

Bulent Acma

Turkey
Anadolu University, Department of Economics
Unit of Southeastern Anatolia Project(GAP)
26470 Eskisehir/TURKEY
Tel: +90 222 3350580ext.6171 - Fax: +90 222 3358895
E.mail: bacma@anadolu.edu.tr
Turkey

Policies and strategies for a sustainable ecotourism: a case study of southeastern Anatolia region in Turkey

ABSTRACT

Ecotourism and sustainability have become popular concepts in Turkey in recent years, because of its richness from the respect of natural resources.

Once, ecotourism was considered as a kind of tourism which covers nature, especially plateau. But today, it is accepted as a broad concept also social and cultural facilities. For this reason, under the heading of ecotourism remarkable developments have been seen about protecting natural resources at first. Then keeping biological diversity and providing sustainability in recent years.

In order to make the tourism of Turkey wealthy and sustainable, it is a priority to develop policies of ecotourism and to make plans.

The aim of this study is to present a series of policies and strategies for a sustainable ecotourism in the region of the Southeastern Anatolia Region which has richest natural, historical and cultural features. For this reason, in this study, former and existing studies to maintain a sustainable ecotourism in the region will be analyzed first.

Secondly, using the results of the studies and experiences gained from these studies, some strategic plans and policies for sustainability will be proposed.

In the first section of this study, the concepts of ecotourism and sustainability will be explained briefly. Then, the existing projects for Southeastern Anatolia Project(GAP) will be analyzed.

In the second section, the natural, historical and environmental properties of Southeastern Anatolia Project(GAP) will be introduced. Moreover, The Southeastern Anatolia Project(GAP), and its dimension of tourism and sustainability will be explained.

In the third section, the strategies planning process for presenting the natural, historical and environmental features of the region to use of ecotourism will be considered. Furthermore, a series of policies and strategies for a realistic process of planning will be offered.

JEL Codes: O2, O3, O18

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Introduction

The concept of sustainable development was introduced by the World Commission on Environment and Development in the Brundtland Report in 1987(WCED, 1987), defining sustainable development as "*development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs*".

Tourism is one of the foremost economic activities around the world, transporting more than 528 million people internationally and generating 322,000 million USD in receipts in 1994. It is a major economic force, generating in 1995 an estimated 3.4 trillion USD in gross output, creating employment for 211.7 million people, producing 10.9 per cent of world gross domestic product, investing 693.9 billion USD in new facilities and equipment, and contributing more than 637 billion USD to global tax revenue(WTO, 1995). The development and management of tourism without damaging the natural and socio-cultural environment is the responsibility of the world-wide tourism industry.

Although economic and environmental positive effects of tourism can not be denied, it is also impossible to deny its negative effects. Recent years, negative effects of tourism such as pollution, overuse of natural resources etc. have been discussed. After realizing negative effects, to minimize these effects and make tourism facilities more sustainable, some new concepts started to be seen. Ecotourism is one of these concepts.

A. ECOTOURISM AND SUSTAINABILITY

Ecotourism

Ecotourism is a commonly used term internationally denoting 'nature tourism'. The term is used largely by the American public and tourism industry and less frequently by British tour operators.

The market for nature holidays has always been an important niche market in the tourism industry. Typical 'ecotourism' holidays include walking holidays, bird watching holidays, mountain trekking, rainforest trekking and safaris.

Ecotourism can be part of a more conventional holiday (day trips to areas of outstanding natural beauty) or can be a total holiday package where the tourist stays in a remote, rural environment for the duration of the holiday (Wight, P.)

Ecotourism is a niche market: the World Tourism Organisation (WTO) estimates that ecotourism represents between 2-4% of all international travel expenditure (the same size as the so-called MICE segment – Meetings, Incentive, Congresses and Exhibitions).

Ecotourism is presently seen as one of the most lucrative niche markets in the tourism industry as ecotourists are higher spenders than 'ordinary' mass tourists. High spending, nature-loving, responsible tourists are undoubtedly an attractive option for governments looking for ways of earning foreign exchange (WTO).

Ecotourism is often seen by poor communities as one of the few livelihoods they have open to them. Communities whose people are living in poverty invariably find their young people migrate to urban centres because of the decline in traditional industries such as agriculture and fishing. Tourism (often 'ecotourism' if they are in remote areas) can prevent this urban drift and provide an essential alternative income.

Ecotourism, if managed properly, could also be an important means of protecting the world's rapidly disappearing ecosystems. If a natural area can be seen to have a high financial worth as an ecotourism destination than alternative more damaging developments, ecologically important areas may be protected from deforestation, agricultural or housing development.

Ecotourism is not however, necessarily "sustainable tourism". Sustainable tourism is defined as: "tourism development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs". This means taking into account social and local economic factors, as well as environmental management issues.

"Tourism Concern is pleased that campaigning organisations in destination countries have pressurised the IYE to recognise that even ecotourism can have serious negative impacts on local people and environments and needs careful consideration," "All tourism needs to benefit local people and their environments, including 'ecotourism'." (Wight, P., 1993)

Nature-Based and Ecotourism (NBE)

Ecotourism is defined in the National Ecotourism Strategy (CDoT 1994a) as:

Nature-based tourism that involves education and interpretation of the natural environment and is managed to be ecologically sustainable.

It recognises that 'natural environment' includes cultural components and that 'ecologically sustainable' involves an appropriate return to the local community and long-term conservation of the resource.

The term 'ecotourism' was originally defined as:

travelling to relatively undisturbed or uncontaminated areas with the specific object of studying, admiring, and enjoying the scenery, its wild plants and animals, as well as any existing cultural manifestations found in these areas. (Caballos-Lascurain 1988).

There are many other definitions sprinkled throughout the literature and an academic industry which has thrived on the analysis of the 'ecotourism' phenomenon. In the tourism industry as a whole the terms 'ecotourism' and 'nature-based tourism' are almost always used interchangeably and indiscriminately. We have intentionally avoided adhering strictly to any definitions since we believe that the concept of ecotourism has already matured and developed beyond the original attempts at definition, that the whole industry is changing rapidly, and that elements of nature-based and ecotourism can enter all segments of the tourism market. Our reference to NBE implies this broader view. The future of NBE and biodiversity conservation is dependent on maintaining a flexible approach to their interrelationships.

This notion of change and breadth of concept was anticipated by the President of the Ecotourism Society who suggested that:

There will never be a firm division between tourism and ecotourism. Ecotourists must define themselves as an avantgarde camp that brings out the best of the tourism market and provides a model for the rest of the world. (Wood 1992).

Rather than suggesting that naturebased or ecotourism is a separate sector of the industry, the Ecologically Sustainable Development Working Group on Tourism (ESDWG 1991) suggested that ecotourism is a situation where 'the idea of a symbiotic relationship between tourism and environment becomes most apparent', and that tourism facilities and services exist in a continuum, from those which are natural resource dependent for their operation, through those which are independent of natural resources. Ecotourism and nature-based tourism can form part of many types of travellers' experiences, varying from a few hours of nature-appreciation, through to intensive long-duration tours of a month or more. NBE should be considered as woven into the broad fabric of tourism, and should not be limited by artificially trying to categorise the phenomenon. We are conscious that this report uses categorisations such as 'ecotourist profiles' for analysis. This is simply because the data have been based on these categorisations.

That the term ecotourism is clouded in confusion, may well be a reflection of the fact that it has less and less relevance in an industry where the differences between ecotourism and tourism are becoming less distinct.

Many industry members including operators, agents, wholesalers and government marketing managers now avoid the term because they feel that it has become misleading, has gained a poor image, is not particularly useful, and means very different things to different people.

Given its tiny base, it is surprising that so many resources have gone into the development of ecotourism strategies, plans, workshops and policies. Logic would dictate that the intention of these strategies is to consider ecotourism as a broader concept than is often stated and assumed, and includes operators and properties across the tourism spectrum, regardless of size.

None of this is intended to suggest that the tourism industry does not need to improve its environmental credentials. It does suggest that it is unreasonable to put the onus of environmental responsibility for the industry as a whole on to a very small, often marginal group, simply because the group has a label of ecotourism or nature-based tourism.

In considering the scope of the potential for integrating NBE and biodiversity conservation, we have considered NBE to embrace the full spectrum of nature and culture-related tourism. This is not limited to tours, but includes walks, talks, resorts, and other accommodation, and other facets of the industry and tourism activities, whether private or industry based, and people partaking of nature-oriented activities also use the same facilities as other tourists.

The principle of ecological sustainability is often taken to mean little more than minimising impact. This philosophy is based on accepting that there will be an impact from tourism. Incremental small impacts inevitably lead to long-term negative ecological consequences which cannot be sustainable. All tourism, not just ecotourism and nature-based tourism is dependent on the natural resources of Australia, and must be a more positive contributor to ecological sustainability, by reversing negative impacts and providing some nett gain through contributions in kind, practice and finance.

In summary, we consider that the concept of ecotourism has evolved over the past decade from a reaction to mass tourism to a force which is contributing to the general greening of the tourism industry. In this sense it can be seen as a process and its importance in inducing change in the tourism industry may be more significant than its categorisation as a small niche market of small operators. The greening of tourism is essential for the ecological and sociological advancement and sustainability of the industry (James, D. 1993).

Tourism and sustainability

Though the Brundtland report made no special reference to tourism, since its publication, the role of tourism in the process of continuously misusing the Earth's resources has been analysed and the concept of sustainable tourism appeared.

Sustainable tourism has several - often seriously debated - definitions. According to the definition of the Federation of Nature and National Parks, sustainable tourism is *"all forms of tourism development, management and activity that maintain the environmental, social and economic integrity and well-being of natural, built and cultural resources in perpetuity"* (Federation of Nature and National Parks, 1993). A publication by the Tourism Concern and the World Wide Fund for Nature defines sustainable tourism as tourism which *"operates within natural capacities for the regeneration and future productivity of natural resources;*

recognises the contribution that people and communities, customs and lifestyles, make to the tourism experience; accepts that these people must have an equitable share in the economic benefits of tourism; and is guided by the wishes of local people and communities in the host areas" (Eber, S)

Though the existing definitions usually differ in their focus or level of elaborateness, the main message of the Brundtland Report seems to be more and more accepted by the tourism industry all over the world.

B. THE SOUTHEASTERN REGION AND THE SOUTHEASTERN ANATOLIA PROJECT (GAP)

In Southeastern Anatolia, the geographical area covering the provinces of Adiyaman, Batman, Diyarbakir, Gaziantep, Kilis, Mardin, Siirt, Sanliurfa and Sirnak is defined as the "GAP Region". Bordered by Syria to the south and Iraq to the southeast, the Region extends over an area of 75358 square kilometers, which is 9.7 percent of the total territory of the country. 20 percent of 8.5 million hectares of economically irrigable land in Turkey is in the GAP Region which mainly consist of the vast plains in the basins of the lower Euphrates and Tigris.

The Region is also named as the "Fertile Crescent" or "Upper Mesopotamia", and known to be the cradle of civilization in human history. Throughout history, the Region has served as a bridge ensuring passage from Anatolia to Mezopotamia.

The Tigris and the Euphrates, two important rivers of Turkey flow through the Region. Both originating from the Eastern Anatolia, these two rivers reach sea in the Persian Gulf. Southeastern Anatolia receives less precipitation compared to the other regions of the country. Hence the idea was to utilize the rich water potential of these two rivers for irrigation and energy production purposes, and to regulate the otherwise irregular flow of both rivers(Unver, 1999).

Short Brief and Stages of the Project

The decision to utilize water resources in a rational manner belongs to Ataturk, the founder of Turkish Republic. While the country was making drives forward for development and change in all fields, the need for electricity in particular appeared on the forefront as one of the most urgent. Consequently, the Electricity Survey Administration (EIEI) was established in 1936 upon the order of Ataturk to produce energy from otherwise vainly flowing streams of the country. The Administration started its preliminary surveys intensively with the Keban Project. In order to carry on studies on the river Euphrates with respect to various characteristics, the Administration established gauging stations on various points along the river. Geological and topographical works over the narrow passage of Keban is started in 1938. Then, in 1950-1960 period, the emphasis was shifted by the EIEI on drillings on the Euphrates and the Tigris. Later, upon the emergence of new needs, another organization, the State Hydraulic Works (DSI) was established in 1954. It was upon the establishment of this organization that the idea of conducting water basin surveys emerged in Turkey. Consequently, the territory of the country was divided into 26 such basins to give way to survey and planning works. The first work for the development of water and land resources in the Euphrates basin was started by the Euphrates Planning Authority established in Diyarbakir in 1961. As a result of these works, the "Reconnaissance Report for the Euphrates Basin" appeared in 1964 with clarity on the irrigation and energy potential of the basin concerned. Another one, the "Reconnaissance Report for the Lower Euphrates Basin" followed the first one in 1966.

In 1968, the proposed water storage facilities and hydraulic plants and irrigation schemes of the Lower Euphrates Projects were contracted out to a group of domestic-foreign firms, the former feasibility studies and the latter for planning. These contracted works were completed in 1970. Meanwhile, work of similar nature was conducted for the Tigris Basin by the Diyarbakir Regional Directorate DSI.

Hence, the overall picture about how the basins of Euphrates and Tigris were to be utilized gained clarity. Finally, in 1977 projects related to these two basins were merged and adopted as a single one under the title the "Southeastern Anatolian Project".

The task of addressing the whole region within the framework of an integrated regional planning and ensuring the coordination of ongoing activities was assigned to the State Planning Organization (DPT) in 1986.

The Southeastern Anatolia Project Regional Development Organization was established by the Government Decree in 6th of November 1989. The objectives of the Organization includes the following; To take relevant measures for the rapid development of the territory covered by the GAP Region; to deliver services related to such areas as planning, infrastructure, licencing, housing, industry, agriculture, mining, energy, transportation and others which are essential for the materialization of relevant investments; to take measures to raise the educational levels of the people living in the Region; and to ensure coordination among various agencies and organizations working along similar lines. The highest level decision making body of the Organization is the "GAP Higher Council" authorized to examine and decide on all kind of plans, projects and programs.

The GAP had originally started as an energy production and irrigation project seeking to utilize the rich land and water resources of the region. It was later converted into an integrated regional development project upon the completion of the GAP Master Plan in 1989. The Master Plan is an overall guide for the course that regional development will follow and for plans, programs and projects to be developed on more specific terms. The basic development scenario adopted by the Master Plan is to transform the region as a agriculture based industrial center.

At present, the GAP is a human centered and integrated regional development project carried out along with the principle of sustainable human development. The development envisaged under the GAP has the goal of creating opportunities for the people of the region fully materialize their preferences and economic potentials.

Other than dams, hydroelectric plants and irrigation schemes over the rivers of Euphrates and Tigris, the very concept of "Southeastern Anatolia Project" is conceived as a regional development drive aiming the multi-faceted and sustainable socio-economic development of the Region on the basis of a multi-sectoral and integrated approach which covers such diverse areas as urban, rural and agricultural infrastructure, transportation, industry, education, health, housing, tourism and investments in many other fields.

Upon the completion of the Project, 28% of the total water potential of Turkey will be brought under control through facilities on the Euphrates and Tigris which jointly flow more than 50 billion cubic meters of water per year. Furthermore, 1.7 million hectares of land will be under irrigation, and it will be possible to generate approximately 27 billion kWh electric energy annually with an installed capacity of 7476 megawatts.

The high potential generated in both agriculture and industry by the GAP will increase the income level of the Region fivefold and generate employment opportunities for 3.8 million people living in a region whose total population is projected to be over 9 million in 2005.

It is the original and basic task of the GAP Administration to plan and carry out all activities related to the development of the Region by a "comprehensive regional development approach" covering all social and economic sectors in a manner to observe the consistency of development objectives, targets and strategies.

The GAP Master Plan is the basic guiding document in this track. With the implementation of projects, urban infrastructures will be developed and the population absorption capacities of the regional urban centers will be enhanced. GAP is a program in which all aspects of sustainable human development are considered in a package program that can take into account interactions between different sectors, activities and one that also serves as an umbrella to coordinate very many government agencies and other entities working in this particular area. The GAP is presently the grand project of the Republic of Turkey with its

estimated total investment cost, US\$ 32 billion. Of which about \$ 14.5 billion was actually spent as of the end of 2000 for the realization of the Project(GAP Administration, April 1996).

The State of the Republic of Turkey has been attaching ever more importance to the elimination of regional disparities in the socio-economic development of the country. This concerns not solely the reflection of a desire for an equitable development. Rather, it originates from the sound diagnosis that mobilization of the development potential of under developed regions will contribute greatly to the realization of such national goals as economic growth, social stability and a rise in export capacity. In short, GAP is bringing civilization back to the Upper Mesopotamia(GAP Administration/b, 1993).

Sustainable Development Programme in GAP Project

The ultimate aim of GAP is to ensure sustainable human development in the region. Therefore it is a human centred development process. Physical structures which are now being built will be the basis of human development. The aim of sustainable development will be achieved by eliminating disparities, spreading welfare, ensuring community participation and developing human resources(Acma, 2000).

The combination of economic growth targets with a human development perspective envisages the transformation of the projected social change into participatory solutions specific to the eco-system and cultural make-up of the region.

The Earth Summit held in Rio in 1992 had adopted a document titled "**Agenda 21**". The Agenda includes some basic principles which are to be adapted to the specific circumstances of individual countries. In this respect, GAP's planning and implementation for sustainable human development fully confirm to these basic principles. This planning and implementation have the following basic principles:

- 1.Participation**
- 2.Equity**
- 3.Development of Human Resources**

Participation is conceived as the active presence of all stakeholders in the processes of project development, decision making, implementation, monitoring and evaluation. This principle is valid for all projects.

When translated into actual processes, the principle yields sample benefits by raising awareness, enhancing the social feasibility of projects, reducing costs and by actually solving problems. One of its side effects is the democratisation of communities involved.

The second principle, equity or fairness in development means the integration of those who are in socially, culturally or economically disadvantaged positions to the process of development. As far as GAP is concerned, such disadvantaged groups are identified as women, children, landless peasants, small farmers and farmers living in areas not under irrigation. Special programmes are being developed with the participation of such groups.

In sum, GAP's aims include sustainable economic growth; fair income for all; better access to such services as education, health and cultural activities; sustainable utilisation of natural resources; a clean and safe environment; decent sheltering for all; and participation to decision making. All these mean the creation of sustainable society which progresses through its internal dynamics.

This sustainable human development approach has started to attract the attention of various international organisations and foreigners. For example, the United Nations Development Programme (**UNDP**) shows its interest by supporting the project(GAP Administration and UNDP. September, 1997).

UNDP and GAP co-sponsored the Symposium "Sustainable Development and GAP" which took place in March 1995. The event was participated by the representatives of universities and local and private organisations.

The seminar was a platform on which the principles of sustainable human development were discussed in the context of GAP.

The programme supports the implementation of 29 sub-projects presented below under five headings:

- Encouragement of social sustainability and improvement of social services,
- Encouragement of agricultural sustainability and improvement of rural productivity,
- Encouragement of local entrepreneurship and industrial development for economic viability
- Encouragement of sustainable human settlements,
- Sustainable utilisation of natural resources at an optimal level(GAP Administration, April 1996)

The seminar also formed the basis of the present **Sustainable Development Programme in GAP** which is being carried out jointly by the GAP Administration and UNDP since March 1997.

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C. PROJECT ANALYSIS FROM RESPECT OF SUSTAINABILITY AND ECOTOURISM IN THE REGION

COMPLETED PROJECT

DOCUMENTATION OF IMMOVABLE CULTURAL PROPERTIES OF THE SETTLEMENTS OF BIRECIK, HALFETI AND SURUC

Objective: To gather an inventory of immovable cultural property in the settlements Birecik, Halfeti and Suruc and to publish the results of documentation.

Scope: To complete the drawings of plan, cross-section and frontal view of the structures documented as a part of the project in the settlements of Birecik, Halfeti, Suruc and to prepare the outcomes for publication after a definition of the structures and enrichment by a supply of maps and photos.

Present Situation: the project was completed and the project outcomes were published by GAP-RDA in August 1999.

THE SYMPOSIUM OF PRESERVATION AND PROMOTION OF THE CULTURAL ASSETS IN GAP REGION

Objective: One of the aims of Southeastern Anatolia Project which is a human- focused sustainable development project is preservation of cultural heritage of the region. As an initial step of presenting the cultural heritage of GAP Region at the international level, assessing the cultural values in hand and emphasizing the importance of this cultural heritage from the perspective of tourism sektor "The Symposium of Preservation and Promotion of the Cultural Assets in GAP Region" is organized.

Scope: The Symposium was held on June 2-5, 1998 in Sanliurfa with the participation of representatives of ministries and organizations at the national level, academicians, NGOs from national and international level and the representatives of media. A total of forty one

papers have been presented by local and international experts on issues such as cultural values, cultural assets and tourism, cities and archaeological sites.

Present Situation: The papers presented in the Symposium were published by GAP-RDA in April 2000. The book titled "The Symposium of Preservation and Promotion of the Cultural Assets in GAP Region".

ONGOING PROJECTS

RESEARCH, EXCAVATION AND RESCUE WORK IN HASANKEYF HISTORICAL AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITE

Objective: To rescue cultural properties in the settlement of Hasankeyf that will remain under Ilisu Dam reservoir.

Scope: Identification of all visible cultural properties, including architectural structures and small findings existing in the site, realization of relief, transfer of the moveable artifacts, creation of an open-air museum and conduct of archaeological work to bring to daylight those cultural properties presently underground, as well as documentation of the findings and publication of these documents.

Present State: Excavation and rescue work started in 1991 upon a protocol between the Ministry of Culture and GAP Administration. But there was cessation in activities until 1998 due to the extraordinary circumstances in the area. Excavation and rescue work re-started in 1998 and in this period, work focused on the area called "lower town". The 2002 year annual excavation and rescue work started in July 1 and was completed in 29th of August in 2002.

PARTICIPATORY URBAN REHABILITATION PROJECT IN MARDIN

Objective: To protect historical and cultural properties in Mardin, particularly its architectural heritage and urban fabric and to stress the importance of these as valuable inputs for recent development of the city and for future generations.

Scope: The project was launched upon a protocol signed by the GAP Administration, UNDP and Istanbul Technical University in December 2000. The Swiss government contributed a grant of 350,000US\$ to the project. The project consists of socio-cultural researches, development of a rehabilitation implementation strategy and guide for the city center and realization of an implementation project in a pilot location, in Sipahiler Bazaar located at the old trade center of the city. This pilot work will lay the ground for the implementation of a series of other similar projects in other cities of the region and serve as a model.

Present State:

- The final reports of the Social Impact Assessment survey carried out within the first three months of the project were discussed in the summer and fall of 2001 at different platforms including the Mardin City Council. The study was also used as an important document in meetings held between the World Bank, Ministry of Culture and UNDP on "Investment Program to Protect Mardin".
- The file and texts prepared by the Ministry of Culture for the inclusion of the city of Mardin in "World Cultural Heritage" were examined, further developed and enriched by updating and addition of new documents by the project manager and his consultants, and GAP - RDA. The outcome report was presented to the expert of ICOMOS (International Council on Monuments and Sites) who was in Mardin for a field research between July 17 and 19, 2002.
- GAP Administration and project management are following the works which is initiated by Ministry of Culture for the candidacy of Mardin and help for the demand of document preparation.
- The documentation and analysis studies on the urban architecture of Mardin are complete and the archive activities are still ongoing.

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- All the photographs gathered together as a part of the project has been archived.
- The restoration project of a pilot site, Sipahiler Bazaar as a model for implementation of restoration so as to be promoted later on for tourism purposes has been completed, and the lighting up facilities are still under construction.
- The studies of the preparation of the city guide "Step by Step Mardin" is ongoing.
- Critical assessment studies on the existing 1/5000 and 1/1000 scale Preservation Plan for the city of Mardin was completed.

SURVEY OF ARCHAEOLOGICAL SETTLEMENTS IN SOUTHEASTERN ANATOLIA

Objective: Conducting assessments as to the geographical and spatial locations and present status of settlements in the GAP region that date back to the period extending from Paleolithic Age up to the end of the Bronze Age, which are already known; determination of the level of degradation on these settlements; promotion of these settlements at national and international platforms; publication of works on these assessments and findings, and maintaining the project so as to cover relatively more recent settlements as well.

Scope: To attain the objectives stated above, a protocol of cooperation was signed between the GAP Administration and the Foundation for the Conservation of Artistic and Cultural Heritage (TASK) on May 30, 2002. Relevant work started in June 2001 under this protocol. First, land surveys were conducted in order to determine the geographical and spatial positions of antique settlements through the use of GIS (Geographical Information Systems) as well as their situation in terms of level of degradation. The project envisages the compilation and publication of the results of earlier surface surveys and excavations. Facilitating access to this information in various environments including printed materials, Internet, CDs will provide a comprehensive documentation on the antique sites of the region.

Present State: The field work part of the project started on August 1, 2001 and was completed on October 31, 2001, giving the following results:

- Geographical and spatial positions and level of degradation on antique settlements dating back to the period stated earlier were determined,
- 388 such settlements were identified,
- Assessments of critical geographical positions through global positioning system (GPS) were completed. At present, the work for publication are ongoing.

ENVIRONMENTAL PLAN FOR ACIRLI (MIDYAT - MARDIN) HISTORICAL SITE

Objective: To protect Elet location in Acırlı settlement which is regarded as sacred by many cultures throughout the history and to facilitate tourism in the area.

Scope: Creation of an area in the historical site where unique cultural characteristics can be maintained.

Present State: The project design was completed and approved by the Council for the Protection of Cultural and Natural Properties. Implementation waits funding.

PLANING PROJECTS

RESEARCH ON AND PROTECTION OF HISTORICAL AND CULTURAL PROPERTIES IN THE GAP REGION

PROMOTION OF CULTURAL PROPERTIES IN TURABDIN SUB-REGION

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Objective: To revitalize the Turabdin sub-region, an area covering the city of Mardin, the towns of Yesilli, Omerli, Savur, Idil, Dargecit and the north of the town of Nusaybin, in terms of cultural activities and tourism by realizing restoration and environmental rehabilitation activities; to promote culture, eco and faith tourism; to encourage in-migration of old inhabitants of the area who have migrated out for various reasons; to boost income generating activities such as wine making, silver works, pottery, stone working, use of houses for home-stay tourism thereby to sustain economic, social and cultural development in this sub-region.

Scope:

- Identification of important centers in terms of natural properties so as to launch recreational areas in these areas,
- Giving an end to existing movements of out-migration in Turabdin and introducing income generating activities for the local people,
- Promoting vineyards and wineries in the area; encouraging "home-stay tourism" as contributions to employment and social welfare,
- Development of training programs to build awareness on cultural values in governmental organizations and agencies, local governments, NGOs and local people,
- Identification of tourist routes in the area,
- Promotion of the area at the domestic and international level and encouraging local people to participate in providing facilities for boarding and accommodation so as to generate income.

Present State: Preliminary project description is ready and attempts to seek funding for implementation are ongoing.

SURVEY OF THE ANTIQUE CITY OF DARA

Objective: Dara Anastasiapolis Antique City is located about 30 km to the south of Mardin city center. The objective of the project is the rehabilitation and renewal of Oguz village, having a population of 2,600 with 360 households, located in the site area. In this context, the project envisages to mitigate population pressure in the area, to create a new living environment in line with modern standards with the opportunities presented by the socio-economic and geographical status of the area, to promote economic development by introducing income generating activities, and to protect cultural properties which make an important component in the history of civilization.

Scope:

- Partial transfer of the village to a new settlement area,
- To give a new momentum to ongoing archaeological excavations in Dara Anastasiapolis Antique City area,
- Development of environmental plans and infrastructure facilities.

Present State: Work description of the project is ready and attempts to seek funding for implementation area ongoing.

EXPLORATION OF CULTURAL PROPERTIES IN THE BARAK PLAIN

Objective: The project envisages surface surveying and documentation work to protect and register cultural properties in the area which will be brought under irrigation upon the completion of Gaziantep irrigation complex, as well as to carry out excavations in archaeological locations and print and promulgate publications to publicize the historical-cultural significance of the area.

Scope:

- Identification of prospective farming and irrigation areas in the Barak Plain,
- Identification of cultural properties existing in these areas,
- Documentation of identified cultural properties,
- Development of projects to protect those areas that will be directly affected by farming activities and irrigation and having these projects implemented by relevant agencies.

Present State: Work description of the project is ready and search for funding opportunities are carried out for implementation.

SUB-REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN FOCUSING ON ADIYAMAN - NEMRUT

Objective: Preparation of a Sub-Regional Development Plan for protection, promotion and use for tourism purposes of cultural properties in Adiyaman, which is an important tourism center in the region.

Scope:

- Arrangements in Karakus Tourist Reception Center and identification of Tour Routes,
- Excavation and restoration works in Old Kahta, New Castle and Arsameia,
- Establishment of a museum in Kahta,
- Encouraging the use of stone - houses in Nemrut for tourism purposes,
- Establishment of Nature Park facilities along the Cendere stream.

Present State: Work description of the project is ready and funding is searched for implementation of the project.

STUDIES AND PUBLICATIONS ON THE POPULAR CULTURE OF GAP PROVINCES

Objective: The rich culture of the Region which accumulated through the ten thousand years of settled agriculture as a result of interaction of many civilizations emerging in the region has further enriched under various rules, languages and religions here and became an important element in world cultural heritage. The concrete and abstract elements of popular culture of the region such as literature, music, theatre, traditions, belief systems, traditional architecture, handicrafts and food has made up a rich socio-cultural structure. The project aims to conduct field research on specific elements of popular culture of the region and later to document the outcomes of this research in a series of publications since the popular culture is changing and/or vanishing day by day.

Scope: Field surveys, documentation and publication on diverse features of popular culture such as traditions, beliefs, handicrafts, dressing, habits, culinary, architecture, traditional calendar, traditional informal law, traditional medicine, music, folk dances, literature, special days and festivals.

Present State: Preliminary project design work is in progress.

ONGOING PROJECTS

GAP BIODIVERSITY RESEARCH PROJECT

Objective: To conduct an assessment in relation to biological diversity in the GAP region, identify priority areas in this respect and analyze the impact of the project on these areas; to make proposals for sustainable utilization of natural resources.

Scope: The region of Southeastern Anatolia has its uniqueness in terms of its natural endowments. It is the border zone through which species peculiar to steppe and semi-desert regions enter Turkey and thus it has two living environments where species not found in other parts of the country exist. These environments are:

- i) The courses of the rivers Euphrates and Tigris, their flooding plains and main tributaries.
- ii) Steppe and semi-desert areas in the southern part of the region.

These two natural environments (wetlands and semi-desert areas) room in many endemic species of plants, birds, fish and other animals. An assessment of this rich biological diversity in the region will contribute substantially to the literature on the environment and also give insight as to the possible impacts of the GAP and therefore appropriate measures to be taken so as to preserve this biological diversity.

Present Situation: The project is implemented as a part of GAP Sustainable Development Program, by Turkish Society for the Protection of Nature (DKHD) in coordination with GAP-RDA with the financial support of UNDP. The project started in April 2001. The first eighteen months of work has already been completed and during this period, a literature review and fieldwork have been carried out under the following titles: birds, large mammals, reptiles and botany. The project method uses fieldwork accompanied by satellite images and aims at obtaining the physical (on map) distribution of relevant data.

A database will be created as a result of the project. This database will be updated regularly according to the needs of the Region and will be open to all those interested parties. Two briefing meetings have been given so far (one given to the representatives of related state ministries and institutions, and the other to the representatives of foreign mission and related international organizations in Turkey) except than those briefing and training meetings carried out regularly in the region during field work. Three Progress Reports have been prepared so far and shared with interested parties. The project will be completed by May 2003.

STUDIES ON THE PRESENT AND PROSPECTIVE CLIMATIC FEATURES OF THE GAP REGION

Objective: To analyze changes in climate and hydrology, on the basis of regional climate models, caused by the projects on the development of water resources; to develop models on the present and future climatic conditions in the region; and to assess the possible effects of climate change on water resources.

Scope: The project envisages the following for the GAP region;

- Detailed identification of present climatic conditions and prediction of changes in climate likely to occur in the future;
- Assessment of negative or positive effects that these changes may have on the hydrology, water resources and vegetation in the region; and introduction of relevant measures against negative effects;
- Search for ways of making maximum use of positive effects; informing all sectors, agriculture in the first place, on possible future climatic conditions; and contributing to the development of pertinent strategies in this regard;
- Regular monitoring of climatic parameters, identification of an implementation plan and corresponding policies; and establishment of a built-in system for monitoring-evaluation.

Present Situation: The project is carried out by the Faculty of Agriculture, Ankara University and it will be realized in three stages. The first stage covering such works as the analysis of climatic data and forming a database for water resources were completed in July 2002. The remaining stage will be completed within 2002.

ECO-CITY PLANNING APPROACH FOR ADIYAMAN

Objective: To identify environmental effects in the province of Adiyaman; to integrate the protection of ecological balances, creation of an environment where coming generations can fulfill their needs and the urban planning principles of Agenda 21 to the planning system.

Scope: The project covers the city of Adiyaman and its surroundings, particularly the Ataturk Dam Lake that is affected by urban development taking place in Adiyaman. Specific points of emphasis in the project include carrying capacity, protection-utilization balance and the concepts of Agenda 21.

Present Situation: Carried out as a part of GAP Sustainable Development Program, the project was contracted by UNDP (United Nations Development Program). The project is carried out by IULA-EMME (International Union of Local Authorities, Section for the Eastern Mediterranean and Middle East). Within the context of the project, meetings with local administration and sociological survey studies were carried out. The project is planned to be completed within 2002. The Final Report is now being revised by the implementing agency.

WILD LIFE PROJECT FOR THE GAP REGION

Objective: To protect biological diversity in the region by creating new living environments for settled and migratory species, including those under the threat of extinction, which live particularly along the course of the Euphrates and around other rivers and dam lakes in the GAP region.

Scope: The Southeastern Anatolia Project is one of the major projects in the world that aim change The Project (GAP) is designed to bring along social change through agricultural development based on the management of water resources. The project has already transformed water thirsty tracts of land into irrigated areas and river courses to dam lakes. However, while enhancing agricultural development in the region, the project may cause the disappearance of natural living environments of many species.

The present project is thus a "rehabilitation/regeneration" project targeting the minimization of negative effects on the natural system. What is desired is to regain natural systems otherwise disrupted by human activities and to introduce a model that can be adopted elsewhere in the country and in the world.

Present Situation: The project is included in the investment program for 2002 and its work definition has been prepared. Two field trips have been organized so far-one in May 2002 and the other October 2002-with the aim of determination of the project area. The work to determine the project area continues in cooperation with related ministries.

POLITICS AND STRATEGIES FOR DEVELOPING ECOTOURISM AND SUSTAINABILITY IN THE SOUTHEASTERN ANATOLIA REGION

To develop ecotourism mid and long term, a series of policies and strategies are required. Requirements of tourism products and guidelines for tourism authorities and companies measures result from ecotourism principles, according to what ecotourism means:

- promotion of local development
- supporting preservation of culture heritage
- supporting preservation of nature heritage
- educating travellers and the public

Connection to the specificity of the region

- tourism product should be based on specificity of the region and authentic nature and culture experience,
- thus tourism product should take into account and evaluate the identity, local culture and way of life of the region, the harmony of human and natural community, that both in terms of travellers and local residents, using outward phenomena and experience should be avoided.

Connection to local economy

- services and products of local residents and companies should be preferred.
- local foodstuff should be preferred in catering, import foodstuff should be avoided.
- local guides should be preferred on the spot.

Following the limits of carrying capacity

- in designing the tourism product and also in compiling and sizing the tourism group ecological, cultural and tourist sensitivity and carrying capacity should be taken into account,
- during the journey visiting areas, where it is not accepted by local community, should be avoided,
- also visiting areas, where it is not accepted by administrators of culture or natural resources, should be avoided.

Competence

- guide accompanying the group should be an expert on local conditions and nature, and
- should be responsible for the behaviour of the travellers during the journey.

Environmental protection

- any waste and unnecessary use of packages should be avoided,
- use of disposable commodities (e.g. dishes) should be avoided,
- recycled and dangerous waste should be sorted and their combustion and incurrence in nature should be avoided,
- subcontractors – providers of single services (transport, accommodation, catering, etc.) should be selected considering their environmental friendliness.

Responsible information

- travellers should be informed about local conditions and peculiarities of nature before, during and after the journey
- they should be inclined to respect nature, conditions, culture, traditions of the area and local people with their property and heritage.

D.CONCLUSION

In the Southeastern Anatolia Region which has rich natural resources and unvalued tourism potential, new opportunities have become clear with the GAP Project. Rich heritage, culture,

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climate, geography and particularly touristic supply resources of the region provide endless opportunities for ecotourism.

Present days, protecting natural resources and environment is getting greater and importance as time passes. To survive the existence for mankind and to realize the commercial and touristic purposes depend on achieving this protection. For the Southeastern Anatolia Region, to use natural resources nationally and to protect ecologic balance will be vital for our region.

In the future, in order to achieve this, macro plans should be harmonic with this reality. Then the sustainable and ecotourism projects should be applied effectively and functionally. In this process, it is a must to protect ecological resources, to evaluate logically and to entegrate into the reality of the region.

A result of this study, as completed, ongoing and future projects are examined, it can be seen that significant development for ecotourism in the region has been realized. Particularly, ecotourism will be an important and locomotive sector for the region in the future.

If the existing sustainable, ecotourism, eco-city planning and applications put into practice effectively and functionally, it seem to be possible that the region will be a heaven for ecotourism.

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