

### *Visit to Milomir Musikić's family, Zupa Niksic, Bastaji Village*



**Figure 1.** During the interview at Milomir Musikić's family, Zupa Niksic, Bastaji Village, February 2020 (Biljana Mickovic, Goran Skataric, and Velibor Spalevic with the Milomir Musikić family).

*Our host, Milomir Musikić, was born in 1939. He had three brothers and five sisters; two of the brothers and two of the sisters were educated. The two educated brothers moved from the village of Bastaje, one to Niksic and the other to Bosnia, while the third brother died in World War II. Only Milomir stayed to live in Bastaje.*

*He says, during the interview, that it was very difficult to live in the countryside then. His family had only two cows and five to six sheep after World War II. There was a lot of fertile land, but it was poorly sown, mostly with corn and barley. At the time, they did not use agriculture machinery; they hoped the land by hand and used oxen for ploughing. Everyone was in the same material state with a similar standard of life. He also stated that they were much more satisfied than people who are living today. They struggled a lot not to be poor. They worked day and night for wages and usually got wheat for work (as payment in kind). At that time, "mobe" (support in working with each other) was common where people helped each other to complete the work in the fields.*

*By contacting an industrial business in Niksic, he received a job opportunity to work in town. He accepted it but did not abandon his farm.*

*Milomir is married and has two sons, who are also both married. One son along with his wife and two daughters stayed with Milomir in the village of Bastaje, while the other son also worked for the ZIGMA company and left the village in order to look for a better life.*

*Milomir says that many people from Niksic's Zupa emigrated to Germany and Switzerland. Some of them were returning and constructing houses in Zupa, Podgorica (the capital), or elsewhere.*

*Two of Milomir's granddaughters, who are students, say that the internet has been available in Bastaje for more than 10 years. They believe that the village does not have bad conditions and that the nature there is beautiful, but that the problem is that it is far away from the city, with social life is not so interesting.*

*They also say that the young people are usually going to the coast. Another granddaughter of Milomir took a job at the Iberostar Hotel in Herceg Novi (Coast of Montenegro). She likes to come to Zupa to visit her parents and enjoy the countryside during the holidays.*

*Milovan, another relative, also said during the interview that the youth of Bastaje today are leaving more than staying. A neighbour, Bezmarevic, and cousin Musikić, a retired professor, say that once the school in Zupa had over a thousand pupils, and that today only about 360 students attend the school. They believe that with investments by the state in the village, there might be young people who would remain or even would return to work in their homeland.*

*A problem is that they cannot sell agricultural products because there are no lines in this region with refrigerated trucks for milk purchase, but also there is a lack of investment to modernise production (milking machines and coolers needed to keep the milk in good condition, which is in direct relation to the number of somatic cells and afterwards the price of the milk).*

*Zupa is a very rich region, and bauxite has been exported from Zupa for decades. However, the people who lived in Zupa did not benefit from it; the profits went to the companies from Podgorica (the capital) and Niksic (the administrative centre). Not only did they not see that benefit, but the trucks hauling bauxite have also destroyed the road, which is in a very poor condition today. On the end of the interview, on the question to add something that was missing in our communication, eighty-year-old Milutin stated that he moves seasonally with his livestock to a "katun" (cottage in the mountains) on Mount Lukavica, where he was from 18 May to 15 November 2019.*

*He says that Lukavica is a rich mountain with 360 springs and that the entire time he is staying with his flock no one except him comes up to the katun. We concluded together that this good practise*

from the centuries ago is a tradition that could be a good point for further development of agro-tourism and future development of this region. Further development of this point may contribute to the diversification of the activities overall, and for the rural development of this nice rural area in the Mountains of Montenegro. But there is a need to improve the entire infrastructure for tourism development in katuns. Only than tourist may enjoy than unique values of the rural areas and our beautiful mountains.

#### Visit to Bosko Draskovic's family, Grahovo



**Figure 2.** During the interview, with the Draskovic family, Grahovo, February 2020.

Host Bosko Draskovic was born in 1930. He had four brothers and sisters. His oldest brother used to work in the police force and another brother was a blacksmith. Mr Draskovic has stayed in Grahovo, but until his thirties, he lived in the village of Tospude. They still have a house in good condition there, but the village no longer has any permanent residents.

Mr Bosko Draskovic also worked at the Ironworks in Niksic, but always lived in Grahovo. He attended a beekeeping school, and even today he is a beekeeper. He started building a house in 1960; when it was destroyed by an earthquake, he finished a second house in 1970.

Mr Draskovic says that earlier in the countryside the living standard was poor. They used horses and donkeys to transport goods to the coast where exchanges took place. Cereals were harvested in the village and milled in the village of Zaslav where there was a water mill. The grain was then transported on horseback. The horses were borrowed from the neighbours to carry the grain, and they returned them with a single per diem, an agreement to work for the neighbour sometime afterward. This return in kind for the use of the horses was usually with work when the days were the longest (in June and July). In Grahovo, they grow mostly corn and very little wheat. They only ate white bread when it was the celebration of a saint or for holidays.

Mr. Draskovic stated during the interview that the conditions in the village today are great, that is just like in the city and even more beautiful. On the other hand, there are no young people in Grahovo, and that every year one house after another is closed. Each household in the village had about five to six members. Most of them moved to the Americas, the coastal regions of Montenegro, Trebinje (in the Republic of Srpska, Bosnia and Herzegovina) and Niksic (the administrative centre). Some who went to America have also come back and constructed houses in Grahovo. There were also those who never returned.

There, they worked in mines where it was very difficult to work, fell ill, and most of them died because of the hard conditions. This was also for them a strong contrast in working conditions as most of them previously were mainly engaged in cattle breeding.

During the interview, Mr Bosko Draskovic informed us that formerly the village of Grahovo had lighting, but it is missing today. They have Grahovo Lake, but also pay for drinking water. Grahovo had a bakery, sawmill, button maker, and raspberry packing operation. They also used technical water flows for irrigation. The state helps the farmers, but the youth are leaving, and nobody returns. Certain areas of cultivated land have been rented to people who are not originally from Grahovo, for which they are paying 200 euros per hectare. Today, about 30 new homes have been built in Grahovo. These are the so-called "weekenders", and none are from Grahovo. They come in the summer and on weekends; they are not permanent residents. Today, there are about ten people in the village over 60 years of age who are single and live alone. The school in Grahovo has 24 students. In the past two years, the number of students has decreased from 35 to 24.

Mr Draskovic lives in Grahovo with his wife, son, daughter-in-law, and grandson. He has another son who lives and works in Trebinje. His son Brano, who stayed with his father in the countryside, is married and also has two sons. One son is studying

The village of Grahovo was a waterless area until the construction and accumulation of the Grahovo Lake. Previously, the villagers would wait all night long to retrieve water from the well. Mr Draskovic reminded us that during 1917 a large number of peasants died of starvation. Now every house has drinking water. He says that people began to move out from the farms after the visit of President Tito of Yugoslavia to Niksic when the ironworks began to be built there. Then, a decision was made to remove all the goats from the farms of the villages. This was two biggest causes of people leaving Grahovo and it never recovered afterwards. He believes that state that has a strong village is a strong country.

at the Faculty of Maritime Studies in Kotor (on the coast of Montenegro). The other lives with them because of health problems. Brano Draskovic is employed as a guard at a school in Grahovo. Today, they have three cows and cultivate vast areas of land. They have all the machines they need to assist them with their work. They manage to sell all their products along the coast. The thing missing in the state system is that there is no organised intake of milk. A new road was constructed in 2010, but did not it improve the situation a lot, because there are fewer and fewer residents in Grahovo. The worst part is that the birth rate has dropped dramatically. Last year, there were only 15 babies born. Young people do not see the point in living here.

**Summary of the Interviews with youth living in the rural areas of Niksic (2020)**

**STRENGTHS**

It is nice to live in the countryside. Young people love the life in village because of its peaceful, healthy environment, clean air, water, and nature. They value the general comfort that village provides and the enjoyment of greater socialization. The big advantage is that a large number of young people who currently reside in the city also have relatively comfortable family homes in the countryside. Usually, these are smaller cottages, electrified and with a water supply. There are numerous vantage points near the picturesque villages with stunning views of the attractive landscapes: views of high mountain peaks; walks along the banks of mountain rivers and lakes; and beautiful areas for hiking, biking, and walks through the forest and nature.

**OPPORTUNITIES**

**There is a something in the mountains, nothing down in the town!**

All interviewed young people pointed out that the food in the countryside is of exceptional quality, since it is healthy homemade food, and the area is also rich with medicinal herbs (teas, various medicinal herbs, forest fruits, blueberries, mushrooms, rosehip, and the like). It is offering the possibility for agro-eco tourism, health tourism development, and for sale of good natural products at the local market. A small number of young respondents indicated that engaging in organic production is an additional activity that could be a good chance for the financial sustainability of young married couples in the countryside. Some of them mentioned that it is also possible to provide production that could be considered for export. All young people unanimously stated that the chances of recovery in rural areas are in investments in transport infrastructure, but also in water supply and telecommunications. There is a high demand from the state for resolving the issue of lack of jobs, i.e., guaranteed cash-flow through the market of agricultural products. The great

**WEAKNESSES**

Frequently repeated weaknesses are a lack of playgrounds and sports field and no bathing area, which would be very useful in hot summer days. There are no individual personal corners for young people at the households. Almost all of them stated as a weakness that there are no coffee bars or small clubs. Very few young respondents have their own vehicle, which greatly reduces their mobility and attending of cinema and theatres. A problem is also poor internet coverage, with lower network coverage than in the city. This is especially a problem in valleys, so young people are moving the routers at higher positions near the house. A similar problem is with mobile telephony coverage. Another weakness is that just a few families reside per village and young people have a larger amount of work to do because of a lack of a workforce, and as a consequence less free time. Most respondents complained about gravel roads and poor-quality infrastructure. A weakness is also a modest financial situation of parents who cannot provide enough of everything that would provide good comfort for living in the countryside. For this reason, young people at an early age have to start their own initiative, which ultimately shortens their childhood and a comfortable life under the parental roof. Most of them originated in urban areas, so they did not learn from a young age to do the complex jobs. Basic skills are lacking. This causes many young people not to see a chance for a better life in staying in the countryside, but from this situation they seek escape to study and later to migrate to the city. All interviewed young people pointed out that the villages are empty as far as they are concerned. There are usually only a few in the area, each with a distance of kilometre or more.

**THREATS**

Massive emigration from the rural areas, particularly of young people towards administrative centres, and abroad, especially to Western European countries. A

natural potential of this area is good opportunity for livestock or crop production. Several young people have pointed out that the preparation of wood for heating, as well as for any of its functions in processing (furniture, souvenirs) can be used as a source of family income. One of the respondents stated that the biggest potential is the fact that young people are always looking for more and better, and this could be a key for the success: providing a lot of stimulants to the young people to come and remain at the rural areas. Young people with potential can improve their life environment if the system provides them opportunities. They stated that more young people are returning to the countryside now than before.

special threat is the loss of a young generation from the rural areas, after the disappearance of their fathers' generation. There is a significant reduction of the number of skilled workers for work in rural areas. Few young respondents stated that climate changes may be also a risk to organize life in the countryside: fears that they may face the problems with shortage of drinking water, but also of water for crops for irrigation, which puts the farm at financial risk and puts the sustainability of their farms in question. Some young respondents pointed out that some springs and smaller watercourses in their areas have almost disappeared, which may pose a risk to those young people who decide to invest in agro-eco tourism. Poor work motivation may affect the quality of products and the level and quality of service in agro-eco tourism. Youth have more difficulties to get married and to form a family. It is difficult to make a career since it often requires presence in urban centres.