJATĂ DIVICI – POJEJENA, JUDEȚUL CARAŞ – SEVERIN

CIPRIANA SAVA[1]

[1]The Christian University "D. Cantemir", The Faculty of Tourism and Commercial Management, Timisoara, Romania;
cipriana.sava@gmail.com

Abstract: *Sustainable development of economies is a current issue worldwide. Protecting the environment through the wise use of natural resources and the reduction of pollution may be a chance of mankind. Tourism is one of the major activities that depends on the environment. Already protected areas can contribute to sustainable tourism development, each having a special regime. One such area is Divici - Pojejena in Caraş – Severin County, classified as wetland. The sustainable development of rural tourism in this area could meet the needs of tourists and increase the quality of life of local people without harming the environment.*

Key words: *sustainable development, tourism areas, protected wetland.*

INTRODUCTION

Environmental pollution has occurred over time due to various human activities and can be physical, chemical, cultural and moral, and its effects are immediately noticeable, long-term, indirect and irradiation.
Currently efforts must be made to reduce pollution, and a viable solution would be the sustainable development of economic activities.

"Sustainability is the emergency doctrine through which development and economic progress must be made and maintained over time, within the limits set by ecology in the widest sense – by the interdependence of human beings and their jobs, the biosphere and the laws

of physics and chemistry that govern...Therefore the environmental protection and the economic development are indeed antagonistic processes"[1].

At European level, with the signing of the Treaty of Maastricht (1992), environmental protection was given full status in all its policies. Thus, the European Commission established the fundamental criteria of sustainable development, namely maintaining the quality of life, permanent access to natural resources and avoiding permanent damage to the environment.

Tourism is one of the activities that produce multiple dynamic types of pollution, which is why in this case experts are trying to implement sustainable development principles. These refer to: the environment – it supports the tourism industry, hence the need for its preservation for generations to come; the tourism activity – it brings about benefits for the environment, local communities and tourists; the environment-tourism relationship in the long term; the preservation of the place's characteristics; the achievement of a balance between the needs of the participants (tourists, their hosts and destination); the observance of principles by all subjects involved in this activity and their responsibility.

A good start for this type of development could be rural tourism with its forms, from the periphery of protected areas. From a tourist point of view these areas have a special attraction and can be characterized by location and accessibility, and surface and structure of existing species.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

All protected areas are remarkable tourist resources, with a well-known value appreciated at a national and at an international level, which were defined by the International Union for Conservation of Nature. According to this international authority, the protected area is "a clearly defined geographical space, recognized, dedicated and managed, through legal or other effective means, to achieve the long-term conservation of nature with associated ecosystem services and cultural values." (Resolution

[1] William D. Ruckelshaus, "Toward a Sustainable World," Scientific American, September 1989.

19.4 of the 19th Session of the Assembly of IUCN, Buenos Aires January 1994).

Also, a classification system for protected areas, noted from I to VII, was developed in order to provide international standards for comparing the protected areas in different countries. The seven Protected Area Management Categories that define protected areas according to their management objectives and are internationally recognized are Strict Nature Reserve, Wilderness Area, National Park, Natural Monument of Feature, Habitat/Species Management Area, Protected Landscape/ Seascape, Protected area with sustainable use of natural resources.

In Romania, according to the Emergency Decree 236/2000 regarding the protected natural areas, the preservation of natural habitats, the wild flora and fauna one can distinguish Scientific Reserve, Nature Reserve, National Park, Natural Park, Nature Monument, Biosphere Reserve, Wetland of international importance (Ramsar site) and World natural heritage site.

An area is put under protection for the following main purposes scientific research, protection of wilderness and species diversity, maintenance of services, protection of natural and cultural features, tourism and recreation, education, sustainable use of ecosystems and preservation of cultural and traditional features.

Protected areas contribute to sustainable development by soil and water conservation in areas of erosion, regulation and purification of water courses, protection against natural disasters (floods, storms, landslides), preservation of important natural vegetation on soils of low productivity in sensitive areas, protection of species sensitive to human action, providing critical habitats necessary for the feeding, breeding, and resting of some species, source of income and employment through sustainable tourism development.

For a good management of protected areas these were divided into functional areas. The following main areas resulted:

- areas of full protection or strictly protected - they are obligatorily protected and represent little disturbing samples, representative of natural ecosystems, terrestrial and aquatic. Therefore they include the most valuable assets of the natural heritage within the protected area;

- buffer areas or areas of sustainable management – they are set around strictly protected areas making the transition to economic areas;
- economic or development areas of human activities - including human settlements;
- ecological restoration areas – they are delimited only where necessary.

Wetlands present a growing interest for tourism. They are characterized by the presence of both land and water in most of the year. According to the definition given by the RAMSAR, wetlands are ponds, marshes, coral reefs, peat bogs, lakes or mangroves with water, natural or artificial, permanent or temporary, stagnant or flowing, fresh, brackish or salty, including stretches of sea water whose depth at low tide does not exceed 6 m.

These areas are designed to: purify water by removing high levels of nitrogen and phosphorus, and in some cases, even toxic chemicals; prevent floods; recharge underground aquifers that store 97% of the world's unfrozen fresh water; protect the land against storms and other meteorological phenomena; slow down the force of water by encouraging the storage of sediments that will get into water; encourage tourism by fishing, hunting, boating, bird watching; encourage tourism by education and science.

In terms of the tourist activity we can say that wetlands are primary locations that could encourage recreational activities.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

A wetland that is worth exploiting from a tourism point of view is Divici - Pojejena, in Caras-Severin. It is part of the Iron Gates Natural Park, from the full protection area, as a Special Protection Bird Area (IUCN IV) and is also included in the areas of sustainable management.

The reserve area surface under consideration (an island in the Danube) is 489 hectares, the territory is under the administration of the commune Pojejena, and it stretches between the place with the same name and the rangers' unit upstream of the village Divici. Its limitations are:

- North - from the junction of the national road with Valea Mare, it divides the ponds from the infields belonging to the people from

the villages Divici, Belobreşca, Susca on the national road until the entrance in Pojejena;

- East - from the entrance in Pojejena, along the Danube banks, until the Border Police Unit, going up the Danube until kilometer 1058;
- South – from kilometer 1058 from the Danube to Valea Mare that is located upstream from the village Divici;
- West – it continues along the Danube to the Border Police Sector Divici (3 km upstream from the village Divici), following the national road to Divici, the junction with Valea Mare.

The protected area comprises the body of water adjacent to the waterside up to a depth of 1.5 m, the 5 consecutive ponds, the bushes and the grassy formations where the water level is close to the surface of the land.

The climate in this area is temperate continental with Mediterranean influences, which translates into mild thermal conditions, with heavy rainfalls in spring, summer and winter. The highest temperatures are recorded in July and August, while the lowest are recorded in January.

In this area, the birds are represented by species that are under the protection of the Romanian law in the Birds Section, ratified by the Romanian Government OUG.57/2007.

Some of the species found in this area are: the small cormorant (Phalacrocorax pygmaeus), the Little Bittern (Ixobrychus minutus), the Little Egret (Egretta garzetta), the big egret (Egretta alba), the red duck (Aythya nyroca), the pintail (Anas acute), the barn owl (Tyto alba), the Marsh Harrier (Circus aeruginosus), etc.

In this area one can also come across species of insects, reptiles, amphibians among which the dragonfly (Libellula quadrimaculata), Aesculapius's snake (Elaphe longissima), the water snake (Natrix tessellata), the water turtle (Emys orbicularis), Herman's tortoise (Testudo hermanni beottgeri).

We can mention species of plants such as the marsh iris (Iris pseudacorus), the orchid (Orchis elegans), the floating fern (Salvinia natans), and the water chestnut (Trapa natans). In addition to these species we can also find unprotected species, species of willow (Salix), reed (Phragmites spp), and sedge (Carex spp.).

In the wetland Pojejena - Divici the following activities are permitted: scientific and educational activities; tourist activities which do

not require construction and investment; the rational use of pastures; the locating and extinguishing fires; the intervention for the removal of negative factors for the habitats and the species found here.

In addition to the permitted activities there are also prohibited activities which refer to the exploitation and usage of natural resources and land, and the carrying out of constructions - investments.

As I have mentioned above, this wetland is under the administration of the village Pojejena.

The development of rural tourism in the village would be appropriate for both the local population and the potential tourists. Also, the protected area could be valued without being destroyed, provided that the principles of sustainable development of tourism are observed.

Pojejena village covers an area of 11280 ha, out of which only 85 hectares are within the built-up area and 11195 ha (99.25% of the total area) are outside the built-up area.

Table1

General data regarding the village Pojejena, county Caraş-Severin

Area (ha)	11280
Adjoining villages that are under the same administration	5 (Pojejena, Divici, Belobreşca, Radimna, Şuşca)
Population (number of persons)	3215
Homesteads (number)	1124
Dwellings (number)	1146
Education Facilities	11 (6 kindergardens and 5 schools)

Source: Pojejena Townhall

Table 1 shows that the number of inhabitants is low compared to the area of the village, and that there is a sufficient number of housing units and of pre-school and school facilities.

According to nationality the inhabitants of the village are: 1681 Serbians, 1475 Romanians, 34 Gypsies, 13 Hungarians, 5 Czechs, 5 Germans, 1 Ukrainian and 1 Croatian. Given the distribution of the rural population, most inhabitants live in Pojejena (1175 persons), then in Belobreşca (656 persons), Radimna (560 persons), Şuşca (482 persons) and Divici (342 persons).

The specific activities of the area are agriculture and fishing, so tourism could increase the standard of living of the inhabitants and would diversify activities in the area.

Some of the existing households could be developed for tourism, taking into account the fact that many homes are new constructions with several rooms.

Besides the beauty of the landscape, the importance of wetland area and the variety of the water flora and fauna, there are other tourist resources in the village area could be of interest to the potential tourists, such as the vestiges of the Dacian fortification Divici, the churches in Pojejena and Divici, the Nature Reserve the Ravine with Martins from the Divici Valley and the customs and traditions of the area.

The main types of tourism that can be practiced here are:

- relaxation and recreation;
- cognitive (itinerant), performed either individually or with organized tours;
- specialized - scientific;
- for youth (for knowledge, understanding and appreciation of nature);
- rural;
- bird watching;
- for fishing and hunting sports.

Currently, in Divici village on the banks of the Danube there is a tourist pension, classified with three daisies, called the Flying Fish, GPS coordinates: 45 42 '37.53 "N, 21 15' 2.58 'E.

This accommodation facility has 15 rooms which offer 37 beds. Tourists enjoy the parking place, the pool, the motor boats, the conference room, the restaurant with a capacity of 55 seats, the sport field and other services and facilities.

CONCLUSIONS

In order to use existing tourism resources, sustainable development of tourism is the best solution. Rural tourism offers an alternative to urban tourism and its development in the vicinity of protected areas increases the interest of potential tourists.

The wetland Divici - Pojejena located at 170 km away from Timişoara and 100 km away from Reşiţa, has an interesting tourist potential.

A first attempt to develop rural tourism has already been done by opening a pension.

For more people to have access to the area the opening of other accommodation facilities, even more modest ones, the promotion of the area, the organization of events on environmental issues, specific knowledge of the avifauna, photo contests etc. would be necessary.

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