

TRADITIONAL SERBIAN COUNTRYSIDE AND SECOND-HOME TOURISM PERSPECTIVES

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Abstract Rural tourism offers opportunity to local communities to oppose the process of rural abandonment. This study assesses the tourism potential of two almost depopulated villages in Serbia, Gostuša (Pirrot) and Poganovo (Dimitrovgrad), and identifies their second-home tourism perspectives. They have similar geo-demographic characteristics, but different development patterns. A practical understanding of residents' perception was gained along with identifying the socio-economic indicators. A comprehensive comparison is made to identify the diversification level of the rural economy in these villages. The study also assesses the rural capital and concludes that it is not realistic to expect fast and sustainable tourism development in these peripheral rural areas. Finally, the study extracts the factors of influence and predicts trends of the diversification process and second-home tourism expansion in rural areas of Balkan Mt.

Key words: rural tourism, second-home tourism, traditional villages, evaluation

Сажетак: Рурални туризам, нуди локалним заједницама могућност супротстављања процесу напуштања села. Ова студија врши процену туристичких потенцијала два готово напуштена села у Србији, Гостуше (Пирот) и Поганова (Димитровград), и идентификује перспективе развоја викенд туризма кроз експанзију секундарних домова. Ова села имају сличне географске и демографске карактеристике, али различите развојне праксе. Практично разумевање перцепција становништва је вршено упоредо са идентификацијом социо-економских индикатора од утицаја на туристички развој. Компарација је извршена са циљем да се идентификује ниво диверзификације руралне економије ових села. Студија такође укључује оцену руралног капитала, на основу чега се закључује да се не може очекивати брзи и одрживи туристички развој овог периферног руралног простора. Коначно, издвојени су фактори који утичу и предвиђају тренд диверзификације и експанзије викенд туризма на руралним просторима Старе планине.

Кључне речи: рурални туризам, викенд насеља, традиционална села, оцена стања

1. Introduction

Majority of European population live in urban areas, while rural areas in Europe experience long-lasting depopulation trend (Kotzeva & Brandmüller, 2016). In this regard, "second home" is becoming a dominant real-estate type in 'empty' villages of Europe. Economic collapse and global changes lead to a situation where many rural areas are coping with existential problems. So, the rural economy in most European countries faced the need to find productive alternatives in fighting low production and incomes, abandonment, and ecological contamination. The economy transformation brought structural changes in agricultural production, higher unemployment and poverty levels, leading to extreme levels of emigration of the youngest, the most active and educated reproductive groups, and therefore eroded the vitality of villages and rural communities (Petrevska & Terzić, 2020). Rural communities in peripheral rural areas, therefore, face many challenges.

Less than 50% of farms in European union earn majority of their income from farm production, while 35–75% comes from off-farm jobs (Sznajder et al., 2009). Diversification is generally recognized as a strategy for decreasing livelihood vulnerability, representing a process by which rural households construct an increasingly diverse portfolio of activities and assets in order to survive or improve their livelihoods (Elis, 2000; Niehof, 2004). In those areas where traditional primary production, such as farming and fishing, is in decline, the existence of local resources, heritage and culture provide the possibility for tourism development that can contribute to job creation and rise of the living standard of small rural communities (Fleisher & Falsenstien, 2000;

MacDonald & Jolliffe, 2003). However, developing tourism in rural areas is still generally related to the resilience strategy of a single household, focusing on the factors that create the ability of the farm to respond to the change. Most farm-tourism businesses are family businesses on small farms, whose decisions depend on the family life-cycle concept, which can generate supplementary income to retain family farmland (Potočnik-Slavič & Smitz, 2013).

Rural tourism is particularly attractive to European travelers seeking authentic, unique experiences and local lifestyles, natural and preserved landscapes, local traditions and gastronomy. Since the number of tourists attracted to rural areas is constantly growing, rural areas can be severely threatened (Hall, 2004). Instead of highly uniformed and fabricated “rural tourism product”, the demand growth is directed towards seeking authenticity and originality of rural destinations. Therefore, the traditional countryside is changing fast, physically and psychologically, adapting to urban-vision and demands, thus evidencing a fast-cultural change in rural areas. Specific rural amenities become highly valued in terms of achieving better living conditions (Deller, 2010; McGranahan et al., 2011; Josipović, 2018), and becoming attractive for elders, pensioners and returnees. A large proportion of rural stays, on the other hand, generate low expenditure on accommodation, as visitors staying in rented accommodation are in the minority (about 10%). So, the main purpose of stay in rural areas tends to be a visit to family and friends, or a stay at second homes (Bel et al., 2015).

Developing tourism, particularly in small traditional villages, is a new economic opportunity for local communities, opposing the ongoing rural abandonment. Such a process is also evident in peripheral high-mountain villages in South-east Serbia, where the trend of the seasonal revitalization of villages through second-home tourism is appearing as of 2002. The study aims to assess tourism potential and second-home tourism perspectives, by examining villages in Balkan Mt. area, with a focus set on two almost depopulated villages. In this manner, it identifies the diversification level of the rural economy, extracts significant factors of influence of tourism development and assesses the rural capital. It highlights that it is not realistic to expect fast and sustainable tourism development of traditional Serbian countryside, despite its great potential.

2. Literature review

2.1 Rural vs Cultural tourism: Parallels and Paradigms

Recently, a focus has been put on the high tourism consumption patterns with extreme growth of “special interest tourism” (SIT), reflecting the continuously increasing diversity of leisure interests of the late-modern leisure society (Douglas et al., 2001; Trauer, 2006) and suggesting non-commercialized individual travel. Various authors explain the emergence of SIT by a desire for achieving a greater level of quality of life and escape contemporary urban life as traditionally major push factors for travel (Trauer, 2006). This led to the creation of various tourism typologies in various SIT segments, like cultural tourism, educational tourism, cycle tourism, wine tourism, event tourism, sports tourism, adventure tourism, senior tourism, eco-tourism, rural tourism, agri-tourism, etc.

Cultural tourism refers to the tourist's engagement with a country, region or local culture, more specifically the lifestyles, history, art, architecture, religion, customs, traditions, gastronomy and other elements that shape the way of living in a specific geographical area. It includes tourism in urban areas with a high concentration of cultural sites, monuments and facilities, but it also includes tourism in rural areas as places of old traditions, social practices, and festivities. Rural tourism focuses on active participation in a rural lifestyle, an exploration of the indigenous population and their respective culture and traditions, often closely connected to nature and environment (Mohnacki, 2017). Cultural tourism is expected to continue its growth in the future, increasing diversity of cultural demand and supply, shifting towards intangible heritage and “soft cultural infrastructure”, refocusing from urban to rural areas, from “high culture” to “living culture” (Richards, 2018). Moreover, cultural experiences and interaction with locals are becoming increasingly popular, as tourists increasingly want to “live like a local” which became the new touchstone of experiencing the authenticity of destination (Richards, 2018).

The rural tourism's wider conceptualization suggests that it may be more commonly accepted as any form of tourism in a rural area, placing a focus on activities that contrast with the 'pure' product (Sharpley & Roberts, 2004) of agri-tourism or farm-tourism. Therefore, rural tourism is overlapping with many other forms of tourism, like nature and eco-tourism, adventure and recreation tourism, cultural tourism, community-based tourism, sustainable tourism, etc. By including nature-based and culture-based elements and variety of possible activities and experiences: animal observation, cycling and walking trails, horse riding, participation in cooking, handicrafts and social events, etc., rural tourism appears in multi-dimensional and multi-functional rural space.

According to Eurostat, the number of accommodation establishments in rural areas within the European Union (EU-28 countries) make about 5.4% share in a total number of such establishments, evidencing stable but slow average annual growth of 1.1% (2012–2018) (Eurostat, 2019). However, nights spent in tourist accommodation establishments in rural areas of the EU-28 in the period 2012–2015 were increased by 12%, with roughly 15% of the total accommodation capacity of Europe represented by tourism establishments in rural areas (Ana, 2017). All EU countries show a significant increase in terms of nights spent at rural tourism accommodation establishments, indicating an ascendant trend and growing interest in this form of tourism (Ana, 2017). About 90% of rural tourism is considered domestic, with national or regional scopes; and domestic tourism is the dominant form of tourism in Europe, with about 67.2% share in total travels. As rural tourism is primarily focused on domestic travels, including visits to friends and relatives, it is characterized by low spending and lack of activities undertaken by visitors to rural areas, who are often happy just to relax and enjoy their surroundings (Bel et al., 2015).

2.2 Second Home Tourism

Second home tourism is considered a symptom of the declining traditional countryside (Müller, 2004), and it seems to be an important activity or solution for areas faced with the ongoing abandonment process. In this line, the second home ownership may be a part of strong traditions of leisure lifestyles in some countries, while in other, less-developed countries, second homes are usually inherited and may continue to be used either as holiday homes or to retain family relationships (Helderman et al., 2004; Borge, 2007; Hall, 2014). Second-homes are reflected in short or long-term migration patterns and practicing of rural lifestyles, while the primary use of the second home is leisure and recreation-oriented, but may also be related to potential retirement planning and long-term migration of urban population (Wong & Musa, 2014), or can be put to tourist use and become available for short-term holiday accommodation (Bieger et al., 2007; Hall, 2014). Second-home visitation constitutes an important component of domestic tourism, which in many regions forms the basic economic activity (Jaakson, 1986). Nevertheless, second homes often represent converted former permanent rural housing and can be found in virtually all locations (Tombaugh, 1970; Müller, 2004).

Hence, the second-home ownership can be treated differently: as a potential for rural development as a 'residential vacancy' (Küpper, 2016), a significant basis for tourism development (Hall, 2014), but in some depopulated and undeveloped regions as an indicator for shrinking a rural area (Jevtić & Gulan, 2008), or a tool for combating abandonment of rural areas, even if it is strictly seasonal (Cartwright & Drobnjaković, 2014). There are many opportunities to integrate second homes in the tourism planning process, as they are usually highly concentrated in rural areas with high ambiance values. Therefore, for many rural communities that suffered the extreme loss of local population, second-homes may serve as a significant economic contributor, where other development alternatives are lacking (Hall, 2014). There are also potential risks: a large influx of temporary population or development of second homes have severe impact on the existing infrastructure and natural environment; significant influence on the economic and social base of communities as a result of 'different' consumptive practices; extreme expansion of second homes in attractive rural ambiance can contribute to the development of *elite landscapes*; by adding some pressures on the housing market, it can lead to specific conflicts between "permanent" and "temporary" residents and contribute to community displacement (Halseth, 1998; Hall & Müller, 2004; Hall, 2014).

3. Background material

3.1 Rural tourism in Serbia: Facts and Figures

According to statistical outlook, the spatial distribution of tourism in Serbia is unequal, since 34.5% of all tourist arrivals in 2018 is concentrated in Šumadija and Western Serbia region, and 33.8% in the Belgrade region, while the South and Eastern Serbia region has a modest share of 15.9%. However, the largest growth levels are registered in the South and Eastern Serbia region with over 17% annual growth rate in tourist arrivals in the last two years (Table 1).

Moreover, rural tourism development is dominant in the western and central parts of the country (Petrović et al., 2015). According to the Strategy of the development of tourism, four rural tourist clusters (spatial units) in Serbia have been recognized, one of which is Eastern Serbia. Within Eastern Serbia rural cluster, the greatest tourism potentials have been predicted within the area of Balkan Mt. (Serbian part, known as Stara Planina), as a prosperous mountain and ski-center in a development phase.

Tab 1. Tourist arrivals in Serbia, spatial distribution and growth rates (%). Source: Statistical yearbook of the Republic of Serbia, 2019

Year	SERBIA		Belgrade		Vojvodina		Šumadija and Western Serbia		South and East Serbia
	Tourists	Growth	Share	Growth	Share	Growth	Share	Growth	Share
2014	2,192,268	-0.01	34.38	4.84	16.95	7.02	33.64	-6.83	15.03
2015	2,437,165	11.17	33.14	7.17	16.96	11.26	35.06	15.86	14.84
2016	2,753,591	12.98	33.16	13.07	16.21	8.02	36.19	16.63	14.43
2017	3,085,866	12.07	33.55	13.37	16.09	11.23	35.20	9.01	15.16
2018	3,430,522	11.17	33.83	12.11	15.70	8.43	34.52	9.01	15.96
Total		56.48		53.98		44.95		60.55	

Rural development in Serbia is still dominantly related to agricultural production, while its sustainable development depends on the practical implementation of the concept of multifunctional agriculture and integral approach to a general improvement of rural well-being, and improvement of the socio-economic position of villages and rural communities (Đorđević-Milošević, 2008). Due to the variety of the geo-morphological pattern, the demographic and economic trends, accessibility, infrastructure, and social elements, rural areas in Serbia are very heterogeneous and undergoing different phases of transformation from traditional to modern cognition. They are still strongly shaped by agriculture, with a small, but increasingly influenced by other activities, such as tourism.

So far, rural tourism development is supported by about 32,000 registered beds in rural areas, out of which just 10,000 in the villages (mostly private rooms). On the other side, there are large seasonal variations causing extremely small occupancy rates. So, in rural establishments in Serbia, the hotel establishments have about 4% occupancy rate, and 21% in other accommodation types (Đorđević-Milošević & Milovanović, 2012). In 2018, there was a total of 616 registered rooms in rural tourist households⁴ in Serbia (23 in spas, 155 in mountain resorts, 438 in other tourist resorts), with a total capacity of 1,680 beds. In such accommodation facilities, a total of 15039 tourists stayed (6.6% foreign tourists) (Statistical yearbook of the Republic of Serbia, 2019). Furthermore, it is noted that domestic tourists make over 90% of rural visitors, with encouraging predictions that the rural tourism segment in Serbia will further attract about 15% share of foreign tourists.

⁴ Rural tourist household is a building or group of buildings used for accommodation and/or food and beverage services, located in rural area, incorporating elements of local tradition and heritage (Official Gazzette of Republic of Serbia, 103/2010).

3.2 Living in Peripheral Serbian Countryside

There is a total of 4,721 settlements in Serbia, of which 4,542 are non-urban (Census data of the Republic of Serbia, 2011), therefore, over 96.2% of Serbian settlements were considered rural, absorbing 40.43% of the Serbian population. In line with the European normative based on the population density, with a threshold of 150 inhabitants per square km as an indicator for determination of rural areas (OECD, 1997), about 93% of Serbian territory, on settlement level, can be considered as rural (Drobnjaković, 2019: 45). Hence, the region of South and East Serbia is officially categorized as a predominantly mountain region oriented towards natural resource exploitation, with low demographic capacities and poor economic status (GRS, 2011). Due to the demographic erosion of rural areas and fragmented settlement networks, there are evidence of demographic shrinking of the rural, especially hilly-mountainous regions (Drobnjaković, 2019). So, there are many identified rural areas that suffer extreme depopulation process, with less than 20 inhabitants/km² (Drobnjaković & Spalević, 2017). This is particularly the case of Balkan Mt. (Stara Planina). In these peripheral rural areas, many negative processes are present, like intensive out-migration, unfavorable demographic structure, aging, repressive economy, low labor market, poor infrastructure, etc. (Drobnjaković, 2019). Rural economy and social policy in rural areas were marginalized for the long-term, influencing the quality of living in rural areas, which is nowadays considered extremely unfavorable. A very small number of rural settlements in peripheral areas of Serbia have a good communal and social infrastructure. Higher quality of the traffic infrastructure and better accessibility to public amenities and services are met solely in settlements that practice tourism and were former municipal centers. Other villages are completely dependent on local initiatives and the financial capacities of rural communities (Drobnjaković, 2019).

4. Case study: Gostuša and Poganovo (Serbia)

Gostuša and Poganovo are located in peripheral, remote area, relying on valuable natural resources, characterized by authentic rural ambiance and cultural amenities. The villages are spatially close and related to the same tourist macro-destination of Balkan Mt.⁵ (Serbian part) and its outskirts. They have similar population structure and economic processes, and domination of seasonal-homes in total housing (over 80%).

Gostuša village (Pirot municipality), popularly known as a "Stone village" (Figures 1–3), is situated on the south-eastern slopes of Balkan Mt., in the valley of Gostuša river and the protected area of Natural Park (about 28 km north-east from Pirot), close to the Zavoj lake. The dominant occupation of villagers is animal husbandry, particularly sheep breeding, milk and cheese production, as well as the production of wool and knitted products. Since 1963 and the formation of Zavoj lake (7 km from the village), Gostuša was highly isolated. In 2013, a research study for the preservation of Gostuša as the cultural heritage of Serbia was conducted and in 2016 awarded Grand Prix by *Europa Nostra* (Manić, 2017). This resulted in placing the whole village area and surroundings under the protection status since 2013 (open-air museum) due to its traditional ambiance and architectural settings of specific massive stone tile roofs, considered as unique and original. The complex has 246 objects in total, of which 169 are households (42 totally and partially destroyed).

⁵ Balkan Mt. is on the list of internationally important bird areas (IBA), important plant areas (IPA), primary butterfly areas (PBA), priority habitats of the Ramsar convention (peat bogs), Emerald list, the list of protected border areas within the GREEN BELT (IUCN) programme and the Pro geo list (geological treasures of Europe) (Stankov, et al., 2011).



Fig 1–3. Scenes from Gostuša. Photos by A. Terzić, May 2019

Currently, only 25 households have permanent residents, while 53 are seasonal households used as second-homes (17 for seasonal stay, and others during weekends and holidays) (Vasić Petrović, 2016). Upon state-supported investments, several households were renovated and adapted as tourist accommodation facilities (apartment "Božana" 5 beds/**, house of Gordana Tošić 6 beds/*, and the House Petrović 5 beds/*). Yet, the biggest problem of the village is the poor infrastructure (no telephone/internet connection, bad road, collapsing houses, lack of medical service, no shop, no gas-station, etc). Also, the community role in the decision-making process is lacking, as development is planned based on the top-bottom system (Terzić et al., 2015).

Poganovo village (Dimitrovgrad municipality) (Figures 4–6) is situated at the valley of the Jerma river and the natural setting of Jerma canyon. It is about 27 km from Dimitrovgrad and Pirot (about 10 km from high-way Niš-Sofija, 80 km from Sofija and 350 km from Belgrade). Until 1927, it was an isolated area. The village is mostly known by the monastery of St. John the Divine from the 14th century, with a status of the cultural monument as of 1949, and cultural monument of great national importance since 1979 (Manić, 2017). In the 1950s, the village was the municipal center with over 1,000 inhabitants and many amenities (Jovanović, 2018). Today, the village has only 31 residents.

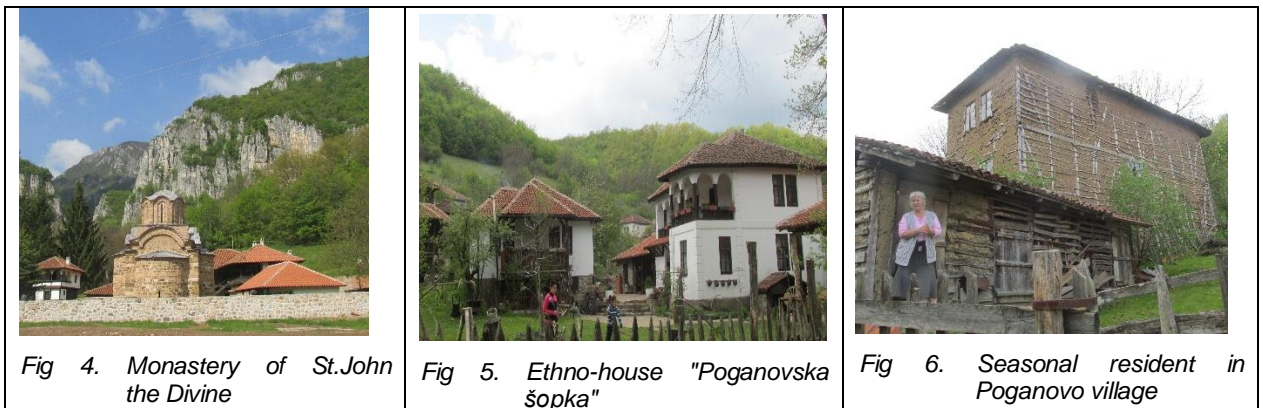


Fig 4–6. Scenes from Poganovo. Photos by A. Terzić, May 2019

Tourism development in Poganovo started since 2011, and several second-homes were transformed to rural tourist households (Ethno-house Poganovska šopka, house Dunderovi, Tošin konak, house Stanojević, house Manov, households Boškov and Georgijev). Tourism based activities were settled by the entrepreneurship of the non-locals and returnees, mostly second-home owners.

5. Methodology

The aim of the research is three-folded: (i) To assess tourism development potential of traditional, almost abandoned villages; (ii) To identify second-home role in tourism development of rural areas; (iii) To identify factors influencing rural diversification process in peripheral areas. The focus is set on two villages with similar geographical, historical and demographic characteristics, but with different development patterns: Gostuša (Fig. 1–3) and Poganovo (Fig. 4–6).

To fulfill the main aims, the study is based on mixed research methods by incorporating qualitative and quantitative data that were proceeded in three stages. It included examining socio-economic indicators that affect the process of rural economy diversification (introducing tourism activities in rural areas). It is argued that personal preferences and attitudes of the farm holder, as well as various socioeconomic factors such as household composition, age, educational level, and social capital, which determine how rural diversification is applied and if individual farm activities are adapted (Meert et al., 2005; Dalgaard et al., 2007; Jongeneel et al., 2008; Lange et al., 2013).

In the first stage, a scholarship approach included an extensive literature review generally on rural tourism, second-home tourism, rural capital, and diversification. Besides the overall academic knowledge, the authors used the data gathered from year-long research of abandoned rural areas in Eastern Serbia. This included on-site evaluation from extensive field research conducted during May–June 2019. Gostuša and Poganovo are sampled as villages located in the macro-destination within Balkan Mt. A total of 20 interviews were conducted, 10 in each village, with a conversation time ranging from 15–20 minutes. The target group consisted of an equal number of permanent and seasonal residents in each village. The main aim was to gain practical understanding of differences and similarities, opinions and attitudes of locals on tourism development. The interviews were conducted in an informal manner, using semi-structured questions allowing the respondents to talk freely with minimal intervention. For this purpose, an interview protocol was prepared with the following list of questions: How many people constantly live in the village, and how many seasonal residents? What do people generally do for a living? How do they perceive the overall economic situation? Is tourism development seen as a prosperous activity for the village? Does it bring some investments? How many tourists usually come annually? How does it affect the living standard of residents? Do people start returning to the village and invest in the revitalization of their households? Have you noticed any negative tourism impacts? The protocol served as a guiding framework in the interviewing procedure, during which, full notes were taken for later summarization of responses describing residents' perception towards diversification level. Furthermore, this stage encompasses an assessment of diversification levels in terms of socio-economic indicators. The main aim was to examine in more detail the factors affecting the diversification of the rural economy.

In the second stage, the researchers extracted the factors of significant influence on the general tourism development in peripheral rural areas, concerning basic preconditions and predicting trends in the expansion of tourism and second-homes as interrelated phenomena. This is done by testing the Pearson's correlation coefficient and a linear regression model for 23 sampled villages evaluated in the year-long research conducted during May–June 2019. The following hypotheses were outlined in line that rural diversification, and, therefore, tourism development in rural areas, is directly affected by second-home expansion, and vice versa:

H1: Diversification of the rural economy in remote rural areas is based mostly on tourism development.

H2: Shrinking rural area is a good base for tourism development expressed through the expansion of second-home houses in rural areas.

The final, third, stage comprised of assessing rural capital and sustainability level. The method of rural capital evaluation (Bogdanov & Janković, 2013; Trukhachev, 2015) was used. All indicators were evaluated using the Linkert scale (1–5). The quantitative data were adapted to

scale marks according to the percentages, while qualitative data were scaled based on objective observation based on the field-work.

6. Findings and discussion

6.1 Diversification Level: Residents' Perception

The perception of locals (permanent and seasonal residents) in Gostuša and Poganovo is assessed by 20 informal interviews. Some samples of summarized and compiled sentences of the interviewees are presented also to describe residents' attitudes towards the diversification level in the sampled villages. Sentences, rather than single keywords, are used since the actual wording resulted in varied terminology.

It was found that Gostuša village received great media attention and brought tourists to this secluded village. Still, tourism is mostly based on occasional visits of individuals and groups with short-term stay, with no possibility for tourism expenditure. Also, the protection status seems to have brought more harm than good to the local community. Namely, locals are prevented in repairing their households, since are being considered to disturb the authenticity of the village. Tourists are also demanding changes for comfort and basic facilities, which seems to be impossible without continuous government support.

The following presents a sample of the quoted sentences by selected respondents that describe residents' perception.

Interviewee 1 (Gostuša, permanent resident, female, 65 years): *"About 60 people live permanently, and about the same number of seasonal residents. We are traditionally herdsmen, mostly taking care of sheep, but few younger people work in the construction industry in Pirot. I live alone, have a small pension, and take care of a donkey, three sheep, and some chickens. We are extremely poor, mostly relying on social aid and pension (less than 80 EUR per month). We cannot even afford to maintain our households, and the stone roofs are falling. Even worse, we are not allowed to fix anything as the village is declared as a cultural heritage. Maybe the village is interesting and valuable, but it is collapsing."*

Interviewee 2 (Gostuša, seasonal resident, male, 60 years): *"We use this house during spring and summer. We are here almost every weekend. My wife and I are from this village. We have everything here, water, electricity, doctor visits us once a week and a priest once a month. The only things that we need are network (mobile and internet), a grocery shop and a better road. There is not much to do in the village. All we can offer is our hospitality, a cup of coffee and a modest meal (for free). There is also good goat milk and cheese that is sold by our neighbor, but we must ask. There is no restaurant or shop here. Four houses offer some rooms for tourists. They were reconstructed by municipal subventions for starting-up tourism business."*

Poganovo village is gradually becoming a popular transit destination mostly due to its closeness to the highway Sofija-Niš and towards Bulgaria, Eastern Greece and Turkey. Due to the declaration of Special nature reserve, Jerma in 2014, and the attractiveness of monasteries in Sukovo and Poganovo, tourist visitation of the area has considerably improved. Overall, the locals positively perceive the improvement of transport and infrastructure. Many locals originating from the village are temporarily returning, generally during May – October. Some quoted sentences of selected respondents are additionally presented.

Interviewee 3 & 4 (Poganovo, permanent residents, female 55 years & male 62 years): *"About 30 people live here, all elders. In the summertime, over 100 people live here. We have lived in Belgrade and recently returned here"*. Interviewee 4 (the husband): *"Our house is one of the oldest in the village. We also bought the house next door and started the renovation. We are planning to buy one more soon. We are not planning to do tourism, but there is an obvious perspective. We may offer some food products, but not expecting much from it. There are already a few houses offering rooms for tourists, which is enough. Owners of those tourist households are not from the village. They inherited or bought these houses for about 2,000 EUR. The village is nice, but there is not much to see or do here"*.

Interviewee 5 (Poganovo, seasonal resident, male 66 years, owner of “Poganovska Šopka”, from Belgrade): *“We bought this house in 2012. It was abandoned and in poor condition. I didn’t plan to do a tourism business. I am a hunter, and it was my escape house. But with free rooms, we realized it was a good idea. We have guests all the time. My grand-children are here the whole summer. I hope this will become a family business, and that eventually, we will permanently move here. I am planning to buy a nearby house and expand the business”*.

Although permanent residents of these traditional villages perceive a perspective of tourism development in their village, they are unable to strongly engage in it, but rather sees it only as a possibility to sell some agricultural products to tourism-oriented households. So, slowly, seasonal residents suppress the locals mainly due to their higher living standards. This is perceived more as a psychological than an economical factor, where the perception of seasonal and permanent residents differs in terms of place attachment. Seasonal residents who originate from the village, highly appreciate the social dimension (Gostuša village). Others are generally led by the natural ambiance (Poganovo village), either economically focused.

6.2 Diversification level: socio-economic indicators

With regards to the factors indicating the diversification of the rural economy and the process of introducing tourism along with an expansion of second-home tourism, a comparison is made of several socio-economic indicators for Gostuša and Poganovo (Table 2). Both villages have very similar geographical characteristics and experienced extreme levels of depopulation. Hence, demographically, these villages are ‘dying out’, as census data indicate that since 1948, they lost about 95% of their population, and since 1981, the loss is over 50% (Table 2). Taking into consideration recent data collected on-site, the decline is even more evident. The decline pick was registered in 1981, which can be explained with growing interest for a job offered in the industry in regional labor centers. Age and gender structure were deteriorated, so depopulation of these villages was an expected process. However, the process is characterized by a fast transformation from residential to seasonal villages.

Based on data in Table 2, one may see the comparison between Gostuša and Poganovo in terms of the economic status of its residents in 2002. In Gostuša, 87.1% of the population (47.5% employed, 39.6% retired) had stable incomes, while only 12.9% were economically dependent (83% women). Similarly, but less favorable was in Poganovo where 79.2% of the residents had incomes (14.3% employed and 64.9% retired) and 20.8% were economically dependent (81% women).

Yet, the migration characteristics of the population differ significantly. Gostuša seems to be inhabited only by the autochthonic population, while the origin of the population of Poganovo is mixed. In Poganovo, half of the population is autochthonic and the other half are immigrants (22.1% moved from other settlements from the same municipality, 28.6% moved from other municipalities in Serbia) (Population Census, 2002; 2011; Field research, 2019). This indicates the greater attractiveness of Poganovo as a residential place, particularly when planning retirement. Unlike Poganovo, Gostuša remains strictly oriented towards the autochthonic population, and seasonal-homes are formed based on direct origin and family inheritance.

Tab 2. Socio-economic indicators of significance for diversification in Gostuša and Poganovo. Source: Statistical office of the Republic of Serbia, Population Census, 2002, 2011

Village	Gostuša		Poganovo	
	2002	2011	2002	2011
Indicators				
Population size	139	70	77	31
Population change (1981/2011)	-	-50.4		-51.9
Population Density	-	1.5		1.9
Share of elders, 65+ (%)	45.3	50	81.8	54.8
Single member households (%)	22	40	52.1	73.7
Activity level (%)	47.5	71.4	14.29	42.9
Economic Dependency Ratio		1.8		12.5
Diversification Level (industry and service sector share)	10.3	0	1.1	50
Daily migrants share (%)	-	100	-	33.3
Population with secondary education (%)	12.5*	0	10.1*	29.03
Share of university educated people (%)	1.3*	0	0.7*	6.45
Village size/capacity (number of dwellings)	112	224	181	184
Permanently inhabited dwellings(%)	52.7	17.9	26.5	10.3
Abandoned dwellings (%)	24.2	1	17.1	-
Temporarily unoccupied dwellings (%)	0.7	0.1	1.1	-
Other dwellings (used for business)	0	0	0	0
Second homes (vacation homes and seasonal agriculture) (%)	22.4	81	55.6	89.7
Vacation homes (used for leisure and recreation exclusively) (%)	1.8	42	51.38	75

* Educational level given represents the average for agricultural and mixed type of households on municipal level.

As one may notice, there is a great difference in the number of dwellings evidenced in Gostuša village between two censuses⁶. The number of dwellings doubled. This is likely the consequence of expansion and separation of the existing dwellings in two or more separate housing units, while there is negligible number of newly built units (supported by field research findings). Having in mind that many dwellings in Gostuša were owned by multiple families (traditionally families had 5 or more children), separation occurred due to standard inheritance system. This is supported with the fact that greatest expansion of housing units and their average size in Gostuša was evident in the case of dwellings used as second homes (25 units with total 856m² in 2002 to 181 units with total 9080m² in 2011, while the number of permanently inhabited dwellings decreased from 59 to 40 units (Population Census: Dwellings, 2002, 2011). Furthermore, as of Table 2, it may be concluded that an expansion of second-homes in both villages occurred since 2002. Particularly, this happened due to the transformation of the permanently inhabited and abandoned dwellings. Also, the transformation of a dominant type of the use of second-homes occurred in favor of leisure and recreation-homes. This is particularly obvious in the case of Gostuša where these second-homes are traditionally used for seasonal agricultural activity.

⁶ The definitions of housing units have remained unchanged between censuses conducted so far. Dwelling is an interconnected construction intended for habitation, consisting of one or several rooms with or without appropriate auxiliary premises. The definition was not digressed from if one was used by two or more households, unless the dwelling had been turned (adapted) into two or more dwellings (Population Census, 2011: Dwelling according to the ownership and tenure status of households, 2013, p. 10).

6.3 Rural Capital Assessment

McGranahan et al. (2011) argued that rural capital is not based only on natural resources, but also on built capacities that allow different recreation activities in rural areas (Josipović, 2018). Figure 7 visually presents the rural capital evaluation of Gostuša and Poganovo. It assesses several indicators:

- Human capital – personal abilities/skills and entrepreneurial potential;
- Economic capital – the extent and quality of resources and sources of income;
- Cultural capital;
- Environmental capital; and
- Social capital – community organizational capacities.

Based on Figure 7, it is evident that both villages have the unfavorable socio-economic condition, caused mostly by deteriorated population structure and lack of economic opportunity. Yet, the environmental and cultural capitals are valuable, while physical capital (infrastructure, public amenities, and services) oscillate. Tourism supply and demand are relatively stable, having in mind that tourism-related activities started since 2010, and are developing ever since.

Both villages are highly dependent on the natural and cultural heritage in terms of defining their future perspectives, but in different manner. Gostuša village received protection status that includes the whole village as traditional cultural ambiance, while Poganovo village's development is relying on high attractiveness of the monastery complex as heritage site of great national importance.

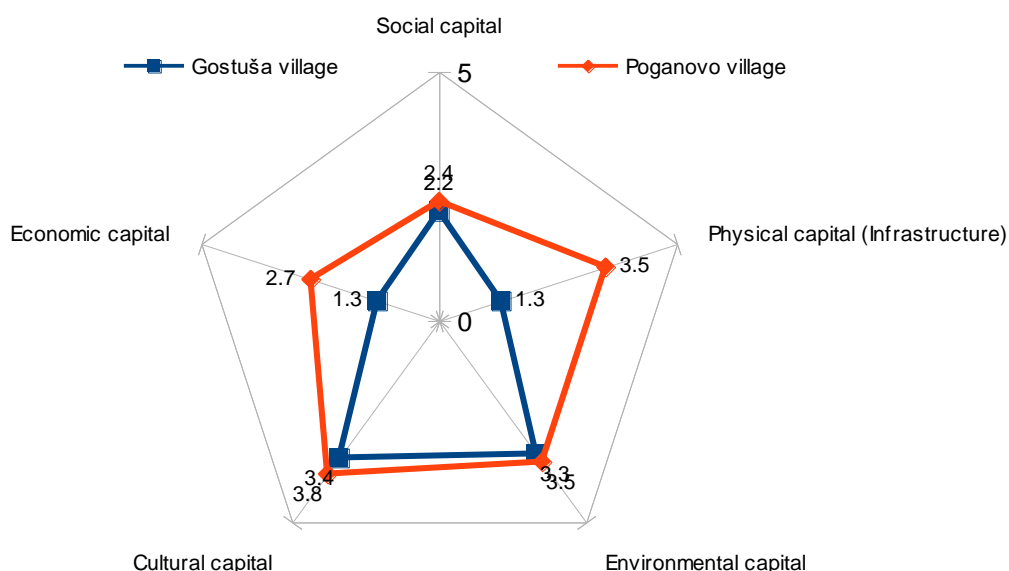


Fig 7. Assessment of rural capital, comparison of Gostuša and Poganovo (Serbia). Source: Author's calculations

Gostuša as a sample shows that the proclamation of the whole village for a heritage site may cause some difficulties for local communities. With limited social and economic resources and poor physical state, additional pressures of keeping the authenticity of the village are directed to local communities, which are already coping with their bare existence. The proclamation, followed by standard conservation procedures and legal demands, with increased media and tourist interest in relatively short time, caused confusion and inability of locals to adapt to the new situation. Therefore, despite feelings of pride and initial enthusiasm, it also causes certain displeasure and a feeling of general incompetence among locals. Therefore, future development is fully oriented towards governmentally directed activities (top-bottom). On the other hand, Poganovo is relying on a nearby cultural site (monastery Poganovo), and

therefore has no legal constraints in terms of reconstruction, visual image, expansion nor use of rural households, even though there are some recommendations which are generally followed. Also, in general, the physical state of houses in this village, as well as general infrastructure, is in a much better state compared to Gostuša. Higher educational level and entrepreneurship potentials, especially among second-home owners allow greater possibilities for rural diversification and faster tourism development process (bottom-up) but with great danger of eventually suppressing autochthonic population.

However, the overall assessment of the rural capital is that Poganovo, particularly in terms of tourism development potential, has a better position. It has a higher level of physical capital compared to Gostuša, implying possible directions of capital empowerment and investments. Yet, the second-home owners may benefit from government grants for modernizing rural housing which is only for locals (Gallent & Twedwr-Jones, 2000), and to transform traditional countryside to a seasonally elite landscape. This tends to be observed in the case of Poganovo. On the other hand, Flognfeldt (2002) discusses that in some cases, these “second-home owners” can be perceived as “local patriots” who may attract additional businesses. These results confirm that second-home based tourism may be a significant source of income and a rural development pattern.

Concerning the sustainability levels, both villages are perceived to have generally low level of achieved sustainability, mostly due to social-economic aspects. Moreover, the destination resources are already seriously endangered in Gostuša, and the autochthonic population in Poganovo is being slowly suppressed by seasonal residents. Due to a severe decline in the number of permanent residents and the rise of seasonal residents and second-homes, both villages are endangered to become “seasonal villages”.

Similar developmental patterns were observed in many other villages in the whole region (Balkan Mt. Area), on both borders. Therefore, the outlining factors related to the diversification level and seasonal homes are considered important in the determination of future development potentials of these peripheral rural areas.

6.4 Factors Influencing Rural Diversification Process

The research was widened, due to the existence of great differences in second-home expansion and diversification level between villages in this region. It included 23 villages in Balkan Mt. area with similar characteristics, allowing extraction of factors of significant influence on rural diversification (Table 3). Pearson's correlation showed that the level of diversification is in direct positive relation with several factors: share of single-member households, a higher level of education, and share of second-homes used for vacation and leisure purposes. On the other hand, it is negatively correlated to the share of the active population and daily migrants. It is found that the level of diversification is negatively correlated to the activity level of residents. This means that the greater the level of the economically active population and daily migrants, the diversification level decreases, and agriculture is dominant (even “the only”) economic activity for locals. A high share of the elderly affects the process of “senilization” (Horvat, 1976), as elders may still be engaged in agriculture. Furthermore, daily circulation is on low level, being again caused by high share of elderly. This indicator represents a level of economic stability of the settlement (Grčić, 1990), where a more mobile population implies fewer opportunities for local development.

The share of second-homes is also directly related to various socio-demographic factors. This provokes that the greatest number of existing housing units in these villages is used seasonally, mostly for leisure and recreation (on average 38.6% of total housing). Further, the share of second-homes (regarding dominance of seasonal population) is positively correlated with the single-member household share ($r=.642$, $p<0.01$), and negatively correlated to the population size ($r=-.512$, $p<0.05$), population change ($r=-.535$, $p<0.01$), population density ($r=-.497$, $p<0.05$), activity level ($r=-.691$, $p<0.01$), and logically, to other types of housing use (permanently occupied – $r=-.668$, $p<0.01$; temporarily unoccupied $r=-.619$, $p<0.01$; and abandoned dwellings $r=-.736$, $p<0.01$). The share of second-homes is most obviously increased by the share of single-member households. The on-site research revealed that a great number

of single elders decided to move and live with their children (out of the village). This directly influences the change of use towards seasonal use (inheriting or selling). The share of the active population and daily mobility also decreases the share of second-homes, in a two-fold manner: firstly, in favor of residential functionality of the village, and secondly, to permanent abandonment.

Tab 3. Diversification of rural economy (tourism-related) – Pearson correlation. Source: Author's calculations

N=23	Mean	Std. Deviation	Pearson Correlation	Sig. (1-tailed)
Diversification Level (industry and service sector - %)	12.59	29.7	1	.
Population size	93.35	67.84	-0.23	0.29
Population change (%)	-38.65	7.42	0.22	0.92
Population Density	4.76	4.08	-0.13	0.57
Share of elders, 65+ (%)	61.9	13.5	0.56	0.80
Single member households (%)	40.27	13.04	0.56	0.01*
Activity level (%)	95.94	66.1	-0.45	0.03**
Economic Dependency (%)	18.03	36.95	0.11	0.62
Daily migrants share (%)	48.75	42.06	-0.37	0.08
Population with secondary education (%)	16.87	9.83	0.5	0.02**
Share of university educated people (%)	2.02	2.84	0.55	0.01*
Village size/capacity (number of dwellings)	149.87	80.06	0.17	0.43
Permanently inhabited dwellings (%)	34.55	18.31	-0.38	0.76
Abandoned dwellings (%)	17.92	15.87	-0.1	0.69
Temporarily unoccupied dwellings (%)	13.12	16.56	-0.23	0.33
Second homes (vacation & seasonal agriculture) (%)	38.61	32.26	0.37	0.08
Vacation homes (used for leisure and recreation) (%)	35.2	26.15	0.45	0.04**
* Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed); ** Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)				

There is a lack of statistical data on socio-economic characteristics of seasonal residents representing the base of tourism activities in these rural areas. So, the number of local resources engaged in “second-home tourism” activity and “small tourism business”, is speculated. Also, the real effects and relations between the diversification of the rural economy and the expansion of seasonal-homes are provisional. Additionally, it is obvious that the level of diversification in these traditional agricultural villages increased significantly with the expansion of second-homes, especially in the period 2002–2011, and continued and accelerated in the next decade. So, the outlined hypotheses confirm that diversification of the rural economy is directly affected by the second-home expansion.

The regression model (Table 4) serves as a base for forecasting possible increase in the diversification level of the rural economy among the resident population. The proposed model is based on several factors that were found to be in direct positive correlation with the diversification of rural economy: share of second-homes used for leisure and recreation (increase in the number of seasonal residents), the share of single-member households, higher educational level (university and secondary education). Linear regression was conducted to examine how well the second-home expansion may forecast the level of diversification of the rural economy. It showed that the relationship between the second-home share (used for vacation and recreation) in total rural housing and the diversification level is positive and linear, and did not reveal any bivariate outliers. The correlation between the diversification level and other chosen variables was statistically significant and positive, $p < .005$. From ANOVA results one may see that r^2 for this equation is 0.199, while adjusted r^2 is 0.16. Therefore, the regression

model explains about 20% of the variance in the diversification level, predictable from the second-home share.

Tab 4. Regression model. Source: Author's calculations

Model Summary ^b										
Model	R	R ²	Adjusted R ²	Std. Error of the Estimate	Change Statistics					
					R ² Change	F Change	df1	df2	Sig. F Change	Durbin-Watson
1	.446 ^a	0.2	0.16	28.35	0.2	4.71	1	19	0.04	2.91
ANOVA ^a										
Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.				
1	Regression	3785.77	1	3785.77	4.71	.043 ^b				
	Residual	15268.32	19	803.6						
	Total	19054.08	20							
a. Dependent Variable: diversification of rural economy (non-agriculture %)										
b. Predictors: (Constant), Second-home's share in total housing (%)										

Tab 5. Linear regression – results. Source: Author's calculations

Coefficients ^a									
Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.	95.0% Confidence Interval for B		
		B	Std. Error	Beta			Lower Bound	Upper Bound	
1	(Constant)	-4.72	10.54		-0.45	0.66	-26.78	17.33	
	Second-home dwellings (%)	0.53	0.24	0.45	2.17	0.04	0.02	1.03	
a. Dependent Variable: diversification of rural economy (industry and service sector)									
b. Predictors: (Constant), Second-home's share in total housing (%)									

This result of f^2 is 0.25 which indicates a “medium” effect size (Cohen, 1988), and confirms the existing relationship between the predictor and the dependent variable. The regression equation (Table 5) for forecasting diversification levels from the second-home dwellings share in total housing units is $y = -4.725 + 0.53(x)$. This allows the forecasting of the diversification level based on the second-home expansion, for villages in peripheral mountainous rural areas (Balkan Mt.) based on second-home expansion pattern. Thus, for each one unit (%) of the increase of the second-home share in the total housing of the village, the diversification level among resident population increases at an average of 0.53%. On the other hand, the increase of diversification levels among the resident population may also result in increased attractiveness of the village for seasonal residents. Therefore, an increase of diversification level for a 1% expected increase of second-homes is likely to be about 0.38% with the regression equation used for forecasting $y = -29.986 + 0.38(x)$.

These findings indicate that the spillover effect of tourism activities and small-tourism businesses started by non-resident population (seasonal residents, second-home owners) is strongly affecting the diversification levels among full-time residents, by their direct engagement in providing tourist services. Further, increased diversification of rural economy contributes to the perceived attractiveness of village in terms of seasonal and permanent living, and therefore

enables revitalization and prolonged vitality of traditional peripheral villages, as found in the case of villages of Balkan Mt., like Gostuša and Poganovo.

7. Conclusions

The study elaborates the cases of Gostuša and Poganovo, two demographically similar villages located in the same tourist macro-destination, and evaluates their development patterns from different perspectives. An opportunity is recognized and the potential of these two villages can be employed for tourism development purposes, but with different development paths. Based on a field-research, it was found that both villages possess a kind of tourism facilities that function, even though with small capacities and strictly seasonally.

Gostuša village is facing many severe problems, particularly with the infrastructure and deterioration of physical amenities. Since it is proclaimed as a cultural heritage, it must follow strictly defined procedures and fully relies on governmental support and direct investments. Even more, locals and second-home owners who want to make some adaptations in their “original and unique” but deteriorated households, have their “hands chained” stuck in the official policies and slow administrative procedures. Poganovo village is much more visited mainly due to better infrastructure and transit geographical position to Sofia (Bulgaria). The better ambiance of the village itself attracts more tourists and tourism development is initiated by private entrepreneurship, so it provides different services engaging locals in the production chain. However, the village itself needs to be aware of the potential danger of becoming the “reserved tourist landscape” where the local community is left out of the development process in favor of the dominance of seasonal residents (returnees and pensioners). This is consistent with the findings of Park et al. (2012) that residents who have lived in their village longer (autochthonic population, such in the case of Gostuša) are likely to indicate lower social capital. Struggling with unfavorable socioeconomic conditions, traditional villages have been losing traditional local leadership and newcomers in the tourism business are establishing new decision-making processes (Park et al., 2012). Therefore, we outline that in the beginning stages of tourism development in these peripheral rural areas, tourism services are provided almost exclusively by the “newcomers”, the second-home owners. As outlined in different studies (Xiao & Li, 2004; Hao, Long, & Kleckley, 2010), it is difficult to generalize about tourism impacts and attitudes as they are often shaped by site-specific conditions. Such seems to be highly dependent on the development stage and confirms the existence of certain differences in attitudes toward tourism development between residents and second-home owners, being mostly related to the community attachment, while socioeconomic factors play only a minor role (Hao et al., 2010).

Similarly to the findings of Fabusoro et al. (2010), socioeconomic factors may serve as predictors for livelihood diversification, while regression model revealed that educational level and household size can predict rural diversification. Furthermore, the research outlined factors of greatest influence to the rural diversification process in peripheral rural areas: the rise of single-member households directly related to the expansion of second-homes, and therefore the change of use, from productive to the service sector, while higher educational levels of residents indicate greater entrepreneurship potential and predict more prosperous tourism development. Also, the significance of income sources to livelihood diversification may indicate that availability of alternative sources of income will enhance an individual's capacity uptake non-farm livelihoods, such as tourism. Among principal problems of rural households and individuals who want to start tourism business seems to be access to capital or credit (Fabusoro et al., 2010), which is why almost all rural tourist households in this region were started with direct governmental aid (non-refundable credits). Thus, the current diversification level identified in the study suggests that such activities have the potential for enhancing the capability of individuals and households to construct positive livelihoods, while traditional agriculture still remains the main resource of rural livelihoods among permanent residents. It was confirmed that most tourism units are based on activities of second-home owners and that diversification level among residents actually represents a spill-over effect. So, the study revealed that the level of diversification of the rural economy of the sampled villages is relatively low, and

based on the service sector, therefore, tourism-related. As the main characteristic of sustainable rural tourism is to remain small-scale and in "locals' hands", in these two villages the diversification of tourism supporting businesses reveals several weaknesses: lack of continuous governmental support, inadequate supporting infrastructure, low-quality products and services, lack of local entrepreneurship initiative, limited market knowledge, lack of finance, low educational levels of the majority of residents, and lack of opportunities and awareness among locals for tourism and hospitality issues, etc.

As Brandth and Haugen's (2011) discussed, the ongoing changes in the agricultural sector in these peripheral areas, along with the development of rural tourism, was mostly based on individual farm resources. The main driving force for this was the survival strategy found in fitting to the modern tourism demands, along with a desire for autonomy and financial independence, and better livelihood. As noted by Lange et al. (2013), it was found that the geographical location of the sampled villages, especially the landscape attractiveness (including natural and cultural amenities) and impact of the nearby urban areas, has a strong influence on the decision-making of rural households in terms of diversification of the rural economy, by direct engagement of locals in the tourist sector. Diversification levels may also indicate the possibility to improve the economic status of villagers and provide better livelihood opportunities and prolonged vitality of the village. Yet, due to the extremely unfavorable socio-demographic and economic conditions, particularly poor households and infrastructure, it is not realistic to expect fast and sustainable tourism development of the traditional countryside in Serbia. The development process should be slow and careful, with granted governmental aid and professional support, along with provided understandable and strictly defined guidelines. On the other hand, the peripheral Serbian area (Serbian side of Balkan Mt.) is detected as favorable for tourism development and been recognized within the national strategy for tourism development as a priority for support of tourism development plans in the next 5–10 years. It is reasonable to expect that rural tourism development in this area will eventually flourish. However, such activities will likely be fully dependent on second-home expansion, while traditional and cultural patterns constantly endangered, with disappearance of authentic cultural space and the autochthonic population in favor of seasonal residents.

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