

ANALYSIS OF SOCIAL, CULTURAL AND EDUCATIONAL CONDITIONS WITH RESPECT TO THE SETUP OF A SUSTAINABLE ECOTOURISTIC PROJECT : A COMPARISON BETWEEN THE MANGROVES OF TANBI WETLAND COMPLEX (THE GAMBIA) AND PROJECTS IN OOSTENDE AND KNOKKE-HEIST (BELGIUM)

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The starting point in the research was the question about the possibility of establishing a sustainable ecotouristic project (a walkboard) in the Tanbi Wetland Complex in The Gambia. The desire to have such a project was expressed by the City Council of Oostende who has an active city link with the city of Banjul in The Gambia. Some key questions that had to be investigated from the social point of view where:

- Which stakeholders can play a part in the building and operation of this walkboard and which role can they play?
- Where could the walkboard be established?
- How can this project develop from a touristic point of view?
- How can this project develop from an educational point of view?
- How can the project be managed?

At the end, the results of this study will actually be used by the city of Oostende and the City Council of Banjul to start up an ecotouristic project.

In this research we can state that the conceptual framework is social constructivism. This approach has a major impact on the used method of investigation since it is seen to be essential to involve the beneficiaries to identify and develop solutions to their problems (Röling, 1995). Therefore the methods used in The Gambia where 'Participatory Rural Appraisal' and 'Rapid Rural Appraisal'. More specifically we used secondary sources, direct observation and participation in activities, open interviews, participatory mapping,

four R's framework and pebble scoring, visioning and pathways. These methods were applied in collaboration with governments and public organizations, local initiatives and individuals who could play an important part in the ecotouristic project.

Since the research is still in progress at this stage we only treat some arising questions regarding the education of sustainability and mangroves in the form of workshops for adults or formal education for children and young adults. We also present a comparison of the management structure with that of similar projects in natural areas of Oostende and Knokke-Heist.

References

Röling N. 1995. Constructivisme en sociale interventie: op zoek naar bevrijdende perspectieven. TVA, 4:1:5-13.