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**PUBLIC-PRIVATE PARTNERSHIP: A MODEL FOR SUSTAINABLE  
TOURISM DEVELOPMENT IN REGIONAL PARK MURA-DRAVA –  
THE POSSIBILITY OF TOURIST VALORISATION OF ABANDONED  
ARMY BARRACKS**

**JAVNO-PRIVATNO PARTNERSTVO KAO MODEL RAZVITKA  
ODRŽIVOG TURIZMA U REGIONALNOM PARKU MURA-DRAVA –  
MOGUĆNOSTI TURISTIČKE VALORIZACIJE NAPUŠTENIH  
KARULA**

**ABSTRACT**

*In many Strategic documents (Strategy of Croatian Tourism Development from 2003. to 2010.; Main plan and Strategy of Croatian Tourism until 2020.) The role of selective forms of tourism in Croatian continental area was emphasized as one of Croatian priorities, although its development has not yet reached those proportions as it expected to have. Slow development of Croatian rural tourism lays in many reasons, among other things there are inefficiency of destination management, low size of investments in touristic infrastructure, a lack of accommodation and insufficient education in tourist and accommodation business. In this paper the authors try to point out the positive role of new declared Regional Park Mura-Drava and its role in sustainable tourist development as it might have. The survey which was conducted with directors of County Tourist Boards in whose territory The Park was declared is used for the current status analysis of touristic offer and development of destination management. The authors emphasize the possibilities of many different kinds of local co-operation and public-private partnerships with the aim of tourist development in the observed area. Among other things, this paper describes a case-study of local co-operation in Municipality of Pitomača. The goal of this partnership is to develop a reference center for organic agriculture and sustainable tourism in the abandoned barracks nearby Hungarian border, now in Regional Park area of protection. This example tries to point to the possibility of using various forms of co-operation and the local public-private partnership to encourage faster development of tourism in natural protected area of The Regional Park Mura - Drava.*

**Key words:** public-private partnership, local co-operation, Regional Park Mura-Drava, rural tourism, sustainable tourism development

## SAŽETAK

*Iako je nizom strateških dokumenata ( Strategija razvoja hrvatskog turizma do 2010., Glavni plan i strategija hrvatskog turizma do 2020.) razvoj selektivnih oblika turizma u kontinentalnom dijelu Republike Hrvatske naglašavan kao jedan od prioriteta , kontinentalni turizam još uvijek nije dosegao one razmjere koje bi trebao imati u ukupnosti turističke ponude. Razlozi nedovoljno brzog razvoja turizma na kontinentu leže između ostalog u neučinkovitosti destinacijskog menadžmenta, nedovoljnih ulaganja privatnog sektora u turističku infrastrukturu , kroničnom nedostatku smještajnih kapaciteta te nedovoljnoj educiranosti za kvalitetno pružanje usluga u turizmu i ugostiteljstvu. Ovim radom autori nastoje ukazati na pozitivnu ulogu koju bi proglašenje Regionalnog parka Mura-Drava moglo imati u razvoju održivog turizma na području njegova obuhvata. Rezultatima ankete provedene s voditeljima županijskih turističkih zajednica na području obuhvata Regionalnog parka Mura-Drava, autori nastoje analizirati trenutno stanje destinacijskog menadžmenta i turističke ponude promatranog područja. Autori izводе zaključak da razne mogućnosti koje pruža lokalno udruživanje i javno-privatno partnerstvo mogu predstavljati značajan poticaj razvoju turizma na promatranome području. Pored ostalog u radu je opisan slučaj lokalnog udruživanja na području općine Pitomača. Cilj ovog partnerstva je razvoj referentnog centra ekološke poljoprivrede i održivog turizma stavljanjem u funkciju napuštene karaule u blizini mađarske granice koja se nalazi na području Regionalnog Parka. Ovim primjerom želi se ukazati na mogućnost da se putem različitih oblika kooperativnih odnosa i lokalnih javno-privatnih partnerstva osnaži brži razvoj turizma u zaštićenim dijelovima prirode Regionalnog parka Mura-Drava.*

**Ključne riječi:** javno-privatno partnerstvo, lokalno udruživanje, regionalni park Mura-Drava, ruralni turizam, razvoj održivog turizma

### 1. Introduction

Regional Park Mura-Drava (hereinafter referred as Park) was proclaimed by the Croatian Government in February 2011. (NN.RH 22/11) The purpose of Park, among other things is: the protection of landscape diversity, sustainable development and tourism. (Zakon o zaštiti prirode, NN.RH 70/05, 139/08) With the exception of the Osijek-Baranja County, in other Counties in the area of the park, there is almost no tourist traffic recorded. Reasons for lack of preparation of nature protected areas, including mentioned one lies in:

- Lack of coordination among the attractions of the Regional Park
  - Insufficient valorization of tourist potentials
  - Lack of distinctive and attractive destination image
  - A very small number of accommodation capacities
  - Lack of accommodation on family farms
  - Insufficient knowledge and skills to provide services in tourism
- (Kranjčević at al., 2010,48-49)

In this paper the authors try to point out that it will be no recent development of tourism in mentioned area without initiatives of local communities through various forms of cooperative relations and the local associations also by using EU funds. So, local communities can become a driving force for sustainable development of tourism in the area of the Park. This fact is also demonstrated by the example of Pitomača Municipality in Virovitica-Podravina County, which Case Study was examined in this paper.

## **2. Regional Park Mura-Drava as driving force of sustainable tourism development**

The demand for nature based tourism makes 7% of total global tourism demand, and annual growth rates range between 10% and 30%. Also the demand of eco-tourism ranges between 7% and 10% of world tourism demand with annual growth rates between 2% and 4%. (Institut za turizam Hrvatske, TOMAS 2007.)

Protected areas are increasingly important in tourism development, and global trends in tourism demand are inclined to destinations which can develop and offer these selective forms of tourism. The Park overlaps with the area of so-called European Green Belt. No Man's Land won by nature, prior to the disappearance of the "iron curtain" has shown remarkable biological diversity. The German BUND Organization (Bund für Umwelt und Naturschutz Deutschland), in 1989. recognized the need to preserve this unique belt. Linkage of the Regional Park Mura-Drava in the European system of natural protected areas gives it an extra dimension and the possibility of developing sustainable tourism, which can take on international significance. Managing the tourism resources in a manner to save them for the future without jeopardizing their ecological and socio-cultural balance is a way not only to develop the local economy but also to enhance environmental quality. (UNEP, 2003, 7)

## **3. The current state of tourism within the Regional Park Mura-Drava**

The authors have conducted a survey among managers of the County Tourist Board in five Croatian counties in whose scope the Park is situated with intentions to summon the facts of potentials for the development of eco-tourism in the Regional Park Mura-Drava, and the results obtained after, taking the following conclusions:

- The fact of the proclamation of the Park did not provide an initiative for development of new or revised Master plans for tourism development in context of developing tourist forms which are appropriate for areas under protection
- There is no hotel accommodation in the Park
- The lack of hospitality facilities is to be seen, especially the accommodation ones
- There is no receptive tourist agencies to offer itinerary through the Park
- The lack of private initiatives by the Family Farm owners is noticeable, especially in the way of diversification of their activities to the tourism offer
- There is no systematic educational and training programs for tourism

Even though the survey results show that there is some tourist traffic, mostly one-day excursionists, it does not include statistical. All this points to the fact that the proclamation of the Park offers outstanding opportunities for the development of selective forms of tourism, for now on there are very little activities in order to create the image of a desirable destination for potential tourists for whom there are assumptions with the regard to tourism attraction base.

## **4. The role of local communities in sustainable tourism development**

Tourism is recognized as an activity that greatly contributes to the development of rural areas, poverty reduction and is a major "export" sector and primary source of foreign exchange inflows in many middle developed and developing countries. (Netherland Develop Organization, 2009., 4) Also it represents a great potential for the growth of national and local economies through job creation. (Ministry of tourism RH, 2003., 18) S. Beeton estimates that every thousand of new visitors of a particular area generates approximately fifty five new business activities in the local community. (Beeton 1998., 7) Therefore, local communities have a great interest for developing tourism on their areas, and this is most easily to

accomplish throughout various forms of local association and thus enhance the experiences and knowledge such as:

- About marketing in rural tourism (which can be transferred from the share of business sector)
  - About the legislation (which can be transmitted by experts from local and regional government)
  - About managing the carrying capacity (by the contribution of environmental management experts)
  - About outdoor planning (which can be enhanced by engagement of architects)
- (Choibamroong, 2011, 182-183)

The tourism sector must be encouraged, among other things, throughout the promotion of culture of collaboration and cooperative relationship among all stakeholders in tourism. (OECD, 2010, 80)

## **5. Local associations and Private-public partnerships in tourism**

Partnerships can be concluded under different names and be structured differently: as a partnership between the private sector (eg. private-private), a partnership of the public sector (eg. public-public) or between public and private sectors (eg. public-private). (KPMG; WTOBC 2004., 2 ). Forms and structure of partnerships will depend on the ultimate goal of this joint business initiatives, and “partnership should be understood as a method of linking the interest of the public sector (public goods), the private sector (profit) and the civil sector (special interests) in increasing the quality and/or availability of services and products.” (Perić and Dragičević, 2009, 253) The tourist management requires building a rounded destination product. Only the establishment of various private-public, public-public, and/or public-private partnerships can create a quality tourism value chain. (Kunst, 2011, 186) Typical objectives of the partnership, among other things may be in the fields of development:

- Product (strengthening and preservation of tourism resources, the creation of new attractions, theme parks and residential buildings, the contribution to the local economy and promotion of sustainable development in the touristic sector).
  - Human Resources (providing of education and training)
  - Marketing and sales (enhancing destination image and improving marketing efficiency)
  - Infrastructure
  - Financing (initial project financing, lobbying for public founding)
- (Adapted from KPMG, WTOBC, 2004, 1)

The case of the project in the Municipality of Pitomača which will be described below in this text, provides a good example of local initiative to establishing a reference center for the development of ecological agriculture and sustainable tourism in the former army barracks. Because of a significant number of such facilities along river Drava by the border with Republic of Hungary, this example can serve as an impetus for similar ventures in the other parts of the Park.

### **Development of a reference center for organic agriculture and sustainable tourism in an abandoned army barrack Banov brod – an example of a local association for the development tourism in the Municipality of Pitomača**

By thinking about the ways to stimulate tourism development in the Park on area of the Municipality of Pitomača and guide it towards sustainable development, there are four areas of intervention that crystallized in the process:

1. Environmental management in a sustainable manner
2. Education
3. Encouragement of ecological agriculture
4. Development of tourism by creating the image of preserved and environmentally-conscious destination with distinctive selective forms of tourism such as ecotourism, sustainable hunting and fishing tourism, adventure tourism and gastro-tourism which are managed in sustainable manner

To achieve that vision, a partnership agreement between the Municipality of Pitomača, Pitomača VET School and Jan Spider Company was signed in the spring of 2011. The goal of this partnership is to create a reference center for the development of ecological agriculture and sustainable tourism in an abandoned army barrack Banov Brod. Considering the fact that the complex with the 5 acres of land is located within the Park, it makes an ideal location for a development of the Center that will have a multiple roles such as:

- **Centre of Education:** will serve as a practicum for VET students from Pitomača Secondary School who are studying for the profession agrotouristic technician and as center for training and education of stakeholders from other sectors concerned for tourism.
- **Pilot reference center for environmental management** by the principles of permaculture (Mollison and Slay, 1999, 9)
- **Information point** for the visitors at the entrance to the Regional Park and in the final phase of the Project, Ethno Village with facilities for the accommodation created by the principles of sustainable construction

At the time of writing this paper, the project has positively passed the first stage of the evaluation under IPA project and there is a reasonable assumption that it will be approved for funding by the European Union.

## 6. Conclusion

Due to the heterogeneity of tourism, its sustainable development can be planned and based only on the continued cooperation of all stakeholders from public and private sectors. It is particularly expressed in areas where its development is at the very beginning, because in such areas the private sector often does not recognize the opportunities which tourism offers. As an example of partnership in order to encourage the development of tourism in the Park there is an opportunity and possibility of tourist valorization of abandoned Army barracks along the river Drava which are located in almost all parts of the Park by the border with the Republic of Hungary. Given that these facilities are in the ownership of the State or are committed to the management of local government, precisely an initiative of local communities to invest in their restoration and touristic valorization through various forms of public-private partnerships can be stimulus to the development of sustainable tourism.

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