

ID 1421 | TOURISM AS ECONOMIC RESOURCE FOR PROTECTING THE LANDSCAPE: INTRODUCING TOURISTIC INITIATIVES IN PROTECTED AREAS OF ALBANIA

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ABSTRACT: The paper aims to investigate the relation between landscape and tourism, with a special focus on coastal protected areas of Albania. The relationship between tourism and landscape is mutually reliant: there is no tourism without landscape attractive features and, on the other hand, landscape needs economic resources to be conserved and protected. The survival of each component is strictly related to the other. Today, the Albanian protected areas appear as isolated islands, too far away from each other to build an efficient network and to avoid waste in terms of energy, economy and work force. This study wants to stress the importance of cooperation in terms of common strategies and the necessity of introducing a touristic sustainable model in Albania. Comparing the protection system of neighbor countries of the Adriatic-Ionian region and through a desk review on the best practices of protected areas that benefit from touristic activities, the study proposes the creation of the Albanian Riviera Landscape Park. This action will impact positively the whole southern Albania territory, introducing a sustainable tourism network aimed at valorizing the local heritage and stopping the coastal exploitation processes. The main output is the definition of future development scenarios in Albania with the establishment of new protected areas and the introduction of touristic initiatives.

KEYWORDS: Albanian Riviera, ecotourism, protected areas, tourism for landscape.

1 INTRODUCTION

“There is no tourist development without a landscape; it also seems that landscapes, especially those called cultural landscapes, need tourism as an economic activity to be sustained” (Goula et al, 2012).

How can tourism and landscape coexist? Referring to the above quotation, those two elements are strictly interrelated. The absence of natural or cultural landscapes in a specific area means not only an absence of interest in visiting it, but, more generally, a lack of interest in developing and investing in it. On the other hand, when in an area there are one or more iconic (Dudley and Stolton, 2009) elements, the risk is to overdevelop it and affect irreparably its heritage components.

So, which are the tools for the pacific coexistence of tourism and landscape? One possible answer to the question is the institution of protected area systems. The role of protected areas is to gather valuable elements and protect them from market pressure, but also to valorize and make them accessible to everybody. In the specific context of a touristic developing region, the designation of a protected area aims to switch from a mass tourism destination to an educated and responsible one.

In this general framework, what is the potential of Albania? Due to its accelerated development process, the risk of exploitation is high. The strategic use of the protection system can offer the possibility to slow down this development process and better plan future steps that ought to be taken.

2 PROTECTED AREAS AND TOURISM: FOCUS ON BALKANS

Tourism “in protected areas produces benefits and costs [and] these effects interact often in a complex way” (Eagles et al, 2009). Although the environmental risks are high, touristic activities should not be avoided, but constantly monitored and well managed. Luckily there are a lot of best practices that subvert the negative opinion about touristic development. The new trends of sustainable, responsible, eco tourism started to be discussed in 90s, but there are many different points of view. Ecotourism, for example, is

defined as “sustainable tourism with a natural area focus, which benefits the environment and communities visited, and fosters environmental and cultural understanding, appreciation, and awareness” (IPS, 2010). In the last few years, ecotourism is becoming nothing more than a kind of environmental show business (Hintze, 2008). So how to avoid this risk?

Touristic activities are often presented and sold as “eco”, but then in reality they strongly impact the environment. But it is also clear that “tourism planning and development aims to take advantage of the interest shown by tourists to as to: (i) enhance economic opportunities, (ii) protect the natural and cultural heritage, and (iii) advance the quality of life of all concerned” (Eagles et al, 2009). In order to develop the correct touristic strategy to include in the park management plan, the natural and cultural features of the area should be clearly identified and categorized according to the IUCN protected area management categories. The following figure (Figure 1) defines the priority of “tourism and recreation activities” according to the IUCN Protected Area classification.

IUCN category	tourism priority
Ia - Strict natural reserve	-
Ib - Wilderness Area	2
II - National Park	1
III - Natural Monument	1
IV - Habitat/Species Management Area	3
V - Landscape Park	1
VI - Protected Area with sustainable use of natural resources	3

Key: 1 - Primary Objective; 2 - Secondary Objective; 3 - Potentially applicable objective; - - not applicable

Figure 1 -Tourism and recreation activity priority in protected areas according to the IUCN categories (source Eagles et al, 2009).

The combination of touristic activities and protected areas is possible if allowed by relevant legislation and IUCN reference category. In the areas belonging to IUCN cat I (Ia -Strict Natural Reserve and Ib -Wilderness Area) and II (National Park), the human visitation is reduced to minimum excepted for indigenous communities who have the right to continue their activities on the territory. Categories III and IV are similar in objectives and different in subjects. IUCN cat 3 – Natural Monuments – includes small sites which are important mainly for their cultural heritage associated to significant biodiversity that needs to be protected, while the IV category (Habitat/Species Management Areas) has a more biological objective. In the last categories – V (Landscape Parks) ad VI (Protected Areas with sustainable use of natural resources) – the human and natural interaction is significant, favoring the development of ecotourism programs.

Balkans countries are rich in natural and cultural heritage -which represents a main potential economic resource, although every single country has a completely different approach to this theme. The following figure (Figure 2) shows the differences in protected areas’ extension in the Western Balkan countries, that are facing or close to the Adriatic and/or Ionian Sea.

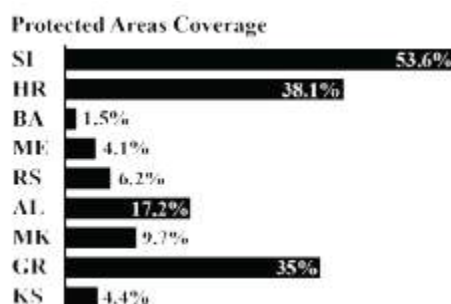


Figure 2 -Terrestrial protected areas coverage expressed in percentage (sources: protectedplanet.net and Mustafa (2011), further elaborated by the author).

Slovenia clearly represents a unique case not only for the Balkan region, but worldwide. With its 2407 Protected Areas, the Republic of Slovenia has more than half of its territory protected by law. Those PA mainly belong to the IUCN category III -Natural Monuments (1159), Natural Reserve (59) and Landscape Park (43). Croatia and Greece follow both with a high percentage, but with different features. Croatia has 82 Significant Landscapes (IUCN cat V) and 81 Natural Monument (IUCN cat III), while Greece counts around 600 Wildlife Refugees (generally allocated in the IUCN cat IV). Albania ranks forth with a total of 60 areas that belong mainly to IUCN cat IV (23) and II (15) (Albanian Ministry Of Environment, 2014). In Bosnia Herzegovina, Montenegro, Serbia, Macedonia and Kosovo there is a prevalence of Protected Areas in IUCN cat III.

IUCN category	hard ecotourism	soft ecotourism	other forms
Ia	no	no	no
Ib	yes	no	no
II	yes	yes	no
III	yes	yes	no
IV	yes	yes	no
V	no	yes	yes
VI	no	yes	no

Figure 3 -Compatibility/suitability of forms of tourism with IUCN's Protected Area Management Categories (source Eagles et al, 2009).

As previously mentioned, the IUCN categories depend on the natural and cultural features of the site and they influence the possible activities to develop. According to Figure 3, there are three possible typologies of tourism to develop in protected areas: hard ecotourism, soft ecotourism and other forms. Hard activities are considered the adventurous and wilderness outdoors experiences with few comforts, while soft ones are more causal and with some comfort (Eagles et al, 2009). For other forms it is intended all other typologies that do not fit perfectly the “ecotourism” definition. The most rigid category is obviously the Ia, which does not allowed any of them. All the others allow only hard and soft tourism. IUCN cat V – Protected Landscape is the only one to allow other forms of tourism in its territory. This category is considered the most flexible one, due to the fact that it often includes wide territories.

3 SLOVENIA AS BEST PRACTICE: SEČ

Slovenia is considered a best practice in the field of sustainable tourism in protected areas, not only for the percentage of area coverage, but also for the effectiveness of its management plans. The case study of Sečovlje Salina Nature Park is presented here for better explaining the positive relation between touristic activities and landscape protection. The data reported is the results of an interview done by the authors to the director of the Park Klavdij Godnic (K. Godnic, personal communication, March 16, 2017). The Sečovlje salt pans are fascinating wetlands (Figure 4) that present an interesting combination of amazing natural heritage and anthropic cultural landscapes with over one hundred of saltpan houses.



Figure 4 -Sečovlje Salina Nature Park (source: Peter Malovrh, available on flickr.com).

The Seč--which is “an area with ovlje Salina Nature Park in Slovenia is a Landscape Park IUCN cat V intrinsic natural value where the influence of people in shaping, maintaining and caring the environment is evident” (Nature Conservation Act, 1999). In the objectives of this category we can find “the creation of opportunities for enjoyment, well-being and socio-economic activity through recreation and tourism” (Stolton et al, 2013). The Sečovlje Salina Nature Park is a good experience in terms of management. The fact that this protected area belongs to a category that allows to organize activities and events is the starting point for any touristic development process, supported by a Management Plans that clarifies duties, responsibilities and limitations. In this specific case, touristic activities are related to sport and environment.

In the last two years, the number of tourists increased by 24% -from 32'000 visitors in 2014 to 42'000 in 2016. This phenomena is mostly related to the great number of activities organized in the park, such as guided tours, creative workshops and educational programs, sporting activities (e.g. biking, rowing, parachuting, surfing, sailing, etc.). It is noteworthy the fact that, according to the MP, all people that decide to take part in sportive or educational activities are considered “paying costumers”, although they do not enjoy all the park traditional touristic services.

Those activities generate an income of 200'000€/year that, summed to the 250'000€/year received from the government, are used for the 15 employees' salaries and the park maintenance machines. The main difficulty in the economic management is the financial split of private and public activities, due to the fact that park is officially one body with one financial account. From an environmental point of view, the main risk is related to the possible pollution of the Adriatic water sea in the coastal area of the park.

4 ALBANIAN TOURISTIC POTENTIAL

Albania has an extremely interesting touristic potential. This potential is expressed in terms of natural heritage, as well as historical and cultural. Natural influencing factors are the favorable geographic and geo-touristic position, the variety of natural landscape, an appropriate climate, a rich water assets and rich flora and fauna system. From a historical point of view, the Albanian territory is widely characterized by cultural hotspots (Doka and Humolli, 2005).

In the last ten years, tourism in Albania has changed drastically. Since 90s, the Balkans were considered one of the best backpackers' travel destination. In 2011, Lonely Planet -world famous travel guide editor – ranked it as the first country in the top ten of must-visit world sites. The score was given according to topicality, excitement, value of money and attractiveness. This surely influenced the touristic trend and, in the following years, travel reports doubled and nicknamed Albania as the Europe Hidden Jewel. In addition to the above-mentioned data, tourism became a priority also due to EU strategies and a number of donor investments, because of the high economic development potential of this field.

In the EUSAIR – European Strategy for Adriatic and Ionian Region, Albania plays a fundamental role as coordinator of the forth pillar with Croatia: sustainable tourism. In a more specific way, the strategy aims to diversify the touristic offer and increase sustainability and responsibility in tourism management. In addition, EU adopts tourism as one of the priority measures in all cross-border-cooperation programs, focusing on preservation, renovation and capacity development. An example is the recently launched Interreg IPA CBC Italy-Albania-Montenegro program, which has its Priority Axis 2 titled “Smart management of natural and cultural heritage for the exploitation of cross border sustainable tourism and territorial attractiveness” (Interreg IPA-CBC program, 2016).

In 2015, the Albanian Government drafted the National Touristic Plan (Niented et al, 2017), emphasizing the importance of tourism as national economic resource and providing the first guidelines for future development. The Manifesto Albania 2030 (Aliaj et al., 2015) strongly stresses the importance of sustainable tourism development, basing its considerations on real touristic data provided by WTTC – World Travel and Tourism Council – and local administrations. Aliaj also lists some of the country's attractive spots – such as three main lakes (Shkoder, Oher and Prespa) and a network of small lakes both natural and artificial, a rich archaeological heritage (Butrinti, Apollonia, Durres, etc), numerous UNESCO sites as Gjirokastra and Berat.

According to the number of projects in progress (cfr Porfido et al., 2016), tourism has become a priority for a number of donors in Albania. The USAID, the World Bank, the AADF, Italian Cooperation, and the Albanian Development Fund all have a clear linkage to tourism, as a generator of local economic development and job creation. In territorial terms, the AADF through its Tourism Improvement District and Business Improvement Districts, is more focused on targeting specific areas in Albania, including key traditional historical towns such as Shkoder, Berat, Kruje, Vlore, Tirane, Gjirokaster and Korç

e. While the WB through its newly approved Integrated Urban and Tourism Development Project will be focusing on the southern qarks, mainly investing in improvement of infrastructure.

In the specific field of protected areas, the project NaturAL (“Strengthening capacity in national nature protection – preparation for Natura2000 network”), coordinated by Italian Development Cooperation (IDC) in synergy with Albanian authorities, aims to inform, communicate and educate young people, visitors, local communities, natural resource managers and all those interested in the importance of nature conservation in Albania and the role of its protected areas. One of the goals is to develop eco-tourism programs in protected areas, focusing on initiative typology, target visitors and management requirements and infrastructures.

5 PROTECTED AREAS AND TOURISM IN ALBANIA

Today Albania counts 59 Protected Areas, 4 of them under RAMSAR protection. In the past 10 years, the protected areas’ total surface has tripled, passing from 5% to the 17.2% (www.natura.al).

Albanian Protection Categories	IUCN	PA	tourism
a) Strictly natural reserve / scientific reservation	I	2	no
b) National Park	II	15	yes
c) National Monument	III	6	yes*
d) Natural managed reservation	IV	23	yes*
e) Protected Landscape	V	5	yes
f) Protected area of managed resources / with multi-purpose utilization	VI	4	no
-) Emerald Areas	-	25	-

**only with previous authorization issued by the responsible body*

Figure 5 -Albanian Protection Categories and Areas, in correlation with IUCN categories (sources: Albania Ministry of Environment and Law on PA, elaborated by the author).

Focusing on ecotourism potential, the protected areas’ law listed 59 protected areas divided in six protection categories (see Figure 5: Strict Nature Reserve, National Park, Nature Monuments, Managed Natural Reserve, Protected Landscape, Protected Area of Managed Resources) and 25 ecological Emerald Areas. The National Park category allows to perform seasonal touristic activities, as well as sailing boats and canoes, flying non-military helicopters, aerostatic balloons and delta-planes, mountain climbing and other outdoor activities. For Natural Monuments and Managed Natural Reserve, a special ministerial permission needs to be issued. Protected Landscapes are territories larger than 1000ha with specific landscape features, in which activities are allowed. While in the Protected Area of Managed Resources, access and interventions are strictly monitored due to the high environmental risk.

Touristic activities are recognized and allowed by law in four Albanian protected areas’ categories, although two of those require previous authorizations issued by the responsible body. It is worthy to underline that 53 of 59 Protected Areas belong to those categories. In the entire country, only 6 areas are restricting access to authorized personnel. This evidences an important opportunity for transforming natural resources in fundamental economic ones.

6 FUTURE SCENARIOS: ALBANIAN RIVIERA PROTECTED LANDSCAPE

The famous Albanian Riviera (Figure 6), the south coast that starts from the Llogara National Park and ends in Saranda, is a promising touristic destination due to its unique natural landscapes, natural and cultural heritage. The whole area belongs to the District of Vlore (Qarku i Vlores) and counts 7 Protected Areas (Albanian Ministry of Environment, 2014) that cover 15% of the district surface and more than 200 Monuments of Culture, one of which is the UNESCO site of Butrinti. In spite of the importance of its heritage, only in the last years the Riviera started its “touristification” process. This delay is probably caused by the low-quality of the infrastructural system, which slowed down the “invasion”, but unluckily the Riviera started to be affected by illegal constructions. One of these cases is the Club Med Resort in Kakome Bay, few kilometers away from Saranda and exactly in front of Corfù Island. The famous French touristic company planned a resort with 350 luxury villas on the base of authorization issued erroneously by the responsible bodies (www.independent.co.uk), fortunately the process was arrested after the protests organized by the local community in 2005.



Figure 6 -Albanian Riviera (source: Angelo Pedrotti, available at panorama-photo.net).

This paragraph analyses the possibility of transforming the whole Riviera in a protected area, in order to add a layer of security to the already existing legal restrictions. The main goal of the unified park is to connect the heritage to its territory in order to operate strategically on it.

From a technical point of view, the IUCN category V -Protected Landscape perfectly meets the Riviera features and needs, joining the necessity of protecting both the natural and the cultural heritage and introducing economic activities as tourism to boost the local development. It is also in line with the Albanian Law for protected areas (Republic of Albania, 2002). A Protected Landscape is protected area where the interaction of people and nature over time has produced an area with a distinct character, significant ecological, biological, cultural and scenic value, and where safeguarding the integrity of this interaction is vital to the protection and support of the area and its associated values. As in the case of Sečovlje Salina Nature Park in Slovenia, this category allows to create “opportunities for enjoyment, well-being and socio-economic activity through recreation and tourism” (Stolton et al., 2013).

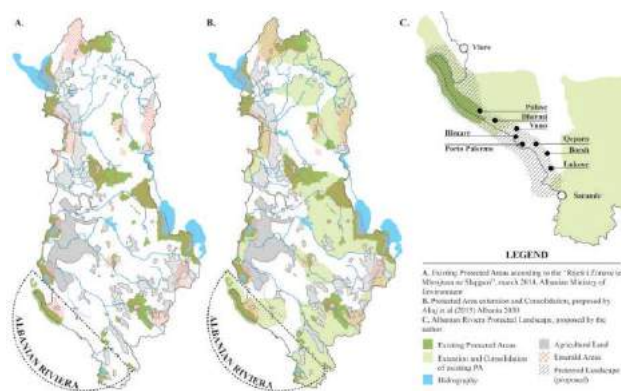


Figure 7 – Albanian Riviera Protected Landscape (source: Aliaj et al (2015), further modified by the author).

The touristic park product can be classified in two main categories: natural/landscape and anthropic/cultural. The first category includes all the natural resources that need to be protected, conserved and monitored through specific processes related to their biological features (e.g. biodiversity). The second one includes physical human interventions – such as ancient settlements both inhabited and abandoned (cfr. Figure 7C) – and activities from gastronomy,, production processes, immaterial cultural heritage, etc.

1. This strategy is based on four main pillars, developed according to the IUCN category assigned:
2. natural/landscape resources protection;
3. anthropic/cultural heritage valorization and re-use;
4. organization and connection of the resources;
5. information and coordination.

The fundamental strategic actions that should be adopted are:

- a. to stop building new structures for accommodation and services purposes and to invest in the existing ones, boosting a process of recovering and valorization of settlement heritage. This action is in line with the idea of starting long-term processes aligned with sustainability requirements, whose effects will not be immediately visible;
- b. to organize a slow mobility network, avoiding the construction of new infrastructures and reducing its impact on the environment through the adoption of alternative, soft, transportation means (bicycles, electric buses, kayak, etc);
- c. to organize the touristic product under a single brand, to coordinate the information and activities, in order to avoid investments' overlapping and waste.

The creation of a protected area with a special focus on touristic activities will also positively affects the labor market, where local communities are encouraged to protect and sell their products. The management role of local communities is an important aspect, but it is not discussed in this paper.

In conclusion, the use of protected area designation aimed at slowing down exploitation processes is not considered a substitute for traditional urban standards, but rather an additional tool that reinforces such standards.



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ID 1431 | TOURISM, GLOCALIZATION AND URBAN REHABILITATION - TRANSFORMATIONS OF THE TOURISTIC ENVIRONMENT OF BAIXA IN LISBON

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1 INTRODUCTION

The tourism dynamics nowadays are the reflection of global and local interactions, verifying, with frequency, the confrontation between the preservation of the local values and their transformation according to the generalized tendency of the cultural patterns of consumption. This transformations, which are recognized for converting many of the trend tourism spots, involve diverse agents that end up arranging efforts to promote tourism locations. The most visible effects pass by a requalification of emblematic public spaces, or neighborhoods with a picturesque value and also areas with high commercial potential.