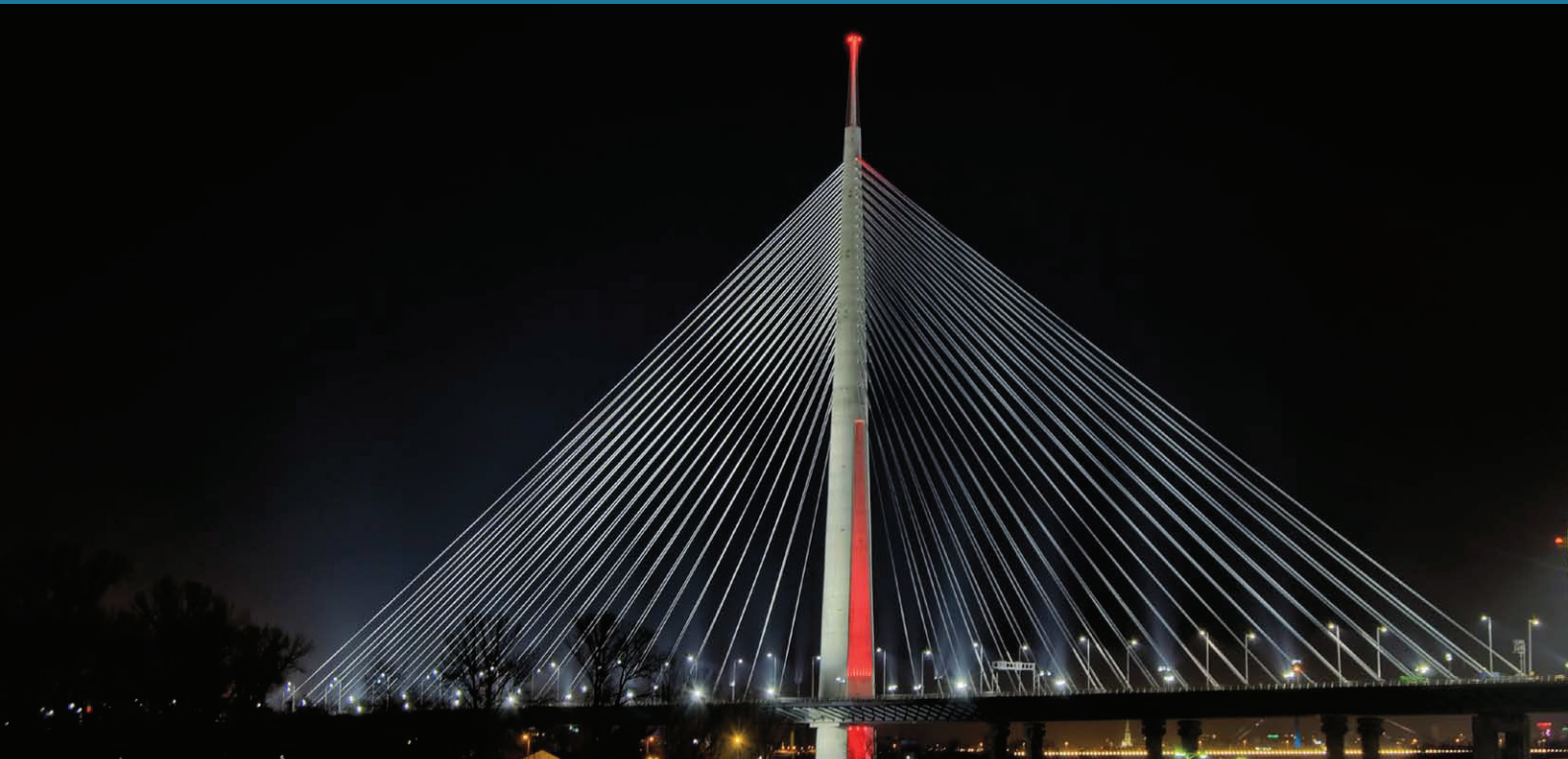


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ON TERRITORIAL CAPITAL AND GEOGRAPHICAL AND TRAFFIC POSITION OF SERBIA IN THE SPATIAL PLAN OF THE REPUBLIC OF SERBIA 2010-2014-2020 (2010): A CRITICAL REVIEW

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Abstract: The utilization of territorial capital has been a relatively new thematic issue in European spatial planning, also treated in Serbia only as from very recently. The *Spatial Plan of the Republic of Serbia 2010-2014-2020*, adopted in 2010, represented an attempt of the kind, i.e., to address this theme in a strategic document at the state (national) level, paralleling few regional plans also comprising this issue in a more significant way. Apart from dealing with the geographical and traffic position of Serbia, some other aspects of overall territorial capital of Serbia have also been taken into account. However, the approach and defined concept have been applied rather rudimentary and insufficiently, especially vis-à-vis implementation of the *Plan* and concomitant institutional and organisational support, either at the state (national) or at the regional governance levels.

Keywords: Spatial Plan of the Republic of Serbia; territorial capital; geographical and traffic position of Serbia; regional governance; institutional and organisation arrangements; the renewal of strategic research, thinking and governance

1. Introduction

Over the time period of more than 20 years, there has been a collapse of strategic thinking, research and governance in Serbia. After the political change in October 2000, transition reforms were directed in accord with the *Washington Consensus*, imbued with neoliberal ideological and political *dicta*. As a result, the country recorded the period of “growth without development”² (Vujošević, 2010), dynamic though, which however ended in 2008, with the bursting out of global and national economic and financial crisis. After that, GDP was growing at considerably lower annual rates, to denote a growth and development stagnation, or even retrogression. Until the mid 2010s, an anti-growth and anti-developmental stance dominated among the elites (“architects of post-socialist transition reforms”), to be followed by a flux of development documents (strategies, plans, policies, etc.) in recent years. Now, there has been several hundred of the kind in Serbia, at various governance levels (national, regional, and local/municipal). However, they have all not sufficed to work out an effective “exit strategy” for both the current and the predictably prolonged crisis, thereby indicating a particular “developmental schizophrenia” (Vujošević, 2010). Serbia belongs to the group of least developed European countries, and so far it has not worked out the necessary policies and instruments to cope with the key developmental problems. In more spatio-developmental terms, it has been ever more mooring in the so-called “inner peripheries of Europe” (Göler, 2005), now the country hardly surviving as a financial, economic, political and environmental semi-colony of few most influential international actors (“a part of the Archipelago of Balkan banana states”), as put in M. Lazanski, commentator of the daily *Politika*, October 2010), with primitive forms of consumerism spreading and dominating the public scene, stimulated by the government and key economic actors (Vujošević, 2010).

Serbia’s comparative advantages and competitiveness have worsened in some key aspects, whereby Serbia’s “endogenous capital” and competitiveness lost a large part of their previous value and potential. ‘Especially has worsened the so-called “soft territorial capital”, together with the weakening capacity for strategic research, thinking and governance.’ (Vujošević, Zeković, Maričić, 2012, forthcoming).

2. Approach and method

As relating to spatial strategic development, there were two attempts to redirect the dominant development path, in 1996 and in 2010, when appropriate national spatial plans were elaborated and adopted.³ While the former had not been implemented, for reasons that will be briefly commented in the sequel, it is still to be seen whether the latter will develop instruments that are needed for its effective implementation.

The analysis is based on a comprehensive development framework approach, in its essence comparative, by means of which geographical and traffic position of Serbia has been examined. This and related issues are discussed in this contribution, focusing, first, on the specific issue of the utilization of the so-called “territorial capital” of Serbia, and second, on the similarities and differences between two attempts in question, in terms of the development substance addressed by two plans and the impact of some contextual factors (“timing”), respectively. In the concluding part, few comments are put forth with regard to the predictable development future of Serbia vis-à-vis available policies and instruments for successful steering of its development.

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² This trend was pointed to as early as at the beginning of the past decade (e.g., Vujošević, 2003a), but it did not attract more attention in professional and political circles.

³ Here, only specific issue of two *Plans* (i.e., territorial capital and some directly related aspects) is discussed. For a more detailed discussion on integral two *Plans*, see Vujošević, Maričić, 2012).

2.1. Results and discussion

2.1.1. The Spatial Plan of the Republic of Serbia (1996)

Plan (1996; 1997, Abridged version) started from the assumption that Serbia – being a Danube River Basin state, occupying the middle part of the Danube flow (a), a Balkan state, located in the centre of the Balkan Peninsula (b), and a Southern European State, in the immediate vicinity of the Mediterranean Sea (c), i.e., a land-locked country, albeit than still a part of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, with Montenegro – has and "advantageous geographic-communications position" (p. 6). This makes possible "the intensification of links with the countries of Central and Western Europe and the countries of Southern and Eastern Europe, and promoting and developing transit and mediator functions between Europe and Asia", by "rationally and efficiently developing its spatia-functional position" (*ibidem*). Here, of the prime significance is the metropolitan area-corridor Novi Sad-Belgrade-Pančevo-Smederevo, with its concentration and agglomeration of production, service and other activities. This area, relatively small in terms of its size, has been generating a number of polarizing effects on Serbia's overall space (*ibidem*). Starting from this point, in the sequel a number of "basic reference points of the Plan" have been formulated (9-11), followed by a number of general goals of utilization of space (11). Very ambitious strategic development schemes were outlined regarding all transport and communications networks (roads, waterways, integral transport network and centres, air transport, railroad transport and telecommunication systems), all supportive to strategic goals and commitments, especially regarding the geographical position of Serbia on the European Corridors. As for the basic reference points and strategic commitments (here: only those relating to its geographic-traffic position), at least two were formulated, which are of relevance for our discussion here, viz.: 1) A higher degree of functional integration of Serbia, paralleled with improving economic and communication links with neighbouring and other European countries, particularly, inter alia, via the Belgrade-Bar railroad line and road corridor (and the port of Bar in Montenegro), and by utilizing the routes towards Thessaloniki. 2) Decreasing/lessening regional disproportions (dis-balances), in the first place by decreasing the concentration of population and activities in the Danube-Sava river belt and the Morava zone through the principle of polycentric development.⁴

As for strategic goals, some ten were formulated, also encompassing the following: 1) Rational utilization of space, in accord with natural and man-made values and development potentials. 2) More balanced distribution of the population and activities, in the first place by decelerating concentration in the densest populated areas.

Four synthetic ("referral") maps (S 1:300,000) were outlined. Map No. II defines settlement centres and regional organization of space, and defines a number of development axes/corridors, grouped into three categories, of I, II and third priority. The I priority corridors go to the European Corridors VII and X in Serbia (with minor modifications) (90-91).

In the final part of the *Plan* a very ambitious implementation scheme was developed, with the intention to have it further worked out in the mid-term implementation programme for the 1996-2000 time period („Phased implementation of the Plan“, p. 58, with the intention to "...coordinate the key long-term propositions of the Plan with the socio-economic policy for the medium-term period“), consisting of a large number of stipulations on various issues.

Despite this, the *Plan* of 1996 has been implemented only partially⁵ It should be emphasized here that the then intention was to work out a strategic document to act as "more than a spatial/physical plan",⁶ i.e., to define a common strategic for coordinating and integration all general and specific (sector) policies with spatial implications and consequences, thereby preceding much later European planning discourse on these theme (cf. Vujošević, Petovar, 2010). In effects, Serbia was the first of all ex-communist (socialist) countries with the adopted national spatial plan.⁷

2.1.2. The Spatial Plan of the Republic of Serbia (2010)

The national spatial plan from 2010⁸ has replicated the ambitions, approach and structure of the former *Plan* (1996). As did the *Plan* from 1996, it has also demonstrated an ambition to be "more than a mere spatial plan" at the national level, thereby introducing a number of measures and instruments targeted at broader reform of systems, approaches and practices in the sphere of sustainable spatial planning and governance.

⁴ Also, a number of other strategic commitments were defined, relating to the issues of: urban system; rural areas and settlements development; development and investments in specific economic zones (with considerable potentials); development of hill, mountain and border areas; system of public service centres, especially via the so-called "functional areas"; protection and rational use of natural resources and cultural heritage; etc. All this, with some modifications, has been replicated in the *Plan* from 2010.

⁵ For more detailed discussion see Vujošević, 2008.

⁶ This had initially been worked out as early at the beginning of 1990s, when analogous strategic spatial document, i.e., *Просторни план СР Србије (Главн Плана)/Spatial Plan of SR of Serbia (Draft)*, was prepared and discussed within the government circles and in the expert arena, but subsequently suspended with the coming political miss-events.

⁷ The *Plan*, an eminently peace-minded document, was presented by Miodrag Vujošević at the preparatory Conference on the European Spatial Development Perspective in Vienna (25-26 November 1998). It ultimately happened that less than 6 later the NATO undertook bombardment of FRJ.

⁸ Similarly to the *Plan* from 1996, this *Plan* has also been adopted by special act. The Plan was preceded by national spatial development strategy.

The *Plan* of 2010 consists of the following parts (structure): Part I Assessment of the current situation, visions, goals (aims) and conception of spatial development of the Republic of Serbia: 1) Surroundings and general assessment of spatial development of Serbia (territory of the Republic of Serbia in broader European surroundings; and general assessment of the current conditions. 2) Vision, principles and goals (aims) of spatial development (vision of spatial development of the Republic of Serbia; general principles of spatial development of the Republic of Serbia; key goals; and operative goals). 3) Spatial development scenarios and conception (spatial development scenarios; and conception of spatial development of the Republic of Serbia, viz. social coherency, ecological connectedness, spatial order and sustainability, economic and regional interactivity, conceptual framework and the utilization of territorial capital of the Republic of Serbia and its regions, and institutional responsibility). 4) Regional development (decentralization and regional development) – regional organisation of Serbia; functional and economic regions and areas; and special development problems areas. Part II Spatial development of the Republic of Serbia 2010-2014-2020: 1) Nature, ecological development and protection (natural resources, by sectors; environmental protection; and biodiversity, landscape, natural and cultural heritage). 2) Population, settlements and social development (demographic development; polycentric urban system; sustainable urban development; sustainable rural development, and social development and social cohesion). 3) Sustainable economic, transportation and infrastructure development (economy; sustainable transport, networks and objects; sustainable technical infrastructure; and land utilization and land policy). 4) Spatial integration of the Republic of Serbia. Part III Towards the Plan implementation.

Even more than the former *Plan* (1996), the new *Plan* (2010) insists on adequate implementation of key sustainable spatial development propositions, also by realizing the Program of implementation (2011), elaborated and adopted one year after the *Plan* itself. There has also been some difference among the two.⁹ Particularly, the new *Plan* devoted more space to novel categories from the current European planning discourse (e.g. “territorial cohesion”, “social inclusion”, “urban-rural cooperation”, “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”, “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.

The new *Plan* (2010) has paid more attention to spatial development scenarios than the *Plan* of 1996 (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. Starting from different assumptions regarding the pace of intensity of the integration of Serbia into the EU, this scenario contemplates four specific sub-scenarios (“variants”), viz.: 1) “negative economic growth and disintegrated spatial system”; 2) “negative economic growth and integrated and partially regulated spatial system”; 3) “positive economic growth and disintegrated and partially regulated spatial system”; and 4) “positive economic growth and integrated spatial system”.

The skeleton of economic and regional interactivity (45-8) are based on development potentials and specific characteristics of seven macro regions, as well as on a number of development axes (corridors). As for macro regions, they are: Autonomous Province of Vojvodina; broader area of the City of Belgrade; Central Serbia; Eastern Serbia; Western Serbia; Southern Serbia; and the Autonomous Province Kosovo and Metohija. Key development corridors are: Danubian corridor; Moravian corridor (along the river of Velika Morava and the river Zapadna (Western) Morava; development belts (zones) of the river Tisa, and traffic corridor (direction) Belgrade-Požega-South Adriatic Coast. Key role has been stipulated for a number of urban centres and other settlements of priority for spatial and economic development of Serbia, especially of centres of medium size. They all form the strategic basis for the utilization of the „hard territorial capital“ of Serbia. Particular attention was paid to the balanced development of broader Belgrad-Novı Sad metropolitan area vs. development of other parts of Serbia, especially of those areas that have been lagging behind the average rate of development and/or are defined as of priority for reactivating of the least developed parts of Serbia (49).

⁹ For more detailed discussion of this issue, cf. Vujošević, Maričić (2012), Vujošević, Zeković, Maričić, (2012, forthcoming), and Vujošević (2010). Discussion in this contribution is based on the document Просторни план Републике Србије 2010-2014-2020, which was worked out after the adoption of the *Plan*, as well as on its abridged version.

The part on the conceptual framework and utilization of territorial capital of the Republic of Serbia and its regions (48-9) contains a number of pertinent elements. The key strategic aim, veritably of the utmost relevance, has been defined as (48) „renewal of strategic thinking, research and governance in the Republic of Serbia“, that should be based on a number of principles („key postulates“), viz.: introducing spatial dimension in all general and sector development policies; striking a balance between economic, social and territorial cohesion; defining republic spatial strategic framework for key development documents at all sub-national governance levels, working out better ways of coordination, with a view to reach more balanced territorial (regional) distribution of population and activities; the necessity to realize a „shift from government to governance“ in strategic governance, to assume the role of supreme principle; priority protection of public space, and parallel prevention of its appropriation for private purposes without appropriate compensation; lessening social exclusion in the appropriation of public space; achieving better input-output relation in production, services; diminishing environmental pollution vis-à-vis economic production performance; etc. In this context, and another issue, which is also of relevance here, has been pointed to, viz. „institutional responsibility“, also ambitiously explicated via more constituent elements (49).

While the notion of “territorial capital” was not explicitly mentioned in the *Plan* of 1996, in the new *Plan* it was given a relatively detailed account, as well as it was prior to that, i.e., in the *Strategy* of 2009. In the Glossary of *Plan* of 2010 (p. 276), the notion “territorial capital” was defined in the following way: “...a sum of all developmental factors (resources, potentials, etc.) of certain area. Composed of “hard” factors – elements, viz.: geographical, i.e. geostrategic position; climate; size of territory; size of population; abundance of natural resources; quality of life; environmental quality; technical infrastructure and its accessibility; cultural heritage; and human resources, and “soft” factors elements: knowledge, cultural and institutional capital; capacity for innovation; social capital (in a narrower sense); attitudes and habits of individuals, groups and institutions and organizations; informal rules of regional relevance and the capacity and readiness of actors for mutual cooperation, help, participation and reaching of compromise.” In sum, we are adding here, Serbia has been lagging behind the more developed countries in that respect, in the first place as a result of the fact that neither „a shift from government to governance“, taking place in many European and some other more developed countries, has so far not happened in Serbia, nor a shift from more participative and democratic forms of decision-making in planning and other spheres of societal governance. Particularly weak are almost all elements of the “soft territorial capital“, including overall institutional and organisational adjustments for strategic thinking, research and governance, as well as relatively poor planning culture, reflecting mere fact that this notion was then rarely discussed in the professional discourse.

The mid-term *Program* for the implementation of the *Plan* for the time period 2010-2020 was adopted in 2011.¹⁰ In accord with the intention to serve as a common strategic framework for other general and sector policies (with spatio-ecological implications and consequences), in the part of the *Plan* on implementation („Ka ostvarenju Plana“, 247-66), it has been emphasized that (249): „Planned elaboration of this spatial plan will be undertaken: directly, via strategic development planning documents...i.e., regional spatial plans and spatial plans for specific areas; and indirectly, via the elaboration of development and regulatory planning documents for which local planning authorities are responsible, i.e., local spatial and urban plans.

3. Conclusion

Having experienced the misfortunes of the implementation of the *Plan* from 1996, similar worries remain regarding the *Plan* from 2010: will it be possible, and how, to reverse the existing institutional and organizational solutions and practices in planning, in order to implement at least the majority of strategic aims from this leading strategic document, on the one hand, and thereby to support the renewal of strategic research, thinking and governance in Serbia, on the other? Almost all key strategic aims of spatial development and environmental protection from the former *Plan* were replicated in the latter, as well as in many other strategic documents over the period of two or three decades, particularly pertaining to regional and related development, and almost not a single of strategic relevance has been implemented. Appropriate lessons have not been learned from the evident collapses of traditional development policies, mechanisms and instruments, of general and sectoral nature, also paralleled, some times, by a lack of effective political will to implement particular strategic document. The current situation in Serbia is even more complex than it was during the preparation and adoption of the *Plan* from 1996: the foreign debt has in the meantime grown tremendously; problems in the public finances have also been complicated, thereby altogether considerably narrowing the maneuvering space of public authorities at all governance levels for development interventions, and especially for undertaking more complex regional (spatial) redistribution of resources for development; and, following the current crisis, chances for engaging more ambitious sum of FDI for directing them in spatial development have also diminished.

¹⁰ Starting from three key dimensions of development of Serbia (i.e., ecological/physical, social and economic), the *Program* contains, inter alia: elaboration of some 300 priorities that have been defined by the *Plan* until the year 2014; detailed description of over 100 indicators for the monitoring and reporting on the *Plan* implementation; priority projects in the sphere of spatial organization (with dynamic plan, financial aspects, responsible actors, indicators for monitoring, etc.); etc.

Especially, the conceptors of the *Plan* from 2010 and its implementation *Program* seem to have failed to acknowledge that traditional development instruments are of almost no use any more, especially for the predictably long period of “Europeanization of Serbia outside the European Union and with its limited assistance“, paralleling global and national economic and financial crisis and bleaks development prospects of the country.¹¹ The realization of *Plan* necessitates enormous sum of financial and other resources, which, simply, will not be at disposal in foreseeable time period to come. Finally, the negative impact of poor planning culture (a lack of a more emancipatory-modernising planning model) seems also to have been neglected, as well as some other part of the „soft territorial capital“ of Serbia.

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¹¹ Serbian rulers seem to have not acknowledged either the flaws in the existing institutional and organizational arrangements for strategic governance or the burden of current miserable development conditions, or even predictably worse development prospects of the country in the next 10 to 15 years, as they envisaged the following “long term vision of the spatial development of Serbia”: “...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.”

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