

# COLLAPSE OF STRATEGIC THINKING, RESEARCH AND GOVERNANCE IN SERBIA AND POSSIBLE ROLE OF THE SPATIAL PLAN OF THE REPUBLIC OF SERBIA (2010) IN ITS RENEWAL

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*Early reforms in Serbia (Yugoslavia) were announced immediately after the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989. From the beginning of the 1990s few attempts of the kind announced have taken place, and, altogether, they still remain more or less uncompleted. To a large extent, this is a result of choices taken by the political and economic elites, in effect without any broader public dialogue undertaken about the strategic directions, contents and means for the implementation of such reforms. So far no overall societal consensus on the key strategic issues has been reached whatsoever, and, therefore, the choices in question have simply been imposed on the society at large by decree. The economic recovery from 2000 onwards, while fairly dynamic, has still been insufficient, and more or less assumes the form of "growth without development". Serbia still keeps one of the most dissipating and non-sustainable economies, social services and spatial development patterns in Europe. Its "post-socialist Argonautics" has been facing a number of difficulties, also exacerbated by a lack of adequate institutional and organizational adjustments, as well as by a lack of proper cognitive and heuristic support. The spatial and environmental planning practice represents a mixture of old habits and substandard approaches, with only some new initiatives. There have been few attempts to redirect the improper development path, however, which have so far either failed or been uncompleted, mostly reflecting the collapse an overall collapse of strategic thinking, research and governance in this country.*

**Key words:** *postsocialist Argonautics, institutional adjustments, collapse of strategic thinking, research and governance, planning in crisis, national spatial plan, territorial capital, Europeanization of Serbia outside the EU*

## INTRODUCTORY NOTES

Following the institutional and economic crisis of the former Yugoslavia (Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia) in the 1980s, its dissolution at the beginning of 1990s and subsequent economic and social collapse during the international isolation and sanctions, Serbia (first within the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, then as a part of Serbia and Montenegro, and as from recently as the Republic of Serbia) has been going through a number of ups and downs over two decades of the postsocialist transition. Especially, the course of adjustments after 2000 proved improper and only partly

successful, resulting in a number of negative developments, which have been pointed to by many independent commentators in the country and abroad much before the appearance of the global crisis towards the end of 2008. Now, Serbia is still in a deep economic, social and political crisis, and no appropriate "exit strategy" has been prepared so far to serve as a long term solution. To a large part, this crisis has resulted from the concomitant collapse of strategic thinking, research and governance, which has been manifested in many ways.

In this contribution, first a brief account of the score of institutional, economic, social and spatio-ecological (environmental) adjustments in recent decade or so is given, followed by a short presentation of planning

and governance system and practice. Then, the intentions and contents of the two strategic spatial plans, one from the mid-1990s, and another from this year (2010), have been discussed, respectively, and compared. The paper concludes with an estimate of the predictable outcomes and imminent development prospects of Serbia.

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## THE SCORE OF INSTITUTIONAL AND DEVELOPMENT ADJUSTMENTS OF THE POSTSOCIALIST TRANSITION REFORMS IN SERBIA

Serbia has been through much turmoil over the last three decades. As a result, the country has now for quite time been in a deep social, political and economic crisis, also reflected in a number of spatio-ecological (environmental) problems. More than 20 years after the fall of the Berlin Wall, Serbia still finds itself in a post-socialist proto-democracy ("post-socialist proto-capitalist *laissez-faire*", "wild postsocialist capitalism", etc.),<sup>1)</sup> yet with only rudimentary developed institutions of representative democracy, civil society and a market economy. On the one hand, the better parts of the former self-management system of the past ideological and political monopoly have been abandoned and almost forgotten, most prominently, for example, the practices of territorial and work participation. On the other, its bad parts, e.g., paternalism, manipulation, clientism, and so forth have been kept, due to the retrogressive and unfortunate events of the 1990s. Serbia has been developing as a "hybrid" society (for a more detailed discussion on this see Golubović, 2006). While one should not overlook the occasional traits of "enlightened political will" in some reform efforts (which is a prerequisite for political legitimacy), still, all of the reform steps that have been attempted from the beginning of 1990s have suffered from a lack of legitimacy.

In sum, three decades seem to have been lost after the ideological turmoil and socio-economic stagnation of 1980s, the auto-destruction and other miss-events of 1990s, and poor political legitimacy of the post-socialist reforms after 2000, mostly decreed upon the society at large, Serbia has now found itself in deep crisis. Now, after all, the emancipatory and modernizing potential of Serbia elites is questioned and dispute again, summarized in a dilemma: "Is there a third beginning for the Serbian society and its elites?"

Especially, the postsocialist transition reforms, which have been undertaken since 2000, are now found unfinished and at the same time carrying a number of negative outcomes. **In socio - political terms**, the key characteristics of the transformation in question read as follows (based on Vidojević, 2000, and Vujošević, Spasić, 2007a):

- The overall legitimacy of reforms is very low: instead of being discussed in the public at

large, and agreed upon by all key elements of society, the reform projects have been imposed by decree by the political and economic elites (this also applies to the steps undertaken from 2000 onwards) and basically supported by the key international actors.<sup>2)</sup>

- The entire reform project is basically non-equitable/unjust, as it has been directed and performed as a grand redistribution of assets, incomes, existential chances, etc., and often so through various forms of merciless robbery of deprived social groups.<sup>3)</sup> For example, in Vujošević, Zeković, Maričić (2009: 23), the entire Serbian postsocialist *Argonautics* was depicted as "Post-socialist transition in Serbia: poor premises, great hopes, false promises, and bleak futures".

- There has been a dominance of new-old ideological and political mantras in this period, viz., liberalization, destation, marketization, stabilization, etc., paralleled by a "growth without development", as an outcome of a hegemony of domicile neo-liberal gurus, seconded by mostly second- and third-grade foreign experts, and concomitantly poor role of independent expertise.

- Until recently, the new-old elites have been demonstrating mostly anti-development and anti-planning stance of, paralleled by an aversion to any form of societal constructivism, mobilization and learning other than Hayek's *katalaxia* (i.e., the free interplay of independent market agents/actors).

**In developmental terms**, the following trends of the mentioned "economic growth without development" are of most relevance here (for more details cf. Vujošević, 2007, and Vujošević and Spasić, 2007):

- Serbia has now been developing as a political, economic and financial (semi)colony, loosing its "territorial capital" and becoming a part of the "inner peripheries of Europe", with primitive forms of consumerism spreading and dominating the public scene, stimulated by the government and key economic actors. In sum, it is a weak, land-locked country with ill-defined boundaries.

- Serbia belongs to the group of the least developed European countries with regard to the GDP per capita, HDI, unemployment, living standard, poverty<sup>4)</sup>, demographic recession, enormous foreign debt, the highest rate of deindustrialization among all ex-socialist countries (ESCs), extremely poor technical infrastructure, poor competitiveness, disproportionably high pollution, as compared to the development level achieved, the lowest percentage of the GDP for R&D in Europe, the

largest social and regional disparities in Europe, paralleled by enormous social polarization, extreme spatial disorder and enormous illegal construction, extremely dissipative patterns of production, consumption and energy utilization, and so on, despite enormous foreign resources, all the pro-growth rhetoric, booster imagery, and various give-away packages of incentives for the business, financial and commercial sectors.<sup>3)</sup>

- Apart from that, there has been only a weak correspondence between the dominant European development trends (at least in the majority of the EU countries) and the development involution of Serbia (for more details on this important issues cf. Vujošević, 2007, and Vujošević, 2009).

In sum, entire **territorial capital of Serbia**, that is, social, institutional, economic, cultural, and so forth, has been endangered for some time now. In fact, this capital has been mostly utilized in a number of suboptimal ways, as compared to its potential, and, furthermore, there will predictably be even more difficulties in its activation in the future (for detailed discussion of this topic see Vujošević, Zeković, Maričić, 2010, and Vujošević, Zeković, Maričić, 2009).

**In cognitive and heuristic terms**, there has been a serious lack of proper expertise for controlling and carrying out the developmental and related matters in the era of postsocialist transition, this being with no earlier precedence in this and all other key aspects (for more details regarding this issue cf. Vujošević, 2004).

## THE COLLAPSE OF PLANNING AND GOVERNANCE SYSTEM AND PRACTICE

As in almost all ex-socialist countries, in Serbia a radical change has taken place in the formerly established balance within the state (power) - market - planning - privatization quadrangle as from the very beginning of the post-socialist transition. A new balance has therefore been searched for, thus influencing entire system and practice of development planning policy. However, such a balance has not been reached so far, due to a variety of reasons, both political and professional. In sum, the planning system and practice in Serbia suffers from the so-called "democratic deficit" syndrome, as well as from its inefficiency (for more details cf. Vujošević, N. Spasić, 2007a).

The planning system and practice has grossly

fallen behind the need to introduce a more strategic mode of development guidance and control and has been characterized by poor planning of legislation for sustainable development and poor institutional and organizational arrangements, by a new group of past and new "institutional Zombies", by the dominance of manipulation and "systematic and organized mobilization of interests and bias," by slowly emerging "coalitions for sustainable development," and by a poorly developed civil society with weak influence in planning matters. The current development policy is in essence composed of a number of large development projects and programmes, uncoordinated and non-harmonized, whereas a more consistent and coherent strategic framework resembling the German *Steurung* is missing so far. Instead of strategic governance, chaotic decision-making predominates, encompassing a strange combination of elements of the so-called "crisis management", "planning-supporting-privatization-and-marketization" (which is especially visible in urban and environmental planning at the local-regulation level), and "project-led planning". In terms of their respective socio-political functions, the majority of spatial, urban and other development plans that have been elaborated over the recent period seem to have been following other purposes than those conventionally attached to the "true" plans, thereby more emanating from what was "beneath the surface", than through the declared (nominal) values, aims and objectives, viz. (after Sillince, 1986): 1) Creating confidence among the planning/development society. 2) Providing symbolic reassurance. 3) (Mere) countering of criticisms. 4) Simple monitoring of planning decisions implementation. 5) Instigating and generating commitment of others. 6) Back covering. 7) Bidding for resources at various governance levels and with some foreign actors. 8) "Making everything legal and above-board". 9) Establishing an arena for debate and broader development planning discourse; etc.

In sum, the role of planning has been reduced to a "junior partner of market" within the emerging institutional arrangements, and the entire planning profession to a "residual factor". So far planning has only occasionally served the causes of democratic pluralism and participative democracy.<sup>6)</sup>

Now, having been slowly departing from the initial neoliberal political and ideological mantras, paralleled by the mentioned anti-planning and anti-development stance, the political authorities and the "reformers" as

from recently embarked upon a hectic preparation of enormous number of development documents at various governance levels. This has brought us to somehow schizophrenic situation: some 80 strategies or similar documents,<sup>7)</sup> which have been elaborated since 2000, did not contribute to the veritable socio-economic and spatio-ecological transformation and evolution of Serbian society. Instead, they "contributed" to its social, economic and ecological "involution", visible to a number of independent commentators and pointed much prior to the occurrence of global crisis in 2008. It is this "methodological void" that is particularly indicative of the collapse of strategic thinking, planning and governance in Serbia. Namely, it is indicative that not a single document of the kind predicted the global crisis, thereby still leaving Serbia without an "exit strategy".

Following such a "U-turn", most recently a new model has been produced and promulgated to cope with the crisis, sponsored by the Government of Serbia, and financed by the USAID (sic!), Belgrade Office, prepared by a group of the mainstream economists, among whom there have been some who have been servicing all political regimes as early as from the 1970s onwards in their concomitant development enthusiasm, optimism and "boosterism".<sup>8)</sup> Consequently and unfortunately, the new document is but one new mathematico-statistical simulacrum, based on appropriate simulation and manipulation, and not veritably rooted in real economic and social life.<sup>9)</sup> Once more, we have witnessed a set of "phantom" targets, defined by the economists in question, basically not rooted in the economic reality, but a newest feigned one.<sup>10)</sup>

In that respect, the new model keeps safe a methodological rule, that has been tried out by the mainstream economist on many occasions, that is, what we depict here as an "extrapolation of the non-existing, forecasting the impossible", viz.:<sup>11)</sup>

- In ten years, an increase of 430,000 new jobs is expected.
- BDP per capita should reach 8,000 €, GDP 52.7 billion €, at assumed average annual growth rate of 5.8%.
- The share of investments in the GDP should increase to 25% (2015), and 28% (2020), from the current 15%.
- Decrease of consumption in the GDP is stipulated for, from 92.5% (2009), to 81% in 2020.
- The increase of the share of exports in the

BDP is expected, from 27.6% (2009) to 65% over the same period.

- The decrease of the share of current foreign deficit in the GDP is predicted, from 7.1% to 3.3%.
- Average annual growth rate of industry should reach 6.9%.
- The increase of gross investments is also expected, from 4.9 billion euros (2009) to 15 billion euros (2020), out of which 2.3 billion euros of FDI per year (from 800 million in 2009).

## **TWO ATTEMPTS TO ESTABLISH A COMMON SPATIO-ECOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK FOR THE INTEGRATION AND COORDINATION OF VARIOUS DEVELOPMENT POLICIES**

Over the last two decades there have been two attempts to redirect unfavourable course of development from the spatio-ecological (environmental) perspective, with a view to establish a common strategic framework for the coordination and integration of various general and specific development policies, viz., *Spatial Plan of the Republic of Serbia* (1996, English version, 1997), and *Spatial Plan of the Republic of Serbia 2010-2014-2021* (2010).

In 1996 *The Spatial Plan of the Republic of Serbia/Prostorni plan republike Srbije* was adopted, in which a large number of basic reference points and strategic commitments and general goals were set up, viz. (English version, 9-12).<sup>12)</sup>

- A higher degree of functional integration of Serbia's space.
- A considerably greater communication and economic links between Serbia and its neighbouring and other European countries.
- Lessening regional disproportions (a more balanced regional development), based on the development of a number of regional centres for pertinent functional (gravitational) areas, designed with the aim to rationalize management and organization of public services and efficient coordination of local community activities.
- Improvement of the quality of life in macro and regional centres, supported by the incentives for the development of small towns.
- Introducing in effective way the principle of polycentric development.
- The development of rural settlements and

areas as multifunctional production, social and cultural entities.

- Improvement of attractiveness of the zones with considerable development potential, in order to selectively relocate some economic activities and population.
- Priority development of insufficiently developed hilly, mountainous and border areas.
- Introducing rigorous locational, technical, techno-economic and environmental criteria in the investment-decision procedures.
- Careful management, rational use and protection of natural resources, and concomitant protection of natural and cultural heritage.
- Priority protection for the best-preserved ecological areas, as well as of those areas with best prospects for sustainable development.
- Providing the timely reservation of space in the corridors of technical infrastructure.
- Combating illegal construction and non-planned utilization of space, etc.<sup>13)</sup>

In more spatial ("physical") terms, a number of development axes of various ranks (I-III) have also been designated.

Also, a very elaborate system of implementation measures and support was stipulated at the very end of this document, to be elaborated in detail in the sequel via a particular implementation programme, which, however, did not happen.

Although there has been neither systematic monitoring nor *ex post* evaluation of the implementation of the *Spatial Plan of the Republic of Serbia* (1996/1997), even a fragmented evidence of the kind indicate that the majority of its provisions have not been implemented. An exception to this relates to the preparation of spatial plans at lower planning levels, which progressed fairly in recent years, albeit not at the pace stipulated by the *Plan*, as well as an indirect implementation of some of its propositions via spatial and urban plans at sub-national governance/planning levels, the key reason being a lack of effective political will to define workable implementation devices.<sup>14)</sup> (for more details cf. Vujošević, Petovar, 2002; and Vujošević, Spasić, 2007).<sup>15)</sup>

Apart from the lack of effective political will to make it implemented (illustrated, e.g., by the missing of a programme for its implementation), a number of unfavourable miss-events also prevented its implementation, viz.: prolonged international sanctions and isolation

of the country, slow pace of transition reforms, the NATO bombardment of the country in the spring 1999, etc. As a result, only few elements of the *Plan* have been realised, and even those more resulting from the non-coordinated activities of some individual actors, than as an outcome of some well organized, programmed and systematic efforts of key institutional actors. Furthermore, contrary to its intentions, the *Plan* has only occasionally served as the key strategic (referent) framework for integrating development documents that have been adopted in the sequel at various governance levels, which particularly applied to the period after 2000.<sup>16)</sup>

In many respects the new *Plan (Spatial Plan of the Republic of Serbia 2010-2014-2021, Draft/Nacrtnog plana Republike Srbije 2010-2014-2021, februar 2010)*<sup>17)</sup> has replicated the ambitions, approach and structure of the former *Plan* (1996/1997). In a way which is quite similar to that of the *Plan* from 1996, the new *Plan* (2010) has demonstrated an ambition to be "more than a mere spatial/physical plan" at the national/state level, that is, to instigate and introduce a number of measures targeted at broader reform of systems, approaches and practices in the sphere of sustainable spatial planning and governance, as well as in the system of regional planning, organisation and governance.<sup>18)</sup> Also, both documents insist, at least intentionally, on proper implementation of the key sustainable spatial development propositions, via a particular implementation programme elaborated after the adoption of the *Plan*. Finally, analogously to the former *Plan*, this new document defines an enormous number of various propositions, belonging to different categories (altogether, many hundreds), which will most certainly prove unmanageable vis-à-vis the poorly developed planning culture and capacity – as was the case with the former *Plan*.<sup>19)</sup> However, there has also been a number of differences between the two documents, out of which the most notable for our interest here are as follows:

- In the new *Plan* more room has been opened for rather more recent categories from the European planning discourse, viz., "territorial cohesion", "spatial banana" (here: "Serbian spatial banana", that is, the broader metropolitan area of Belgrade and Novi Sad), "social inclusion", "territorial capital" (here: of Serbia), "European gateway cities", "the knowledge based economy and society", "the role of European Corridors" (here: particularly VII and X), "urban-rural cooperation", "territorial-regional decentralization", "spatial integration of the territory of Serbia", and so

forth. Particularly, much room has been devoted to the strategic planning control of the so-called "Serbian spatial banana", that is, the area of concentration and polarization of a large portion of population and economic and social activities in the relatively small metropolitan area of Belgrade and Novi Sad, a pendant of the European "blue banana".<sup>20)</sup>

- Deterred in no way by the current miserable development conditions, or even worse development prospects of Serbia under the predictably prolonged international and national crisis, the authors of the new *Plan* (2010: 25) envisage the following "long term vision of the spatial development of Serbia", imbued with further "boosterism" of the kind – "...Serbia...defined in territorial terms, balanced in regional terms, comprising sustainable and competitive economic growth, socially coherent and stable, equipped in infrastructural terms of good transport accessibility, with conserved/preserved and protected natural and cultural heritage, and environment of high quality, and integrated in functional terms in the broader regional environment."

• As compared to the previous *Plan* (1996), the new document has more dwelled on the spatial development scenarios (at least nominally). Without any more detailed and substantiated corroboration (and analysis of the respective pros and cons either), two basic scenarios have been defined (31-32), i.e., "scenario of recessive growth with the elements of crisis management" ("predictably not to last more than 3-4 years"), and "scenario of sustainable spatial development", to emulate the above defined vision and subsumed key strategic goals in the sectors comprised by the *Plan*. Within the latter, a number of reform steps have been stipulated with regard to the following "frameworks": legal and institutional; market, economic and development; macro economic; demographic; social; ecological; and spatial-urban. This scenario contemplates four specific sub-scenarios ("variants"), viz.: "negative economic growth and disintegrated spatial system" (1); "negative economic growth and integrated and partially regulated spatial system" (2); "positive economic growth and disintegrated and partially regulated spatial system" (3); and "positive economic growth and integrated spatial system" (4), all under different assumptions regarding the pace of intensity of the integration of Serbia into the European Union.

- Already at hits point of time, an elaborate list of indicators has been defined, for the monitoring and *ex post* evaluation of the key strategic propositions of the *Plan*.

• The key comparable aspect pertains to the broader contextual factors that influence the implementation of the new *Plan* (2010). They are in many respects different as compared to those pertaining to the implementation of the former *Plan* (1997). However, regarding the effective manoeuvring space of the planning authorities at various governance level, this has even narrowed in three key aspects: first, misbalances are worse, the macroeconomic situation is worse, and the foreign debt has reached a multi-ten billion of euros mark<sup>21)</sup> – altogether crippling the effective capacity to introduce more redistributive policies, which are however an imperative (a must) vis-à-vis ever enlarging territorial misbalances and social differentiation and polarization... And this brings us to the concluding comments, which has in essence to do with the key issue, i.e., that of the real transformative and modernizing capacity of Serbian elites, which has been opened and disputed for a longer period now. This issue will be particularly reflected under the predictable circumstances of a prolonged “Europeanization of Serbia outside the European Union and with its limited assistance”. Also, the current and pending budget deficit management, dictated by the IMF, will certainly influence the implementation of the *Plan* in a negative way.

• Ultimately, there has been the utmost limit to the *Plan*'s implementation, namely, that stemming from a predominant compartmentalization of development policies in Serbia. The work of ministries is extremely competing and uncoordinated, as being mostly managed under the auspices of political parties as their “feuds”, under the circumstances of prevailing “partitocracy”,<sup>22)</sup> as the current state of political governance of Serbia is depicted by the majority of most authoritative commentators. Under such circumstances, it is difficult to expect that new *Plan* will act as strategic synthesis of particular frameworks and concepts, now integrated within a common strategic framework, i.e., combining both spatio-ecological (environmental) proper, and broader development concerns. This brings us to the concluding part of this paper, where the issue of the role of Serbian elites under the predictably bleak development prospects is briefly commented.

## CONCLUDING REMARKS

There have been only few attempts to redirect the wrong economic growth and development path that took place in Serbia since the end of 1980s/beginning of 1990s, most notable being two national/state spatial plans, the *Spatial Plan of the Republic of Serbia* (1996), and the

most recent *Spatial Plan of the Republic of Serbia 2010-2014-2021*. Both have been very ambitious efforts to establish a common strategic development framework for various general and sectoral development and related policies, otherwise lacking (1), to renew the collapsed strategic thinking, research and governance (2), and to introduce new development policy approach (3). The former plan has been poorly implemented, for two key group of reasons: first, a number of mis-events as from mid-1990s which prevented its implementation, and second, a lack of appropriate political will to define proper implementation mechanism and devices. Albeit the latter plan has not been adopted so far, the prospects for its implementation are similarly open, now for the reasons that are somehow analogous to the earlier ones, and specific and new as well. On the one hand, general development prospects for Serbia are rather bleak, also encompassing ever narrower manoeuvring space for the planning authorities to introduce more redistributive policies (in economic, social and territorial terms). On the other, also on this occasion the effective political will to define and deploy appropriate implementation instruments is still to be demonstrated. To a large extent, this has to do with a necessity for political and economic elites of Serbia to radically change their credo which has been practiced for two decades now, namely, that of *pro domo sua*.<sup>23)</sup> In parallel, the elites should also demonstrate appropriate competence and modernizing and emancipatory capacity, which was basically lacking over the entire last period, vis-à-vis the development problems and challenges and conundrums the society has been facing, also since 2000. Namely, after 2000, Serbia experienced dynamic nominal economic growth of ca. 5% annually, but with slow recovery and the so-called “eco-eco” (economic and ecological) restructuring of its real economy. The general trend has been depicted as a “growth without development”, despite all the pro-growth rhetoric, booster imagery, and various give-away packages of incentives for the business, financial and commercial sectors. The nominal growth has been absorbed by the imports and supporting sectors (trade, finance, insurance, transport and freight servicing, etc.), thereby piling up enormous foreign debt. Now, Serbia has been developing as an economic and ecological (semi) colony, with primitive forms of consumerism spreading and dominating the public scene, basically stimulated by the government and key economic actors.

Consequently, this “third” beginning for the

elites, and for the entire society as well, in its post-socialist Argonautics (a “long voyage of Serbia to Europe”), paralleled by a “search for a new Kolchida”, encounters problems that even more complex than those from the 1990s. Once more time, the emancipatory and modernizing potential of Serbian elites has been questioned. The country is now facing a “Europeanization of Serbia outside the EU and with its limited support”, under predictably prolonged overall crisis, and a narrowed manoeuvring space for interventions of the public sector aimed at social, economic and territorial redistribution. There is no doubt that the prospects to be developing as a “civil society” via model of a complex social, economic and spatio-ecological (“environmental”) transformation are rather weak – which is at the very basis of the most recent national spatial plan – especially under the circumstances of pending bankruptcy. In that respect, in M. Vujošević (2007b), we depicted the existing situation and the imminent development prospects in the following way: ‘The Serbian elites are confused... In its “post-socialist Argonautics”, Serbia faces a number of crucial questions – Where is the new *Kolchida* to be found now and where to search for a new *Golden fleece* – prospecting for it in the West, or in the East, or somewhere in the ex-Third World, or within the “Club of Porto Allegro” or elsewhere? – still unanswered. The potential of its human capital, with its enormous illiteracy, “poor education for Europe”, and “poor education for sustainability”, is questionable. The “*new Jasons*” of the post-socialist Argonautics have been facing a different sort of conundrum, that is, how to “rebuild the ship at sea” while avoiding its sinking? Do they enjoy the ultimate support of the Gods? Do the activities taking place on the “boat” *Argo-Serbia* (e.g., diligently rowing, grumbling commons, the bad reputation of Karl Marx and his comrades, etc.) work in favour of positive outcomes?’<sup>24)</sup>

There is a number of preconditions which are needed to depart from the existing substandard and inferior practices, towards a more enlightened political will that is needed now:

- The will to establish wide societal dialogue and to reach general consensus on the key development problems and prospects.
- The will to provide all necessary preconditions for preparing and passing of both democratic and relevant development decisions.
- The will to make sure that all needed implementation devices, policies and support are also provided. So far, in terms of spatial

and urban development planning at the national (state) level, the attempts of the professional planners to that end have grossly failed.

However, we also point to the necessity for a more constructive role of Brussels in supporting pro-European actors in the country. The critics of both the inadequate decisions of Serbian political and economic leaders, and those of the EU bureaucrats and political *apparatchiki* highlight a number of pertinent issues. Particularly, they point out the necessity to consult more actors on the key Serbian issues beyond the political interface between Brussels and Belgrade.<sup>25)</sup>

There are, however, a number of imperatives that should be realized on the internal (Serbian) political and planning scene. In the first place, a radical departure is needed from the dominating partisanship and the so-called "systematic and organized mobilization of interests and bias" on the public scene at large, in order to better follow contemporary European practices. We still assume that key progress can be expected from engaging more independent and unbiased expertise during the preparation and passing of the key planning decisions. This implies that many new forms of professional and political communication and interaction should be established. Of the utmost importance is the establishment of firm professional rules against widespread intellectual and other corruption in spatial, urban and environmental planning, and the provision of better expertise in this field. Finally, radically better education is needed on sustainable development and related matters within the academia. In parallel, there has for a long time now been an imperative to establish a clear demarcation of responsibility among institutional actors, with a view to prevent various conflict of interests, especially of state and parastatal institutions and organizations vis-à-vis professional organizations proper, which particularly applies to the strategic planning. Finally, radically better education is needed on sustainable development and related matters within the academia.

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1) Some authors, e.g., Vidojević (2010), emphasizes that the most proper definition of this era should read "postreal socialism" (54). The same author especially points to the "...state of a degenerative crisis", as the most proper description of Serbian society (11).

2) According to Mihailović (2010), reporting on the perception of and average Serbian citizen on the score of transition reforms in Serbia in the last 20 years, the "image" of the so far implemented privatization model has particularly been non-favorable among in the public at large: 44% interviewed citizens find that the applied model has been a "mere robbery", another 27% understand it "necessary, but implemented in a wrong way", 26% still cannot estimate fully its relevance and results, and only 3% support it in the existing form. Many authoritative commentators depict the main course of reforms in the same way, e.g., Z. Vidojević (2010: 239): "...privatization...as legalized robbery of a major part of societal wealth", that has produced an enormous "human surplus/waste" (op. cit.: 249).

- 3) According to Lazić (2010), professor of sociology at the Faculty of Philosophy, University of Belgrade, the postsocialist transformation in Serbia (Yugoslavia), and formation of the (new) capitalist order, since the beginning of 1990s took place primarily as a redistribution of the existing wealth, instead of a generation of new wealth: "The capitalist class in postsocialism has been formed primarily as the result of the redistribution of the already existing societal wealth (that is, by its appropriation), and not by the generation and accumulation of new wealth." Thus we had a "capitalism without capitalists", in which the old-new capital was grabbed up through a number of social clashes, and a number of wars in some of the former Yugoslav republics. This is seen by the author as the key tenet of the so-called Milošević's era and its regime. Author also insists that, in parallel to the Serbian newly constituted political and economic elites (new-old "nomenclatura"), a number of influential actors played a decisive role in defining such a direction of events.
- 4) It should be emphasized here that official appraisals of poverty seem to have largely underestimated the depth and broadness of this phenomenon. By official presentation, in the first half of 2010, the number of citizens beyond the poverty line increased for another 100,000, thereby, measured by the official statistics, reached 8.8% of the total population, i.e., ca. 650,000 persons. This is sharp contrast to the equivalent estimate for the European Union, namely, marked at some 17% of its total population (average), ranking from the lowest 11% (Netherlands and Slovakia) to the highest 23% (Romania). In recent 10 or so years the threshold of absolute poverty oscillated between 8 and 10 euros per day per person ("per consumption unit"), i.e., up to 150 euros per month. In the Union, the understanding of poverty is somewhat different, as poverty is understood in relative terms, and not measured vis-à-vis some absolute threshold: those persons with the income less than 60% of the national average are treated poverty (this percentage varying by states from 40% do 70%), to reflect the concern for the principles of equity and social solidarity. If the absolute standards are applied in the Union, two are in question: first, five euros per person per day, to reflect the so-called absolute poverty line; and second, ten euros per person per day, to express the relative poverty. The first threshold gives some 150 euros per person monthly, that is, almost double the mark applied in Serbia. For a comparison, in the USA average annual income of a four-member family was some 50,000 US dollars, and ca 22,000 dollars (that is, ca. 1.700 dollars per month) has been defined as the poverty line for a family of that size in recent years. The absurdness, as well as the extent of political manipulation applied in defining such a miserable threshold ("African"), can only be understood vis-à-vis estimates of independent persons, appraising that for a decent material life to live, a four-member family (households) would necessitate some 600 euro per month to cover the basic minimum of a standard "consumer basket"! Also, this sharply contrasts the more reliable evidence from independent sources, according to which some 23% of the total population of Serbia lived (2005) on the household income per capita (that is, per household member) less than 35 euro per month, the other 25% with the per capita family income of 35-70 euro per month, some 25% with the per capita family income of 70-140 euro per month, 20% with 140-210 euro per month, while some 7% of total population spent more than 210 euro per household member monthly. Some 83% of the total populations of Serbia consider poverty and unemployment as the most important issues.
- 5) The development collapse took place as a "natural outcome" of some government decisions, viz: in a semi-official paper/programme (2002/2003) of the Government of Serbia, which was neither disclosed to the wider public, nor discussed in the public at large, for the coming period as the priority was defined the growth of services and supporting activities. In the real sector, only a part of technical infrastructure, and agriculture, were put to the front.
- 6) To note, in Yugoslavia first efforts to constitute spatial planning as a trans-engineering discipline took place in the second half of 1950s (which has now been neglected and almost nullified in Serbia, especially by the spatial and urban planning legislation of 2003 and 2009). In 1960s and 1970s this trend was strengthened by introducing new legislation and institutionalization of integral planning, with a view to harmonize social, spatial and economic development ("cohesion"). At the time, Yugoslavia was found among the "planned-most and the most-decentralized country in the world", however, with a highly hypertrophied planning system and planning, followed by the crisis of "socialist self-management planning" (1980s). As from the beginning of 1990s a sort of professional autism started to dominate the planning scene, viz.: economism (in economic planning), ecologism (in environmental protection policy), and physicalism (in spatial and urban planning), rendering planning as a junior partner of market. After 2000, there have been faint efforts to depart from "planning-as-crisis-management", "planning – as – supporting-privatization-and-marketization", "planning-led-by-projects", etc., so far mostly unsuccessful.
- 7) The development documents in question comprise both various sectoral conceptions (e.g., for tourism, agriculture, energy, transportation and communication, commerce, etc.), and a number of general strategies (viz., general economic development, information society, sustainable development, employment, foreign investment, regional development, exports, etc.). This also applies to ever growing number of development and related documents at various sub-national planning and governance levels, now already reaching many hundreds of the kind.
- 8) The mainstream economists, in their institutional zeal and loyalty to the political regime after 2000, which has been inducing both myopia and hypocrisy, would admit, at most, that the applied transition reforms model exhausted its potential, and never that it has been initially wrong. In order to not "rock the boat", i.e., to foreclose the unwanted conclusions about this, they would never admit that deep development crisis in Serbia took place as a result of a deep-slanted systemic (structural) flaws in the postsocialist transition model. The global crisis has merely accelerated it and made its manifestations more readily vivid. Thus, the old-new model seems to be a mere rhetorical repackaging of the former, basically "market" ideas, now slightly redirected to what was some 10 years ago understood as heresy, e.g., the imperative to introduce a strategic development approach, re-industrialisation policy, and similar.
- 9) Cf. "Postkriзни model ekonomskog rasta i razvoja Srbije 2011-2020. godine"/"Postcrisis model of economic growth and development of Serbia 2011-2020", Vlada Republike Srbije, oktobar 2020. Serbia (former Yugoslavia) has now been living already a long history of various reforms. In recent 20 or so years, the most famous among them were two: first, led by the last prime minister of the SFRY Ante Marković (1989/1990), and second, designed by the governor of the National Bank of the FRJ Dragoslav Avramović (1994), both failed to be implemented.
- 10) To remind, according to Joseph Stiglitz, a good programme of the kind should comprise a set of measures, which (here reframed and slightly reformulated): 1) Will be instantly implemented, and have fast effectuation, both in the first period and over the long term. 2) Are focused on the key short term problems, with the view to solve long term (strategic) problems. 3) Are focused on the investment side of the implementation devices and support. 4) Remove the deficiencies in those sectors in which the largest number of jobs have been lost. 5) Is based on societal consensus, and carrying overall social and political responsibility.
- 11) It would also be interested here to point to a hypocrisy of the authors, who, instead of clearly explicating that the "transformation" after the model applied especially since 2000 has resulted in a destruction of economy and society, heading, according to some predictions, ultimate catastrophe, still keep to the formulation that "...the existing model exhausted its potential."
- 12) At the time, Serbia (then, a part of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia) was first among the postsocialist countries that have had a newly prepared and adopted national/state spatial plan. This author has presented it at the "Conference on the European Spatial Development Perspective/ESDP", held in Vienna on November 25-26th, 1998. At the same time, the Plan was also commented in one of the leading European journals for regional development planning (cf. Anker, 1998), when the problem of its implementation and coordination was already pointed to ("...there is a need for further coordination of the proposed concepts over the medium term with other policies and development measures").
- 13) According to Vujošević (2007), "...the Plan was a wordy document comprising some 300 various propositions, i.e. prospects/perspectives, forecasts/prognoses, goals, aims, objectives, targets, policy measures, implementation instruments, and so forth, for mid- and long-term planning period. The majority of those propositions have not been operational zed afterward, i.e., "brought down" to directly implementable stipulations; the gross of them have been expressed in rather glowing terms." In the meantime, especially its vague and malleable notions, viz., "development", "sustainability", "polycentric development", "territorial cohesion", and many other, have been left open to many different and often disparate interpretations, which by itself rendered the implementation process very complex and almost non-manageable. To note, the new Plan has also been elaborated as a voluminous and extensive document.
- 14) For a detailed discussion on this cf. Vujošević, Petovar (2002), and Vujošević, Spasić (2007).
- 15) The year 2010 was fixed as a long term horizon for the Plan, and even longer periods for conceived for some sectors, mostly those in the sphere of technical infrastructure.
- 16) As we wrote in Vujošević (2008), and Вујошевић,

- Спасић (2008), for a strategic development to assume the proper societal (social and political) legitimacy, three kinds of political will is needed: first, the planning authorities should carry out a continuous ex post evaluation of previous decisions, followed by established broad societal dialogue – and, preferably, consensus – on the key development issues; second, they should provide that high professionalism and the so-called “nonmanipulative persuasion” rank high among the communicative techniques in the public discourse, as the key instruments by means of which to make a departure from the “systematic and organized mobilization of interest and bias”, that dominate the public scene; and third, to pass, after all, decisions for which implementation proper instruments will be appropriately designed.
- 17) Following the Strategy of Spatial Development of Serbia, which was prepared in 2009, and the broad public discussion on the first Draft version of the Plan (2010), this document has as from recently been put to the Parliamentary deliberation (and, hopefully, adoption), now, under way.
- 18) The implementation programme is stipulated to comprise a number of elements (273-274), in the first place those on: priority projects (with all necessary financial and other details regarding timing, responsible actors, etc.); the criteria and indicators for monitoring of spatial dynamics and changes; revision of the so far adopted development documents at various governance level; legal adjustments (from the standpoint of the Plan’s priorities); guidances for the implementation of the Plan via other development documents; guidances regarding strategic development and governance at regional level; spatio-ecological norms for the Plan’s implementation; implementation of the Plan under the circumstances of a prolonged global crisis; priorities of research, institutional and organizational adjustments; priorities for the elaboration of spatial, urban and environmental plans/documents; and indicators for the monitoring and ex post evaluation of the Plan’s implementation.
- 19) In terms of its scope, the new Plan has been much similar to the former one, within the format of a conventional spatial development strategy/plan at the state/national level, comprising almost a standard set of issues.
- 20) Not only malicious persons would depict this as a “part of the Archipelago of Balkan banana states”, as Miroslav Lazanski, commentator of the daily *Politika* did recently (October 2010).
- 21) It would be interesting to point to a curious fact how the key economists of the former Yugoslavia (Federal Socialist Republic of Yugoslavia) were ominously predicting towards the end of 1980s that the ever enlarging foreign debt of the country might ultimately put it apart (which effectively happened at the end). To note, at that time total debt reached some 16 billion US dollars. Now (2010), total foreign debt of Croatia, Serbia and Slovenia has already exceeded 100 billion US dollars.
- 22) The preponderance of political parties in the political life in Serbia has been described in a number of ways, perhaps the most veritable being that of “the (terror) of partitocracy”. According to Slavujević (2010), reporting on the results of a research on the perception of citizens of Serbia on the credibility of post-socialist transition to capitalism, based on the representative sample of 1.800 persons, the citizens carry the lowest confidence to political parties, out of the following institutional and legal institutions, ranked in descending/negative order: school system, military, police, President of Serbia, judiciary, Government of Serbia, trade unions, Parliament, and political parties.
- 23) Already as from the mid-seventieth century, a dictum was posted at the entrance of Dubrovnik City Hall, that is, *Obliti privatorum, publica curatel*, to always remind the local representatives and dignitaries of their public duties.
- 24) In parallel, while the galeati are ever more grumbling, the Brussels, and Washington, on their part, are devotedly following an old rule that “the powerful always prefer to work with a larger number of weak actors, than with a smaller number of strong actors,” and have been continually and systematically working to fragment the Balkan geopolitical space.
- 25) The process of consultations has for many years been somehow confined to these circles and kept grossly non-transparent to the public at large, both in political and professional terms.