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2ND INTERNATIONAL
SCIENTIFIC
CONFERENCE

**REGIONAL
DEVELOPMENT,
SPATIAL
PLANNING AND
STRATEGIC
GOVERNANCE**

Conference Proceedings

**Institute of Architecture and Urban & Spatial
Planning of Serbia**

**2nd INTERNATIONAL SCIENTIFIC
CONFERENCE**

**REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT,
SPATIAL PLANNING AND
STRATEGIC GOVERNANCE -
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SOCIALIST LEGACY AND SOME CURRENT ISSUES OF ENVIRONMENT PROTECTION IN A EUROPEAN TRANSITIONAL SOCIETY: SERBIAN EXAMPLE

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1. INTRODUCTION

The term ‘socialism’ has totally different connotation than in the period prior to the first “revolutions” in Eastern Europe in 1989. Though, there is still a negative stigma in perception of environmental accidents and disasters that happened in the countries of the former communist block (e.g. Chernobyl), yet at the same time, the promoters of neo-liberal thinking do not critically assess the equivalent effects of environmental disasters under the umbrella of capitalism (Bhopal, Love Canal, Seveso, etc.). And while radical sociologist David Harvey (2010) explains the crisis of capitalism and wonders “is it time to look beyond capitalism towards a new social order that would allow us to live within a system that really could be responsible, just, and humane?”, philosopher A. Gorz (1994) reminds us: “As a system, socialism is dead”, and as a movement it stands on *wobbly* legs. A newer (and still *alive*) Marx’s interpretation is done by „ecological Marxism“ - a social movement developed in 1970s mainly by Western Marxist scholars (J.B. Foster, J. O’Connor, P. Burkett etc.). This interpretation is today fully accepted in socialist countries like China which are seriously reviewing their ignorant relationship (with devastating consequences) to natural resources management (Wang, 2012). But socialist ruling élites in USSR (where according to Foster (2008) an “extreme version of productivism” under Stalinist system led to “its own version of ecocide“) as well as the élites in eastern European countries interpreted Marx’s ideas in a way which suited them, and environmental concern was mainly subordinated to achievement of economic goals, which resulted in severe environmental degradation in those countries. Even nowadays, authoritarian legacy of post-socialist societies, which is represented by the tendency to pursue the centralised decision-making model despite the multiparty political system, keeps on the environment and ecological concerns at the margins of development agendas.

The evolution path of Serbian post-socialist, transitional society is marked by similar issues that other European post-communist countries have been going through, especially viz. the lack of economic investments and high unemployment rates which keep present Serbia focused on existential issues rather than on environmental concern. One should bare in mind that under socialism, Serbia (as the part of former SFRY) followed a specific, individual path, i.e. it fostered the first established economic system of self-governance anywhere, which limited the power and economic function of the central social and state

organs by the independence and self-management of the producers, so that the incentives in a society's environmental, social, economic, cultural, etc. spheres came from bottom up. However, the break-up of SFRY coincided with initiation of transition process which has had a prolonged duration in Serbia. Both the aftermaths of the NATO air strikes on Serbia in 1999 as well as the uncritical adoption of a neo-liberal concept throughout the whole period of post-socialist transition implied severe consequences, especially in terms of environment degradation. In the period of international isolation and war in Serbia (in the 1990s) 'political élites were not interested in applying the model of prudent environmental management' (Petrović, 2012:527), however after the year 2000, especially because of the country's inclination towards EU integration, new environmental and other legislation has been stimulated, even though this process has had a slow pace. As Petrović (ibid.) points out, this lingering is largely due to slow changes in the administrative apparatus (horizontal transposition of jurisdiction between the ministries and vertical transposition between different levels of governance) as well as by the lack of cooperation with the "third" sector.

Like other European post-socialist countries, the present Serbia is substantially dedicated to implementation of environment protection measures. The underlying reasons for this are: a) mitigation of far reaching (both in time and space) negative environmental consequences that were produced by centrally managed economic policies practiced under the socialist regime as well as by subsequent neo-liberal approaches; 2) membership or candidate status for EU that creates obligation for transposition of the environmental *acquis* (with some of the world's highest environmental standards); and 3) raised citizen's awareness on environmental issues (including creation of environmental movements).

2. HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE - ENVIRONMENTAL LEGACY OF THE SOCIALIST ERA

According to initial socialism doctrine, as interpreted by Karl Marx, a socialist society implies sustainable development; hence ecological problems could not develop in it (Hou, Xu, 2012:127). In a way, Marx was a pioneer for sustainable development discourse, by arguing that 'a whole society, a nation, or even all simultaneously existing societies taken together, are not the owners of the globe. They are only its possessors, its usufructuaries, and, like *boni patres familias*, they must hand it down to succeeding generations in an improved condition' (Marx, 1996).

The communist ideology proclaimed that because the profit gain wasn't the main motive for planned economies, they were more environmentally friendly than the market oriented economies (Cherp & Mnatsakanian, 2003:67). However, the practice showed that centrally managed economy would induce significant impact on environment and ecosystems, starting from the overuse of resources, pollution of air, water and soil, up to degradation of valuable ecosystems. According to Ellman (2007:19) development at any price and achievement of norms designated in famous 'five year plans' resulted in severe

environment degradation, though according to Cherp & Mnatsakanian (2003:67) there have been also some positive examples (e.g. *zapovedniks*, a unique network of nature protection reserves in USSR created on the base of Vernadskii's theories). The lack of comprehension or deliberate ignoring of ecological problems under communism was induced by so-called Stalin model of industrialisation, i.e. by putting an emphasis on resource and energy production for the purposes of export, which directly caused environmental degradation in the countries which opted for such model of production, as well as by the absence of environmental protection laws or their disobey (Brkić, 1998). One of the reasons for insufficient care about natural resources (that were taken 'for granted') was "overcentralisation" of decision making (with top-down management, 'socialisation' of decision-making where no one was directly responsible for the consequences of action, as well as the lack of vertical and horizontal consultations, i.e. with regional and local levels of decision making and coordination between different sectoral ministries that brought to collision or overlapping of liability). In addition to that, the concentration on rapid industrialization through development of heavy industry and application of "dirty" technologies continued to be implemented in the communist countries while they were already abandoned in the West. However, it should be noted that the Western European countries had their share in enhancement of ecological problems in the Central and Eastern European countries, e.g. while the Western Europe entered the post-industrial phase and rejected "dirty technologies" in the 1970s and 1980s, communist/socialist countries of Europe had been motivated to "grab the chance" and increase their proper production of resources and energy on the account of environmental quality.

Already during the 1960s, various social movements in the western countries raised the general public awareness of the world environmental issues. Originally, market oriented economies in their search for profit claim have ignored importance of protection and sustainable use of natural resources. However, some major ecological incidents and citizens dissatisfaction influenced adoption and implementation of strict environmental regulation, along with appearance of international treaties and agreements in this area.

In contrast to the western countries, where environmental movements were often associated with protests, under communist regimes, the protest (including the one for the sake of environmental protection) was considered a criminal act – as it was a critique of the state and the Party (Lee and Norris, 2000:376). According to Pedersen (2000:2), in those countries 'environmental legacy created a platform for public uprising in the late 1980s, turning into a demand for changes in the economic and political system'. Indeed, environmental protests in the former Soviet republics triggered political movements for the change of system and for national rights/ independence. Certainly, catastrophic images such as Chernobyl disaster in 1986, the polluted Aral Sea, discarded plutonium mines and decaying nuclear submarines made Eastern Europeans more receptive to environmental issues, though in comparison to the western Europeans, people in the East have been

generally more concerned with other (economic) issues, e.g. the unemployment or national economy (Lee and Norris, 2000:373).

2.1. Environmental legacy of the socialist era in the former Yugoslavia (SFRY)

In the period following the World War II until 1989-1991, similarly to other former communist/socialist countries of Central and Eastern Europe, Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (in the sequel: SFRY), that consisted of six republics including Serbia, had had integrated economic and political decision-making, i.e. key economic decisions were centrally made. The nature of such political-economic system was contained in 'achievement of set increases in production as the key parameter of economic progress, which was considered much more important than 'temporary' negative environmental impacts that such production may induce' (Waller and Millard, 1992).

However, in contrast to other European countries of the communist block, SFRY was not under the influence of USSR after the year 1948, and even though ecological considerations were not the primary goal for SFRY, they were not completely neglected 'as the country wasn't led by combined autarchy and dependency from the Soviet Union' (Brkić, 1998:220).

In the first phase (after the World War II until 1959) SFRY put a focus on protection of natural rarities, whereas in the following period characterised by significant social and economic changes (economic development, urban and industrial growth, etc.) a holistic approach to nature protection was applied (see: Стајић, 1977: 409-15).

According to Milašin (2013), the environmental concern was more developed in SFRY than in other communist/ socialist countries – especially starting from the 1970s. The Government of Yugoslavia established the Council for Man Environment and Spatial Planning. Back then in SFRY, instead of using the term 'environment' it was insisted on using the term 'man environment', and the awareness on negative anthropogenic impacts on the environment was well established in the professional circles and institutions, whereas 'population masses' didn't get through media sufficient information on the issue. Environmental issues have been broadcasted through all types of media, but often this was too superficial and/or it treated issues that were relevant for other continents instead of those of local concern (Бујновић, 1978:81). In support to early involvement of Yugoslav and Serbian academics in critique of environment degradation it is documented that already in 1973 the Serbian Academy of Science and Art (supported by several Republic's organisations including University in Belgrade) organised a huge interdisciplinary scientific conference "Man and environment in Serbia" which acknowledged that 'environment degradation had been lately intensified', particularly criticising environment degradation in Serbia, based on conditions of 'disharmony between technical-technological development and ecological aspects when natural resources are irrationally used'

(Каназир, 1977: 17). A need to confront the import of “dirty technology” was emphasised as well, but it was also concluded that ‘socialist self-government society has major advantages over other social constitutions... It offers unique possibilities for a far more successful and efficient solving of all problems that may arise from environment degradation because the society is proprietor of production and production resources ...’ (*ibid.*).

International cooperation of SFRY was well developed – certainly much more than in other countries of the communist block, and it was established through participation in various international congresses as well as in the international projects. All this was possible because SFRY had a ‘privileged’ position of self-governance state ‘between East and West’.

Affirmatively, SFRY adopted resolutions and declarations on various environment protection issues, but since the necessary organisation and institutionalisation was missing, all these documents were not followed by concrete measures and legislative framework that would support efficient environment protection. SFRY had rather good legislative framework in reference to environment protection, and it was among the first countries in the World which incorporated in its Constitution of 1974 that “a person has the right on healthy environment” as well as that “Social community provides the conditions for fulfilment of this right.” This made a way for delegation of responsibility on protection of natural resources, water and air from the federal state to republic and municipality levels. Under the conditions of emphasised industrial development, environmental laws were often just “words on a paper” and the price of environmental pollution within such context was treated as less important. However, the Report of the European Environment Agency from 1998 (REC, 2001:10) found that ‘until not long ago the environment conditions in SFRY were not as bad as it could be assumed’, i.e. SFRY was less degraded than the countries of Western, Central and Eastern Europe.

3. TRANSITION PERIOD (1990s – 2010)

By linking the problematic of environment protection with transition reforms that encompassed all post-communist (post-socialist) countries in the period after the ‘fall of the Iron curtain’, i.e. following the ‘revolutions’ in Eastern Europe in 1989, destruction of the Berlin wall in 1990 and break up of the Soviet Union in 1991, certain established patterns and modalities in relationships have been definitively abandoned in the countries ‘encompassing the geo-space between Leipzig and Sofia’ (Hofbauer 2009:213, in: Vujošević *et al.*, 2010:19).

The word ‘transition’ is associated with a course, i.e. a path from point ‘A’ to point ‘B’ which, in case of former communist countries, represents a path from communist/ socialist political and economic system to ‘something and somewhere else’ (mainly understood as a

transition to market economy and democratic pluralism) about which there is a lack of knowledge either for political and economic actors in transitional societies, or for their counterparts in the countries of the West (Brkić, 1998:214).

After the collapse of communist regimes in the countries of Central and East Europe, most of official ‘responses’ to their ecological problems were commonly inspired by the patterns of ‘Western origin’ which, though potentially applicable in ‘traditional capitalist countries of parliamentary democracy’, represent a lack of considerations on great challenges that post-socialism induces, as well as they overlook the diversity and specificity of various post-socialist societies (Michalak and Gibb, 1992, Herrschel and Forsyth, 2001). With that in view, this argument focuses on specificity of prolonged transition period in Serbia, which already entered a third decade of duration.

The transition period in Serbia (from the beginning of 1990s till present days) is generally qualified by the lack of stability, disincentives of interrelationships, lacks of trust and continuity, and as Vujošević *et al.* (2010:31) claim ‘the applied neo-liberal concept of forced and accelerated privatization has turned Serbia into some sort of economical, ecological and financial (semi)colony’.

The transition process in Serbia could be labelled (with more or less cynicism) as a ‘shift from one misfortune to another’, having that its initiation coincided with the process of SFRY’s disintegration (*ibid.*:11). Under such circumstances of ‘marauding of a kind’ and ‘fishing in troubled waters’, additionally complicated by international isolation and UN economic sanctions imposed on Serbia, instead of establishment of the war economy and production within self-sufficiency framework in the country, an economy of collective smuggling had been established.

In this first period of transition in Serbia, which lasted from the beginning of 1990s till the year 2000, negative trends inherited from the previous decades had only been emphasised: environmental care was subordinated to the temporary political-economic goals, as well as to the subsistence needs and financial capacities of the society. UN economic sanctions imposed on Serbia in the period 1992-95 had devastating consequences on the quality of life of its citizens. Though industry capacities were under-utilised, the increased consumption of coal (because of the strict oil embargo) caused greater air pollution (Serbian Sanctions Case Study, 2013). The situation worsened even more in the period of NATO air strikes on Serbia (24th March – 10th June 1999), i.e. with “NATO ecocide” or “deliberate and conscious causation of environmental damage to achieve war aims” (Joksimovich, 2000). NATO engaged massive aviation (almost 35,000 taking-off air raids) and used depleted uranium in missiles to bomb Serbian industrial and energy plants (especially in Pančevo, Prahovo and Novi Sad). As discovered by an independent report prepared for the European Commission, environment of the whole territory of Yugoslavia was affected by NATO air strikes, with severe pollution in the vicinity of targeted industrial complexes, while many valuable ecosystems were disturbed and biodiversity

endangered (Regional Environmental Center for Central and Eastern Europe, 1999). In sum, according to the Report of the Committee on the Environment (2001), ‘the bombing subjected ecosystems, surface water, groundwater, soil and air in the Balkans to unprecedented contamination involving over 100 toxic substances’ (Edeko, 2011:35). The period of violent conflicts at the whole territory of SFRY also induced many problems associated with the large number of displaced persons. In 1996 more than 600,000 refugees from Bosnia and Herzegovina and Croatia came to Serbia (Vaseljenska TV, 2013). As many refugees didn’t have the basic life necessities, this led to further environmental problems and pressures as deforestation, degradation of land and water resources. Even today, Serbia remains a European country with highest number of refugees and internally displaced persons – 287,700 in 2013 (UNHCR, 2013).

The second period of transition in Serbia, with initiation that could be conditionally marked by October 2000 changes, and which lasts until present, has continued with ‘semi-permeable liberalism’ practice (Hofbauer, 2004). This scenario, according to Vujošević (2009) ‘gave Serbia the so-called growth without development and one of the greatest de-industrialisation among all former socialist/ communist countries’. However, despite a great number of industrial plants were closed in Serbia as soon as the transition started in Serbia, the environmental issues have still been great because of ‘missing economic and other stimuli for better steering of economic restructuring towards greater spatial-ecological (environmental) adequacy’(Vujošević and Spasić, 2007:15). From the beginning of 1990s, a majority of environmental indicators worsened, together with all crucial economic and social indicators, meaning that Serbia is still – despite partial recovery - going through deep economic, social and political crisis (Vujošević et al., 2012:1714) with heavy consequences on its environment.

The so-called democratization, i.e. the forming of a civil society is still incomplete in present Serbia. Likewise all post-socialist societies, with growth of social protests, in the period of transition, Serbia also got new political organisations, however its old ‘élites’ that were established during the socialist era have continued to play the key role and often they took a comprador position within ‘new’ circumstances. In contrast to the societies in the West, various movements for environmental protection in the post-socialist countries including Serbia do not necessarily have a natural inclination towards left-oriented parties but they often associate with parties that rely on market mechanisms, even with the nationalistic parties.

At the same time environmental politics was also lagging behind. According to Nadić (2012) it started to develop in the end of 1980s, along with critical reconsideration of self-governing concept and institutional changes. The Ministry of environment protection has been established in 1991 for the first time in Serbia, and Law on environment protection was enacted the same year, which created a good starting point for further development of environmental protection.

4. SOME ASPECTS OF THE CURRENT STATE OF ENVIRONMENT IN SERBIA

The current state of the environment in the Republic of Serbia is characterised by relatively high level of endangerment for all elements of the environment, together with negative tendencies in the natural resources and energy management, inadequate waste management and poor quality of life (Агенција за заштиту животне средине, 2012). Systemic problems in environmental management and protection associated with competences and modern and efficient government-administrative measures are particularly pronounced. Based on the analysis of elements of the environmental management system in Serbia today, the following can be concluded:

- The budget of the Republic of Serbia (Агенција за заштиту животне средине, 2012) is the largest source of environmental protection financing. Financial resources for environmental protection for 2011 accounted for 0.8% of country's GDP (in 2011, the GDP in Serbia was 31,143 millions of euro according to the data of Ministry of Finance of the Republic of Serbia, 10th February 2013), which was far greater than the resource allocations for this purpose in 2009 (0.6% of its GDP), or in 2006 (0.37% of its GDP). Other countries undergoing transition allocate approximately 2% of their GDP to environmental protection, while new EU member countries allocated 1.5-2.5% of their GDP in pre-accession period. It is estimated that the resources allocated to environmental protection in Serbia are actually greater - up to 0.9% of its GDP, given that the official data have not included contributions from the local level, neither have they included contributions from industrial and private sectors. It is estimated that additional 2.1% of its GDP will be allocated to these purposes in Serbia until 2021, thus the total budget resource allocations for environmental protection would reach 3% (NKOEU, 2012). Although such forecasts are optimistic, the fact is that current resource allocations for the sector of environmental protection are insufficient, as well as that it would be necessary to substantially increase the financing, which implies a financial system reform. It is necessary to shift main burden of financing from the state budget to polluters and earmarked funds. In this context, it is possible to base the environmental financing on (new or revised) public utility service charges at the consumer level, be it residential, commercial, or industrial consumers.
- The implementation of environmental protection policy is ensured through legislative instruments. In this context, environmental protection in Serbia is governed by basic laws and bylaws harmonized with EU regulations in this field. In Serbia, the Department for Harmonization of Regulations in the Field of Energy and Environmental Protection within the Ministry of Energy, Development and Environmental Protection is responsible for this matter. Generally, the legislative framework for environmental management cannot be much criticized considering that, in preparing legal instruments in this field, the competent state institutions are keeping

track and analyzing the current international legal instruments, as well as keeping track of the EU legislation and carrying out comparative analysis of the EU and national legislation. These activities are carried out with the aim of preventing legal lacunae and avoiding any conflicting provisions of national legislation, at the same time achieving full harmonization of national legislation with *acqui communautaire*. It can be concluded that horizontal transposition of legal regulations related to certain segments of the environment does not follow the dynamics of "umbrella laws" that have already been harmonized with international agreements adopted within the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UN ECE), as well as with regulations of the European Union (REC, 2006). The transposition at the horizontal level has so far significantly progressed in sectors for chemicals, nature protection and waste. In order to continue the process of transposing the legislation within the competences of the sector for air protection, the political decision making in defining national thresholds of greenhouse gas emissions is needed. As for the water sector, the EU Water Framework Directive was substantially transposed into the adopted Water Law (2010). The work on transposition of legislation within the sector for industrial pollution must be updated in order to include the new Directive on Industrial Emissions adopted in November 2010. Aiming at making a visible progress, the priority has been given to amendments and supplements of current regulations and not to overall legal changes which would be more time-consuming and potentially controversial. This approach, which is still present today, has in some cases led to legal and institutional ambiguity (Nacionalna strategija Republike Srbije za aproksimaciju u oblasti životne sredine, 2011).

- The State acts in different fields, thus also in the field of environmental management, through institutional organization. The Law on Environmental Protection (2004) and regulations adopted pursuant to this Law govern the system of environmental protection and improvement, measures for natural resources protection and management, measures and procedures for the protection against harmful effects of economic activities on the environment, supervision by inspection, etc. In Serbia, there is a certain number of institutions which are competent for monitoring the implementation of environmental protection policy. The number and competences of such institutions in Serbia are mainly constant, except that certain changes occur in names of institutions, their organizational structure and place in hierarchical system according to political situation. In Serbia, the most important institutions for monitoring the state of the environment and the implementation of environmental protection policy are: Ministry of Energy, Development and Environmental Protection; Environmental Protection Agency; Ministry of Natural Resources, Mining and Spatial Planning; Institute for Nature Conservation of Serbia; Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Water Management; Republic Directorate for Water, Republic Hydrometeorological Institute of Serbia, and local administration bodies in charge for environmental protection. What can be concluded in this moment in the context of institutional organization of the State in the field of environmental

management is that there is an institutional diversification. More precisely, the competences related to certain aspects of the environment are „split“ between several ministries, which leads to their complicated overlapping. In this context, inadequate inter-institutional coordination can cause serious procedural problems and, indirectly, also environmental problems, i.e. the problems in the implementation of the current policies in this field. The above mentioned problems have arisen as a result of political situation typical for countries undergoing transition which is characterized by instable and frequently unclearly defined sequence of reform activities contributing to important institutional changes. This is visible in changes of ministries competent for environmental management which have taken place with each change of power in Serbia in the transition period from 2000 to date (2001-2004 Ministry of Natural Resources and Environmental Protection, 2004-2008 Ministry of Science and Environmental Protection – Administration for Environmental Protection, 2008-2012 Ministry of Natural Resources, Mining and Spatial Planning, from 2012 to date Ministry of Energy, Development and Environmental Protection). When the change of power in Serbia will no longer affect the dramatic changes in the state apparatus, its functioning and division of competences, the institutional problems will be less pronounced as well.

- Environmental information system is especially important for an efficient organization of environmental management. Good decision making precisely depends on the quality and importance of information available to decision makers (Josimović, Krunić, 2008). The problem in Serbia lies in the fact that there is no a uniform national environmental information system, neither is there a spatial information system in general. According to Article 74 of the Law on Environmental Protection ("Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia", No. 135/04, 36/09 and 72/09 – 43/11-Constitutional Court), the Environmental Protection Agency of the Republic of Serbia is competent for establishing and keeping Environmental Information System (EIS), modelled after the European Environment Agency (EEA). There are also other state institutions collecting systemized environmental data, amongst which the most important are: Ministry of Energy, Development and Environmental Protection; Ministry of Natural Resources, Mining and Spatial Planning; Directorate for Water; Ministry of the Interior – Sector for Emergency Management; Republic Geodetic Authority; Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia; certain scientific and professional institutions, and numerous local self-governments. Environmental Protection Agency should coordinate and collect spatial environmental data with the aim of creating a uniform national environmental information system. However, there are significant problems in this process and in harmonization (both software and organizational) of the functioning of the mentioned institutions. This fact makes the collection of relevant spatial environmental data difficult and reduces their availability. The problem is especially pronounced in obtaining necessary inputs from relevant institutions of local self-governments (Агенција за заштиту животне средине, 2012). In this context, there is a need for an inter-institutional coordination

of the existing spatial environmental data which would be based on defined rules, methods and procedures, as well as adopted indicators, and also available to users on the Internet in the way similar to the existing one (see: Ekoregistar, 2013).

5. CONCLUDING REMARKS

Previous analysis has marked three most influential periods in recent history of Serbia, when discussing the domain of environment protection, and those are:

- 1) Socialist period (after the Second World War till disintegration of SFRY);
- 2) Period of crisis (from SFRY disintegration till today, also partly overlapping with the third period) and
- 3) Period of harmonisation with EU legislation (from beginning of XXI century till today).

In the socialist period some important foundations for nature and environment protection have been laid (though there has never been formed a ministry for environment protection on Federal or Republic level), as well as debates about the environment have been initiated mainly among experts/scientists and government/administration officials. Some negative impacts from this period could be identified as: a) insufficient cooperation between different governing/administration bodies and levels, and between government and other important subjects (as enterprises, citizens etc.); b) citizens were not well informed on environmental problems, and therefore not very concerned/motivated to participate in environmental decision making; c) citizens were accustomed to command-and-control approach to governance, i.e. they had big expectations from government sector; etc. and that have continued or even intensified in the period that followed the SFRY disintegration (due to deep socio-economic crisis, political changes, prevalence of neo-liberal approach, deterioration of moral and cultural values, etc.). The transition period also induced some positive effects due to: a) the need for harmonisation of national legislation with *acqui communautaire*; b) greater citizens' awareness on environmental issues and greater participation in environmental decision making process; c) development of environmental policy and institutions; d) voluntary activities as corporate social responsibility, non-governmental organisations (both still insufficient); e) access to foreign (mainly US and European) funds; etc. Serbia's endeavour to become European Union member state also led to some negative consequences, and above all, uncritical transposition of EU legislation – inadequate to contextual problems, habits and local conditions, with lack of intermediate norms and regulations which could facilitate adaptation of economic and other subjects to new, more strict legislation. Instead of upgrading environment protection, these kinds of constraints often initiate violation or “bypass” of new laws (often gathered with low sentences and insufficient control mechanisms) along with corruption issue, as well as because of continuation of negative trends from the beginning of transition period. In this context, experiences of countries that already went through post-socialist transition and managed to cope with more success with mentioned problems could be used as a

support tool. More than ever, in Serbian society that is still struggling to restore standard of living of its population on the level like at the end of 1980s, there is an increased and urgent need for application of newer, more successful and influential policies, tools and instruments in all spheres of planning, including the environmental one. Environmental problems are still influenced by and imbued with long-lasting economic, social and political crisis, combined with some deeply rooted negative habits (of environment neglecting, corruption, etc.). But the country should strive to improve or adjust existing and develop new strategic instruments and introduce more strategic development-oriented planning in all spheres, so this long-term transition and economic crisis do not distract Serbia from this “hard road to clean environment”.

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SUMMARY

Post-socialist societies are increasingly concerned with environmental and natural resources management issues. Their former, "state-regulated economy" practice cared more about fulfilling production goals and targets, than about negative effects on the environment that such actions may impose. This legacy left behind environmental consequences that are often hard to mend. But Serbia, as part of SFR Yugoslavia, was less degraded than the countries of Western, Central and Eastern Europe, whereas some important foundations for nature and environment protection have been laid. This analysis marked three most influential periods in

recent history of Serbia, regarding environment protection: Socialistic period; Period of crisis; and Period of harmonisation with EU legislation.

Serbian (post)transition society is still experiencing deep socio-economic-political crisis, that has numerous repercussions in environmental planning and management, and there is urgent need for application of newer, more successful and influential policies, tools and instruments.

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