SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT OF RURAL SETTLEMENTS IN SPATIAL COVERAGE OF THE PROTECTED AREAS IN SERBIA, EXAMPLE OF MOUNTAIN BESNA KOBILA

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ABSTRACT

Rural settlements in Serbia, whose administrative territory located within protected natural areas are characterized mostly by favorable conditions for life. These areas should be characterized by limitation of conventional agriculture and exploitation of forests, preservation of biodiversity. Therefore there is a need for identifying optimal solutions of renovation and conservation that would contribute to their sustainable development. Rural settlements, which belong to the protected area of mount Besna Kobila characterized by compromised environment, and as the only permitted type of tourism it is necessary to develop sustainable tourism. That the concept of sustainable development and environmental protection become routine practice, it is planning to react and stop further construction. It is very important that, as at the community level and at the state level, raising awareness on the protection of rural areas of the mountain Besna Kobila.

Key words: sustainable development, protected areas, mountain Besna Kobila, rural settlements.

INTRODUCTION

The rural tourism is becoming more and more actual and an increasingly important place in the tourist trends in developed countries. The development of rural tourism has a significant impact on the transformation of economic, social and functional structures of rural areas, as evidenced by examples of some European countries - France, Italy, Slovenia ... The pure and preserved nature, healthy environment, organically produced food that we are striving for, as well as facilities that can provide an attractive and relaxing holiday, become the need of every modern man who is trying to satisfy this need. All of these can be found in the unique environment in the area of mountain Besna Kobila.

Defining the clear and achievable strategic goals and priorities, as well as their implementation, is of great importance for the sustainable development of rural tourism in the area of mountain Besna Kobila. The objective of this paper is to detect the strategic development of rural tourism in the area of mountain Besna Kobila and its surroundings in order to form the basis on which to base the sustainable development of rural tourism in this area. The strategic directions of the development of rural tourism of this region should enable the development of local
communities and regions, and should also ensure the protection of natural resources.

**BASIC FEATURES OF THE RELIEF OF THE MOUNTAIN BESNA KOBILA**

The mountain Besna Kobila, with its highest peak at 1,922 meters above sea level, is located in southeast Serbia, on the watershed basin of South Morava River basin and the Struma River. It is 40 km east of Vranje, 120 km from Nis (from Corridor XI), 120 km from Skopje and 400 km from Belgrade. Besna Kobila belongs to the Rhodope mountain range. Rhodope Mountains are provided east and west of the South and Great Morava. In addition Besne Mares, Rhodope Mountains include mountain: Dukat, Vardenik, Cemernik, coward, Jastrebac, Juhor, etc. The highest peak Besne Mares is located at an altitude of 1,922 m. North of Besne Mares extends Vardenik (1,874 m), Cemernik (1,638 m) and Undertow, and south of Besne Mares extends Dukat (1,881 m) and the mountain Ostrogovske in Macedonia.

Higher altitude Besne mares are covered pastures and the foothills covered trees. Since mineral deposits most important the lead ore and granite (lead, zinc, cadmium, silver, copper).

**POSSIBLE DIRECTIONS OF SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT OF RURAL TOURISM IN THE AREA OF MOUNTAIN BESNA KOBILA**

Contemporary trends in the world’s tourism are increasingly turning to the demand of the original environment. Serbia’s chance as a country of diverse and preserved nature is going in the direction of the development of eco and rural tourism. Committing to these types of tourism and unambiguous quality of the natural environment of rural areas are a good way towards the ultimate formation of the strategy of development of sustainable rural tourism. [Milanović, 2008].

A large number of rural areas in Serbia is characterized by depopulation and economic underdevelopment, while urban centers recorded higher concentration of population and economic activity. This trend is negatively affecting the development of the whole country. Therefore it is necessary to develop programs, projects and future strategic directions of sustainable development of rural areas, in accordance with their specific characteristics, economic and non-economic functions, and demands of the domestic and international environment. An important priority for the sustainable development of rural tourism is the restoration and development of rural infrastructure (roads, water, sewage, electricity, information and telecommunication services, etc.) which has a large socio-economic and ecological significance. In this case, international projects can significantly bring better use of local resources, for example, a common road infrastructure, energy networks, tourist facilities, etc. [Ristić, 2013].

A large number of authors, researchers and those who participated in tourist planning, especially in underdeveloped areas that are still rich in natural conditions for the development of ecotourism, suggest involving of local people in tourist development, in order to minimize the negative effects of tourism and to maximize its benefits from tourism [Cvetkovic et al. 2011.; Kostic et al. 2014.; Maksimovic,
Mountain tourism in the Besna Kobila should be devised as a program for the development of summer and winter tourism, considering prevention of further degradation of nature.

The rural area of the mountain Besna Kobila is characterized by negative demographic trend, underdeveloped infrastructure, non-market oriented agricultural production, insufficient investment in rural areas as well as high unemployment. One of the main strategic directions of the development of rural tourism in the area of mountain Besna Kobila is the protection of the environment, because the sustainable development strategy is based on the principle that the economic, social and environmental effects must be taken into account in the decision making processes. However, as Stankovic said (2003), the protection of nature and the development of tourism are not a matter of an individual, and social and professional organizations. It is the need for the engagement of the entire community.

The area of mountain Besna Kobila has good prospects for the development of rural tourism thanks to its geographical position, varied landscape, cuisine, folklore, as well as a great cultural value that has products of traditional crafts and handicrafts through which one meets a rich heritage of the local people.

Nowadays, the visitors of the mountain Besna Kobila are mainly domestic tourists, but in the future it may be the target group of foreign tourists, participants of different business meetings and seminars who can enjoy the healthy climate, intact nature, and the abundance of flora and fauna. Organizing events, conferences, sports competitions and other forms of socialization would mean a higher capacity utilization and extension of the tourist season in the area of Besna Kobila. (Marić et al. 2015).

**CONCLUSION**

The conditions for the development of the rural tourism in the area of the mountain Besna Kobila are more than favorable. The development of rural tourism should provide the preservation of the environment and all the other developmental resources together with the preservation of the integrity of the local community. The development of rural tourism would improve the economic power of the local population who has for decades been struggling with low standards, and thus would have positive effects on the regional economy.

The exceptional relief, the climate, the endemic-relict vegetation protected by the law, the mountain Besna Kobila and its characteristic floating islands of peat offer more than favorable conditions for the development of economic and non-economic activities, which can satisfy the needs of tourists. All these things are initial and primary elements for the development of the rural tourism in this area.

We should take advantage of the connection between agriculture and tourism, especially when it comes to healthy and organic food production, making this region distinctive as the local population does not possess the financial strength to invest in agriculture production. In particular, organic agriculture can contribute significantly to the sustainable development of rural areas, because it is socially, economically and environmentally friendly (sustainable).
Partnerships between commercial and economic activities are necessary. They also require investments in building the image so as to make this destination recognized on the tourist market.

Great emphasis should be placed on human resources, because they would certainly be a very important factor in the development of rural tourism on the territory of Serbia. Special attention should be paid to the promotion of human resources in rural areas of Southeast Serbia. An important part of the activity should be the education of all participants in the development of rural tourism. The educational program should be covered by rural households that participate directly in making and offering their products. With a higher motivation and a better training of the population one of the main barriers to the development of rural tourism would be eliminated.

In this way the local population can achieve a significant economic profit thereby encouraging the development of rural tourism in the area of the mountain Besna Kobila and throughout Southeastern Serbia.

REFERENCE