

LIFE – MED ŽIVLJENJEM IN SMRTJO

LIFE – Between Life and Death



Biodiverzitetna kriza je največja kriza, s katero se trenutno spopada človeštvo. Čeprav je izumiranje vrst naraven proces, je danes jasno, da je človek zaradi netrajnostne rabe naravnih virov to dinamiko popolnoma spremenil. Tako denimo ptice danes izumirajo 25-krat hitreje, kot bi bilo to evolucijsko pričakovano. Že desetletja se človeštvo zaveda, da je biodiverzitetna le kazalec stanja naravnih sistemov, brez katerih družba ne bi obstala. Gre za t. i. ekosistemske storitve, koristi, ki jih narava ponuja človeku, a ne zaračunava zanje. Razdelimo jih lahko v štiri kategorije: (1) preskrba – naravni viri, pitna voda, les itd., (2) regulacija – varstvo pred erozijo, poplavam, naravnimi katastrofami, (3) podpora – fotosinteza, proizvodnja kisika, vezava CO₂, opravevanje rastlin in (4) kultura – vse možnosti sprostitev, navdiha in regeneracije, ki jih človek išče in najde v naravi. Prekomerno izkoriščanje naravnih ekosistemov prinaša ljudem višji standard, a zmanjšuje dolgoročno preživetje človeške populacije. Številne raziskovalne skupine po vsem svetu se v zadnjem času ukvarjajo s finančnim vrednotenjem teh storitev. Tak pristop utemeljujejo z dejstvom, da vsi ti podporni sistemi prispevajo neposredno in posredno k dobrobiti človeštva in so sestavni del ekonomske vrednosti našega planeta. Leta 1997 so tako v reviji Nature objavili minimalno oceno teh storitev, ki naj bi letno znašala v povprečju 33 bilijonov (10¹²) dolarjev, pri čemer je letni svetovni BDP tedaj znašal 18 bilijonov dolarjev.

Zavarovana območja pokrivajo le približno 12 % površine Zemlje, a kljub temu bistveno prispevajo k ohranjanju biodiverzitete. Poleg zagotavljanja ekosistemskih storitev zavarovana območja v večini držav pomembno prispevajo tudi k lokalni, regionalni in celo nacionalni ekonomiji ter socialni varnosti. So glavni promotorji, organizatorji in usmerjevalci zelenega gospodarstva, pri čemer niti ni pomembno, za kateri tip zavarovanega območja gre; odlične primere praks najdemo tako v krajinskih parkih, regijskih parkih, naravnih rezervatih in biosfernih rezervatih. Tudi na območjih Natura 2000. Čeprav območja Natura 2000 niso nujno tudi zavarovana območja, gre pri trženju vsebin narave za isti princip. Ohranjena naravna dediščina je tisti glavni vir, ki zagotavlja vse druge zelene gospodarske dejavnosti. Da gospodarskega učinka, ki izhaja neposredno iz območij varovane narave, ne gre zanemariti, nam izkazujejo številni podatki. Tako se je v študiji, ki so jo naročili v EC – DG Env. leta 2011, izkazalo, da letno obišče območja Natura 2000 v EU 1,2–2,2 milijarde obiskovalcev, ki tam samo za turizem in rekreacijo porabijo med 50–85 milijard evrov na leto. Skupna ocena je, da tržne zelene aktivnosti na območjih Natura zaposlujejo 12 milijonov ljudi v EU, kar je 6 % vseh zaposlitev v EU. Turisti na zavarovanih območjih porabijo več denarja kot turisti v mestih.

Omrežje območij Natura 2000 je v državah članicah EU večinoma že vzpostavljeno, z izjemo morskih območij, kjer je še veliko dela. Celoten sistem Natura 2000 torej pomembno prispeva k reševanju biodiverzitetne krize, kljub temu pa hkrati integrira ljudi in jih ne izključuje. Gre za tipičen evropski sistem, ki se povsem razlikuje od ameriškega, kjer so velika prostranstva namenjena le varstvu narave brez vpliva človeka. Območja Natura 2000 sicer omogočajo nezanemarljiv del prihodkov ljudi, ki tam trajnostno tržijo ekosistemske storitve, za upravljanje s temi območji z glavnim ciljem ohranjanja populacij

kvalifikacijskih vrst pa generalno ni poskrbljeno. Natura 2000 namreč kljub vsemu, kar daje družbi – kar se je še enkrat lepo pokazalo v kampanji Alarm za naravo z zbranimi čez pol milijona podpisi v podporo – nima sistemskega financiranja! Torej, to, kar dramatično izboljšuje in celo sploh omogoča kvaliteto življenja v Evropi, je na lestvici prioritet med zadnjimi. Edini finančni mehanizem, namenjen izključno Naturi 2000, je program LIFE. Program je izjemno učinkovit in brez dvoma za vložena sredstva dosega maksimalne učinke. To pa zagotavljajo samo konkretne in neposredne aktivnosti, ki jih omogoča. S tem programom imamo tudi na DOPPS-u zelo pozitivne izkušnje, zato mu izrekamo vso podporo. Učinki projektov LIFE se ne končajo zgolj pri doseženih rezultatih. Z njimi, ali pa vsaj nekaterimi, se močno krepí tudi civilna družba, ki bdi in reagira, ko pride do nekontrolirane degradacije in plenjenja tistih storitev in vrednot narave, na katerih sloni celotna družba. Morda pa je bil ravno ta eden izmed razlogov, da je bil program LIFE resno ogrožen in ga je EU celo želela ukiniti. Močno upamo, da se to seveda ne bo zgodilo.

Slovenija je po svetu prepoznana po svoji naravni dediščini. V različnih mednarodnih analizah smo bili uvrščeni zelo visoko pri ocenjevanju okoljske ozaveščenosti. Center za zaščito okolja ameriške univerze Yale je med 149 državami uvrstil Slovenijo na 15. mesto, upoštevajoč zahtevni *Environmental Performance Index* (podatek 2008). Dalje je leta 2014 svetovno znana založniška hiša Rough Guide uvrstila Slovenijo na seznam turistično najbolj zaželenih in uglednih destinacij. Omenjajo jo kot eno petih “top držav”, kot čudovito in prelepo državo. Ker je ohranjena narava naše osrednje nacionalno bogastvo in naša prepoznavnost, lahko prek njenega varovanja in trajnostnega trženja ter rabe pomembno okrepimo nacionalno gospodarstvo. V varstvu narave je predvsem veliko priložnosti za dopolnilne dejavnosti malih kmetov, manjših podjetij, samostojnih podjetnikov, geografsko gledano pa lokalnega prebivalstva, večinoma odmaknjene od urbanih središč. Brez težav je mogoče ekonomsko dokazati, kolikokrat in kje vse je povrnjen vsak evro, vложен v varstvo narave.

Biodiversity crisis is one of the most crucial and dangerous situations currently facing humanity. Although extinction of species is a natural process, it is now clear that this dynamics has been totally altered by man owing to the unsustainable use of natural resources. Birds, for example, are becoming extinct 25 times faster than evolutionarily expected. For decades, man has been aware that biodiversity is merely an indicator of the state of natural systems, without which the society would not have survived. Here we are dealing with the so-called ecosystem services, i.e. benefits offered to man by nature free of charge, which can be divided into the following four categories: (1) supply – natural resources, drinking water, wood, etc., (2) regulation – protection against erosion, floods, natural disasters, (3) support – photosynthesis, oxygen production, binding of carbon dioxide, pollination of plants, and (4) culture – all possible types of relaxation, inspiration and regeneration searched for and found by man in nature. Excessive exploitation of natural ecosystems indeed provides people with a higher standard of living, but reduces long-term survival of the human population. Lately, the numerous research groups worldwide have been engaged in financial evaluation of these services. They substantiate such approach with the fact that all these support systems contribute, directly and indirectly, to the benefit of mankind and that they are an integral part of the economic value of our planet. In 1997, for example, the journal *Nature* published minimum

evaluation of these services, which putatively amount to 33 trillion (10^{12}) dollars annually on average, whereby the annual global GDP amounted at that time to 18 trillion dollars.

In spite of the fact that protected areas cover only 12% of the Earth's surface, they substantially contribute to biodiversity conservation. Apart from providing for ecosystem services, they significantly contribute, in most countries, to the local, regional and even national economies and social security. They are the major promoters, organizers and catalysts of green economy, irrespective of the types of protected areas; excellent examples of practices can be found in nature parks, regional parks, nature reserves and biosphere reserves. And at Natura 2000 sites. Although the latter are not necessarily protected areas, the principle is the same as far as marketing of nature's contents is concerned. The preserved natural heritage is that particular major source, which provides for all other green economic activities. The imperative that the economic effects, which stem directly from the areas of protected nature, should not be neglected is corroborated by numerous insights and reports. For example, the study ordered in EC – DG Env. in 2011, has shown that Natura 2000 sites in EU are annually visited by 1.2–2.2 billion people who spend there, for tourism and recreation alone, between 50 and 85 billion euros per year. The overall assessment is that marketable green activities at Natura 2000 sites employ 12 million people in EU, which is 6% of all jobs in EU. In protected areas, tourists spend more money than tourists in towns.

In most EU member states, the Natura 2000 network has already been set up, with the exception of marine areas, where much work is still to be done. The entire Natura 2000 system thus significantly contributes to solving biodiversity crisis and integrating, not excluding, people at the same time. It is a typical European system, which greatly differs from the American practice, where huge expanses are intended only for nature conservation with no human impact. The Natura 2000 sites indeed enable a fair share of income to people who sustainably offer their ecosystem services there, whereas managing of these areas with the main objective to conserve populations of qualifying species is generally no taken care of. Specifically, Natura 2000 has no funding system in spite of everything it gives to the society – which has yet again been clearly reflected in the Alarm for Nature campaign with over half a million signatures collected in its support! So, everything that dramatically improves and generally enables quality of life in Europe is among the very last things on the priority scale. The only financial mechanism envisaged exclusively for Natura 2000 is the LIFE Programme. It is highly effective and has no doubt been achieving maximum effects with the invested funds. This, however, is provided only by concrete and direct activities enabled by it. With this programme, we at DOPPS have had some very positive experiences as well, which is the reason why we declare our full support to it. The effects of LIFE projects do not end at the achieved results only. With them, or with some of them at least, the civil society is strengthening as well, the society that watches over and reacts when uncontrolled degradation and pillaging of the services and valuable natural features, on which the entire society depends, take place. Well, this was perhaps one of the reasons why the LIFE programme was seriously endangered and almost abolished by the EU. We sincerely hope that this will not happen, of course.

Slovenia is recognized worldwide for its rich natural heritage. In various international analyses we have been ranked very high in terms of environmental

awareness. The Center for Environmental Protection at Yale University ranked us 15th among 149 countries by taking into consideration the *Environmental Performance Index* (2008). Furthermore, the world famous Rough House publishers put us, in 2014, on the list of most distinguished and desirable tourist destinations. They refer to Slovenia as one of the five “top countries”, as a wonderful and gorgeous lands. Given that protected nature is our greatest national wealth and our best recognized feature, we can significantly consolidate our national wealth via its conservation, sustainable marketing and use. In nature conservation, there are numerous opportunities particularly for complementary activities of small farmers, small firms and entrepreneurs and, geographically speaking, of local inhabitants residing mostly away from urban centres. In economic terms, we can easily prove how many times and in what places every euro invested in nature conservation has been reimbursed.

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