

MULTILEVEL GOVERNANCE INSTRUMENTS FOR ACHIEVING BALANCED URBAN-RURAL DEVELOPMENT

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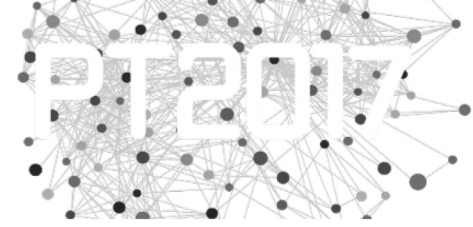
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ABSTRACT

Sustainable and balanced urban-rural development largely depends on governance system and methods, instruments and practices deriving from it. Just, efficient and effective governance requires collaboration and sharing of responsibility in policy formulation and decision-making processes between different stakeholders at different levels of territorial organization. This implies a complex set of mechanisms, processes and institutions through which stakeholders can articulate their interests and exercise their rights, but also share ideas, negotiate, reach common understanding and agree on solution in given circumstances. This paper discusses process and achieved results of the collaboration between academic institution and local government in the students' master thesis and integrated projects development for the territory of the municipality of Pančevo, Serbia. The main focus of the curriculum was set on application of multilevel governance instruments in order to achieve balanced development of the municipal territory. Students' projects address different challenges: devastation of agricultural land; migration of (especially young) population from rural to urban areas; poor services and low income in rural areas; waste management; neglect of natural and cultural heritage. The educational approach was designed in order to create learning environment that foster collaborative learning for all participants involved: students, local stakeholders, consultants and mentors. The paper has three main parts. The first one provides a brief overview of the theoretical background of the multilevel governance and collaborative learning and practice oriented educational approach. Second part presents the objectives of this educational model, methods and structure of the expected deliverables. The third part presents seven students' projects that are dealing with urban-rural relationships and highlights key multilevel governance instruments for the implementation of proposals. Conclusion discusses process and product outcomes differentiating benefits for all involved, obstacles and challenges and provides recommendations for future work.

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INTRODUCTION

In Europe's complex and rapidly evolving development context, characterised amongst other things by threats to the vitality of rural areas, as well as by urban sprawl and declining quality of life in urban areas due to congestion and pollution, the interdependencies between city and country become a particularly important topic in key European development policies. The European Spatial Development Perspective (ESDP) (EC, 1999), as an indicator of 'political concern' for the future of rural areas throughout Europe, promotes 'urban-rural partnership'. This is a concept applicable to both rural communities and areas blighted by uncontrolled urban sprawl, and its key tenets are the provision of basic public services and public transportation in rural areas; fostering partnership between cities and rural settlements and creation of 'functional regions'; integration of rural zones into urban areas' spatial development strategies; encouragement of and support for co-operation between rural areas, as well as between these and small and medium-sized towns (at both the national and international levels), to implement projects and exchange experiences; and establishment of networks between public institutions, small and medium-sized businesses, and local communities in both urban and rural areas.

The concept of a spatial and functional relationship between urban and rural areas is based on the movement of people, capital, goods, information, and technology, and the interdependencies of these factors can be examined by means of sociology, economics, geography, and spatial planning (Davoudi & Stead, 2002; Zonneveld & Stead, 2007). According to Davoudi & Stead (2002), urban-rural relationships must be viewed in the context of overall globalisation trends (production, finance, trade, and labour markets), whereby there has to be a shift away from the conventional view of rural areas as exclusively agricultural. Urban-rural linkages are a key segment of territorial development policies exactly because of their major potential to advance the quality of life for both urban and rural populations.

The sustainability of urban and rural areas is based on alignment and synergy of their individual development paths that are based on their distinct resources, potentials, and development constraints. In the context of spatial planning and programming, the urban-rural relationship can be made more sustainable through better co-ordination of transportation, land use, and open space planning; limiting growth and increasing the density of existing settlements based on green and compact city principles; constructing blue and green infrastructure; safeguarding agricultural land; and promoting domestic production and the locally-based economy (Nilsson et al., 2014).

Within the urban governance, the multilevel governance is a concept that can allow the articulation and execution of appropriate responses to these challenges posed by urban-rural development.

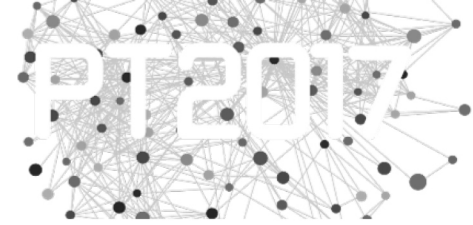
MULTILEVEL GOVERNANCE INSTRUMENTS

The governance model has seen alterations over the past twenty years, spurred by the acceleration and increasing unpredictability of changes to the development context. The key features of the new governance model are more flexibility in decision-making and greater involvement of various stakeholders in articulating and executing decisions, including a greater range of modalities for stakeholder participation. This has allowed those affected by decision-making to enter territory that was previously the sole domain of the authorities (public agencies at various levels of government and within multiple departments with divided and very often overlapping powers). This change in the value system has brought about an altered understanding of the role of public agencies, whose position has been shifting from 'holding power and making decisions' to initiating, motivating, informing, empowering, organising, and facilitating participation and dialogue by various spatial stakeholders: public agencies at all levels of government and various departments; private businesses; civil society organisations; and citizens.

The integration of different government levels (local, regional, and national, as well as European, in the context of EU integration) and other stakeholders into a consistent and integrated governance system constitutes the backbone of multilevel urban governance. This concept was defined in the Leipzig Charter on Sustainable European Cities (EurActiv 24/05/07), which for the first time highlighted the significance of multilevel governance for the execution of urban policies. The Toledo Declaration (2010) was adopted to address the context of the 2008 global financial and social crisis that has affected nations and cities throughout the globe; this document further elaborates on these issues and makes recommendations for the development of instruments tailored to this model of governance. It particularly underlines the need for a new form of governance, the so-called 'urban alliance', in which all those with a stake in constructing the city ought to participate.

To attain integrated urban development, multilevel urban governance can be put into practice by means of cross-cutting policy instruments that facilitate: (1) formulation of solutions based on the integration of environmental, social, economic, spatial, organisational, and cultural objectives of development; (2) constant communication and collaboration between various levels of government; (3) constant and constructive participation by stakeholders from the private and civil sectors; (4) support for the establishment of partnerships between the public, private, and civil sector; and (5) support for integrated local actions (European Cohesion Policy, EC 2010).

Below we will present the education model applied and the results achieved in the Integrated Urbanism study programme at Belgrade University's Faculty of Architecture, where one of the objectives was to familiarise students with the new EU urban governance instruments and promote their critical re-assessment. The goal of the programme is to build capacity of future planning professionals to allow them to better face the socio-economic context of Serbia's post-socialist transition. For academic year 2015/16 the main topic for students' master's projects was 'Multilevel urban governance instruments: Implementation of the City of Pančevo Development Strategy, 2014-2020'.



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EDUCATION FOR BALANCED URBAN-RURAL DEVELOPMENT

The key strategic precept of the education model followed in the Integrated Urbanism master's course is the creation of a flexible platform for introducing professional experiences from various disciplines (natural sciences, social sciences and humanities, and arts) and fields (academia, practitioners, public institutions, international bodies, activists, the market, etc.) into the teaching process in its entirety. The process of developing masters' projects, which will be presented in this paper, has been conceived in line with this commitment, which has allowed sound professional dialogue and collaborative and practice-oriented learning, not only for students but for all involved. This has made the teaching process a testing ground for the re-assessment of existing urban governance ideas, concepts, and instruments, and the introduction of new ones into practice.

Collaborative learning is a common modern teaching method that entails encouraging students to work together to complete assignments. Learning takes place through collaboration in smaller groups to attain common objectives and maximise both individual learning and that of other students (Johnson & Johnson, 2004). Collaborative learning contributes to the cognitive, social, and emotional development of students ((De Hei et al, 2015).

Problem and practice-oriented teaching is a research-based learning approach, as learning is thought to be much more effective when students are actively involved and interested in a topic (Kwan, 2000). Teaching methods and student work are aimed at the solution of practical problems, which students address by working on particular assignments. Practice-oriented teaching is intended to prepare students to perform comprehensive research, planning, and activities aimed at the development and application of scientific and technical achievements (Chuchalin et al, 2013). More generally, the methodological approach to education used in the study programme contributes to the establishment of broad-based dialogue within the profession to re-assess the position of planning professionals in Serbia's altered socio-economic context and re-define their position in spatial development practice.

The process of developing students' master's projects is primarily oriented towards creating solutions rooted in professional practice, the quality and complexity of which are products of the involvement of a multitude of different stakeholders. Knowledge creation is directly conditioned by the thematic framework, which is selected so as to reflect the most up-to-date professional experiences and issues of significance for the planning profession globally, and at the same time mirrors topical problems of urban planning practice in Serbia. At the same time, the overall thematic framework provides a platform for permanent communication between all stakeholders during the development of students' final works. Knowledge is constructed in the process of developing solutions through an exchange of professional experiences from various fields. Different forms of organised discussion – such as meetings, group debates, and workshops – create a broad-based working environment and create space for open professional dialogue.

INTEGRATED STUDENTS' MASTER PROJECTS FOR URBAN-RURAL BALANCE

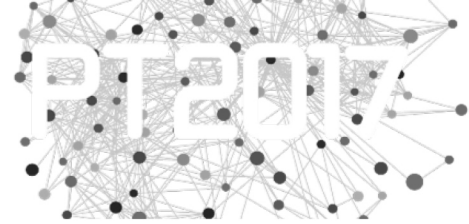
Masters' projects produced by students of the Integrated Urbanism course constitute a set of mutually compatible designs for the City of Pančevo. Some of these designs are predominantly concerned with spatial interventions and changes to physical structure, others focus on social or economic objectives, whilst others still deal with the design of institutions and mechanisms to facilitate change. However, regardless of their primary focus and initial impulse, all of these projects integrate all aspects of development (spatial, environmental, social, and economic) to ensure the proposed solutions are sustainable. The various aspects are integrated by being aligned and consolidated with a number of sectoral policies (articulated in different types of documents) pertaining to the territory of Pančevo that have been defined and are being implemented at various levels of government (Milovanović Rodić, et al, 2016). Below we present students' projects, problems, solutions, and key principles that underpin balanced urban-rural development of the Municipality of Pančevo.

IP1: Farming co-operatives to promote organic production

- **Problem:** Small farms are not competitive in the market, and consequently their revenues are low. The issues of small farm size and obsolete equipment are compounded by the vulnerability of the soil to inappropriate disposal of municipal and farming waste.
- **Project proposal:** In this project the development of small farms is based on the greater revenues that farms can achieve by joining together into co-operatives. Apart from improving competitiveness and market access and facilitating the purchase of farming equipment, co-operatives would promote farmer awareness and encourage the acquisition of new knowledge and skills.
- **Urban-rural synergy:** Integration of supply of and demand for farm production; support for the local circular economy.

IP2: Rural tourism as a factor in the development of Pančevo's rural areas

- **Problem:** As in many rural areas of Vojvodina, the village of Ivanovo faces low living standards; in addition, the area suffers from pronounced country-city migration and depopulation. The village fronts the Nadel and Danube Rivers, and its territory includes a river island that has been declared a natural monument (home to protected and rare species of plants, animals, and fungi). There are many holiday homes in the area, which has a tradition as a day-trip destination. Nevertheless, the village's tourism offering and infrastructure are under-developed, and it lacks accommodation capacity.
- **Project proposal:** Under this project, rural development is to be based on greater revenues from tourism that the village can earn by developing recreational fishing, activating existing accommodation capacities and creating new ones, constructing a small boat marina, and developing an integrated offering that links leisure with entertainment. These efforts are expected to improve local products and services and enhance the quality of life.
- **Urban-rural synergy:** Integration of urban and rural tourism offering; improvement of quality of life in rural area; and reduction in the rate of daily migration.



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IP3: Supporting social entrepreneurship by allowing access to unused town-owned office space

- **Problem:** Publicly-owned office space is under-utilised, which has had an adverse effect on economic activity and general dynamism of the town centre. On the other hand, non-governmental organisations (NGOs) are unable to rent publicly-owned premises for their social enterprises at concessionary prices unless they intend to engage in business.
- **Project proposal:** This project entails support for social entrepreneurship by (1) mobilising and incentivising NGOs to create social enterprises; (2) providing financial support and education for social enterprises, and allowing them access to unused town-owned office space; and (3) amending the institutional and regulatory environment.
- **Urban-rural synergy:** Empowerment and social inclusion (association and revenue generation) of vulnerable groups, including rural women and elderly people.

IP4: Sustainable system to manage hazardous household and farming waste

- **Problem:** The issues addressed by this project are the lack of a system for selective collection of household and farming waste; low public engagement and awareness of this issue, its extent, consequences, and efforts to resolve it; degraded areas; and threats to public health.
- **Project proposal:** This project defines a sustainable process for managing waste throughout its lifecycle. It is based on principles of environmental design, which require products to not have adverse impacts on the environment at any stage of their lifecycles. The solution is tailored to the needs and capacities of Pančevo.
- **Urban-rural synergy:** Establishment of an integrated waste management and environmental protection, particularly with regard to soil and water.

IP5: Construction of a biogas facility in Pančevo

- **Problem:** Pančevo is threatened by high air pollution levels caused by the local chemical industry, as well as, in winter, district heating facilities and individual households that burn solid fuel for heating. On the other hand, farmland accounts for 83 % of the town's territory, and by-products of farming are routinely either burnt or discarded.
- **Project proposal:** The project proposes that organic farming waste should be used to make biogas, which would then be utilised as fuel for district heating across the territory of Pančevo, as well as for the manufacture of fertiliser, a by-product of biogas production.
- **Urban-rural synergy:** Establishment of an Integrated waste management; renewable energy; and environmental protection, particularly with regard to air.

IP6: Ensuring inclusion of Pančevo's cultural offering into the Danube Route cultural network

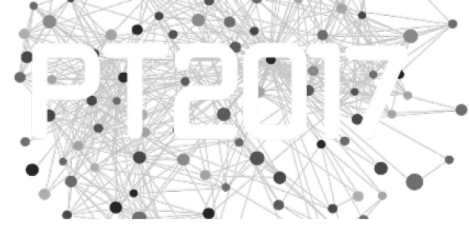
- **Problem:** Under-utilisation of resources to develop the cultural offering of the town, in particular in outlying rural areas; poor attendance and overlap between events; absence of prior announcements for seasonal programmes; mismatch between supply and demand; and poor audience participation in the development of the town's cultural content.
- **Project proposal:** This project aims at including Pančevo's cultural offering in the Danube Route cultural network. It envisages the creation of a network of cultural institutions and events in the town and nine outlying villages, and the deployment of measures to encourage activities at village cultural centres. Preserving the traditions, languages, and customs of these multi-ethnic-confessional areas may make them more attractive not only for the local population, but at the international level as well.
- **Urban-rural synergy:** Positioning of Pančevo's cultural offer, networking between cultural institutions at the local, national and sub national (Danube region) level, and integration and alignment of their activities.

All projects are based upon the integration of different sectoral policies and linkages, co-operation between different levels of authorities, public institutions, and the civil and private sector in the design and implementation of integrated projects.

CONCLUSIONS

The opportunity to work on a real, practical case within the framework of collaboration with different actors gained the added value to the learning exercise, and final project ideas. Firstly, it gained the understanding that implementation of the local development strategy is as a set of complementary integrated projects for both urban and rural areas. These projects rely on synergy of development paths that are based on the distinct potentials and constrains of rural and urban areas. Secondly, objectives of the projects were related to: (1) better land management of both agricultural and construction land; (2) improvement of technical and social services; (3) support of low income groups' employment (women in rural areas); (4) improvement of the natural and cultural heritage in rural areas, and (5) better urban governance. And, thirdly, besides the projects themselves these ideas include different types of networks between public institutions, new types of partnership between private and public sector, and, as well, public participation and improved transparency in order to reach better governance in both urban and rural areas.

We relied on the principles of multilevel urban governance that are crucial for attaining integrated urban development are co-ordination, co-operation, participation, and integration of sectoral policies and stakeholders. The teaching model outlined above and students' projects promote the use of participatory multilevel governance instruments to achieve balanced urban-rural development. Their objective is to facilitate linkages, dialogue, and joint action between authorities at different levels of government, as well as between these bodies and stakeholders in the private and civil sector. 'Participatory instruments' here means all policy instruments (such as regulations, plans, strategic documents, designs, etc.) created in the course of a process that encourages, fosters, and motivates the participation



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of various public, civil, and private organisations, groups, communities, and members of the public in their articulation and implementation.

The students' projects presented above are grounded in the understanding that balanced urban-rural development can only be attained if: (1) there is active and continuous collaboration between various stakeholders in designing and implementing solutions; (2) different sectoral policies are integrated; (3) co-ordination is allowed between different levels of government to implement integrated urban projects; (4) monitoring of implementation is ensured; and (5) institutions are able to change and adapt to an evolving development context.

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