

The Economic Product of Regional Park Škocjanske Caves, Slovenia

The development potentials of a naturally and socially fragile locality

Ana Barbič

University of Ljubljana, Biotechnical Faculty - Agronomy Department, Ljubljana, Slovenia
E-mail: ana.barbic@uni-lj.si

SUMMARY This paper deals with the economic development of a socially fragile rural area whose natural and cultural heritage is protected by a special law. This subject is, in general, extremely important because the social fragility of a rural community and its individual households is related to its fragile physical environment, scarce natural resources, and poorly developed infrastructure, but the relevance of this research object is on the top list in protected rural areas. The problem of modern society is how to keep them populated when economic activities of residents must be related with restrictions. The author in this paper presented results of the research of economic product of Regional Park Škocjanske Caves in Slovenia as an example of the protection as the stimulus for local development. The identified economic product of Park Škocjanske Caves consists of economic activities selected as desirable by 19 out of 25 local households on the one hand, and of common activities carried out by the local tourist society on the other. Considering the interests and availability of prerequisites to carry out the selected economic activities, the economic product for each household was defined and some recommendations how to realise the common economic product were specified. The economic products of individual households seem to be compatible and realisable, but the ways of marketing it have not been agreed upon yet. In the future a special attention has to be paid to the cooperation among the households and to the common marketing of the local economic product. The complexity and step by step realisation of a development project requires interdisciplinary team of experts working with a local community for a longer period of time.

Key words: fragile rural areas, economic product, Regional Park Škocjanske Caves, Slovenia

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1. Introduction

The social fragility of a rural community and its individual households is, no doubt, related to a fragile physical environment (carst, Alpine areas), scarce natural resources (low soil fertility, poor forest quality, lack of other natural resources), and poorly developed infrastructure. It is also related to the number and demographic characteristics of the residents and to their economic situation. Depending on the population density and the types of (un)favourable characteristics the intensity of social fragility of a locality can be defined and on this basis the strategies to cope with it formulated.

The problem modern societies are facing is not just searching for ways to populate marginalized and socially excluded rural areas (Mernagh and Commins, 1997), but rather how to keep them populated. In other words, how to secure the quality of life of rural residents to make them stay where their predecessors cultivated the land and made their living out of scarce local resources. While there have always been work migrations (seasonal, weekly or daily) of some rural family members whose earnings were indispensable for the survival of the family, especially in less favourable rural areas (Barbič, 1996a: 190-191), it was the long lasting rural exodus (Puljiz, 1977; Angeli, 1989; Štambuk, 1991; Barbič 1996a) which contributed a great deal to rural marginalization.

In Slovenia where about 70 percent of the total agricultural area lies in unfavourable hilly and mountainous regions (Agricultural Situation and Prospects in the Central and Eastern European Countries, Slovenia, 1998: 62), the work migrants have not only been men, but also women, who went as far as Egypt (Barbič and Miklavčič-Brezigar, 1999) for paid domestic work. After World War II, when the process of fast industrial development took place in the former Yugoslavia (which Slovenia belonged to until its independence in 1991), the majority of full time farms turned into part-time or even supplementary farms due to new jobs available to farm/rural residents. The farming has been losing its paramount role as the family supporting economic activity in rural areas.

The present transitional status of Slovenia can be characterised by a modest unemployment rate: 7.5% of the active labour force in the third quartile of 1998 (Trg dela, 1998: 13). At the same time an ecologically aware population, stimulated by state policy, directs the attention of decision-makers (parliament) as well as rural residents themselves to care a great deal about the resources in fragile rural areas.

Numerous members of farm/rural families in Slovenia, who have lost their jobs in the process of the economic transformation of the country, have discovered new opportunities for income generating activities based on local resources, especially in the protected rural areas such as national and regional parks and landscape protected areas.

In this paper the economic product of Regional Park Škocjanske Caves, a naturally as well as socially fragile rural area, is presented as an example of the protection as the stimulus for local development.

2. The economic product of Regional Park Škocjanske Caves

Residents of the three villages in the area have accepted the fact that they are living in the Regional Park Škocjanske Caves protected by law in 1996. They have also accepted the responsibility for protecting all natural and cultural heritage of the area and not just Škocjanske Caves, which in 1986 were recognised by UNESCO as a World Heritage Site. At the same time, however, local residents expect to live better and easier, which might even keep their children from emigrating. In order to meet these expectations, the local economic product was identified and the possibilities for realizing it specified.

2.1. Starting points

The basic starting point in defining the economic product of the Regional Park Škocjanske caves is the recognition that the natural and cultural heritage of an area is best protected by the local residents who “make their living” out of it.

Development on the basis of local resources is supported by several contemporary developments on the field of work/jobs such as:

- orientation towards the service sector
- unification of working and living places
- increase in variety of economic activities of individuals/households
- flexible organisation of work and flexible working time, and
- economic emancipation of women and their increasing participation in public life.

These developments were supposed to be stimulated by modern information technology, which enables fast access to information as well as the participation of individuals in computer supported information networks.

With the first reform of Common Agricultural Policy of European Community formulated in 1980, the process of diversification of the economic activities of rural areas has been encouraged. The income derived from supplementary activities of farm households as well as the income based on non-farming sources (small and medium-size firms funded in rural areas, services and traditional economic activities such as handicrafts) have contributed significantly to the income of farm/rural households. The concept of integrated rural development has been introduced (Ulbricht, 1986). Almost at the same time in Slovenia a similar concept was for-

mulated (Barbič, 1985) and applied in four local communities of less developed region of Slovenia (Kovačič, Barbič, Jakoš, Gosar, Peterle, and Rupena, 1988).

The main aim of the Agenda 2000 (European Commission Newsletter, 1999):

- to keep Community farming competitive,
- to reinforce the rural development of the CAP as a second pillar of the policy,
- and to safeguard farm incomes in the context of the European model of agriculture, are supported by drawing attention to the variety of services which farming, as a multifunctional sector, provides for society, including the protection of the environment and natural resources.

Agenda 2000 is relevant for Slovenia not only as a candidate for the EU membership but also as a country promoting food quality, nature preservation and environmental protection.

Can these aims be applied in formulating the economic product of the Regional Park Škocjanske Caves within which only 11 (44%) out of 25 interviewed households own agricultural land, and only 2 people derive their income solely from agriculture? In fact, the value of agricultural land and forest and their sustainable use (organic farming, sustainable forestry) is in their economic functions as well as in sustaining cultural landscapes both of which can be utilised for local development based on tourism stimulated by Škocjanske Caves.

In the case of Regional Park Škocjanske Caves great value and at the same time the fragility of natural, cultural and social components of the locality should additionally be taken into consideration. A disturbance of any of the three components of the whole system causes disturbances in the other two (Defilipis, 1997: 9), which may lead to the degradation of the whole area. Therefore, in the course of creation as well as in realisation of the economic product of the Park demand for the protection of natural and cultural heritage, on the one hand, and the needs of local residents for the economic security on the other need to be balanced.

2.2. The economic product

The data on the basis of which the economic product was defined were collected in March 1998 by interviews based on the pre-formulated questionnaire. 25 out of 28 households in three villages participated with a great benevolence, 2 households rejected cooperation and 1 (single person) household was not available.

The economic product of the Park is composed of economic activities based predominantly on local resources respecting the obligation to protect them. In order to efficiently market the local economic product, economic activities of individuals/households have to be compatible and adjusted to the integrated economic product. However, the efficiency of such a product does not depend solely on the

supply but also on the demand of potential consumers. For the demand is not known yet, it is expected that some of the proposed economic activities will turn out to be more and other less efficient, some will have to be abandoned, some modified and expanded and some even newly introduced.

2.2.1. Individual residents and households as the source and as the carriers of local development

Natural, material and spiritual heritage as well as local residents' and households' potentials are identified as local resources. However, the residents/households do not represent only a source but also a target and the carriers of local development (Barbič, 1991: 105-118). The variety of roles the local residents perform in local development, requires their multi-level definition. Their demographic characteristics, household structure and migration processes have to be taken into consideration in defining the local economic product.

Emigration processes are a constant characteristic of the locality. Between 1931 (the earliest date of an emigration from a local household remembered) and 1997 (the last year a resident left locality for good) 33 individuals emigrated. Among them were 24 (72,7%) women from 17 (68%) out of 25 households. The expectation that emigration will continue is supported by the data that in 2 out of 25 households a young family member plans to leave the home village.

Between 1995 and 1998 the number of local residents decreased from 69 to 65. One man died, one man left for the nursing home, two girls married and moved out, one man emigrated and one man immigrated.

The average of 2.3 members (Table 1) per household is much lower as the average for Slovenia (3.1) (Census, 1991).

Table 1.
The structure of 28 households according to the number of members

Number of members	Number of households	
	Number	%
- one	9	32.1
- two	8	28.6
- three	6	21.4
- four	3	10.7
- five	2	7,1
Total	28	100.0
The average	2.3	

Only 11 (44%) out of 25 interviewed households own agricultural land (from 3 acres to 34 hectares). Four of them have left some of their land uncultivated and one household is leasing out 3 ha of their agricultural land.

Among the household principals/spouses the majority are women (58.3%), due to widows (5) and divorced (3) female household principals. Seven (41.2%) male spouses and 12 (57.1%) female principals are at least 60 years old. Male and female principals/spouses do not differ significantly in their formal education. They fall into three equal groups in size:

- one third finished 8 year primary school;
- one third accomplished 2 or 3 year professional school;
- one third completed 4 year secondary or 2 year/first level university education.

Over a half (51.5%) of household principals/spouses are retired, one tenth (3 or 8.6%) are unemployed, and only a bit over one third (13 or 37.2%) hold a job.

It is obvious that retired and unemployed principals/spouses represent the main labour potential of the community, while those who have jobs can contribute to the local labour force only in their leisure time.

2.2.2. Components of the economic product and possibilities of the households to carry them out

The economic activities permitted within the Park are grouped into four categories:

- forestry and agriculture,
- food processing,
- crafts and services,
- tourism.

Nineteen out of 25 households are ready to introduce or to continue with at least one economic activity and only 6 of them are not considering the possibility to carry out any of them. Among 38 economic activities permitted in the Park and interesting for 1 to 9 local households, 10 are agricultural production activities, 7 food processing activities, 10 craft or service activities, and 11 are tourist activities.

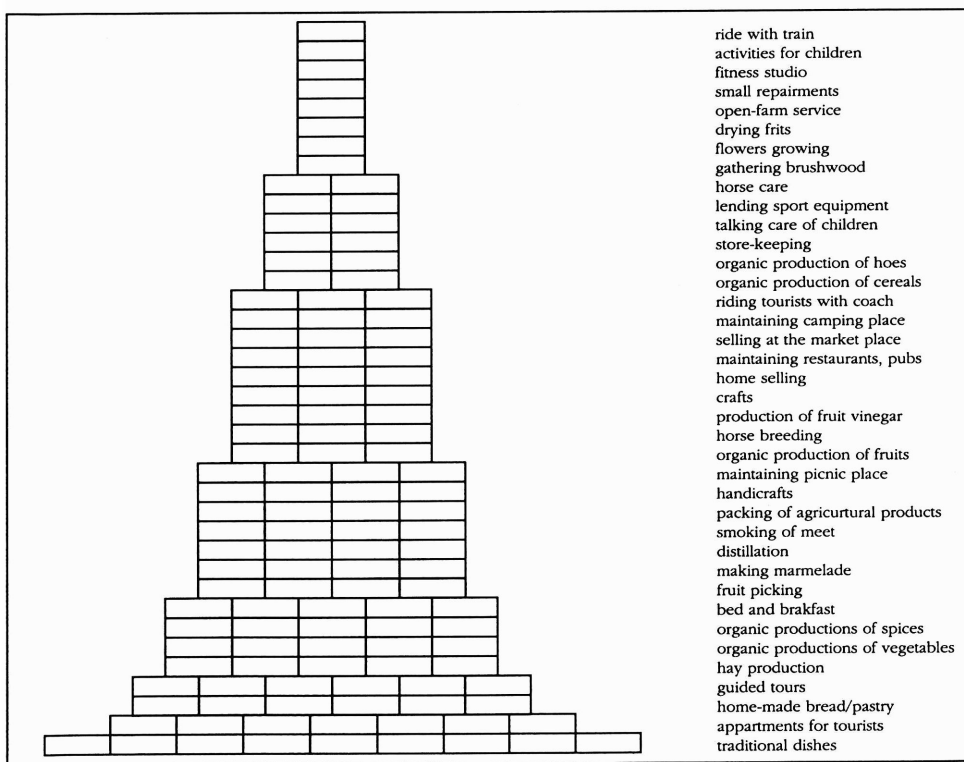
Identified interest for economic activities - supposedly supported by realistic possibilities to perform them - represents a picturesque economic product in which agricultural production, food processing, crafts, services and tourist activities literally complement one another (Picture 1).

In order to carry out selected economic activities the respective households need to satisfy at least the following conditions:

- possession of knowledge/qualifications
- availability of room/land
- availability of financial means for necessary investments.

In the near future only those households will be able to start an economic activity, which in addition to the interest at least to a certain degree fulfil all three basic conditions. Other interested households will join them step by step especially in the case of growing demand for products and services. In case of the supply exceeding demand, competition among the producers and service performers will improve the quality of products and services, which might in turn accelerate demand.

For two thirds (65.8%) of 38 activities of the economic product some of the local households meet (at least to certain extent) all three conditions for carrying them out. For almost a quarter (23.7%) of the economic activities, some interested households satisfy two out of three conditions for carrying them out, and only for 3 (7.9%) out of 38 economic activities households interested in satisfy only one out of three conditions (Table 2).



Picture 1
Economic activities according to the number of households which expressed their interest to carry them out

Table 2

The economic activities according to the number of interviewed households meeting the conditions for carrying them out

Economic activities	The number of households				
	It is engaged, interested in		Has knowledge/ qualifications	Has space/ land	Has at least a part of own funds
	total	%			

Forest and agricultural activities

gathering brushwood	1	5.3		1	
collecting fruits in old orchards	4	21.1	4	4	3
hay production	5	26.3	5	5	2
organic production of cereals	2	10.5	1	2	
organic production of hoes	2	10.5	1	2	1
organic production of vegetables	5	26.3	1	3	
organic production of spices	5	26.3	5	3	
organic production of fruits	3	15.8	2	2	
horse breeding	3	15.8	1	2	3
flower growing	1	5.3	1		

Processing of raw materials

drying fruits	1	5.3			
making marmelade	4	21.1	2	3	1
making the fruit vinegar	3	15.8	1	3	1
distillation	4	21.1	4	4	1
smoking of meat	4	21.1	3	4	3
home made bread/pastry	6	31.6	5	6	3
traditional dishes	9	47.4	6	8	5

Crafts and services

home selling	3	15.8	1	2	
Open-farm service	1	5.3	1		
handicrafts	4	21.1	2	4	3
crafts	3	15.8	1	3	3
packing of agricultural products	4	21.1	2	4	1
store-keeping	2	10.5	1	2	2
maintaining restaurants, pubs	3	15.8	2	3	2
market place	3	15.8	3	2	2
small repairs	1	5.3	1	1	
fitness studio	1	5.3	1	1	

Tourist activities

bed and breakfast	5	26.3	2	4	3
apartments for tourists	7	36.8	3	6	5
maintaining picnic place	4	21.1	2	4	2
maintaining camping site	3	15.8	1	3	1
child care	2	10.5	2	2	
activities for children	1	5.3	1	1	
guided tours	6	31.6	1	3	2
lending of sport equipment	2	10.5	2	2	1
care for horses	2	10.5	1	2	2
ride with coach	3	15.8	1	2	3
ride with train	1	5.3	1	1	1

N = 19 households

The overview of the conditions for carrying out individual economic activities exposes three facts:

Firstly, the larger the number of the households interested in performing an economic activity, the larger the proportion of those among them which satisfy the conditions for carrying them out.

Secondly, for three activities (growing flowers, small repairs, fitness studio - only one household interested in performing each of them) the only condition that is met is availability of knowledge/qualifications. In spite of little relevance of those activities for an overall economic prosperity of the locality, they would definitely make life of the residents easier (small repairs) or prettier (growing flowers, fitness studio), and would guarantee three qualified people either a full-time or a part-time job.

Thirdly, the largest number of households have available room/land for the selected economic activities, followed by the number of households whose members possess the relevant knowledge/qualifications. The smallest number of households have at least some financial means for necessary investments. In order to obtain a loan or a subsidy, a great amount of energy of the household principals/members will be needed. Municipality and public/state institutions can help by providing the necessary information and professional advice.

2.2.3 The economic product of individual households

The presentation of interests in various economic activities and chances to realise them offer a precise picture of the overall situation about present and potential economic activities of the locality, but at the same time reveal nothing about the structure of economic interest of individual households. In order to get some information about it, households are grouped according to the number of economic activities interested in performing them, and the fulfilment of conditions to carry them out.

According to the number of the existing and potential economic activities 19 households form 4 groups (Table 3):

- First group consists of 4 (21.1%) households interested in 12 to 24 out of 38 suggested economic activities in the Park.
- Second group embraces 3 (15.8%) households whose interests cover 5 to 9 economic activities.
- Third group consists of 7 (36.8%) households, which are interested in 3 to 4 economic activities.
- Fourth group contains 5 (26.3%) households, which are interested to perform only 1 or 2 economic activities.

Table 3
Households according to the number of existing and potential economic activities

ID of household	The number of activities																						Total					
	Already engaged				Interested in																							
	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	N	% of 38
1	■				■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	24	63.16
2					■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	17	44.74
3	■				■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	15	39.47
4					■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	12	31.58
5	■	■	■		■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	9	23.68
6	■	■	■		■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	7	18.42
7	■	■	■		■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	5	13.16
8	■	■	■		■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	4	10.53
9	■	■	■		■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	4	10.53
10	■	■	■		■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	4	10.53
11	■	■	■		■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	4	10.53
12	■	■	■		■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	4	10.53
13	■	■	■		■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	3	7.89
14	■	■	■		■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	3	7.89
15	■	■	■		■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	2	5.26
16	■	■	■		■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	1	2.63
17	■	■	■		■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	1	2.63
18	■	■	■		■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	1	2.63
19	■	■	■		■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	1	2.63
Total number of activities																											38	

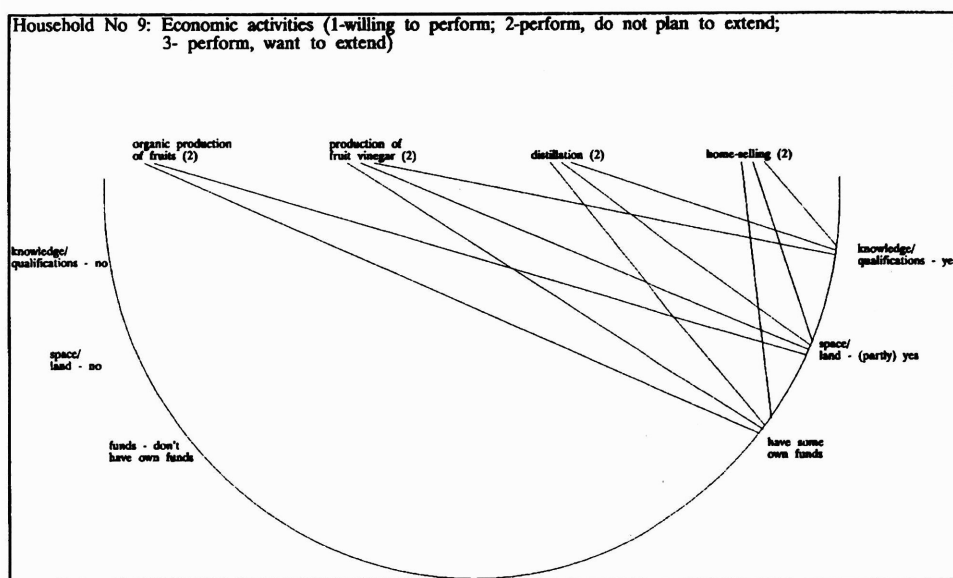
Differences among the households according to the number of existing and potential economic activities are due to some objective (the availability of labour force and material goods as the prerequisites for a particular activity), and to some subjective conditions (personal traits such as optimism, readiness to take a risk, readiness to work hard and the capability of the realistic evaluation of the household's potentials to perform selected economic activities efficiently).

However, the expressed interest in numerous economic activities does not presuppose that a household would start with all of them. It means solely, that a household is ready to get involved in almost any activity which will bring in (additional) income. In addition, many of the economic activities on the list have a lot in common such as various kinds of organic farming or various tourist activities, meaning that it is not too difficult to combine them, and some activities can take place only at special occasions (baking and cooking local dishes, organising activities for children).

In accordance with the satisfaction of basic conditions to perform selected economic activities (knowledge/qualifications, room/land, financial means), 19 households fall into three groups.

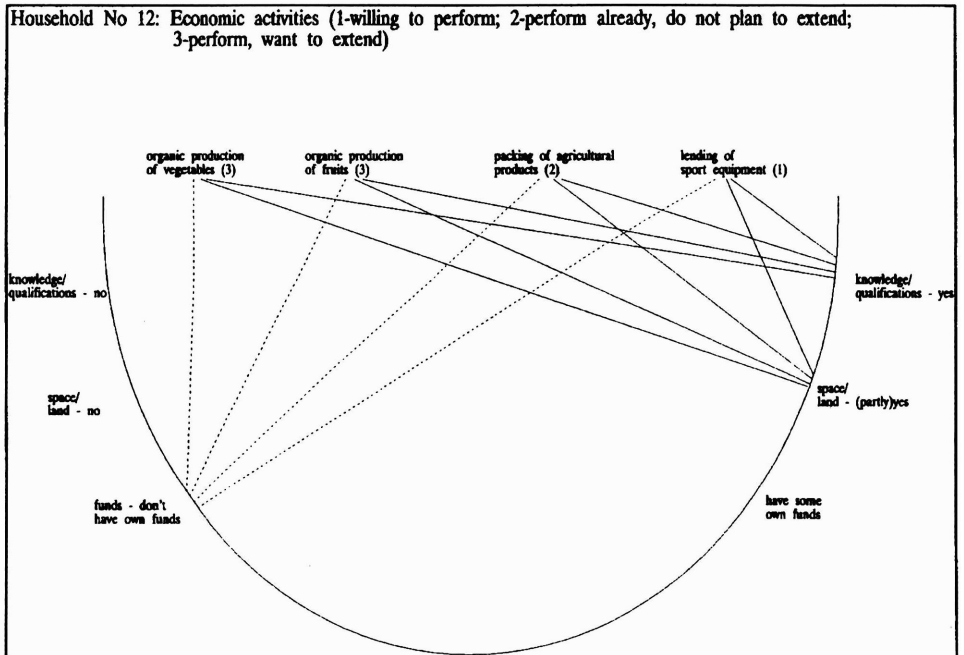
The first group is composed of 6 (31.6%) out of 19 households, which satisfy all three basic conditions for carrying out selected economic activities. Three of them chose only one activity (either growing hay or running a pub or renting tourist apartments); and three chose three or four selected economic activities (Picture 2).

Second group consists of 9 (47.4%) out of 19 households with one of the basic conditions for the selected economic activities missing. The number of economic activities of the households in this group, ranges from 3 to 17 activities. It might be the high number of the selected activities which at least to a certain extent contributes to the fact that one of the basic conditions to carry them out is missing. Among the most frequently missing conditions is the knowledge/qualification. Even missed in the most cases the lack of knowledge/qualifications is not the biggest problem, but the lack of money for necessary investments. One household interested in four economic activities has no funds needed for the investments into two activities, and one household has no funds for any of the four selected economic activities (Picture 3).

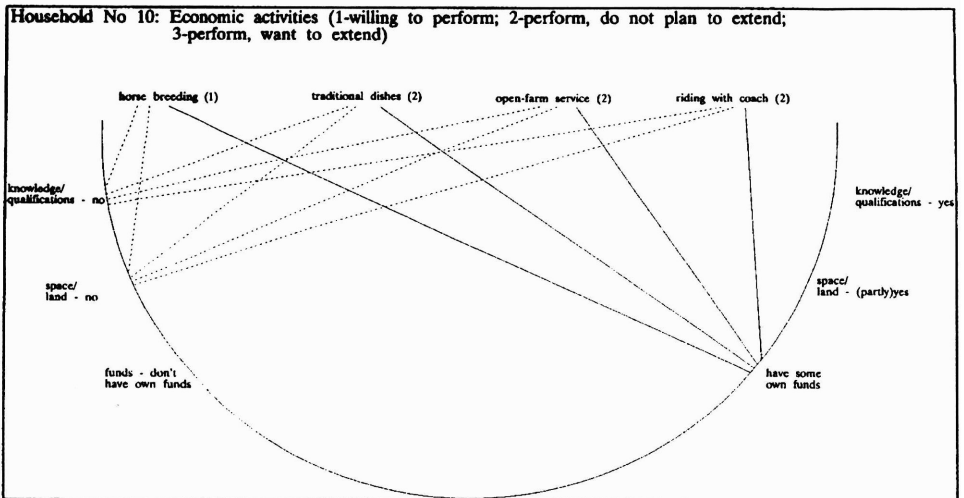


Picture 2
Pattern of the economic product of the household with all three basic conditions satisfied for four selected activities

Third group represents 4 (21%) households, which lack two or all three conditions for performing the majority of the selected economic activities. The worst situation faces the household, which for all four selected activities lack knowledge/qualifications as well as room/land (Picture 4).



Picture 3
Pattern of the economic product of the household without funds for necessary investments for any of four selected economic activities



Picture 4
The pattern of the economic product of the household without knowledge/qualification and without the room/land for any of four selected activities

2.2.4. The main characteristics of the identified economic product

The identified economic product of the three villages is very rich in terms of the great variety of activities local households are willing and capable of carrying out. It also looks compatible from the point of view of its components/structure as well as from the point of view of the number of households interested in reforming individual economic activities. Thus, the identified economic product does not need any co-ordination among the local households.

At the same time, the suggested economic product of individual households seems to be rather realistic, for the majority of selected activities are based on at least partial fulfilment of basic conditions for carrying them out. There are only a few activities selected only by a few households, which expect to start them solely on the basis of subsidies or favourable loans.

Tourism represents the central component of the local economic product but on the other hand, households interested in tourist activities, have no relevant experience. Only the local tourist society has some experience with organising and realising tourist events, in which the majority of local residents participate. Their experiences can be at least to certain degree utilised in the tourist activities of their own households.

However, even among 27 “non-tourist” activities there are 12, in which the interested households have no experience so far. Indeed, for some of them (gathering brushwood, drying fruits) no specific experience is needed, while for others (organic farming, growing flowers, handicrafts and crafts, hosting and serving tourists) specific skills and knowledge are required.

In order to succeed, rural tourism has to be a way of local life and not only an opportunity for making money. Tourists pay for service (room, food, tickets, leased an equipment or a guide), but at the same time they expect a kind word from local residents or at least a greeting when they meet. The hosts of tourists have to devote to their guests some of their time without expecting to be paid for. However, tourists can have friendly relations only with people who are friendly to each other, within the family and in the village. Development of tourism itself does not stimulate cooperation and good relations among the locals. On the contrary, the development of tourism can even destroy good relations among local residents because it promotes well-being of some and leaves others behind (Verbole, 1998). Therefore in tourism development projects special attention has to be paid to the cooperation among local residents.

2.3. Activities supporting local economic product

Required infrastructure and activities of the local community, e.g. of Tourist Society Škocjan are defined as supporters of the economic product of Regiona Park Škocjanske Caves.

2.3.1. Infrastructure and knowledge

Among seventeen **infrastructural objects** local residents assigned the highest importance to objects enriching tourist offer of local community as well as to the need to make the image of the three villages attractive, followed by the need to build objects for satisfying common needs of local residents and tourists. The least important in the eyes of local residents are common objects for carrying out economic activities of individual households (Table 4).

Table 4

Infrastructural objects according to the average points of their necessity for economic development assigned by local residents (from point 1 - it is not needed to point 5 - it is essentially important)

objects for serving common needs of local residents and/or tourists	\bar{x}	objects for the enrichment of touristic offer and arrangement of appearance of three villages	\bar{x}	objects for specific economic activities	\bar{x}
• arrangement of open space for performances	4.4	• renovation the church bell tower	4.8	• to clean up the overgrowing areas and to maintain them with use	4.6
• building mortuary	4.2	• arrangement of the square in front of the church	4.7	• establishment of market place	2.8
• building children's playground	4.0	• renovation of "spahnjenca" in Matavun	4.6	• building the drying house for fruits	1.8
• building purifying plant	4.0	• renovation of dams on river Reka	3.2	• building the vinegar factory	1.5
• placing garbage cans	3.9	• renovation of mill/mills	2.6		
• building parking places for visitors	3.8				
• building bowling alley	3.4				
• post office	2.3				

Local residents also support the **acquiring of new knowledge**, especially the one, supporting new economic activities of individual households such as:

	\bar{x}
• language courses	4.5
• courses for carrying out specific activities	4.4
• computer equipment available to residents	3.7
• workshops promoting participation of women in public life	3.5
• workshops for entrepreneurship	3.2

2.3.2. Common actions and performances

The residents of three villages have rich experiences in carrying out common actions financially supported by the state and by some EU funds (PHARE). They have reconstructed the empty "old school" for the use of local tourist society and local community. In it several exhibitions have been arranged such as exhibition of ethnological objects in 1995, exhibition of paintings of the participants of Vreme painters workshop in 1996, exhibition of handicrafts of farm women, herbs and fruits in 1998, exhibition of interior equipment in 1998. The tourist society is since 1996 organizing yearly trecking along river Reka and also (since 1997) Škocjan cultural festival of amateur theatrical and folk dancing groups, choruses, and orchestras.

Members of almost all households have participated in common actions and are willing to do so in the future. Due to the fact that common actions and organized events support economic activities of individual households, high correlation between the interests of households for developing one or more economic activities and the willingness to participate in common actions have been identified. Even more, two out of six households which do not plan to develop any of economic activities (one-member households, households with old members only) on their own, are willing to participate in common actions. However, some of the households (4 out of 21), who intend to develop new economic activities are not ready to participate in future common actions. In order to explain such refusal, the attention should be paid to the fact, that new situations, especially those which are offering new options for economic activities of individuals and individual households usually create conflicts in which some individuals/households appear to be winners and other losers (Bryden, 2000: 12) with the later showing tendency to withdraw from public actions/life at least for a while or become too individualistically oriented.

2.4. Some recommendations for the strategy for realisation of the economic product

The first meaning of the word strategy refers to the procedures, ways of planning and conducting big military actions, wars. Today in everyday use the word strategy means procedures, ways to realise a goal (Slovar slovenskega knjižnega jezika, 1985: 971). In the present case, the goal of the strategy to be formulated, is the realisation of the identified economic product of three villages within Regional Park Škocjanske Caves. The strategy of the realisation of the local economic product will have to be defined by the local community and agreed upon as a common endeavour. In case that an agreement is not reached each household will define its own development strategy, which has already been the case of some local households. Both approaches - individual and common - do not exclude but rather complement one another. The individual approach alone is bound to yield only limited results.

This research project whose goal was the formulation of the local economic product cannot prescribe the rules for its realization but can only offer some recommendations for its realisation:

a) The economic product of the local community has to be formulated by connecting the economic products of individual households with the actions/performances carried out by the tourist society. It means that the households intending to develop any economic activity, have to participate in common endeavors. In order to do this, they need to be invited by the initiator(s) and the key roles in different tasks ascribed to different residents, for many of them have the potential to lead. In such a case the locality will be less vertically and more horizontally organized and competitiveness replaced by cooperativeness. The Tourist Society has been since 1997 very successful in organizing "cultural summers" by inviting amateur theatre and music groups. Their performances attracted not just the locals, but also the residents from surrounding areas and some tourists.

b) A firm for the promotion and trading of the local tourist product need to be founded. The realisation of the economic product has to start with the identification of potential consumers in order to justify the investments of the individual households. For there are only 8 (32%) out of 25 households fond of the idea to found a marketing firm, a cooperative of the producers might be a better solution. Any kind of common marketing is better than each household marketing its products by itself.

c) The cooperation among the households involved in the same or compatible economic activities has to be stimulated, for cooperation does not only promote rationalisation and division of labour, but also helps to replace competitiveness and envy with mutual help and positive attitude. In addition, cooperation of the local households is a basic prerequisite for acquiring money, especially that available from the various funds of the EU.

d) The local community and active households have to be open to the households which might decide to participate in the common economic product later as well as ready to accept the newcomers with economic ambitions.

e) The transparency of the local economic development is necessary in order to support coordination of the economic product of individual households.

Because of the lack of the labour force and the long-time lasting demographic regression of the area the effort should be made to encourage immigration, especially of the people and firms with professional and financial potentials. But before encouraging immigration the population capacities of the Park should be taken into consideration.

Women of the three villages are not "visible" enough in terms of their participation in decision-making. Therefore the realisation of the defined economic pro-

duct also represents an opportunity for local women, an opportunity for their economic, social and political participation at the local level in terms of equality with men.

The local community has to avoid self-isolation by linking up not only with the neighbouring communities (local tourist society has been already very effective in cooperating with the neighbouring tourist societies in organising joint actions) but needs to take an active part in founding Carst Regional Park which will include the Regional Park Škocjanske Caves.

3. Conclusion

The identified economic product reflects most of contemporary developments in the field of work as well as locally relevant points of Agenda 2000. Basically, there have been only two digressions identified. The first one is related to the expectation according to which modern computer techniques support/stimulate the flexibility of living places and jobs. No more than 6 out of 25 households possess home computers (Barbič, 1998: 54), and there were no indications for activities based on modern information technology. The second digression from general trends refers to the participation of women in public life (e.g. decision-making) at least at the local level. The locality of three villages is obviously men dominated. The president of the tourist society has always been a man. A man is also the representative of the locality in the local community of Divača, which the three villages belong to (Barbič, 1996:5). Thus, the idea to form a women's section within the local touristic society is more than justified and if realised it will represent at least a tiny channel for local women to act publically.

The case-study presented indicates that the identification of an economic product of a rural/farm household and a rural community is only the first step towards the realisation of it. Its success or failure depends to the greatest extent on the local residents themselves - on their determination for cooperation and joint marketing of the common economic product. As known, the modern development projects are building on local initiatives, on cooperation and exchange of experiences, and also on solidarity and mutual help.

However, worshipping the principle of local initiative does not exclude outside professional support (Verbole, 1999: 222) which is indispensable at least in providing professional justification/knowledge for each component of an economic product, as well as in identifying potential consumers and ways of marketing local products. Why is outside professional help needed? The answer to this question is very simple. In socially and environmentally most fragile rural areas there are none or rather few professionals who can take over very professional tasks, which need to be dealt with interdisciplinary in order to enable the equilibrium of the social, economic, natural and ecological components of such areas. This fact can be illustrated by the case of agricultural and food-processing activities for which

the households in Regional Park Škojanske Caves have rather favourable conditions to carry them out. In order to do so in accordance with the local natural potentials and with the protection law, the appropriate technologies of production and processing of the products need to be selected, the technical and environmental standards of the products presented to the producers, and the ways of marketing specified. The realization of these and other relevant tasks requires professional help.

The complexity and step by step realisation of a development project requires interdisciplinary team of experts working with a local community/region for a longer period of time in order to reach the desired results. These are the reasons because of which the development programmes of the European Union supporting the development of less developed, e.g. socially fragile rural areas of the member states do not last a half of a year or a year, but four (LEADER I: 1991-1994) or six years (LEADER II: 1994-1999).

Due to the fact that the EU financially supports only development programmes in which participants (individuals, households, local communities and (borderland) regions display a great degree of cooperativeness, joint endeavours and cooperation have to become fundamental principles of developmental planning and acting, especially in the associated countries which are applying for the full membership of the EU. At the same time, a certain degree of understanding and solidarity from the EU member countries is expected in building common rural Europe in which protection of nature (wildlife, rare plant species, rural landscapes, and forests) as well as residents in remote/marginal rural areas cannot be realised by respective countries themselves.

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Ana Barbič

Univerza v Ljubljani, Biotehniška fakulteta - Oddelek za agronomijo, Slovenija

Ekonomski proizvod Regionalnog parka Škocjanske jame, Slovenija Razvojni potencijali prirodno i društveno krhkog lokaliteta

Sažetak

Rad se bavi ekonomskim razvojem društveno krhkog seoskog područja čija je prirodna i kulturna baština zaštićena posebnim zakonom. Ovaj je predmet, općenito, krajnje važan jer je društvena krhkost ruralne zajednice i njezinih pojedinačnih gospodarstava povezana s krhkim prirodnim okruženjem, oskudnim prirodnim resursima i nerazvijenom infrastrukturom, ali je taj predmet istraživanja u zaštićenim seoskim područjima na vrhu liste relevantnosti. Problem suvremenog društva jest kako ta područja održati naseljenim u uvjetima kada su gospodarske djelatnosti stanovnika ograničene restrikcijama. Autorica u radu iznosi rezultate istraživanja gospodarskog (ekonomskog) proizvoda Regionalnog parka Škocjanske jame u Sloveniji kao primjer zaštite koja djeluje poticajno na lokalni razvoj. Identificirana gospodarska proizvodnja Parka Škocjanske jame sastoji se od gospodarskih aktivnosti koje je kao poželjne odabralo 19 od 25 mjesnih kućanstava, s jedne strane, i zajedničkih djelatnosti koje izvodi mjesno turističko društvo, na drugoj strani. Sukladno interesima i raspoloživosti uvjeta da se izvedu odabrane gospodarske aktivnosti definiran je gospodarski proizvod svakog kućanstva i određene preporuke kako realizirati zajednički ekonomski proizvod koji je bio specificiran. Ekonomski proizvodi pojedinačnih gospodarstava izgledaju prihvatljivim i izvodljivim, ali načini prodaje još uvijek nisu usuglašeni. U budućnosti osobita se pozornost ima pokloniti suradnji između gospodarstava i zajedničkoj prodaji lokalnih gospodarskih proizvoda. Složenost i izvedba razvojnog projekta korak po korak nalaže zajednički rad interdisciplinarnog ekspertskeg tima i lokalne zajednice tijekom duljeg vremena.

Ključne riječi: krhka seoska područja, ekonomski proizvod, Regionalni park Škocjanske jame, Slovenija

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Ana Barbič

Departement de l'agronomie, Faculté biotechnique de l'Université de Ljubljana, Slovénie

Le produit économique du Parc régional Les caves de Škocjan, Slovénie Les potentiels de développement d'une localité fragile en vue naturel et social

Résumé

Cet article s'agit du développement économique d'une région rurale socialement fragile dont l'héritage naturel et culturel est protégé par une loi spécifique. Ce sujet est généralement extrêmement important car la fragilité social d'une communauté rurale et des ménages individuels qui l'appartiennent est lié avec la fragilité de ses environs naturels, avec les ressources naturels pauvres et avec une infrastructure peu développée, mais dans les milieux ruraux protégés cet objet de recherche est au sommet de la liste de l'importance. Le problème de la société contemporaine est comment préserver ces régions peuplées quand les restrictions limitent les activités de leurs résidents. Dans cette étude l'auteur présente les résultats de la recherche du produit économique du Parc régional Les caves de Škocjan en Slovénie comme l'exemple de la protection stimulant le développement local. Le produit économique du Parc Les caves de Škocjan est de l'un côté constitué de les activités sélectionnées comme désirables par 19 de 25 ménages locaux, et des activités communes exercées par la société touristique locale de l'autre. Selon les intérêts et l'accessibilité de les conditions préalables pour l'effectuation des activités économiques, on a défini le produit économique pour chaque ménage individuel et on a spécifié les recommandations pour la réalisation du produit économique commun. Il semble que les produits économiques des ménages individuels sont compatibles et réalisables, mais les façons de sa présentation sur le marché ne sont pas encore agréées. Dans l'avenir une attention particulière devra-t-être faite à la coopération entre les ménages et au marketing commun du produit économique local. La complexité du projet de développement et la réalisation pas à pas exigent une équipe d'experts interdisciplinaire qui travaillera ensemble avec la communauté locale durant une longue période.

Mots clés: régions rurales fragiles, produit économique, Parc régional Les caves de Škocjan, Slovénie

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