

DEVELOPMENT OF THE URBAN SYSTEMS IN SERBIA- TOWARDS NEW SPATIAL PLAN OF THE REPUBLIC OF SERBIA

Marija Jeftić^{A*}, Velimir Šećerov^A, Dragutin Tošić^A

Abstract

In the light of making a new Spatial plan of the Republic of Serbia 2021-2035 (SPRS), the paper is elaborating on the current state and prospects of spatial development of the urban systems in Serbia. With reference to previous SPRS and implementation programs, the importance of the urban systems in the interregional and intraregional integration of Serbia and its environment is critically considered. In the SPRS from 1996., the roles between the specific centers in the organization of the territory of Serbia were not clearly divided, nor was there a clear division between the spatial plans' jurisdictions of the local communities, regions or state. The SPRS from 2010, among other things, advocated the principle of subsidiarity, which supports the functional organization of space and is based on concentration of the functions in certain centers. How the new plan perceived the position and role of urban systems, for the purpose of rational territorial organization of the Republic of Serbia and what changes enacted to establish a coherent space in the Republic of Serbia, are some of the questions this paper tried to answer.

Keywords: urban systems, integrations, sustainability, decentralization, coherence

Introduction

Today's situation in the Republic of Serbia (RS) regarding the spatial distribution of settlements is characterized by conditional **unevenness**. Favorable geographical position of settlements, their number (4.542 settlements, excluding Kosovo and Metohija), demographic or human potential, and the impression that they are distributed relatively well throughout the territory of RS, could mislead and without further research indicate that it is a territory that has very good and properly located urban system (Figure 1). This is relatively true until a detailed analysis of its structure according to different socio-economic criteria is performed. Significant regional disparities can be observed between Vojvodina and the geographically central part of Serbia. The Autonomous Province of **Vojvodina**, with a relatively rationally located and urbanized network of urban and other settlements, dominates the Serbian geospace. The high-

est degree of homogeneity of smaller subunits within the Vojvodina area is the result of the inherited urban matrix from the earlier period, but also the morphology of the terrain, which conditioned a clear and favorable distance between settlements and the possibility of their good connection. In the (geographically) **central part of Serbia**, settlements are more irregularly distributed, so different morphological and territorial units are distinguished, starting from those in which there are larger centers by demographic capacity, more densely distributed, to those territorial units in which there are almost none but where there are less urban, isolated parts that differ from the rest of Serbia. In other words, more densely distributed settlements are mostly positioned on the development axes, between which there is, conditionally, a lot of space that is in the "pure" sphere and where there are no demographically stronger poles. Namely, if the

^A University of Belgrade, Faculty of Geography, Department for Spatial Planning; Studentski trg 3/III, Belgrade, Serbia; marija.jeftic@gef.bg.ac.rs, velimir.secerov@gef.bg.ac.rs, dragutin.tosic@gmail.com

* Corresponding Author: Marija Jeftić; e-mail: marija.jeftic@gef.bg.ac.rs

mentioned centers, spreading on the West Moravian route (Užice-Čacak-Kraljevo-Kruševac), the Great Moravian route (Smederevo-Požarevac-Jagodina-Čuprija-Paraćin) and the South Moravian development route (Niš-Leskovac-Vranje) are excluded, larger urban settlements in terms of functional capacity are only Kragujevac, in Šumadija part of the central Serbia and Valjevo in Kolubara part, and between them, except Gornji Milanovac, there is almost no major urban center. Furthermore, in the rest of the Serbia, in the eastern part of central Serbia (Timočka Krajina), larger centers as Bor and Zaječar can be noticed, and in the western part - Novi Pazar. Between the concentration zones of the population, functions, etc. (development axes), in the remaining part of Serbia, the distribution of smaller settlements, mostly rural, is irregular and concentrated in the form of sporadic enclaves in a demographically, economically and functionally insufficiently integrated area.

The distribution of settlements on the territory of RS coincides with the population concentration. The urban network of Serbia is characterized by a very pronounced development gap between the central (Belgrade) and other urban settlements (Table 1). The dominant position of Belgrade in relation to the national urban system is indicated by the index of urban primacy whose value is 4.86 (the ratio of the number of inhabitants of Belgrade and Novi Sad). The phenomenon of the dominant city in the urban hierarchy (far larger demographic size in relation to the second in a row - Novi Sad) and the lack of evenly distributed urban settlements of medium demographic size (from 200,000 to 500,000 inhabitants) is primarily the result of untimely directing of urbanization and inherited development policy from previous periods, according to which Belgrade was economically and functionally developed as the capital of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (SFRY).

Table 1. The ratio of demographic size of Belgrade and the most numerous urban settlements in relation to the total population of Serbia in 2011

	1971	1981	1991	2002	2011
G1/total population	0,14	0,16	0,20	0,21	0,23
G1/G2	5,84	5,88	5,94	5,27	4,86
G1/G2+G3+G4+G5	1,78	1,83	1,90	1,80	1,80

Source: Census 2002., 2011, Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia.

Some expert opinions emphasize the views of the Serbian territory overurbanization, in the first place the overurbanization of the dominant developmental pole - Belgrade, however, detailed research and knowl-

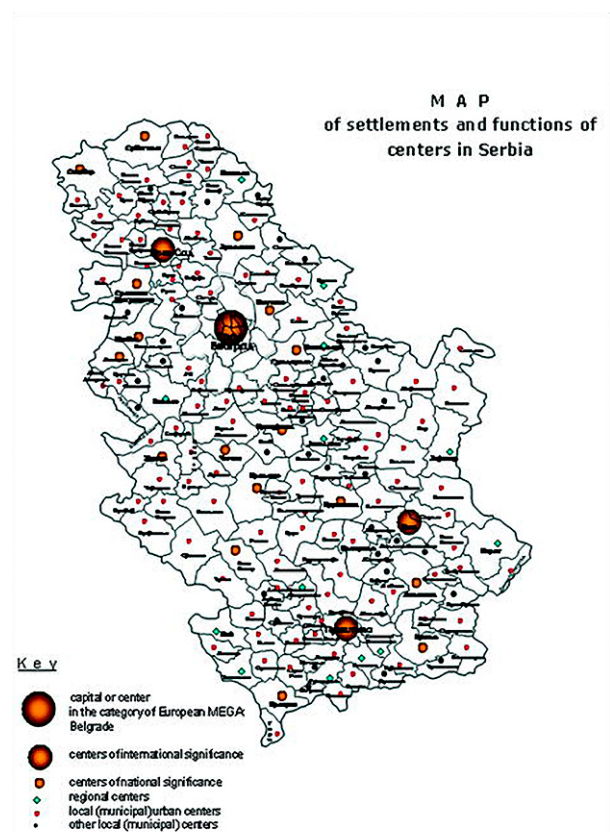


Figure 1. Network of settlements in the Republic of Serbia
Source: Spatial Plan of the Republic of Serbia, 2010.

edge of socio-historical processes of this area indicate that Serbia is still insufficiently urbanized state (Tošić, D., Nevenić, M., 2010), and that Belgrade was, like some other centers (e.g., Budapest, Vienna) developing primarily for the needs of former SFRY. Due to unfavorable political and economic conditions during the nineties of the 20th century, it remained the capital of a much smaller territory compared to previous period (while it was part of the SFRY), but with inherited problems of overcrowding, traffic and infrastructural neglect, etc. Also, starting from the point of view that urbanization is a historical-geographical, i.e., socio-historical legality that showed different tendencies depending on the space and conditions in which she took place (somewhere it went faster due to a better economic basis), it can be said that in the urban system of Serbia polarization processes prevail, with accompanying effects. With planned urbanization, initiated by industrialization, city centers attracted the population in proportion to their functional capacity, which led to polarization of the Serbian space (Jeftić, M., 2013). The processes of polarization are justified and logical, having in mind the fact that Serbia was a centralized state with a planned economy and a capital city who, as the most functionally developed in the country, attracted the largest number of inhabitants and thus created a large disproportion in the national urban system. The

pressure on Belgrade alleviated the process of suburbanization in the internal spatial and functional structure of the metropolitan, i.e., the City of Belgrade, but also the development of other local and regional centers that attracted the population of the narrower and wider area. There was no decentralization of urbanization at the level of Serbia, which reflected in the slowing down of stronger functional and economic development of other urban centers on the territory of the Republic. The current trend within the national urban system is conditioned by the change of the socio-political system, i.e., liberalization in the economy and by transition from a centralized economy to almost liberal capitalism. In the EU member states, liberal capitalism is defined by the laws that govern them, while in Serbia these processes take place more spontaneously than planned (Nevenić, M., 2009).

The problems of urban development and the development of the Serbian urban system are ambiguous and multidimensional. They appear in the domain of unfinished harmonization of domestic legislation

with the European one (as well as its actual application), horizontal and vertical inconsistencies of the institutions and planning documents, “mixing” of competencies, insufficiently clear responsibilities in space, etc. One of the biggest problems is certainly **depopulation**, which is reflected through two prisms - a general decrease in population, but also through the disruption of the socio-economic stability of population structures in terms of labor quality, population aging, emigration, etc. Of particular concern is the emigration trend of the highest quality labor force to stronger functional capacity centers, i.e., abroad. Nikitović, V. points to recent estimates of the demographic situation in Serbia, based on which it is observed that “every year on average about 50,000 people go abroad for at least a year, and that about 35,000, mostly old and retired people, return to their homeland” (Nikitović, V., 2020). Depopulation is accompanied by a reduced impact of urban centers on their surrounding area, where the centers’ functions are less and less integrating their immediate surroundings.

From functional urban areas to urban systems- brief review

Spatial Plan of the Republic of Serbia, 1996

With the abolition of inter-municipal regional communities, on the basis of similar separation criteria, the territory of RS was divided, by the Law on Territorial Organization of RS in 1992., into 29 administrative districts and the territory of the City of Belgrade¹. This is also the period of SFRY disintegration, war conflict, introduction of international sanctions against Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. It comes to economic, financial, social and collapse in all other social spheres. Several attempts to rebuild the state are blocked and fail in the conditions of international isolation of the country, loss of previous markets and the introduction of the so-called war economy. However, in the state system planning, there is an initiative to develop the territory of the RS in a planned way, i.e., a consensus is established on the thesis that without spatial planning there is no rational organization. For the purpose of this goal in 1996. year, the first Spatial Plan of the Republic of Serbia was finally formed,

which, for the first time in the theory and practice of planning, introduces the term functional areas. Until the drafting of the Spatial Plan of RS in 1996. year, planning documentation on the impacts of the centers on their surroundings, i.e., functional urban regions, did not exist, but was a territorial division of the state in administrative and governance terms, into certain units that played the role of functional regions (counties- srezovi and inter-municipal communities). The basic hypotheses of the division into functional areas were as follows (OG RS 13/1996):

1. Governing rationalization and more efficient work performance in the field of everyday needs of citizens²
2. Organization of public services more harmonized with the needs, possibilities and interests of local communities.
3. More efficient coordination of activities and programs of local communities³

¹ Administrative districts (okruzi) were later renamed into districts (oblasti) and today RS (according to the amendments to the Law on Regional Development - Official Gazette of RS No. 30/10 and 89/2015), is administratively-territorially divided into provinces, regions, administrative areas, City of Belgrade, cities and municipalities. The territorial organization of RS consists of five regions (Belgrade region, Vojvodina region, Šumadija region, western Serbia region, Southern and Eastern Serbia region and Kosovo and Metohija region). They include the City of Belgrade as a special territorial unit determined by the Constitution and by Law, and 30 administrative districts, 24 cities, 30 city municipalities, 150 municipalities, 6,158 settlements and 193 urban settlements.

² This hypothesis was the basis of functionalism, i.e., the functional organization of the territory of RS. Thus, the needs of the citizens were the basis for the regionalization of the territory of RS, which caused the incompatibility of the functional division (true in smaller segments) with the territorial administrative division into administrative districts.

³ The principle of subsidiarity was not sufficiently satisfied with this hypothesis. The rule of European subsidiarity, as a basic rule of the EU, is based on respect for local initiatives through institutionalized forms of action. It implies the participation of the public and the

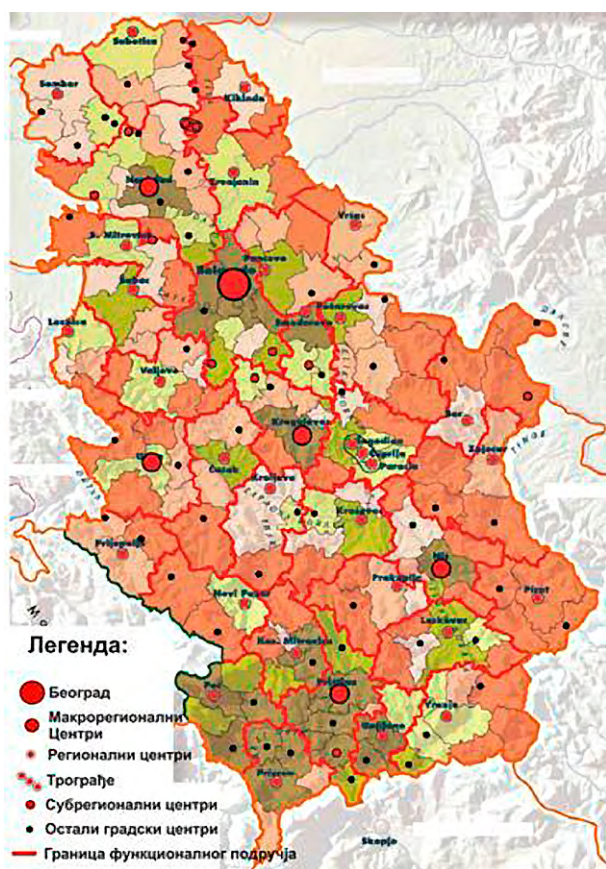


Figure 2. Functional areas in Serbia
Source: Spatial Plan of The Republic of Serbia, 1996

Based on these hypotheses, 34 functional areas of RS were singled out, organized according to the principles of dominant centers (Figure 2). Thus, at the top of the hierarchical pyramid was the state center (Belgrade). Lower rank had macro functional areas, in whose core areas were macroregional centers (Novi Sad, Niš, Priština, Kragujevac and Užice), then functional areas of lower rank, within whom were influential spheres of smaller or larger urban centers (regional, subregional centers, developed urban centers, rural community centers, etc.).

Spatial Plan of the Republic of Serbia, 2010-2020

The concept of functional areas in the Spatial Plan of RS from 2010, following the example of European Spatial Planning, i.e., ESPON methodology, was replaced by the FUA model⁴. The hierarchy of centers from the first Spatial Plan of RS (1996), despite all the chang-

es, conditionally speaking, was retained in the second national Spatial Plan from 2010 (Figure 3). The central city has been given an even greater opportunity to be the main development conceptor of the processes that will take place in the future. The basic planning goal is directed towards the determination, organization and networking of FUAs as a basis for balanced regional development of the RS. Accordingly, a hierarchy of Serbian centers is given, based on which they are categorized into 6 levels⁵ (OG RS 88/2010):

- 1 center in the category of European MEGA 3 - Belgrade
- 2 centers of international importance - Novi Sad and Niš
- 21 centers of national importance - Čačak, Kragujevac, Kraljevo, Kruševac, Kikinda, Leskovac, Loznica, Novi Pazar, Jagodina, Pančevo, Požarevac, Šabac, Smederevo, Sombor, Sremska Mitrovica, Subotica, Užice, Vranje, Valjevo, Zaječar and Zrenjanin.
- 2 centers of regional importance - Pirot and Vršac.

In accordance with the main (but also specific objectives), the Spatial Plan concept (2010 year) started from the following principles of FUAs spatial development, which refer to: polycentricity, sustainability, cooperation, decentralization of functions and activities, subsidiarity, competitiveness and coherence. Special emphasis is placed on the principle of subsidiarity, which is not sufficiently elaborated in the previous plan and which supports the functional organization of space and is based on the concentration of functions in certain centers. The roles between certain centers in the organization of the Serbian space were not clearly divided in the previous plan, nor was existing a clear distribution between the competencies of the spatial plans of local communities, regions or the state.

By comparing the role and importance of functional areas in the old and national Spatial Plan (from 2010), it is possible to conclude that the FUAs in the 1996 plan were treated as functional areas by whom was Serbia completely “covered”. The methodology of FUAs delimitation in the old plan was different in relation to the Plan from 2010 year. Also, in the Spatial Plan from 1996., functional areas did not have a prefix urban, which is logical bearing in mind that Serbia

non-governmental sector in the system of producing and adopting strategic documents.

⁴ The data used in the research were generated at the municipal level, i.e., the impacts of the first and second order of neighboring municipalities of the analyzed city and vice versa (city as an administrative territory) were considered, without using the level of settlements within the municipality, which would of course give a more precise picture of the spatial disposition of the same influences. As a result, marginal relations have been abstracted in the plan and determined are, in relation to the observed regularities of some parts of Serbia, the limit values that delimitate the scope of FUAs influence. As the boundary of each FUA is dynamic and subject to change in a short time, their graphical representation is presented exclusively as a model and not as a precise image indicating any administrative division (OG RS 88/2010).

⁵ In Kosovo and Metohija, due to the lack of relevant data, the situation remains defined in the same way as in 2009 year.

Figure 3. Functional Urban Areas in Serbia.

Source: *Spatial Plan of The Republic of Serbia. 2010-2014-2020. Abridged version, 2010, Republic Agency of Spatial Planning, Belgrade*

[click on figure to enlarge]

was not sufficiently urbanized at the time first spatial plan was made (according to the 1991 Census, Serbia had about 50% of the urban population), nor were existed functionally developed urban relations to which one city center would have a wider territorial entirety that completely gravitates to it. The situation has changed to date.

Spatial Plan of the Republic of Serbia, 2020-2035-urban systems in Serbia

Recent SPRS 2021-2035 is currently in the draft stage (has passed procedure of the public insight). Similar to previous spatial plans of RS, this plan through planning regions⁶ organizes the space of Serbia at the level of urban areas which in perspective should have the role of more even and rational regional de-

velopment instruments (Figure 4). The specific urban system development objectives are focused on the following: (2) An urban center with a functionally dependent surrounding area, i.e. urban area as a basic structural unit of spatial organization; (2) Establishing a hierarchy of urban systems and centers based on subsidiarity by decentralizing the centers' functions; (3) Polycentric development of agglomerations as an instrument of controlled concentration; (4) Transformation of smaller urban centers in rural areas into progressive and prosperous centers of rural areas; (4) Sizing the functions of urban centers according to the total number of space and services users, which includes the number of permanent residents and other permanent and occasional users.

The prefix functional (urban areas) has been replaced, in the new plan, by the notion urban areas. In terms of terminology and practice, there are not much essential differences between urban areas and functional urban areas because both terms are recognized as a "territory of variable coverage and different morphological and physiognomic manifestation, which besides urban center is consisted of surrounding settlements and rural areas, connected with the center by daily commuting of labor force and other population movements conditioned by functional dependence of the center"⁷. Serbian society is seen in the plan as urbo-centric (about 60% of the urban population lives in the cities that have a dominant position in the Serbian geospace). Compared to the previous SPRS, the new plan especially separates urban settlements from rural ones and makes their more detailed and precise classification, so urban areas are divided into 5 categories and rural to.

In general, based on the territorial distribution of settlements, their demographic capacity and other criteria, the urban system of Serbia consists of (Jeftić, M., 2013; SPRS 2021-2035, Draft):

1. **Belgrade agglomeration**, i.e., Belgrade urban area, which is in the which is in the metropolis category of the European rank and has an impact on the entire Serbian territory. It is polycentric, but with a pronounced centralization of the core settlement (Belgrade) and with internal differentiation into

⁶ Even more attention was paid to the planning regions of Serbia compared to the previous period, because the elaboration of the planned spatial development of the RS will be carried out through a new generation of regional spatial plans, i.e., through the revision of all spatial plans of special purpose areas adopted before 2010. year, in order to perceive the degree of planning solutions' implementation and to test the concept of spatial development in the special purpose areas.

⁷ Depending on the demographic size, traffic accessibility and functional capacity, urban areas are hierarchically organized. Depending on the number of functionally connected urban centers, urban areas can be **polycentric**, and morphologically they are recognized as a **metropolitan area** (complex and dynamic system of urban settlements of multilayered hierarchy and high degree of functional and spatial relations), **urban agglomerations** (morphologically and functionally connected urban centers of significant functional capacity), **urban areas with different zones of influence and urban centers of rural areas** (SPRS 2021-2035, Draft).

Figure 4. System of urban centers and rural areas in Serbia

Source: SPRS 2020-2035, Draft. <https://www.mgsi.gov.rs/sites/default/files/PPRS%20Nacrt.pdf>

[click on figure to enlarge]

subcenters and suburbs of different characters and hierarchical ranks⁸.

2. **Novi Sad urban area and Niš urban area** (former macro-regional centers - Novi Sad and Niš). Novi

Sad is a polycentric urban agglomeration that spatially and functionally integrates the entire territory of Vojvodina. In a broader sense, Novi Sad urban area is a part of the larger bipolar Belgrade-*Novi Sad* FUA. Niš urban area also forms the wide zone of influences which, compared to the previous period, is weaker due to the decreasing number of inhabitants in the municipalities out of which is Niš (functional) urban area consisted of.

3. **Larger agglomerations networked by development axes** actually represent the backbone of primary development axes on the territory of RS (Danube-Posavina, Moravia-Great Moravia, South Moravia, West Moravia, etc.).
4. **Centers of former FUAs**, which are most often the centers of districts-areas⁹. SPRS 2021- 2035 in this category recognizes urban areas that are outside the primary development axes such as Kragujevac, Valjevo, Bor, Novi Pazar and others.
5. **Municipal centers that have the status of urban settlements**. They number from 5,000-15,000 inhabitants and in the conditions of economic recession they face the problem of insufficient contingent of employed population which could prospectively support these municipalities and be the carrier of their spatial and economic development¹⁰.
6. **Central settlements that have a certain centrality but do not have the status of an urban settlement**. These are municipal centers of rural character with a small impact zone, which functionally meet the needs of the local population and exist in almost all parts of Serbia, and are especially typical for underdeveloped parts of Serbia (eastern, western, south-eastern Serbia).
7. The existing classification of the centers, among other things, allows a qualitative organization of functional connections and relations within the RS, and at the same time provides multiple possibilities for different types of cooperation between

⁸ Belgrade FUA is a multifunctional system within which exists one system with two subsystems of the first and second rank. The first rank has the core of the City of Belgrade in the administrative sense, i.e., the city settlement of Belgrade with a zone of intensive, weaker and weakest influences. The area of the Belgrade settlement intensive influences includes the periurban ring settlements of the City. The weaker influence zone consists of the parts of Stara Pazova municipality, the City of Pančevo and the municipalities of Pećinci, Opovo and Smederevska Palanka, while the weakest influence zone of the Belgrade settlement is built on the previous ones, including the parts of Kovin, Kovačica, Ruma municipalities and Cities of Valjevo, Šabac, Smederevo and others. In the **second rank** are three subcenters (Mladenovac, Lazarevac, Obrenovac) of similar demographic size, which form a secondary subsystem, also polycentric one. **The centers of lower rank** within the secondary subsystem are Grocka, Sopot, Barajevo and according to the recent development tendencies and to the analysis of the last Census from 2011 - Surčin and Borča. Subcentres Mladenovac, Lazarevac, Obrenovac, Surčin, Grocka, Sopot and Borča are places of work for employees in the municipalities of the same name, i.e., places of residence for employees in the settlement of Belgrade.

⁹ Districts in Serbia exist in the administrative-territorial sense but they do not have governing levers and essential mechanisms for development controlling and directing. The Spatial Plan of the RS from 2010 planned the functional competencies of urban centers, i.e., an attempt was made to determine their rough limits of influence.

¹⁰ In relation to the previous scientific and professional standpoints that dealt with the delimitation criteria for urban settlements, as well as regarding to the views of official statistics, the previous minimum number of inhabitants, as a criterion relevant for a settlement to be considered autarchic (which can meet its needs) was 5,000 inh. According to the last Census from 2011., the limit minimum was raised to 10,000 inh., and even 12,000 inh. in some cases.

Serbia and neighboring countries and regions (OG RS 88/2010). **Cross-border cooperation** of centers in Serbia with the wider environment is most intensive in the north and east of Vojvodina - with Hungary and Romania¹¹, while cooperation with Bulgaria in eastern and southeastern Serbia is insufficient, as well as with Macedonia in the south. There are certain types of cooperation and joint actions with Bosnia and Herzegovina through a series of parallel ties on the line Bosnia and Herzegovina-Republika Srpska-Serbia. In summary, sufficiently strong centers of cross-border cooperation currently do not exist in the territory of RS, but it is possible to assume that they will gradually take shape in the future, depending on the political and economic situation in the region. In that sense, some centers such as Sombor, Vršac, Kikinda, Loznica, Pirot and others are seen as the carriers of cross-border cooperation in the future.

General urban context as an instrument of rational functional organization of space

In general, the development of the Serbian urban system is based on the “**general urban concept**”. It requires that comprehension of traditional hierarchy model of urban centers transforms into the general urban concept according to which urban areas and centers he attracts are qualitatively equal in providing conditions necessary for quality life, and are complementary in the supply of jobs and services for residents as well as for daily and other migrants. This means that the elements of urban life quality (basic set of services and quality infrastructure) and security, are felt in almost every settlement of the urban system, regardless of its distance from the center and demographic size. Preconditions are in the development of efficient interurban transport and decentralization of functions, public social infrastructure and institutions, which will encourage daily and general mobility of the population. This especially refers to the urban areas of Belgrade, Novi Sad, Niš, Kragujevac, Priština, as well as to the West Moravian agglomeration (SPRS 2021-2035, Draft). What does that exactly mean?

Each city has a “territorial horizon” of its influence (sphere of influence) which usually overlaps with the territorial horizons of neighboring cities. The overlap is facilitated by two seemingly opposite processes, rivalry and cooperation. In this way, opened are the possibilities of accomplishing the interests of various economic and social actors to use, in different ways, certain territorial values from the zone of overlapping

spheres of several cities` influences. In this direction, the planning of the deployment of social and economic functions is considered, as well as during commuting planning that takes place in direction: first ranking central city - central cities of a lower rank of centrality, a central city - its territorial-functional horizon, and – or between central city - zones of overlapping with other urban centers. The main urban centers indirectly induce the development and have an impact to organizing the territories which are not in their direct spheres of influence, but are parts of a general “urban context” (SPRS 2021-2035, Draft).

The novelty of SPRS 2021-2035, in the segment related to the development of urban systems are the planning guidelines defined individually for each category of the Serbian urban areas. Although given in general, these strategic guidelines provide wide opportunities for regional spatial plans and special purpose area plans to more precisely define planning measures at lower levels and thus provide proposals for solving local development problems. Planning measures are categorized for the following 5 types of urban areas in the territory of RS (modified SPRS 2021-2035, Draft):

1. **Belgrade and Novi Sad bipolar FUA** is recognized as the dominant Serbian development engine, in which the concentration of functions, population, users of space and economy will continue in the future. The metropolitan area will also become the dominant tourist destination in Serbia. There will also be a manifestation of the suburbanization effects as a consequence of the life quality deterioration (environmental quality) in the central, most densely populated parts of the metropolitan area. It is a development opportunity for the smaller local centers, especially in the Srem and Banat part of metropolitan area.
2. **Priština and Niš urban areas**, as well as the urban areas of cities in the West Morava valley (Užice, Čacak, Kraljevo and Kruševac) need a better infrastructure, as well as expanding the range of services. Emphasis is placed on the economy that needs highly educated and quality workforce, with the scientific research development and technical-technological capacities. At the same time, these are preconditions for stopping the emigration trends towards the metropolitan area.
3. For the **Kragujevac, Subotica, Zrenjanin and Leskovac urban areas**, it is imperative to continue economic growth and development, especially in the domain of high-tech industries, and then the development of services and institutions of region-

¹¹ The area of Vojvodina Autonomous Province has been a part of the DKMT Euroregion (Danube-Krish-Mures-Tisza) since the mid-1990s, while numerous border municipalities have cooperated through bilateral projects together with regions / municipalities in neighboring countries.

al character, in order to stop emigration to the metropolitan area and abroad.

4. For **Sombor, Vršac, Kikinda, Valjevo, Šabac, Loznica, Novi Pazar, Jagodina, Bor, Zaječar, Vranje, Pirot, Prizren, Uroševac, Peć, Đakovica, Gnjilane and Kosovska Mitrovica urban areas**, the priority is to improve their functional capacity, especially in domain of economy, public services and institutions. They also have a great chance as networking centers of 219 small centers in the rural areas that surround them.

5. **Urban centers of rural areas** must adapt to the seasonal oscillations to the number of space users, and focus on products and services offered by resource-rich rural environment, tourist potential and predominantly high-quality environment. The available EU funds make these areas to be considered as the leading priorities of the state's spatial development. It is realistic to expect that by 2035, the functions, economic development and new integrative roles of certain smaller urban centers will be strengthened, especially those in the metropolitan area and in agglomerations.

Conclusion

The role of FUAs is important for balancing the distribution of population and functions in space. Defining the central settlement scope of influences within the FUA individually will not by itself contribute to reducing development imbalances between different parts of Serbia. For that, it is necessary to have clear mechanisms for the planning / strategic concepts' implementation at the state level, which emphasize the demographic development of local and regional centers as a priority development goal. Only after that will be created the preconditions for demographic growth and the transformation of current local centers into real local development centers in the future. The planned organization of public social infrastructure, completion of infrastructure corridors, modernization of the local transport network and other previously mentioned measures would affect the distribution of functions that would consequently affect the population relocating (staying in the place of residence or daily migration of employees). It is imperative to plan the intra-regional differentiation of urban areas depending on the nature of their manifestation in space. *Monocentric (functional) urban areas* require planned strategies based on concentrated centralization of population and functions. *Polycentric (functional) urban areas* with several stronger poles require strategies that would be based on decentralized concentration of population and functions and constituent poles networking into a homogeneous entirety.

Whether the new SPRS 2021-2035 will be, conditionally speaking, implemented through urban areas, time will tell. The Belgrade agglomeration certainly remains the backbone of the Danube-Sava development belt of Serbia - part of the pan-European development corridor of exceptional traffic importance and development opportunities. The position of the four largest agglomerations in Serbia (Belgrade-Novi Sad, West Moravia, Niš and Priština), their demo-

graphic capacity and connection with traffic corridors should provide a fundamental basis for forming a solid network of urban areas which, together with larger centers, have better economic and demographic capacity and in cooperation with urban centers of rural and border areas can contribute to better functional integration of Serbian territorial units. The potential is better infrastructural connectivity and equipment, with the completion of the traffic corridors and accompanying facilities constructing, as well as the started process of reindustrialization. Some urban settlements have a valuable cultural heritage and cultural diversity, including the heritage of modern architecture and urbanism of the twentieth century (especially in the Vojvodina part of Serbia). Parts of planned urban settlements have a high level of traffic and communal infrastructure and good coverage of public service facilities. (SPRS 2021-2035, Draft).

However, due to neglecting the development of rural-urban connections, disparities in the quality of life and accessibility between urban and rural settlements are growing. This is reflected in the long-term depopulation of rural areas and the unplanned expansion of urban settlements. The quality of life in peripheral and peri-urban zones is lower in relation to central urban cores, but it is higher in relation to rural settlements, which contributes to the continuation of the negative tendencies in regional, urban and rural development. There are differences in the cities and urban settlements between parts of the urban area in terms of life quality, primarily equipment and availability of infrastructure and public services and utilities. The reasons for the emergence of these differences are primarily in the mass illegal building of the settlements' new parts, in peripheral urban zones, but also in the existing substandard neighborhoods that can be found in some central parts of urban settlements. The lack of basic urban infrastructure further worsens the living conditions and health of the inhabitants,

and pollutes the environment of the substandard settlements, but also the wider urban environment. In illegally built parts of the settlements, the luxurious residential buildings can be found, but also multi-family residential buildings. The harmonization of urban development policy with the construction land policies and communal economy is insufficient. Sponta-

neous and unplanned construction, in the previous decades, among other things, led to the incompatibility of the traffic network and other purposes in space. Cities, but also other urban settlements, are facing congestion (caused by exhaust gases), insufficient flow capacity and lack of space for stationary traffic.

References

- Drobnjaković, M. (2019). Methodology of typological classification in the study of rural settlements in Serbia. *Journal of Geographical Institute "Jovan Cvijić" SASA*, 69(2), 157–173.
- Gajić, A., Krunić, N. & Protić, B. (2018). Towards a new methodological framework for the delimitation of rural and urban areas: a case study of Serbia. *Geografisk Tidsskrift-Danish Journal of Geography*. 118. 1-13.
- Jeftić, M. (2013). *Functional urban region in spatial planning*. Belgrade: Faculty of Geography (In Serbian with English summary)
- Jeftić, M. (2015). Functional urban region- contemporary theoretical approaches. *Зборник радова са 4. српског конгреса географа*, 303–308. ISBN 978-86-6283-032-6 (In Serbian with English summary)
- Nevenić M. (2009). Značaj Beograda u regionalnoj integraciji jugoistočne Evrope, Faculty of Geography University of Belgrade
- Nikitović, V. (2020). Author's article, *Политика* (accessed 1.8.2021). <http://www.politika.rs/scc/clanak/458786/Svakoga-dana-gubimo-107-stanovnika>
- Radovanović, M. (1993-94). Regionalizam as an approach and principle and regionalization as a procedure in functional organization of geographical space with application to Serbia. *Зборник радова Географског института „Јован Цвијић“ САНУ*, book 44-45, 67-101.
- Jeftić R. M., Tošić D., Nikolić T. (2019): Resilient Functional Urban Regions: Spatial Planning in the Light of Climate Change. W. Leal Filho et al. (eds.), *International Perspectives on Climate Change*, Climate Change Management, pp. 113–126.
- SPRS from 2021 to 2035, Draft (Spatial Plan of the Republic of Serbia)(Study on urban systems- Research leaders: Nikola Krunić, Dragutin Tošić, Velimir Šećerov). Ministry of construction, traffic and infrastructure. Government of the Republic of Serbia. Belgrade. <https://www.mgsi.gov.rs/sites/default/files/PPRS%20Nacrt.pdf> (July 25, 2021.)
- Tošić, D., Nevenić, M (2007): Regional geography between the paradigm of chorologism and the paradigm of spatial organization, *Зборник радова првог конгреса српских географа* (стр. 85-96), Belgrade: Serbian geographical society (In Serbian with English summary)
- Tošić, D., Nevenić, M. (2010). Urban settlements network – instrument of the spatial-functional organization of the Republic of Serbia. In M. Krevs, & D. Đorđević (Eds.), *Challenges of spatial development of Ljubljana and Belgrade* (pp. 71–84), Ljubljana: Filozofska Fakulteta.
- Šećerov, V., Nevenić, M. (2009): Model of functional urban areas in Serbia today. Regional development, spatial planning and strategic governance. *Тематски зборник радова са међународног скупа*, стр. 75-101. Belgrade. Serbia (In Serbian with English summary)

Legislation

- OG RS 13/1996 (Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia 13/1996): The Act on Spatial Plan of the Republic of Serbia 1996 (Zakon o Prostornom planu Republike Srbije 1996 godine).
- OG RS 88/2010 (Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia 88/2010): The Act on Spatial Plan of the Republic of Serbia from 2010 to 2020 (Zakon o Prostornom planu Republike Srbije of 2010. godine do 2020. godine).
- OG RS 129/2007, 18/2016 (Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia 129/2007, 18/2016): The Act on Territorial Organization of the Republic of Serbia (Zakon o teritorijalnoj organizaciji Republike Srbije).