

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT: CASE STUDY – TOURISM IN THE PROTECTED AREA OF THE DANUBE DELTA

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Abstract

The current crisis has brought about some new discussion about the way people should go about in pursuing their economic interests. It's not a new topic, there were talks about sustainable development of the economies starting from the 70's, but what changed is the necessity to really implement it. Tourism is one sector that contributed consistently to the economic growth, worldwide. Thus, sustainable tourism is the way to go for the future, as it's link to the environment and to social welfare is obvious. The Danube Delta is one of Romania's tourism treasure, but the development and the increase of visitors should be well weighted out, and thus, sustainability should be the leading principle.

Key words: *sustainable development, sustainable tourism*

JEL Classification: Q01 - Sustainable Development

Introduction

Sustainable development is defined as being the "*development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs*" (WCED, 1987). The Brundtland Report is considered to be the first official document in which the new approach on the economic development is stated as being not optional, but mandatory for all states. There can't be any exception, now less than ever, because globalisation makes the world "flat, hot and crowded" (Th. Friedman, 2008), and more, because ecological disasters don't stop at national borders. There can be endless talks on who is to blame, who should pay, there can be explanations and justifications, but the fact remains: according to scientist, pursuing the same way of development in the future will end in global collapse of the ecological system. This is why, each economic sector, especially the ones with a big impact on the environment should undergo a major change of attitudes and values it relies on. A long term vision is in order for the tourism sector, as it becomes an ever more important sector for every national economy.

2. Sustainable development

The origins of the concept of sustainable development can be traced back to the publication of Rachel Carson, *The Silent spring*, in 1962 and in 1973, of *Ecological Principles for Economic Development* by Raymond Dasmann, John Milton and Peter Freeman. One year earlier there was a Conference on the Environment in Stockholm, where the conflicts between environment and development were first acknowledged—and in the 1980 World Conservation Strategy of the International Union for the

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Conservation of Nature, which argued for conservation as a means to assist development and specifically for the sustainable development and utilization of species, ecosystems, and resources (W. M. Adams, 1990). Thus the notion of “sustainability” was launched onto the global stage, bringing the cautious thinking of the conservationist together with the positive but sometimes heedless world of the developer. It was an attempt to find a compromise between the development needs of the nations in the Southern Hemisphere and the conservation demands of the developed nations in the North.

On December 1983, Gro Harlem Brundtland, the Prime Minister of Norway, was asked by the Secretary General of the United Nations to chair a special independent commission, the World Commission on Environment and Development known as the WCED. This Commission had to re-examine critical environmental and development problems around the world and formulate realistic proposals to address them. As stated in the Brundtland Report: *The environment does not exist as a sphere separate from human actions, ambitions, and needs, and attempts to defend it in isolation from human concerns have given the very word “environment” a connotation of naivety in some political circles. The word “development” has also been narrowed by some into a very limited focus, along the lines of “what poor nations should do to become richer,” and thus again is automatically dismissed by many in the international arena as being a concern of specialists, of those involved in questions of “development assistance.” But the “environment” is where we live; and “development” is what we all do in attempting to improve our lot within that abode. The two are inseparable.* More so, this should determine a better international cooperation between all nations and also raise the level of understanding of and commitment to sustainable development on the part of individuals, organizations, businesses and governments.

In the '90s there were other international meetings on the topic of sustainable development. The United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) in Rio de Janeiro in 1992 (the so-called “Earth Summit”) issued a declaration of principles, a detailed Agenda 21 of desired actions, international agreements on climate change and biodiversity, and a statement of principles on forests. In the year 2000 **UN Millennium Summit and the Millennium Development Goals** was being organized. It was the largest-ever gathering of world leaders which agreed to a set of timebound and measurable goals for combating poverty, hunger, disease, illiteracy, environmental degradation and discrimination against women. Now known as the Millennium Development Goals, to be achieved by 2015 (although the percentage of the world’s people without access to safe drinking water was cut in half since 2012, prior to the date committed). In 2002, at the World Summit on Sustainable Development in Johannesburg, South Africa, the commitment to sustainable development was reaffirmed.

One of the most recent gathering was 2012 Rio +20: Fifty years after Silent Spring, 40 years after Stockholm and 20 years after the Earth Summit, the global community reconvenes in an effort to secure agreement on “greening” world economies through a range of smart measures for clean energy, decent jobs and more sustainable and fair use of resources.

An unanimous definitions of this concept is not given, as it implies a lot of elements (economic, ecologic, social, cultural, technological etc.) and it allows many approaches. As a concept, its malleability allows it to remain an open, dynamic, and evolving idea

