

SUSTAINABLE HERITAGE UTILIZATION IN RURAL TOURISM DEVELOPMENT IN SERBIA

Marija Maksin¹, University Singidunum, Department of Tourism and Hospitality Management, Belgrade, Serbia

Research on natural and cultural heritage as one of the key levers of sustainable tourism development in Serbia has been conducted 2010, for the elaboration of the Master plan for Sustainable Rural Tourism Development in Serbia. To evaluate achieved and potential attractiveness of natural and cultural heritage at rural Serbia the FAS methodology was implemented, and the results of this evaluation are discussed. Based on achieved and potential attractiveness and accessibility of natural and cultural heritage, and other criteria, the rural tourism clusters have been established. Methodology for rural tourism clusters identification and prioritization is presented, and the results of prioritization discussed. Elaboration of the Master plan for Sustainable Rural Tourism Development in Serbia has been based on the holistic approach. Therefore the aim of rural tourism development is to protect, revitalize and use the natural and cultural assets in sustainable way to benefit the rural communities. Challenges and possibilities for sustainable heritage utilization, sustainable rural tourism development, and management arrangements are discussed for two cases – Viminacium archaeological park and Mountain Stara planina Nature Park. Based on analyzed cases the evaluation criteria for management of sustainable heritage utilization and rural tourism development are proposed.

Key words: evaluation criteria, attractiveness of natural and cultural heritage, sustainable heritage utilization, sustainable rural tourism, management.

INTRODUCTION

Rural development in Serbia is an economic, social and environmental priority. Almost half the population of Serbia lives in rural regions which make up nearly three-quarters of the country's territory. Despite its unspoilt natural beauty, rural environment is relatively untapped and provides a great opportunity to create value for rural communities. Sustainable rural tourism is one of the key sectors with strong potential to diversify the Serbian rural economy. Sustainable rural tourism is committed to the long term relationship between the tourism sector and the local communities. International trends show that rural tourism has a key role to play in rural communities in alleviating poverty, uplifting the quality of life, fighting social and economic inequality and economic degradation. Depopulation and high rates of unemployment have been affecting Serbia over the last years. Both these problems are far more intense in rural areas.

Rural tourism is already playing an important role

in rural Serbia and is generating a significant level of income. From more than 32,000 beds (registered and un-registered) in rural areas, approximately 10,000 beds are exclusively rural. It is estimated that these total beds are generating yearly more than 5 billion RSD of accommodation incomes and contribute to almost 5 billion RSD more direct incomes for the tourism sector, which represent 16% of the Direct Travel and Tourism GDP calculated by WTTC (World Tourism and Travel Council) in Serbia for 2010 (Diagnostic Report, 2010: 191, 192).

Rural tourism is defined as tourism which produces a "rural environment" for the visitor, by offering a combination of natural, cultural and human experiences which are typically rural in character. It is the immersion of the visitor in authentic, original and grassroots experiences which are the essence of rural life. Rural character can be described as the combination of natural and cultural landscapes, natural and cultural heritage, and activities developed by the local population. It is the contact with this nature and the personal human contact with the local people and their culture which makes rural tourism so unique. Rural tourism, therefore, combines many different aspects of

experiencing, sharing and showcasing rural life.

Attractiveness and accessibility of natural and cultural heritage is very important for sustainable rural tourism development (Maksin, 2010). There is a large number of nature and culture-based assets spread throughout Serbia potentially highly attractive for a sustainable rural tourism development, but the majority of them has still not been developed for tourism. To maintain achieved heritage attractiveness and to develop its potential attractiveness, the protection and sustainable utilization of heritage in tourism development is important as well. In this respect, the main purpose of the paper is to analyze and discuss the evaluation of heritage attractiveness and rural tourism clusters, as well as the evaluation of heritage utilization and rural tourism development sustainability in the management of tourism destinations.

To evaluate achieved and potential attractiveness of natural and cultural heritage at rural Serbia the FAS methodology was implemented in the

Prepared as a part of the scientific project titled: The role and implementation of the national spatial plan and regional development documents in renewal of strategic research, thinking and governance in Serbia (No. III 47014)

¹ Danijelova 29, 11 000 Beograd, Serbia
 mmaksin@singidunum.ac.rs

research conducted for the Master plan for Sustainable Rural Tourism Development in Serbia (2011) (in the sequel: Master plan)². The results of this evaluation are discussed – the problem of insufficient data for carrying out the quantitative evaluation, and qualitative assessment uncertainty of potential attractiveness. The identification and prioritization of rural tourism clusters is based on the attractiveness and accessibility of natural and cultural heritage, as well as on other criteria. Methodology for rural tourism cluster identification and prioritization is presented, and the results of prioritization discussed.

The aim of sustainable rural tourism development is to support the protection and utilization of the natural and cultural heritage in sustainable way, and to benefit the rural communities. Challenges and possibilities for sustainable heritage utilization, sustainable rural tourism development and management are analyzed and discussed at the cases of protected natural and cultural heritage in Serbia. Based on analyzed cases several criteria for the evaluation of sustainable heritage utilization and sustainable rural tourism development are proposed for tourism destinations.

EVALUATION OF NATURAL AND CULTURAL HERITAGE AS TOURISM ATTRACTORS AND FACTORS FOR RURAL TOURISM DEVELOPMENT IN SERBIA

To evaluate the attractiveness of natural and cultural heritage at rural areas of Serbia the FAS methodology was implemented (Figure 1).

According to the FAS methodology (Factors – Attractors – Support) of the UNWTO, attractors include natural resources, cultural heritage and “man-made” tourism sites and assets which continually attract significant number of tourists. Tourism attractors (natural, cultural and man-made) are tourism sites or assets that are currently visited by tourists. The assessment considers the current situation of the attractor, as well as its potential to attract tourists in the future. For its assessment, each attractor is rated from 1 to 5 on its current attraction (quantitative and qualitative weighting of number of visitors and value for tourism, qualitative weighting of the beauty of the site/place and accessibility; 1 being low and 5 high) and from 1 to 5 in terms of its potential attraction (qualitative weighting of: possible upgrades, future increase/

decrease on the number of visitors, future accessibility works and future value for tourism; 1 being low and 5 high). Therefore, the final assessment for each attractor results of the weighted average between the current attraction assessment and the potential attraction assessment, and not of the arithmetical average (Table 1).

Ten main natural attractors have been identified at rural areas. These include natural heritage sites and mountains (national parks, natural parks and reserves), diversity of scenic landscapes, rivers and gorges, thermal springs etc. Natural elements are well preserved and have great potential to be attractive for tourists. Therefore, the assessment has been valued at 3.3 reflecting a high attractiveness of the natural attractors that mostly have to improve their interpretation and accessibility.

Eleven main cultural attractors have been identified at rural areas. The best examples are Viminacium archaeological park and Felix Romuliana (UNESCO World Heritage site). There are monasteries recognized as UNESCO World Heritage sites but they have still to

develop their presentation and interpretation for tourists. Unique remains of prehistoric civilisation in Europe, Lepenski Vir archaeological site in Iron Gate (Djerdap) gorge has been reconstructed (first phase finished at the end of 2011), with the potential to become one of the most attractive sites by providing access to cruisers at Danube. Guca brass band festival has become the bestseller based on elements of traditional folk music. Therefore, the assessment has been valued at 3.4 reflecting a high attractiveness of the cultural attractors that mostly have to be further developed.

Man-made type of attractor shapes the leisure elements within the tourism industry such as bars, restaurants, shopping and other entertainment and edutainment activities. In rural Serbia, man-made attractors are limited and should be increased to become a more attractive for tourists. Currently, there are only two high potential attractors. Famous film director Emir Kusturica built an attractive ethnovillage, Drvengrad, where he organises the international film festival annually. Nearby there

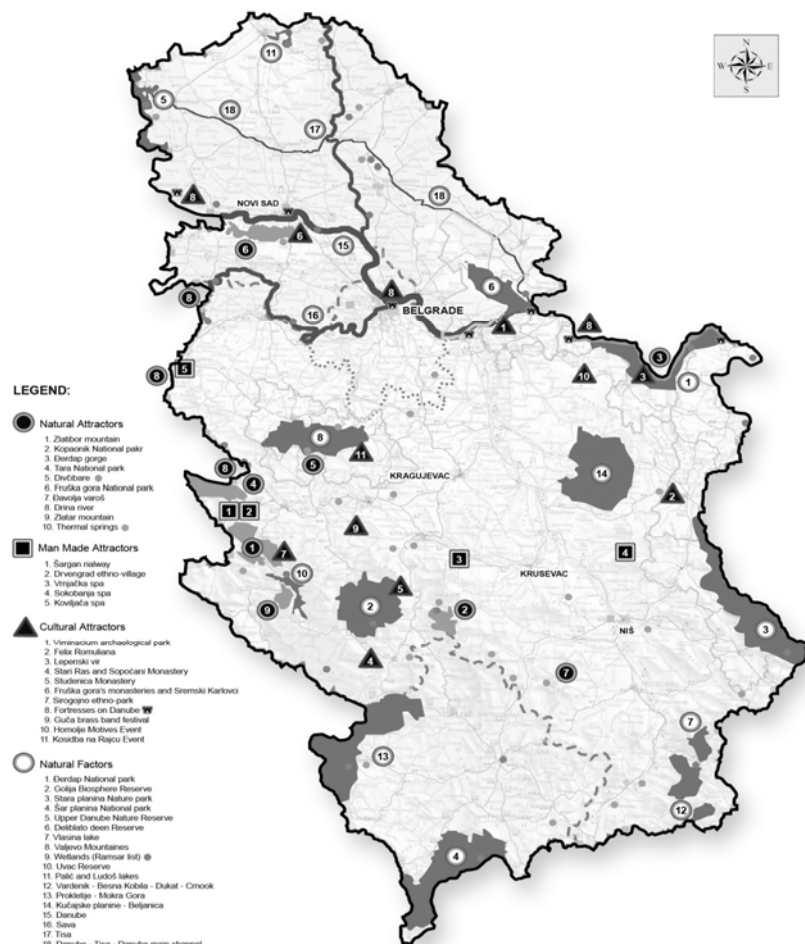


Figure 1. Mapping of the most relevant attractors and factors in Serbia as defined by UNWTO FAS

Source: Diagnostic of Rural Tourism in Serbia, Master Plan for Sustainable Rural Tourism Development in Serbia, UNWTO, 2011, p. 35.

Table 1. Attractor assessment according to the FAS methodology

Natural Attractors		Assessment	Cultural Attractors		Assessment
1.	Zlatibor mountain	4.25	1.	Viminacium archaeological park	4
2.	Kopaonik mountain	4.25	2.	Felix Romuliana*	3.75
3.	Đerdap gorge	3.9	3.	Lepenski Vir	3.75
4.	Tara National park	3.75	4.	Stari Ras and Sopotani Monastery*	3.25
5.	Divčibare	3.5	5.	Studenica Monastery*	3.5
6.	Fruška Gora National park	3	6.	Fruška Gora's monasteries and S. Karlovci	3.5
7.	Đavolja varoš	2.5	7.	Sirogojno ethno-park	2.25
8.	Drina river	2.25	8.	Fortresses at Danube	2.5
9.	Zlatac mountain	2.5	9.	Guca brass band festival	4.25
10.	Thermal springs	2.75	10.	Homolje Motives Event	3.5
Total		3.3	11.	Kosidba na Rajcu Event	3.5
Man-made Attractors		Assessment	Total		3.4
1.	Shargan railway	4.5	Assessors		Assessment
2.	Drvengrad ethno-village	2.25	N	Natural Attractors	3.3
3.	Vrnjaska spa	4	C	Cultural Attractors	3.4
4.	Sokobanja spa	4	M	Man-made Attractors	3.1
5.	Koviljaca spa	4	Total		3.3
6.	Traditional cuisine restaurants	2.5	* UNESCO World Heritage List		
7.	Traditional craft shops	2	Source: Diagnostic of Rural Tourism in Serbia,		
8.	Markets with agroproducts	1.75	Master Plan for Sustainable Rural Tourism Development in Serbia, UNWTO, 2011, p.34.		
Total		3.1			

Table 2. Natural factor assessment according to the FAS methodology

Natural factor		Assessment	Natural factor		Assessment
1.	Đerdap National Park	5	11.	Palić and Ludoš lakes	2.5
2.	Golija Biosphere Reserve*	4.5	12.	Vardenik-Besna Kobila-Dukat-Crnook	3.5
3.	Stara Mount Nature Park	4.5	13.	Prokletije-Mokra Gora	3.5
4.	Sar Mount National Park	4.2	14.	Kučajske Mount-Bejanica	3
5.	Upper Danube Reserve	3.5	15.	Danube river	5
6.	Deliblato Sands Reserve	3.5	16.	Sava river	4
7.	Vlasina lake	3.5	17.	Tisa river	4
8.	Valjevo Mountains	3.5	18.	Danube-Tisa-Danube fairway	2.5
9.	Wetlands	3	19.	Climate	2
10.	Uvac Reserve	3	Total		3.6

* UNESCO MaB List

Source: Diagnostic of Rural Tourism in Serbia, Master Plan for Sustainable Rural Tourism Development in Serbia, UNWTO, 2011, p. 32.

is the internationally recognized old Shargan railway (Šarganska osmica). Both attractors are placed in scenic landscape of Mokra Gora. The assessment of man-made attractors is 3.1, highlighting that these attractors should be increased and more diversified.

Factors are resources which do not currently attract many tourists and have not yet been prepared for their inclusion in tourism. However, they have potential to be developed for tourism. Factors include two different elements: natural factors that have potential to become tourism attractors; and human and capital factors that are key issues that ease or hinder (depending on the assessment) the process of tourism factors to become tourism attractors. The natural factors are qualitatively assessed from 1 to 5 in terms of their beauty, biodiversity and potential to attract tourists (1 being low and 5 high).

In Serbia 23 relevant factors have been identified and assessed with an average of 3.1, where the highest assessment has been given to natural factors (3.6) and the lowest to capital factors (2.2 due to limited financial access in Serbian rural areas, which means that this

particular factor is not meeting the minimum average rating and, therefore, it is has to be considered as a strong weakness).

Serbia is composed of a large offer of natural resources and a great diversity of scenic landscapes, from high mountains to valleys and plains. The Danube, which runs through Serbia for 588 km, with Sava, Tisa and Great Morava rivers compose a dense river network, attractive for all water activities in summer and autumn. Biological diversity, both of ecosystem and species, is extremely high and attractive for tourism. Vascular flora belongs to almost a half of all floristic/vegetation regions in the world, representing one of the biodiversity centres of Europe. Climate is continental and moderate-continental with more or less pronounced local characteristics. Total average assessment of the natural factors in Serbia is reflecting a great potential to host tourists and high attractiveness of the natural factors (Table 2). Due to greatest potential attractiveness and chances to improve its accessibility (by developing nautical infrastructure), the best ranked factor is Đerdap National Park with Danube.

Discussion of the results

Qualitative assessments of attractors and factors and assigned values as a result of the evaluation process carried out by experts in tourism research (Delphi method), are more appropriate for assessment of the natural and cultural heritage value for tourism, than quantitative assessments. The problem in carrying out the quantitative assessment emerged due to the lack of sufficient data on tourists visiting natural and cultural heritage. In Serbia, entrance for the natural and cultural heritage is seldom charged. Only reliable data on tourist visits was available for natural and cultural heritage with charged entrance – Viminacium, Felix Romuliana and Đavolja Varoš. The information system on tourism development is not established, and the private sector is not obliged or willing to give any information concerning the tourism development (tourist visits, overnight stays etc). So far, only reliable annual data on tourist visits and overnight stays for municipalities is provided by the Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia, but this data does not provide for tourism destinations.

Prioritization of rural tourism development in Serbia

Rural tourism in Serbia is generally at an emerging stage. The international experience shows that development of tourism cannot be fostered everywhere in the country and at the same pace. Moreover it is good to have a strategy that enables the country to continuously showcase new rural tourism products and destinations.

Necessity to establish development priorities can be resolved by determining physical rural tourism clusters that are suitable for rural tourism development. The objective of the rural tourism clustering is to identify and prioritise the rural tourism clusters for development in the short- (3-5 years), medium- (5 to 10 years), and long-term (more than 10 years).

Rural tourism clusters were created using the clustering methodology described below:

1. Initial prioritization

- Identification of rural tourism clusters (RTC) – Twelve rural tourism clusters were created by taking into account the most relevant attractors and factors elected by the FAS methodology. Creation of initial RTC comprises high, medium or low concentration of priority attractors and factors with ranking points from 1 for high, 2 for medium and 3 for low.
- Prioritization of RTC – Based on criteria for prioritization such as the concentration of resources, the presence of Tourism Master Plans and the potential of the destination throughout the year, initial RTC are evaluated. Evaluation in terms of their seasonality and potential as a year round destination is based on the following criteria from the Spatial Plan of Republic of Serbia: potential of destinations as an all year round offer, dominant summer offer with participation of winter supply or a dominant summer offer. After the initial rating of the RTC (level 1 for high, 2 for medium and 3 for low 3), next step is grouping of the RTC into groups of clusters which are in relatively close proximity – rural tourism cluster groups (RTCG).

- Initial set of prioritized RTC and RTCG throughout the territory of the Republic of Serbia was mapped and validated by stakeholders.

2. Secondary prioritization

- Identification and evaluation of other influences, dimensions of importance to the prioritization of the previously identified RTC – infrastructure and accessibility, urban centres/markets proximity to RTC, hospitality supply, unemployment distribution and tourism experience.
- Validation of the prioritization level given to the RTC or re-prioritization of the RTC based on included dimensions and stakeholder participation.

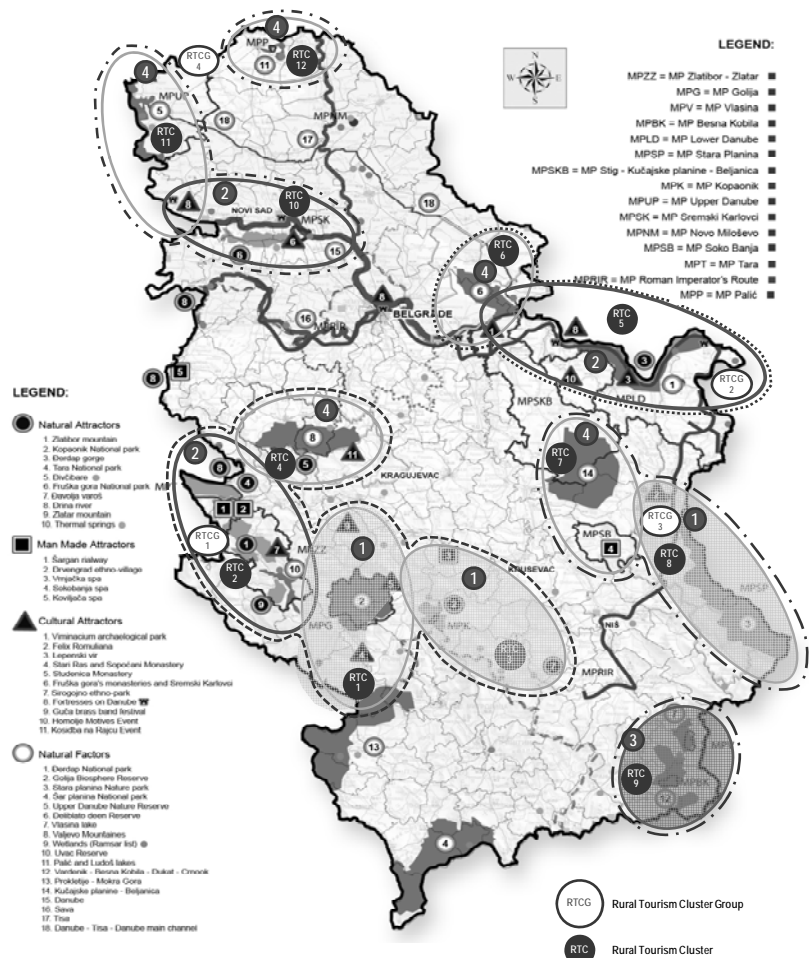


Figure 2. Map of Rural Tourism Clusters and Rural Tourism Cluster Groups in Serbia
 Source: Strategy for Sustainable Rural Tourism Development in Serbia, Master Plan for Sustainable Rural Tourism Development in Serbia, UNWTO, 2011, p. 25.

- Final prioritization of RTC and RTC groups (Figure 2).

The following rural tourism cluster groups (RTCG) and rural tourism clusters (RTC) have been proposed: RTCG 1 Central Serbia and Western Serbia – RTC 1 Golija, RTC 2 Zlatar-Zlatibor, RTC 3 Kopaonik, RTC 4 Central Serbia; RTCG 2 South Banat and Lower Danube – RTC 5 Lower Danube and RTC 6 South Banat; RTCG 3 Eastern Serbia – RTC 7 Soko Banja, RTC 8 Eastern Serbia and RTC 9 South Eastern Serbia; RTCG 4 Vojvodina – RTC 10 Fruška Gora, RTC 11 Upper Danube and RTC 12 Northern Vojvodina.

In the process of initial prioritization, the identified 12 RTC are rated according to the following criteria:

- Level 1: Cluster contains a high concentration of high value factors and attractors, has a Tourism Master Plan and has at least one resource with the potential to be an all year round destination.
- Level 2: Cluster contains a high concentration of priority factors and attractors, has a Tourism

Master Plan but has limited potential as a destination all year round, or Cluster contains a lower concentration of priority factors and attractors, has a Tourism Master Plan but has potential as a destination all year round.

- Level 3: Cluster contains a lower concentration of priority factors and attractors, has a Tourism Master Plan; but has limited potential as a destination all year round; or Cluster contains a lower concentration of priority factors and attractors, has the potential as a destination all year round, but does not have a Tourism Master Plan.

The comparison of the RTC and RTCG brought up the following conclusions:

- RTCG 1: Comprises of RTC 1-4 and is located in Central Serbia and Western Serbia. The cluster group comprises of a high variety of clusters which have high potential to attract visitors and tourists throughout the year. It has a high variety of natural and cultural attractors, as well as having three of the most important man-made attractors in Serbia.
- RTCG 2: Comprises of RTC 5-6 and is located in

South Banat and Lower Danube with the northern part or Eastern Serbia. The cluster group comprises a high variety of clusters with high potential to attract visitors, although it does not have such a strong potential as RTCG 1 to attract visitors throughout the year.

- RTCG 3: Comprises of RTC 7-9 and is located primarily in Eastern Serbia. The cluster group contains attractive natural factors, but has limited attractors. It has natural resources which have the potential to attract visitors and tourists all year round.

- RTCG 4: Comprises of RTC 10-12 and is located in Vojvodina. The cluster group contains attractive natural factors and attractors, although it is not as highly concentrated as in RTG1 and RTG 2. RTCG 4 has less potential than RTCG 1 and RTCG 3 to attract visitors and tourists all year round.

However more factors have been taken into account in a second prioritisation process in order to fine tune the decision making process. The results of the initial and secondary prioritisation (Table 3) show that the final prioritization for rural tourism development is the following (in order of priority): Central and Western Serbia (RTCG 1), Vojvodina (RTCG 4), South Banat, followed by the Lower Danube with the northern part or Eastern Serbia (RTCG 2) and Eastern Serbia (RTCG 3). The highest priority clusters (RTCG 1, RTCG 4) have the best opportunities and highest potential to create value and potential returns from tourism investments.

Discussion of the results

The identification and prioritization of rural tourism clusters was based on the results of FAS methodology, as well as on the relevant spatial plans (Spatial Plan of the Republic of Serbia and spatial plans of special purpose

areas) and tourism master plans for primary tourism destinations in Serbia. The prioritization based on the results of FAS methodology corresponded to the prioritization set by relevant spatial and tourism sector plans. Validation of the prioritization level given to the RTC and re-prioritization of the RTC was conducted by stakeholders at the national level of governance – ministry in charge of tourism and national tourism organization. This reduction in participation of actors at national level of governance reduces the validity of the results. Their validity would be higher if other relevant actors participated in the process of prioritization, namely the ministries and agencies in charge of spatial planning, nature and culture heritage protection, transport etc.

HOW TO MANAGE THE SUSTAINABLE HERITAGE UTILIZATION AND SUSTAINABLE RURAL TOURISM DEVELOPMENT?

Cases

The main challenges and possibilities for rural tourism development in achieving sustainable heritage utilization and benefit for development of rural communities are discussed at two cases – protected natural heritage of Mountain Stara planina, and protected cultural heritage of Viminacium.

Viminacium is the highest ranked cultural attractor in Serbia, located in RTC 5 and RTCG 2. Mountain Stara planina is the third ranked natural factor, located in RTC 8 and RTCG 3.

Viminacium Archaeological Park

Viminacium archeological site is in Pozarevac Municipality, at the rural area near “Drmino”

open pit coal and “Kostolac B” thermal power plant.

Viminacium is protected as immovable cultural property of exceptional importance for the Republic of Serbia, and the proposal for the Tentative List of UNESCO World Heritage is in preparation. Viminacium was the capital of the Roman province – Upper Moesia (Moesia Superior) and Late Antiquity Moesia (Moesia Prima). There are indications that this great city and legionary camp on Roman Limes was transition point between the West and the East when the capital was moved from Rome to the East, to Constantinople. Its advantage is the possibility to investigate and present the entire Roman city whose area was greater than Pompeii.

Bearing in mind that eighteen Roman Emperors who were born in present-day Serbia represents one fifth of the total number of all the Roman Emperors and the greatest number of Roman emperors who were born and ruled out of the Italian territory, the Archaeological Institute of the Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts (further: Archaeological Institute) launched the project “Roman Emperors’ Cultural Route in Serbia” (Itinerarium Serbiae Romanum). The basic idea of this project is to connect all of the imperial territory at Serbia into one unit as it existed when the Roman Empire was on the banks of Danube. The project has the objective of Pan-European significance, to connect to other places in the imperial Roman provinces at the territory of Roman Empire, where Roman Emperors were born or lived.

Viminacium is the first archaeological park in Serbia, and so far the most attractive site at Roman Emperors’ Cultural Route in Serbia. The intensive archaeological and multidisciplinary

Table 3. Results of initial and secondary prioritization of RTC and RTCG in Serbia

Rural Tourism Cluster Groups (RTCG), Rural Tourism Cluster (RTC)	Initial prioritization		Secondary prioritization					Average RTCG Total RTC
	FAS	Seasonality	Accessi-bility	Proximity to markets	Un-employ-ment	Hospitality	Experience in Tourism	
RTCG 1:	1	1.5	2	1.75	1.75	1.5	1.5	11
RTC 1 Golija	1	1	2	2	1	2	1	10
RTC 2 Zlatar-Zlatibor	1	2	2	2	2	1	1	11
RTC 3 Kopoanik	1	1	2	2	1	2	2	11
RTC 4 Central Serbia	1	2	2	1	3	1	2	12
RTCG 2:	1.5	3	2	1	2.5	1.5	2	13.5
RTC 5 Lower Ddanube	1	3	2	1	3	1	1	12
RTC 6 South Banat	2	3	2	1	2	2	3	15
RTCG 3:	2.3	1.3	3	1.7	1.3	2.7	2.7	15
RTC 7 Soko Banja	3	2	3	1	2	2	2	15
RTC 8 Eastern Serbia	1	1	3	1	1	3	3	13
RTC 9 South Eastern	3	1	3	3	1	3	3	17
RTCG 4:	2	3	1.3	1.7	2.3	1.3	1	12.6
RTC 10 Fruška Gora	1	3	1	1	2	2	1	11
RTC 11 Upper Danube	2	3	2	2	2	1	1	13
RTC 12 Northern Voj.	3	3	1	2	3	1	1	14

Prepared based on: Strategy for Sustainable Rural Tourism Development in Serbia, Master Plan for Sustainable Rural Tourism Development in Serbia, UNWTO, 2011, p. 26.

research at the area of this Roman city has been carried out since 2002 under the direction of archaeologist Miomir Korać from the Archaeological Institute. All investigated localities have been immediately presented and interpreted as a part of the Viminacium archaeological park. Efficient development of Viminacium archaeological park was supported by establishing the appropriate management arrangement. Archaeological Institute and the Mathematical Institute of Serbian academy of Arts and Sciences, Faculty of Mathematics and Faculty of Mining Geology, University of Belgrade, founded the Center for New Technologies "Viminacijum" to manage the geophysical surveys, archaeological site protection, development and promotion of tourism. This Center developed good coordination and cooperation with public services and enterprises at national, and less at local level management.

Development of the Viminacium archaeological park is environmentally, economically and socially sustainable. Environmental and economical sustainability is achieved both in cultural and archaeological tourism development and cultural heritage protection. Economic sustainability is strengthened by an investing part of tourism revenue in investigations, protection and presentation of archaeological site. Environmental sustainability is strengthened by resolving the conflicts between immovable cultural property protection and expansion of open coal mines in the buffer zone of Viminacium. Social sustainability is partly achieved by employing the local population, namely providing jobs for 20 young people at archaeological park (e.g. tourist interpreter, organization of conferences, workshops and events, guard service etc). Social and economical sustainability of local communities is going to be accomplished by development of a specific accommodation along Roman Emperors' Cultural Route in Serbia – so. Domus. The idea of this project is to employ the local inhabitants by combining the cultural and rural tourism products. In agreement with the representatives of the Italian region of Friuli Venezia Giulia, formed joint task force of experts prepared a project worth 39 million euros for the construction of 100 Domuses along the 600 km of Roman Emperors' Cultural Route in Serbia. This accommodation will be located at a distance of about 5-10 km, at a day cross on foot or by bike. All will be built in the Roman style in the form of a Roman villa, with 5-10 bedrooms and standardized services. It will provide all services for cycling. Each will employ 8-10 people. All 100 Domuses directly will employ 800-1,000 and

indirectly another 3-4,000 local inhabitants in catering and other necessary supply. It is estimated that Domuses should provide employment for a total of about 4-5,000 local inhabitants (Maksin *et al.*, 2011).

Mountain Stara planina Nature Park

The Mountain Stara planina Nature Park occupying the area of 1.143 km² is situated in the eastern part of Serbia, in the border line between the Republic of Serbia and the Republic of Bulgaria. The Nature Park is selected as IBA and IPA site and planned to be proposed for the UNESCO MaB (Man and Biosphere) program. This is an area with pronounced potentials for the development of winter and summer tourism because of which it has been prioritized as primary tourism destinations with all-year-round offer in Serbia. It is also an area containing a great number of cultural monuments of national and regional importance, as well as authentic old mountain villages, water sources of national and regional importance, etc. Diversity of rural cultural heritage, particularly the preserved examples of folk architecture and settled entities are important resource for the rural tourism development. Rural cultural heritage (tangible and intangible) may help the strengthening of Nature Park identity and identification of inhabitants and visitors with natural and cultural values of rural area, which would contribute to the preservation and sustainable utilization of cultural heritage. Although this area has potentially exceptionally attractive tourism assets in eastern Serbia, the tourism is only in the initial phase of development, and it still cannot create positive effects on socio-economic development of local communities.

The conflicts between different tourism development concepts (concentration concept – mega winter tourist resort and dispersion concept – small and medium tourist resorts and rural tourism development), and between planned mega winter tourist resort with ski infrastructure and nature heritage protection and local communities development occurred due to non compliance of spatial plan and tourism master plan. In other words, the Stara Planina Resort Area Master Plan (2007, in the sequel: Master Plan) was not elaborated in compliance with the Spatial Plan for the Special-Purpose Area of the Mountain Stara planina Nature Park (2008, further: Spatial Plan for Stara planina), nor with the protection regimes established for the entire area of Mountain Stara planina Nature Park. The Master Plan has doubled the accommodation capacity in the mountain zone compared to the total capacity envisaged by the Spatial Plan for Stara planina. Sustainability assessment of the planned Jabučko Ravnište-

Leskovac Tourist Resort proposed by the Master Plan was researched and presented in the Strategic Environmental Impact Assessment (2008), which was carried out for the Spatial Plan for Stara planina. Based on the results of evaluation carried out using the Strategic Environmental Impact Assessment (SEA) methodology, it has been concluded that, under the tourism concept of a dispersion development and construction which has been implemented in about 88% of the area, implementation of the Spatial Plan for Stara planina will have significant positive effects manifested in: the protection and improvement of the natural environment; preservation and sustainable utilization of natural and cultural heritage; overall economic effects and equitable growth in local employment (in the realm of tourism, agriculture and other complementary activities); uniform development of infrastructure and improvement in the quality and accessibility of infrastructure and public services; creation of conditions in which tourism and recreation will be accessible to all tourist, etc. In carrying out the SEA, it has been concluded that, in the smaller part of the area covered by the Spatial Plan for the Stara planina (in about 12% of the area), the implementation of tourism concentration concept with mega winter tourist resort (Jabučko Ravnište-Leskovac) will have a long-lasting unfavorable effects on the natural environment, particularly in regard to water supply, wastewater disposal, access and internal traffic, solid municipal waste elimination, the quality of life of local residents etc, which is much more difficult to control than in case of concept of disperse development which is more suitable for the protected area of the Mountain Stara planina Nature Park (Maksin-Mičić *et al.*, 2009). The SEA has provided recommendations for the reduction of originally determined capacities of Tourist resort Jabučko Ravnište (approximately 22,000 beds) to the level which would not endanger the environment (approximately 6,000 beds). The Plan of Detailed Regulation of Jabučko Ravnište (2009, in the sequel: PDR) has been designed for 6,000 beds. In carrying out the SEA for this PDR (IAUS, 2009), it has been concluded that none of the planning solutions will generate significant long-lasting unfavorable effects on the environment and local communities development that cannot be kept under control.

Problems in achieving sustainable tourism development, natural heritage protection and rural development mainly occur due to management arrangement for the Mountain Stara planina. Management arrangement includes the public sector predominantly at the national level of governance, namely the

following key stakeholders: in nature protection – Institute for Nature Conservation of Serbia and Public Enterprise "Srbijašume" (monitoring and managing protection and development of Nature Park), and in tourism development – National Corporation for Tourism Development of Serbia (managing development of the Jabučko Ravnište Tourist Resort), Public Enterprise for the development of mountain tourism "Stara planina" (managing construction of the Jabučko Ravnište Tourist Resort), and Public Enterprise "Skijališta Srbije" (managing construction and maintenance of the ski infrastructure). Efficiency and effects of the established public sector management arrangement have not been monitored at national level of governance. Local public and private sector, as well as civil society have almost no influence on the management of tourism development and nature protection at Mountain Stara planina.

Evaluation criteria for managing sustainable heritage utilization and rural tourism development

Based on two analyzed cases the following evaluation criteria for the management of sustainable heritage utilization and sustainable rural tourism development are proposed for tourism destinations:

- Planned tourism development – Adopted Spatial Plan for Special-purpose Area (SPSPA), regulation plan for tourism resort (RP) and Tourism Master Plan (TMP) for the area with protected natural and cultural heritage (or wider area).
- Compliance of the plans – compliance of TMP with the SPSPA and Strategic Environmental Impact Assessment (SEA) in respect to protection regimes, planned tourism development and local society development.
- Controlled tourism development – level of tourism development in compliance with the SPSPA and RP at the protected area of natural and cultural heritage.
- Achieved sustainability of tourism development (and rural tourism development), heritage utilization (protection, presentation and interpretation) and rural community development (employment and inclusion of local inhabitants in tourism development and heritage protection, economic and social benefits for rural communities).
- Governance support and coordination of tourism

development, heritage utilization and local community development.

Planned tourism development at area with protected natural and cultural heritage is rated according to the following criteria:

- High (1) – for the area with protected natural or cultural heritage all proposed plans are adopted (SPSPA, RP for priority tourism resort and TMP),
- Medium (2) – for the area with protected natural or cultural heritage one of the proposed plans (SPSPA, RP or TMP) is adopted, or two plans have been elaborated, but not adopted,
- Low (3) – for the area with protected natural or cultural heritage none of the proposed plans is elaborated.

Compliance of the plans, namely the Tourism Master Plan (TMP) with the Spatial Plan for Special-purpose Area (SPSPA) and the Strategic Environmental Impact Assessment (SEA) is rated according to the following criteria:

- High (1) – when TMP is elaborated and adopted in compliance with SPSPA and SEA for the spatial plan or with SEA for the master plan,
- Medium (2) - when TMP is elaborated and adopted partly in compliance with SPSPA and SEA for the spatial plan, only in respect to protection regimes,
- Low (3) – when TMP is not elaborated and adopted in compliance with SPSPA and SEA for the spatial plan.

Controlled tourism development in respect to the level of tourism development in compliance with the SPSPA and RP at the protected area of natural and cultural heritage is rated according to the following criteria:

- High (1) – when the tourism development and construction of tourism facilities is in accordance with the SPSPA and RP, based on technical documentation and Environment Impact Assessment (EIA) when proposed,
- Medium (2) - the tourism development and construction of tourism facilities is partly in accordance with the SPSPA and RP (with deviations within the limits of carrying capacity, prevailing landuse and in accordance with protection regimes proposed by the plan), based on technical documentation and Environment Impact Assessment (EIA) when proposed,
- Low (3) – the tourism development and

construction of tourism facilities is not in accordance with the SPSPA and RP.

Achieved sustainability of tourism development and heritage utilization is rated according to the following criteria:

- High (1) – achieved environmental, social and economic sustainability of tourism development, sustainable natural and cultural heritage utilization (protection, presentation and interpretation) and sustainable rural community development (employment and inclusion of local inhabitants in tourism development and heritage utilization, economic and social benefits for local community, etc),
- Medium (2) – achieved environmental and partial social and economic sustainability of tourism development, sustainable natural and cultural heritage utilization (presentation and interpretation) and partial support to rural community development (employment and inclusion of local inhabitants in tourism development),
- Low (3) – sustainability of tourism development, natural and cultural heritage utilization and rural community development has not been achieved.

Governance support for coordinated management of tourism development, heritage utilization and local community development is rated according to the following criteria:

- High (1) – coordinated tourism destination management and heritage protection management at national level of governance, with participation of local stakeholders in public and private sector, and civil society (e.g. rural households),
- Medium (2) – coordinated tourism destination management and heritage protection management at national level of governance, with partial participation of local stakeholders in public and private sector, and weak participation of civil society,
- Low (3) – uncoordinated tourism destination management and heritage protection management at any level of governance, with the weak participation of local stakeholders in all sectors.

The sustainability evaluation of heritage utilization and rural tourism development is carried out based on proposed criteria for the analyzed tourism destinations with natural and cultural heritage (Table 4). Although less planned and without any involvement of the national level of governance in destination

Table 4. Sustainability evaluation of heritage utilization and rural tourism development for tourism destinations with natural and cultural heritage in Serbia

Tourism destination with natural/ cultural heritage	1. Planned tourism development	2. Compliance of plans	3. Controlled tourism development	4. Achieved sustainability	5. Governance support	Average points
Viminacium Archaeological Park	2	2	1	2	2	1.8
Mountain Stara planina Nature Park	1	3	2	3	3	2.4

management, Viminacium tourism destination has achieved higher level of overall sustainability. This brief evaluation shows that the key problem in achieving the sustainability of tourism development, heritage utilization and local community development is the un-efficient management.

Discussion of the results

Data base for evaluation process is partial for the third criteria and insufficient for the last two of proposed criteria, as there is no established information and monitoring system on spatial and tourism development, or on heritage and environment protection in Serbia.

Detailed sustainability evaluation should be carried out based on monitoring of sustainability indicators and criteria of rural tourism development, rural community development, and natural and cultural heritage utilization. Thus would enable carrying out both quantitative and qualitative assessments.

CONCLUSION

Rural tourism combines many different aspects of experiencing, sharing and showcasing rural life and rural environment. Key aspect of rural experience is the attractiveness, presentation and interpretation, as well as accessibility of nature and culture-based assets and their sustainable utilization and protection. To evaluate the attractiveness of natural and cultural heritage at rural Serbia, and at primary tourism destinations defined by the Spatial Plan of the Republic of Serbia, the FAS methodology should be implemented. To carry out the quantitative evaluation, necessary data should be provided on tourism development of primary tourism destinations in Serbia.

Development of tourism cannot be fostered everywhere in the Serbia and at the same pace. The identification and prioritization of rural tourism clusters is based on the concentration of attractive natural and cultural heritage, as well as on other criteria – the potential of the destination throughout the year, accessibility, infrastructure, urban centers/markets proximity, hospitality supply, unemployment distribution and tourism experience. This kind of prioritization should be carried out for each primary tourism destination in Serbia, and for appropriating support of international and national funds. Validation of prioritization should be based on the expanded participation of stakeholders in public, private and civil sector.

Five evaluation criteria for the management of sustainable heritage utilization and sustainable

rural tourism development are proposed for tourism destinations – planned tourism development, compliance of the plans, controlled tourism development, achieved sustainability, and governance support. To carry out any detailed sustainability evaluation, information and monitoring system on spatial and tourism development, as well as on heritage and environment protection in Serbia should be established.

References

- Ecosign – Mountain Resort Planners Ltd. (2007) *Stara Planina Resort Area Master Plan*.
- Government of the Republic of Serbia (2008) *Spatial Plan of the Nature Park and Tourism Area of Stara planina*, http://195.250.98.80/rapp_mape/113/Plan_Stara-pl.pdf, accessed 14th Oct 2012.
- Institute of Architecture and Urban & Spatial Planning of Serbia (2008) *Izveštaj o Strateškoj proceni uticaja na životnu sredinu Prostornog plana područja posebne namene parka prirode „Stara planina“*.
- Maksin, M., Pucar, M., Milijić, S. & Korać, M. (2011) *Održivi razvoj turizma u Evropskoj uniji i Srbiji*, Belgrade: Institut of Architecture and Urban & Spatial Planning of Serbia.
- Maksin, M. (2010) Challenges, responses and partnership for achieving sustainable tourism and heritage preservation, *SPATIUM International Review*, No. 22, pp. 11-18.
- Maksin-Mičić, M., Milijić, S., Nenković-Riznić, M. (2009) Spatial and environmental planning of sustainable regional development in Serbia, *SPATIUM International Review*, No. 21, pp. 39-52.
- Municipality of Knjaževac (2009) Plan detaljne regulacije prve faze Turističkog rizorta „Jabučko Ravnište“ na Staroj planini.
- Institute of Architecture and Urban & Spatial Planning of Serbia (2009) *Izveštaj o Strateškoj proceni uticaja na životnu sredinu Plana detaljne regulacije prve faze Turističkog rizorta „Jabučko Ravnište“ na Staroj planini*.
- UN Joint Programme "Sustainable Tourism for Rural Deelopment" (2011) *Strategy for Sustainable Rural Tourism Development in Serbia. In Master Plan for Sustainable Rural Tourism Development in Serbia*. Madrid: UN WTO, http://www.turizam.merr.gov.rs/images/stories/UNWTO/Novi_fajlovi_21042011/VOLUME_II_STRATEGY_for_Sustainable_Rural_Tourism_Development_in_Serbia_190411.pdf, accessed 14th Oct 2012.
- UN Joint Programme "Sustainable Tourism for Rural Deelopment" (2011) *Diagnostic of Rural Tourism in Serbia. In: Master Plan for Sustainable Rural Tourism Development in Serbia*. Madrid: UN WTO, http://www.turizam.merr.gov.rs/images/stories/UNWTO/Novi_fajlovi_21042011/VOLUME_I_DIAGNOSTIC_of_Rural_Tourism_in_Serbia_190411.pdf, accessed 14th Oct 2012.

turizam.merr.gov.rs/images/stories/UNWTO/Novi_fajlovi_21042011/VOLUME_I_DIAGNOSTIC_of_Rural_Tourism_in_Serbia_190411.pdf, accessed 14th Oct 2012.