



INTERDISCIPLINARY DIACHRONIC STUDY OF EUROPEAN INFLUENCES ON BALKAN TRADITIONS WITHIN THE CULTURAL HERITAGE OF THE PROJECT SCOPE

The project seeks to bridge interdisciplinary scientific research with applied results in the tourism sector. Its goal is to discover and develop the untapped potential found within the tangible and intangible cultural heritage of the region.

The Research Focus

The heritage is examined as a synthesis of local traditions and various external influences during the 19th century, a period that transformed the aesthetic details of homes and everyday lifestyles. The proposed solution envisions a strategic transition from general European cultural influence toward its specific regional and local expressions.

Strategic Objectives

- **Creation of a Shared Cultural Calendar:** Aligning regional events into a unified schedule to increase visitor stay.
- **Route Integration:** Connecting existing and newly established cultural routes based on both cultural and natural heritage.
- **Formation of a Unified "CULTURAL SPACE":** Merging individual municipal assets into a cohesive regional identity.

Research and Development Goals

The project focuses on exploring the latent potential of the region’s tangible and intangible heritage, specifically analyzing the intersection of Balkan traditions and external 19th-century influences that redefined the local way of life.

Comparative Analysis (Matrix of Resources)

Characteriscs	Dupnitsa	Kyustendil	Kriva Palanka	Kratovo
Architecture	Urban secession	Antiquity and baths; Medieval (Byzantine) and Late Medieval (Bulgarian and	Monastery and mountain	Medieval towers and bnridges

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Priority 3 "Integrated development of the cross-border region



Partners:



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Characteriscs	Dupnitsa	Kyustendil	Kriva Palanka	Kratovo
		Ottoman); National Revival; Urban Secession.		
Accomodation	Urban	SPA, Balneo hotels, hotels, guest houses, mountain huts, apartaments	Apartments and villas	Hotels and ethno-houses
Gastonomy	Dupnitsa <i>kebabche</i>	Fertility; Kyustendil <i>zelnik</i>	Monastery dishes	Kratovo Pastrmajka
Strengths	Geographic location; cultural and historical heritage; festivals	Geographic location; rich natural and cultural-historical heritage; cultural, festival, and ski tourism.	Mountain relief	Authentic town–museum
Weaknesses	Digital nerrative	Marketing and advertising	Accessibility and parking places	Infrastructure and stairs

IV. Addressing specific target groups

Target group	Approach based on culture and connection
Uoung people / digital nomads	Development of strong digital connectivity and Wi-Fi zones in cultural sites, creation of interactive (AR/VR) content and promotion of culture through social media.

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Target group	Approach based on culture and connection
Adults/people with disabilities	Ensuring physical accessibility to sites (CONNECTED), as well as providing easy-to-use digital tools and adapted tours.
Special tourists (e.g. cultural and natural heritage, art)	Creation of thematic trails and platforms for direct communication with experts from Cultural and Educational institutions.

V. Development Potential and Common Solutions for the Cross-Border Region

The successful development of tourism and the region requires integrating cultural heritage with modern principles of Connectivity to attract diverse target groups. Approaches must focus on creating accessible, personalized and engaging experiences.

Common Cross-Border Solutions:

- **Digital Map:** An integrated mobile application providing real-time data on bed availability in Kriva Palanka and Kratovo, synchronized with the shared cultural calendars of Dupnitsa and Kyustendil.
- **Infrastructural Synchronization:** Coordination of transport links between municipalities through active collaboration between local authorities and the NGO sector.
- **Cooperation and Co-creation of Experiences: Establishment of Smart Cultural Routes.**

Implementation Steps:

- **Digitalization of Heritage:** Creation of virtual tours, 3D reconstructions and online archives to expand access and allow for pre-trip research (for both tourists and educational institutions).
- **Personalized Connectivity:** Utilizing mobile apps and geolocation services (**Smart**) to provide multi-language content with varying levels of detail, targeting specific interests (e.g., history, architecture, gastronomy).

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- **Integrated Logistics:** Connecting sites via efficient transport and logistics information, covering both main hubs and local communities to encourage dispersed tourism.

Integrated Path of Traditions and Nature – Proposed 3-Day Itinerary:

- **Day 1:** A cultural tour of **Secessionist Dupnitsa** (Art Nouveau architecture) followed by **SPA relaxation in Kyustendil**.
- **Day 2:** A visit to the **Osogovo Monastery** and a traditional lunch in **Kriva Palanka**, concluding with an evening walk in **Kratovo**.
- **Day 3:** Exploration of the medieval towers and bridges of **Kratovo**, a tour of the underground tunnels and a final stop at the **Stone Dolls (Kameni Kukli)** natural phenomenon in Kuklitsa.

Educational-Tourism Packages (CONNECTED): Developing joint programs between **Cultural and Educational Institutions** that offer specialized seminars, workshops, or summer schools tailored for niche groups, such as students and researchers.

Public-Private Partnerships (GOVERNANCE & GREEN): Engaging the **Business Sector** (e.g., hoteliers, restaurateurs) in the creation of sustainable (**Green**) and locally-focused products that emphasize the authenticity and cultural traditions of **Local Communities**.

NGO Engagement (SMART & CITIZENS): Integrating NGOs into the **Governance** process to develop social tourism initiatives or projects for the restoration of abandoned sites, leveraging their expertise in addressing local needs and working with vulnerable groups.

Shared Culural Calendar with events (Appendix)

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