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Spatial Planning Of Peripheral Rural Regions In Serbia

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SPATIAL PLANNING OF PERIPHERAL RURAL REGIONS IN SERBIA

JEL: R58, R14, R11

Abstract: After the establishment of the new legislative framework on planning and construction, territorial organization of the Republic of Serbia and regional development, as well as adoption of the Spatial Plan of the Republic of Serbia 2010-2020 (SPRS), the strategic spatial plans at regional level have been elaborated. Over the last few years, the total of 10 regional spatial plans (RSP) have been either adopted or in final stage of elaboration, five of them for peripheral rural regions of Serbia. The paper analyzes concepts and models used in planning the sustainable territorial development of peripheral, rural and mountain regions in Serbia. It refers to several key issues related to sustainable territorial development of peripheral regions: accessibility, urban-rural development, rural settlement network and depopulation of peripheral mountain areas, tourism development, spatial and functional integration and potentials for trans-border cooperation. One of the models discussed is a model for rural settlement network. Aging of rural population and depopulation of peripheral mountain and border regions hinders the preservation of micro rural centers, in particular the provision of public and commercial services. Emerging model is that of mobile services, now developed dominantly for social and medical services, which can be expanded to almost all services, or combined with the revitalization of micro rural centers, namely those within urban regions, main transport corridors or tourism destinations. Potentially, the most attractive tourism resources are located at peripheral regions of Serbia. Their activation for sustainable tourism development would provide a support to economic development of peripheral regions and local communities, as well as to the realization of higher quality of life of rural population. The benefits and constraints for implementing some of the proposed models are discussed. Short critical overview on constraints of regional development and implementation of regional spatial plans related to undeveloped regional level of governance, as well as to

weak vertical and horizontal coordination of other levels of governance, has been indicated. The purpose of this paper is to discuss the challenges and possibilities of regional spatial planning to contribute sustainable regional territorial development of peripheral rural regions.

Key words: regional spatial planning, peripheral rural and mountain regions, sustainable territorial development, network of settlements, tourism development, accessibility.

1. INTRODUCTION

There is an ongoing transformation of the planning system in Serbia along with expectations in acquiring its legitimacy and establishing greater efficiency of practice in planning and managing the development. The planning system and relevant legal bases will be recognized based on the EU strategic framework, regulations and instruments, primarily in the domain of strategic planning.

In Serbia, during the transition period, there have been frequent changes in legal basis in all domains, the development of general and sector plans/strategies and programs has been intensified, and the lack or gradual absence of their mutual coordination and coordination with spatial and environmental planning has been manifested. The law which regulates spatial planning and construction ought to be the basic law to provide a basis for planning and the implementation of sustainable development of territory and settlements. Main changes in legal basis for spatial planning and construction were made in 2003 and 2009. None of these changes in legal solutions did consider the issues of importance for the improvement of process and efficiency of spatial planning, such as: principles of spatial planning, methods of plan elaboration; mechanisms and procedures for the coordination in the elaboration of spatial and other (general, regional and sector) plans and strategies, as well as their integration through the process of spatial and environmental planning; participation of actors in and support to implementation of plans. Only the Law on Spatial Plan of the Republic of Serbia (2010) set out the obligation to implement this spatial plan through other spatial and urban, as well as general, regional and sector plans, strategies, policies and programs with territorial dimension. However, this obligation is not sound enough, as most of general and sector plans and strategies lack territorial dimension. The Law on Regional Development (2009, 2010) established a new system of regional planning for NUTS 2 and 3 planning regions – the national regional development plan, regional development strategy and programs of funding regional development. The elaboration of these regional plans and programs has not started

yet. It was intended to harmonize these plans with adopted spatial plans, as well as to represent one of starting bases to develop new spatial plans and programs for their implementation. The manner in which the obligation for spatial plans was formulated indicates that there will be no verification of spatial impacts of regional plans/strategies, i.e. that the coordination and integration of regional plans/strategies into the spatial planning process and the realization of sustainable regional development might be disabled in practice. This brief analysis (Maksin, 2011) shows that the legal basis does not provide an adequate support for achieving coordination and integration of strategic planning of sustainable territorial development in Serbia, especially the coordination and integration of spatial, regional, environmental and sector planning.

Spatial planning in Serbia establishes the main strategy basis for the sustainable territorial development. The Spatial Plan of the Republic of Serbia (SPRS, 1996) has been the first strategic document to establish the sustainable development for its territory. New Spatial Plan of the Republic of Serbia, adopted in 2010, puts even more emphasis on establishing a concept of sustainable development by proposing the planning concepts and priority solutions for the protection and sustainable use of natural resources, natural and cultural heritage and landscapes, as well as for the environmental, demographic, economic, social and territorial development. It represents a basis for the coordination of strategic planning of a more balanced territorial development of Serbian regions, functional urban areas and rural areas.

Due to insufficiently developed regional policy, absence of regional level of governance and slowness in choosing an adequate form of regionalization, the practice in elaborating and, particularly, in implementing the regional spatial plans (RSP) in Serbia has not been sufficiently developed. Ten RSPs are currently in different stages of adoption and elaboration. Half of the RSPs have been prepared for peripheral rural regions, four of them in Eastern and Western Serbia: RSPs for the Southern Pomoravlje (Jablanica and Pčinj administrative districts) and Timočka krajina (Bor and Zaječar administrative districts) in Eastern Serbia, Zlatibor and Moravica administrative districts, Kolubara and Mačva administrative districts in Western Serbia. Developing these plans is a part of the SRPS implementation, as well as the implementation of municipal and sectoral national strategies, plans and programs and their adaptation to regional and local specificities.

This paper points out the key issues related to sustainable territorial development of peripheral rural regions and discusses the solutions implemented at four analyzed RSPs in Eastern and Western Serbia for: improving the accessibility, balanced polycentric urban system, new

forms of development and partnership between urban and rural areas, tourism development, spatial and functional integration. The two key issues, as well as possibilities for more balanced development of peripheral regions, have been analyzed in more detail. The first possibility refers to the application of the model of polycentric urban system, urban and rural development, as well as models of rural settlement network development in peripheral rural regions. Aging of rural population and depopulation of peripheral mountain and border regions hinder the preservation of micro rural centers, in particular the provision of public and commercial services. Emerging model is that of mobile services, now developed dominantly for social and medical services, which can be expanded to almost all services, or combined with the revitalization of micro rural centers, namely those within urban region, main transport corridors or tourism destinations. Other possibility refers to tourism development. Potentially, the most attractive nature tourism resources are located at peripheral regions of Serbia. Their activation for sustainable tourism development would provide a support for the economic development of peripheral regions and local communities, as well as for the realization of higher quality of life of rural population. The benefits and constraints for implementing some of the proposed models are discussed.

Brief critical overview on constrains of regional development and implementation of regional spatial plans related to undeveloped regional level of governance, as well as to weak vertical and horizontal coordination of other levels of governance, has been indicated.

The purpose of this paper is to discuss the challenges and possibilities of regional spatial planning in order to contribute to sustainable regional territorial development of peripheral rural regions.

2. KEY ISSUES RELATED TO SUSTAINABLE TERRITORIAL DEVELOPMENT OF PERIPHERAL RURAL REGIONS

At the regional level of spatial planning, national policies and priorities are being interpreted and adapted to regional conditions; inter-regional and intra-regional functional relationships and development directions are being determined; areas with critical natural capital (strategically important and limited water resources, mineral raw materials, natural and recreational values, etc.) are being selected and protected; plans for the development of regional and sub-regional systems and public services are being elaborated; environmental impact assessment for the planning options and solutions is being carried out; guidelines for elaboration of local spatial and other plans are being provided, etc.

Regional spatial planning is also an instrument for checking and coordinating the spatial/territorial impacts of all spatially relevant national and regional policies (economic development, natural resources, sustainable development, rural development, heritage protection, the tourism and cultural development, etc.). In the process of planning, local governments should cooperate on considering possible options to jointly solve problems and issues of common interest for their communities. Options for spatial planning should be the subject of public consultations and strategic impact assessment.

A major and the most difficult task in the planning process is to achieve sustainable development of regions through directing the general spatial distribution of the development and investments, as well as through the coordination of population dynamics, development of economic activities, infrastructure and public services, environmental and natural resources conservation.

Peripheral rural regions face many developmental problems: depopulation, economic underdevelopment, high unemployment and poverty rates in rural areas, unused natural resources, poor accessibility, underdeveloped settlement network, etc. Some of the key problems of sustainable territorial development of peripheral rural regions discussed in this paper are: poor accessibility, lack of spatial and functional integration, urban – rural settlement network and partnership, tourism development, spatial and functional integration (and trans-border cooperation). This paper points out several key possibilities and limitations in addressing selected key problems of sustainable territorial development of peripheral rural regions.

2.1. Peripheral rural regions covered by the regional spatial plans

The two RSPs for Eastern Serbia comprise the territory of 4 districts and 21 towns/municipalities, in the total area of about 13,500 km² (which represents about 15% of the territory of Serbia), with about 970 settlements and about 752,600 inhabitants (according to 2002 Census). Physically and geographically, these plans comprise most of the South Morava and Timok river basins, a part of the Danube River basin, as well as high mountains dominated by Stara Planina (Old Mountain) and Krajište with Vlasina.

The two RSPs for Western Serbia also comprise 4 districts and 28 municipalities/towns in the total area of about 15,000 km² (which accounts for about 17% of the territory of the Republic of Serbia) with about 1,090 settlements and about 1,060,000 inhabitants (according to 2002 Census). Physically and geographically, the plans comprise regions of Mačva and lower Kolubara river basin to the north, hills and low mountains, mountain ranges of the Drina river basin (Podrinje) and Valjevo mountains, parts of the the Uvac, Lim, West Morava river basins

and their tributaries, a part of central Drina river basin and hilly-mountain zones of Tara, Zlatibor with Murtenica and Mučanj, Zlatar, Pešter plateau (Pešterska visoravan) with Jadovnik, Ozren and Giljevo, Kamena gora, Rudnik and a part of Golija with Javor mountain to the south. (Figure 1)

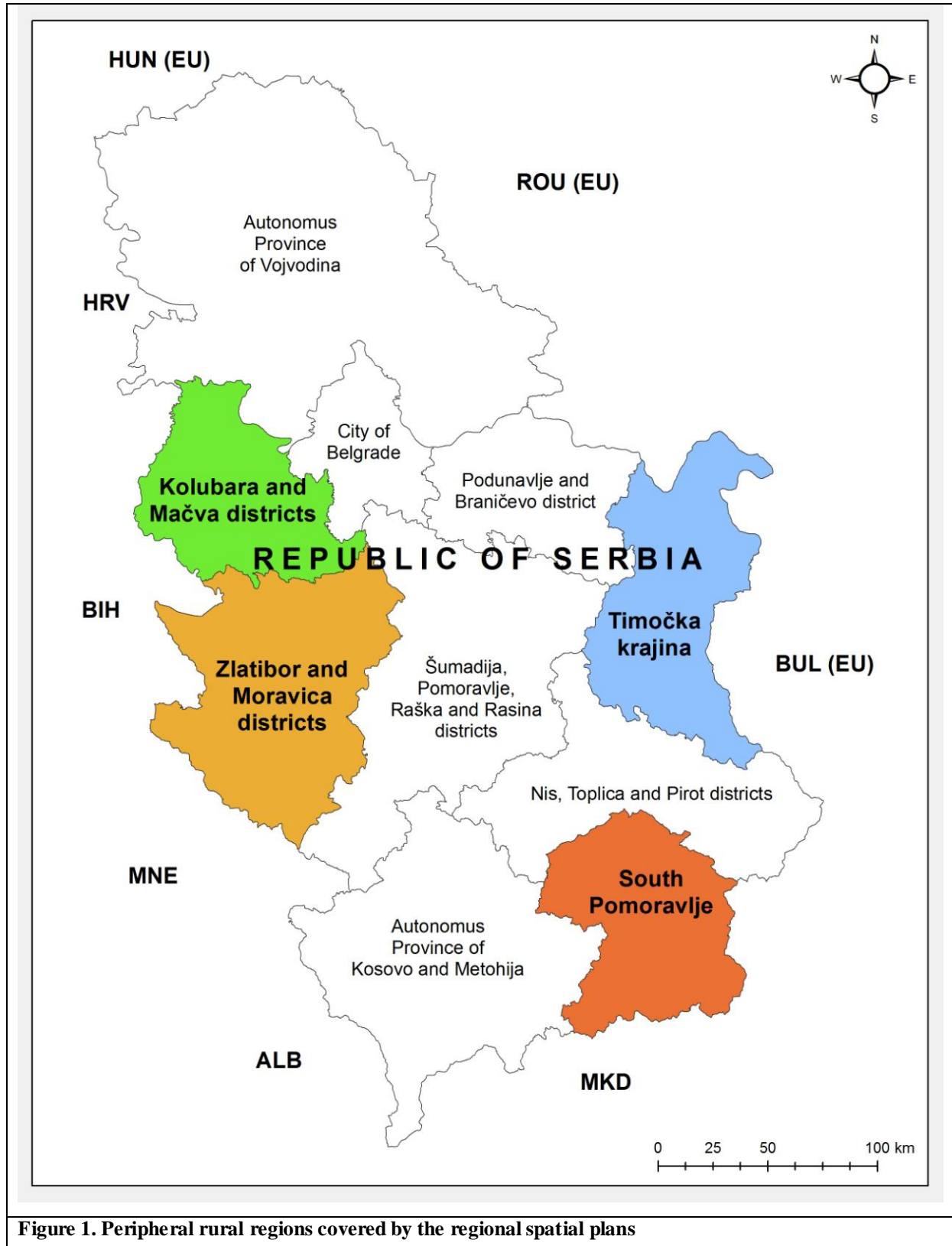


Figure 1. Peripheral rural regions covered by the regional spatial plans

2.2. Similarities in addressing the sustainable territorial development

There are certain similarities in addressing the sustainable territorial development of peripheral rural regions within the coverage of four RSP. This primarily refers to the general sustainable development goals, such as:

- responsible and sustainable development, management and protection of space with realistic possibilities and limitations of natural and created values, as well as long-term requirements for economic and social development and environmental protection;
- more balanced development within regions and at the inter-regional level, encouraging the development of agriculture, tourism, energy sector, mining and infrastructure, improving the accessibility of Pan-European and other important transport corridors (Belgrade – South Adriatic, etc.) and the Danube river/nautical corridor, significantly improving the accessibility of highland and remote areas, initiating the cross-border cooperation programs;
- improving the quality of life and creating conditions for demographic renewal, encouraging people to remain in or return to their communities, particularly in economically vulnerable rural communities or centers through investments for building, reconstruction and maintenance of infrastructure, public services, conservation and enhancement of the natural resources and cultural heritage, development of economically sustainable and status-attractive activities, particularly in tourism.

All analyzed regional spatial plans have defined the visions, major concepts and planning solutions for achieving more balanced regional and sub-regional development, higher competitiveness and greater integration of regions and districts into the surroundings (neighboring functional areas, as well as neighboring municipalities, districts and regions, as well as with neighboring/border municipalities and regions in Bulgaria, Romania, Macedonia, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Montenegro). Particular attention has been dedicated to attractiveness of the region for investment through defining the planning solutions for activating and mobilizing territorial capital; sustainable use of natural and created values; long-term renewal and development of human resources; increase of traffic accessibility; building the infrastructure and increasing the energy efficiency; development of economy and institutions; protection of natural resources and cultural heritage; as well as factors for the development of the region, environmental remediation, etc.

Starting points in defining the visions and planning solutions for sustainable territorial and regional development of comprised districts are based on the following spatial specificities:

1. **Southern Pomoravlje** (the South Morava River Basin): belongs to underdeveloped, economically and demographically depressed regions; region of Pan-European Corridor 10 (with partially developed highway system); agricultural-livestock and forest areas; areas of natural and cultural heritage and tourism assets (with high potentials for the development of tourism and complementary activities); water sources of national and international importance, 5 existing and 4 planned water accumulations, water protection facilities, potential navigable corridor, etc.; special purpose zones with existing and planned border crossings and border areas towards the Republic of Bulgaria (European Union), Republic of Macedonia and the security zone towards Autonomous Province of Kosovo and Metohija (which is, after 1999 NATO bombing, under international supervision), etc.

2. **Timočka krajina** (Timok Region): belongs to underdeveloped, economically and demographically depressed regions; region of Pan-European Transport Corridor 7 (the Danube with partly used navigability potential and unused nautical potential) and contact area between the Pan-European Corridor 10 to the west and Corridor 4 to the east; region with outstanding hydropower potential (two existing hydroelectric power stations: „Đerdap I“ and „Đerdap II“, as well as a possibility of building the reversible hydro power plant „Đerdap III“); agricultural-livestock and forest area; natural and cultural heritage and tourism assets (with exceptional tourism development potential at Stara Planina (Old Mountain) and on the Danube, together with complementary activities); water resources of national and regional importance, 3 existing and 3 planned water accumulations, water protection facilities, etc.; the region with significant reserves of mineral resources and developed mining (mining company RTB „Bor“, etc.); special purpose zones with existing and planned border crossings and border areas towards the Republic of Bulgaria and Republic of Rumania (European Union) in the length of 307 km; etc.

3. **Kolubara and Mačva districts**: pronounced economic, social and territorial polarization, mainly between regional centers of Valjevo and Šabac, on the one hand, and other municipal centers and settlements, on the other hand; water sources of national and regional importance, several existing and planned water accumulations, water protection facilities, etc.; infrastructure corridor Belgrade-South Adriatic area; potentials for the development of the Drina river belt; forest areas and agricultural and livestock areas; natural and cultural heritage and tourism assets; area with exceptional potential energy (exploitation of energy raw materials in the Kolubara lignite basin, hydropower systems on the Drina river, geothermal water, etc.); area with significant reserves of mineral resources (particularly the reserves of lead and zinc, rare earth metals and building stone); special purpose zones, existing and

planned border crossings and a long border area (about 162 km) towards the Republic of Srpska (Bosnia and Herzegovina); etc.

4. Zlatibor and Moravica districts: pronounced economic, social and territorial polarization mainly between the northern and southern parts of both districts; water sources of national and regional importance, several existing and planned water accumulations, water protection facilities, etc.; area of the West Morava river infrastructure corridor and future infrastructure corridor Belgrade-South Adriatic; forest areas and agricultural and livestock areas; natural and cultural heritage and tourism assets (with potential for the development of all-year-round tourism at mountains of Zlatibor, Tara, Golija, etc., integrally with complementary activities); region with exceptional hydropower potential (hydropower systems on the Uvac, Lim, Đetinja, Drina, Beli Rzav and Cmi Rzav rivers, with the possibility of extending the existing and building the new water resource management facilities on the Veliki Rzav, Lim, Skrapež rivers, etc.); region with significant reserves of mineral resources; special purpose zones, existing and planned border crossings and a long border area towards the Republic of Srpska (Bosnia and Herzegovina) and Republic of Montenegro (in the length of 326 km); etc.

3. ADDRESSING THE KEY ISSUES RELATED TO SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT OF PERIPHERAL RURAL REGIONS

Certain similarities and differences occur in addressing the key issues related to sustainable territorial development of peripheral rural regions within the coverage of four RSPs, as follows:

3.1.Improving the Accessibility

1. Southern Pomoravlje and Timočka krajina: The support to carrying out integration, more balanced and polycentric development of these regions is planned through improving the transport infrastructure and spatial accessibility. This particularly refers to the planning solutions for completing the construction, equipping and arranging the infrastructure corridor of E-75 motorway and better transport connectivity between surrounding areas and the motorway by building new transversal sections as follows: E75 – Bor – Zaječar; E75 – Stara Planina; E75 – Trgovište – Bosilegrad; E75 – Kriva Feja – Bosilegrad, etc.; completion of equipping and regulating the section of the Danube waterway/nautical corridor; reconstruction of the existing railroad tracks (Niš – Zaječar – Prahovo, Niš – Makedonija, etc.), with legs into Romania and Bulgaria and building the E85 high-speed railroad, the development of energy and telecommunications infrastructures. The planned construction of transport

infrastructure should contribute to improving the transit and mediatory connections of Eastern and Southern Serbia to the Corridor 10 and to the roadways to Pan-European Corridor 5 to the west and Corridor 4 to the east; improving the spatial and functional positioning; raising the competitiveness of the region; as well as faster development of regional centres. The realization of internal integration, development of small towns, micro-developmental rural centres, as well as activation of highland and border areas has been supported by the planning solutions for improving the capillary, regional (category II state road) and local road network, especially transverse roadways, and their connections with roads and highways within the Pan-European corridors.

2. Kolubara and Mačva districts, and Zlatibor and Moravica districts: One of the preconditions is to improve transport accessibility and infrastructure of the area. Rehabilitation and completion of state road network (construction of a section of Beograd – Požega motorway, and regional/category II state road Sr. Mitrovica - Vladimirci, etc.), revitalization and modernization of existing railroads (Beograd – Bar and Ruma – Šabac – Loznica – Brasina – Zvornik), as well as completion of the railroad Valjevo – Loznica (in future, also the construction of Beograd – Obrenovac – Šabac railroad), opening of a new border crossings, regulation of international waterway (the Sava river), the development of water resource management and energy and telecommunication infrastructures, will be a key factor of greater openness of the region towards and integration with surrounding area. Building the transversal road infrastructure will contribute to improving the transit and mediatory connections of the region between the Pan-European Corridor 10 to the east (through Serbia) and Corridor 5 to the west (through B&H), improving the spatial-functional positioning, as well as raising the competitiveness of the region, thereby realizing the overall concept of the development of Serbia, particularly the one associated with the faster development of functional urban areas, urban clusters and border areas. From the viewpoint of internal integration goals, it is important to improve the network of regional roads (category II state roads), as well as local roads to insufficiently activated peripheral parts of the region (particularly in the area of Ivanjica, Nova Varoš, Sjenica, Priboj, Prijepolje and other hilly mountain areas) and also to connect these networks with corridors of existing state roads.

2.2. Balanced polycentric urban system

1. Southern Pomoravlje and Timočka krajina: In applying the concept of balanced polycentric regional development, the model of dispersed concentrated development and distribution of population, economic and other activities has been used to slow down the population concentration and activities in primary development axis (Pan-European Corridor

10) and to stimulate dispersion of the development in communities with significant territorial capital and potentials. These are planning solutions for resolving the following problems:

- Development of functional urban regions in independent and dual urban centers (Bor – Zaječar, Leskovac – Niš, Vranje – Vladičin Han), strengthening of the regional functions in Bor, Zaječar, Leskovac, Vranje and Pirot and decentralization of the remaining functions in municipalities, sub-municipal and micro-development centers in rural areas as exponents of socio-economic development of rural communities and their functional integration with urban centers.
- Development of spatial functional connections (in Vlasotince, Lebane, Bojnik, Bosilegrad, Trgovište, etc.), inter-connection and connections with regional centers in the immediate and cross-border areas.
- Initiating the formation of secondary development axis in the peripheral Timok river valley (direction Niš – Knjaževac – Zaječar – Negotin – Kladovo, which is to be extended up to Bor) and primary development axis along the South Morava river (direction Niš – Leskovac/Vlasotince – Vranje – Vladičin Han – Bujanovac/Preševo) and development of the regional functional urban systems connecting the macro-region of Niš with the Danube Basin and immediate international surrounding.
- Development of the existing successful small and medium size enterprises which will, after the modernization, restructuring and specialization of their production, become leaders in regional economically linked clusters of production and services, and which will compete with companies in the region and surrounding areas (Niš, Belgrade and other industrial centers), namely in the field of energy, mining, transport, warehousing and logistics, tourism, as well as other activities.

2. **Kolubara and Mačva districts, and Zlatibor and Moravica districts:** A multi-level hierarchy of centers within the network of settlements has been proposed for Kolubara and Mačva districts, and Zlatibor and Morava districts:

- The first hierarchical level comprises Valjevo, Šabac, Užice and Čačak as regional centers of similar functional capacities whose zones of influence exceed the borders of districts and areas covered by regional spatial plans.
- The second hierarchy level comprises the following sub-regional centers: Loznica (integrating Mali Zvornik and Krupanj as important centers in trans-border cooperation), Gornji Milanovac and, to a certain extent, Prijepolje and Požega. Prijepolje has a development potential of a sub-regional center in the south-eastern part of Zlatibor district

and in possible trans-border cooperation with Pljevlja and Bijelo Polje (Montenegro), while Požega has an excellent position in primary agglomeration, at the crossroads of the West Morava river basin and regional development areas of Kosjerić – Ivanjica.

- The third hierarchy level comprises local first-category centers: Ub, Lajkovac (integration with Belgrade agglomeration), Arilje, Bajina Bašta, Ivanjica, Kosjerić, Lučani, Nova Varoš, Priboj, Sjenica and Čajetina, which have local influence on settlements within their respective municipal territories. Second-category local centers: Bogatić, Vladimirci, Koceljeva, Krupanj, Ljig, Mionica, Mali Zvornik and Osečina, which have local influence on the settlements within their respective municipal territories, as well as on certain settlements in the neighboring municipalities/towns.
- The fourth category comprises micro-development centers including urban and rural settlements which are centers of association of settlements or centers with specific functions (e.g. tourist centers: Banja Koviljača, Banja Vrujci, Divčibare, Guča, Zlatibor, Brodarevo, Rudnik, Seča Reka, etc.).

The development of the areas covered by regional spatial plans, and particularly urban clusters, will be based on spatial-functional integration within the territory of the Republic of Serbia, as well as cross-border cooperation. Spatial-functional influences of the centers of different hierarchical levels, in wider surroundings, have required the formation of development areas of national and trans-border importance: the Sava development axis in the direction Beograd – Obrenovac – Šabac – Sremska Mitrovica – Brčko – Slavonski Brod; the Drina development axis in the direction Šabac – Bjeljina – Loznica – Zvornik – Bajina Bašta – Priboj – Prijepolje (with connections to B&H); and the Ibar development axis in the direction Belgrade – Lazarevac – Lajkovac – Ljig – Gornji Milanovac – Čačak – Kraljevo – Raška – Novi Pazar; as well as the West Morava development axis in the direction Kraljevo – Čačak – Užice with connections to Kragujevac, Višegrad (B&H) and Podgorica (Montenegro).

The problems so far in implementing the planning models and concepts for the development of centers within the settlement network are reflected in insufficient diversification of functions and job opening, as well as in the absence of investment and other measures for intensifying the specific sub-regional, municipal, economic, public and social functions for the purpose of slowing down the concentration of economic and other activities in regional centers, as well as for encouraging the economic and social development of other centers within the settlement network. From the viewpoint of the planned settlement network

development, an insufficiently controlled building of suburban settlements and settlements along the public road corridors represents a particular problem.

2.3. New forms of development and partnership between urban and rural areas

Natural resources and quality environment in rural areas, on the one hand, and economic, scientific, research, innovative, information, development, administrative, cultural and other functions of urban centers, on the other hand represent one of the major strongholds in the planning solutions for establishing new forms of development and partnership between rural and urban areas. Implementation of new forms of development and partnership in rural and urban areas will be achieved by establishing a core of socio-economic transformation of rural and poorly urbanized peripheral areas in the region, as well as by developing the daily urban systems (DUS) and formation of functional urban regions (FUR). Daily urban systems will be developed in the areas covered by RSPs as an instrument of a balanced and polycentric development. Functional areas belonging to conventional functional urban regions are envisaged as sub-systems in the future polycentric urban integration.

Daily commuting, as an instrument of territorial and functional cohesion in regions, will be developed at three levels as follows: the first level will comprise daily urban systems of regional centers – Leskovac, Vranje, Bor, Zaječar, Šabac, Loznica, Valjevo, Užice and Čačak; second level will comprise daily commuting systems – Vlasotince and bipolar daily commuting systems and agglomeration of Vladičin Han – Surdulica (with the zone of somewhat lower influence); Knjaževac, Negotin, and Kladovo; Gornji Milanovac, Požega, Ivanjica, Arilje, and Lučani; while the third level will comprise other local commuting systems/local centers of work.

By the end of the time horizon of the RSP, it is expected that the number of daily commuters of regional centers will increase as a result of strengthening their regional functions, as well as strengthening the sub-regional centers. In addition to these commutes, the strengthening and diversification of economy will influence migration of people with specific education and professions into regional centers, as well as centers of specific functions. Zones of influence of other municipal centers will become smaller in the forthcoming period (inertia of negative demographic trends), and will stagnate by the end of the planning horizon, but along with more intensive daily commutes between centers and settlements at periphery of urban regions. Based on a number of research activities carried out in Serbia, it has been confirmed that for the DUS formation and establishment of the FUR, it is necessary to have a certain population quantum and, in correlation with it, a higher development level of functions, i.e. higher functional capacity. Furthermore, it appears that the change of economic and social system in Serbia,

particularly after 2000, has only intensified the polarization effects in space through implementation of neoliberal economic principle. Experiences of neighboring countries, that are already members of the EU (Hungary, Romania, Croatia), show that these effects are increasing over the course of time. Precisely the foreign direct investments have contributed to this given that the FDI, as a rule, go to the most developed parts of the country, thus widening a gap between the center and the periphery. The remaining settlements in the periphery (not only in spatial meaning) constitute a heterogeneous system which is more or less integrated into systems and sub-systems of urban regions. These settlements will develop in a direct functional dependence on centers and general development tendencies.

The development of public services in Serbia will be in discrepancy between constitutional rights and declared standards, on the one hand, and economic conditions, under the minimum demand principle, on the other hand. Favoring the economic viability over the equal social standard has conditioned the change in functioning and hierarchical organization of a part of public services (primarily of all social institutions and health care system, but also educational system in the future). Further effects will be manifested in a negative spiral („vicious circles“), thus a decrease in functions will encourage emigration so that it will be increasingly difficult to maintain budget-dependent administrative and public functions.

It is necessary to support the policy of developing the job market, as well as other measures for more intensive specific regional, economic, public and social functions in small centers to slow down concentration of economic and other activities in big urban centers, as well as to stimulate economic and social development in other centers within the settlement network.

Dilemmas have arisen concerning the application of long advocated, but never realized, model of dispersed concentration with greater number of micro-development centers in rural areas. Except for northern low-land area of the Mačva district, a dispersed settlement system which, steadily losing permanent population, dominates in the remaining rural areas covered by analyzed regional spatial plans. In conditions of depopulation and a very low population density, micro-development centers lose beneficiaries and functions.

Special-function settlements, near to urban centers and with traffic-favorable position will have more chances for the development. To this end, three measures are crucial (Krunić, 2012): (i) planning, directing and allocating most of public services whose activities are spatially flexible; (ii) accepting and encouraging the seasonal „life“ of settlements; (iii) encouraging the „social segregation“ through developing those functions of settlements that make them attractive to population of certain age, social status, interests, etc. These measures would encourage the development of functionally directed, spatially grouped or independent settlements that would be

destinations of interest-linked and complementary population structures in certain period of time: agricultural producers (e.g. wine producers), owners of complementary industrial plants, pupils and students, soldiers, policemen and other public servants, hunters and fishermen, yachtsmen, pensioners, „weekenders“, tourists and excursionists, etc.

2.4. Tourism development

A part of planning solutions for more balanced regional development is based on economic prosperity, development and improvement of living conditions in rural areas, conservation and improvement of rural values, strengthening of economic positioning of agriculture and agricultural producers, development of infrastructure, as well as raising of the utility and public standards in rural settlements. The main approach applied in RSP is that the tourism development is one of the possible solutions to problems faced by the economy of peripheral rural regions in Serbia. The planning solutions for sustainable tourism development in peripheral rural regions are conceived with the aim to provide support to: sustainable development of regions and local communities; balanced development of rural areas (e.g. integrated development of tourism and agricultural production, as well as development of other complementary economic activities); higher quality of life of rural population; environmental protection, as well as the protection of heritage and local culture.

Regional tourism development models are based on the most important tourism assets and specific, recognizable and integrated all-year-round tourist offer (natural heritage, mountains, rivers, lakes, spas, cities and villages, cultural heritage, manifestations, etc.), as well as on joint marketing activities of the region. The combined development of three forms of tourism according to their importance for local community and region has been planned: modest tourism (small-scale tourism having a complementary role in the development and providing additional income to population), dominant tourism (as a leading development sector), and balanced tourism (a dynamic sector in a balanced local/regional economy).

1. Southern Pomoravlje and Timočka krajina:

Planning solutions for the tourism development are the following: (i) Completion and integration of existing tourism offer in the region (the Danube riparian area with Đerdap Lake and „Đerdap“ National Park, „Stara Planina“ Nature Park, Vlasina Lake, Sokobanja, Vranjska, Bujanovačka, Sijarinska and Gamzigradska Banja spas, Felix Romuliana and Lepenski vir archeological sites, etc.); (ii) Development of new tourism supply for creating all-year-round regional tourism offer (nautical and tourism infrastructure on the Danube, tourist centers and ski resorts on Stara Planina and Besna Kobila mountains, Roman Emperor's cultural route, diversity of tourism other resources such as lakes, mountains,

cultural heritage, Negotin wine cellars, traditional manifestations, spas, towns and villages, hunting and fishing resorts, etc.); (iii) Functional integration and diversification/specialization of tourism offer within regional surroundings in Serbia, Bulgaria, Romania and Macedonia. The tourism development will provide one of the mechanisms for compensating the local population for limitations imposed by the peripheral position and by regimes for conservation and protection of natural resources, natural and cultural heritage.

2. Kolubara and Mačva districts, and Zlatibor and Moravica districts:

The planning solutions for the tourism development are the following: (i) Completion, integration and development of the all-year-round tourism offer (at Zlatibor, Tara, Golija, Valjevo and the Drina Basin mountains, on the Drina river, in spas, town centers, etc.); (ii) The development of new tourism supply for creating all-year-round regional tourism offer (tourist centers and ski resorts, diversity of tourism other resources such as lakes, mountains, cultural heritage, spas, towns and villages, traditional manifestations, hunting and fishing resorts, adventure tourism, etc.); (iii) Functional integration and diversification/specialization of tourism offer within the district and with surrounding destinations in Serbia, B&H and Montenegro.

Sustainable tourism development of rural regions in Serbia will meet several challenges in providing necessary support for: increasing the incentives for tourism development, man-made attractors, integrated tourism product, utilities and tourism infrastructure, planning and realizations of thematic tours, education and human resource development, sustainable tourism destination management, etc.

2.5. Spatial and functional integration

The intention was to increase the degree of functional integration of areas covered by regional spatial plans at two levels. At the intra-regional level, within the covered districts, the planned qualitative changes in spatial, transport, economic and social structures will allow harmonization of development and networking of sub-regional entities, especially highlands and border areas with pronounced dysfunctions of social and economic development. At the inter-regional level, functional integration with neighboring functional areas will enable the realization of prioritized planning solutions significant for several municipalities and regions, primarily for transport connectivity with corridors 10 and 7, the development of other infrastructure systems and formation of regional clusters (economy, tourism, education etc.). Connecting and cooperating with international surroundings, neighboring border municipalities and regions in Bulgaria, Romania, Macedonia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, as well as Montenegro, imply the preparation and implementation of cross-border cooperation

programs for which certain planning solutions have been proposed by RSP in the domains of infrastructure, energy, tourism, ecology, urban centre cooperation, etc.

4. CONCLUSIONS

Regardless of insufficiently developed regional spatial planning system in Serbia, the key factors, principles and concepts of sustainable territorial development have been satisfactorily implemented within the analyzed regional spatial plans for peripheral rural regions, i.e. concepts of balanced polycentric regional development and urban systems, new forms of urban-rural partnership, development of networks of transport corridors, technical infrastructure and decentralization of services of public interest, sustainable use of natural resources, natural and cultural heritage, etc. The principles and concepts applied in the RSP for peripheral rural regions are oriented towards the realization of the following general goals: slowing down the depopulation process, providing the higher quality of life and earning of local population, sustainable development of local communities and regions.

Problems have also been observed, primarily those of systemic character which, to a great extent, cannot at all be overcome through regional spatial planning, including the absence of investment and other measures for intensifying the specific sub-regional, municipal, economic and public and social functions so as to slow down concentration of economic and other activities in regional centers and to encourage economic and social development of other centers in the rural settlement network; absence of adequate cooperation between local, regional (in its infancy) and national management institutions; insufficient motivation of stakeholders for participation in spatial planning process, particularly at regional level; insufficient transparency in strategic decision making at national level; non-harmonized sector strategies, plans and programs, as well as insufficient support for implementing regional spatial plans; absence of data or not updated spatial data, etc.

The regional spatial planning process implies an integral approach to sustainable territorial and regional development. Based on available potentials, limitations, as well as recognized tendencies and requirements associated with the regional development, the vision of integrated development has been offered, as well as concepts and planning solutions for sustainable and more balanced regional development. Furthermore, all recommendations and initiatives of local communities, concepts, solutions and local strategic priorities (sustainable development, economic development, etc.), plans (local spatial plans, local environmental protection plans, etc.), programs and other development documents have been taken into

account. Participative approach in the regional planning process has been only partially realized due to insufficient training and education of professional planners and local management, insufficient knowledge of regional problems and lack of motivation on the part of local stakeholders, as well as nondevelopment of institutions at the level of regional governance. The cooperation with certain regional institutions (Center for the Development of Jablanica and Pčinja districts, Regional Agency for the Development of Eastern Serbia, regional chambers of commerce, etc.) has been important in preparing and developing the concepts/strategies of the plan, and has resulted in better quality and applicability of proposed solutions to the key problems of sustainable development of peripheral rural regions. Problems have manifested themselves in an unbalanced engagement and insufficient inclusion of local level of governance into the process of regional spatial plan preparation. This is not in correlation with the level of development of municipalities and towns, or development of local governance (e.g. the least amount of information and proposals has been received from the towns of Leskovac and Valjevo, out of which Leskovac has one of the greatest administrations in Serbia by the number of employees of about 1000). We believe that this is a matter of not recognizing the importance of regional strategic planning, particularly the spatial planning, one the one hand, and inertia of certain local governments, on the other hand. Local stakeholders have expressed their dissatisfaction with the amount of funds allocated by the Republic of Serbia for the development of areas covered by regional spatial plans. Local stakeholders in Timočka Krajina further expressed the lack of trust and resistance towards cross-border programs initiated in the domain of economic cooperation and infrastructure development, including joint application of local communities from Serbia and neighboring countries for the EU funds and assistance of relevant international associations. A specific problem in developing Regional Spatial Plan for Kolubara and Mačva districts lies in traditional distrustfulness and lack of interest in any kind of cooperation, as well as in establishing functional links between Šabac and Valjevo regional centers.

The precondition for ensuring the participation in spatial and other types of strategic planning is to provide training, as well as the possibility for all professional planners at all administrative levels to motivate and include citizens and other stakeholders into the decision-making process and implementation of planning measures, particularly at regional and local level of management and planning.

It is necessary to harmonize the legal basis pertaining to integrated strategic planning and management of sustainable territorial development of Serbia and its regions. In the forthcoming period, the reform of the planning system should be oriented towards the

development, coordination and integration of regional and sector planning into regional spatial planning to achieve management and guidance of sustainable development of the statistical planning regions at the NUTS 2 level.

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