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## NATURAL RESOURCES AND REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT: CASE STUDY OF THE GORNJE POLIMLJE REGION IN MONTENEGRO

### Abstract

*The Gornje Polimlje has all characteristics of the geographical region, which some of the areas, or just part of them, left many author's works of impassable value. The northeastern part of Montenegro possesses, in qualitative and quantitative aspects, an enormous wealth of natural values. It was unexpectedly and unacceptably economically neglected in the last fifty years in Montenegro's development. The paper aims to present the natural resources of the Gornje Polimlje region and the way of their valorization in the function of equal development of this region. Tourism is seen as an activity that would produce great economic results with the least negative impact on nature. The conclusion is that natural resources are either underutilized or utilized in the wrong way. Further development should be based on the exploitation of natural resources, first of all on the development of sustainable tourism and the use of renewable energy sources.*

**Key words:** mountains, tourism, Montenegro, Gornje Polimlje, regional development

**JEL classification:** R11

## ПРИРОДНИ РЕСУРСИ И РЕГИОНАЛНИ РАЗВОЈ: СТУДИЈА СЛУЧАЈА РЕГИЈЕ ГОРЊЕ ПОЛИМЉЕ У ЦРНОЈ ГОРИ

### Апстракт

*Горње Полимље има све карактеристике географске регије, о чијим су појединим просторима или само неким аспектима, бројни аутори оставили дела непролазне вредности. Североисточна Црна Гора и у квалитативном и у квантитативном погледу поседује огромно богатство природних вредности, који су током последњих педесет година у развоју Црне Горе недопустиво и неочекивано мало економски валоризоване. Циљ рада је да представи*

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*природне ресурсе регије Горње Полимље и начин њихове валоризације у функцији равномерног развоја овог региона. Туризам се посматра као активност која би донела велике економске резултате са најмање негативног утицаја на природу. Закључак је да се природни ресурси или премало користе или користе на погрешан начин. Даљи развој треба да се заснива на експлоатацији природних ресурса, пре свега на развоју одрживог туризма и коришћењу обновљивих извора енергије.*

**Кључне речи:** планине, туризам, Црна Гора, Горње Полимље, регионални развој

## Introduction

The Gornje Polimlje region was a subject of study of numerous researchers from various scientific areas. This area was explored by geographers, geologists, biologists, and others. Jovan Cvijić researched the origin and geomorphological characteristics of the Gornje Polimlje. Most of the work concerned the impact of an ice age in this area. The main characteristics of relief, hydrographic, and hydropower were presented by Jovan Petrović, thus continuing Cvijić's research. Cvijić's interest in the Prokletije Mt., his reference to the wide range of geographic phenomena expressed on this peculiar mountain, has never been fully investigated. Important regional-geographical works on the Prokletije Mt. came from Cvijić's School of Geography. He provided significant scientific knowledge of the Prokletije Mt. with his glaciological and geomorphological approach. He defined the areas and the borders, introduced them to science, and explained a new national name for these mountains (Cvijic, 1994). This gave the followers a solid basis for geographical studies. This paper aims to present the natural potentials of Bjelasica Mt., Komovi Mt., and Prokletije Mt. in the function of regional development of the Gornje Polimlje. These mountains present a significant natural resource for the tourist valorization of this region and an overall tourist offer of Montenegro. The richness of mineral resources, hydro potential, and forests is another parameter of this area that presents viable economical resources. All domestic and foreign analyzes agree that this area has significant potential for the overall economic development of Montenegro. The number of natural resources can be very competitive in the region. The dominant part of this area is Prokletije Mt., one of the longest mountain ranges in the Balkans, similar to the Alpine mountains. The richness of nature is visible throughout this area, which is why the German experts added the name “wild beauty” to it. Tourism is emerging as the main factor of revitalization and development without major negative environmental impact (Park & Yoon, 2009; Sharpley, 2001). The development of tourism influences employment growth (Coccosis, 2008), brings numerous benefits to the local population, participates in cultural exchange (Besculides et al., 2002), improves basic infrastructure and public services. In addition to the positive effects, tourism also produces negative effects, which are reflected in environmental degradation and negative socio-cultural impact (Marjanović, 2019). To avoid the negative impact of tourism, it is necessary to apply sustainable tourism development. This term implies use of natural resources that meets all economic, social, and aesthetic needs while respecting cultural integrity, basic ecological processes, biological diversity, and lifestyles (WTO, 1993). Regional

development is very important because it affects the equal development of all parts of the country, and the overall development of all regions (Partal & Popa, 2012).

This paper aims to present natural resources in the function of the economic development of the research area. A qualitative-quantitative method was used to describe the data descriptively and numerically. Valorization of these areas refers to natural elements. The SWOT analysis shows the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats, on the one hand, and risks associated with further development on the other.

## **Geographical Position of the Research Area**

The Gornje Polimlje is a region in the northeast of Montenegro. It is named the Gornje Polimlje because it covers the upper basin of the Lim River. It extends between 42° 25' and 42° 55' 5'' north latitudes and 17° 15' 25'' and 17° 40' east longitudes. It lies in a position of south-north. This area consists of the composite valley of Lim River and the mountains east and west of it. The Gornje Polimlje region shares its eastern border with the Metohija region and the Gornje Poibarje region. From the south to the north, the border leads from the Bogičevica Mt., then it spreads to the catchment of Zavoј Mt., Starca Mt., Čakor Mt., Mokra Planina Mt., Smiljevica Mt., and Turjak Mt. The north part of the Gornje Polimlje extends to the valley of Lješnica, Tivran gorge and branches of Bjelasica Mt., which separate it from the Srednje Polimlje region. The Gornje Polimlje shares its western border with Lower and Upper Kolašin, Kuči, and Albania. From the north to the south, it goes through the catchment of Lim River and Tara River on the Bjelasica group of the mountain, Trešnjevik Mt and Komovi Mt., and the catchment of Lim River and Morača River on the Prokletije group of the mountain. The southern border is the state border with the Republic of Albania and leads to the ridges of the Prokletije Mt., which presents the catchment of the Lim River and Drim River. Within these boundaries, going from south to north, the Gornje Polimlje consists of: The Plavsko-gusinjski basin, Polimlje, and the area of Andrijeviца and Berane (Bakić, 2005). Considering the geographical position of the Gornje Polimlje, we can point out that it represents a natural connection with neighboring areas such as Kosovo and Metohija region, the Centralno Polimlje region, upper Potarje region, and the Kuč region, and through them the Montenegrin coast with the Pannonian Basin and central parts of the Balkans. Besides this natural predisposition has not been adequately valorized so far, first of all, because there were no quality roads that would contribute to the greater functional importance of this area (Golubović, 2015).

## **Mountains in a Function of Tourism Development**

Strong geotectonic disturbances in the past have caused complex and varied relief. The most powerful and intense glaciation in the Balkans has left the deepest traces of glacier erosion in the form of numerous cirques, that left behind a dozen smaller lakes. Cvijić (1994) pointed out that, nowhere in the Balkans, glaciers left such deep erosion as in the Prokletije Mt.

The Prokletije Mt., with its natural beauties, is among the most interesting mountains. The raw wilderness and the tame, bare peaks of various shapes that rip clouds

and valleys of the Alpine type adorn this area. The Prokletije massif can be divided into four groups: northern, central, southern, and western mountain groups.

Based on the research of morphological characteristics relevant for tourism development, it is estimated that these mountains have a total leveling (capacity of ski terrains) in the range of about 93,000 m. Suitable areas for the development of winter tourism are north, northeast, and northwest, with a slope of potential ski terrain from  $10^0$  to  $25^0$ , which provides opportunities for arranging trails of different categories. According to new research, the total leveling of the tourist-geographical units of Montenegro is 91,899 m or 26.6% of the leveling established in the mountains of the former Yugoslavia. The Prokletije chain possesses 45,392 m or 49.7% (Kasalica, 1992). In the area of Montenegro Prokletije, several morphological zones are designated as potentials and perspective tourist areas. These are several attractive mountain zones: Ćakor zone, Staračko-Zavojska zone, Bogičevica zone, Bor and Kofiljača zone, Karanfilsko-Bjelička zone, Visitor zone, and others. Mountain tourism is characterized by the existence of two qualitatively different tourist seasons, winter and summer. Development of the winter and summer season leads to a more moderate-income distribution throughout the year. Key tourism activities are based on activities in nature, primarily with ecotourism, geotourism, recreational activities, and the combination of natural components with cultural and historical values. Sustainable tourism refers to touristic activities that minimize negative impacts on the environment, have positive results on social communities and local economy (Antić et al., 2020). Ecotourism is one of the fastest-growing forms of tourism. Such rapid growth in demand for this form of tourism is linked to the fact that tourists in the world require more ecological experience (Abou Arrage & Hady, 2019). Geotourism presents a form of tourism related to geology, geomorphology, and natural resources with an emphasis on respect for the processes that create or have created such phenomena (Dowling & Newsome, 2006). Main focus of geotourism is on interpretation, promotion, and conservation of geoheritage (Bratić et al., 2020). The most represented form of tourism in this region is excursion tourism. Excursions are made by those who wish to stay outside urban centers for a short period, but also those who come from neighboring tourist centers (coastal municipalities, Podgorica, Serbia, Albania, etc.), and even though there is no official data on their number in the area of Prokletije Mt., one-day visitors represent a significant category. It is necessary to establish mechanisms for the implementation of the TSA (Tourism Satellite Account) indicators as soon as possible, to measure, evaluate and compare economic results of tourism in the Prokletije area with other tourist destinations in the country and abroad. The development of tourism in the city of Plav and the city of Gusinje, and in the area proposed as Prokletije National Park, will bring positive economic effects. The number of tourists and income will grow with increasing and improving the level of tourism, tourism services, providing a better road network, tourist signposts on peripheral routes, and better propaganda activities (PPPN of Prokletije National Park, 2018). In addition to the attractive peaks, glacial lakes known as “Gorske oči” are Plavsko lake, Ridsko lake, Tatarsko lake, and Ropojansko lake. One of the forms of tourism that could take advantage of such an attractive natural environment is recreational tourism as an active vacation. Active vacation is a type of tourism that involves a combination of activities while using the holiday. It is most commonly associated with healthy living and leisure, to recover psycho-physical strength (Marjanovic, 2017). Active vacation includes many

activities such as hiking, cycling, walking through areas of exceptional beauty, picking herbs.

*Fig. 1. Plavsko lake*



*Source: www.kurir.rs*

The Plavsko Lake covers an area of 2 km<sup>2</sup> and it is the largest glacial lake in Montenegro. It covers the lowest parts of the Plavsko-gusinjski basin at an altitude of 906 m. It has an oval shape and the lake is accessible from all sides (Bakić, 2005).

The Prokletije area is rich in flora and fauna. Of 154 plant diversity centers on Earth, six are located in Europe, and one of them is the mountain system on the Balkan Peninsula. In terms of floristic richness and diversity, the Prokletije massif is in the first place. Till now, 750 species of highland vascular flora have been registered in this area, 18 of them are local and over 100 Balkan endemics (Leković, 2014).

The position of The Bjelasica-Komovi Mt. area has a polyvalent relation to the regional and global tourism market. Concerning the local and regional market, it is an area that is in contact with the attractive tourism potential of the coastal area of Montenegro, which is developed and modernized. Montenegro also opens a strong market for its mountain potential through excursion and later derived stationary mountain tourism. After the modernization and opening of new highways (Montenegro, Serbia, and Croatia), this area becomes a strong transit area. Montenegro is getting stronger transit links with southeastern Europe because of the regional complementarity and quality of the transport system.

Bjelasica Mt. and Komovi Mt. have a relatively favorable position to numerous tourist areas of the east and central part of southern Europe. After all, the fact that the European tourists have the largest share in the foreign tourist traffic realized in Montenegro, indicates the appropriate spatial relation of Bjelasica Mt. and Komovi Mt. to the biggest tourist emissive market in Europe. In terms of the external market, this space has the best position because of three key reasons:

- Increasing the overall tourist image in all countries in the region;
- Montenegro's traffic connection with its environment is rapidly developing;
- Global market interest in mountain destinations and products is growing (PPPН Bjelasica Komovi 2011).

*Fig 2. Komovi mountine*

Source: <http://www.toandrijevic.me/turisticka-ponuda/priroda/komovi>

The tourist offer is complemented by the glacial lakes of Bjelasica Mt., and they are very interesting to visitors when conquering the peaks of Crna and Zekova Glava. The lakes that are located at the foot of the peaks mentioned above are Pešića Lake, Great and Little Ursulovačko Lake, and Šiško Lake.

Montenegro is the only country in the Balkans that does not have a highway. A newly constructed highway will be a very important traffic facility in the regional and international development of the Gornje Polimlje. Part of the highway will pass at the junction of Bjelasica Mt. and Komovi Mt., and it will greatly contribute to a better tourist valorization of the Gornje Polimlje and a better connection with Serbia.

## **Mineral Resources in a Function of Economic Development**

The Gornje Polimlje has a variety of natural resources for development, especially in the field of mining, hydro-energy, and bio-geographic features. These include deposits of brown coal, lead, zinc, architectural construction, and decorative stone. The general characteristic is that they are under-researched, for some of them it is known only as phenomena, they are little used, or they are not yet activated for developmental purposes. The Berane coal basin is the only brown coal basin in Montenegro. The total area of the basin is 40 km<sup>2</sup>. The Petnjik coal deposit is the most significant. The most intensive exploitation was in the last two decades. The research identified several layers of coal. The main layer is developed over the entire layer, and it has a complex structure (Bakić, 2005). Its average exploitation thickness is 4,5m. Besides that, two more layers of coal are separated with exploitable thickness in the deeper layers of the deposit. The first is below the main layer at a distance of 6-10m. Its thickness is between 1-7m, and it is developed only in the part of the city of Petnjik. Mining experts point out that the structural assembly of this deposit has unfavorable elements of opening and exploitation. Frequent changes in the thickness of the layers, which cause a change in the way of excavation, make it difficult to excavate. However, its benefits are a small ratio of gas, because in the layers of coal up to 200m deep there is little methane. There are no springs

nearby, and in the thicker parts of the reservoir, there is no major groundwater that would threaten the exploitation. Its established coal reserves are 18,438,000 tons of B and C1 categories.

The Berane coal basin covers a bottom area of the Berane basin, which forms an alluvial plain on either side of the Lim River. Coal is widely distributed not only horizontally but also vertically, and occurs in over 20 layers of coal of varying thickness. Coal is up to 300 m deep. Its off-balance sheet reserves are estimated at 103,625,000 tons of C1 category (Gomilanović et al., 2000). Coal is very dominant in electricity production and it is confirmed by the fact that European countries have postponed shutting down aged thermal power plants until 2025, even if that had to be done in 2015, there are now rumors of an additional shift of that deadline to 2033.

The “Pogane glave” coal basin is located on the northern slopes of the Visitor Mt. Some laboratory tests were performed. Experts estimate that this area has about 2,000,000 tons of ore with about 1% lead, 2.5% zinc, and 0.1% copper.

Through mining and geological researches in the Gornje Polimlje, iron ore has been discovered in Kline in the area of Konjuha village and the Ševarinska River in the village of Vinicka. Reserves were not calculated for the occurrence of iron in Kline, and based on the data obtained from exploratory works, it can be concluded that they are small and that the chances for economically significant reserves are low.

The coal in the Ševarinska River occurs in the form of lenses. The depth of the ore is about 70 cm. According to published studies so far, the iron content ranges from 24.5% to 36.8%, but no estimates of possible reserves have been given. The deposits and the appearance of architectural, construction, and ornamental stone have been discovered in several localities, in particular: Željeвица, Babov Potok, Trebačka River, Balj, Pčelinjak, and Piševska River.

## Hydropotential of Gornje Polimlje

The most significant hydrological object in this region is the Lim River. Lim River has a dense river network. It is branched off in the mountainous part of the region, and the surface water is scarce by the Polica and a series of limestone surfaces. The main features of the Dapsićka River, Kaludarska River, Šekularska River, and Bistrica River, are water-rich upper streams, allochthonous middle and lower streams, and significant hydro potential. In terms of annual water level, they belong to the level-pluvial regime of the Dinar type, which has high water levels in March, April, and May, while November is approximately equal to December. The low waters are in August or September and then in February and January (Golubović, 2015).

The hydropower capacity of Lim River is estimated by experts at 503 GWh with the possible construction of 3 hydropower plants: “Andrijevića” with 331 GWh, “Berane” with 78 GWh, and “Lukin Vir” with 94 GWh. On its tributaries, it is possible to build 19 mini-hydropower plants.

Small hydropower plants are an absolute advantage over other types of power generation facilities. Utilizing the water potential of watercourses is the most important alternative compared to energy obtained from fossil fuels, as water is a renewable resource. It is an inexhaustible source, and from an environmental impact point of view,

it is the cleanest way to use it. This is why energy derived from water is called pure energy. In the case of hydropower, we save the final reserves of coal and oil, as well as the financial resources for the import of expensive liquid fuel for thermal power plants. The use of renewable energy sources will have the effect of reducing harmful substances in the air and the greenhouse effect, which is one of the major problems worldwide (Pittock, 2005).

## Forests Potentials

The forest fund is one of the most significant natural resources of the area. The forest floors are presented by:

1. thermophilic mountainous area of oak forests and mallow,
2. mesophilic transitional area of oak forests of sessile oaks,
3. mesophilic area of beech forests,
4. area of highland forest vegetation.

Above the forest fund, there is grassland or a highland area of alpine vegetation. In the structure of forests, most of them are highly economic, protective, and the smallest are low forests. The ratio of hardwoods and conifers of Prokletije Mt. is quite equal (NP Prokletije Management Plan 2016-2020).

In the municipality of Plav, forests cover an area of 29,829 ha, of which 25,270 ha or 84.7% is state-owned. The total area under forests amounts to 22,967 ha, while the non-overgrown areas (for planting and rocky areas) occupy 6,862 ha. The largest part of the forest area is occupied by high forests (12,107 ha or 52.7%) with partly rainforest character, then protective forests (7,789 ha or 33.9%) and finally by bushes and logging forests (3,071 ha or 23.4%).

The forests of the Municipality of Andrijevica cover an area of 17,434 ha. There is a trend of an increasing forest since the use of pastures is diminishing, the forest is being restored. Most of the forests in the territory of Andrijevica municipality are state-owned (about 80%), part of which is allocated for concession activities. By structure, natural forests dominate. Deciduous forests cover 12,726 ha (72%) while conifers cover 4,708 ha (28%). Following the plan of the Forest Administration of Montenegro, a set of measures for the protection of forests is undertaken by the competent authority for forest management (Strategic Development Plan of Andrijevica Municipality, 2017-2022).

The total area of forests in the Berane Forest Administration is 27,856.58 ha. According to the purpose and cultivation of forests, the structure of the surface is as follows:

1. Commercial forests 21,167,32 ha, of which:
  - high forests of 13,158.26 ha,
  - 2,462.31 ha of logging forests
  - shrubs 5,516.75 ha
2. Forests for other purposes 4,916.50 ha, of which:
  - high forests of 981.70 ha,
  - 3,934.80 ha of logging forests

3. Non-covered areas of 1,772.76 ha, of which:
- suitable for planting forest 1,162.10 ha,
  - for other purposes 219.35 ha
  - barren 391.31 ha.

High forests account for 62.2% of the total forest area. The potential area of forest for production, including 1,162.10 ha of clean area for planting trees, is 22.329,42 ha.

## SWOT Analysis

Based on the data from the previous text, an overview of the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats, and risks related to further regional development, was made. The principle of action should be based on rising the strengths and taking advantage of the opportunities that exist, as well as on eliminating weaknesses and preventive action on identified risks.

*Table 1. SWOT analysis*

Strengths
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Extraordinary natural beauties, based on green (forests) and blue (rivers and lakes) riches</li> <li>• New destination (environmentally friendly, unexplored, wild, untouched, unassailable)</li> <li>• Diversity of natural and cultural resources, attractive tourist sites</li> <li>• Prokletije National Park - high level of biodiversity (endemic species of flora, richness of forests, preserved high mountain natural areas - nature reserves)</li> <li>• Inter-ethnic stability (multicultural environment)</li> <li>• The existence of traditional villages and katuns around the outskirts of the Gornje Polimlje</li> <li>• Hospitality, local crafts and gastronomy of the local population</li> <li>• Hydro-potential</li> <li>• No serious pollutants</li> <li>• Significant reserves of mineral resources</li> </ul>
Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Undeveloped infrastructure (primarily transport and communal)</li> <li>• Underdeveloped tourism infra-structure and supra-structure</li> <li>• Lack of local staff</li> <li>• Lack of tourist and other signalization</li> <li>• Lack of events of international importance</li> <li>• Undiscovered archaeological heritage</li> <li>• Contemporary construction not in harmony with the landscape and cultural environment</li> <li>• Lack of educational, thematic, picnic and recreational trails</li> <li>• Undeveloped sustainable local economy</li> <li>• Lack of marketing strategy, poor promotional - propaganda activity</li> <li>• Depopulation</li> <li>• Difficult economic situation of municipalities in the northeast of Montenegro</li> <li>• Insufficient environmental awareness of the local population</li> </ul>
Opportunities

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Designing cross-border tourism products</li> <li>• Opening of official border crossings to Albania and Serbia</li> <li>• Active inclusion of the Gornje Polimlje in the tourist offer of Montenegro</li> <li>• Diaspora, exchange of experience, knowledge and skills, donations, investments and private-public partnerships through investments</li> <li>• Development of tourism products and offers</li> <li>• Specific types of tourism (sports, rural contents, agro-tourism, health, adventure, etc.)</li> <li>• Stimulating the production, supply and marketing of healthy foods</li> <li>• Development of small hydropower plants</li> <li>• Product branding</li> <li>• Availability of EU funds and other funds</li> <li>• Exchange of experience and cooperation with other similar and developed regions</li> <li>• Monitoring of European regulations and trends in the field of environmental protection</li> <li>• Using the Internet and media</li> </ul>
<b>Threats</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Intensive depopulation, shortage and outflow of skilled personnel</li> <li>• Aging of population</li> <li>• Economic recession and weak purchasing power of the domestic market</li> <li>• Poor investment climate and long depreciation period are limiting factors for investors</li> <li>• Unstable political situation in the world and the region</li> <li>• Changes in demand in the tourism market</li> </ul>

*Source: made by authors*

Extraordinary tourist potentials and high mountain peaks could be taken as the main strength, which would create a tourist offer. The main weakness is the lack of basic infrastructure and suprastructure, as well as the absence of a long-term development plan. Complementary development of rural and mountain tourism, as well as cooperation with other economic entities in the region, are the main chances for further development. Given that the funds allocated for the promotion of tourist destinations are very limited, the popularity, wide spatial coverage, and low cost of advertising via electronic media should be exploited. Internet usage is one of the major components in contemporary marketing strategies and key tourism trends (Garabinović, 2019). The economic recession and the lack of domestic and foreign investors, as well as the faster development of rural areas in the region, are major threats to further regional development.

## Conclusion

Based on all of the above, it can be concluded that Gornje Polimlje possesses exceptional natural potentials, which with adequate use and purpose would have long-term positive effects on regional development. Certainly, tourism should be given the most attention, since tourism is realized by the so-called invisible exports. Sustainable tourism is a form of tourism development that has a balanced impact on natural, economic, cultural, and social values. In many countries, tourism has emerged as a factor in the revitalization and development of underdeveloped areas. Ivolga & Erokhin (2013) state that tourism leads to sustainable rural development and can increase the quality of life in rural areas. Combining the tourist offer with the offerings of other regions would create a more complex tourist offer, which would attract tourists from other countries. One of the forms of cooperation that has shown positive results is the association of tourist clusters. Clusters represent one of the more successful methods of regional development.

Clusters are an integral part of developed economies that make a significant contribution to the competitiveness of cluster members at the regional and national levels (Paraušić et al., 2013). Clusters encourage innovation, knowledge application, research, and the development of new technologies (Jednak et al., 2018).

One of the priorities is the conservation and improvement of the water regime in this area, including both quantitative and qualitative characteristics of all surface and groundwater. The peculiarity of the watercourses is the exceptional hydro potential. Construction of mini-hydropower plants is underway on some rivers, which will condition the energy efficiency of northeastern Montenegro. Regarding the problems of the lakes, it is necessary to accept the necessity of rehabilitation, restoration of the original state as close as possible to (geological) time and form when they occurred. Accordingly, the necessary geodetic, geological, and hydrological observations and works need to be done. Glacial lakes are a natural phenomenon that is not so often represented in these areas. Preserving such landscapes and bending under a certain regime of protection would be a necessary activity.

Another important natural resource of the Gornje Polimlje is the brown coal mine in Berane, which holds reserves for the next 200 years. Activating ore mines and ore exploitation will bring considerable economic effects. There is a worldwide trend in the use of renewable energy and the reduction of fossil fuels, so this project should be approached with great caution. Strict use of land, and forest protection and conservation must be adhered to. Establishing an ecological network will ensure the connection and conservation of habitats and ecologically significant localities of interest to Montenegro and countries in the region.

To become more fully acquainted with this unique space, it is necessary to carry out further research, map the zones suitable for valorization, and to establish a continuous monitoring system. It is necessary to get more involved and use the funds provided by the EU, attract investors, and make an economic regional shift.

Regional development would halt the process of depopulation and outflow of skilled personnel. Creating new jobs would provide opportunities for young people to live a normal and stable life. Cross-border cooperation is one of the factors of regional development. Borders should not have the function of national barriers, but rather be places of intellectual, cultural, and economic interaction, which by joint action will lead to overall regional development (Molnar & Soos, 2016).

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