

## Zoning in spatial planning for protected areas and tourism destinations in mountain regions - case of the Kopaonik National Park in Serbia

Saša Milijić<sup>1</sup>, Marija Maksin<sup>1</sup>, Nikola Krunić<sup>1</sup>, Vladica Ristić<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Institute of Architecture and Urban & Spatial Planning of Serbia, Belgrade, Serbia

<sup>2</sup> Faculty of Applied Ecology 'Futura', Singidunum University, Belgrade, Serbia

### Abstract

All mountain tourism destinations (MTD) in Serbia are located with at least one of their part in the protected natural heritage areas (MTD-PA). The trend in the world and in European countries is an integrated natural heritage protection zoning and land-use zoning for the protected areas (PA) and their surroundings. The integrated MTD-PA zoning in Serbia is achieved through the spatial planning process – the spatial plans for special purpose areas (SPSPA). The innovations for improving the role of zoning in spatial planning are analysed at the example of the SPSPA for the Kopaonik National Park (SPSPA Kopaonik). The innovative methodological approach is based on the combined use of integrated and collaborative approaches in the process of developing the SPSPA Kopaonik. The main task was to harmonize the conflicting sectoral decisions on nature protection zoning for the protected area and land-use zoning for tourism development. The compromise solution was selected, which enabled an adequate natural heritage protection and sustainable use of limited resources for the development of all-year-round tourism, as well as the sustainable development of local communities in immediate and wider surroundings of MTD-PA.

### Keywords

Protected area, tourism destination, mountain region, nature protection zoning, land-use zoning, spatial planning

### Introduction

The mountain regions of Serbia cover about 34% of its territory. By their specific potentials for the mountain tourism development, the high-mountain regions (above 1500 m a.s.l., covering an area of 5,389 km<sup>2</sup>) with their immediate hilly-mountainous surroundings (1000-1500 m a.s.l.) cover the total area of 9,680 km<sup>2</sup> of the state territory (Milijić et al. 2013). All high-mountain regions and a part of their immediate hilly-mountainous surroundings are located in the protected areas.

Starting from results of the previous research projects published in the Institute of Architecture and Urban & Spatial Planning of Serbia, this paper identifies the key problems in realizing the role of nature protection zoning in spatial planning and the coordinating role of spatial planning in the strategic planning and management of sustainable development of MTD-PAs in Serbia. Starting from the key problems, the possible answers are offered at the example of spatial planning for the Kopaonik National Park, which is the key tourism area in the Kopaonik MTD, where the innovations in the spatial planning for the MTD-PAs in Serbia are implemented relative to the previous practice.

### Zoning in spatial and strategic planning of protected areas and tourism destinations in Serbian mountain regions

The nature protection zoning is used for the parts of the MTD in the PA in accordance with the legal bases, declaration of protected areas and management plans for the PAs. The three-stage protection regime established in Serbia by the LAW ON NATURE PROTECTION (2009) and the Regulation on the Protection Regimes (2012) can be compared with the IUCN categorization:

- level I protection regime (strict protection) corresponds to category Ia;
- level II protection regime (active protection) corresponds to category Ib;
- level III protection regime (proactive protection) corresponds to categories V and VI (RISTIĆ 2016).

The trend in the world and European countries is an integrated nature protection zoning and land-use zoning for PAs and their surroundings (NAUGHTON-TREVES et al. 2005). The integrated zoning facilitates the meeting of often conflicting demands for strengthening the protection of natural heritage, cultural heritage and natural resources, on the one hand, and for developing the tourism and other activities and improving the quality of life of local residents, on the other hand (Ibid.; MAKSIN et al., 2014). In Serbia, the integrated zoning is made through the process of spatial planning, namely through the spatial plans for special purpose areas (SPSPA) which are elaborated for PAs and MTD-PAs.

### **Methodological innovations for zoning in spatial planning of protected areas and tourism destinations in Serbian mountain regions - case of Kopaonik National Park**

The innovations for nature protection zoning and land-use zoning in spatial planning are analysed at the example of the Spatial Plan for Special Purpose Area for the Kopaonik National Park, adopted at the end of 2016 (SPSPA Kopaonik 2016).

The innovative methodological approach is based on the combined use of integrated and collaborative approaches in the process of developing the SPSPA Kopaonik 2016.

The problems in the previous environmental and natural heritage and natural resources protection, as well as in the achieved development of tourism, other economic activities and infrastructure systems and in the quality of life of local residents, were identified in the first step in the process of developing the SPSPA for MTD-PA.

In the next methodological step, and based on the analysed problems, it was possible to identify the key conflicts in the protection and in sustainable development of MTD-PA and its local and regional surroundings. Several conflicts were identified, out of which the key ones included the conflicts between the tourism and the natural heritage protection. Further mountain tourism development within the National Park depends to a great extent on the overcoming of current conflicts regarding the protection of nature and natural heritage in the most suitable terrains for Alpine skiing under the level II protection regime and within the tourism complexes/resorts under the level III protection regime with intense and unplanned construction.

A set of thematic maps with all spatially identified mismatches in relation to the planning solutions from the previous SPSPA Kopaonik (2009) and in relation to the approximately determined new boundaries of the National Park and zones under the three-level protection regime from the new LAW ON NATIONAL PARKS (2015), were produced using the GIS tools (Fig. 1a).

Based on the identified conflicts, the principles and strategic commitments for their relativization were established. They served in the next methodological step for checking the sustainability and harmonizing the conflicting sectoral decisions on nature protection zoning (from the Law on National Parks and the Decree on the Protection Regimes) and on land-use zoning for tourism development (from the Master Plan for the Kopaonik tourism destination and from the urban plans for the tourist sub-resorts in the National Park and tourism settlements located at its boundaries).

Starting from good practices of European countries, particularly good practices of the MTD-PA in the Alpine countries, several scenarios for the differentiation between the nature protection zones and the land-use zones with terrains suitable for Alpine skiing and for tourist resort development were offered – with a radical shift away from the previous practice in zoning for the PAs in Serbia (dividing the area of the National Park into several most valuable entities with the three-level protection regimes and separating the land-use zones for the development of tourism centres and ski resorts outside its coverage) and with more or less compromise options for the protection and sustainable development of MTD-PA.

For achieving the coordination and relativization of conflicts, it was necessary to use the collaborative approach in a way to also include, besides the protected area managers, the key stakeholders in the environmental and natural heritage protection, tourism and spatial planning at national and at local levels of management into the process of considering the offered scenarios and decision making on the selection of the most suitable scenario. This enabled to negotiate with stakeholders on certain solutions, until the final solution was agreed and selected.

A compromise solution was selected for harmonizing the land-use zones of tourism and recreational infrastructure with stricter regimes for the nature protection (I and II level protection regimes) (Fig. 1b). Based on this solution, minor corrections of the coverage of the zones with level I protection regime and with level II of the protection regime were made, the number of ski runs was reduced and the capacity of ski runs was increased, the position of ski infrastructure was corrected, as well as connecting the parts of the ski resorts into a single entity was enabled. The sustainable spatial development of tourism was supported by several options (concerning the accommodation and other contents) for redirecting the focus of tourism offer development from the tourism resorts in the National Park to the tourism settlements in its immediate surroundings.

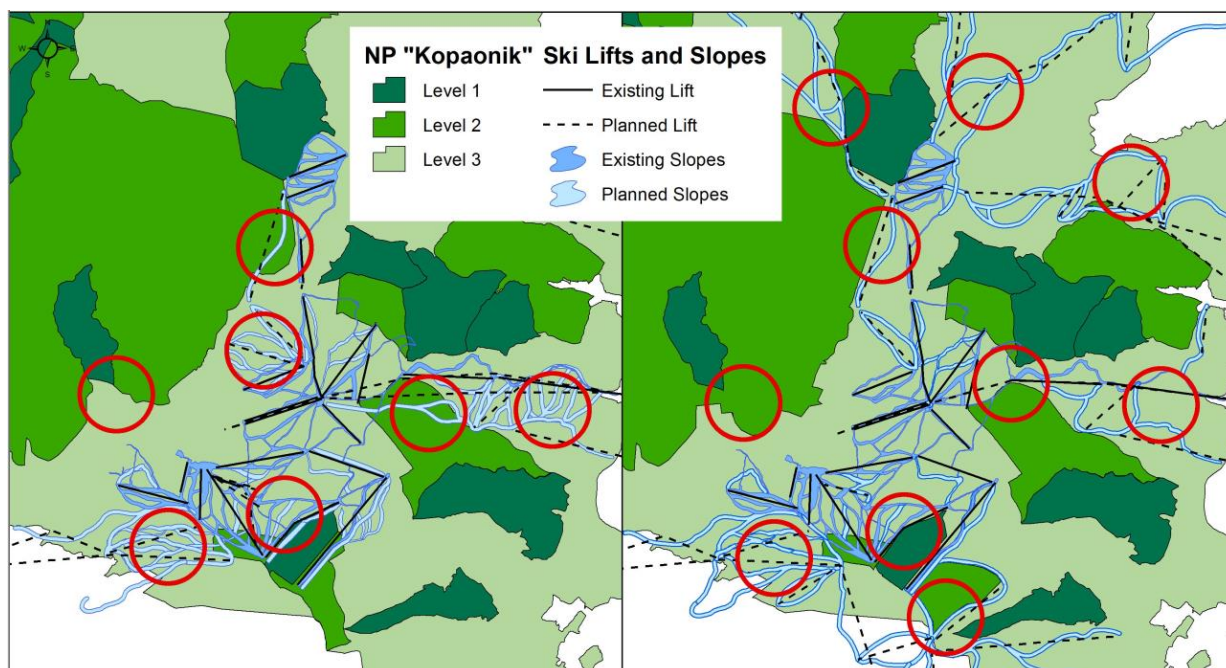


Figure 1a & 1b: Identified mismatches between nature protection zoning and ski infrastructure (1a, left picture) and agreed compromise solution (1b, right picture)

## Concluding Remarks

The effects of the innovated methodological approach are that the changes enabled an integrated planning and management of the protection and sustainable spatial development of MTD-PA through:

- the coordination and integration of nature protection zoning and land-use zoning ;
- the collaboration of key stakeholders and participation of local residents and entrepreneurs in selecting planning options, and decision making.

Assessing the effectiveness of integrated zoning (nature protection zoning and land-use zoning) in protection and sustainable development of the MTD-PA should be based on the monitoring the implementation of the spatial planning instruments for MTD-PA.

It is necessary to achieve the coordination among different sectoral plans and programs through the spatial planning process, primarily the coordination among the nature protection and tourism development sectors; multisectoral coordination and collaboration among all competent development entities in the public and private sectors; participation of local residents and entrepreneurs in the planning process; as well as to establish partnerships among the key stakeholders in the decision making and implementation of the adopted decisions.

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## Contact

Saša Milijić, Marija Maksin, Nikola Krunić  
[sasam@iaus.ac.rs](mailto:sasam@iaus.ac.rs); [maja@iaus.ac.rs](mailto:maja@iaus.ac.rs); [nikola@iaus.ac.rs](mailto:nikola@iaus.ac.rs)  
Institute of Architecture and Urban & Spatial Planning of Serbia  
Bul. kralja Aleksandra 73/2  
11000 Belgrade  
Serbia

Vladica Ristić  
[vladicar011@gmail.com](mailto:vladicar011@gmail.com)  
Singidunum University  
Faculty of Applied Ecology 'Futura'  
Serbia