

DEVELOPMENT OF THE ENVIRONMENTAL CODE OF CONDUCT IN DAJTI NATIONAL PARK

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Abstract

Dajti National Park is one of the main Natural National Parks in Albania. This Protected Area is situated in the East of Tirana and covers an area of 29217 ha. Dajti National Park is very important on local, national and regional level, for its biodiversity, landscape, recreational and cultural values. Among others it is considered as a live museum of the natural vertical structure of vegetation. The heritage, traditions on ethnography, music, cooking, hospitality etc, unique on Central Albania region, are some other local cultural values that from centuries runs in compliance with natural richness. Unfortunately, for more than 20 years, because of the demographic changes and human stresses caused by it, the National Park values are threatened and reduced by uncontrolled human activity. Forest fires, erosion, inappropriate solid waste disposal, etc. can be counted between main negative impacts caused by human intervention in the area. Unplanned tourism and missing of an appropriate and integrated management is threatening the remained values of this important site. In this condition developing and adopting of Environmental Code of Conduct in Dajti Park is necessary and would contribute in development of ecotourism as an important tool for conservation of natural and cultural resource and for sustainable development. This Code consists on definition of the framework for protection of natural and human values instead of their overexploitation for short term purposes. The Environmental Code of Conduct is focused on the Environment Quality Code, Ecological Code and Socio-ethical Code that compiled in a common and easy comprehensive regulatory will help on implementation of a multi dimensional management, considering tourism as a conservation instrument.

Key words: *Environmental Code of Conduct, environmental protection, Protected Area, ecotourism.*

Introduction

Over the last decades, worldwide is using Environmental Code of Conducts, as a new and promising tool to raise awareness of environmental issues and improve behavior and practices. Agenda 21, the programme of action agreed upon at United Nation Conference on Environment and Development held in Rio in June 1992, encourages business and industry to adopt and report on the implementation of codes of conduct promoting best environmental practice (United Nations, Agenda 21, 1992). During the time, is observed that such codes were really effective in different industrial branches. A very important part of such codes is that they are not enforced, nor are they enforceable. (UNEP, 1995).

From 1980, Manila Declaration of the World Tourism Organization , challenged the industry with a concept of tourism that emphasizes social, cultural, environmental, economic, educational and political values of tourism. Tourism is very active, and as an industry is heavily depends on the maintenance of healthy environment: a clean, healthy and attractive environment remains essential to further growth of tourism industry. The concept of sustainable development therefore is very essential to tourism because it treats the over-use of resource bases, raises awareness for environmental management, and focuses on the need for change in all areas where tourism planning is concerned (Butler and Boyd , 2000)

During years the Environmental Code of Conduct for tourism development has become an important conservation instrument for Protected Areas and other recreational sites. Primarily, parks and protected areas are created in order to conserve natural habitats from the development around it. Protected areas are very attractive settings for the growing demand for outdoor, appreciative activities in natural environment. Challenges for protected area managers are to ensure that while visitors have opportunities to participate in desired activities, they are aware of and maintain the values (Eagles, McCool and Haynes, 2002). The fourth Congress on National Park and Protected Areas recommended that protected area agencies and tourism industry cooperate to adopt codes of practice, guidelines and technique that are compatible with long term protected management plans in order to enhance visitor experiences that are consistent with and reinforce the conservation objectives of protected areas (IUCN, 1996).

The sustainable development concept is relatively a new one for Albania and is developed during the last two decades. Sustainability and awareness on environmental issues are a major part of the tourism development strategy in Albania. According to this strategy, Albania should build up and increase the sector potentials and should develop the tourism in such a way, so that it remains sustainable in the long term, in the cultural, social, environmental and economical points of view (MTCYS, 2005). In this framework, developing and implementation of Environmental Code of Conduct in general tourism industry or in specific site of tourism areas will strongly contribute in the process of achieving a sustainable tourism development in ecotourism context. Specific Environmental Code of Conduct addresses tourism actors' behavior in

specific location, such as national parks and protected areas. Such codes often combine general guidelines with more specific localized ones: dispose of waste properly; protect the natural and cultural environment; use energy efficiently; pay a fair price for goods and services. Such Codes involves tourism provides, such a tourism developers and Park Administrators, visitors and host communities etc.

Nevertheless the surface of Albanian Natural Protected Areas is increased from 8% of the country surface in 2000, to 13.17% in 2010, (AMP, 2011), their richness (specific habitats and biodiversity) is seriously reduced in many PAs. Overexploitation of Protected Areas' biodiversity, tree cutting, illegal constructions, poaching and uncontrolled fishing has reduced seriously the main genetic bases for food and recreation. (Totoni, 2010). It is clear now, that the PAs are almost protected by local community, interested actors (tourism providers), supported by the positive pressure coming from civil society, than from administrative bodies and environmental decision makers.

Characteristics of National Park of Dajti.

Dajti National Park is one the most beautiful and important Protected Area of Albania. Its geographical position, very close to Tirana and its recreational capacity, defines it as one of the most important nature tourism sites of Albania. The National Park is a very rich ecosystem characterized by wonderful landscapes, specific vegetation and flora, paleo-ecological values, wildlife, caves etc. The Dajti Park, declared officially National Park by Albanian Government in 1964 with a surface of 2957 ha, is one of the most important Albanian Protected Areas, not only for its recreational and tourism values, but also for its educational values. The National Park, was well protected during central economy period, but its recreational values were not well exploited. Differently from other Albanian Protected Areas, after years '90, the National Park was well protected from local community and only some few informal constructions were built in the Park territory. Still, other negative impacts are caused during last 20 years. To improve the natural park capacity and ameliorate its management and conservation efficiency, in 2006, the Dajti National Park surface is increased and declared officially with a total surface of 29 384.18 ha (*DCM no. 402, 2006*).

The National Park Management structure is approved in compliance with Albanian legislation and IUCN guidelines and consists in:

Tab. 1. Main Management zones and their surface in Nature National Park of Dajti.

Category	Management zones	Surface in ha
A	Core Area	9 101.23 ha
B	Recreational Zone	2 365.13 ha
C	Traditional Managed Zone	16 602.22 ha
D	Sustainable Use Zone	1 184.27 ha
E	Zone used for Military Purposes	131.33 ha

By the above table, is clear that the surfaces of management zones, as well as the Protected Area management category (National Park), guarantee a successful conservation of its specific biodiversity and landscape. The core area provides satisfactory space for rehabilitation of habitats and biodiversity and the Recreational and Traditional zones, offer appropriate conditions for nature visitors.

The Park is rich in the surface and ground waters. Water percolates in limestone creating wonderful caves. The vegetation of the Park represents a live museum by its vegetation structure, consisting in bushes and shrubs in lower altitude, high trees in the middle and natural pastures at the top. The Park is very interesting from fauna point of view. In the area, between others, are observed several species of amphibians, reptiles, birds and mammals, with specific protection status in national and international levels.

Land use in the Park is characterized by agricultural activity, mostly represented by fruit trees, olives, vineyards and vegetables and husbandry. The infrastructure in general is poor and developed almost in inhabited area.

Dajti Nature National Park is considered as one of the most appropriate natural site of Albania for ecotourism development, such as nature tourism, scientific and education tourism, adventure tourism, agriculture tourism etc. Several tourism facilities are operating in Recreational, Traditional and Sustainable Use Zones. Some of the main tourism potentials of Nature National Park of Dajti are listed below:

Tab. 2. Summarized Potentials of Dajti Nature National Park

Classic Nature Tourism Potentials	Dajti National Park Proprieties
Appropriate Climate	Mixed Mediterranean climate with Central European one
High, interesting and easy observed wildlife	Very rich in decorative and singing birds, rich in mammals, amphibians and reptiles
Attractive landscape and green cover	Wonderful landscape and beautiful forests, grasslands, running waters valleys and reservoirs
Easy and attractive access	Very close to Tirana city and Rinas Airport Cable car from Tirana to the visitor center functioning every day of the year. Bad conditions of the road from Tirana to Recreational zone
Health and hygienic services, specific meals and drinks etc.	Appropriate hygienic conditions, specific meals and drinks, traditional clothes, music etc
Appropriate tourism facilities	Not very appropriate
Healthy Social and political conditions	Appropriate social and political conditions
Additional tourism potentials	Educational potentials on natural sciences, ecology, stratigraphy and peleo-ecology, historical values and vicinity with other tourism sites like Durrës etc.
Hospitality of host community	High hospitality and appropriate behavior

Issues of Nature National Park of Dajti

Although the Dajti National Park is well protected compare with other Albanian Protected Areas, during the last years it has suffered several damages that seriously reduced its potentials. Considering at last 6 hotels, operating in/close to the core area and several restaurants/cafeterias, the incomes generated by tourism activity in the site remains negligible. Despite the construction and operation of the cable car, and increasing of the number of the site visitors, the incomes from tourism in the site remain very low. To the other side, unplanned tourism activities, insufficient implementation of the Management Plan of the Protected Area etc., constitute a continuing challenge towards conservation efforts. As he other National Parks of Albania, Dajti Park is administrated from the Ministry of Environment, Forests and Water Administration. Very low investments by state for the site administration and low contribution of tourism actors on Protected Area conservation are some of the

main issues for Dajti Protected Area. In more detail, the most important problems encountered in the Dajti National Park are presented in the table below:

Table 3. Issues of Dajti Nature National Park and their sources

Issues	Sources
Forest Fire (more than 4 ha are fired every summer)	Natural phenomenon; Forest fires by adventure tourists; Man fires for opening of pastures or space for construction
Erosion	Quarries, missing of anti erosion measures, Deforestation
Landscape pollution during summer season	Waste generated and un appropriate waste disposal
Deforestation	Timber, fire woods, opening of spaces for car parks or construction, opening of tracks for mountainering, etc
Low funds for management	Missing of appropriate financial instruments, low possibilities for site management
Reducing of wildlife	Illegal hunting, habitat destruction, human presence etc.
Bad road condition from Tirana in Recreative zone	Missing of the maintenance of the main road
Low incomes from tourism facilities and infrastructure	Bad management and incompatibility of tourism financial feedback with Park administration aim.

Environmental code of conduct for tourism development in Dajti Nature National Park

All protected areas must initiate and endorse a code of conduct. Developing a Code of Conduct for tourism in Protected Areas, works best when it involves the collaboration of academic organizations, NGOs and Local Tour Operator organizations with tourism actors and Protected Area authorities. For this reason, specific Environmental Code of Conduct for Dajti Natural National Park, should involve all tourism stakeholder groups, such as tour operators, tourists, tourism developers, park administrators and host community. Environmental, social and economic aspects should be included on the Code for each of the actors. Such codes, all together aim to raise awareness of visitors and tour operators about the consequences of their behavior and seek cooperation to prevent negative tourism impact and encourage conservation behavior in Dajti National Park by self regulation measures. The environmental Code of Conduct as a principle guideline for ecotourism development can contribute on implementation of following principles:

- Minimize impacts
- Build environmental and cultural awareness and respect
- Provide positive experience for both visitors and hosts
- Provide financial benefits and empowerment for local people.
- Raise sensitivity to host countries political, environmental and social climate. (TEIS 2010)

Environmental Code of Conduct for Site Visitors

The main driving force that leads to environmental degradation or tourism impact is visitor behavior and conduct of tour operators in protected areas tourism. Many tourism impacts result from the activities of visitors who are inexperienced or unaware. Awareness and knowledge of their behavior can induce visitors to adopt a code of conduct which would lower their impacts and help them to promote conservation. Environmental Codes of Conduct persuade tourists to play an active and positive role in protecting the physical environment, ecological values and

engaging sympathetically with host communities. Some main guidelines which may be taken in consideration for drafting Environmental Code of Conduct for visitors in Dajti Park are:

- Be careful in generation and disposal of waste;
- Avoid contamination of soil and water source;
- Use water and energy efficiently;
- Avoid as much as possible the movement by cars into Protected Area territory
- Minimize noises, don't make unnecessary noises;
- Do not spoil the landscape. Don't damage the vegetation and rocks;
- Don't open new trails or enlarge existing ones, just follow designated trails;
- Respect the wildlife: don't disturb, don't touch and don't feed the animals;
- Be careful with fire;
- Inform Park administrators for any adverse behavior or action inconsistent to conservation and administration guidelines;
- Learn about social and economical characteristics of local community;
- Respect local cultures and traditions;
- Support the local economy by buying local goods and services;
- Do not use unauthorized guides;
- Contribute to local conservation efforts;
- Not disfigure the cultural sites and monuments;
- Respect the Park conservation guidelines, regulations and restrictions;
- Learn as much as possible on Dajti characteristics, development strategy; conservation policy, tourism guides and Environmental Code of Conduct

Environmental Code of Conduct for host community

Host community plays a major role in the development and maintenance of sustainable tourism. Environmental Code of Conduct for host communities addresses three major areas of interaction between host communities and tourism: the social and cultural norms of host community; the economic development of the host community and the protection and preservation of the local environment. Environmental Code of Conduct for tourism providers in Dajti National Park, remains a crucial point to implement the voluntary conservation measures on the development of nature tourism. In this code, for both tourism providers (tourism developers and host community) are included also economical guidelines that contribute in park conservation.

- Produce and sell local production and use appropriate prices;
- Offer to visitors traditional music, clothes, beverages and cooking,
- Employ local community people, considering the knowledge on foreign languages (possible English);
- Prepare and deliver to visitors environmental guidelines for the tourism facility, considering environmental quality, efficient usage of energy and waters, conservation of biodiversity etc. Respect the Tourism Code of Conduct and deliver it to visitors;
- Verify if the visitors have paid the entrance ticket for the Park and if not inform the site administrators on that;
- Avoid as much as possible the contradictions between visitor behavior and host community habits;

- Denounce inappropriate behavior, illegal activities etc of visitors to Park administrative body;
- Do not disturb the visitors;
- Avoid employment of pupils and children on tourism developers or as guides for visitors;
- Collaborate with visitors on Dajti Nature National Park conservation efforts.

The Environmental Code of conduct for Administrative body

An efficient Code of Conduct for Ecotourism development for the administrative body of Dajti National Park should include a list of procedures expected to be followed by organizers and tour operators before, during and after their trip to the site.

The Park Administration Code of Conduct includes elements such as:

- Comply with all requirements of the Albanian Protected Area legal framework and ensure that visitors are aware of requirements that are relevant to them;
- Monitor environmental impacts of their activities, if appropriate, and advise the Regional Environmental Agency or National environmental Agency of any adverse or cumulative impacts resulting from an activity, which were not foreseen by their environmental impact assessment;
- Operate cars, motorcars, bicycles etc safely and according to appropriate procedures;
- Provide the Park with visitor information tables, signs and maps in Albanian and English language and ensure that such information tables and signals are easy watched and clearly indicate sites and related permitted activities, strict protected sites, waste disposal sites, etc;
- Provide Environmental Code of Conduct and Tourism Guides to visitors; deliver to the tourism developers the Dajti National Park regulation and summary of management plan.
- Train appropriate local community members, give to them “Guidance license” and offer them to visitors or tourism developers as licensed guides. Train the tourism developers and host community on Dajti National Park features and specifications, conservation objectives etc.
- Apply fines to the tourism developers, visitors and host community in case of not respecting Park restrictions and regulations
- Intermediate in case of confrontations between tourism developers, host community and visitors, avoiding conflicts
- Maintain a careful and complete record of the activities conducted.

The code of Conduct is most useful when made available on site. It can be printed on brochures, exhibited on signs where they are easily seen or proclaimed verbally to visitors by administrative staff of the Park or local guides. The commitment of Park administration on the Code of Conduct development and implementation is necessary.

Conclusions

The Code of conduct for Dajti Nature National Park, is a voluntary document that should be applied and well supported by main tourism actors. The tourism providers,

where can be included tourism developers and Park authority, should have their own Environmental Code of Conduct, focused on Environmental Quality Code, Ecological code and socio-cultural code. Also visitors have their specific Environmental Code of Conduct with the same structure like those of tourism providers. Nevertheless their structure, all Codes should be in compliance with each other and can be represented in one document as the “Environmental Code of Conduct for Tourism Development in Dajti Nature National Park”. Well training of tourism developers and local community is obligatory for the implementation of an effective Environmental Code of Conduct.

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