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## CERTAIN ASPECTS OF RURAL PLANNING IN SERBIA

*Marija Drobnjaković*<sup>\*1</sup>

\* Geographical Institute “Jovan Cvijić” SASA

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**Abstract:** Rural planning has been neglected in the system of geographical scientific disciplines in Serbia for a long period. It was incorporated in the researches regarding development of rural areas, while in the recent scientific literature it is observing through “renaissance” of rural areas. Rural geographers, the *ruralists*, have placed it in recent years in a broader context, correlating it with other scientific disciplines. The aim of this paper is to present the current understanding of rural planning in Serbia, to point out the concept of rural planning and to indicate at what stage of development it currently is in comparison to other developed countries.

**Key words:** rurality, rural planning, rural development, Serbia

### Introduction

At the beginning of the discussion on rural planning, it is necessary to reflect on the meaning of the term rural. In daily routine, the meaning is based, and refers to images of rural landscapes, countryside, fields, pastures, hills, green idyll, peace, etc. On the other hand, it is associated with poverty, poor infrastructure, a difficult life, loneliness, remoteness, but also familiarity in communication, a different way of life, mentality and culture (Radovanović, 2010).

This term now has a spatial and interdisciplinary dimension (Woods, 2009), expressed in relationships and connections with other disciplines that expand its meaning. Its definitions vary in scope and meaning. In countries such as Serbia, the difference cannot be bypassed between two diametrically opposed entities, rural and urban. Usually the concept of rural is viewed as residual to urban, and includes all that is nonurban. One of the main shortcomings of many approaches in its defining is reflected in ignoring the fact that rural places and experiences are much more than a set of statistical and demographic measures and benchmarks of classifications, which are more one-dimensional (Gallent, Juntti, Kidd, & Shaw, 2008).

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<sup>1</sup> Correspondence to: m.drobnjakovic@gi.sanu.ac.rs

For rural we can say that is a relative term, from temporal perspective. Its meaning was changing depending on the socio-economic conditions that have been characterized by a certain time: from established rural-urban dichotomy, through urban-rural continuum and partnerships, to the negation of the rural (Harrington & O'Donoghue, 1998; Bengs & Schmidt-Thome 2006; Lukić, 2010; Tošić, 2011). Taking into account the complexity and interdisciplinary nature of this phenomenon, we can say that its variability lies in the choice of research approach.

### **Planning of Rural Areas**

Many authors argue that in terms of depopulation and impoverished rural area, to plan the development of such a space is practically *nonsense* (Đorđević, 1998). If we look at rural planning as a tool for creating high-quality changes in rural areas and a link among its different sectors (Kranjčević, 2006), then its role in the preservation and development of rural areas is high. The first question we should ask at the beginning of the discussion on rural planning is: *Which area the planned activities refer to?* Not only spatial planners of our region meet this problem, but also a much wider. Here, the question of the rural settlements and environment is always current, while in the Anglo-Saxon area there is a dilemma of *planning of rural area or countryside* (Gallent et al., 2008).

Rural planning can be considered as the realization of rural policies in a particular field (Đorđević, 1998). The basic documents by which the development of rural areas is guided in Serbia are the Strategy of Agriculture and Rural Development, the National Rural Development Programme, Spatial Plan of the Republic of Serbia and the like. This issue in Serbia is regulated by the legislative frameworks from 1995, the Law on Planning and Construction, and then its subsequent amendments in 2003, 2009, 2011 and 2013, first in the framework of urban planning and regulation planning, and then in the plans of general urban and spatial planning of wider areas on different levels, with rural areas and settlements as an integral part.

The fact is that this segment of planning in Serbia has for a long time been unjustly neglected in the institutional, legal, methodological and technical terms. The basic subject of this segment of planning is not treated with enough attention, integral and meaningful, and this type of planning, due to the lack of interest and short-sightedness of local and state governing structures, is repressed, and its further development as a scientific discipline is marked by stagnation and degenerative evolution.

In the post-war period, an emphasis was placed on the land and control of its use in the planning process, while the achievement of certain aims was done through rationing. According to Gallent et al. (2008), the practice of rural planning was characterized by the brakes under development, designed in order to prevent the environment and protect the interests of agricultural production. The lack of direction and vision of rural planning has led to a number of negative consequences for the rural area. The past decades have seen intensive processes of urbanization and industrialization, and attention was focused on the problems that they have caused in the cities and their directing. In such circumstances, rural planning shall acquire the epithet of “Cinderella” (Đorđević, 1998) that many seem justified. On the contrary, this period of turbulent structural changes should be accompanied by a parallel development planning in rural areas, not its absence. The pressures on rural areas have become more pronounced, as a result of changed economic conditions and social modernization processes and the high expectations of being competitive on the market, respecting the principles of sustainable development, while at the same time to develop their multi-functionality (Kranjčević, 2006). The effects of this approach are already visible after the 1980s, and in rural areas in the population sense we have an exodus, backwardness in the economic sense, poverty in social sense, disrepair in ecological sense, isolation in structural sense, shame in psychological sense, and misbalance in the organizational sense.

This paper will further present how inhabited and uninhabited part of the rural area in Serbia is planned, how the purpose of rural areas and activities that take place in rural areas are planned and which scale of rural development in Serbia is reached. When presenting the level of rural planning in Serbia, a matrix of three concepts proposed by Bičanić (1964) will be accompanied: land use planning of an area, planning the rural settlements and its surroundings as a spatial unit and integrated structural planning - the concept of rural development.

### *Rural Planning in Terms of Land Use*

Planning of rural areas should first be considered from the aspect of planning of various activities which are its users. This segment of rural planning refers to an uninhabited part of the rural area and it can be said that it is thematic, sectoral planning, as it considers the individual functions of the rural environment and use of land conditionally reserved for it. To some extent, this segment of rural planning could be identified with the *land-use planning*, for it is essentially a planned manner of using the rural area. In the eternal dilemma of how to maximize the positive effects of development and how to minimize the negative

impacts, it is searched for the best way of use of land in an area, in which agriculture and environment are most often confronted.

Rural areas as open entirities or smaller populated areas are the subject of planning at different levels, and depending on it the level of generality is determined. However, we are often faced with the paradox of control of change of use of rural areas without effective measures of planning and failure to implement existing legislative norms and measures (Selman, 1988), while the pressure on the other side multiply. If we observe rural area with modern aspect, then we assume that it is multifunctional. One of the problems of rural areas is expressed through the process of finding a unique way of evaluating rural area for multipurpose use (Đorđević, 1998), that is, the formulation of an objective, rapid, simple model for evaluating the activities and resources in rural areas, applicable to both national and local levels.

In the Spatial Plan of the Republic of Serbia (SPRS, Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia, No. 24/10, 2010) the rural planning has been incorporated in almost all parts of the plan, because the development of rural areas is directly concerned with regional, wider urban or functional, economic, social and infrastructural development, and the protection and conservation of environmental elements and geo and cultural heritage is carried out largely in rural areas. The closest are prescribed the guidelines for *Sustainable rural development* that is directly related to integrated planning of the development of rural areas in Serbia, restructuring of rural areas, reconstruction and development of villages, raising competitiveness, land management and natural resources, diversification of the rural economy, empowerment of rural community, respecting the specificities and heterogeneity of rural areas of Serbia, which were the basis for the newly established typology of rural regions. In accordance with the SPRS (2010), the spatial planning in rural areas and reconstruction of villages take a special segment of spatial plans at the regional and local level.

Other segments of spatial plans refer to the use and purpose of land. One of the roots of rural planning has been recognized in the so-called plans of land classification, in which priority is given to natural land use and production (Đorđević, 1997). Historically, agriculture is the main user of rural areas, and the planning of spatial development of agriculture stands out as one of the most important elements of the development and a way of usage of the rural area. The main elements on which the spatial development of agriculture is based are divided into four large groups (Spasovski & Jaćimović, 1986; Todorović, 2002): natural conditions, socio-ownership, organizational-technical and production

characteristics. At the national level, the out zoning of agricultural production is carried out, the main problems are identified and priorities given to solve them, based on the analyses that rely on multi-dimensional complexity of the relationships between agricultural activities and the natural environment, on the one hand, and the general socio-economic conditions, on the other (Nikolić, Popović, & Katić, 2009). At lower levels of planning, advantages and limitations for the development are further observed, more precise zoning of agricultural production is performed and recommendations through concrete solutions and projects are provided in line with the needs of the local population and market, as well as measures of protection and improvement of agricultural land.

*Forestry* is besides agriculture one of the dominant activities of rural areas, and the planning of development and protection of forests is an important segment of the rural planning. Until recently, most attention was paid to the so-called sustainable yield, which mainly focused on timber production, and then, the development of integrated management plans that take into account the poly-functionality of forests, sustainable management and participatory approach, taking into account both all the capacities of resources, needs and requirements of all stakeholders (Medarević, Banković, & Šljukić, 2009). Sustainable planning, use and management of forests and forest land are based on the planning scheme which involves improving the condition of forests, increasing forest areas, meeting the environmental, economic and social functions, generational equality in relation to their multipurpose use (SPRS, Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia, No. 24/10, 2010).

*Water management* has multiple significances in rural areas and represents an important generator of rural area (Popović, 2006). Because of that, but the negative consequences that can cause, Đorđević, Sudar, Hrkalović, & Knežević (2013) point out that water infrastructure has the strictest and most demanding spatial requirements for development in comparison to other systems. The SPRS (2010) provides guidance for integrated planning, use and protection of waters, consistent with the preservation of the environment, rationalization of water supply and the reduction of consumption and adequate protection of the water and orders that during the planning of water resources development, care must be taken of the development of plans for special purpose for springs which are of the national importance, the flood risk maps, plans and studies and the like.

In rural planning, the protection of *the environment* and planning of use of resources of material nature take a special place. The ecological aspect is gradually incorporated in all aspects of life, and rural development policies have become environmentally oriented. Planning principles of rural areas have moved

from the concept of agriculture based to the so-called environmental aspect (Maruani & Amit-Cohen, 2007). Especially these two segments are in confrontation because agriculture is one of the biggest polluters in the rural area. However, in planning norms of Serbia “environmental dimension” of planning has long been ignored until the establishment of a new legislative framework (Filipović, 2005). Attention today is directed towards creating harmony between environmental and economic dimensions of the space, with significant interactions that lead to changes in the way of organizing, planning and use of space, introducing environmental criteria and indicators in the planning system (Miljanović, 2006). The importance of this segment of rural planning is emphasized by high diversity of natural and cultural assets in Serbia. It is implemented through the protected area management plans, regional plans, in the framework of urban development plans, plans and programs of management and use of natural resources (Tošić, 2011). The SPRS (2010) contains the so-called ecological aspect of planning, which deals with issues in the area of improving the quality of life of the population by achieving the desired environmental conditions and preserving natural and cultural heritage. An important part of planning in relation to the environment is *landscape planning*, which proved to be important for making strategic impact assessments and planning (Vasiljević, 2008). In Serbia, it is incorporated in legislation on planning in 1995, through the General Plan of Landscapes. However, these plans are made by sectors, according to a methodology similar to urban plans, and in their preparation did not follow the basic idea of protection (Cvejić, Vider, & Prokić, 2001). The SPRS (2010) introduced this segment of planning, where the making of studies of categorization of landscapes is instructed, in which they are classified according to the degree of their modification and developmental character into natural and cultural, and these in rural and urban. This contemporary concept of landscape protection is based on the interdependence of species, communities and ecological processes, and represents a “mosaic of different landscape elements” which must be understood in order to establish balance (Crnčević, Marić, & Bakić, 2010).

In recent years, *tourism* is recognized as a potential tool for the development of rural areas (Tošić, 2011). It became a favourite, but not an organized response to rural development. In practice, it is commonly held view that rural planning is subsumed under the planning of tourism and recreation, but this one-dimensional planning again leads to observation of rural area through only one aspect of small and temporary problems (Đorđević, 1998). A segment of rural planning is significant as it relates to a set of activities, services and facilities of the rural population. The lack of mutual coordination of the activities grouped around tourism can lead to unwanted problems. Spatial and functional structuring of the

tourism area refers to rounding and linking tourist destinations through the establishment of joint zones, defining tourist points and lines connecting them (Šećerov, 2008). Rural tourism should be one of the components of an integrated rural development, given that it provides the rural population alternative sources of income and employment, includes all members of the household, raises the value of indigenous agricultural products, has a positive effect on the maintenance of ecological balance, conservation and the prevention of ethno heritage and the increase in cultural exchange between urban and rural population (Tošić, 2011).

*Rural industrialization* is a relatively new concept and somewhat robust sounds when associated with the development of rural areas in Serbia. It can be seen as an extension of the process of industrialization in the process of its multifunctional and polycentric development, which involves the creation of commercial centres of lower rank in rural area in the process of dispersion of industrial activity. In this way, new opportunities are created and directions of development of industrial structure are changed in rural areas (Miletić & Todorović, 2003). It is equated with the concept of rural economy, which includes territorial whole complex of economic and other activities in rural area. It is most often linked to the model of economic growth based on the use of the potentials of rural areas, resulting as a consequence of their neglect in the process of classical industrialization and agglomeration of economic activities in urban areas (Popović, 2006). It is often seen as a counterpoint to the classic industrialization and viewed in the context of the development of new industry, as the concept that is based on the re-industrialization and re-organisation parallelism (Zakić, Rikalović, & Stojanović, 2010). Rural industrialization can be viewed from two aspects: as the diversification of the rural economy, with the aim of creating alternative forms of activities and sources of income, which often leads to removal of agriculture and food production, as the basic functions of rural area (Bogdanov, 2007), and as an attendant process in the multifunctional development of agriculture and relies on the fact that agriculture is a manufacturer of a wide range of products and services that participates in shaping the environment, social and cultural life and contributes to economic growth (Gorman, Mannion, Kinsella, & Bogue, 2001). These processes enable the creation of preconditions for further development of comparative advantages of rural areas.

#### *Rural Settlements and Their Spatial Development and Regulation*

Before considering the planning of the residential, constructed part of rural areas, it should be addressed to the understanding of rural settlements in Serbia.

In theory, we face with growing problems in their determination. The village/rural settlement is in its definition always compared with the city<sup>2</sup>, but there are no unique, strictly defined and accepted criteria for differentiating. There are 94 definitions in use, because the characteristics of villages has been changed depending on the level of socio-economic development, and regarding that the meaning of the village has been changed, in the why that it always included major anthropogenic features of concrete phase in the development of human society (Stamenković & Bačević 1992). The traditional definition of village puts the emphasis on population activities primarily related to the land and nature, while the contemporary understanding views them as organizational human agglomerations with specific properties, which are part of the net of settlements of some spatial area and make an integrated basis and criteria for planning and construction of the area (Simonović & Ribar, 1993). Many scientists, since Jovan Cvijić<sup>3</sup> dealt with the characteristics of rural settlements and determination of the principles of their classification. Usually all the definitions and typologies are reduced to the most commonly used indicators, such as population, population density and employed in the primary sector activity, although often at a more fundamental determinations more complex and derived indicators can be seen.

On the basis of scientific and literary material, the periodization of spatial organization and development of rural territories can be made. At the beginning of the last century the forms of settlements were not the product of urban and architectural profession, but they formed randomly, according to the needs of farmers, but certain rules were respected which dictated the adapting to natural conditions. The beginnings of a planned and organized development of villages are linked to the adoption of the Civil Law 1932/38, which becomes a platform of the Serbian urbanism in general. It contained the basic rules of construction and planning of rural settlements, which were reflected in the quality of life of the population, and the regulation of rural courtyards was taken into account, too. In the middle of the twentieth century the biggest transformation of rural settlements is recorded, which reflected in the lifestyle, population structure, urban morphological elements, architecture and others (Kojić, 1977). More intensive actions in the field of urban and utility development of rural settlements began after the 1970s. Given the fact that this period coincided with a period of intense industrialization and urbanization, it did not last long. Since

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<sup>2</sup> This analogy was also made in the official statistics, differentiating settlements on urban and others, so the concept of village cannot be recognised

<sup>3</sup> Kojić, 1958; Simonović & Ribar, 1993; Stamenković & Bačević, 1992; Stamenković, 1999 and others.



that period of visible changes that have marked the further development of the village, few authors were concerned with the character of their transformation, but with recording and quantification of structural problems. Many countries were facing this problem, and the issue of the directions and causes of the transformation of rural settlements and their spatial characteristics has been imposed as the key one in the further study of the rural area and its comparison with rural areas in other countries (Tan & Li, 2013).

Spatial development and regulation of rural settlements is a complex process that refers to the inhabited part of the village, including concrete architectural and urban structural solutions, and the rural district with the basic principles of the organization of rural activities. Planning and organization of rural territory is also in a domain of rural and agricultural architecture dealing with specific problems and rules for construction of housing and economic facilities, and in the field of “rourism”, a discipline that deals with the arrangement, regulation and construction of rural territory (Kojić, 1958). This process must take into consideration the needs of the population, economic and non-economic activities in the region, as well as models of construction and design, but of the corresponding population size in order to economically justify such activities. However, the arrangement of villages in Serbia is usually elemental process, except for planned formed settlements.

According to the Law on Planning and Construction (Official Gazette No.72 / 2009, 81/2009, 98/2013), arranging and planning the territory of rural settlements is done through two types of plans: spatial plan of the local government, providing guidelines for balanced territorial development, and urban development plans, general and detailed regulation, for certain parts of the settlements or rural areas which are important for the regulation of informal building, construction of infrastructure corridors, facilities of energy and utility infrastructure, etc.. Most often, when talking about rural planning it is precisely meant on the control and regulation of rural settlements. Control of the area is done according to the rules of regulation and rules of construction, represented by the system of urban policies and indicators, such as the purpose, coefficient, the height of buildings, distance from road and other facilities, navigation, etc.<sup>4</sup> They have certain discriminatory function, which continues to affect the organization and development of villages (Danci, 2010). According to recent amendments of Low, shall be made the arrangement basis for rural settlements. It should be adopted for all settlements that have passed or have not planned to

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<sup>4</sup> Rules of regulation and construction are included in the Rule Book on Creation of Allotments, Regulation and Building (Official Gazette of the RS, No. 50/2011).

draw up a planning document. The purpose of this arrangement basis should be spatial development of the rural area, encouragement of its sustainable development, taking into account the difference in the type of settlement and its main characteristics (Article 20a).

Plans at all levels, in particular deal with the part relating to the *organization of the settlement network*, to achieve and improve its polycentric development. In order to achieve a better integration of rural areas, different hierarchical levels in the network of settlements are allocated in accordance with the level of endowment of communal infrastructure and public services, level of development, population size and character of the settlement in the region. When planning the development of a network of rural settlements, the *decentralized concentration* concept is usually applied (Tošić, 2011). The greatest importance in this process makes secondary centres, centres of community of settlements, or the so-called micro-developmental nucleus (Tošić, 1999), which by their development impulses integrate rural areas, posing a counterweight to the urban centres, affecting the positive transformation of settlements in the region.

During the planning and development of rural settlements the type of the settlement should be particularly take into account, because the same rules and principles cannot be applied, since the conditions of the existence and further development or stagnation are different (Marić & Manić, 2004). The biggest problem in the regulation has the settlements of dispersed type. Settlements of this type, although usually at the edge of the demographic and economic existence, are the nearest to the natural life in the area in which the living and working are perfectly coordinated and rationalized, and as such deserve special attention (Malobabić & Bakić, 2004). These are the settlements where urban-morphological elements are mixed with natural characteristics, and it is extremely difficult to determine the boundary of the construction area. They usually have a specific site that bears the function of the settlement centre, where the major functions of the settlement are located and where the public life of the locals takes place. Infrastructural facility in these settlements is mostly unfavourable, often does not meet the set minimum for planning and usually depends on the economic power of the residents themselves and the local community. On the other hand, compact and settlements and settlements with straight streets laid out require completely different treatment. Their morphological and urban features are regulated, because they occupy the correct forms or they are formed in a planned manner. They are situated mainly in the lowlands or along roads and river valleys. In the structure of the settlement the construction area clearly stands out with residential and economic facilities, physically separated from agricultural areas. Such a settlement organization

provides favourable conditions for rational planning and development of utilities and transport infrastructure, but also for landscaping designed for common use. The locality with central functions is clearly defined, which, in addition to role in common and public life of citizens, usually represents the traffic, meeting place. In addition to adequate and rational arrangement of infrastructure, they are characterized by better endowment and facilities of public service providers, and the conditions for life and meeting basic needs and additional facilities are far more favourable. Less favourable living conditions are evident in the modalities of these settlements, which are spreading spontaneously, without respecting the basic rules of construction and decoration, stretching in line around traffic flows or densely compacted in the river valleys, where the density of construction and population impair the quality of life and disrupt the basic hygiene, environmental and construction conditions.

The arrangement of villages or their certain urbanization is a topic that provokes numerous dilemmas. For the purpose of the recovery and survival of villages/rural settlements, it is essential to enrich rural areas with facilities and non-agricultural activities, give them some urban lines, but strictly bear in mind that the village “does not grow into an amorphous body, which could negate the nature of symbiosis between the settlement and the natural environment” (Marić & Manić, 2004, 66). Interventions to arrange rural settlements depend on several factors: the type and structure of the village, located facilities that define its purpose, and often the size, on the fitting of urban-morphological elements in the environment, harmonization of labour and housing, autarchic architectural rules and special architectural style, relationship with settlements of a higher rank, traffic flows, projected population size, needs and purposes of areas in the settlement, etc. (Kojić, 1958; Simonović & Ribar, 1993; Malobabić & Bakić, 2004).

### **The Concept of Integrated Rural Development**

Rural development is a relatively new paradigm, developed as a response to the pressure that accompanied the modernization of European agriculture. It was created with the intention to reconstruct the economic basis of the rural economy and agricultural entrepreneurship, but also to contribute to the preservation and strengthening of rural area. The very concept of rural development implies integrated management of natural resources in the rural community. In the evolution of this concept, three phases stand out:

1. From the establishment of the EEC to the '70s of the XX century, when the rural area was observed through agriculture and programs to protect cultural

heritage. During this period, the focus was on the sectoral support with access to “top-down”, and agricultural policy was considered a synonym for rural policy (Zakić & Stojanović, 2006).

2. From the 1970s to the 1980s rural development is perceived in the context of regional and interregional policies and gradually the so-called territorial approach to the development of rural areas began to be applied. Agricultural policy is increasingly oriented to a series of questions related to the natural, social and cultural environment of the village (Nikolić & Maksin-Mićić, 2003).

3. The beginning of the 1990s is characterized by an integrated approach and inter-sector coordination. The spatial, temporal and multi-sector dimensions are united (Radovanović, 2010). Some of the crucial moments and important document for evolution of rural development concept are: The European Conference on Rural Development in Cork (1996); Agenda 2000 - Reform of CAP in Berlin (1999), which refers to the introduction of the concepts first and second pillar of the CAP; Meeting of the Council of Europe in Gothenburg (2001) with the introduction of new measures under the CAP and rural development (environment, food security, sustainable production, etc.); A reformed agricultural policy in Luxembourg (2003); The EU Conference on Rural Development in Salzburg (2003) (European Commission, 2003).

The basic principles of the EU rural development policy are based on four areas of action and measures set out in the new rural development regulation: improving competitiveness for farms and forestry, improving the environment and landscapes, improving the quality of life, diversification of the rural economy and participatory approach. The fourth axis of action bases on the experiences of the LEADER program (links between actions for the development of the rural), representing potential for rural development, based on the “bottom-up” approach. This program focuses on the development of integrated strategies for rural development and the exchange of experiences between these same areas at the European level. On the other hand, diversification of the rural economy and development of tertiary activity are one of the most important segments of rural development, because they influence other components and allow the creation of preconditions for the further development of rural comparative advantages. Diverse rural economy contributes to solving key problems of the majority of rural areas and is based on the use of local resources and workforce (Bogdanov, 2007).

The concept of rural development has set up a platform for new approaches to development of rural settlements. By the time, it begins to have its “own life” (Murdoch, 2000, 407), and the rural settlements takes on new forms and contents. Experience has already shown that agriculture alone cannot maintain the rural system with increased and different needs of the rural population that is looking for a more attractive, richer, more diverse village (Todorović, 2007). Rural area remains the primary food producer, but also an area of specific landscape with pronounced natural, cultural and historical elements.

Agriculture is an activity that still forms dominantly the economic and social life of the village. In developed countries it is not considered as the sole factor of rural development and specific rural development cannot be achieved only through agriculture, but it is still a necessary and the most important element in this conglomerate of rural activities. Through the application of the concept of rural development, agriculture should be placed in the broader context of rural area in order to preserve in the ecological sense its traditional cultural and economic values increase. The key to successful economic transformation of rural areas lies in the available economic, human, cultural and environmental resources that highlight its multidimensional nature and possibly can compensate the decline in agricultural production, and by the overall interaction operation they can contribute to the integral development of rural areas (Agarwal, Rahman, & Errington, 2009; Murray, 2008).

Serbia has long lagged behind the EU countries in the field of development of rural areas. Without institutional framework and adequate strategy that could comprehensively treat the problem of rural areas, it could not be accessed to adequate actions and specific funds for the improvement of rural areas. In Serbia, policies related to rural area and territorial development irregularities were not sufficiently coherent (Todorović, Drobnjaković, & Gligić-Simeunović, 2010). Bogdanov (2007) points out that this dimension is marginalized and regarded only as an accompanying part of other policies and development programs. Such an attitude towards the rural area in Serbia has contributed to the marginalization of the village, stagnation and decline in the vitality of rural areas, where “there is a clear concentration and spatial prominence of numerous problems” (Stamenković, 1999, 185). Agriculture remains the primary activity of the rural area of Serbia, deeply burdened by numerous structural problems and deficiencies. As such it really is more a necessity than a potential and profitable activity, and ahead of it there is a more significant reorientation in the context of the accession of standards and harmonization with the EU rural development policy. Thanks to the process of modernization of agriculture and the application of scientific and technological progress in the field of agriculture,

farming becomes a professional orientation that is not acquired by place of birth, but adequate training (Nikolić & Maksin-Mičić, 2003). Unfortunately, this statement is in the current conditions in Serbia hardly acceptable and applicable. The absence of adequate rural development policy has a negative impact on the quality of life of the rural population. Basic features are becoming besides traditional norms, deprivation, economic and cultural poverty, impotence and inability to change their attitude and find some measure of life. It is associated with exposure of certain rural areas to broad socio-economic and political changes associated with the deregulation, restructuring and re-composition (Clope, Goodwin, Milbourne, & Thomas, 1995).

Table 1. Concepts of rural planning in Serbia

Concept	Approach	Planning aspects/segments	Significant documents
<b>Land Use Planning</b>	Sectoral	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Agriculture</li> <li>- Forestry</li> <li>- Water management</li> <li>- Protection and censervation of natural environment and planning of use of resources of material nature,</li> <li>- Tourism and                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Rural industrialisation</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Spatial Plan of the Republic of Serbia (2010),</li> <li>- Strategy of Agriculture and Rural Development (2005),</li> <li>- Law on Agricultural Land (2006;2009),</li> <li>- Strategy of Forestry Development of RS (2005); National Forestry Program (NFP),</li> <li>- Water Management Basis of RS (2002),</li> <li>- Law on Nature Protection (2009; 2010); Law on National Parcs (1993; 2009); Law on Environmental Protection (2004; 2009),</li> <li>- Tourism Development Strategy (2006),</li> <li>- Law on Tourism (2009; 2012) etc.</li> </ul>
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Spatial development and arragement of rural settlements (rourism)</li> <li>- Urban (General Regulation Plan and Detail Regulation Plan) and Spatial Planning of rural settlements</li> <li>- Organisation of settlements network</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Civil Low (1932/38),</li> <li>- Law on Constraction Land (1979),</li> <li>- Law on Spatial Planning and Development (1995),</li> <li>- Law on Planning and Construction (2003; 2009; 2010; 2011; 2012; 2013; 2014),</li> <li>- Spatial Plan of the Republic of Serbia (2010)</li> </ul>
<b>Rural Development</b>	Integral	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The competitiveness of agriculture</li> <li>- Protection of natural environment</li> <li>- Improvment of quality of life and diversification of rural economy</li> <li>- Participatory</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Spatial Plan of the Republic of Serbia (2010),</li> <li>- Plan of Strategy of Rural Development of RS (2009),</li> <li>- National Program for Rural Development of RS (2011),</li> <li>- Strategy for Agriculture and Rural Development of RS (2014).</li> </ul>

Source: Elaboratet by author, 2014

The village and the peasantry in Serbia are burdened with numerous problems, which have impeded the development of the whole country. Urgency and detailing in resolving these problems are necessary. In order to slow down and stop the negative trends, a new, contemporary and aggressive policy of rural

development is required, according to which the villages are not only production area but also a place for living, resting, etc. In addition to the absence of adequate motivation and determination to address this issue, the biggest obstacles for the eventual development of rural area and establishment of a balance between nature and man are also unregulated institutional framework and lack of funds that would be used for such purposes. Key steps in framing and creating adequate and applicable policy of rural development are: defining the rural areas according to criteria that are characteristic for Serbia, identifying the types of rural areas, creating specific development policies for each of them and the establishment of indicators to evaluate the effects of rural development policy (Zakić & Stojanović 2006; Efstratoglou, Bogdanov, & Meredith, 2007). The first steps in this process were conducted in early 2009, when the Ministry has adopted the National Programme for Rural Development (Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia, 2011). In this document were analysed the current limitations and potentials of Serbian village and identified the types of rural areas. So, resolving the problem of planning the development of rural areas has been slightly moved from sectoral to integral approach (Table 1). In light of the changes that the EU accession carries, as well as candidate status and the ability to use certain funds for development of rural areas and agriculture, a draft of the new Strategy of Agriculture and Rural Development (2014) has been set to review, where the idea of a previous classification of rural area is abandoned and it is focused on measures by which the funds will be directed to identified development priorities in this area.

### **Conclusion**

Taking into account the current situation in the rural area of Serbia, as well as undefined and institutionally unframed objectives and scenarios set unclearly, it is difficult to talk about the contemporary form of rural planning in Serbia. In fact, rural planning has long been a repressed activity and inexcusably neglected direction of planning, taking into account the current spatial and socio-economic development problems. Some authors justify the status of rural planning by concluding that in village a little remained of what could be planned. On the other hand, discontinuity and sectoral approach to the process of development planning have contributed to the neglect of rural area in Serbia, and therefore have left aside those directions of science and practice to deal with its development. Only in the light of fulfilling the pre-accession EU norms and realising the rights to certain funds, this question becomes a current issue and gradually “returns to the map through the revitalization of rural science” (Woods, 2009, p. 849), although more in economic and agro-economic circles.



The current planning practice and institutional framework left the Serbian villages on the margin of development, without adequate instruments and incentives that would enable more dynamic economic and social development, more meaningful endowing and protected environment. Due to its importance for overall and balanced territorial development, it is essential that restoration, improvement and renovation of rural areas in a sustainable and socially rational manner become one of the key strategic priorities of Serbia (SPRS, Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia, No. 24/10, 2010). Planning the development of rural area in Serbia is more in the domain of the sectoral approach. One-dimensional problem solving can hardly give the expected results. The development of agriculture ignores the socio-cultural aspect of life of the rural population, the violent diversification of rural activities neglects infrastructure equipping, the revitalisation and reutilization of rural resources are aimed at economic, not demographic development. The absence of an integrated approach cannot move rural area off the shelf of development. Unfortunately, these aspirations are felt even in the framework of regulations that should be the first step on this path. In which direction the development of rural area will go in Serbia depends solely on the determination and the financial and personnel possibilities of governing structures to deal with this problem.

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