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RURAL REGIONS IN SERBIA - POPULATION STRUCTURE AND CHANGE

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Abstract: This paper aims to contribute to the exploration of space outside the metropolitan area Balkan's countries using the concept of integrated rural development. In the European borders of the Balkan countries have a very rural area, while in the national framework of rurality significantly different level eg. EU and Western Balkan countries. The paper focuses on the demographic characteristics of rural areas of Balkan countries and Serbia, especially in the patterns rurality, dynamics, age structure and the basic economic characteristics (employment and unemployment) of the rural population. Since the redistribution of population in the "old members" of the EU, now the dominant processes of counter-urbanization and less suburbanization, and economically less developed European countries can expect a similar redistribution to the benefit of the rural area.

Key words: rural development, population, region, Balkan

Résumé: Cet article a pour but de contribuer à l'exploration de l'espace extérieur de la zone de pays métropolitains de Balkans à l'aide du concept de développement rural intégré. Dans les frontières de l'Europe, les pays de Balkans sont une région très rurale, tandis que dans le cadre national, le degré de la ruralité est différent, par exemple entre l'Union Européenne 15 et pays de Balkans occidentaux. Le document met l'accent sur les caractéristiques démographiques des zones rurales des pays de Balkans et de la Serbie, particulièrement dans les modèles de la ruralité, la dynamique, la structure par âge et les caractéristiques de domaine économique (le travail et chômage) de la population rurale. Aujourd'hui, dans la redistribution de la population de membres «anciens» de l'UE dominant les processus de la contre-urbanisation et moins de la suburbanisation, c'est pourquoi on peut attendre, dans les pays européen économiquement moins développés, une redistribution similaires en faveur de la zone rurale.

Mots clés: le développement rural, la population, la région, les Balkans

Introduction

Over the last twenty years, an increasing number of inhabitants of EU countries leave the cities and moves into rural area. Spatial redistribution of population in European countries, now takes place through sub-urbanization and/or counter-urbanization and it often results with the increase in number of rural regions and area of rural territories, as is case in Serbia. Therefore, nowadays a number of papers deal with problems of rural areas, especially the problem of low employment rate of the population living outside metropolitan areas. For this purpose in 2006 the European Council adopted the methodology for classification of regions

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as urban and rural, which allowed to member states to formulate their own development policies, consistent with the principles of three basic documents that define the development of rural regions: the CAP, the Lisbon Declaration and Strategy for Sustainable Development³. In all three documents, the objective of rural policy is diversification of activities of the rural population, in order to increase employment of the population outside urban centers.

According to research conducted in the EU, the rural population is the entire population of local communities where the population density does not exceed 150 inhabitants per km². This rough division of the population in urban and rural can be discussed, as it can be discussed about density as the relevant criteria of this dichotomy division. However, the population density over time proved to be the only internationally comparable and statistically available parameter suitable for analysis of rural areas in various countries. As there is no universal understanding of the concept of rurality, so there is no generally accepted methodology for defining of rural region. Of all the attempts of classification of regions in urban and rural, the methodology applied by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development is the only one recognized as international.

OECD methodology is based on population density and is implemented through a two-step procedure (OECD, Creating rural indicators for shaping territorial policy, Paris, 1994). First, the local territorial units (municipalities, LAU1/2) are identified as rural if their population density under 150 inhabitants/km². Then, regions (NUTS3 and NUTS2) are classified into one of three categories:

- Predominantly rural (PR), if more than 50% of the population of the region live in rural communities (with less than 150 inhabitants /km²)
- A significant rural-mixed (SR), if 15% -50% of the population of the region live in rural communities
- Predominantly urban (PU), if less than 15% of the population of the region live in rural communities

³ CAP - Common agricultural policy. EU rural development policy as defined in Agenda 2000 is called "second pillar" of the Common Agricultural Policy. This policy was based on the following principles: multi-functionality of agriculture - on the position of agriculture in terms of overproduction of food caused the necessity of encouraging the development of service activities in the country, multi-sectoral and integrated approach to rural economy in the direction of diversification of activities, creating new sources of income and employment opportunities as well as protection of rural resources, flexibility of resources for rural development - based on self-help and decentralization, partnerships at the local and regional level, transparency in the creation and management development programs.

Lisbon Declaration basically a European Employment Strategy. In July 2003. The EU Council of Agriculture as part of the objectives set by the Lisbon Declaration of the program "The growth of employment in rural areas." On that occasion, were identified as problems of employment of the population in rural areas: aging agricultural population, lack of participation of youth and women in the rural economy, EU enlargement and divert resources from supporting production to support manufacturers and others. In 2005th proposed new measures for the adjustment of labor and business requirements of the market in that sense more investment in human resources, particularly in improving the knowledge and skills.

16th June 2006, was reaffirmed and has been adopted EU Sustainable Development Strategy which emphasizes the strengthening of economic performance must go hand in hand with the sustainable use of natural resources. This strategy can provide some new roles of farmers who are not only producers but also key actors in the preservation of the environment ...

On 20th of February 2006, by decision of the EU Council of Ministers, this methodology was adopted and implemented within the framework of common strategic guidelines for rural development (Community strategic guidelines for rural development (programming period 2007 to 2013) (2006/144/EC)). The European Commission has left open the question of alternative definitions that better reflect the diversity and importance of rural and peri-urban areas have now.

This work consists of four chapters. The first chapter analyzes the image of rural Europe and the Balkan countries. The second chapter focuses on the territory of Serbia and further analyzes the dynamics of population in rural regions. In the third chapter the authors deal with the age composition of the rural population in Serbia and short analysis of employment and unemployment of the population in rural regions of Serbia.

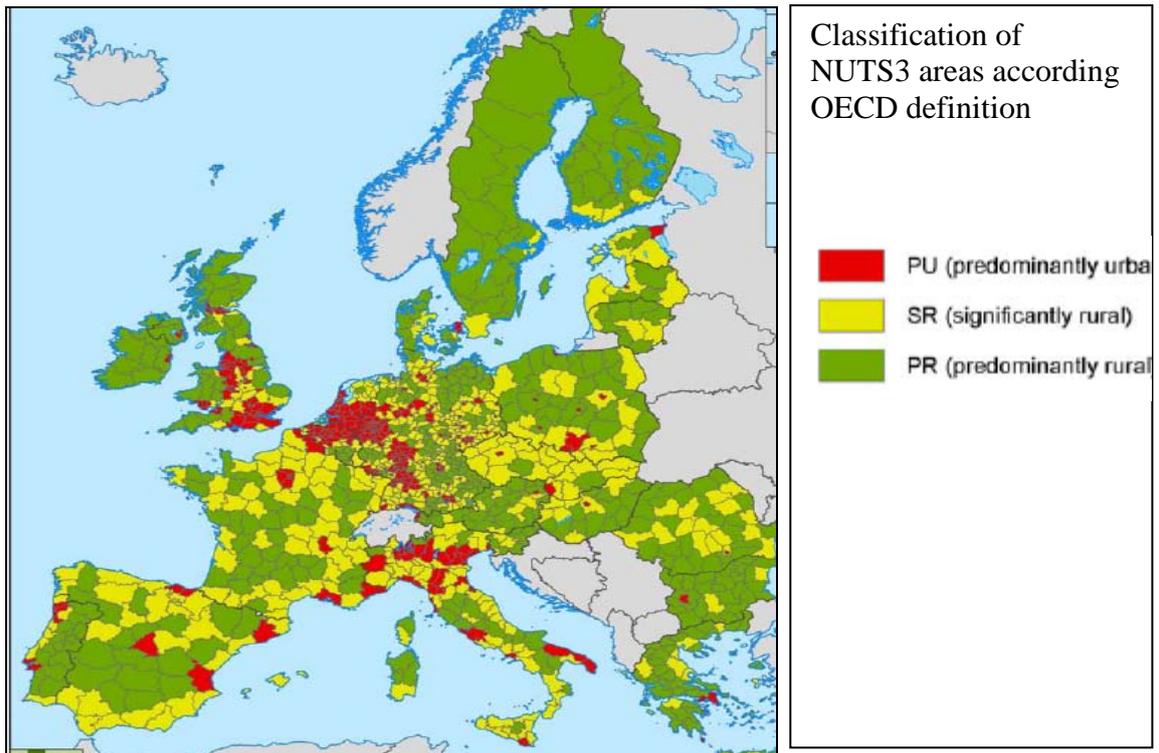
1. Picture of rural Europe

In 27 European Union countries, rural regions (mainly rural, significantly rural-mixed) cover some 90% of the territory and 54% of the total population (Figure 2). Of these, predominantly rural regions constitute 53% of the territory with about 17% of the total population of EU member states. The greatest significance of rural regions arises from the size of territory they cover, and it varies across EU countries, from urban countries where its importance is small (such as Belgium, Netherlands and Malta) to rural countries (Ireland, Finland, Slovenia) where the importance of rural regions is very high. In most countries such as Cyprus, Luxembourg, Czech Republic, Estonia, Slovakia, Bulgaria, Great Britain and Lithuania, significantly rural (mixed) regions have the most important role (Figure 1). Although the economic activities are mainly concentrated in urban regions, rural regions in the EU generate 42% of gross value added and 53% of jobs (DG AGRI, 2008).

Rural space in Europe is mostly sparsely populated, with population density varying from 36 inhabitants/km² in the predominantly rural areas, to 548 inhabitants/km² in urban areas. These differences are even greater at the national or regional levels: at the level of NUTS3 population density varies from 2 inhabitants/km² in Finland to 20,501 inhabitants/km² in Paris (DG AGRI, 2008).

Age structure of population in the EU is generally uniform. Regional differences are tangible only in share of population in working age, which is significantly higher in the predominantly urban regions while the predominantly rural regions of Europe are populated with older population. This means that the age composition of the region is under the influence of demographic differences between EU Member States.

Figure No. 1 - Rural regions in the EU



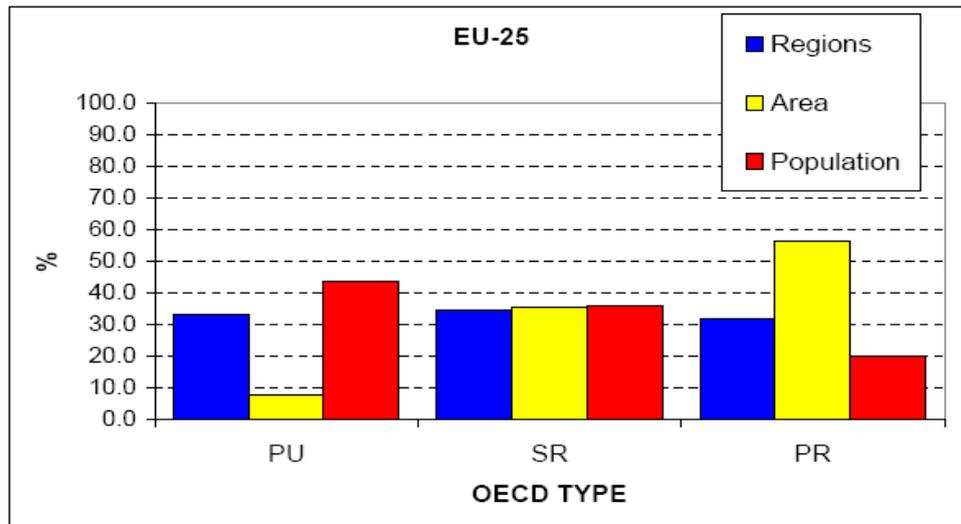
Source: Employment in rural areas: closing the jobs gap, 2006

Rural areas in the "old" member states (EU15) generally have a slightly higher proportion of older population while rural areas in "new" member states have more of young population. From 2000-2005 the share of young population was decreasing in most EU countries and in all types of regions, so it was the case in rural regions of countries which joined the EU later. Income per capita in rural areas is about 30% lower than in urban areas and generally increases in all countries with the increase of urban characteristics. The gap measured as the difference in income between rural and urban regions is higher in "new" EU member countries even though the income in rural and mixed areas of these countries increases (from 32% to 35% of EU average in rural areas and from 43% to 48% average in the mixed regions. (Commission of the European Communities, 2006).

The primary sector employs 28% of the population and the structure of gross value added of rural regions the EU participates with 5%. In new member states that share is 28% and 9%. The trend of increase in the service sector in rural areas is very pronounced. In Bulgaria, Poland and Romania, the primary sector has declined since 2000-2006 and in the structure of employees in rural areas this sector does not exceed 16% (1.6% in the EU15) and participated with 1.2% only in the generation of gross value added. (Commission of the European Communities, 2006).

Figure No. 2-Distribution of NUTS3 regions in the EU⁴ according to the OECD definition

⁴ Without data for Bulgaria and Romania.



Source: Employment in rural areas: closing the jobs gap, 2006

2 Rural Regions of the Balkan countries, Serbia

Analysis of the rural areas of the Balkan countries include Romania, Bulgaria, Greece and Serbia. The analysis will be partly complemented with data for two non-Balkan countries Hungary and Slovenia, in cases where formulating conclusions requires a wider territorial framework. For Balkan countries belonging to the EU, data are taken from the detailed analysis prepared by the Working Group of the European Commission for research employment in rural areas, while the data and analysis for the area of Serbia are the contribution of the authors of this paper. Rural area of Serbia is defined in accordance with the methodology that is accepted in the EU, a detailed demographic analysis is also fully comparable with the results of the member states. In the study of employment, the Balkan countries are covered only partially, due to the fact that for Bulgaria and Romania there is no complete statistics comparable with other countries, while the Western Balkan countries have not been an integral part of the study.

According to this study⁵, the Balkans is a very rural region, where significant majority of the population lives in predominantly and significantly rural regions. The relative share of the total rural population ranges from 64% in Greece to 91% in Romania. It is interesting that Slovenia was by far the least urbanized area where according to the definition of urban and rural regions, urban regions do not exist and more than 60% of the population live in predominantly rural areas. The strongest urbanized area in the Balkans, is the territory of Greece, and a maximum participation of the rural population in total population is in Serbia (Table 1).

Table. 1 - Distribution of population by type of rural region, 2003 ⁶

⁵ See the study "Employment in rural areas: closing the jobs gap" in details, (COM (2006) 857 final), Commission of the European Communities, 2006., Brussels.

⁶ For Serbia, the data are from statistics of 2007. For other neighboring countries, EU member states, statistics are taken from the report of 2006. Data for Slovenia and Hungary are shown for comparison, although the two countries are not Balkan countries.

	Population (%)		
	PU	SR	PR
Bulgaria	15.4	15.0	69.7
Greece	35.6	27.2	37.2
Romania	8.9	44.0	47.1
Hungary	16.9	36.0	47.1
Slovenia	-	38.3	61.7
Serbia	21.8	-	78.2
EU 27	20.5	37.8	41.6
EU 15	48.6	35.9	15.5

Source: Synthesis of the author. Rural Development in the European Union - Statistical and Economic Information - Report 2006th

Balkan countries in relation to the rest of Europe are less urbanized and at the EU 27 level all the countries, except Greece, have two times less urban population. Only Serbia has a percentage of the urban population at the level of the European average and that is, as will be discussed later, result of strengthening of the only urban center in Serbia, Belgrade. If we compare the degree of rurality of the Balkan countries with the countries of "old members" and the EU 15, the regional disproportions are the more pronounced. Apart from Greece, the Balkan's rural character sets a very low share of urban population, which in countries that are EU members doesn't exceed 15%. Compared to the average urban population in the EU15, Serbia, with the exception of Greece, has the highest share of urban population, about 22%.

Furthermore, there are interesting spatial differences in deploying medium category of the population in rural regions ⁷ (mixed). This type of rural region is considered in theory as the most dynamic category of the population and it is considered to arise mainly by moving of category of mainly urban regions to the next category by the degree of rurality. This phenomenon is in the EU associated with the spatial redistribution of population trends, where particularly important are the processes of de-urbanization and counter-urbanization. In economically less developed countries of the Balkan states of the EU, the dominant trend of redistributing the population is still sub-urbanization and peri-urbanization, so that the impact of these two processes at the same time critical to population growth in rural regions of mixed categories.

Larger populations and larger areas of mixed region are also related with the process of decentralization of the national territory. Extremely decentralized country in the neighborhood, such as Slovenia, doesn't have any urban region and in the participation categories of mixed regions it is above the average of EU27 and EU15. There is a similar picture in Romania, where the share of urban population is below 9% and even 44% of the population lives in mixed areas. Entirely different is the interrelationship of rural regions in Serbia, which is an example of an extremely centralized territory: the high share of urban

⁷ Since the names of regions are similar, in an effort to avoid confusion, the authors believe that the category of significantly rural regions may be renamed in the term mixed regions for the purposes of this paper.

population (20%, about the average for the EU 27) and there is no any mixed region (the remaining 80% of the population lives in clear rural areas).

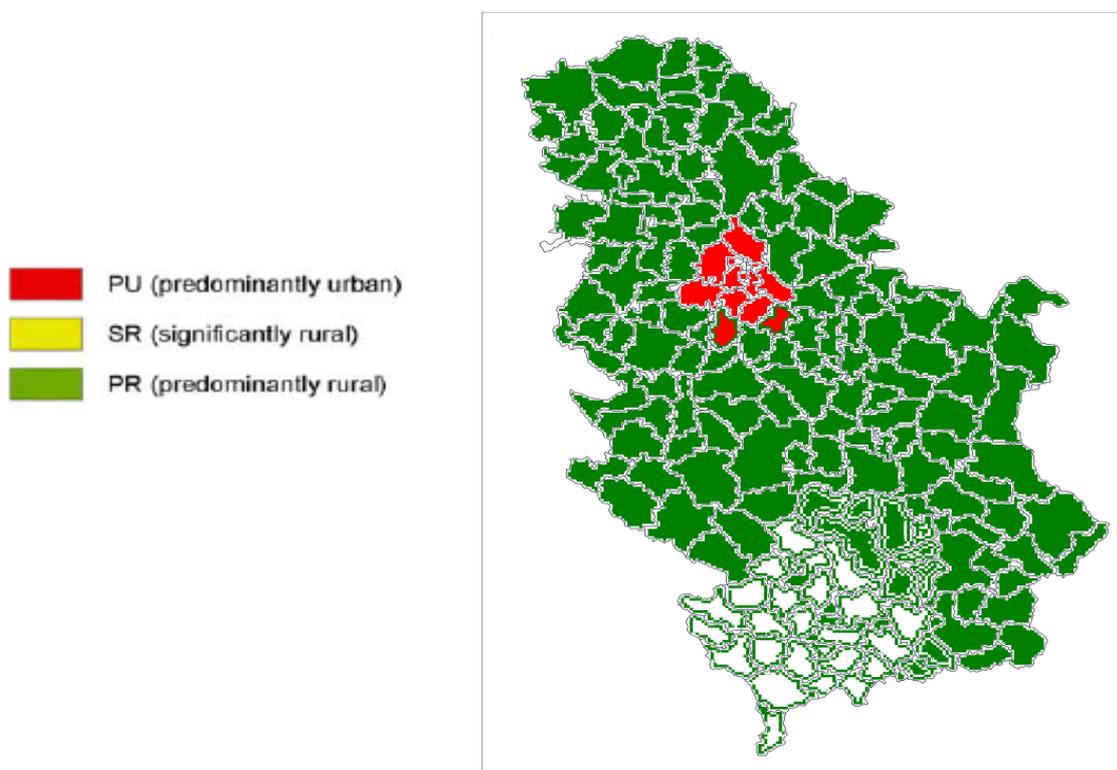
Table. 2 - The distribution of population and area of Serbia according to the type of rural region, 2002 and 2007

Type of region	Number of regions		% Of		Population		% Of population	
	2002	2007	2002	2007	2002	2007	2002	2007
PR	11	11	96.35	96.35	5921877	5770246	78.98	78.17
SR	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
PU	1	1	3.65	3.65	1576124	1611333	21.02	21.83

Source: Authors calculation. Municipalities in Serbia 2003 Municipalities in Serbia 2008.

Analysis of the degree of rurality has shown that area of Serbia is highly polarized into urban region of Belgrade while the remaining territory consists of rural areas (Figure 3). The degree of urbanization outside of Belgrade is very low in Serbia and in 2007 78.17% of the total population lived in predominantly rural regions. In the distribution of the total area, the rural regions participate with even bigger share, ie. affect 96.35% of Serbia's territory (Table 2).

Figure no. 3 - Rural areas in Serbia ⁸: 2007.



⁸ The data for the area of Kosovo and Metohija are missing.

Analysis of rural regions in Serbia included a period of social transition and the economy and the results are given for the five-years period between 2002 and 2007. The results show that there is highly expressed regional inequality in distribution of rural regions by type, which is on one side only one but very strong urban population center, Belgrade, with around 2 million inhabitants, and on the other side is a homogeneous, clean rural area that includes the entire non-metropolitan territory of Serbia (Figure 3). Within the five years period, the values of rurality indicators in Serbia were not significantly altered and it is obvious that the structural changes in rural regions take much longer. Although relatively small, changes in the total population indicate the strengthening of the urban region of Belgrade on one side and population loss in the interior of Serbia.

3. The dynamics and structure of the rural population in Serbia

Definition of NUTS3 regions in rural and urban OECD methodology, showed that in Serbia there is one urban and 11 rural regions and that this interrelationship is not changed during the five-year period of research. However, the regional population dynamics varied significantly more than population density, which has set the region type, and for more complex analysis of population changes, proposed methodology was needed to modify. In an effort to differentiate the area out the Belgrade metropolitan space at least in two categories according to degree of rurality, taking into account local specifics, all the NUTS3 regions in which 100% of the population lived in rural communities (municipalities with a density below 150 inhabitants/km²) were treated as predominantly rural. Predominantly urban were considered regions with less than 50% of the population living in rural communities, while the remaining NUTS3 regions went to a group of mixed or substantially rural.

Upon moving the lower bound of the interval of mixed regions for Serbia it was possible to follow population changes which show that in the short five-year period there is increased number of predominantly rural regions at the expense of the mixed region, and that the regions with the highest degree of rurality are actually border regions with the highest birth rates. These observations have led authors to more detailed demographic analysis presented in the further in the paper.

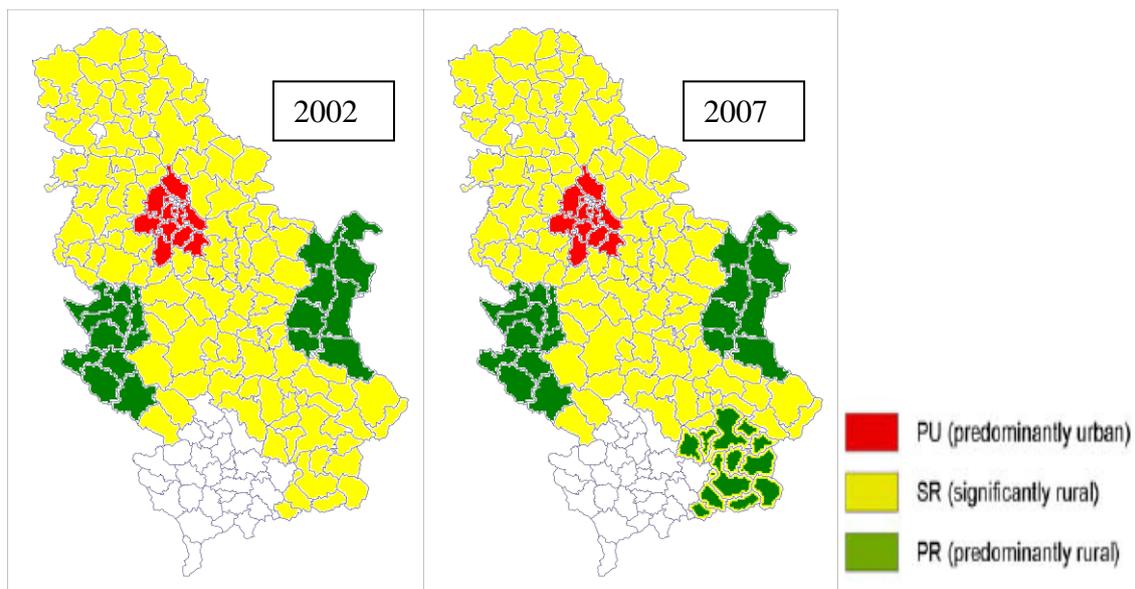
Table 3 - Distribution of the population in the EU15 and Serbia according to the type of rural regions (%)

Type	OECD methodology				A modified methodology	
	EU 15		Serbia		Serbia	
	1980	2000	2002	2007	2002	2007
PU	45.2	45.4	21.1	21.8	21.02	21.83
SR	32.3	32.7	-	-	71.01	64.49
PR	22.6	22	78.9	78.2	7.97	13.68

Source: Synthesis of the author. Employment in rural areas: closing the jobs gap, 2006

Modification of the methodology has led to a change so that in the structure of the rural regions, the most populated ones are mixed regions (Table 3). However, contrary to trends in the EU15, in Serbia this type of region saw weakening of the populations, while strengthening of population happened in predominantly rural regions, so that the degree of rurality increased during the five years period only. Regional distribution of rural regions in Serbia is interesting, because all predominantly rural regions are concentrated in the border areas. Looking at the level of NUTS3, in 2002 two predominantly rural regions, Zlatibor and Bor, and Zajecar belonged to this category, while by 2007 the NUTS3 region in the south, Pčinjski and Jablanica (Figure 4) joined this category.

Figure no. 4 - Geographic distribution of rural regions in Serbia



In Serbia, in the period 2002-2007 the total population decreased from 7498001 to 7381579⁹. Overall decline in population affected the population density in Serbia and some of the local communities (municipalities) have moved into the group of rural communities, thus leading to an increase in the number of rural regions. As shown in Figure No. 3, Jablanica and Pčinjski NUTS3 region from the category of mixed region moved to the predominantly rural. It is interesting that this region has the highest rate of natural increase because it is heavily influenced by reproduction models characteristic of the Albanian, Muslim population. This region is an extreme immigration area with the highest rates of negative balance of migration and high rates of decline in the total population (Table 4).

⁹ Estimation of population for the year 2007. Municipalities in Serbia in 2008, Serbian Statistics Office, Belgrade.

Table. 4-Average annual rates of natural and migration components of population movement in Serbia, the level of NUTS3, 2002-2007, in percents

NUTS3	Population growth	Natural change	Net migrations
BAČKA	- 0.18	-0.4	0.2
BANAT	- 0.81	-0.6	- 0.2
SREM	- 0.24	-0.5	0.2
BELGRADE CITY	0.44	-0.5	1.0
KOLUBARSKI and MAČVANSKI	- 0.81	-0.5	- 0.3
PODUNAVSKI and BRANIČEVSKI	- 0.54	-0.5	- 0.0
BORSKI and ZAJEČARSKI	- 1.43	-1.4	- 0.1
MORAVIČKI, ŠUMADIJSKI and POMORAVSKI	- 0.54	-0.4	- 0.2
ZLATIBORSKI	- 0.73	-0.2	- 0.5
RASKI and RASINSKI	- 0.15	-0.1	- 0.0
NIŠAVSKI, TOPLIČKI and PIROTSKI	- 0.58	-0.6	0.0
JABLANIČKI and PČINJSKI	- 1,12	-0.1	- 1.0

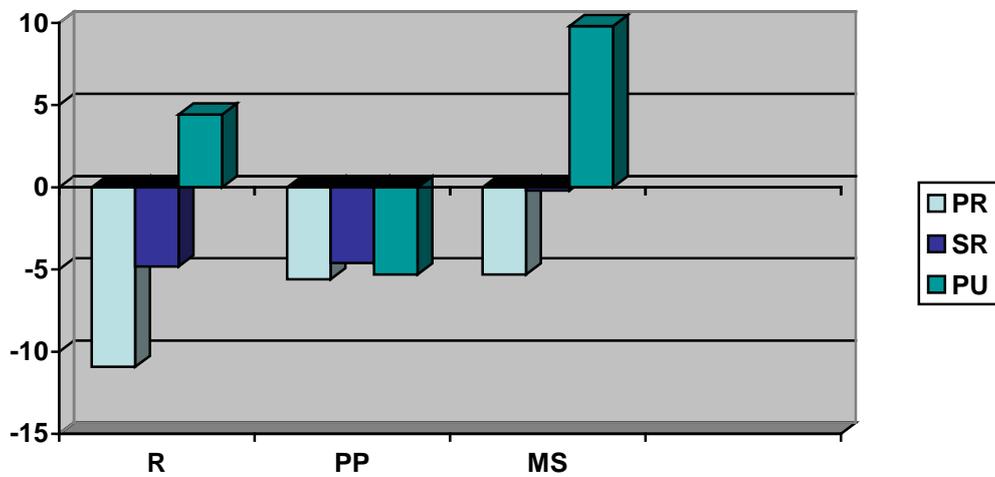
Source: Authors calculation. Municipalities in Serbia 2003 Municipalities in Serbia 2008.

The only NUTS3 region in Serbia with increase of population during the period 2002-2007 was the City of Belgrade. In all other regions of the population has declined and most distinctive in the predominantly rural regions (Bor and Zaječarski and Jablanica and Pčinjski). The population is decreasing at the lowest rates in Backa (due to the urban center of Novi Sad) and Raska and Rasina NUTS3 region (high rate of reproduction of the Muslim, Bosnian population).

Migration component contributed to increase of the urban population in Belgrade region, as it was the case with mixed regions of Backa and Srem, mainly renewed through immigration of refugees from former Yugoslav republics.

According to the types of rural regions, the relationship between natural and migration components of movement of the population is clearly defined (Figure 5). The Serbian urban regions (Belgrade) record a growth of population, only through component of migration (population growth is negative in Belgrade) and the predominantly rural regions are losing population, equally through influence of natural movements and migration. Again, position of significantly mixed or rural regions is interesting, where population declines only through natural component, which leads us to two conclusions: that these are areas in which further emigration is stopped and that there is movement of the population towards regions outside of Belgrade too.

Figure no. 5 - Natural and migration component of population trends by type of rural region, %



Source: Authors calculation. Municipalities in Serbia 2003 Municipalities in Serbia 2008.

Age composition of rural regions in Serbia is mostly uniform. The population of Serbia is very old, both in cities and in rural areas. Following the definition of the region according to the degree of rurality, analysis was performed on the population of each type of region under the following categories: young, working age population (15-25 years) and old population (65+). Rural EU regions have a greater share of the population older than 65 years and the same trend is observed in rural regions in Serbia. It is also noted that population in urban regions of Europe is aging and it is the case with urban population of Belgrade. Participation of young population in working age in 2002 was the highest in the urban region of Belgrade, but not greater than the participation of old population, as is the case in European cities, while in 2007 the highest number of young, working-age population lived in predominantly rural regions. Interestingly, the share of young people has increased outside Belgrade, mostly in pure rural areas and not in the urban center that attracts lot of people from inside the country. This process is incompatible with decline in participation of young people in all types of EU regions. Number of elderly population in both observed years was highest in the predominantly rural regions, but as in most European countries, their share decreased in Belgrade (Table 5).

Table 5 - percentagewise participation of age categories in the total rural population, by type of region

type	2002		2007	
	15-25	65 +	15-25	65 +
PR	12.9	17.9	13.9	18.2
SR	13.4	16.9	13.7	17.3
PU	13.5	15.7	13.3	15.3

Source: Authors calculation. Municipalities in Serbia 2003 Municipalities in Serbia 2008.

The economic structure of population in rural regions included the analysis of employment and unemployment in Serbia. The employment rate is the main indicator of participation of a territory in the regional economy. Low employment rates are usually an indicator of the aging population and inadequate structure of the economy. Employment rates in the EU are generally lower in the predominantly rural regions and highest in predominantly urban regions. Over time, rural regions of the EU have stagnated in terms of economic activity, while urban have made some progress.

The picture of economic activity is somewhat different in Serbia. In 2007, Serbia was a highly centralized state, metropolized, asymmetric, regionally closed, with large economic, demographic, social and infrastructural imbalances between regions.

Table No. 6 - Economic activity of population

Serbia, 2007

Type of region	Employment rate	Unemployment rate
PR	20.4	30.7
DR	23.5	36.6
PU	39.1	13.5

Source: Authors calculation. Municipalities in Serbia 2003 Municipalities in Serbia 2008.

This is way the issue of employment growth outside the territory of Belgrade metropolitan area is set as the fundamental one, in an effort to develop the Country more evenly through decentralization.

According to types of rural regions in Serbia, it is more than obvious that extreme economic polarization of the national territory exists, dividing the territory to developed Belgrade and the remaining periphery. The employment rates in EU urban areas are generally higher than in the other two types of rural regions, but in Serbia the gap between urban and rural regions is very pronounced. Employment rate in Belgrade is twice higher than in other regions and when unemployment is concerned, the regional disproportions were more pronounced (Table 6).

Conclusion

Over the past ten years, EU member countries recognized the problem of development of the area outside metropolitenskih area. For the solution of the problem is conceptualized Rural Development Policy, which has been a formal part of development policies of member countries. In the European Union in rural areas (mostly rural regions and partially) affect 90% of the territory and 54% of the total population. Following the definition of the region in urban and rural, it can be concluded that the Balkan extreme rural regions. Most of the population live in rural regions of Romania and Bulgaria, and Serbia and the least in Greece. It can be assumed that in other Balkan countries for which data was not too high share of rural population in total population. The importance of rural regions is higher if measured in an area that affect these regions. In Romania, Bulgaria and

Serbia have expressed regional disproportions in deploying different types of rural regions. Urban regions are only individual cases involving an area of major cities. The most distinctive regional disproportions in Serbia, where there is no middle category in the region, but only one predominantly urban and the remaining mostly rural regions. In rural regions of the EU's declining population and predominantly rural regions increased in the intermediate category of the region. In urban regions, growth has slowed considerably. Dynamic categories are significantly rural regions that accept both ways of redistributing the population: urbanization and counter-urbanization. The Serbian population strengthen rural regions and smaller urban region of Belgrade. Young population in urban areas more numerous than the old EU, while in Serbia, the largest share of young population in rural regions. Rural regions in the EU member countries have lower employment rates than urban regions. In Serbia the unemployment rate is the ratio of urban and rural regions 1: 2,3.

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