

# The Settlements of the Belgrade Region

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**Abstract** *The basis for defining the plan of forthcoming organization of the settlements in the Belgrade Region were characteristics, processes and issues. The main goals of development are based on physical-functional organization of the settlements and centers network. Accordingly, the proposal of administrative-territorial organization of this region is defined. However, vagueness about limitation of its wider metropolitan area still exists. The Belgrade Region is an area with 158 different settlements regarding to their size, functional characteristics, economy structures, equipments, morphology characteristics, etc. These settlements also have different demography changes, process of urbanization, as well as daily migrations. Functional area of this region is much wider than its present administrative territory.*

**Key words** *issues, settlements, organization, region, Belgrade*

## Preface

The Belgrade city area is placed in an extremely important position in the Serbian, Balkan and European region. There are several advantageous factors for the connecting of the network of cities and even network of settlements on a large scope. These factors are: good natural conditions and recourses for the concentration of population and activity agglomeration; very good traffic connections with the northwest part of the Central Serbia, regions around the Velika Morava valley, adjacent parts of Vojvodina and indirectly with other regions of Serbia. All of this gives great advantages to Belgrade to take over the leading role in the process of connecting and integrating Serbia in a wider economic, social and political space of the Balkan and Europe.

With its agglomeration, Belgrade constitutes a complex system of settlements with a high level of functional connections and clear hierarchy and gravitational impact that goes way beyond the Republic borders. Therefore, Belgrade carries the potential to be an international pivotal center of Southeast Europe (Tošić, 2000). That dominance of Belgrade over a wider area was the starting point for making the national development plan for spatial organization and development of settlement and center network. Strengthening of functions and development forces that could create a counter-balance to intense polarizing effects of Belgrade would spur more harmonized settlement development. Urban agglomeration of Belgrade with all accompanying development characteristics represents the key indicator of uneven regional development of Serbia (Derić, Perišić, 1996). Therefore, the key factor of equal regional development of Serbia is the planning of development of the Belgrade region and its territorial organization.

## Characteristics of the Belgrade Region Settlements

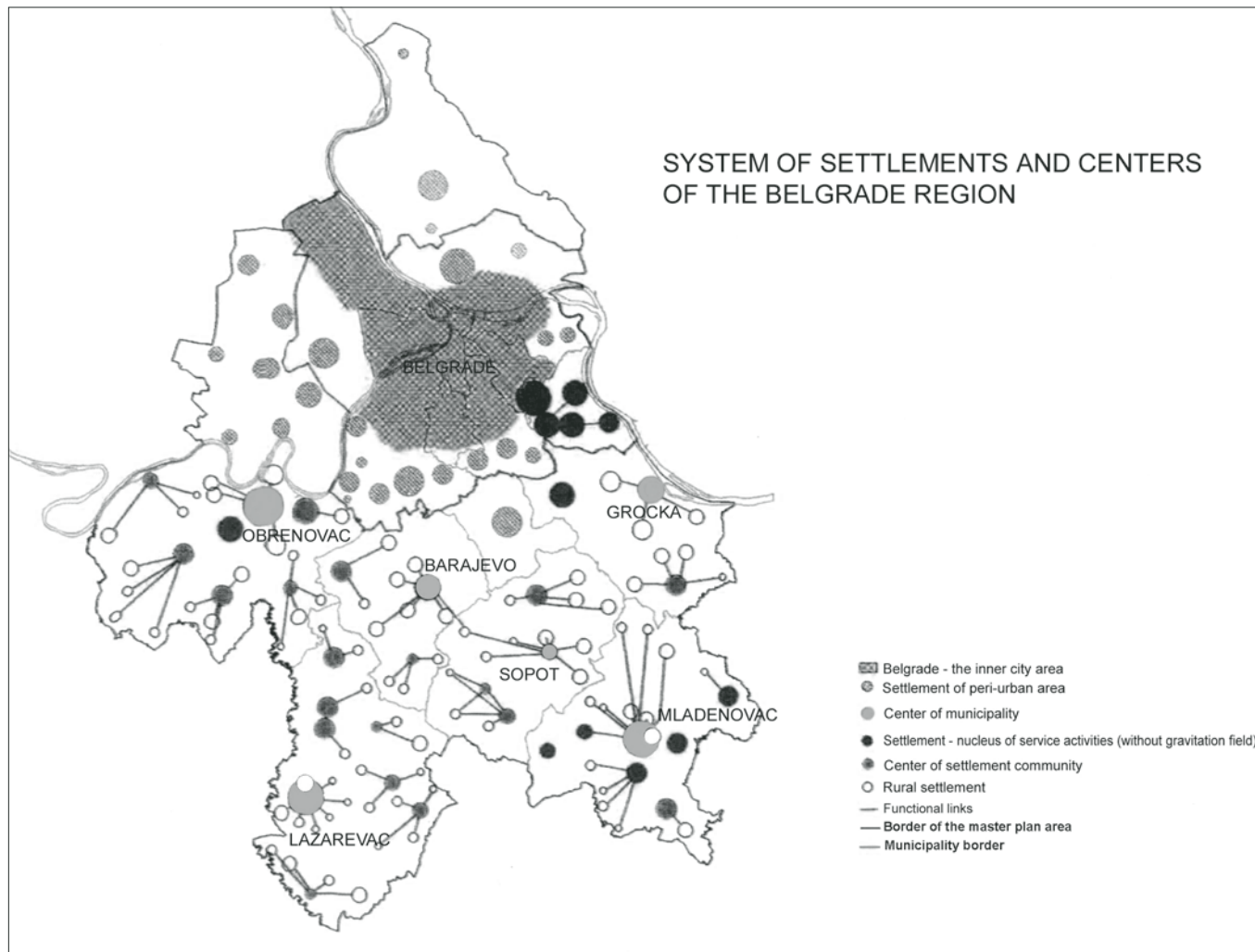
The Belgrade Region covers the area of 3224 km<sup>2</sup> (3,6% of total Serbia area), it includes 16 municipalities (10 inner city and

6 peripheral). In 2002, the population was 1.574.000 in 158 settlements. This area can be divided into three entities with specific characteristics and each can be separately analyzed. The first one is the inner-city area, the second one is the peri-urban area, and the six peripheral municipalities comprise the third area – Fig.1. (RPPAPB, 2002).

The main characteristic of the inner-city area is that the population of 1.119.000 is stagnating and even dropping. The population function structure is stable and developed, functional diversification is very clear, and this is the area where all the Republic administration buildings are set. Morphological changes of the inner-city area follow the new concept of urban planning - inward city expanding. Unfortunately, illegal and construction without planning in the area of the heart and elite parts of the city is more and more present.

All peri-urban settlements are immensely affected by the capital and the largest city. But the results in this urban-rural belt differ, slightly or thoroughly from one area to another. The population of the 26 settlements was 140 000, or on average, 5 300 residents per settlement (Census, 2002). The population in these settlements is very imbalanced: from just 300 to over 3 500. On average, the population in the settlements is stagnating. Strong polarizing effect of Belgrade on the peri-urban settlements can be seen in a large number of non-agricultural and mixed settlements, especially in the south, and less in Vojvodina. The level of public services and utility structures depends on the area of the settlements. These settlements differ in character types according to the functional organization. Dormitory suburbs make one type: those are detached, separately formed settlements that have grown on the core of the old villages of former Belgrade outskirts. Another type are so-called weekend settlements, and third are already formed (or are in forming) as residential-industrial settlements. In the area of Vojvodina and along the Danube River settlements are in the function of primary production or processing of agricultural products (industrial-agricultural plant). The largest number of settlements in the urban-rural belt is in the function of production and services for the purposes of inner city area. Hence, the population is mainly involved in nonagricultural activities and there is a steady daily migration of workers. This area lacks clear economic orientation, adequate utility structures (especially in the Banat area), and public services. All this, plus the growth of spontaneous development requires great planning efforts for resolving all issues.

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■ Figure 1. System of Settlements and Centers of the Belgrade Region

The last entity of the Belgrade administrative area (region) is comprised of six outskirts municipalities. On one hand, these municipalities are under strong influence of Belgrade, while on the other hand, these are independent regions basing their development on local or regional and state scale recourses. Number of inhabitants and settlements, as well as their network density varies from one municipality to another. The average number of population in settlements outside the municipality centers is 1000 - 2000. The population in all the municipalities is stagnating, but the greatest number of new settlements, almost 70%, is caught in the depopulation process. The population growth or stagnation is present only in administrative municipality centers, larger and settlements in more attractive locations (along the main roads), or settlements surrounding the administrative municipality centers. Active population, recorded according to the place of domicile, consists of large number of daily commuters: mainly in the segment of Belgrade production and services or in the line of mining and electric-supply industry on the territory of the same or adjacent municipality. Due to exploitation of lignite in municipalities on the southwest region, some settlements are extinguished

and the population is moved out. The level of public services and infrastructure generally matches the average Republic level of according settlement size in the Central Serbia, or just below average, due to the proximity to Belgrade.

The main characteristic of the six observed municipalities is a large number of dispersed settlements, even on plain or slightly sloping ground. Only the parts of settlements that "get down" on the main roads are of compact, linear type. Along with the structures of weekend cottage type, mainly illegally built, the whole area is full of illegally built structures for habitation or other purposes. The common characteristic of the whole region is that there are no boundaries between the settlements; this area is built in continuity and the ground is taken uneconomically.

There are five more towns on the territory of the Belgrade region. These settlements have to meet the following terms (Veljković, et al., 1995):

- to have more than 5000 inhabitants
- to have developed active structure (less than 50% of active population in primary activities)
- to act as centers in a network of surrounding settlements (according to the

size of active population in tertiary-quarterly sector)

- to progress faster than other nearby settlements

Proportion of the Belgrade population in Serbia has been increased in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, and in 2002 it was 15%. Belgrade comprises almost one third of the Serbia city population, while the second largest city, Novi Sad, participates with mere 5%. There are three medium-sized cities in the Belgrade region (with the population over 25000), but still lacking the concentration needed for changing the urbanization streams and diminishing the proportion of Belgrade.

### Belgrade Region Settlement Issues

The greatest issue of the Serbian urban system development is imposed by the explosive growth of Belgrade. The Belgrade gravitation area has not been a subject of long-term and systematic research. Also, the urbanization processes were unorganized and in the function of industrialization, instead vice versa. In such conditions the urban structure was unable to avoid autarchy as a result of spontaneity. This was followed by uncontrolled growth of the wider city area that was not capable to take

part in the planned development process (Bojović, 1997).

Negative impacts of the urbanization process could be seen through the control of building and populating on one hand, and development of the settlement system as a higher level of development, on the other. All segments of residential construction are in a chaotic state and the reduced potentials for rational investment have made space for large outlays in the field of vacation houses.

Furthermore, the current moment of the Belgrade region development is burdened with illegal erecting of constructions for all purposes. This chaos is a result of long-lasting politics and general economic situation, and the main causes are: lack of reliable legal regulations regarding the land reserves, lack of, or outdated urbanistic plans, conversion of agriculture land into construction avoiding urban experts where only illegal building is possible and other. The greatest part of these constructions is not illegal, it is semi-illegal, since some documentation does exist, but it is incomplete or improper, especially in the inner city area (Žegarac, 1998).

Regarding the development of the settlement system in the Belgrade region, neither significant nor investment decision has been made for other municipal centers of peripheral municipalities. The example for this is the lack of claim for a part of miner annuity in the Lazarevac municipality (a territory with heavy excavation of lignite) that should go to the property owner, and not to the excavation company - Electric Power Industry of Serbia (Elektroprivreda Srbije). This would solve many problems of Lazarevac, a medium-sized city with developed urban functions, but without own economic base (except in the field of mining and power industry), that would provide the resource income for the town and the population after the end of lignite excavation. The magnitude of the power industry in Obrenovac (there are two thermal power plants in the surroundings of this town) was not, to some extent, an obstacle for development of other activities in this centre.

The main limitations of forming the development threshold that would consolidate the importance of these centers are: the proximity of other municipal centers to Belgrade, large number of daily commuters and strong functional dependence on the capital. The development action of other Region centers was so low that it couldn't stop depopulation process on most of the settlements. Besides that, all of these settlements, especially in the six peripheral municipalities, have a problem of low quality roads and low level of utility structures.

By developing the tertiary and quarterly sector, Belgrade has entered the postindustrial stage even in the nineteen sixties.

The politics of the seventies has destroyed the tertiary sector of the city, and the hostile attitude towards individual work has led to the "banish" of small enterprise. This resulted in development of the economic base of the surrounding centers in Vojvodina, since they offered better conditions for business. This is one of the impacts of Belgrade to the urbanization of the surrounding area in Srem (Bojović, Borovnica, 1998).

The model of metropolitan Belgrade area requires the central position of the metropolis in the gravitation field. However, Belgrade in its administrative area formed in 1970, holds the peripheral position, due to the imposed restriction of the administrative area expansion that occurred by forming the Autonomic Region of Vojvodina. Joining of a part of Vojvodina space is a factual consequence - the locations of the civil and army airports in Surčin and Batajnica, and the Pančevo marsh is partly feeding the Belgrade population. If the administrative border of the gravitation field would correspond with the demographic, economic and functional power of the city, then some municipalities of Banat and Srem should rather be part of Belgrade, instead of Vojvodina.

State interventions in industrial development of Pančevo (medium-sized town, set in Vojvodina, outside the Belgrade administrative area, but at the distance of only 15 km from Belgrade) - all in the function of the capital - have only initiated stronger economic bonds between the two cities, but for decades were inhibited through administrative borders. The borders with Vojvodina have led to a stop of development for the Belgrade functional area.

In terms of joined area, the development of the Belgrade administrative area was more intensive in the Šumadija background on the south. Inhibited by administrative borders, especially in the direction of Vojvodina, Belgrade was not able to form its own functional region, nor lead a coherent urbane and other development politics and constitute a metropolitan area.

### Elements for the Settlement Development Model

The basis of the proposed model for the future development and organization of the settlements and centers of the Belgrade region, in accordance with the stated goals, consists of settlement communities (group of settlements in the gravitation field of a greater and more important rural, mixed, or urban type of settlement). This model appeared as is a result of the analysis of the situation in the settlement network and issues that occur in the agricultural settlements. In the framework of these communities certain settlements have started to

stand out from the surrounding villages and will play the center part in the future. These settlements have some qualities: well traffic-geographical position, higher level of community structures and concentration of industrial and other activities of the population based on the traditional relationships. Settlement communities represent one functional form in the spatial organization of settlement and centers in terms of constituting complementary interests for the development of settlements and the whole region. They are a result of accomplishing the goal - area decentralization and holding the population in rural spaces on one hand, and on the other, forming one hierarchy homogenous system of settlements and centers with the possibility of good integration.

Economical, cultural and other ties among the settlement communities of the Belgrade region will continue to function and strengthen on three hierarchy levels:

1. Complex community of settlements of the whole administrative area (region) territory, bonding with the settlement and centre framework on a wider scale,
2. Settlement community in the municipality structure
3. Secondary settlement communities in municipalities, developing along with smaller centers and comprising groups of rural settlements on a part of municipality territories

The basis for defining of the area administrative-territorial organization proposal was the spatial-functional organization of settlements with detached settlement communities of the region and existing centers. The spatial units in the proposed model were set in accordance with the European Union regional division criteria, following the five level nomenclatures based on the size of the territorial government. Compliance of our regional division to the NUTS system eases the receipt in the European community and opens the access to structural funds for programmed financing (Stojkov, 2000).

Further research and study of the proposed model in the Belgrade region would be of great importance, since the work on the said regionalization represents a serious task for the Serbian area, too. All the dilemmas regarding the territorial demarcation would be answered only after completing the regionalization of the Republic.

### Summary

Settlements of the Belgrade region are rather heterogeneous, in terms of population and function characteristics, as well as in terms of public services, morphological development, urbanization, and the like. On the wider region area, the southern suburban municipalities, there are the secondary development poles - three medium-sized towns. An intensive migration of workers is going on between these cent-

ers and Belgrade, while none of the three centers has proved to be significant enough in order to obtain greater autonomy level. The secondary centers would provide only for basic needs of the rural settlement population.

Priority aims include detailed perceiving of the production and service activities in all centers as well as developing centers to prevent depopulation in rural area. Emergency measures are necessary against uneconomically using the ground and against illegal construction.

The basis of the organization model for settlements and centers of the Belgrade region consists of settlement communities, i.e. joining from lower to higher level. This concept is a result of issues occurring in the rural settlements of the region and the fact that the settlement communities represent a functional form in the spatial organization of the settlement and center system, in terms of forming complementary interests for development of the settlement group and the whole region.

With its administrative area Belgrade was not able to form its own functional region due to lack of border coordination, especially in the north, therefore has not uphold own metropolitan area.

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