

**PROGRAM ACTIVITIES
FOR SUSTAINABLE RURAL DEVELOPMENT:
CASE STUDY, VILLAGE BERBATOVO, NIŠ**

UDC 728.6:502.131.1(497.11)

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Abstract. *This paper deals with the analysis, proposals, and development of program actions and measures aiming at a sustainable development of the village of Berbatovo. Development problems and potentials are defined in addition to collecting general data about the village and its development characteristics. The main shortcomings of the analyzed village are the decline in the number of its inhabitants due to their migration to cities, low education level of those who choose to stay in the village. There is not enough adequate space for public gatherings, there are no institutions necessary for functioning of the locals, such as outpatient clinic, post office, kindergarten, roads are in bad condition. Apart from producing for their own needs only, the local population shows insufficient activity and interest in starting their own business, which would create the conditions for a better quality of life in the village. In this paper, after defining development problems and observed potentials, appropriate strategic directions of sustainable development, general and specific goals and program actions and measures that would contribute to the adequate development of the village were selected.*

Key words: *Berbatovo, village, sustainable development, measures, rural architecture*

1. INTRODUCTION

Traditionally, the regions that are economically, demographically and socially most vulnerable are underdeveloped areas. About 85% of the territory of the Republic of Serbia is characterized as a rural area, i.e., most of the mountainous and border areas in the southern and southwestern part of Serbia [1]. The definition of rural areas varies from country to country. In particular, in European countries, the classification of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) is most common [2]. According to the aforementioned

Received September 18, 2022 / Revised October 21, 2022 / Accepted October 25, 2022

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classification, non-urban settlements are those with a population density of less than 150 people/km². The OECD rural area definition methodology applies to Serbia, as well. Hence the conclusion that 85% of the territory of Serbia is identified as a rural area, with about 55% of the population and an average population density of 63 people/km². In addition to the number of inhabitants, communal equipment in rural areas is significantly reduced and external functions are poorly developed. As many as 500 villages do not have an asphalt road, in 400 villages in Serbia there are no shops whatsoever, around 200 villages do not have a post office, in 230 villages there is no primary school, while around 200 primary schools have only one pupil each [3]. The term rural (lat.rus, rusalis) originally means a field, but also rural, arrangement of the village, agricultural area as well as the way of life in the countryside, therefore it includes the entire individual, family and social life in the village.

Since its existence, the rural-urban dichotomy has been conflicting [4]. Better living conditions, more employment options, higher salary are some of the main advantages that living in the city offers. On the other hand, in today's age, the village and the city are more interdependent than before. The village is still mainly a producer of food and raw materials, and it is argued that the urban society cannot be fully maintained without the rural environment that provides it with the essentials. On the other hand, the countryside becomes dependent on the city because of the industry.

It is vital to determine development goals of the villages and conditions to be improved as soon as possible, primarily with the intention to encourage and organize unused production potentials and thus, among other things, reduce the conflict between villages and cities so that the villages re-establish their importance. Questions are raised as to how and whether it is possible to encourage rural development of villages, how to bring life to the already almost completely empty settlements and how to develop the agricultural branches of the village and give them their old glory. It is necessary to establish and list the development measures that shall contribute to the improvement:

1. Economic structure development and increase in competitiveness
2. Infrastructure development
3. Development of human resources
4. Rural and agricultural development
5. Spatial and environmental development [5].

The problem of rural development of villages is considered at the global, continental, national and local level through a series of strategic initiatives, strategic documents, planning documents and rural development programs. In the European Union, rural development is directed through the entire segment of strategic documents of development programs, measures and activities, the most important of which are the Rural Development Policy, and the Rural Development Program that arose from it. In the last few decades, programs have been implemented over six-year periods. Currently, the program period is 2013-2021, within which three key goals, six priorities and eighteen focus areas are recognized. In our country, rural development is considered through strategic documents at the national and local level. When it comes to the city of Niš, the key strategic document is the Action Plan for the Development of the City of Niš [6]. Therefore, the aim of the paper is to demonstrate the possibility of implementing mechanisms and measures in accordance with the strategic document at the local level through the analysis of a case study, that is, through the analysis of a selected village belonging to the administrative territory of the city of Niš.

2. METHODOLOGY

The methods defined in the paper are: description, observation, swot analysis, survey and case study method. The analysis method was applied for the basic development and strategic determinants of rural development, the case study method was chosen for defining the mechanisms and measures and examining the possibilities, supported by the method of observation and survey.

The Berbatovo Village was chosen for the case study. The village is located in the administrative territory of the city of Niš, which has 69 villages. Berbatovo was chosen for the case study because it belongs to the category of population-small villages, which are the most numerous and most exposed to development problems, so it is assumed that examination and definition of measures and mechanisms on the selected example will provide an adequate research basis for the definition of military directions and other villages belonging to this size category.

While analyzing and defining measures and mechanisms, the research relies on planning documentation, observation and conducted survey. Measures and mechanisms are defined in accordance with the key strategic document of the Action Plan for Sustainable Development of the City of Niš 2015-2020 [6].

3. RURAL DEVELOPMENT – SETTING THE CONTEXT

Rural development can be defined as the process of improving the quality of life in relatively isolated and sparsely populated areas and, at the same time, the process of improving the lives of people living in those areas. Rural areas within the EU contribute significantly to European economics, cultures and ecosystems [7]. They represent a place for a healthy life, for creating energy, food, strengthening the economy and creating jobs. More than half of the EU population lives in these areas and over 40% homemade products are produced there. Developing an adequate rural development policy in the EU is based on activities aimed at strengthening financial capacities for supporting rural areas, as well as organizational and institutional ones. The main strategic document that defines the directions of EU development, including rural development, is the current EU 2020 strategy. Conceptually defined and supported by the EU 2020 strategy and the EU Cohesion Policy, the EU Rural Development Policy (RDP) plays a key role in the realization of the development process of rural areas which is based on three strategic objectives: 1. encouraging the competitiveness of agriculture; 2. ensuring sustainable management of natural resources and climate change; 3. achieving balanced territorial development of rural economies and communities, including creating opportunities for increased employment [8].

4. RURAL DEVELOPMENT IN SERBIA

In Serbia, rural areas differ in size, category, structure, content, but they have a common characteristic, which is that they fulfill equally, necessary functions in all parts of the country, that is, they provide basic life goods and services necessary for the survival of people in those areas. One of the problems of rural areas and villages is the stagnation or backwardness in development that has been going on for decades.

The main characteristics and development problems are strong depopulation and marked demographic emptying of villages and rural areas, a low level of physical and social

infrastructural equipment of the area and a poorly developed economy, although it is estimated that 60% of the population in Serbia is engaged in agriculture. There are about 40000 empty country houses and homesteads in Serbia, especially in the area of southern Serbia. Three basic development areas are important for the development of rural areas: 1. economic development; 2. arrangement of space and settlement; 3. social and cultural development.

Rural population accounts for 43.60% of the total population, while about 85% of the national territory consists of rural areas [9]. Urban settlements are most concentrated in the area of the northern part of the country, starting from the central part, while there are extremely fewer in the southern part.

According to the Spatial Plan of the Republic of Serbia from 2021 to 2035, it is considered that the abandonment of villages and agriculture, which arises as a consequence of economic development, entails deep demographic imbalances as well as the loss of a part of productive resources. The focus of the PPRS is on sustainable, favorable and rural development, which implies environmental protection and is at the same time technically applicable, economically profitable and socially acceptable. The realization of that concept, which has been officially accepted on the world stage since the mid-1990s, was adopted by undertaking activities on three basic means: 1. regional aid; 2. increasing rural employment and income in order to eliminate poverty; 3. protection of natural resources and the environment, in accordance with the multifunctional nature of agriculture [10].

In order to improve the situation in the field of agriculture and rural development, a new strategy for agriculture and rural development of the Republic of Serbia for the period 2014-2024 was created [11]. It lays the foundations of a new agricultural policy. It lists several priority areas for strategic changes. There are 14 priority areas and they relate to the financing of agriculture and rural development, the improvement of physical resources, the improvement of the knowledge transfer system and the development of human resources, the improvement of the social structure and the strengthening of social capacity, etc. Also, in the strategy, the measures and activities for the realization of strategic goals are detailed.

5. CASE STUDY: BERBATOVO VILLAGE, NIŠ

The focus of this paper's research is scanning and researching the village of Berbatovo, its geographical location and structure, genesis and historical development, its demographic, urban, morphological, functional structure and communal equipment, as well as the development of the village itself.

5.1. General information about the village

Geographical position

Berbatovo is a populated area within the municipality of Palilula, within the area of the city of Niš, in the Nišava district. The village is located on the southern edge of the Niš basin, at the foot of Seličevica mountain, 10 km from the center of Niš (Fig. 1). Berbatovo is next to the villages of Gabrovac and Vukmanovo.

Urban-morphological structure

The village of Berbatovo is an example of a compact type of settlement. Buildings are densely concentrated next to each other, with small yards. This is primarily the result of the

mountainous relief on which it is located. The village was built without any plan. According to the shape, the structure of the village is radial, the streets are arranged radially. The blocks are irregularly shaped (Fig. 2). The majority of buildings in the village of Berbatovo are individual houses, rarely semi-detached or terraced houses. According to the place of settlement, the village can be divided into two groups connected by the main road. On the eastern side of the village, there is a larger grouping with the main square, from where side streets spread out like rays around the perimeter, with most of the buildings. On the western side of the location of the village, along the perimeter of the main street, several buildings have been placed. Between the inhabited parts of the village, along the perimeter of the main street, there are arable agricultural areas. Most of the arable land is irregular in shape. The cadastral parcels were not distributed in a planned manner because the village itself developed unplanned. The street network is not orthogonal but has an irregular shape.

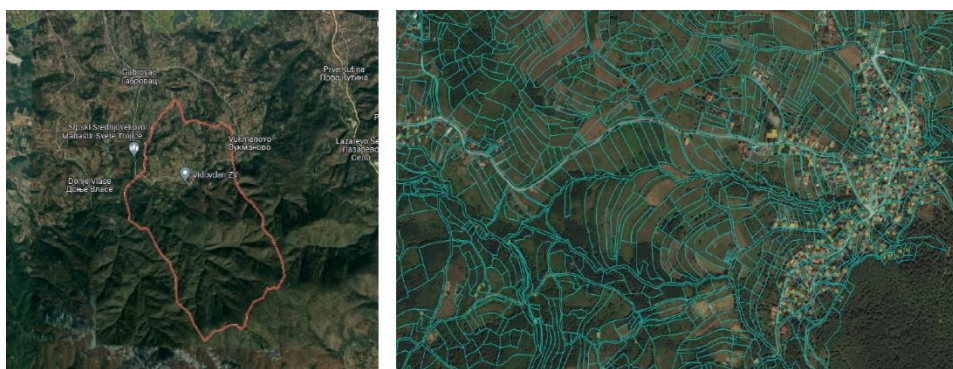


Fig. 1 View of the village Berbatovo **Fig. 2** Layout drawing of the compact type of village and the radial structure and appearance the blocks within the village

Source: <https://a3.geosrbija.rs/> (downloaded March 6th, 2021)

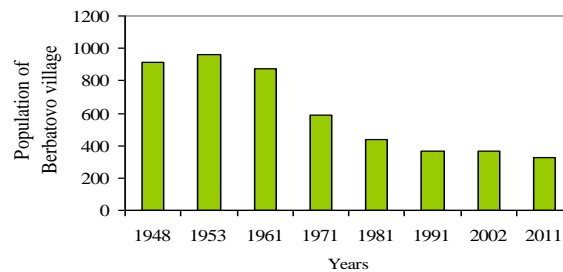
Genesis and historical development of the village

The ancient traces and Turkish censuses from 1498, recording 24 houses and three mills in Berbatovo are a testimony to the ancient settlement of this area. Berbatovo and its surroundings played a special role during the Second World War in the fight for the liberation of Niš. Later, in further development, the population of the village of Berbatovo increasingly moved from livestock farming to farming, and after 1955, it became more and more oriented towards the urban economy in Niš. After 1970, one of the weekend zones of Niš began to be built from the Gabrovac monastery and along the road towards Berbatovo. Around the eighties of the 20th century, twenty buildings were already built in this area. Today, Berbatovo is a small primary rural settlement that has elements of a local village.

Population

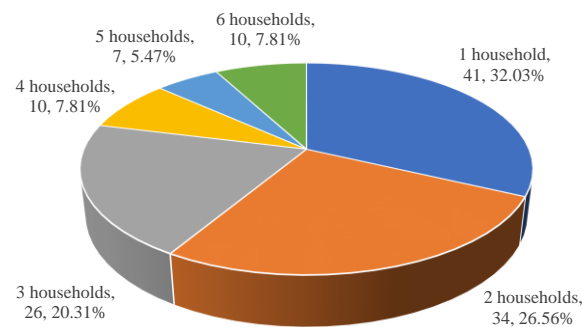
The village of Berbatovo belongs to the group of small villages with slightly less than 400 inhabitants. According to the 2011 census of the Republic Institute of Statistics, the village of Berbatovo had 327 inhabitants, which is less than 1% of the total population of Serbia. Judging by the previous censuses and information, the largest number of inhabitants

inhabited the village in the period between 1950 and 1960, when 959 people lived in the village [12]. Between 1948 and 2011, the number of inhabitants in the village decreased from 910 to 327 inhabitants. From the census of 2002 to 2011, the number of inhabitants fell by -1.18% (Graph 1). If the population were to change as in the last period, the number of inhabitants in Berbatovo would be 290.



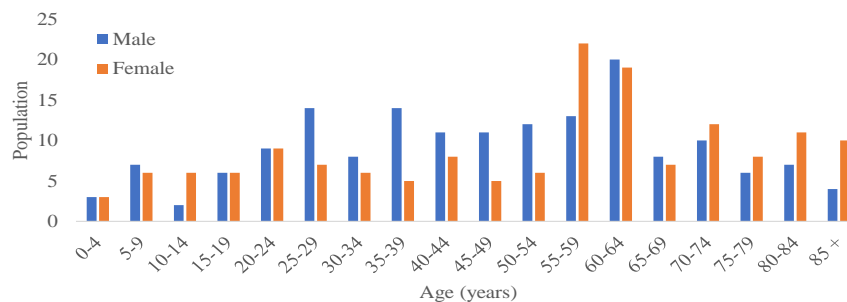
Graph 1 Population of Berbatovo village during the period 1948-2011

The number of households in the village of Berbatovo is 128, of which 41 have only one member, 34 count two members, 26- three, 10- four members, 7 households have 5 members each, and 6 households have six or more members. The average number of members in the household is 2.55 (Graph 2) [12]. The majority of residents spend their life in education and work in the city, while as pensioners they return to their native village and, in most cases, end their lives there.



Graph 2 Number of household members

The average age index is 49.9, which leads to the conclusion that the village has, or remains, an older population. Out of the total population of 327, 171 of them are male, while 156 are female. The largest number of male residents are people between the ages of 60-64, and as for the female population, the largest number are people between the ages of 55-59 (Graph 3).



Graph 3 Population ratio by age and gender

In the village of Berbatovo, according to the 2011 census, there were 6 youngest residents under the age of 4, while as many as 14 residents were 85 and older. The adult population consists of 292 inhabitants. The average age is 49.9 or approximately 50 years [13].

Functional structure and communal equipment

The structure of a settlement is characterized by unplanned formation. There is only one educational institution in the village - the satellite classroom of "Branko Radičević" elementary school for first four grades. The school is old, the facade is collapsing here and there, the road that passes by is in bad condition (Fig. 3). Within the school, there is adequate equipment for children play. In the back yard is a field for group sports. At one point the school was closed for there were no students. Nowadays children do live in the village of Berbatovo, but most parents enroll them in Niš city schools. There is no kindergarten in the village. There are no health institutions, nor are there cultural institutions and social welfare institutions. There is no post office in the village of Berbatovo, the residents of the village go to the post office located in the neighboring village of Gabrovac. There is one church in the village - the Church of St. Dimitrije (Fig. 4). Next to it is the village cemetery with an area of 1ha. Each nearby village has its own cemetery.



Fig. 3 Elementary school "Branko Radičević" **Fig. 4** Church of St. Dimitrije
Source: author's recordings (March 2021)

In the center of Berbatovo lies a small square with a monument, the point from which streets branch out to all sides of the village (Fig. 5). Within the square, there are several waste containers. The village has only one service facility - the "Vidovdan žv" store (Fig. 6). It also serves as a gathering place of the village population. In order to shop for something specific, the inhabitants have to go to Niš. Most of the residential buildings in the village of Berbatovo are in very poor condition, decaying.



Fig. 5 Berbatovo village square **Fig. 6** The monument of the square and the only shop
Source: author's recordings (March 2021)

The houses are old, most of them without host of the house, signaled by the displayed death certificates. Most of the facades are dilapidated, the roads from the gates to the houses are not cleared, moreover, they are inaccessible (Fig. 7).



Fig. 7 Old and abandoned village houses and their facades
Source: author's recordings (March 2021)

The population of Berbatovo village is primarily engaged in cattle-breeding and agriculture, yet only for their own needs. The village of Berbatovo does not have separate landfill, only public waste bins are used, which are located in the central part of the village, within the square. As far as waste water drainage is concerned, waste water from stables and pigsties is drained into septic tanks. Public suburban traffic is circular - 23K: Niš - Vukmanovo - Berbatovo - Niš. The bus runs every day of the week. The streets in the village of Berbatovo are mostly of medium and poor quality (Figure 8a). At the entrance to the village there is a board with the name of the village written on it (Figure 8b). Residents of the village complain about the quality of the streets and say that they are of poor quality and that they have been unsuccessfully spray sealed. Adequate signage has been installed along the streets. The street lighting is inappropriate. Residents' safety is not adequate.

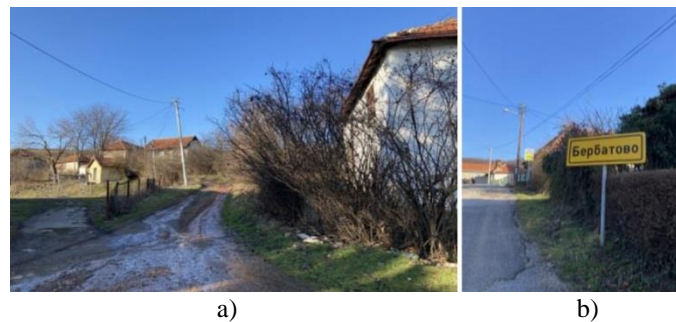


Fig. 8 Roads (a) and Berbatovo sign at the village entrance (b)
Source: author's recordings (March 2021)

5.2. Development problems and potentials - SWOT analysis

In addition to the analysis of available statistical data and development documents, a SWOT analysis was also used to assess the development problems and potential of the village. The results of the SWOT analysis are shown in Table 1.

Table 1 SWOT analysis of development potentials and problems of Berbatovo settlement

Strengths	Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ located in the vicinity of the city of Niš ▪ well-connected with the city and surrounding villages in terms of transportation ▪ adequate infrastructure ▪ daily public transport ▪ church and a cemetery within the village territory ▪ "Branko Radičević" elementary school satellite classroom ▪ Recreation court ▪ mountain village (unpolluted air, magnificent view...) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ poor condition of existing roads ▪ lack of public institutions (doctors, post office, kindergarten) ▪ lack of institutions for cultural and public manifestations ▪ lack of landfills ▪ lack of production capacity, purchase stations or any other production plant that would motivate residents to start producing more ▪ poor condition of older buildings ▪ insufficient commitment of the population to contribute to the general development of the village ▪ insufficient encouragement and investment by the state
Opportunities	Threats
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ road paving ▪ new lighting in the village to raise the level of safety ▪ development of tourism (ethno-village) ▪ development of private businesses to motivate residents to stay in the village ▪ getting the residents employment within the community ▪ establishing public institutions in the village (healthcare center, post office, kindergarten) ▪ landfill installment ▪ public space improvement ▪ greater investments in rural development 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ lack of young population, who spend most of their working hours in the city, using village only as overnight accommodation. ▪ steady migration to the city ▪ declining birth rate ▪ lack of investments ▪ dire economy of the whole country ▪ locals' lack of interest to improve the village environment ▪ insufficient investment in the village ▪ dying of the village

Development issues

One of the biggest development issues is primarily the insufficient commitment of the villagers and lack of interest in contributing to the general development of the village, as well as the constant migration of residents from the village to the city, i.e., the decline in the number of residents. Also, one of the major development problems, simultaneously being the biggest possibility for a solution, is the lack of necessary investments, which is partly caused by the bad economic situation in the country.

Berbatovo village roads are dilapidated. Village residents say that it is essential to completely restore the roads, not just spray seal them. Some roads are unpaved. There is not a single public institution in the village, such as a healthcare center, post office or kindergarten, posing a significant disadvantage. In addition, there are no facilities for cultural and public events in the village. All waste is now deposited in waste bins located at the village square, there are no other specific areas where waste will be left. Villagers do agriculture and cattle-breeding only for their own needs, no one initiates the idea of developing production and creating purchase stations or any other production facility.

Development potentials

First and foremost, it is the location of the village, only 10 km away from the city of Niš. Then, it is well-connected to other nearby villages and the city due to appropriate public transportation. By establishing public institutions in the village, such as a healthcare center, post office, and kindergarten, and switching to a better lighting that would have a favorable effect on the safety of the villagers, the village would be on a higher level. Also, one of the important development potentials is the fact that it is a mountain village and that the air is cleaner than the city's, which may possibly lead to the development of tourism. In order to develop tourism, it is absolutely essential to pave the existing roads that are in poor condition. It is possible to develop private businesses that would motivate residents to stay and work in the village.

5.3. Defining strategic directions of sustainable development, general and specific goals, program actions and measures

To develop the village adequately, i.e., to implement the appropriate development directions, first it is necessary to consider its positive and negative aspects and pay attention to the limitations. Having defined the village problems, it is required to propose ideas for their solution, and decide on the direction further development and growth of the village should take, as well as which particular investments are vital for the selected location.

Defining strategic directions of sustainable development - direction 1

Based on the analyses and surveys conducted with the residents of Berbatovo village, the following strategic direction for the development of the village has been established [6]:

- Strategic direction 1: Territorial, infrastructural and environmental development

General and specific development goals for strategic direction 1

General objectives:

- Infrastructural and sustainable development of the territory aligned with the environmental capacities: utilization of the geostatic and traffic position of Niš at the European, national and regional level and improvement of access to urban amenities throughout the entire territory of the city

The specific goal of strategic direction 1 is:

- 3.1 – Balanced urban and regional development of Niš

Program actions and measures

Upon analyzing flaws and issues pertinent to the selected village, in order to solve them, it is required to refer to the points of the Action Plan for the development of the city of Niš and the given guidelines for further elaboration. Within the framework of the four strategic directions, listed are appropriate actions that may provide adequate conditions for the improvement and development of the village. Further work is related to some of them (Table 2). Within the specific objective 1.1, an appropriate program action was selected and entered in Table 2.

Specific action and measure for achieving specific goal 1.1 is:

1.1.1 *Coordination of urban and regional development strategies with the integration of local potentials and the development of an integral approach to urban development and renewal/regeneration, which includes spatial-physical, cultural, economic and social dimensions* - the development of villages require an all-aspect approach; it is crucial to persuade residents to stay in the village by providing them with suitable conditions, to organize spaces for cultural and public events, provide a sufficient amount of money for salaries as well as the possible opening of new jobs within the village, primarily for the missing basic life requirements (healthcare center, pharmacy, post office...)

Table 2 Program action 1 – Urban development and village renewal – goals, actions and measures

Goals		Actions
Direction 2	No.	Direction: Economy/business
Specific goal 1.1	1.1.1	Coordination of urban and regional development strategies while integrating local potentials and developing an integral approach to urban development and renewal/regeneration, which includes spatial-physical, cultural, economic and social dimensions
Measures		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ provide the villagers with appropriate conditions to stay ▪ organize spaces for cultural and social events ▪ open those facilities that are missing 		

Defining the strategic directions of sustainable development - direction 2

Strategic direction 2 deals with the development of the economy and business. Berbatovo is a mountain-type village, it has fresh air and is located in the vicinity of the city of Niš. In addition to these prerequisites, it is possible to develop certain village areas, landscape and enrich them so that they draw tourists' interest to visit the village and enjoy all its benefits.

Most village inhabitants have basic education, a small number of inhabitants have completed secondary or higher school. Those who graduated from the university remained in the city. It is necessary to raise awareness among residents about the higher education and attending courses, so that they acquire knowledge that would later serve them.

General and specific development goals for strategic direction 2

General objectives:

- Creating a favorable business environment for investment, development of entrepreneurship, increasing employment and strengthening competitiveness of the economy; strengthening territorial marketing initiatives in order to improve the image of the city as a business center

Specific objectives of the strategic direction 2 are:

- 2.3 – Improving the tourist potential of the city of Niš
- 2.5 – Promoting entrepreneurship, self-employment programs and support for individual initiatives

Program actions and measures

Within the program action *Creation of business opportunities*, three specific goals were chosen as well as corresponding program actions and measures (Table 3).

2.3.1 *Tourism development program based on the natural, cultural and accommodation capacity of the city (spa, health, transit, congress and business tourism, eco-ethno-tourism, religious tourism, tourism of big cities - City breaks, events and manifestations tourism - Events, etc.)* - one of the important criteria of the village advancement would be the emergence and development of tourism as well as the location improvement that would be interesting to the visiting tourists. In addition to clean mountain air and relief, the village of Berbatovo can improve certain public areas and create an offer for staying there while enjoying nature. With the advent of tourism, the visibility of the village would be greatly increased and more people would want to visit it.

Table 3 Program action 2 - Creation of business opportunities – goals, actions and measures

Goals		Actions
Direction 2	No.	Direction: Economy/business
Specific goal 2.3	2.3.1	Tourism development program based on the natural, cultural and accommodation capacity of the city (spa, health, transit, congress and business tourism, eco-ethno-tourism, religious tourism, tourism of big cities - City breaks, events and manifestations tourism - Events, etc)
Specific goal 2.5	2.5.1	Programs to increase competitiveness of human resources, through permanent education, specialization, continuing education
	2.5.3	Start-up loan programs to support business beginners and self-employment
Measures		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Improving public spaces and working on offers that the village can provide to tourists to spend some time in nature and relax - development of tourism ▪ encouraging the inhabitants of the village to go to school, directing them to further education ▪ providing financial support for undeveloped areas of the village and encouraging residents to work and establish not only personal businesses ▪ considering the possibility of organic food production ▪ formation of poultry farms 		

2.5.1 *Programs to increase the competitiveness of human resources, through permanent education, specialization, continuing education* – after surveying the population, it was established that the majority of remaining village population completed primary or secondary school. One of the significant goals regarding the village development is a focus on their education, and encouragement to complete higher education or professional education and thus acquire knowledge that would later serve them in work and life. It is necessary to work on their guidance and further education in the form of courses or demonstration exercises so that they can use and apply their newly acquired knowledge in the most adequate way in their native region. These could be courses in the field of economic activities that do not require large investments or production facilities (flower growing, handicrafts, basketry, production of organic food, production...).

2.5.3 *Start-up loan programs to support business beginners and for self-employment* - provide the younger population that stays in the village with the opportunity and financial assistance to start an independent business (financial assistance for underdeveloped areas and population, raising greenhouses, establishing small poultry farms, production of organic food, production of flower seedlings, handicrafts, souvenirs...).

Defining strategic directions of sustainable development - direction 3

Strategic direction 3 deals with social development. In the village of Berbatovo, it is necessary to further develop and strengthen social life. It is vital to bring the inhabitants of the village and the surrounding area together, helped by recreational facilities/equipment/area, which will at the same time encourage them to get to know each other and socialize. New gathering spots need to be set and equipped. In addition, it is crucial to encourage the village inhabitants to participate in decision-making concerning the village and fight for its welfare.

General and specific development goals for the strategic direction 3

General goal:

- Creating a stimulating and safe social environment in which all citizens will be able to express and satisfy their needs for belonging and identity, socializing and personal development

The specific objectives of strategic direction 3 are:

- 3.2 – Creating conditions for individual development and personal affirmation
- 3.3 – Creating conditions for a rich and meaningful social life
- 3.4 – Strengthening the community through the inclusion of all citizens, strengthening solidarity and developing identity

Program actions and measures

Within the program action Creation of business opportunities, three specific goals were chosen as well as corresponding program actions and measures (Table 4).

3.2.3. *Development of sports and physical education, creation of the village sports brand* – in the village of Berbatovo, during the summer, football matches and competitions are often organized in which younger inhabitants of the village as well as nearby inhabitants participate. Also, it is possible to organize mountain biking and races in the spring and summer.

3.3.2. *Improving and equipping public space for outdoor socializing (parks, picnic areas, promenades, outdoor playgrounds)* – Currently, the main and only gathering spot in Berbatovo is the open space around the only drugstore in the village. What is necessary is to organize and equip additional places for meetings and socializing in the open, where the inhabitants of the village and visitors will gather.

3.4.4. *Programs to encourage and train citizens to participate in decision-making and solving local problems* – the inhabitants of the village should be one of the main contributing factors regarding the issues of the village and its development, and it is necessary to include them as much as possible in the discussion and decision-making when solving local problems.

Table 4 Program action 3 - Development of social life in the village
– goals, actions and measures

Goals		Actions
Direction 3	No.	Direction: Social development
Specific goal 3.2	3.2.3	Development of culture of sports and physical education Creating the village sports brand
Specific goal 3.3	3.3.2	Improving and equipping public space for outdoor socializing (parks, picnic areas, promenades, outdoor playgrounds)
Specific goal 3.4	3.4.4	Programs to encourage and train citizens to participate in decision-making and solving local problems
Measures		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ creating the village sports brand ▪ organizing football and mountain bike competitions ▪ establishing and equipping a new place for gathering of locals and visitors ▪ including village residents in discussions and decision-making for solving local problems 		

6. DISCUSSION

The Serbian village is at the crossroads between disappearance and survival. According to the numbers from the previous census, it is clear that the number of inhabitants is growing exclusively in large cities, while the opposite is the case in villages. There are 4800 villages in Serbia. It is estimated that in less than two decades, villages with less than 100 inhabitants will disappear, and there are about 700 such villages. The mentioned villages are mostly located in central Serbia, mostly in eastern, southeastern and southern Serbia. One of these villages in southern Serbia is the village of Berbatovo in the area of the city of Niš. Bearing in mind the whole picture, the population is getting older, dwindling by year, the number of marriages is plummeting, more and more people are migrating abroad, the birth rate is decreasing. This is even more obvious in mountain villages. First of all, the village should overcome its main problem, which is depopulation, aging and migration of the young population. Another problem is insufficient education and the orientation of the young population to the city for education and employment. The reform of primary education should lend rural schools a special and privileged status [14]. Moreover, the educational countryside-related contents referring to villages as healthy environment and to agriculture as a promising life occupation should gain greater scope and importance in the curricula of all primary schools. In addition to the afore-mentioned issues, the essential problems of the current state of the village include infrastructural and institutional equipment, or lack thereof, economic status and underutilized conditions pertaining to the growth and development of a village.

7. CONCLUSION

In order to remedy the problems and obstacles that tend to block the development of the village, it is necessary to introduce appropriate measures that will contribute to the reconstruction and better life in the village. First of all, it is crucial to devise state and regional programs for revival of the sustainable villages in such a manner that the investors become attracted to it, especially the ones who would employ those left unemployed in the cities, eager to move to the village to live there, get a job and start their own business in agriculture,

cattle-breeding, or some other economic activity. One of the steps is public space improving and working on the offers that the village can provide to locals, tourists and people who would like to move to the village or visit it. Furthermore, it is necessary to encourage residents to stay in the village, then encourage them to establish businesses that are beyond personal (for their own needs), but also to show opportunities for creating businesses that will provide better living and working conditions for the entire village. One of the possibilities is for the inhabitants to complete the courses and start doing handicrafts, create souvenirs, weave bags, learn the technique of gold embroidery, classical embroidery... Another possibility is to create their own brands, prepare winter clothes, chutneys, produce organic fruits and vegetables, grow and pick medicinal plants and distribute them to the cities. Berbatovo is a mountain-type village, so it is possible to landscape and improve certain areas with the development of village tourism in mind. One of the ideas would be the introduction of sports games and competitions in football, cycling and other sports. Thus, the development of tourism would be further encouraged.

After conducting analyses, observations, surveys, and case study methods, the conclusion was reached that the best approach for the development of rural areas, in this case specifically the village of Berbatovo near the city of Niš, is the introduction of strategic support for development. In the case of the city of Niš, the key strategic document defining the measures and mechanisms in this paper is the Action Plan for the Development of the City of Niš 2015-2020 [6]. In accordance with the Action Plan, measures and mechanisms were defined. They would help in the rural development of the selected village of Berbatovo and at the same time satisfy the mentioned actions listed in the Spatial Plan of the Republic of Serbia 2021-2035 [10], as well as the mentioned priority areas from the Strategy of Agriculture and Rural Development of the Republic of Serbia for the period 2014-2024 [11]. This has been precisely one of the main goals of the paper - to demonstrate how a strategic approach and an existing strategic document can be used to apply specific measures to a specific example.

All the measures mentioned in the paper are achievable, it is possible to work on the village development, and it is of utmost significance that the inhabitants join the discussion and participate in the decisions to be made for the sake of a better life and progress in the village.

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**PROGRAMSKE AKTIVNOSTI
U CILJU ODRŽIVOG RURALNOG RAZVOJA:
STUDIJA SLUČAJA, SELO BERBATOVO, NIŠ**

Rad se bavi analizom, predlozima i razradom programskih akcija i mera u cilju održivog razvoja sela Berbatovo. Pored prikupljanja opštih podataka o selu i njegovih razvojnih karakteristika definisani su razvojni problemi i potencijali. Glavni nedostaci sela koje se analizira su opadanje broja stanovnika, njihova migracija u gradove, nizak nivo obrazovanja stanovnika koji ostaju da žive u selu. Nedovoljno je adekvatnog prostora za javno okupljanje, nema ustanova neophodnih za funkcionisanje meštana – ambulanta, pošta, obdanište, loše je stanje puteva. Osim proizvodnje za sopstvene potrebe, nedovoljna je aktivnost i zainteresovanost stanovnika za pokretanje sopstvenog biznisa koji bi stvorio uslove za kvalitetniji život u selu. U radu su nakon definisanja razvojnih problema i uočenih potencijala odabrani odgovarajući strateški pravci održivog razvoja, opšti i specifični ciljevi i programske akcije i mere koje bi doprinele adekvatnom razvoju sela.

Ključne reči: *Berbatovo, selo, održivi razvoj, mere, ruralna arhitektura*