

RURAL DEVELOPMENT AND REGIONAL POLICY – CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

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Abstract. *The paper treats the potential of incorporation of the rural development into the planning framework of regulation of a more uniform regional development. The initial assumption is that the regional, „medium“ level of management is necessary for a legitimate management of public business and that the problems of development of rural areas can be adequately regulated within the regional development policy through an integrated planning approach starting from the paradigm of sustainable development. The basic assumption, worked out in detail in the paper, is that the activities related to the rural development are operationally defined and realized in the framework of the regional policy, given that the rural areas are one of the resources of the given region, its potential or limitation, and thus actively participate in the process of development of a region and in reactivation of its developmental potentials.*

Key words: *regional development, rural development, regional policy.*

1. INTRODUCTION

Awareness of the importance of villages for the survival of mankind, and favoring of its development and renovation, assumed global proportions in the closing decades of the 20th century. Village decay was identified as a global problem so the fight against poverty, marginalization, depopulation and low quality of life in rural areas in the majority of countries became an act of a political orientation, and a highly ranked developmental goal, instrumentalized through a variety of developmental options, strategies and programs. During the recent years, in social and professional milieu, an attitude that the problem of development of rural areas can be adequately treated within the regional development framework, through an integrated planning approach starting from the sustainable development paradigm. Such political willingness makes possible that through harmonization of two traditional approaches: (1) regional/physical planning and (2) environmental protection, the problem of rural areas development is treated through multiple

sectors and through consideration of environmental, economic, social and physical developmental aspects. Theoretical foundations of the orientation are corroborated by the fact that the so-called hybrid planning approaches are nowadays on the rise. Namely planning is progressively assuming forms of strategic/developmental planning, in whose framework it is possible to instrumentalize and operationalize developmental projects and programs in the course of the entire planning process. In this context is viewed the potential to form and implement the programs of rural areas renewal as one of the instruments of planning of a more uniform regional development.

The practical reasons for consideration of this issue, arise from the necessity to find solution for big developmental problems and disturbances in regional and population structure of Serbia, from the fact that around half of the population of Serbia lives in rural areas covering around 85% of national territory, as well as from the view national strategy of spatial development comprises elaboration of planning instruments in the function of realization of global social goals, and the more uniform regional and rural development are certainly such goals.

The fundamental view of the author is that the program of rural development, defined as an act of state orientation at the national level, and operationalized at the regional and local levels, could be one of the strategic instruments for direction, not only of rural but also more uniform regional development. The basic support of such statement, apart from the fact that the effects and experiences of such a view are positive in many countries, is comprised in the Draft of the Physical plan of the Republic of Serbia and the Strategy of spatial development and renovation of villages and rural areas with the goal of a more uniform development. The additional motive is in the expressed political commitment to integrate with the European Union – and as there a great attention is paid to regional and rural development, the institutional changes in this direction become obligatory, and researches of this kind, very beneficial.

2. REGIONS AND RURAL AREAS – TYPOLOGY AND (COR)RELATIONS

Developmental and structural characteristics and problems of regions and rural areas are very heterogeneous, so it is understandable that the definition, first of regional typologies, and then of the structural typology of rural areas at the regional level, are the subject of much study and research. The practices of many countries at the national level often distinguish and apply three types of regions (OECD, 1994): 1) rural and remote region, 2) the intermediate region, and 3) agglomerated region.

A region is defined as rural and remote if more than 50% of the population lives in rural communities (municipalities), whereby those communities whose density is less than 150 inhabitants per km² (OECD), or 100 per km² (EU) are considered the rural communities. In order to determine the differences in the framework of this type, these regions are usually divided into three categories: regions closer to metropolitan centers (metro-adjacent sub-regions"), regions that are distant from metropolitan centers (non-adjacent sub-regions") and border regions ("hinterlands sub-regions"). The region is defined as the intermediate if 15% to 50% of its population lives in rural communities (or municipalities). Under agglomerated is comprised a region in which less than 15% of the population lives in rural communities.

The countries of the European Union are characteristic for a division of regions into: 1) predominantly rural, 2) significantly rural and 3) predominantly urbanised, with population thresholds that correspond to the previous categorization.

Starting from the division, based on the identification of standard developmental problems, defined as: the pressure of modern life, stagnation and decline of rural development, and very marginalized areas, the OECD program of rural development (1998) distinguishes three types of regional classification of rural areas. Those are:

(1) 'integrated rural areas'

These areas are usually located near the urban center, and are growing in economic and demographic terms. Despite the largest employment occurring in the secondary and tertiary sectors, income from agriculture is still very significant. Their resources are in environmental, social and cultural heritage; some of these areas, close to large centers, risk to become just "dormitories" and not the working area (rurbanization); some of them to develop more comprehensively.

(2) intermediate rural areas

These areas are spatially relatively far away, but their good infrastructural facilities ensure easy access to urban centers. They are traditionally dependent on agriculture and other related activities, but notwithstanding the share of non-agricultural activities, such as industry and services is increasing.

(3) remote rural areas

These are the areas with lowest population density located in border regions, away from urban centers, isolated due to topographical features of the terrain and poor transportation links. They are characterized by low population density, poor age and educational structure of population, poor infrastructure, equipment and service, low income and so on.

In addition to illustrating the diversity of rural areas, structural typology points to the need to recognize the limitations and potential of development and consider the local development specifics, resource and structural differences in the formation and practical application of effective development strategies and programs for development of rural areas. Within the European Union, the research on this topic is numerous. Some of them are based on an inductive approach that uses a set of indicators for representing the relationship between the agricultural aspects, diversification of economic activities and rural-urban interactions and their impact on the conflicts in the use and purpose of land. As a result of research the following division of rural areas at the regional level is suggested:

(1) successful rural area

These areas are characterized by the presence of developed agricultural activities, the vertical integration of primary activities in the food industry and diversification of local industries in different sectors

(2) under pressure rural area

These are areas where rural development is conditioned by a strong interaction with the city and various forms of rural-urban complementarity, such as: (1) the presence of various economic activities (including agriculture) that are generally

located near the metropolitan areas, medium-sized cities or polycentric urban systems and relationships that are characterized by links with urban systems in the commercial sense (common market of goods), social terms (moving towards industrial and service activities) and through the use of urban services, (2) presence of urban parks and green areas with successful urban-rural interactions.

(3) "weak" rural area

These areas are characterized by economic decline and various types of negative socio-economic trends. These are areas where the agricultural structure is devastated by urban development - eg. marginal urban areas in surrounding metropolitan areas, then hilly and mountainous areas and areas where distance and poor connections to the cities lead to emigration and extinction of traditional activities.

Variety of natural and socioeconomic conditions, and the complexity of the problem requires on the one hand, an integrated and comprehensive approach, but also makes prominent a number of other social, economic and environmental challenges and difficulties whose various manifestations many countries face in operationalization of defined goals and claimed orientations.

3. REGIONAL PLANNING AND RURAL AREAS

With the redefinition and reinterpretation of theoretical concepts in the period of "reconstruction" of regional planning, as well as with the inclusion of environmental aspects of development, a large part of the experts agree that the elaboration of integrated theoretical approach, primarily the theoretical concept of sustainable development, provides an adequate conceptual framework for addressing the development problems of the village and rural areas in the regional framework. However, it is too early to speak about a completed and methodologically elaborated theory. The concept of sustainable development implies and enables a more active role of villages and rural areas in the process of regulation of a balanced regional development because of its commitment to the integrated approach and endogenous development. Integrated and sustainable rural development is defined as "development-political concept for the development of rural areas by activating the self-assistance, target oriented public funds and encouraging economic growth" (Dams, 1985). The aim of this approach is to include residents of rural areas in the global social system which creates the conditions not only for improving their economic and social position, but also the overall development.

Regional issues, expressed by the existence of social, economic and spatial inequalities, are a condition for a regional intervention - regional planning and regional policy as mechanisms of regulating and directing of intraregional and inter-regional development. In the countries where the planning and development control is present, there is a direct structural correlation between the planning and the organization of administration, in the sense that the planning sub-system is equivalent to the constitutional, political and administrative system - for example the equivalent relation of the level of planning and management levels. Consequently, the regional level of planning is not developed in the countries with a management model that does not recognize the level of the region. However, many authors believe, and practice in developed countries, shows that the nature of

specific development problems still requires intervention at levels between intermediate and local, that is that regional, "intermediate" level of planning and management is necessary for a legitimate and effective administration of public affairs (Martins, 1986; Wannop, 1995; Pusic, 1989; Vujosevic, 1996). These views are supported by the efficacy of applying the principle of subsidiarity, which just assumed decision-making closer to places and places where the problems about which decisions are made are manifest (Bennett, 1994), in order to make their identification and resolution more efficient. In theory, the dominant view is that there will always be inequality and that, therefore, regional planning / policy must be an ongoing activity. Regional activities are an act of state regulation orientation to balanced development, because, according to G. Myrdal (1957) "People who live in underdeveloped areas cannot bear the consequences just because their lucky number in life has not been drawn, to be born in the developed areas" - requires social support and planned and directed efforts of the entire community with the goal to create and realizing a socially optimal strategy of regional development. These original views evolved over time, so that regional planning / policies, which have historically had a primarily political and social motives, in most of the developed countries, obtain also their development and economic dimensions and give rise to a new approach to the overall social, economic and spatial development

The "new" regional development policy embodies two components - the developmental and regional, and accordingly is treated in two ways, as: (1) new approach to the development of national economy based on a regional basis ("regional growth in economic activity leads to an increase of the national economy as a whole"), and (2) a new approach to regional development with a significantly broader developmental impacts on the overall social and physical development. In light of new theoretical developments, and the expressed political and social commitment to greater concern about the problems of rural areas, many commentators believe, and practice establishes Principles of effective program policy:

- Regional planning/management is the most appropriate mechanism to regulate the level of rural development.
- region (or subregion) is the most natural physical and operational environment for the implementation of policies and rural development programs.

The reasons for this view lie primarily in creating the best conditions for: 1) effective integration of rural and urban / spatial development, 2) more effective integration of rural development and sectoral policies relevant to rural development - agricultural, transport and environmental policy, 3) greater spatial efficiency of sectoral policies, 4) territorial/problem solving approach – a development of rural areas based on the consideration of local particularities and potential (endogenous development), 5) greater motivation for the inclusion of local people in development initiatives and programs, and 6) more efficient direction of institutional and financial arrangements. The justification of the treatment and directing of the development of rural areas within the regional framework is confirmed by the stated commitments and planned activities, the most important being:

- General and specific goals for regional/spatial development, the most important being the balanced/polycentric spatial development and a new relationship between urban and rural areas;

- Concepts and regional development strategies that are based on the endogenous development of local areas and mobilization of development resources, which among others include the potential of rural areas;
- Numerous regional initiatives and programs for rural development.

4. CONCLUSION

If one is considering models for managing and governing of regional and rural policy, one may observe large differences from country to country and from region to region in decentralized countries. In the latter, the regional level often has a great deal of autonomy, with the characteristics of strategic orientation and implementation. In Germany, for example, each province decides independently which explains the large differences of various regions in terms of the rural development issues and operationalization models. The freedom given by the central government to the regions of Belgium, or Spain to the autonomous communities, is slightly smaller, in that the regions must be managed by the general directives defined at the national level. In the more centralized countries, national ministries are the main coordinators of regional and rural policy, as is the case in France, Greece and Portugal. There are also situations between these two extremes - so, for example, in Austria and Finland, the central government shares responsibility with regional and local authorities and allows greater financial autonomy. The political objectives reflect national, regional and cultural trends and differences, and orientation of the government. There is a wide range of goals - in the Scandinavian countries, France, Greece, Portugal and Switzerland the aim of regional policy in the field of rural development is primarily the preservation of the existing network of settlements and population, in Austria. Canada and Turkey priority is given to development and expansion of economic activities in rural areas; whereas balanced regional development and equality of living conditions set the policy in Austria and Germany, the main goal of regional policy in Japan and the United Kingdom is the development of less developed rural areas, the vitality of the economy of rural areas and creation of an attractive rural environment/landscape.

In countries that have developed a policy of regional and rural development, rural development as a development priority occurs in almost all national and regional development programs, but its importance, position, and in particular development measures and means available, are very different, and apart from the institutional and systemic framework and conditions, primarily depend on: 1) the type and structure of the region, 2) regional development priorities, and 3) the type and structure of rural areas. While in developed countries, particularly in the European Union, rural and regional policy is a strategic issue, in our country the problem of regional and rural development is only considered as one of the important issues of planning and management. In these considerations, scientific research and practical experience of countries in which the processes of regional and rural development and cooperation has dominated for a long time can be a valuable asset for our country, especially given the current national development trends, intentions and commitments.

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RURALNI RAZVOJ I REGIONALNA POLITIKA – KONCEPTUALNI OKVIR

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U radu se razmatraju mogućnosti uklapanja ruralnog razvoja u planske okvire regulisanja ravnomernijeg regionalnog razvoja. Polazni stav je da je regionalni, "srednji" nivo upravljanja neophodan za legitimno vođenje javnih poslova, a da se problemi razvoja ruralnih područja mogu adekvatno regulisati u okviru politike regionalnog razvoja kroz integrisan planski pristup koji polazi od paradigme održivog razvoja. Osnovna pretpostavka, koja se u radu detaljnije razradjuje, je da se aktivnosti vezane za ruralni razvoj operacionalizaciono definišu i realizuju u okviru regionalne politike, budući da su ruralna područja jedan od resursa datog regiona, njegov potencijal ili ograničenje, pa stoga aktivno učestvuju u procesu razvoja regiona i (re)aktiviranja njegovih razvojnih mogućnosti.

Key words: *regionalni razvoj, ruralni razvoj, regionalna strategija*