

## Quarries in Serbia are (not) in line with the environment – exploitation threatens the roads, it's necessary to increase the inspection controls

Prijezdici local people have been facing the same problems for ten years already – while the dust from nearby quarries destroys their plantations of fruits, vegetables and their own health, trucks taking off the stone every day leave new traces along an already devastated road to nearby Valjevo.

The biggest problem is the dust. In our region, there is two quarries, even though that is not in accordance with the law. They are working with an old technology and they don't respect the regulations. They don't sprinkle the road, which is their obligation, they do nothing to reduce the dust and when they work on both quarries, the dust spreads up to 10 kilometers – said Vlado Pavlović, who lives near the quarry Cross, managed by the enterprise Kamen desetka.

According to his words, people are moving out because of these issues, and nearby one of the quarries, there are no more than twenty inhabited houses.

Due to pollution and dust, a local from this village, Mikica Novković said she is left with no strawberries. As she mentions, in the last few years, there is also an appearance of raspberry orchards, which currently are not for use.

Our cattle is getting sick. Our cows are becoming sterile, the sheep are coughing... – says Novković.

Besides the dust, another big issue is the noise that plants are causing and the trucks which on daily basis are taking off a big quantity of stones used mostly for roads.

Every few minutes, a truck passes by, destroying the carriageway that it goes through.

Daily, the locals say, about 3,000 cubic meters of stone are taken off.

Prijezdici's locals protested in April 2017 for the destruction of the road

Because of consequences like these, in April 2017 they complained. In a petition addressed to the city authorities, they asked for the 10 kilometer long road connecting Kamenitovac and Mratišić to be asphalted. Today, a year after, their petition has remained only a “dead letter on paper” – the road is not asphalted, but is said to be additionally destroyed. And the bridge, which is the only connection with Valjevo, is partially destroyed. On their request, they tell us, the authorities in the local self-government are not responding, which caused them to file a criminal complaint in order to try through the court to solve the problem. They also met with representatives of the Ministry of Environmental Protection, which gave some guidelines, however, they say, the local self-government is always taking complains into consideration.

In Valjevo's local self-government they refused to answer our questions regarding this problem, because, as they explained, “nobody can talk about it at the moment.” The locals are ready to continue the fight and hope that the relevant ministry will stand by their side.

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### Negative impacts

In the Ministry of Environmental Protection, they state that through the process of strategic assessment of the impact of plans and projects on the environment, negative impacts resulting from the exploitation of mineral resources are reduced to the minimum, by prescribing environmental protection measures and mandatory monitoring with the regular inspection controls.

They also state that during inspection controls, the most frequent environmental problems caused by the exploitation of mineral raw materials are the damage to roads that cannot handle the load of trucks with stone, because they are not designed for that, excessive noise regarding the night work and inadequate maintenance of the dust extraction equipment on crushing installations, and increased frequencies due to the passing of trucks with the load and the machinery itself for excavation.

Another problem is also the pollution of soil and watercourses due to precipitation, air pollution and environmental pollution due to the deterioration of the floors and access roads, as well as inadequate maintenance of dust extraction equipment on the crushing plant, increased noise and vibration levels, adverse impacts on the plants and animals, and the degradation of spatial features and cultural assets – it is stated in the response that we received from the Ministry of Environmental Protection.

According to the word of Tomislav Šubaranović, a professor at the Mining Geological Faculty, besides these issues, „if the populated area is near the surface of the rock, due to incompetent mining, the earthquake may occur, as well as the decay of the mined material.“.

However, according to his words, if during the exploitation of the stone, the applicable laws and bylaws are respected, as a consequence on the environment, only the changed appearance of the terrain remains.

Avoiding earthquakes can be done by respecting the projects and expert blasting, even when a populated city is nearby. Causes of noise are machines on the dirt, but machines of the newer generation have silencers and noise can be within the allowed limits. By slaughtering roads, places of loading and mining, the appearance of dustiness will be avoided and it will be reduced to the minimum possible measure. Also, by respecting the projects and performing rehabilitation and recultivation of the degraded terrain, it is possible to bring it to a better quality than the previous one – says Professor Šubaranović.

### Monitoring the environmental impact

The competent ministry states that after the completion of every exploitation, technical-biological recultivation must be carried out, so bringing the degraded area to a new

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destination, which is a mandatory environmental protection measure for the project holder prescribed in the environmental impact assessment procedure.

Let's remind that the environmental impact assessment process is done before the beginning of the exploitation of raw materials, and this study is an integral part of the technical documentation needed to obtain a permit or approval to start the project.

In order for the quarry to start working, an approval on the impact assessment study is needed.

The holder of the project is obliged to implement the measures for environmental protection and to respect all other conditions and consent of the competent authorities and organizations in accordance with a special law, in particular the conditions of the Institute for Nature Conservation of Serbia, the Conditions of the Institute for the Protection of Cultural Monuments and the water conditions – they state in the competent ministry and add that the project holder must implement an environmental monitoring program.

The development of the Study of the impact assessment of exploitation, explains Professor Šubaranović, is not necessary for all surface pit mines. Each entity submits a Request for deciding on the need for an environmental impact assessment, and then, depending on the size of the exploitation field or surface mine, locations, types of mineral raw materials, ways of exploitation, proximity to populated cities, the competent authority decides whether it is necessary to develop the Study of the impact assessment of exploitation.

According to the words of Prof. Šubaranović, a huge amount of companies in Serbia that are dealing with stone exploitation are currently in the process of document preparation for opening new quarries, and on most of the stone pit mines they comply with regulations. However, as he adds, there is a certain number of quarries that are not in comply with the regulations, that is, they work illegally.

- In addition to depriving the state budget of compensation for the use of mineral resources, they also damage the environment as well. In order for all surface mines of stone to comply with regulations and legal provisions, it is necessary to increase inspection controls, which requires a bigger number of republican mining inspectors.

According to the data collected at the Business Registers Agency, the exploitation of construction and ornamental stone, limestone, gypsum and chalk in Serbia involves 128 companies and 9 entrepreneurial shops. At the same time, for the exploitation of gravel, sand, clay and kaolin, there were 135 enterprises and 93 entrepreneurs registered.

On its way to a membership in the European Union, Serbia will have to comply with a number of regulations regarding the directives relating to this area. Environmental protection is one of the most complicated and most expensive chapters, so we are facing



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many challenges on this path.