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The SHARR Mountains:
- Spatial Development based on Cross-border Cooperation

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Abstract

For decades, the peaks of Sharr Mountains had defined the border between two federal units of Former Yugoslavia, but after the political changes in Central and Eastern European Countries this massif became an intersected mountain. In this thesis work I saw of interest to analyze the status change from a massif unit as part of one state, to a cross-border mountain between two states and its affect on spatial development; - was there any cooperation on mountain management in the past; - how is the current mountain management proceeding on both sides; - which were the opportunities of cross-border cooperation in previous European experiences; - what can be expected from independent mountain side management on report to other side without any environmental assessment; and in the end to find and highlight the possible cross-border cooperation opportunities toward sustainability and eco-management of the Sharr Mountains in the future.

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Introduction

1.1 Subject of the Thesis

Spatial development of the cross-border areas becomes a very important component in reaching sustainable development to a wider context. The border areas have always faced the difficulties reflected by the “periphery”, therefore mountain areas have always been characterized as disadvantaged regions reflected by natural handicap. Double consequences resulting from the combination of those two aspects (the periphery and natural handicap), doubtlessly characterize the cross-border mountain regions and make them the most affected Less Favored Areas (LFA). Considering the fact that Sharr Mountain is divided by two countries, its areas share the same characteristics. Situated in the Balkan Peninsula, approximately 150 km to the right of the Adriatic Sea and 300 km to the north of Aegean Sea, the Sharr Mountain present a crossing point of the lines connecting Dubrovnik in the west with Constantinople in the east, and the one connecting Athens in the south with middle Europe in the north. The mountain massive outstretches 80 km long and 10 to 30 km wide.

Its peaks have always been used as quotes of border lines which has divided not only nature but also communities with the same culture and traditions all around the mountain. During the communist era, a part of Sharr presented an Iron Curtain, while now the other part, after the break-up of Yugoslavia, defines the segment of the newest borders in Europe between Macedonia and Kosovo/UNMIK, in a time when in developed parts of Europe, the borders are losing their compartment meaning.

The period of transition, transformation, stabilization and association, that the Western Balkans are facing leaves significant tracks and after-effects not only on social life but also on the non renewable values of natural treasure. In the context of extreme pollution, gas-emotion and global warming, the Sharr Mountain makes up the healthiest environment area in Western Balkans. They are sources of water, biodiversity, green
energy, forest products, agriculture and recreation. Presenting the complex and interrelated ecology of the area, the Sharr Mountains as a major ecosystem, are essential to the survival of the wider ecosystem. However, these values are rapidly changing, being susceptible to accelerated soil erosion, land slides and rapid loss of habitat and genetic diversity. In addition, interethnic tensions and the war in Kosovo were associated with nature overexploitation and degradation along the bordering areas, and along the mountains too. Irrational and centralized development policies have affected and have left deep marks in the western Balkans. Hence, the socio-economic development of the mountain’s communities and the efficient management of Sharr-Mountain’s resources deserve immediate action.

In order to prevent and react upon the mentioned negative aspects which the border areas face, the cross-border cooperation resulted as the efficient policy, among different European intersected mountains. That is the reason which makes the cross-border cooperation a suitable way regarding the promotion of efficient and coherent spatial development on two sides of the Sharr Mountains. Its main strategic objectives are to protect the diversity of natural, cultural and spiritual heritage in the border areas, in one hand and promote peace and harmony among people and nature, in the other. In addition, cross-border cooperation aims to enable free movement beyond the natural and political boundaries, which has great importance for the Sharr Mountain ending cross-border and interethnic tensions and creating a neutral zone without landmines and army installation.

Those would be the preconditions for peace, cooperation and sustainable development of the area, which would be based on rural development, organizing local tourism, organic local agriculture, use of low technical equipment, renewable energy, handcrafts, etc. Through cultural exchanges and socio-economic and political cooperation, the rational use and eco-management of natural resources and the security in the two-border zone, the comprehensive prosperity doubtless would be achieved on the entire massif of the Sharr Mountains.
1.2 Structure

This thesis analyzes the Sharr Mountain’s spatial development; how it was managed as a massif in the context of state (during the former Yugoslavia) and how as a divided cross-border mountain (from 1991) between two states. This study will give the specifics of both sides of the mountain and highlight the possible eco–management opportunities of spatial development based on long term and sustainable cross-border cooperation.

First, I describe the geographic characteristics of the Sharr-Mountains, accounting for the opportunities that this natural resource can offer. Secondly, I present the importance of cross-border cooperation policies implemented on mountain management throughout Europe, and try to find similarities from other successful experiences that the Western Balkan area could learn from in the future. Considering the fact that every area has its own characteristics, it is of interest to give a review of mountain spatial management before and after 1991, the year of the independence of Republic of Macedonia from Yugoslav Federation, when the Sharr Mountains became an intersected mountain between two states. In addition, I analyze the current perspectives of each side of the mountain, by examining development plans and strategies prepared from authorities of different governance levels.

Finally, having a picture of the circumstances, I analyze the cross-border cooperation policies and look into the opportunities of efficient mountain spatial management toward the proper use of natural resources, in order to achieve sustainable development based on socio-economic equalities, and nature protection for future generations.
1.3 Methodology

Throughout the research I used a variety of literature and sources, where my theoretical approach was largely based on theories about cross-border cooperation policies on spatial development with particular interest in the eco-management of cross-border mountain areas. On the Sharr Mountains spatial values and other issues regarding nature protection and planning, I used different books published in Prishtina, Skopje and elsewhere in Former Yugoslavia.

To extend my knowledge about cross-border cooperation I used research paper produced by different planners, governmental and non-governmental bodies as well as European documentation, including important conventions, bilateral agreements, workshops, conferences and guides that give a clear picture of the opportunities that this policy implementation can offer. On the other hand, about the spatial management of the Sharr Mountains, I based my research on documentation that I was been provided with, through visiting the common institutions and organizations in Prishtina and Skopje. In addition, to search about previous mountain management (in context of Former Yugoslavia), I met each participant who had taken active place on the drafting of previous spatial documentation and plans.

Considering the fact that a series of international organizations operate in Kosovo and Macedonia, like REC – Regional Environmental Center, SIDA – Swedish International Development Agency, EAR – European Agency of Reconstruction, I also saw of interest to know about their activities on Sharr Mountain spatial development.

Another important meeting which I considered most helpful was with CADSES’s representative in Skopje. Beside the interesting explanation and discussions, she provided me with important documentation from European planning association regarding the spatial development of certain areas based on cross-border cooperation.
2. The Spatial values of the Sharr – Mountains

2.1 Name and knowledge about Sharr Mountains

The Sharr Mountains appear in different times by different names, since the antics. Polibi, an old erudite, has used name Scardus orus, though Tit Livija the name Scordi montis or Scordus. By name “Scardus”, it has been written in Ptholomeou’s maps. On some remained documents of 19th century could be founded by Montagna dell argento, Schardagah, and lately as Sharr. These different names proclaim the interest of numerous (curious) peoples that have sought for the beauties and particularities of this geo-strategic part of the Balkan Peninsula.

First scientific researches in Sharr Mountains have started in 1836 and 1837 by the French geologist Ami Bye on Kobilica and A. Grizebah on Ljuboten in the year 1839. Not long after that many geologists have joined the researches, among these: F. NOpsca in 1905, geographer J. Cvijik in 1911, zoologist Doflajn in 1917, J. Bornmiler in 1925, 1926 and 1928, I. Rudski in 1934 and I. Horvat from 1935 - 1974. Some of these expedites took longer than a week and usually were accompanying by military officers and solders, as expedite in 1911 by representative of Turk Army and the one in 1917, by representative of German Army. Those visitors, besides scientific researches were amazed by the views that Sharr Mountain peak could offer, particularly the peak of Luboten. From there, on the eastern side are clear views up to mountain Rila in Bulgaria, while on the northern view is visible the whole Kosovo up to the peaks of Kopaonik Mountain. The views on southern side within lenth of approx. 300 km enable eyesight of the Thessalonica’s Gulf in Aegean Sea (Stojmilov, 1974).

A contemporary expert of the mountain was P. Furarek, a scientific researcher on Phytocenology, Professor at the University of Sarajevo. He has written about the natural values of the Sharr Mountains in order to boost this area’s popularity and stimulate local professionals to continue and strengthen further research in the field (Karahoda, 2002. p. 105). Through original proposals, he initiated the idea for regional co-operation toward the announcement and eco-management of National Parks.
2.2 Geographic characteristics

The Shar Mountain is one of the biggest with vertically most significant missives in the Balkan region. The mountain's particular quality is its height, its bandy shapes and its huge, flat areas, about 80 km long, and 10 to 30 km wide. It consists of an old erosive surface with its height of 2000 to 2200 meters, where the highest points are: Tito's Peak (2747 m), Ljuboten (2499 m), Lake Peak (2604 m), Black Peak (2585 m), Kobilica (2528 m), Livadica (2.491m), Vraca (2582 m) and many others.

The size of the Shar Mountain, its geographic characteristics, geotectonic and geomorphologic structure, huge geographic changes in the past, the high main cliff's attitude, geological substance where waterproof silicon rocks prevail, clearly define the global climate of the sub-Mediterranean and continental climate. These characteristics also define various different microclimate specifics in regards to the water flows which make the Sharr the most “watery” mountain in the Balkan Peninsula, within conditions that result to complexity and mosaic layout of the living creatures and their communities. The oldest cliffs whose composition makes the wide part of Shar Mountain belong to the complexes of Paleozoic metamorphoses and igneous rocks.
Relief - of the Shar Mountains represents one complex of geo-morphological appearances characterized by a big number of different forms: fluvial, abrasive, glacial, limestone etc. Many of these are very rare because of their beauty and their particular importance for science. In the time of glacial era the Shar Mountains was overtaken with glacial process due to the different fossil glacial shapes. Under its highest points there are about 80 different forelands, as well as glacial stones. In the valley, under the forelands, there are glacial series.

Hidrography - Large areas of the atmospheric changes have also stipulated the richness of the Sharr Mountains with waters, which makes this massif a special attraction. It is a general characteristic that due to the terrain configuration, the richness with water amount is very frequent, especially during the periods of the precipitations of rainfalls, respectively snow melting. In addition to the frequent flows and abundances of mountain river water, with an emphatic number of waterfalls and precipitous flows intersect this area from all directions.

The Sharr Mountains are extremely rich with a large number of mountain lakes, big or small, which have been created in the deepness of glaciers. River springs, actually are created by the conflux of the creeks that spring from the all sides. Therefore the flows in the upper parts are fast with a number of waterfalls and ravishing flows.

Glacier lakes introduce one of the splendors of the Sharr Mountain. From total 39 lakes, there are 25 lakes over 1.900m which are distinguished for its beauty and size, first of all Livadica and Lake of Jazhinca. The biggest lake is the Livadica one, which lies below the Livadica peak (2.173m). It has a long shape and its length is 230m, width 120m, and the largest depth of 7.3m. In the summertime, the water temperature sometimes reaches up to 20ºC, which allows the excursionists and shepherds to go swimming in it.
**Biodiversity** – The Mountains in the Balkan Peninsula are one of six centers of European ecological and biological diversity. There are a number of massifs in this part of Europe, but the Shar Mountain is singled out by its floristic, fauna, ecosystem and genetic fortune. This mountain simultaneously makes up a center of eminent mountaineers, edifice as well as local endemism. Apart from its complex biogeography and ecological composition, the Shar Mountains differ from other massive by its floristic diversity. On this massive there are about 1500 types of different vascular floras which all belong to living forms and number of ecologic types, from the Mediterranean to the Arctic. Many different livable communities have developed with different floristic compositions, disposed in different climate zones, starting from termokseromezofil to High Mountaineer. The characters of these communities differ from the Mediterranean to the tundra type, because the highest points of the massif exposed to the winds and different climate changes.

This massif with its floristic complexity is rich with fauna as well. Almost all animal groups which exist in Europe can be found there. The most known is the Sharr Dog, the autochthonous and unique shepherd dog, which physical strength and mental determination are truly awesome. They are genetically predestined to assume a life of his master without any specific training. According to the data which are available can be concluded that Sharr Mountain is the area of high diversity and potential center of dissemination of many insects, amphibians, reptiles, bats, birds and mammals.

**Landscapes** – the area of the Sharr Mountains comprises the extreme important landscape complex, which defines a range of splendor natural localities (valleys, rivers, waterfalls, cliff rocks, glacier lakes, etc.). However, the most attractive landscapes are definitely the areas covered with forests, grass, meadows, pastures and other herbal formations. In addition, the extreme relief division made by intersecting a number of river and stream valleys in the form of canyons and gorges with a number of waterfalls
and lakes fulfils the complete experience of this authentic wonderful and virgin nature. In the lower parts of the Sharr, during summer, the forest’s flowers bloom in meadows in various colors, making the landscape attractive and extremely beautiful and provide the area with specific scent and freshness of a clean countryside.

The climate is characterized by quite low air temperatures, notably during the winter. As much as higher on the mountain the temperatures are above zero with clear skies and relatively warm weather. The absolute minimum temperature is -23.7 °C, whereas the absolute maximum temperature is 30.6 °C. The rather high maximum temperatures and the rather low minimal temperatures produce a very big temperature oscillation, which is characteristic of regions with marked continental climate. The yearly temperature climate oscillation of over 22 °C is also substantially emphasized, (Stajic, 1982). These meteorological data refer to the meteorological station in the ski center Popova Shapka, within an altitude of 1750m.

The Sharr Mountain is abundant with precipitation, most of which is snowfall. The average annual precipitation is 109.6 mm. The precipitation amounts are almost equally distributed throughout the year but November is still the month with most precipitation,
on average about 150 mm, and August is the month with least precipitation, on average 58 mm. The Sharr Mountain is normally characterized by 149 days under snow cover beginning in September and lasting until May or even June. The average date of the first snow fall is 15\textsuperscript{th} of October, and of the last is 12\textsuperscript{th} May. The earliest snowfall ever was recorded on 8\textsuperscript{th} September and the latest was on 3\textsuperscript{rd} June. Thus, the long duration of snow cover is 268 days that is 73\% of the year. The maximum depth of the snow cover is over 106 cm, and on the higher terrain it is over 200 cm.

**Tourism** is one of the complex activities of our current modern world. In the developed countries it has obtained the shape of a contemporary industry, which relates to economics, politics, culture and various human activities. The tourist opportunities of the development of the Sharr massif are among other: mountain tourism; winter and summer tourism; rural, hunting and fishing, activities in the countryside; medical tourism, mountaineer tourism, tourist excursions, etc.

The Sharr Mountains include the most attractive integrity of the area: difference in altitude level of ski slopes, quantity, length and the shape of slopes, which characterized the spatial elements of high tourist values (Gashi, 1981). Also the climatic conditions play a key role on the Sharr Mountain’s tourism opportunities that enable tourism activities throughout the whole year. Also the mountain communities are in high density and offer the labor capacities needed to fulfill the tourism requirements. It is important to concentrate on the development of locally produced products and services, for example by encouraging the local population to become involved in tourist activities (P. Fredman, L. H. Friberg, L. Emmelin, 2006).

Even though the mentioned values have been well known since early 30’s, where as the first buildings have been done before the 50’s, but the further development went very slowly. Each side of the Mountain has a ski center; Brezovica on the Kosovo-UNMIK side and Popova Shapka on the Macedonian side.
Each of the existing tourist resorts use to have an adequate infrastructure, like: main roads from the nearest cities, a considerable number of ski – lifts, and some accommodation which were neither properly maintained nor further improved for the past twenty years.

It is true that there are more possibilities for accepting tourists than the real options are, which means that planning has to be taken as an on-going process, in phases, whose feasibility will depend on the level of achieved economic and social development. Also, planning of the natural values is sustainable only when the natural recourses are rationally used, which means planning of the desirable socio-economic development shall be based on environmental framework.

Spatial development of Sharr Mountain requires more complex approach because its geographical position is intersected by the border dividing two countries. From the basic hypotheses: “How effective could the independent development of two sides of the mountain be, if a reciprocal environmental impact isn’t considered at first?” can be concluded that in order to eliminate or decrease these occurrences, the cross-border cooperation is essential. Thus, like in previous examples among Europe, the cross-border spatial development of Sharr Mountain would define a path toward common eco-management of natural resources and achieving sustainable development in the area and beyond.
3. Cross-border Cooperation and Mountain Eco – management

3.1 Characteristics and motives

The “patchwork” of historic landscapes of the middle ages developed during the 19th and 20th centuries has created the specific structure of European states, which are characterized not only by their diverse, yet often shared culture and history, but also by their many borders. Reinforced by military, administrative and socio-economic policies, barrier effect of national boundary caused serious disadvantages for the local people and social partners. The old state borders in Europe and even those in the last few years in the Balkan area often separate regions and ethnic groups, which actually belong together. The political ideologies and ambitions of individual military blocks that dominated after 1945 have turned some state borders into unbridgeable borders, which through decades have created “Iron Curtains”. Thus, the Sharr Mountains had not only defined the iron curtain’s coordinates for a half century (between former Yugoslavia and Albania), but their peaks also present the new border in the Balkans (after the independence of Macedonia from the Yugoslav Federation in 1991).

The transformation from state borders into actual noticeable barriers between national states has been supported by different policies on both sides of the border, especially those concerning administration, taxation, law and socio-economic affairs. These circumstances, in turn, had a negative effect on the willingness to establish cooperation and closer contacts. Furthermore this development frequently caused envy and covetousness among neighbors, political disagreement and even wars which caused the transformation of European border areas into peripheral, disconnected and structurally weakened areas with limited transport links. Natural borders, such as mountains, seas, lakes and rivers reinforced frontier separation.
In order to overcome these historical barriers and to readdress the inequalities, imbalances and peripheral problems, different pioneering groups of border regions initiated the first cross-border cooperation. It came at the time when the border area communities started to deal with large numbers of misguided investments and everyday absurdities resulting from uncoordinated activities of national authorities which eventually led to the elaboration of a more suitable solution. Representatives of numerous European border areas motivated mainly by the desire to raise living standards and ensure lasting peace got together to discuss the dismantling of border difficulties and the possibilities of promoting cross-border relation. They stated they would have to alleviate or even totally eliminate the negative effects caused by their “far-off” territory if they wished to lead the same life the people living in the heartlands did. They soon discovered, however, that in their communities this could be achieved with only limited success due to the absence of administrative and legal competence. As a consequence, the establishment of communal and regional associations began on both sides of the border, where each of them was subject to the national legislation and related to the area of common concern aimed at improving cross-border cooperation.

To help the border regions start and pursue their policies, the Association of European Border Regions (AEBR) was founded in 1971, and shortly established close contacts with the European Council, the European Commission, the European Parliament and the national governments (Gabbe, 2006). After the establishment of the Single European Market and democratic movement in Central and Eastern Europe numerous new cross-border regions became members of AEBR.

The network of cross-border regions has became a powerful force in the development of cross-border cooperation within European states and the development of European aid programs in favor of the borders communities and Europe as a whole. Opportunities of cooperation blooming in the modern era include fixed link projects within the European continent – the La manche tunnel between Great Britain and France and the bridge between Sweden and Denmark.
The philosophy of cross-border cooperation can be defined as a genuinely joint cooperation between two neighboring communities, which encompasses all areas of daily life and development of joint priorities, programs and actions. The principles of cross-border cooperation appropriated by AEBR and followed by the European Commission are as follows:

- the wide-ranging vertical and horizontal partnership;
- the subsidiarity through involving the local and regional levels and delegating responsibility to them;
- the preparation of joint cross-border development concepts and programs;
- the implementation of cross-border projects

(EC, 2000)

The type of border regions are differentiated by important factors, such as natural geographic features like mountains ranges, rivers and maritime borders; the degree of homogeneity of a region; the level of development and support status under EU structural policies; size, population, density, labor market characteristics, etc. Cross-border cooperation focuses in advance, assistance and coordination particularly in the following fields: economic development; transport and traffic; environment protection; tourism and leisure; social cooperation; agricultural development; innovation and technology transfer; energy; waste disposal and disaster presentment.

The most important factors in the process of planning and implementing joint cross-border strategies or concepts are particularly the partnership and subsidiarity. They present the basic prerequisite on creating equal strategic framework prospects and conditions for sustained and long term cooperation. In order to promote cross-border cooperation between European regions one of recent policies of the European Union is the Interreg program which aim is to achieve economic development, social cohesion and cross-border integration.
3.2 INTERREG (CADSES) Initiatives

Border areas in many cases have a series of handicaps that have led to delays in economic development in respective countries. The geographic characteristics, insufficient communication ways, distance from economic centers, depopulation and lack of relationship with the areas at the other side of the frontier are obstacles to their development. In order to reduce the delay of boundary areas and to prevent the national borders becoming barriers toward European integration, a policy program called Interreg was established in 1990 by the EU institutions.

The Interreg program focuses on preventing the national frontiers from becoming a difficulty for the balanced development and integration of the European territory. This program has developed through three phases: Interreg I during the period 1990-1993, Interreg II from 1994 – 1999 and Interreg III from 2000-2006. Each of the phases’ aims was the economic development and restructuring of border areas, and also the support for the adoption of external border areas to their new role as frontiers of the EU, and cooperation with neighboring third countries. The last phase Interreg III differs from the previous programs, because according to the Commission’s evaluation, Interreg III failed in Southern Europe. In developing lasting cross-border cooperation association it was not successful due to the lack of cooperation experience and trust of administrative bodies. So, in order to overcome those shortcomings, Interreg III was not only focused in economic development, but also in establishing efficient cross-border cooperation between regions.

One of three divisions of Interreg III program is Interreg III B, under which the CADSES (Central-, Adriatic-, Danubian- and Southeastern European Space) initiative was adopted, which covers the spatial areas of the Balkans. This initiative is intended to contribute to a balanced all-European regional development by stabilizing economic and social structures as well as by supporting ecologically sustainable economic development. The coordinated approach also helps to improve the regional
effectiveness of the community’s other policies. The overall idea was to allow the joint projects (involving partners from the EU member states as well as partners from TACIS, CARDS and PHARE countries) to submit one application that will be jointly assessed and approved in regard to the project activities to be carried out on internal (EU) and external (TACIS, CARDS and PHARE) sides of the border (CADSES; [http://www.interreg.gov.pdf](http://www.interreg.gov.pdf)).

The elaboration and implementation of Interreg III includes three different phases. Firstly, there is a top-down process through which the European Commission and the national governments negotiate the distribution of the structural funds, and in which the Commission launches the objectives and procedures for the operative programs in Interreg. Secondly, there is a bottom-up process through which the local, regional and national administrations evaluate the Operative program contents, before submitting it to the Commission for approval. And thirdly, there is a bottom-up execution process through which local and regional administration, semi-public and private institutions examine initiative programs and then compete for financial support from the program. It may also involve other actors in addition to institutional actors in the structures for programming and execution.

The Interreg III B-program for the CADSES has turned out to be a highly suitable EU supportive instrument for provinces along or close to the EU’s external border, through the projects containing many elements that are essential for the growing-together of Europe and providing an efficient instrument to prepare the border areas toward meeting the EU standards. A large amount of success and improvement may be achieved through cooperation of this kind, but Interreg has also demonstrated that the development of new forms of cooperation is a complex and difficult task with high demands being placed on communicative and co-operative abilities.
3.3 Cross-border cooperation experiences on eco-management

Because natural resources are becoming more politically, legally and ecologically complex, many communities are giving extra importance to their natural resource base, and are examining the entire ecosystem process systems that provide and maintain these resources. This new ecosystem management approach requires better cooperation between agencies, investors and governments. Running counter to many of our traditional paradigms of natural resource management, community and government, this approach must overcome numerous barriers to effective stewardship. Collaborative resource management is different when an international border is involved, as a result of cross-border resource issues (Harris, Huntley, Mangle, Rana, 2001).

Mountain massifs as important natural resources are often transnational and border areas with a tradition of exchanges, which share common challenges and strengths, but also have differences between them. Thus, there is also a similarity of problems and potentials between the massifs which would justify particular attention to the collaboration between mountain areas. This type of cooperation should be established at appropriate geographical levels, and should build on previous partnerships and established links. In terms of economic development, not all mountain areas have the same needs, and therefore a homogeneous community policy to support economic development in mountain areas wouldn’t be necessary. On behalf of the appropriate scale of administrative policy implementation, one would be tempted to respond spontaneously to relatively large homogeneous mountain areas, like the level of the massif. This level of intervention would indeed be efficient for the joint use of available means and for the programming of investments, and would secure a true community added value within the framework of Interreg cooperation programs between the countries sharing the same massif (Nord Regio, 2004; DG Regio Mountain Study, http://www.euromountains.net/norway/documents/documenten/contributioneuromontana_en1.doc).

The mountain core areas are expected to be affected by processes of further development, growing competition in agriculture and tourism, over-ageing of population,
decline in state aid funding and rising energy consumption. Mountain cities could gain phenomena and cultural tourism from urban growth, but will also potentially be affected by their position regarding accessibility to infrastructure and knowledge, and by the urbanization and counter-urbanization process taking place in all of Europe (EC, 2006).

Regarding the development of mountain territories and efficient cooperation, the European multi-sectoral association – Euromontana was established. The mission of Euromontana is to promote living mountains, integrated and sustainable development, and quality of life in mountain areas. It embraces regional and national mountain organizations throughout Europe, such as: regional development agencies, local authorities, tourism, agricultural and forestry organizations, environmental agencies and research institutions.

The numerous workshops organized by Euromontana, discussed the various types of natural parks around Europe seeking efficient practices, and concluded that partnerships in local, national and European levels and even between the established networks themselves are essential to today's world. The workshop on training also concluded that in CEEC countries there is an important demand for specific education for the mountain areas because in the past, the education system was not adapted to the socio-economic realities in these areas (Euromontana, 2005). In addition, the Balkans workshop debated the next steps towards starting a formal cooperation, and learning from the models of Alpine and Carpathian Conventions.

**Alpine Convention.** – is a framework agreement for the protection and sustainable ecological development of the Alpine area. It was signed by the European Community and seven countries of the Alps (Austria, France, Italy, Switzerland, Germany and Liechtenstein) in 1991 in Salzburg of Austria and came into power on March 1995. By that time, Slovenia had also signed the convention and Monaco became a party on the basis of separate protocol. The goal of the Alpine Convention is a holistic policy for the conservation and protection of the Alps involving the circumspect and sustainable use
of resources with respect to the principles of prevention, polluter-pays and cooperation. It is also designed to strengthen cross-border cooperation in and for the Alpine region. The framework convention relates to the following sectors: people and culture, land use planning, air quality, mountain forests, mountain agriculture, tourism and leisure activities, transport, energy and waste management, soil protection, water regimes, environmental protection and landscape management.

Towards long term transnational cooperation and sustainable territorial development in the Alpine Space an executive summary of Prospective Study of Alpine Space Interreg III B Programme was drafted by the expert group engaged by Managing Authority of the Alpine Space Interreg III B programme in accordance with the indications of the respective national coordinators. On behalf of this report analysis, trends have been classified according to the following three categories of sustainable development paradigm: a) natural resources and biodiversity, b) economic development and c) social welfare. A fourth dimension namely d) spatial development, has been added to accommodate the developments of a more narrowly defined territorial character.

Logical framework of the Alpine Space Prospective Study
Source: http://www.alpinespace.org/uploads/media/ASPS_Full_Report_nov05.pdf)
While the four main objectives of the Alpine Space program are:

- To establish the Alpine Space as a powerful area in the European network of development areas. This requires a common understanding of the role of the Alpine Space in terms of sustainable spatial development and active promotion through various activities and actions.
- To initialize and support sustainable development initiatives within the Alpine Space by considering the relationship between the alpine core region and the fringes of the Alps. This would cover transnational activities in various sectors from Community to municipal level by focusing on the most important issues of the Alpine development.
- To find efficient solutions in the domains of accessibility and transport by promoting sustainable modes of transport and communication.
- To safeguard the diversity of the natural and cultural heritage, and to protect the population and infrastructure from natural hazards from the development of common tools, the exchange of methods and information.

(EU Community Initiative Alpine Space Programme; http://www.alpinespace.org, March 2007)

According to the Executive Summary, the Alpine Space will become increasingly open in all directions, after learning to distinguish its own identity and role in each of the member countries before and later within the EU. This extraversion will shift the stakes for territorial development from the heart of the Alps towards greater coordination with peri-Alpine regions including Balkan Europe (Prospective Study of Alpine Space Interreg III B Programme). In this way, the Alpine Space would rebuild and promote its role at looking at much broader horizons, and at the global scale.

**Carpathian Convention.** The Carpathian Mountains constitute a major ecological, economic, cultural and recreational and living environment in the heart of Europe, shared by a lot of people and countries. The seven Carpathian states (Czech Republic, Slovakia, Poland, Ukraine, Hungary and Romania), are aware of the fact that efforts to protect, maintain and manage the natural resources of the Carpathian cannot be achieved by one country alone, but require regional cooperation and the added value of
cross-boundary cooperation in achieving ecological coherence. Thus, recognizing the experience gained in the framework of the Alps Convention, as a successful model for the protection of the environment and sustainable development of the mountain, the Carpathian States have agreed on defining the Framework Convention on the Protection and Sustainable Development of the Carpathians.

According to the Convention, the parties shall pursue a comprehensive policy and shall cooperate with the view of improving quality of life, strengthening local economies and communities and preserving natural values and cultural heritage. In developing spatial policies and programs, particular attention should be given to:

- preventing the cross-border impact of pollution
- integrated land use planning and environmental impact assessments
- coherent urban and rural planning in border areas
- cross-boundary environmentally friendly transport, energy and telecommunication infrastructure and services
- the preservation and sustainable use of natural resources

Also, particular attention was given to promoting sustainable tourism and providing benefits to the local people based on the exceptional nature, landscapes and cultural heritage of the Carpathians. In addition, the Convention agreed on the cooperation in developing an ecological network in the Carpathians, as a constituent part of the Pan-European Ecological Network.

**Cross-border cooperation in Tatra Mountain.** – is a European experience with great importance for further cooperation in Balkan Areas, due to similar history of political and social status of the Central Eastern European states. The Tatra Mountain is situated along the border between Poland and Slovakia; where as the TANAP National Park was announced in the Slovakian side of the mountain, the TNP National Park was announced in the Poland Side of the mountain massif. Tatra National Park's most important priority is nature protection. Tourism is of value, though nature conservation is of greater importance. But, suggestions of crossing the border in the mountain and
offering “new” trails to tourists are an attractive alternative both in the recreational and nature conservation aspects.

At the Tatra Mountains, where 75% belongs to Slovakia and 25% belongs to Poland, the existing tourism infrastructure could be adopted for cross-border tourism purposes, with the majority of the tourists staying in the towns and villages located at the foot of the mountain complex. This will surely create opportunities to open “new” areas, based on existing infrastructure and regulations.

With the purpose of identifying the differences and similarities in tourism management and recreation between the two National Parks, a comparative analysis of the Tatra National Park was made, where the following characteristics were analyzed and compared: tourism management placement in management strategy, zoning and infrastructure, legal and spatial conditions for various user groups, visitor number and risk management. In addition, potential tourist border-crossings and trans-national routes have been pointed out, where strengths and weaknesses, along with accommodation possibilities and accompanying attractions have been identified, problem areas and critical management issues have been discussed, while cross-border routes have been checked (Taczanowska, 2004).

Crossing the Polish-Slovak border on tourist routes is regulated by the bilateral agreement between the respective governments of Poland and Slovakia, signed in July 1999.

However, previous European experiences have shown that defining a strategic vision for cross-border cooperation is a matter of consensus-building on the foundation of multiple and often divergent viewpoints, rather than of assuming beforehand a unique conception of the future desirable for territory. Therefore, the pursuit of one shared model must necessarily pass through the possible combinations of the existing different views, as a starting point for building convergence.
4. Spatial Management of the Sharr Mountains

Before and After 1991

4.1 Legislation of spatial management for natural resources in former Yugoslavia

Before the independence of Macedonia from former Yugoslavian Federation, in 1991, the Sharr Mountains belonged to one state, where as its peaks has defined only the border between two federal units, the Socialist Republic of Macedonia and the Socialist Autonomous Province of Kosovo. In order to protect the nature and the environment, the state of ex Yugoslavia has signed the numerous of international agreements, which has played important role on protection of natural heritage, based on particular legal articles, conventions, free protocols, resolutions, declarations, codes and common guides. Those instruments crystallize the statement that the values of nature of each state are also heritage of the whole humanity.

Since 1873, the international convention for birds’ protection has been announced, which in 1950 has been signed by Yugoslavia. Other important signed agreements on international level are:
- European and Mediterranean Convention for protection of nature, in 1951
- International Convention for vegetation, in 1952;
- Convention of civil responsibility about nuclear resources, in 1963;
- Convention for natural and cultural world heritage protection, in 1972;

The first common law on the issue of protection of cultural and natural resources, was approved in former Yugoslavia, immediately after World War II, in 1945. Based on this Law the **Supreme Institution for protection of natural resources** has been established in Belgrade, which (after some years) has operated as coordination body of the federative units’ institutions of six socialist republics and two socialist autonomous provinces. The competences for approval of laws on natural and environmental issues
have been transferred to the federal units of former Yugoslavia (Marinovic – Uzelac 1986, p. 305). From analyzing the legislation of the sub-federative level, it can be concluded that apart from the national parks that basically had the same treatment in both republic and province legislation on nature protection, the rest of the categories on protection were very different, as in the terminology defining aspect, as in the content of their protection, as well as in their exploitation. (Karahoda, 2002).

Also, in former Yugoslavia, on a central level, there has been no National Spatial Plan. The duty and competencies for spatial planning have belonged to sub-federative authorities. However, the infrastructure net and other important issues have been coordinated in Belgrade by common central institutions.

From the above, we learn that spatial management in both the nature protection and planning aspects in the former Yugoslavia was mandate and responsibility of the republics and provinces. Therefore, the spatial developments of both sides of the Sharr massif were more or less independent of one another. So, in order to have a clear picture of the spatial management the approach on research is required for both sides of Sharr – the southeast part of Sharr, which was under SR of Macedonian competences, and the northwest part, which was under the competences of SAP of Kosovo.

4.2 Spatial Development of Northwestern side of the Sharr Mountains

The Northern part of Sharr Mountains are stretching within Kosovo boundaries, and includes the area of 1100km² or about 1/10 of the Kosovo area, whereas the rest of the area, the southern part of the Sharr Mountains is located in the Republic of Macedonia.

**Infrastructure.** - The Sharr Mountains in Kosovo are connected by the roads through Ferizaj from the east and Prizren from the north, whereas this area is connected to Albania through Prizren and to the Adriatic tourist region through Peja.. The roads connecting Ferizaj – Skopje and Pristina – Belgrade pass through the mountains. Apart
from this border crossing there is another road with lower importance that connects Tetovo from the Macedonian side and Prizren from the Kosovo side. The “Sharr Mountain” area is also connected to the railway from two directions: through Ferizaj and Prizren. Through Prishtina Airport in a distance of around 70 km, the Sharr Mountains are also connected to aero-transport. From the airport, one can travel by car or bus through Ferizaj or through Prizren to the Sharr Mountains.

Identified issues:
- Traffic chaos near tourist centers is a result of parking deficiency. This results due to the lack of urban plans.
- A small number of visitors as a result of regular bus connection deficiency.

**Settlements.** The specifics for south-east and north-west parts of the Sharri Mountains are that some of the towns and villages were populated even in the ancient times and the density of the population was very high, both in towns and mountain villages. Prizren, one of the most beautiful towns in Kosovo, is situated almost at the foot of the mountain, on a altitude of 400 m, while the Municipality with the highest altitude is Dragash with 700m. There are other Municipalities like: Suhareka, Ferizaj, Shterpce and Kacaniku, along with a few other villages on the lower part alongside the border crossing with Macedonia. The husbandry is considered to be the main occupation of the population.

**Husbandry.** Husbandry has potential due to the huge and qualitative pasture capacities, which stretch all over the Sharr Mountains. The pastures’ main characteristic is the richness of the grass layer and water springs, which ensure good conditions for pastures. Pastures, depending on the aspect of the origin are divided into primary and secondary.

- Primary pastures: The specifics of these pastures are permanent, which means it was affected by the climate factors throughout the history of the development of vegetation in
different geological stages. These pastures are situated above the forest vegetation all away to the grass layers at the top of the mountain. That's the reason why they are called high mountain pastures or Alp Pastures.

- Secondary pastures are developed as a result of the impact by human and natural factors. These pastures have been created by the human factor, while converting forest’s into agricultural land (pastures) Secondary pastures are situated below 2000 m and are mainly used by the local’s for husbandry pasturing.

**Tourism.**

The appropriate configuration, quality and the duration of the snow cover of the area are the basic preconditions for the development of winter sport activities. The difference in altitude level of ski slope capacities allows the presence of a considerable amount of skiers. This territory comprises 80 ski lanes with over 500 meters difference in altitude level, which enables skiing opportunities for over 100,000 skiers. The most suitable terrains for ski lanes are found in the wide location of Sharr Mountains, in the region above Shtëpia e Stojkut and Prevala. Out of all these Sharr massif locations, only Brezovica has benefited from investments in tourist infrastructure, despite the fact that OSCE experts have ranked Prevala as a better winter sport resort. Brezovica has 1,134 beds, out of which 740 in hotels of 'A' and 'B' category, then with two ski-tows, 4 ski-lifts and other specific equipment.

There are two tourist-recreational areas:

1. Upper Brezovica – This has two hotels and a closed type resort. There is a weekend area within this territory – the area where many cottages have been built.
2. Sharr - Shtëpia e Stojkut – is connected to Brezovica through the asphalted road, respectively the Doganaj-Prizren road. “Molika”, “Shtëpia e Stojkut” hotels, a “Ski School”, a “Stone House” and some cottages are located at the top.
Regarding current capacity use, in the previous years after the conflict, only 30% of hotel capacities are in use. When it comes to ski lifts, they temporarily work during the ski season, when there are skiers on the ski slopes. Poor conditions like old tows, bad power supply, power cuts, etc, have a negative effect to both the guests accommodated in hotels and also to daily guests who come for skiing. One of the issues of this ski centre is also the small capacity to accommodate a large number of daily visitors. Another extremely delicate issue related to the current situation in this centre is the issue of delayed privatization, which has stagnated the vigorous development and prosperity of this centre.

4.2.1 Legal Base for Nature Protection in Kosovo

Initial steps toward nature protection in Kosovo, as constitutive part of SFRY, began in the late 60’s through administrative phases and procedures for institutional and legal perfection, while in 1981 the Kosovo Assembly approved the Law on the establishment of the SAPK Institute of nature protection (SAPK – Official Gazette nr.15/81). Based on numerous researches from scientists from Kosovo, Yugoslavia and beyond, and on the basis of their results upon the special and unique values of the Sharr Mountain, the SAPK Institute of Nature Protection drafted the project proposal for announcement of certain part of Sharr Mountain as a National Park.

In accordance with the legislation system of former Yugoslavia, in 1986, the Kosovo Assembly adopted a Law by which was announced the “Sharr Mountain” National Park (SAPK – Official Gazette nr.11/86). This law precisely defines the boundaries of the National Park and its area of 390 km² or 35.4% of the total area of the mountain stretching in Kosovo side. This makes up only 3.58% of the total area of Kosovo, while international criteria foresees the system of protected zones make up 10% of a country’s total area. In recent years, there’ve been efforts to announce the part of the mountain “Bjeshket e Nemuna” (another mountain 50km west of Sharr Mountain) as a National Park, which would increase the percentage of protected zones in accordance with international criteria.
According to SIDA (Swedish International Development Agency), National Park “Sharr Mountain” has sufficient values to be part of Natural Heritage protection within the European context. Dating back from former Yugoslavia, the National Park was nominated for zone of World Heritage, and according to IUCN – International Union pour la Conservation de la Nature, National Park “Sharr Mountain” is part of the International list of protected zones, but till now, due to Kosovo’s undefined status, the status of this heritage remains “in limbo” regarding to global aspects.

4.2.2 The spatial management of National Park “Sharr Mountain”

Legacy – The National Park “Sharr Mountain” is the first national park in Kosovo, which has been announced in 1986 by Kosovo Assembly, in accordance with the existing legislation of former Yugoslavia, according to which the first national park was announced in early 1928. It is situated in southern part of Kosovo, along the border with Macedonia. By the Law of National Park “Sharr Mountain”, the total surface of 39 000 ha was part of four Kosovo municipalities, like: Prizren, Ferizaj (Urosevac), Suhareke and Kacanik, but within the establishment of new municipality of Shterpce the National Park’s location belongs to the following municipalities: in Prizren (19 500 ha, or 50%), Shterpce (15 210 ha, or 39%), Suhareke (2 730 ha, or 7%) and Kacanik (1560 ha or 4%). From the entire territory of NP, around 80 % is public land and approximately 20 % belong to private sector. According to the destination, there are the following structures of surfaces: Grass vegetation (pastures and agricultural land) – 62 %; Forests - 34 %, and others (cliffs, roads, rivers, lakes and buildings) – 4 %

The Law of National Park “Sharr Mountain” has foreseen the composition of the Spatial Plan and development program for the NP territory, in order to reach the balanced development in accordance within different harmonized stakeholders interests and would contain:

- analyses of the existing situation with opportunities for further efficient development,
- measures and principles of protection and cultivation of natural resources, including biodiversity, landscapes, water, forestry, pastures and special reservations,
- Programs and plans for development of tourism and recreation activities, etc.

Also the document would include the scope of works and bill of quantities within all necessary actions that would be financially supported by Kosovo province budget.

**Zoning.** – The basic element of NP’s Spatial Plan is zoning. According to Marinovic-Uzelac, (a Croatian planner from Zagreb), in former Yugoslavia the zoning system of national parks among all republics and provinces has started approximately ten years before the Benaf Convention of IUCN – *Internationale Union pour la Conservation de la Nature*, which was adopted in 1972. Although it is known that initial zoning was very broad, it was divided into “narrow” and “wide” protected areas. Benaf Convention has very precisely defined name and functions of these zones. (A. Marinovic-Uzelac, 1986, p. 320). According to the typical natural values the overall territory of the “Sharr Mountain” National Park is divided into three protected zones:

1) **First zone,** which contains Strict Natural Reserves because of their endemic character with unique scientific and natural values. These reserves belong to the first degree and can be used mainly for educational and scientific purposes. The following areas with in the territory of “Sharr Mountain” National Park have the status of the protected reservation: Koxhaballkani (Pisha e madhe), Oshlaku (Arneni), Maja eArnenit (Prevala) and Rusenica.

2) **Second Zone:** Or, so called zone of the oriented protection. This zone belongs to the second level of the protection and it is dedicated for various economic activities; tourism (vacation, active recreation, winter sports, etc.), husbandry (use of the pastures), forestry, catering, trade etc, which should be harmonized with the set criteria for the protection of the natural resource characteristics. All the forests outside the strict reservations are located within the zone, as well as grass areas which surround strict natural reservations with a width of 200 to 500 m (Buffered zones should be determined
by law) depending on the reservation specifics, position of the terrains and different economic activities which are planned to be used close to the strict natural reservations.

3) Third zone: Or, so called multi-purpose zone of the third level of protection, which includes all the grass territories which neither have any special values of biodiversity nor cultural-historical special values. Third zone is dedicated to tourism development, sport-recreation activities and sport and recreation facilities. Within the tourist zone of the National Park, dedicated zones of use should be distinguished as follows:

- Active recreation and outdoor stay
- Summer and Winter Sports
- Tourist and Health Facilities

As far as construction of the tourist capacities (facilities) of the National Park are concerned, they are usually divided into two categories:

a) Concentrated Construction

b) Individual Construction, Construction in accordance with various tourists offers from different parts of the territory respectively.

Concentrated constructions are recommended for tourist centers, which mean the construction of tourist facilities in two or three limited parts of the territory with the following advantages:

a) Rentable from the economic aspect
b) With low impact and change to the environment and
c) Degradation of the natural values is lower.

All this zonal regulations were used only during the defining and planning phase of the zones of the National Park, although those proposals as much as they are efficient and functional couldn’t be implemented in the beginning, means from 1986, due to budget deficit of SAP of Kosovo, and later for political reasons. The mentioned reasons make the previous foreseen zoning to remain just on the paper, while the site reality is changing day by day, for more than twenty years.
Functions. - of the National Park are determined so they first of all assure protection and development of the fundamental national park values, and then regulation and exploitation of these values in a rational way and in accordance with basic requirements. Functions of the National Park are divided into these four basic groups:

a) Ecological and Protection Function
b) Recreational – Tourist Function
c) Cultural – Scientific and educational Function
d) Other Functions like: (husbandry, forestry, hydro-economy, commerce, SME, construction and services

Management. - National Park represents a territory with special natural values and in order to have successful management it requires special administrative, organizational, legal and financial conditions which create a base for:

- Management, protection and development of natural resources
- Management of the activities allowed in specific zones of the National Park
- Construction of Tourist and additional facilities

Present Management of the National Park relies on this legislation:

- Law on National Park (GZK 11/86)
- Law on Forestry nr. 2003/6

New Law on the National Park is waiting for approval from the assembly of Kosovo. The function and establishment of the new institutions which deal with environment, in the local and central level, proved to be right decisions towards achieving the set goals, but at the same time insufficient. Currently, due to political reasons and least for functional reasons two Directorates are established in order to manage park resources. One of them is based in Prizren and doesn't have full competences in the whole territory, and the other in Shterpce, which manages only the part within the Municipality. Existence and function of these Directorates is creating space on behalf of which the spatial degradation appears gradually.
4.3 Spatial Development of the southeastern side of the Sharr Mountains

The Sharr Mountain is the biggest and highest mountain in Macedonia, which defines the northwestern boundary, starting from Sherupa peak (2092m), a tripartite area of Macedonia, Albania and Kosovo - UNMIK. From this point the border follows in an east direction through numerous high peaks up to the Kacanik Canyon, where it crosses the river Lepenc. The Sharr has high mountain ridges, in the shape of an arch, up to 80 km long and 10-20 km wide, with a total territory of 912.8 km². Out of these, 795 km² are higher than 1000 m, 500 km² are higher than 1500 m and about 183 km² are higher than 2000 meters. The peak furthest away from the ridge is Luboten (2499m) which is considered to be one of the most beautiful peaks of this mountain.

**Infrastructure.**- The mountain is very well linked to the area’s motorways; two of the main Western Balkan’s corridors pass through the mountain’s foot. The one goes in the north – south direction (Belgrade – Skopje – Athens) up to the Aegean Sea and the other in the east-west direction (Sofia - Skopje – Durres) up to the Adriatic Sea. Also on the distance of less than 40 km the Skopje Airport is situated, which plays an important role on mountain spatial development.

**Settlements.**- Just around the foot of the mountain two Macedonian towns are situated, Tetovo and Gostivar, and the capital city Skopje is very close. The three cities are very old which indicates that the area has been populated since ancient times. It affected on inhabitance of the villages, too. The population of some villages ranges between 1000 to 3000 inhabitants, even if, the great number of villages are situated at a distance of 0 to 5 km or 5 to 10 km from the border. Because of the relief structure of the region as well as the location, there are around 40 hilly villages and up to 50 mountain villages. The so-called scattered villages have a very complicated relief structure and location. A considerable number of villages are situated at an altitude higher than 800 m, even
though some are too spread. This means that in some villages the difference in altitude between two parts of the village can sometimes be more than 100 m. On the basis of the Law for Development of Undeveloped Areas (SRM Official Gazette nr. 2/94), all the villages which are situated at an altitude higher than 800 m belong to the group of hilly villages that is, mountains areas. Therefore about 50 villages which spread through Sharr Mountain have the status of hill-mountain zones.

**Husbandry.** – Pastures make up the most important part of the Sharr Mountain’s husbandry. In the southern part of Sharr Mountain the pastures cover most of the territory, which is the longest in Macedonia. The length of this territory is about 100 km which spreads on a silicone bed, starting from the river Radika and continuing without any interruption as far as Luboten in northeast (Stojmilov, 1984).

The width of this enormously high pasture zone ranges from 3 km near Luboten to 23 km near Mavrovo Lake up to the border. The geological structure of this terrain consists of slates and limestone containing clay. During the summer months, from April until late autumn, the individual farmers from the villages nearby lead their sheep on the very high mountain pastures, in the so called “bacila” type, where different dairy are produced. The most known is the Sharr’s cheese with a unique taste and very old tradition. Lately the pastures have not been in use as luck of sheep capacitates.

**Forestry.** - The exploitation of forests, which cover an area of more than 53 000 ha, is carried out according to certain plans. The availability of the capacities for primary as well as for final wood processing are very important for the forestry as a separate branch of industry, but the cultivation of new forest is on a very low level. Along the border regions there are only few private sawmills for primary wood processing and their capacity is very limited. There are no statistics on the already mentioned manufacturing capacities and therefore there exists no detailed information about which type of equipment is used. According to the evaluation made by the Ministry of Environment and Spatial Planning, less than 20% of the woods are being used for industry, whereas around 80% are being used for heating.
Tourism.- The very convenient climate, the natural beauties and relatively good infrastructure net influence the development of the tourism on the south-east side of the Sharr Mountain, (besides the first tourist places in former Yugoslavia). According to overseas experts Zhean Iten and Michael Rei on "The analysis of opportunities and problems of winter-tourism development in Yugoslavia" published in 30', the Sharr Mountain and “Bjeshket e Nemuna” (situated approximately 50 km from each other), could offer the greatest tourism opportunities. Both mountains are characterized by having a difference in altitude level above 200 000 m, which is equal to the level-distance of all the other mountains in former Yugoslavia counted together (Stojmilov, 1974). Even though the Macedonian side of the mountain has a south-east exposition, it possesses the deep snow layer which promises the long skiing season. Also the mountain’s hydrographical characteristics with rich and high quality waters give extra credit to the tourism opportunities.

The very first mountain’s habitation was built in 1932 near Luboten (the very eastern peak of the Sharr mountain), and two years later in Popova Shapka. The second phase of building took place between 1950 and 1954 with some new houses and maintenance of the existing ones.

The most productive phase have started after the construction of the first tow in 1962, connecting the city of Tetovo (approx. 350 m above sea level) and Popova Shapka on an altitude of 1845m, a length of 6 527 m and a capacity of 400 passengers per hour. In the 1960’s a considerable number of buildings were constructed, which presented the beginning of planning development based on urban and spatial plans.
Most of the buildings functioned as labor habitation for different public enterprises from Macedonia and former Yugoslavia. The total number of buildings and beds reached 17 and 600, respectively, in the 1970’s. Also the existing areas of ski slopes and ski-lifts net have been maintained and the new ones have been extended.

This development increased the number of visitors in Popova Shapka, from 2900 up to 7000 in 1966 (Stojmilov, 1974). In the 70’ Popva Shapka became the most popular ski center in former Yugoslavia, being visited not only from Yugoslavian tourist but also from foreign ones.

The first international ski competition the "Sharr Mountain - Cup", was held at Popova Sapka in 1947. This event became a tradition, which was held every year in February with the participation of the best skiers from Macedonia, Yugoslavia and abroad. Both in winter and summer, Popova Shapka and the Sharr Mountain were full of tourists because of the plenty opportunities for rest and recreation that the area provided. It must be noted that mount Sharr Mountain is not only a winter recreational centre but a rich hunting area for games and a well-stocked fishing region.

However the political movement of central-east Europe indicated a complex stagnation of economic activities, which gradually broke through every cell of society. The radical political changes still haven’t settled. In this context, the unresolved status of the National Park and privatization remain issues of concern for Popova Shapka. Due to the lack of an adequate system for spatial management, the first steps of privatization have shown no progress. This is a result of the undefined legislation and competences between the Central and Local Governmental hierarchy.
4.3.1 Legal Base for Nature Protection in Macedonia

Since 1971, with the Amendment of the Constitution of the Socialist Federative Republic of Yugoslavia, the competences were divided between the Federation and the Republics and Provinces, which obliges these Federal Units to draft and adopt adequate laws on Nature Protection. Thus, Nature Protection in Macedonia has legal bases in the Constitution and is accorded with the other legal sectors. The special law was adopted on protection of the unique natural resources, which was based in following Republic’s Laws:

- Law on urban and spatial planning - SRM Official Gazette nr. 20/78
- Law on hunting - SRM Official Gazette nr. 5/73
- Law on fishing – SRM Official Gazette nr. 15/73
- Law on forestry – SRM Official Gazette nr. 20/74
- Law on water – SRM Official Gazette nr. 5/73
- Law on mineral research and exploring – SRM Official Gazette nr. 24/73
- Law on management and use of pastures – SRM Official Gazette nr. 20/74
- Criminal code of SRM – ROM Official Gazette nr. 25/77

In contrary to the other Republics, this law foresees only the protection of natural reservations, such as: National Parks (three in Macedonia), exclusive nature reservations, parts with special characteristics and specific landscapes. The law excludes nature protection on a comprehensive context. The Law also foresees the adoption of policies, by which the natural heritage will have an impact on community life, and protection of this natural heritage should be incorporated within the programs of general planning.

All the above data were presented in the document of “The Spatial Plan of Socialist Republic of Macedonia 1982 – 2000”, which has been defined through the different sector studies, known as – categorization of natural and rare resources which affect aspects of natural life. According to this plan, in chapter on National Parks, within the
Sharr Mountain was proposed new National Park for the so-called “National Park Leshnica”, with an area of 11,182 hectares.

The National Park “Leshnica” differs from the natural entity of Gorna Leshnica as a complex natural entity with great significance. It differs with geological and geomorphologic characteristics, as well as fluvial-glacial and hypsometric characteristics. Pasture composition in this relatively small area, and the growing interest to explore this complex nature, is not only of Macedonians themselves, but goes beyond their borders.

### 4.3.2 The Process for announcement of National Park “Sharr Mountain”

Due to social and political movement in the entire Western Balkan area, the idea for a National Park “Lesnica” proposed by experts who composed the Spatial Plan of the Socialist Republic of Macedonia (1982 – 2000), had remained untreated for more than a decade. In 1997, the Ministry of Urbanism, Construction and Environment made the Proposal for adoption of the Law for announcement of the part of Sharr Mountain as a national park. With the new proposal the previously proposed name the “Lesnica” was replaced with National Park “Sharr Mountain” and the area was extended from 11 182 ha to 51 585 ha, which covers 30% of the total surface of the Sharr Mountain.

Positive opinions about this Proposal have been obtained from different of governmental institutions, NGO’s and Independent Federation for protection of the nature of Macedonia. Nevertheless, the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Economy and the Faculty of Forestry were against the adoption of this Law.

With the establishment of the Ministry of Environment in 1999, the process for adoption of the Law has been initiated again and it has been submitted to the Government of the Republic of Macedonia for review. This new revised document is updated by the recent international criteria and concludes that the area which announces for a National Park will receive special treatment in terms of the possibilities to achieve sustainable
development. The huge responsibility would lie in the hands of the state regarding the management and humanization of the area, the protection and cultivation of nature, the development of tourism, in particular eco-tourism, which would make the national park receive recognition and importance on an international context. The selection of certain forest areas for national parks should be understood as an intention to protect entire composition and potential of forests and forestry land, as well as for adequate maintenance, by which it will be provided ecological, esthetic and economic sustainability.

It is in the interest of every country, and its general economical development, to establish protected areas (such as national parks). Studies have shown that the economical power of every country is greater, as their protected areas and objects of nature are rationally and sustainable utilized. With the announcement of part of the Sharr Mountain as a national park the following will be expected:

- protection, preservation of natural heritages and sustainable development of the area;
- protection and sustainable use of the forestry;
- modern arrangement of villages around the park and necessary infrastructural linkage with other settlements in the area;
- planning and constructing the traffic system;
- construction of modern water supply systems, waste management and other infrastructure in the villages;
- opening the market for hand made local products from the area;
- stimulation and financing of sheep breeding, which represents a special historical mark of Macedonia and the wider Balkans;
- development of traditional agriculture and its incorporation in tourist organization, and, in particular, development of eco-tourism;

The huge contingent of compatible labor market in the local settlement (over 60 % in total) and limited agricultural potential, could be engaged in activities such us protection,
maintenance and management of the Park, (positive experiences could be learned from other national parks in Macedonia; Pelister, Mavrovo and Galicina). The tourist opportunities would be planned according to environmental regulation and through particular spatial organization, which would select the tourist functions and common actions. In order to implement successfully the protection measures, the government, through its fiscal policies, will stimulate development of settlements, with aim to promote healthy environment and landscape values. The spatial planning of the National Park would enable the rational use of natural resources towards a sustainable development of the entire area.

Although the process of announcement has been on-going for quite long time, but still has not reached the concrete results. According to the Ministry of Environment and Physical Planning of the Republic of Macedonia, the area has been affected by the 2001 conflict, which affected on security conditions up to now, and that is the reason why the process for the moment is interrupted. The Ministry suggests that the process will continue when socio-political issues enable the conditions for adopting the Law for announcement of the National Park “Sharr Mountain”.

4.4 Erosion and Degradation

The erosion maps indicate that some areas of the Sharr Mountains are affected by erosion of various scale of intensity. Zones which are not covered with vegetation can be influenced by physical, chemical and biological factors which could lead to an increased level of erosion.

The environmental pollution in the Sharr Mountains’ area is expressed in terms of global pollution. There is a lack of environmental monitoring which results with inadequate data regarding the issue in question. There is a lack of spatial planning and regulation not only in this area, but throughout the entire mountain massif, therefore the number of the visitors is small. The main issues of degradation are:
- Destruction of the qualitative areas as a result of the construction of illegal buildings;
- Degradation as a result of not considering terrain characteristics, waste and sewerage pollution;
- Deficiency of electricity source in the hotels and resident areas as a result of insufficient usage of water potential in building hydro plants;
- River pollution by sewerage from residential areas and tourist - recreational facilities as a result of the lack of filters for cleaning the sewerage;
- Irrational usage of the forests can cause pastures to expand and the upper edge of the forests to shift down;
- Uncontrolled usage of the pastures has caused their quality to decrease;
- Damaged roads as a result of improper maintenance;
- Traffic chaos near tourist centers is a result of parking deficiency;

Prevalla is the place affected mostly by pollution, as a result of waste disposal in the countryside by the visitors, coming to visit this place throughout the year. This results from urban planning deficiency and management inefficiency in the Shar Mountain.
4.5 Previous initiatives for cross-border cooperation

The first initiative for cross-border cooperation took place in 1994, between the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and the remained Federation of Yugoslavia, (at the time, Slovenia and Croatia had already been separated from the Federation). The conflict between Bosna and Hercegovina were still on-going in 1994, and only four unites of the old Federation remained: two republics, Serbia and Montenegro, and two autonomous provinces, Vojvodina and Kosovo). The protocol was signed in the capital city of Vojvodina, Novi Sad, on 16 December 1994, based on the Convention for biological diversity and other international declarations for protection of the natural values of the Sharr Mountain in the inter-state context. In the agreement the cooperation questions of the general natural values of the Sharr Mountain were also included, in particular the geomorphologic and hydrological phenomena, vegetation and animal species (rare and endangered species), as well as different issues of arrangement, management and joint promotion of the Sharr Mountain.

In 1998 dialogues were finalized, and a Proposal – Protocol on cooperation between the Yugoslav Ministry of Environment and Macedonian Ministry of Urbanism, Construction and Environment was brought forward. According to this proposal, issues of joint interest for the two neighboring states for long term cooperation in the area of protection of nature and environment should be established. Both countries were responsible for resolving the issues on protection of nature and environment, in particular for purpose of global character; which are lead by adopted standards of international legislation in the area of protection of nature and environment. These standards were determined by “Parks for Life” by IUCN (22nd Priority Project – “Support for trans – border protected areas”) and together with the strategy for biology and landscape diversity 1996 - 2016 and its actions for 1996-2000 (priority theme 10 applies to mountain eco-systems), oblige signing authorities to undertake various coordinating and adjusting activities. In the Protocol certain proposals have been agreed on with the regard to the border protection areas, which will be gained by this cooperation:
joint activities in the implementation of agreed projects for protection and development of managing according to the most recent European criteria;
- promotion of eco-system approach for joint management of vegetation and animal community, which reside on two different sides of the state borders or which migrate (seasonal/daily) across the borders,
- reducing of risks of losing a biodiversity.

In the Protocol it was agreed to implement joint activities for preventing illegal trade of vegetation and animal species, particular kinds that are under protection or under traffic control, joint planning of development of the region, revitalization and promotion of tourism offers, coordinated development of communication technology, joint scientific–research projects, etc. In order to implement this Protocol effectively, the signing parties have agreed to establish mixed Yugoslavian/Macedonian Working Groups, which would be composed of representatives from Ministries, Colleges, National Parks and experts of adequate profiles.

Since that time the western Balkan area has faced different circumstances in the socio-political spheres. After the Kosovo crises in 1999 that part of the remaining Yugoslav Federation was and still is under the United Nation Mission in Kosovo - UNMIK administration. Furthermore, the so called Federation of Yugoslavia transformed into the state of Serbia and Montenegro, until the final division into two states in 2006. The initiative of cross-border cooperation remained vise-vogue, in the context to which the competence should belong, until the final status of Kosovo which is still undefined since 1989.
5. Sharr- Mountains on current perspectives

5.1 The North-west perspectives on the Sharr Mountains

After June 1999, many international organizations were engaged in Kosovo to fulfill the transitional period under UNMIK’s protectorate. One of them was SIDA, which dealt with the need on drafting an emergent management plan for National Park “Sharr Mountain” and the development of a zonal system and the establishment of the management structure.

After the constitution of the PISG (Provisional Institutions of Self Government) by UNMIK and Constitutional Framework, Kosovo is considered a unique spatial unit and the competency on the section for Spatial Planning and Development was transferred to the Ministry of Environment and Spatial Planning (MESP) of Kosovo. The law on Spatial Planning, approved by the Kosovo Assembly and the SRSG of UN on 10 September 2003, states that the Ministry of Environment and Spatial Planning is responsible for the drafting of a Spatial Plan for Kosovo. One of the most important issues in the Kosovo Spatial Plan 2005-2015+ document is the treatment and protection of natural and cultural heritage, thus on February 2006 the MESP took the decision to compose a spatial plan for the special zone of National Park “Sharr Mountain”.

The plan’s main objective will be the controlled spatial development of the park by preserving natural, environmental and landscape heritage and by protecting biodiversity, as one of the characteristics which distinguishes and makes this region unique. According to MESP, the spatial plan of National Park Mountain Sharr will be based on the present social, economic and environmental condition and will be drafted through an all-inclusive and transparent process with public participation in decision making.

The composition of this plan is based on the current legal regulation consisting of: the Law on spatial planning, the Law on Agricultural land, the Law on housing and construction, the Law on protecting the environment, the Law on protecting nature and the Law on waters. The drafting of the plan should serve as a guide to:
- Identify the locations with spatial development potential;

- approve policies linked to potential development in areas of the park related to tourism development, offering the necessary service in accordance with the best possible protection of heritage and natural/cultural values determine the role of neighboring villages, and bigger cities nearby.

- Determine the role of important infrastructure and connection with the park’s territory.

According to the framework on the process of composition the National Park’s spatial plan, the MESP, respectively its Institute of spatial planning will be based on four phases, where the necessary documents will be prepared;

- The National Park “Sharr Mountain “profile; (still being prepared)

- The vision and strategic goals

- Spatial development concepts

- The strategy for implementation

Based on the logical activity framework, this process is planned to last one year. Scientific information related to the park is generally based on data/evaluation from 1980 – 1990, which was more oriented toward scientific study and less toward the protection management. The evaluation of species and their environment with internationally accepted methodology is needed, in order to spread biodiversity, management efficiency and community efforts.

The spatial plan of National Park “Sharr Mountain” will determine long-term regulation and objectives of spatial planning, for the next ten years at least, and actual duration and budget implications. The Kosovo Assembly will approve the spatial plan for Kosovo on the basis of the Kosovar government proposal, and afterwards the SRSG will ratify it. The planning process is continuous. It should go through monitoring and evolution before being changed when necessary. It means that in case of any cross-border initiative, the plan would be flexible, in order to be harmonized by other neighbor’s plans in the region.
5.2 The South-east Perspectives on the Sharr Mountain

Due to an ethnic conflict in 2001 in Macedonia, which particularly affected the north-western part, the officers from the Ministry of Environment and Physical Planning think that the area is still unsafe in order to undertake any serious measures for its future development. As a consequence of the interruption of the procedure for the announcement of part of the mountain as a National Park, there exists no particular project or strategy plan for me to examine, except the Spatial Plan of Macedonia 2002–2020. Some data I was able to collect from different organizations, which also did not have any significant information upon the Sharr Mountain, but they provided me with other comprehensive documents, which propose the development of the whole territory of Macedonia. In order to get better picture of the Macedonian perspective upon the Shar Mountain, I tried to highlight and combine some common data from the Spatial Plan and the other documents of the particular issues, of infrastructure, tourism, agriculture, pastures, environment, etc.

The interlink position of Macedonia, between the Adriatic Sea in the west and the Black sea in the east, was treated with particular interest in all the mentioned documents. That would drag on harmonization of national plans and strategies within the neighboring countries and beyond (Document of Spatial Plan of Macedonia 2002 – 2020). The two important TEN (Trans European Network) corridors that pass just on the foot of the Sharr Mountains’ south-east side are considered for further maintenance. According to the Ministry of Infrastructure, the foreseen corridor E80 (Rome, Dubrovnik, Podgorica, Prishtina, Nish, Sofia) and E771 (Bari, Skadar, Prizren, Prishtina) is considered to be beneficial for Macedonia. Thus, the existing road, which links Tetovo and Prizren is expected to be considerably improved. This includes the reconstruction of the segment 29 km up to the border place of Jazhinca, which is situated in the middle of the Sharr Mountains. Through this road Macedonia would be linked with E771 corridor faster.
The development of the mentioned local infrastructure would tickle the economic development of the whole mountain region, including all sectors. According to the “Spatial Plan of Macedonia 2002 – 2020”, the Sharr-Polloshi tourist zone includes five tourist centers with different characters. Besides the monumental tourism in Tetovo, in Luboten tourism could be developed in three centers: Vratnica, Piribreg and Tri Vode. The third center covers the parts of Shipkovica municipality, which includes existing ski-center of Popova Shapka and the other two, the Black peak and Leshnica. However, all the tourist opportunities of this zone, do not present any dominant position; they make up for only 1.91%, compared to the total number of foreseen beds in Macedonia up to year 2020.

The Department of Environment proposes to link the foreseen National Park of the Sharr Mountain with the existing National Park of Mavrovo. Up to 2020 Macedonia would have 298.5 ha protected area which amount to 11.6% of the total area of the region. These zones, according to governmental actors, need more complex treatment, which would include cross-border cooperation, in order to avoid environmental side effects and achieve the efficient spatial development of the region.

5.3 The initiatives of cross-border cooperation

The REC – Regional Environmental Center, which now operates in Kosovo, has operated in Macedonia, too. This NGO helped both Ministries of Environment to draft their Strategy upon environment and later, to draft the KEAP – Kosovo Environmental Action Plan and the NEAP – National Environmental Action Plan for Macedonia. Beside the numerous cross-border agreements between Kosovo and Macedonia in economic
fields (trade, telecommunication, energy, etc), the first steps of cross-border cooperation on environment were initiated through REC activities.

Spatial development of the Sharr Mountain, based on cross-border cooperation was the main topic of discussion at the meeting that took place in Prishtina, the capital city of Kosovo, in the end of April '07. In this meeting the Permanent Secretary of Macedonian Ministry of Environment and Physical Planning met with his homologue, the Permanent Secretary of the Kosovar Ministry of Environment and Spatial Planning, and discussed the key aspects that these two governmental institutions are focused on.

Considering the fact that both neighbours aim to be part of the European Union, they agreed that cross-border cooperation is unavoidable and very helpful towards fulfilling their objectives. The cross-border cooperation would focus, firstly, on the legislation field in order to harmonize both existing legislation systems of the two neighbors in accordance with EU legislative criteria. They also agreed that the bilateral cooperation is important for environmental aspects, particularly in the Sharr Mountain area, where for better results for the entire western Balkan region, this cross-border cooperation would extend further towards Albania too, because a small part of the Sharr Mountain massif is part of Albanian territory.

Even though this meeting was not on ministerial level, it was still significant in initiating the first steps towards cross-border cooperation, and the necessary legislation system for future cross-border spatial development.
6. Sustainability based on cross-border cooperation

6.1 Cross-border Spatial Planning Policies

The treaty of Maastricht set new directions for a spatial development planning. It aims to preserve, protect and improve the environment, to rationally exploit natural resources, and to respect national and regional diversity. Spatial development aims to both promote social and economic cohesion in the EU, by gradually reducing the differences in development level and creating a balanced regional structure, and to maintain an environmentally friendly economic development, and a sustainable balance in diversity. Spatial development planning in cross-border area of the Sharr Mountains would involve the regional cross-border socio-economic analysis/assessment, the preparation of joint development plans and the amplification of cross-border ways of elaborating.

Spatial development planning covers two basic levels of co-operation: state-regional and regional-local. These forms of co-operation operate on the basis of governmental agreements, but often work without formal authority and develop their own spatial development concepts. Legal measures on the other hand, include more productive state-region agreements and co-ordination of spatial planning, and as a result can help intensify cross-border regional development planning. The first steps for the cross-border cooperation on the area of Sharr Mountain can be based on the model that was used for the establishment of the association “Balkan Peace Park Coalition”, in Bjeshket e Nemuna (only 50 km from Sharr Mountain). It came as a result of the networking and empowerment of environmental associations in region of western Kosovo, south-eastern Montenegro and the north of Albania and has close collaborative relation with the BPP Committee in the UK. It is characterized by transparency and openness to foster wide cooperation with all sectors of society in the cross-border zone.

In the future, for the area of Sharr Mountain, cross-border co-operation at all planning levels, will require special enhancement through the creation of sectoral development plans (e.g. for transport, tourism, development of open spaces and rural areas), the preparation of rehab programmes for improvement of the environmental situation, and the co-ordination of local planning in border municipalities.
6.2 Economic Development

Border regions require the development of new attitudes and supportive cultures for entrepreneurship and necessary organizations to assist business startups, the creation of various networks which facilitate contact, provide opportunities for businesses to explore interests and create preconditions for productive co-operation, and researching and innovation in order to boost economic development. Modern infrastructure is also vital to effective economic development. Bearing in mind that cross-border co-operation is virtually impossible without interregional roads; significant importance must be given to the upgrade of general transport and transport links (tunnels, bridges etc.) This would enable the economic cooperation between rural settlements situated on both side of the mountain within quite considerable population density.

Business development in border regions requires preparatory and intensity-low action towards establishing the framework, defining the scale of co-operation, providing contact opportunities between different structures, and supporting further co-operation. In order to create favorable conditions for the development of informal or formal business and for effective exchange of information and experiences, specific action and activities must be made, such as familiarizing visits, identifying partners, workshops, conferences, scooping research in identifying problems and potential for co-operation. In addition, in the border region of the Sharr Mountain, extra importance should be given to unique values of regional rural specialization like dairy products and wool, as valuable elements for improving the capacity of minor-businesses. The common institutions from both sides should establish the pre-requisites for marketing major products under an eco-label and particularly those products intended for export.

The future economic development of Sharr Mountain is mostly linked to tourism, regarding to the great and unique values of natural resources in comparison with social opportunities those mountain rural areas could offer.
6.2.1 Sustainable Tourism Opportunities

The development of tourism in cross-border regions was always affected by barrier effects of national borders, possible dependencies on tourism and ever-growing imbalance in regional economic structure, and the lack of cross-border co-operation between public institutions and other supportive organizations. Thus now, developing border regions have started focusing on boosting strategic level co-operation to research opportunities and design joint strategies, in order to create tourism products, marketing strategies and support services.

Successful tourism development requires strategic level co-operation and diverse products to attract tourists, based on the concept of sustainable development and awareness of potential weaknesses. This then, makes way for structural development of cross-border areas and successfully contributes across a variety of other fields like labor market, infrastructure and business investment. The range of tourist activity necessities vary from the joint tourism information systems on transport, accommodation, to the joint management of common resources like landscapes, lakes, rivers, forests, pastures etc. The regional development requires healthy relations between tourism and environment, and productive synergy from cross-border cooperation in both fields.

Tourism must be environmentally sustainable, to be economically sustainable, too. Sustainable tourism generally implies a balanced mix of sustaining local economies, local cultures and local environments. In particular, sustainable tourism by one definition could be considered as a type of development that connects tourists and providers of tourist facilities and services with advocates of environmental protection and community residents and their leaders who aim a better quality of life. Thus, sustainable tourism must also be dedicated on improving the quality of life of the people who live and work there by high degree of local involvement. It is important to know just how local participation may affect the people’s means of livelihood and the equitable sharing of benefits. In order to achieve a harmonious coexistence between tourism and
environmentally friendly agriculture, it is essential that environmental aspects are integrated into the tourism management, and harmful activities to the environment and natural resources are avoided. Sustainable tourism is often equated with “ecotourism” which the Ecotourism Society defines as responsible travel to natural areas which conserves the environment and sustains the well-being of local people.

**Ecotourism** could be understood as a form of sustainable development with minimal environmental effects. Tourism development is closely related to ecotourism targets, where local communities benefit without endangering their economic systems, and where the environmental, natural and cultural resource base is protected. However, ecotourism doesn’t completely solve economic and environmental concerns; rather it can serve as an effective tool for sustainable development. The following principles help the development and management of ecotourism:

- Ecotourism should not degrade the resource and should be developed in an environmentally-friendly manner;
- It should provide first-hand, participatory and enlightened experiences;
- It should involve education among all parties – local communities, government, non-government organizations, industry, and tourists;
- It should encourage all-party recognition of the intrinsic values of the resource;
- It should involve acceptance of the resource on its own terms, and in recognition of its limits, which involves supply-oriented management;
- It should promote understanding and involve partnerships between many players, which could include government, non-government organizations, industry, scientists, and locals;
- It should promote moral and ethical responsibilities and behaviors towards the natural and cultural environment, by all players;
- It should provide long-term benefits – to the resource, to the local community, and to industry (benefits may be conservation, scientific, social, cultural or economic).

(Wight, 1993, p. 3)
Ecotourism should be considered one component of sustainable development, since it should compete with other uses of the social, economic and environmental resources of a region. Thus, the planning of sustainable tourism development requires a systematic approach that considers what opportunities are provided and their management. To define tourist opportunities and conceptual management approach help the frameworks, like Recreation Opportunity Spectrum (ROS) and Tourism Opportunity Spectrum (TOS).

**Recreation Opportunity Spectrum.** - The ROS is a regional planning process that is adapted to tourism issues, because of concern about growing tourism demand and limited resource supply, especially related to ecotourism and nature-based tourism. The guiding concept was to develop a rational and comprehensive planning approach for regional planning and management that provided for a broad array of recreational opportunities for users. The ROS defined several setting categories of land-management, from primitive to urban to help managers better understand physical, biological, social and managerial relationship.

**Tourism Opportunity Spectrum.** - The second framework, the TOS, strives to develop a rational and understandable planning approach for region planning and management which then created various opportunities for tourists. Users of TOS find this approach more comprehensive, more rich in tourist opportunity information, and more accessible and practical. Furthermore, users of TOS are able to assist other planners in understanding how ecotourism, nature-based tourism, and other types relate and bind with one another.

### 6.2.2 Local Tourism Opportunities

The geographical position of the Sharr Mountain is a key factor, which enables multiple tourism opportunities. The combination of particular cliff forms, rich with waters and the mixture of Mediterranean and continental climate offer tourism activities during the whole year, within different destinations throughout the four seasons.
Besides numerous **winters sport activities**, the **summer sports** in the Sharr Mountain could develop, too, based on lakes and rivers on both sides of the massif. The compatibility of sport tourism relies on climate characteristics, which enable a relatively long season for any significant sport, where the skiing season could last six months, starting in November and ending in May. Other sports like, sailing, climbing, biking, hunting, fishing, and even golf could be offered during almost eight months. Other local opportunities could offer the villages within high population density. The local population from the both sides could be involved in tourism services; where as a result unemployment would decrease. Among the villages, some of which are situated in an altitude higher than 1000 m, **rural eco-tourism** could be developed.

Fresh air as a result of high altitude, rich flora and qualitative sunshine give the Sharr Mountain the opportunity for **health tourism** on both sides of the mountain. Lately, this kind of tourism has become the most imperative tourism, where many researches argue that the mountain environment regenerates the blood hemoglobin and increases the skin pigment through sun tan. In the Sharr Mountain, there are some spa resources, which could enable the development of **thermal-spa tourism**. The rich biodiversity stimulates the development of **educative tourism** for different generations. The **excursion tourism** and **transit tourism** could be developed either with existing infrastructure, or after the implementation of other TEN corridors on northern side of the mountain that would promote both tourism. The reconstruction of segment road, which would improve the connection of both sides of the Sharr Mountain, would undoubtedly open wider windows for a better future for the area. In other hand,
the old local road could be used for the development of driving competition sport. The old cities of Tetovo in the Macedonian side, and Prizren in the Kosovo side, which are characterized by rich cultural heritage, could be the centers for the development of monumental tourism, too. This kind of tourism is more attractive when it fulfills the other kinds of tourism mentioned above and further contributes to their compatibility.

6.3 Environmental effects by cross-border cooperation

The improvement and management of the environment in cross-border regions should be included within the framework of cross-border co-operation, in order to successfully address the regions’ problems, and promote fruitful approaches toward sustainable development. The successful development of cross-border regions will require the integration of environmental issues into different aspects of cross-border development (economy, tourism, infrastructure etc.)

Economic development policies should give extra importance to the rational and sustainable usage of natural resources, and should ensure that industrial and economic activities are harmless to the environment, and do not threaten the area’s ecological balance. Environment quality is a great way to attract new investment and “clean technology” – based business, marketing development of the region’s products (foods, crafts), modern tourism and leisure industries, and of course, inhabitants planning to live, work or visit in the area. Infrastructure development should ensure its developments do not have a negative impact on the environment. Extra planning care could decrease congestion and pollution to save energy, and could ensure that attractive scenery, landscapes and ecology are not damaged by infrastructure development (inappropriate buildings, roads through environmentally-sensitive areas etc.) Inter-relation between healthy environment and economic development is essential toward the border region’s overall development. Thus, the region’s strategies and actions must depend on the inter-dependent co-operation of the two, in order to boost the region’s development opportunities.
7. Conclusion

This thesis work started with the description of the Sharr Mountains’ spatial values, as a massif stretching between Macedonia and Kosovo, through which I tried to give clear insight regarding its geographical characteristics, accounting for the opportunities that this natural resource can offer. I was aiming at the highest values to justify the thesis objective, which was the importance of spatial development on the Sharr Mountain through efficient eco-management based on cross-border cooperation.

One of the most beautiful and unique values is shown by the Luboten Peak, which enables amazing views up to 300 km to Rila mountain to the east, Kopaonik mountain to the north and eyesight of Thessalonica’s Gulf in the Aegean coast to the south. In addition, the geomorphologic shapes of its massif, created by rich water sources, and the mixture of continental and Mediterranean climates make the Sharr Mountains one of the richest and most unique natural resources in the West Balkan. Its importance increases by combining the Sharr Mountains’ cross-border components, which ratify the complex dimension of its planning and management, because the planning of the natural values is sustainable only when the natural resources are rationally used, therefore the planning of the desirable socio-economic development should be based on environmental framework. Related to this I considered the basic thesis hypothesis: “How effective could the independent development of two sides of the mountain be, if a reciprocal environmental impact isn’t considered at first?” That brings to a conclusion that in order to eliminate or decrease these occurrences and achieve sustainability of efficient spatial development of the Sharr Mountains massif, cross-border cooperation is essential.

The cross-border cooperation on the eco-management of the mountain areas means the cooperation between two or more mountain areas along the border of two or more countries, equally protected in symbiosis, where each of the parties benefit without compromising borders, interests or territorial integrity. Its aim is the cultivation and promotion of cultural and natural diversity of communities inhabiting the border areas.
towards their local sustainable development, harmony and entire prosperity. The promotion of local sustainable development, as the main strategic objective of cross-border cooperation, is based on organizing family-rural eco-tourism, organic local agriculture and farming, renewable energy, handcrafts, use of low technical equipment, the rational use and good management of natural resources, cultural exchanges and socio-economic and political cooperation for security and prosperity of the border zones.

To better understand these empirical theories of cross-border cooperation I analyzed the European associations’ activities through AEBR - Association of European Border Regions and later the establishment of Interreg policies. Based on Interreg specific measurements and objectives, numerous cross-border cooperation partnerships between two or more states have been built throughout Europe. In addition, I gave a short overview of some European cross-border experiences, like the Alpine Convention, Carpathian Convention and Cross-border Cooperation in Tatra Mountain. However, considering the fact that different regions have different requests, there is no unique concept for cross-border cooperation. It depends on geographical factors in one hand and on socio-political and economic situation of bordered regions in the other. These components would influence on the building of new partnerships in the future.

This was the reason that the previous spatial management of Sharr Mountains from both sides needed to be treated carefully, in order to have a clear picture for further actions. From these analyses it can be concluded that, even though the Sharr Mountain massif was part of one federal state, the border sides of the mountains were planned from two federal units independently from each other. As a consequence, in 1986 only in the north-western part of the massif a National Park “Sharr Mountain” was announced. The first idea for the announcement of a part of the Macedonian side a National Park was mentioned in the Spatial Plan of Macedonia 1982 – 2000. Since 1994, when the Proposal was made, the announcement process has been going on, but due to the ethnic tensions of 2001, this process was temporarily interrupted. Hopefully, the process will continue soon, based on the relatively quiet situation during the last years.
Inside internal territories of each mentioned National Park, up to now, only one ski center has been developed on each side, even though this natural heritage could offer many other tourism opportunities. During the 80’s, both centers enjoyed desirable treatment and popularity, but the political changes in Southeast Europe left these economic cells totally “forgotten”. For more than twenty years, the degradation is evident not only in these partial planning areas that are gradually degraded, but in other parts of the mountains, too. Most affected are the communities of the mountain settlements, which are in considerable population density, even in the altitude of 1500 m on both sides of the border. However, this unlike situation was tried to be overtaken through cross-border cooperation, which was initiated in 1994, between Macedonia and Former Yugoslavia. The agreement was nearly reached, but due to political changes and the breakdown of the state of Former Yugoslavia, it remained only an initiative, because of the undefined territorial and planning competencies regarding the unresolved Kosovo status.

After the international intervention to control and stabilize the region’s political situation, many international organizations participated and contributed to Macedonia’s and Kosovo’s development, which also touched the ideas for spatial development of natural resources, too. As a result of international support, the common governmental organization of Macedonia and provisional governmental organization of Kosovo have undertaken the adequate measures on composing different important documents, plans, strategies or Action Plans that consider the cross-border cooperation as the best alternative for the future spatial development of Sharr Mountains. This can be illustrated by the last meeting held in Pristhina, in April ’07, between representatives of MESP (Ministry of Environment and Spatial Planning) of Kosovo and MEPP (Ministry of Environment and Physical Planning) of Macedonia which aimed to step forward the establishment of long and sustainable cross-border cooperation in environmental and spatial planning fields.

Since there are some hopes for cross-border cooperation in the spatial development of Sharr Mountain, I finally gave some opportunities on how these policies could be
implemented in the future. Spatial development planning covers two basic levels of co-operation: state-regional and regional-local. These forms of co-operation operate on the basis of governmental agreements, but often work without formal authority and develop their own spatial development concepts. In the future, cross-border co-operation at all planning levels, will require special enhancement through the creation of sectoral development plans (e.g. for transport, tourism, development of open spaces and rural areas), the preparation of rehab programs for improvement of the environmental situation, and the co-ordination of local planning in border municipalities.

An extra importance should be given to unique values of regional rural specialization like dairy products and wool, as valuable elements for improving the capacity of minor-businesses. The common institutions from both sides should establish the pre-requisites for marketing major products under an eco-label and particularly those products intended for export. Ecotourism should be considered another component of sustainable development, since it should compete with other uses of the social, economic and environmental resources of a region. Thus, the planning of sustainable tourism development requires a systematic approach that considers what opportunities are provided and their efficient management. Frameworks like Recreation Opportunity Spectrum (ROS) and Tourism Opportunity Spectrum (TOS) should be used to define mountain tourist opportunities and conceptual common management approach for both sides of Sharr Mountain. Tourism must be environmentally sustainable, in order to be economically sustainable. Sustainable tourism generally implies a balanced mix of sustaining local economies, local cultures and local environments. Inter-relation between healthy environment and economic development is essential toward the border region’s overall development. Thus, the region’s strategies and actions must depend on the inter-dependent co-operation of the two, in order to boost the region’s development opportunities.
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