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VILLAGE TOURISM AS GENNERATOR OF RURAL DEVELOPMENT IN SERBIA: SITUATION AND PERSPECTIVES

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Village tourism is becoming an area of increasing interest for households in rural areas and it is trustworthy indicator of implementation of multifunctional agriculture concept in Serbia

1. INTRODUCTION

Dominancy of rural areas characterises Republic of Serbia, represented with 84% of territory with 53% of population (2002) in 4,537 settlements – of which 3,515 or 77% of rural settlement are experiencing depopulation process. Contrary to territorial and demographical dominancy, rural areas contribute to creation of Serbian GDP with only 43%.

Prevailing activity in rural areas of Serbia is agriculture, which is characterised with unfavourable agrarian structure since small family farms with holdings up to 1 ha and 1-3 ha represent 60.2% of total 778,891 family farms. These agrarian potentials, accompanied with relatively small subventions to agricultural production, do not provide conditions for economic safety of the largest part of rural households that own farms.

Given characteristics of Serbian agriculture and village imply that non-agrarian activities should be developed as main or additional income resources for significant portion of households in rural areas.

On the contrary, industrialisation and accelerating economy development in Serbia and developed European countries are generating need for urban population to use more and more advantages of village and rural tourism.

Global trends indicate that tourist sector of economy have experienced dynamic growth, and, in its context, increasing number of tourists spend whole or part of the holiday in the village.

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However, in social and economic ambient of disintegration of ex-SFRJ and transitional changes in last two decades, village tourism was not in the focus of development, neither for tourism as tertiary nor for rural areas in Serbia.

Having in mind previous experiences of other countries – especially European ones (and among them transitional countries such as Slovenia, Hungary, Czech Republic, and Poland), and numerous of congresses and institutions organized in function of domestic village tourism development, in this paper was given an evaluation of current condition and perspective of village tourism as generator of rural and total economic development of Serbia.

2. PREVIOUS PHASE OF DEVELOPMENT OF VILLAGE TOURISM IN SERBIA AND REASONS FOR ITS STAGNATION

Organised approach to development of village tourism in Serbia begun three decades ago. At start, this was activity reserved for some village households at the mountains' side, and later joined agricultural cooperatives that used to be numerous and more present in social development of villages. First local associations for village tourism arise and they were engaged in some extent to activities of tourism agencies on municipality level (Kosjerić, Ivanjica, Knić, ...).

According to information given on www.cenort.org.yu, at the end of 1980's, around 800 households practiced village tourism in about 50 villages that disposed of near 3,000 beds. Unfortunately, first spread of village tourism has been stopped due to following reasons: disintegration of ex SFRJ (since 1991), economic sanctions SB UN and neighbourhood wars (1992-1996), NATO bombing (1999), etc.

3. REVITALISATION AND PERSPECTIVES OF VILLAGE TOURISM DEVELOPMENT IN SERBIA

According to researches done by *Ševarlić M. and Nikolić Marija* (2007), in Serbia today there are only 22.625 households or 2.9% of 779.000 farms with active farmers who's farm is bigger than 10 ha of total land – which can be seen as potential nucleus of our agriculture organized in farm way. This implicates that there is continuous need of creation additional incomes for dominant number of small farms. These incomes should be related to agriculture (especially organic and multifunctional) and ecology, or in function of sustainable rural development.

As addition to this believe, we give results of research on synergy of agriculture and village tourism, which imply that village tourism in some areas in other countries participates with over 30% in creating incomes of agricultural households.[1]

[1] *Guido Van Huylenbroeck, Isabel Vanslembrouck, Mieke Calus and Liesbeth Van de Velde* (2006 : 14)

Therefore fans of village tourism appreciate the fact that since 2004 is being issued publication *The Guide of Tourist Manifestations in Serbia* – that in two semi-annual numbers presents calendar of all touristic manifestation, and among them significant number of those held in rural areas.

Some of these manifestation are devoted to preserving tradition of agricultural labours and date from the end of XIX Century (*Haymaking on Rajac*, 1892), other gained international significance after several decades (*Congress of trumpeters* in Guča, 1965) and assemble in several days over half of million visitors, third are established a decade or two decades ago and already they overcome national boundaries and aspire achieving so called Ginnis records (such as *Kobasicijada – Sausage days* – in village Turija with sausage long over 2,023 meters or *Slaninijada – Bacon days* – in village Kačarevo with 14,000 dishes of beans with bacon prepared in one huge ladle; ...). However, most of rural manifestations have regional character and they are being organized in spirit *No business without show business!*

Vine admirers find especially attractive *vine roads* in some vineyards zones, among which is *Župa's vine road* in municipality Aleksandrovac where vineyard raising and vinery were developed even in time of Serbian Duke Lazar (killed in historical Battle on Kosovo with Turkeys, 1389) – which proves special *Museum of wine and vineyard raising* in building where use to be Wine and vineyard raising school.[1]

Beside earlier built ethno village *Sirogojno* (1970's) on mountain Zlatibor – represented by museum under "open sky" with village architecture, housing goods and agricultural equipment from XIX Century, development of **ethno settlement**, imply on higher interest and economic profits from village tourism. Examples of these ethno settlements are:

- *Drven grada* on Medvednik – built as settlement for the film of our famous producer *Emir Kusturica,* and then convert to unique touristic attraction together with railway *Šarganska osmica* and steam train from the beginning of XX Century;[2]
- *Terzića avlija (Courtyard Terzić)* in village Zlakusa (municipality Požega) with preserved ambient surrounding from early XX Century, which along with famous *Potpećke pećine (Cave Potpećka)* visit around ten thousand visitors annually;[3] or
- *Vajati*[4] in village Gornja Kravarica and no-named complex of ethno facilities in village Goračići on sides of mountain Jelica – represent completely new

[1] For further information see: *Ševarlić M.* (2006)

[2] Curiosity of *Drven grada* (*Wooden city*) is newly introduces *ecological tax* for all visitors that arrive by car or by bus in this ethno settlement.

[3] On economic interest of this ethno settlement one can judge based on fact that owner and his family abandoned work and apartment in Belgrade and return to homeland to practice village tourism.

[4] Outbuilding (used as sleeping quarters).

facilities built in the spirit of old village architecture but at the same time they are provided with all boons of modern hotel accommodation (satellite TV programs, wireless Internet, saunas and pools,...). On the other hand, they enable vacation in village ambient (walking over meadows and woods, riding horses and driving in gig and cabs, picking fruits and forest products, involvement in agricultural works and village customs such as preparing brandy, preparing food for winter, spinning, ...).

On the contrary to hilly-mountain area that dominates in central part of Serbia, in plain areas of Vojvodina so called **Salaš**[1] **tourism** is already international recognisable. This kind of tourism is being developed on isolated agricultural holdings with living and agricultural facilities, smaller family ethno displays and specialities of local and regional kitchen. Some of more famous are *Perkov salaš* in Irig and salaš near highway on destination Subotica – Novi Sad (*Salaš 84, Salaš 137, ...*).

Numerous agrarian-touristic manifestation are dedicated to agricultural products famous in some parts of rural areas in Serbia – *Grape harvest* in Vršac, Župa, Sremski Karlovci, Palić, Erdevik, Aleksandrovac, Irig, Hajdukovo, Erdevik, Smederevo, Topola, ...; *Cabbage days* in Mrčajavci and Futog, *Tomatoes days* in Irig, *Plum days* in Koštunići, Osečina and Blace; or some culinary speciality – such as *Barbeque* in Leskovac; *Ham days* in Mačkat; *Golden pot of Danube* in Smederevo, Apatin, Kladovo,...; or collecting "gifts from nature" – where we underline *Mushroom days* in Divčibare, *Bee days* in Zaječar, *Medical herbs days* in Soko Banja; ...

Besides listed manifestation that glorify Serbian food specialties, information provided based on survey done among visitors of web site of village tourism are very indicative – among five favourite dishes in our villages[2] two of them are produced only in Serbia (kajmak – *cream* and čvarci – *scrap*).

Natural beauties and hospitality of village host should be supplemented with new spheres of interest for those interested in village tourism, such as:

- Workshops of old crafts (producing pottery products in village Zlakusa near Požega);
- ethno or agro museums (*Agricultural Museum* in village Kulpin in municipality Bački Petrovac, *Museum of wine and vineyard raising* in Aleksandrovac Župski, village house with ethno display in village Jazak, …);
- attractive natural locations (caves, waterfalls, river canons, lakes, …);

[1] Salaš is a kind of farm, with special ambient and particularly prepared and build.

[2] According to www.turizam.co.yu/selo/index.htm, their sequence is following: **1)** cream (33.0%), 2**)** lamb-meet under comb (26.4%), **3)** smoked ham (21.6%), **4)** scrap (10.6%) and **5)** cooked cabbage from pitcher (8.5%).

- cultural-historical monument, especially churches and monasteries in context of religious tourism;
- art colony of world acknowledged primitive in Kovačica and Jagodina;
- special settlement of vine facilities entitled *Pimnice* in three neighbour winery villages in Negotinska krajina (Rajac, Smedovac and Rogljevo – that serve to students of agriculture as demonstrative polygon of popular construction from the of XIX and from the beginning of XX Century);
- bike roads such as the one on mountains Povlen and Tara that Ecological bike society *Green Bike* from Valjevo offers since 2003 to domestic and foreign bikers[1] or internationally confirmed *Danube bike road* that link all Danube countries*;*
- *jeep itinerary* on Stara Mountain, Povlen, *....;*
- hunting and angler localities; ...

In period after disintegration of ex SFRJ first programs of development of village tourism started in the context of integral rural development in area of Suvobor.[2] Based on data prepared by *Touristic organisation of Serbia*, organised village tourism is detected in households in municipalities Valjevo, Kosjerić, Ljig, Čačak, Požega, Knić, Lučani, Mionica, Užice, Sokobanja, Čajetina, Prijepolje, Brus, Šabac, Kraljevo, Ivanjica, Rača Kragujevačka, Gornji Milanovac, ..., and further information on single offer can be found at www.selo.co.yu.

However, there are still missing continuous and quality marketing campaign in Serbia that would serve to promoting village tourism at potential domestic[3] and even more foreign guests.[4]

Due to Internet technology, diffusion of information on potentials of village tourism in Serbia is easiest and fastest way available to anyone, and certain *web sites*, besides marketing have also significant education function. Among them special attention deserve www.cenort.org (*Centre for sustainable tourism – CENORT*), www.selo.co.yu, www.village.org.yu, www.serbia-tourism.org, www.moba.co.yu, …

Finally, on significance and perspective of village tourism refer that certain courses are introduced in faculties, such as **Economic of village tourism** on *Department of Economic of Agriculture in Faculty of Agriculture in Belgrade*

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[1] Ecological recognisable of participant in *Green Bike* caravan is represented with campaign under slogan "Bring at least one more than you brought"! (plastic bottle, bag, can, paper,...)

[2] For further information see: Todorović Marina, Ševarlić M., Bjelij S. (2003)

[3] Such as rubric "*Serbian villages – touristic destination of the world*" started by members of "Agropres" society or TV show symbolically called "*Hit the road*".

[4] Such as short serial of Serbian touristic movies on CNN during 2006.

(www.agrifaculty.bg.ac.yu) and **Village tourism** on *Department for geography, tourism and catering on Faculty for science and mathematics in Novi Sad* (www.ig.ns.ac.yu).

4. SUMMARY

Resources potentials of rural areas (84% territory, 53% population, landscapes, hospitality and richness of different traditional customs of life and work in village, village architecture, churches and monasteries, rural manifestation...) and market incompetitiveness of 60% of farm (with up to 3 ha of land) steer to possibility and need of faster development non-agrarian activities in Serbian villages – among which village tourism has the greatest economic potential and significance.

Serbia dispose of natural beauty and hospitable hosts, but is still missing satisfactory infrastructure for arrival in villages (roads, sign post, info-centres, ...), marketing of village tourism and specialised households in greater number that meet these demanding touristic services.

Greater involvement of economy and secondary activities, village tourism can become generator of touristic and total economy growth in Serbian rural areas.

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