

## PRELIMINARY REPORT

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**CITIES AS DESTINATIONS  
OF URBAN ECOTOURISM:  
The Case Study of Novi Sad\***

**ABSTRACT:** Ecotourism in an urban environment takes place in areas that offer a certain degree of naturalness in a situation when they are significantly modified by previous human activities. Concept of urban ecotourism recognizes the significance of ecotourism in facilitating cultural exchange, environmental protection and sustainable urban development. Contrary to classic ecodestinations, urban ecotourism is more acceptable considering a higher capacity of urban destinations and the potential to renovate locations that have been degraded by industrial, traffic or other human activities. The experiences and examples from Europe and North America indicate that such projects significantly contribute to a sustainable ecological and social-economical development of many cities. In Serbia, the practice of quality preparations and including natural and other resources into the development of urban ecotourism has still not been established. The paper found that Novi Sad has the resources which would make it also interesting as destination of urban ecotourism. As the most significant point, Danube should be mentioned with its coastal green zone and numerous islands, as well as the city parks.

There are green complexes, available surfaces and abandoned objects and facilities of previous economical activities located in the peripheral and suburban zone. In the immediate surroundings of Novi Sad, there are numerous messages (Čenej messages are in the city itself), that have been recently redecorated as eco and ethno oases. The purpose of the paper is to suggest manners of their inclusion into the integral tourist product based on the research of resources for the development of urban ecotourism in Novi Sad. The paper employed analytical-synthetic method, a combination of secondary sources of literature data, internet, and other sources, with the primary data gained by field observation, analyzing the content of advertising materials and contact through informal interviews with various organizations and experts from the field of ecology, ecotourism and tourism in general, and with decision makers. This research suggests the ways of including ecotourism resources in the tourist offer of Novi Sad.

**KEY WORDS:** urban ecotourism, ecodestination, restoration and repurposing, sustainable urban development, Novi Sad

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## INTRODUCTION

In the past few decades, the classic tourist tides have undergone structural changes, meaning, they have gained a completely different concept due to new forms of tourism based on the principles of sustainable development. Ecotourism reached a prominent position amongst them, with a few sub-forms, amongst which are, for example, mass tourism and urban ecotourism, that shift the boundaries of ecotourism as they have been seen until now.

Ecotourism is a form of tourism that is propagated as tourism based on nature. It is defined by its results in sustainable development: protection of nature, the education of visitors about sustainability and benefits for the local population. While ecotourism means traveling to relatively untouched and unpolluted natural areas (Ceballos-Lascurain, 1996), urban ecotourism takes place in areas that offer a degree of naturalness in a situation where they are substantially modified by prior human activities (Jegdić and Milošević, 2012).

Many cities in the world have promoted urban ecotourism actively, and have mixed it with urban tourism. The practices of urban ecotourism, mixed with urban tourism, gradually depart from the central part of ecotourism, and since then, more disagreements have arisen (Wu et al., 2010). Summarily speaking, even though the boundaries of urban ecotourism have overlapped with urban tourism, their core ideas are considerably different. It seems that urban tourism places emphasis on the cultural aspects, while the contents of urban ecotourism are more similar to the concerns of traditional ecotourism.

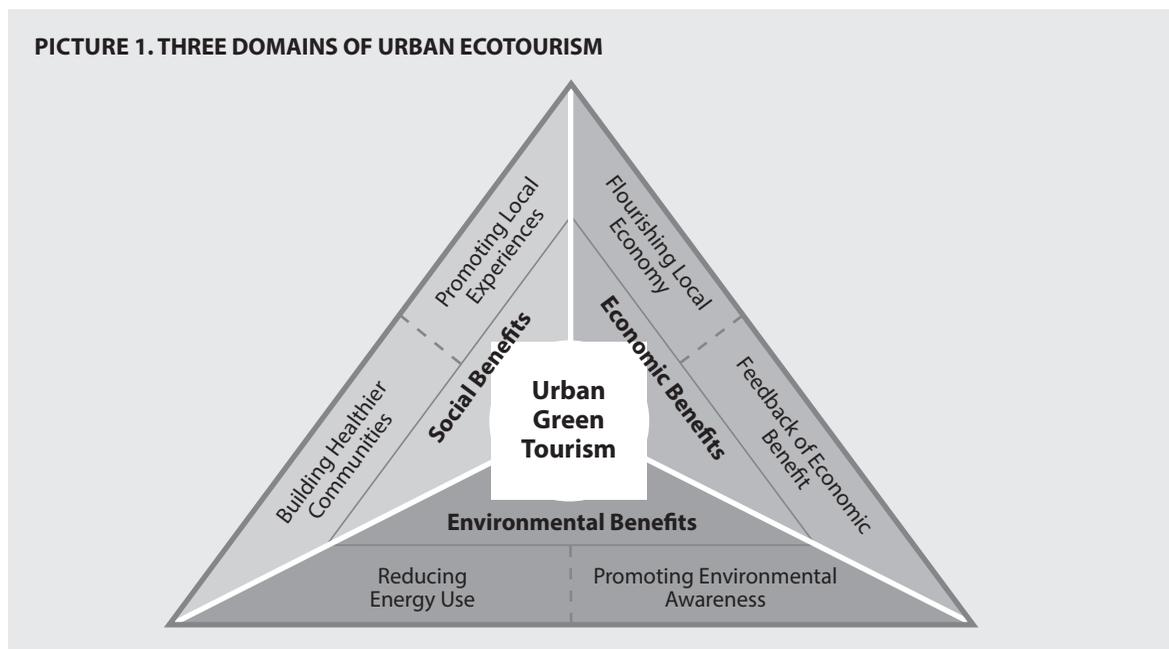
The subject of this research are previous activities aimed at the development of eco-tourism in Novi Sad, understanding the conditions and possibilities for improvement of ecotourism, proposing possible solutions for the future, as well as the coordination of these activities with the objectives of protection of natural and cultural heritage and the concept of urban development.

## THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Although the analysis of the three key criteria of ecotourism (natural attractions, educational motivation and sustainability – ecological and social) indicates a high position of protected areas as eco-tourist spaces, according to Weaver (2005), the modified areas also have potential and certain ecological advantages. He believes that urban places can also be destinations for more kinds of eco-tourist products. Weaver bases this claim on the fact that urban ecotourism is a complex phenomenon of a high capacity, which can be focused on the issue of restoration and improvement, thus enabling interesting visits remote from sensitive natural areas. In summary, urban ecotourism offers “a viable combination of ecological and cultural protection, increased local awareness of the value of preserving the natural and cultural environments and local economic development” (Joppe and Dodds, 1998). Picture 1 shows the three main domains of urban ecotourism and some examples of activities.

The concept of urban ecotourism appeared for the first time in 1996, when it was defined by Blackstone Corporation as “one of the sustainable ways of travelling to urban areas” (Wu et al., 2010: 739). The concept of urban ecotourism was elaborated in more detail during the First Urban Ecotourism Convention, held in White Rock, Canada in 2004. The experts for ecotourism agreed that urban ecotourism is an “opportunity to conserve biological and social diversity, create new jobs and improve the quality of life” (Declaration on Urban Ecotourism, 2004). At the same time, while ecotourism includes travelling into “relatively undisturbed and unpolluted natural areas”, urban ecotourism is an activity that strengthens protection of nature and the quality of life of the city population (Oh, 2007). The Green Tourism Association (GTA) defined urban green tourism (urban ecotourism) as “travelling and exploring inside and around urban area that provides satisfaction and respect of the city’s

PICTURE 1. THREE DOMAINS OF URBAN ECOTOURISM



Source: Hamilton.com, 2013, according to: Butty et al., 2014

natural areas and cultural resources to the visitors” (Gibson et al., 2003). It simply includes a natural travel that is conducted in an urban environment. A particular challenge is making the urban space tolerable to protection of biodiversity. Urban ecotourism recognizes urban centres as cradles of civilization and examples of cohabitation of various cultures. These areas can be devastated to such an extent that they become unusable or that the space and objects lose their original function. In this case, they can provide great potential through restoration and repurposing. Modified areas can be acceptable as eco-tourist locations, if they are well presented, guided and aesthetically pleasing (Higham and Luck, 2002). On the one hand, urban ecotourism is necessary for improving cities that are becoming destinations of urban ecotourism, and on the other hand it represents a new area of interest in the world of tourism. The research in early 2000s led to the establishment

of urban ecotourism as a special area of study and activity, located between sustainable urban development and tourist disciplines. Contrary to classic eco-destinations, urban ecotourism is more acceptable considering a higher capacity of urban destinations and the potential to renovate locations that have been degraded by industrialism, traffic or other human activities. Tourists that participate in urban ecotourism can use the existing infrastructure, including public transport. Precisely for that reason, many cities that are popular tourist destinations, as well as those that are trying to become one, invest great efforts to maintain and improve their ecological aspects, which attracts a new “kind” of tourist. The development of ecotourism, with respecting the standards of ecological sustainability, becomes a way to gain profit for entrepreneurs, as well as economic and social benefits for the local community. This research will be focused on

clarifying the term and the practical aspects of ecotourism. Jegdić and Milošević indicate the following benefits:

*Inclusion of cities in the development of ecological ethics opens the stage for „greening“ of tourism in the cities worldwide. Increase in green areas in a city leads to an increase in wellbeing of the inhabitants of cities and can be used as a road to renewal of the deindustrialised areas and finding new practical uses for areas and objects which lost their primary function and are abandoned (2011: 437).*

This implies that urban ecotourism is a means for sustainable urban development.

Higham and Luck (2002) point out that urban ecotourism can have some advantages over ecotourism in the sensitive natural areas:

- ☞ *Ecological influences*; Urban ecotourism uses the existing infrastructure.
- ☞ *Renewing the natural areas*; Protected treasures can renew and strengthen the quality of settlements during the implementation of the unique ecotourist experience.
- ☞ *Interpretation and education*; Urban environment provides the realisation of a wider spectrum of goals, thus promoting sustainability, to a greater extent, for the entire social background.
- ☞ *Financial purposefulness*; This form of ecotourism can generate more income, as it attracts a wider range of audience and is usually less season-specific.
- ☞ *Advantages in the field of destination marketing*; Urban ecotourism is a way to enrich the offer and is an added value asset in the city promotion.

Some characteristics of urban ecotourism, identified by Dodds and Joppe (2003), also contribute to the harmonic development of the cities: ecologic responsibility, local economic vitality, cultural sensitivity and wealth of experience through the active, personal and meaningful participation and inclusion of nature, people, places and cultures.

According to the definition, a sustainable city respects the environmental, economic and socio-cultural dimensions of the sustainable development. These cities use renewable energy, recycling and try to increase green spaces. Urban ecotourism takes into consideration issues of natural areas, noise and pollution. Thoughtful town planning is also necessary as well as the establishment of many public places. Urban ecotourism has to create interactions between tourists and inhabitants. One of its missions is also to value popular areas and the local economy by making tourists discover the “real city” and its culture.

## METHODOLOGY

The aim of this paper is to identify the resources for the development of urban ecotourism in Novi Sad and to suggest the ways to include them into the integral tourist product of this destination. The aim of the research is realized using the following research tasks: (1) By reviewing the theoretical concept and the practice of urban ecotourism in the world, (2) By identifying attractive resources and other benefits for forming the urban ecotourism product in Novi Sad, (3) By reviewing specific solutions for the promotion of existing and implementing new forms of urban ecotourism activities. Considering thusly defined objective, qualitative case study approach was applied (Yin, 1989). This research was realized as a transversal study of empirical character. Apart from the non-experimental method as the basic explicative method, bibliospeculative method (theoretical analysis) was also applied in the phase of defining the theoretical framework of the paper. The paper combines secondary data sources from literature, internet and other sources, with the primary data gained by field observation, advertising material content analysis, and contacts made during informal interviews with various organizations and experts from the field of ecology, ecotourism and tourism in general, as well as decision makers.

## NOVI SAD AS A DESTINATION OF URBAN ECOTOURISM

### Attractive resources

Novi Sad is located on the river Danube, which, with its coastline, is an ecological corridor of international importance. It has large parks (Kamenički, Dunavski, Limanski, Futoški etc.), Ribarsko ostrvo (Fish island), Štrand beach, as well as public green areas alongside Petrovaradin fortress and the Jetty next to the Danube river. It also provides a rent-a-bike system, which is well organized all over the city. Furthermore, it houses very attractive catering and commercial facilities that also serve and sell products based on local, organically produced supplies, an organic green market and “Moj Salaš” shops. Not far from it there is Čenej, most of which consists of countryside, meadows, pastures and forests. The tourist attraction here consists of the messuages, where significant traditional values are preserved. Messuages, that are used more and more for tourism purposes, nurture a particular combination of tradition and culture, national cuisine, nature and serenity.

According to functionality, attractive urban ecotourism resources in Novi Sad can be divided into the following groups:

☞ *Danube with the riparian zone.* The city is located on the river Danube, the riparian zone of which makes the most significant resource for the development of urban ecotourism. On this river, there are numerous islands, one of which is located in the city itself – Ribarsko ostrvo (Fish island), and it is a unique woodland oasis of peace. In some places, sandy beaches cut through the complexes of riparian woodland, among which, Štrand city beach is the most decorated and the most beautiful. It is located downstream from Fish Island and the marina. Kamenički park, as a monument of nature, extends along the right riverbank, right across the river. Until the year 1918, this park was a private garden of the Castle

with hundreds of kinds of plants from all over the world, with lakes, fountains and sculptures. “Begečka jama” nature park is located on the left riverbank, in the suburban zone upstream of the city, and downstream of it, there is a special nature reservation “Koviljsko-petrovaradinski rit”.

☞ *City parks.* The parks of Novi Sad are important presuppositions of sustainable urban development and they serve to satisfy a series of social, psychological and ecological needs (Pajvančić-Cizelj, 2015:353). In the territory of Novi Sad there are significant park areas, three of which are park areas protected as monuments of nature due to their extraordinary natural values – *Dunavski park*, *Futoški park* and *Kamenički park*. Among the most famous ones is the *Dunavski park*. With over 250 plant species and a lake, it has become the most beautiful and the most decorated park in Novi Sad. *Futoški park*, with its water surface of slough landscape, plastic configuration of the terrain, abundance of valuable dendrological material (woodland trees, bushes and semi-bushes), decorated tracks, kid’s corner, and a good public lighting is a pleasant place for visits even in the evening hours. *Limanski park*, created during the construction of Liman III suburb by planting poplar and willow trees, was later enriched by linden, birch, oak, cedar, spruce and decorative bushes. A beautiful lawn was also tended. There is a source of (potable) water within the park. It is the largest city park, and it fits well with the green stripe of Danube’s riverbank. *Željeznički park*, secluded and fenced off with a railway causeway, is a suitable place for performances in the open.

☞ *Suburban zone.* In the peripheral and suburban zone, there are green complexes, available surfaces and abandoned facilities and spaces occupied in the past by economic activities (industrial facilities, transport infrastructure and facilities with corresponding green belts). Local military facilities particularly stand out with the volume of the buildings and the surface they occupy (barrack “Majevica” next to Detelinara suburb and barrack “Trandžament”), as well as the space and facilities

in the settlement around Petrovaradin fortress, etc. This is accompanied by messuages, once field estates with a main house and economic buildings, and today mostly remodelled into catering facilities, but with an old-time charm. Some of the most famous ones are Salaš 137 and Berkin message next to Čenej. There are mountain lodges in the administrative area of the city of Novi Sad, located on the excursion sites Popovica and Glavica in Fruška Gora.

☞ *Industrial legacy.* Industrial legacy primarily includes cultural spaces (Tomka, 2011), but with its thematic spectrum, it is partially also in the domain of urban ecotourism resources. Unfortunately, apart from the unrelated and sporadic initiatives, in Serbia, the practice of providing quality protection and including facilities of industrial legacy into the socio-economic development of the local communities or into tourism has still not been established. The state government should have the key role in such projects. It is the government that evaluates the projects that are the most suitable for investment, and what is of the greatest interest to the city/country (Jegdić and Milošević, 2011). As far as industrial settlement in the territory of the city of Novi Sad is concerned, the closest to it is Ledinačko lake (next to the village Ledinci), an artificial lake in the “Fruška Gora” national park. It was created at the bottom of an abandoned quarry (mining heritage). After several years of equipping, decorating the beach and other contents, as well as use for recreation, the lake has been drained. It has been decided to restart extracting stone here, and after the exploitation to construct a new lake which would be the centre of a future nature park that will include excursion sites, a beach, sports terrains, bicycle tracks and rocks for sports climbing ([www.pressonline.rs](http://www.pressonline.rs)).

☞ *Events.* There is a larger number of events in Novi Sad and the surrounding area that are directly or indirectly connected to the sustainable development and ecotourism. The most connected manifestations with ecotourism came from the Nature Conservation Movement

in Novi Sad. Such is, for example, “Novi Sad Spring” manifestation that takes place in March every year, and during which expert panels, lectures and exhibitions are organized. Then, “Flower markets” are organized, taking place during the spring and autumn seasons. They contain selling exhibitions of flowers, seedlings, honey, products of old and artistic trades, national workshops, etc., as well as workshops and promotions of current ecological activities.

As far as attractions for urban ecotourism are concerned, they are mostly complementary as they cannot independently attract tourists to Novi Sad, they can only serve to enrich the content to the tourists that are drawn by another attraction (sailing the Danube, Novi Sad agricultural fair, Exit, Sterijino pozorje festival and other cultural, entertainment, sports or business events). Thus, the products of urban ecotourism in Novi Sad can have a character of complementary tourist products and should be developed in such manner, meaning, they should be tied to the basic tourist products and so enrich their portfolio.

### Material basis and organization

By principle, eco-tourists are searching for experiences that will provide them with the feeling of closeness to the natural attractions and local community, which primarily brings them to a place. Every destination that wishes to attract such tourists must protect its resources and successfully organize the population, as well as prepare adequate offer for the tourists. From this aspect, Novi Sad has the following characteristics:

☞ *Preparedness of attractive resources.* As far as preparedness of natural resources for eco-tourists is concerned, with direct insight in the field it has been determined that they contain minimal equipment that enables physical access and stay in these localities. However, in most cases, additional amenities for quality recreation do not exist, nor do already built attractions, popular attractions-

honeypots and similar, which would make them more competitive. Nevertheless, there is a visible progress in organizing suitable local events. The basic constructed value is the bicycle lane on the Jetty next to Danube, as well as a system of bicycle lanes for touring certain parts of the city. There is no comprehensive signalization that would direct to locations, content and approach to individual attractions.

☞ *Accommodation.* Novi Sad has a large number of hotels and hostels, luxurious and exclusive, as well as simpler and more affordable ones. There are no forms of accommodation unique to classic ecotourism, however, that is not a necessity in urban conditions considering that visitors are not eco-tourists of the “hard” type. In the nearest surroundings, such a facility is the “Radulovački Ecological Center” in Sremski Karlovci, as well as a few mountain lodges in Fruška Gora in the ambiance of preserved nature and on the territory of Novi Sad. However, this leaves the impression that the providers of the accommodation gave insufficient thought to ecology, i.e. implementing “eco-friendly” contents into their hotels/hostels. Recycling is mostly lacking, energetic efficiency, conservation and recycling of water, solar panels, supply of home-made, organic groceries for the diet of the tourists, using natural materials for the interior, etc. However, some standards of eco-hotels are being applied in terms of the way towels are being used, biological washing detergents, etc.

☞ *Food.* Vojvodina is proud of its culinary tradition and home-made recipes for making authentic meals and drinks. Novi Sad features locations that sell or serve home-made, organically produced food. Such places are of course lacking in number, but they do exist. The extent to which those supplies are in fact organic and grown without artificial fertilizers, pesticides and herbicides, etc. should be controlled. Furthermore, it is necessary to have more of such locations, more restaurants with organic, home-made cuisine made of products of protected origin, and it is necessary to work more on their promotion. Better marketing leads to a

larger number of consumers, which means that a larger number of ecologically conscious tourists will know of these locations and will see Novi Sad as an eco-destination.

☞ *Tours and sights.* Novi Sad offers a relatively small number of organized eco-tours, such as, for example, a tour of Kovilj-Petrovaradin rit (marshes), rafting on the Danube or horse riding in Fruška Gora, which can be found in the offer of *Panacomp* tourist agency; however, depending on the month, various fairs, gatherings, activities, presentations, promotions and local events can be found. With citizen initiative, new activities and events are often introduced and organized. One such example is the activity of the people of Novi Sad from Novo Naselje part of the city. Young activists of Nature Conservation Movement in Novi Sad organized a cleaning event of the entire suburb, and what is particularly interesting is the idea of restoring old objects and turning them into new and decorative ones in order to beautify this suburb.

☞ *City transportation.* Novi Sad sidewalks are ideal for cycling, as apart from the large boulevards and wide streets, they have separate cycling lanes, or to be more accurate, over 70 kilometres of bicycle lanes (Novi Sad cycling initiative, 2012). A large number of Novi Sad residents specifically use bicycles for transportation, so this means of transport is also recommended for tourists. A few years ago, rent-a-bike system was introduced in order to facilitate circulation through the city to the citizens as well as tourists. Bases have been set in 10 locations where it is possible to take or return a bicycle. This is extremely well designed and accepted. Any part of the city is easily reached, and it costs 100 dinars (less than 1 EU) a day. Several special projects of bicycle lanes have been created. For example, within the reconstruction of the Novi Sad Jetty in 2010, in addition to the separate space for walking and running, a 2.2-km-long bicycle lane was also constructed (Polić, 2012). Apart from the City, citizen associations and sports organizations have begun to actively

promote using bicycles as the ideal means of transportation for citizens and tourists since 2010. Of course, “Novi Sad cycling initiative” citizen association stands out, which conducts a series of projects and activities, organizing mass monthly promotional bicycle rides (that have been in duration since 2012), produces promotional video materials, organizes a regional cycling festival called “Biciklana FEST” (Bicycle fest), organizes several stops for bike repairs, etc.

### Activities of local communities and individuals

For this research, numerous organizations and individuals were contacted, however only a few of them responded. Among those are the *Ecological Movement of Novi Sad* and *Nature Conservation Movement of Novi Sad*.

*Ecological Movement of Novi Sad* was founded as a citizen association with environmental protection and advancement program, as well as protection and affirmation of spiritual legacy ([www.ekopokret.org.rs/](http://www.ekopokret.org.rs/)). As its president, Nikola Aleksić says:

*Ecological movement of Novi Sad can be credited with implementing ecology into pre-school education, payment collection of eco-dinars through the monthly bill of Informatics, it is the initiator of the construction of a factory for the selection of garbage in a garbage dump, the first of such kind in Serbia. Until now, we had 19 international scientific eco-conferences and over 300 public open lectures that contributed to raising of the ecological awareness of the citizens of Novi Sad. After visiting and acquiring insight into the results gained, German “The Greens” have pronounced the Ecological Movement of Novi Sad to be the strongest ecological organization in Europe according to the results.*

He believes that, for now, urban ecotourism in Novi Sad does not exist in the true meaning of the concept. Many things need to be changed through citizen initiative as well as activities of local self-government and non-government organizations, such as the Ecological Movement of Novi Sad. The very idea is not sufficient, nor is the indisputable

potential. It still requires plenty of work and money in order to meet all necessary conditions for ecotourism in Novi Sad.

*Nature Conservation Movement of Novi Sad* aims to protect the environment and nature through planting and protecting forests and non-forest greenery, ecological education and raising the ecological awareness of the citizens of all ages, encouraging active participation of the public in making decisions important to the environment and promoting voluntarism ([www.pokretgorana.org.rs](http://www.pokretgorana.org.rs/)). The work of the Nature Conservation Movement of Novi Sad was based on the activities of volunteers that are supported by a small professional team. Members of the Nature Conservation Movement participated in building four Novi Sad parks, in sanitation of wild dumps by planting protective greenery, greening of the industrial zone around the oil refinery, enriching the Home for Children and Youth with Disabilities in Veternik with green surfaces, etc. They issued several books and manuals in the field of eco-education.

The research that has been conducted in 2013 on the sample of 120 secondary school students, aided them in gathering information based on which they organized training and created the “Manual for eco-educators”. Namely, they established that 70% of secondary school students in Novi Sad, even with numerous natural and culturally-historical values of Novi Sad park surfaces, are not sufficiently familiar with them. They believed that the solution lies in the informal education that is specifically created and presented to the youth in an attractive manner. In December 2015, they organized a training for tourist eco-guides in Novi Sad. The two-day training was held by experts from the field of work with youth, tourism and landscape architecture. The training was organized by the Nature Conservation Movement within the project “Green side of the city- Meet the green side of your city with eco-guides”, with the cooperation of JKP “City Greenery” and the youth of landscape architects’ association from

the Faculty of Agriculture in Novi Sad. The aim of the project was to improve and enrich the program of informal education for the young, which encourages the expansion of knowledge and information regarding the greenery of Novi Sad, and by training 20 young students to be eco-guides and, using methods adapted to the target group, to lead groups of young secondary school students and other visitors into Novi Sad parks in order for them to become familiar with their natural values and the significance of green surfaces for urban ecology. The project encompassed four field trips into four parks with up to 30 secondary school students accompanied by four guides. Then they conducted activities regarding construction and promotion of the “Manual for eco-educators – Green side of the city”, where they represented Novi Sad parks in detail as well as creative ways and methods to get to know their characteristics.

### **The condition of urban eco-tourism in Novi Sad**

After the interviews with the management and the employees in the only two receptive Novi Sad agencies, *Panacom* and *Magelan*, and the analysis of their tours and the interest for them, a conclusion was reached that in Novi Sad, urban eco-tourism practically does not exist.

However, there is a certain number of foreign tourists that contact these tourist agencies in search of a local guide and special experience. This refers to tours of the centre of Novi Sad on bicycles, tours of Petrovaradin fortress and its underground chambers, as well as visits to messuages. There is a bigger interest for Fruška Gora and Sremski Karlovci. These tourist agencies have in their offer tours such as “Cruising the Danube”, “Danube rafting”, “Horse riding in Fruška Gora”, “Fruška Gora wine tour”, “Fruška Gora monastery tour”. Other interesting aspects are part of the offer as well, for example in Sremski Karlovci there is: visit to the Honey Museum, Bread Museum, wine cellars, etc. These tourist agencies primarily

deal with congressional tourism, and they fill in vacant time in the schedule of their tourists with such tours. At the moment, in the very city itself, no location, facility, or attraction is included in this, apart from touring the very city centre accompanied by a local guide.

*Magelan* tourist agency has begun a project titled “The richness of difference” in 2011, into which Kovilj village from Novi Sad municipality was included. Begeč is still not included, even though it is a village ready for eco and ethno-tourist promotion. Tourists have the opportunity to meet people of various cultures, customs and traditions, to experience new tastes of gastronomical specialties, to enjoy various music rhythms and folklore, to buy local products, etc.

Precisely this wealth of differences is the most valued possession of these lands and it offers a basis for the creation of a unique tourist product – a cultural tour that includes visiting villages inhabited by people that are trying to maintain and protect their specific way of life from urbanization and globalization. This tourist agency has another product that has proven to be successful in previous years. Namely, in cooperation with organizations and associations from Great Britain, they succeeded in attracting foreign tourists and organize bird watching tours. They organize approximately three tours a year, where the foreign tourists are accommodated in Novi Sad, and in the surroundings of Novi Sad, Vršac, Zrenjanin, Kikinda (the very city of eagle owl), etc. they observe birds. Some of them are: yellow heron, black stork, lesser eagles, saker falcons, crested lark, eagle owl, etc. During the visit that lasts 2-3 days, eco-tourism type tours are organized in Fruška Gora and in Sremski Karlovci.

Guests frequently arrive to Novi Sad on bicycles. These are one-day visits, and tourists often come from the direction of Budapest. They tour Novi Sad on their bicycles accompanied by a guide. They plan in advance where they will eat, sleep and what they will visit and see on their route.

As far as eco-friendly tourist activities and events are concerned, several of them are organized; however, they are complementary and included into existing larger projects, such as the Agricultural Fair and others. Initiative of Novi Sad Tourist Agency (TONS) is necessary, as well as receptive tourist agencies, Ecological Movement, Nature Conservation Movement and other associations of citizens and individuals, and the support of local self-government and the sponsorship of larger companies.

### Suggestions for improving urban eco-tourism

In Novi Sad and its surroundings there are natural resources, sights and certain ecological and complementary activities of numerous organizations and associations. It is necessary to work more on their promotion and inclusion into the integral tourist offer. Dunavski and Željeznički park, Štrand and the Dunavski kej (Jetty) are the most interesting and most accessible locations where activities of urban eco-tourism could be organized. Furthermore, Fish Island and Kamenički park, as more remote locations, could be used for cycling or walking tours.

For example, during spring or autumn, when Štrand is not crowded and the weather is not cold, kiting could be organized, various competitions, socializing, festivals, concerts, movie screenings, shows, etc. Local population would be hired, the entrance fee would be the same as during the summer bathing season. The income would be generated from the entry tickets and from the sponsors of such gatherings. This would open new jobs and would provide income from Štrand to Novi Sad during the autumn and spring, not only during the summer. In the winter, there would be an ice-skating rink in Štrand, which is of interest in itself. In order to increase the visitation rate and interest, it would be necessary to introduce certain activities accompanying the skating rink. Similarly, as in the previous suggestion, competitions could be included, concerts, festivals, etc. In perspective,

some of these activities, if they could become affirmed, could become attractive to tourists.

*Dunavski park* has the ideal position and a large surface area, and it can be used as a location for some new activities related to urban eco-tourism. Up until a few years ago, screenings within *Cinema City* festival were located here; however, they are now displaced. Something similar could be constructed again and brought into this location. It is also an ideal location for picnics. With the always popular and attractive competitions in some sports activities, among which are old sports and knight battles, Danube park could be attractive for tourists. Considering that there is no longer an entrance fee into the park, souvenirs could be sold here, stands with organic, natural food and drinks could be placed that would also sell freshly squeezed juices, candy, ice-cream. In that way, income could be achieved and new jobs would be opened in that location.

*Željeznički park*, secluded and fenced off with a railway causeway, is a suitable place for performances in the open.

*Dunavski kej* provides conveniences for running, hiking, bicycle riding and group exercise of martial sports and skills in the open.

As far as *Kamenički park* is concerned, camping sites can be organized here, as well as concerts, festivals, larger festivals, larger competitions that also include water sports such as swimming, rowing, diving, etc.

On *Fish Island*, numerous lunches and nature picnics could be organized, which would be prepared by local restaurants after reaching the island from Kamenički park by boat. Also, it is possible to organize a catamaran ride along the Danube to the hidden oases on the riverbank and the islands.

The potential is great, as is the number of ideas; what is necessary is the citizen initiative, support of the local self-government and hiring entrepreneurs with the financial and other incentives from the municipal level.

## CONCLUSION

Novi Sad has plenty of potential for urban ecotourism. As far as attractive resources and the activities for potential tourists are concerned, Novi Sad offers plenty of diverse possibilities for animation. From the natural resources in the surroundings, to the city parks, the Danube, the Petrovaradin fortress, Fish Island and Štrand in the city itself, there is a large number of activities that would be attractive particularly to eco-tourists. As far as food is concerned, it has always been tied to domestic products, and with certain improvements in the organization, it is the stimulation factor in the development of eco-tourism. What lacks is the awareness of the population, the initiative of the tourist entrepreneurs and the support of the local self-government for the development of ecotourist projects.

By taking into consideration all that is necessary to turn Novi Sad into an eco-destination, the highest burden and the highest expectations should befall the local self-government. Of course, the hope remains that the accommodation facilities will take note of the new trends and implement sustainable ecological advancements. Good examples are the Nature Conservation Movement and Ecological Movement citizen associations, with their young activists who are well familiar with the advantages of sustainable development and ecology, and who have already entered certain projects that could also be of use for the sustainable urban ecotourism.

Until now, the very city of Novi Sad was not an interesting destination for ecotourists, but its surroundings – Fruška Gora and Sremski Karlovci were. Specific information, acquired by receptive tourist agencies, say that ecotourists only pass through Novi Sad, glancing at the old city,

historical buildings and ambient environments, and then continue on their way towards other destinations. Currently, Novi Sad does not offer much besides a walk in the parks, cycling along the Jetty and some of the organic food. Of course, there are the possibilities and many unused resources, as well as the potential to improve the existing offer. Therefore, substantial investments would not be necessary, apart from the promotion of new activities in the city. Help is needed in the formation, creation and realization of these activities regarding certain resources by the local self-government, TONS, Ecological Movement and Nature Conservation Movement, receptive agencies, etc. It is necessary to develop synergy and use the energy of the subjects from all three sectors – public, business and civil.

The public sector should aid in the construction, i.e. furnishing with the necessary infrastructure, activities in the area of concept realization of active protection of the nature and cultural assets, financing attractive projects, destination promotion, etc. The civil sector, meaning non-government organizations and citizen associations should be the initiators of specific programs and projects of urban ecotourism, be their promoters, as well as work on the ecological education of the local population. The private sector should be included by utilizing suitable business opportunities, business creativity and marketing knowledge.

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\* This article is part of a scientific project “Models of entrepreneurship development in sustainable tourism of Vojvodina”, No 114-451-2487/2016-01, for the period 2016-2019, financed by the Provincial Secretariat for Science and Technological development AP Vojvodina.

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