PROBLEMATIC AREAS OF THE REPUBLIC OF SRPSKA WITHIN THE CONTEXT OF DEMOGRAPHIC CHANGES

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ABSTRACT: The paper discusses problematic areas in the Republic of Srpska, from the aspects of spatial distribution of the population and demographic changes during the period between the last two censuses. The paper also treats causes and consequences of an unbalanced spatial development.

Social-economic processes indicate the increase of regional differences, the consequences of which are numerous and they also differentiate the country’s area on several grounds. One of the consequences is the unbalanced development and spatial distribution of the population. Assuming that the demographic potential triggers the complex valorization of an area, the paper also indicates limitations and risks of the future development resulting from demographic changes. Starting with 1960s, the poor total demographic potential of the Republic of Srpska area has been particularly strong in rural areas. This further implies the necessity to change the approach to demographic development strategies.

From both theoretical and practical aspects, the paper also addresses the consequences of the unbalanced spatial distribution of the population. The polarized development of the country jeopardizes the economic and geopolitical sustainability of the demographically depressive peripheral areas and makes it difficult to integrate into modern development processes.

KEYWORDS: problematic areas, demographic development, spatial distribution of the population, differentiated spatial development, the Republic of Srpska
INTRODUCTION

In the second half of 20th century, West Balkans witnessed the dynamic development processes along with complex geopolitical, social-economic and demographic consequences. In comparison with the European development centre (European development poles), there are several indicators that define this region as a problematic area. Within this problematic region that lingers due to several incomplete development processes, there is a complex spatial differentiation determined by the type and dynamics of a whole range of development factors. The most negative features are the spatial distribution, population, structure and functional characteristics of the settlement system.

Spatial units characterized by development problems (natural geographic limitations, economic, social, demographic and environmental issues) cover most of the Republic of Srpska territory and these development issues should be treated in compliance with the aforementioned problems. Regional science and regional planning define problematic areas as territorial units with specific development problems.

“Classification of problematic areas or regions should be treated from the aspects of space and time in which the problem appeared [Tošić 2012: 102].” Criteria of classification must match the nature of the problem and its effect on the development of the area in question. More specifically, we refer to the lack of development centre functional capacity with negative influence on demographic migrations and total development. The negative trend of population growth in the second half of 20th century is a direct consequence of development processes. In late 20th and early 21st century, demographic features are the crucial indicator of problematic areas and the limiting factor of revitalization and progress.

Differentiation of problematic regions and the new approaches to finding solutions appeared in 1930s during the great economic crisis that had affected the mining and industrial areas. The genesis of the solutions had lasted for decades and former socialist republics used to treat the problems of unequal regional development via national development plans. Despite the fact that European Union is a highly developed region, it also has its problematic areas that are differentiated on the basis of the same criteria and are dealt with through planned interventions and regional development policies.

More and more territorial units worldwide have been defined as problematic areas (regions) due to the dynamics and characteristics of development processes. Therefore, both scientific and professional focus has been on applicative research in order to find appropriate development policies that might revitalize problematic areas, overcome development disparities and enable social-economic integration into modern progress.

Problematic areas have appeared due to natural surroundings, historical development, development policy, global processes, etc. all of which provoked different methodological approaches and classifications. Among many classifications based upon the cause, the most complex and elaborate one was proposed by Hagel [Hagel 1982] and it focused on four large groups of problematic areas as follows:
– commercially underdeveloped areas;
– overpopulated and overbuilt areas;
– areas of degraded natural background and
– areas threatened by natural disasters.

According to Hagel’s classification, the Republic of Srpska’s problematic areas belong to the first category (commercially underdeveloped areas) and some even display the characteristics of areas of degraded natural background. Urban and rural systems with poor development options, loss of demographic and social potential, poor infrastructure, peripheral location and commercial exploitations of poorly valorized natural background are typical of problematic areas in the Republic of Srpska. In addition, features of problematic areas are further defined by specific development policies.

CENTRE-PERIPHERY FOCUSED SPATIAL DIFFERENTIATION OF REPUBLIC OF SRPSKA

The analysis of spatial-structural features of the Republic of Srpska indicates the spatial differentiation. For the purpose of this research, we ran an analysis of spatial population distribution, municipality centres, their functional capacities and levels of functional connection which resulted in centre-periphery focused spatial differentiation of the Republic of Srpska as shown in Table 1. Spatial-functional features were analyzed based on the municipality level (basic administrative-territorial units) which is also the crucial criterion for spatial differentiation of problematic areas. Specifically, we neglected the development differences among municipalities, i.e. among rural areas and municipal centres, as we focused on functional capacities and abilities of each municipality centre to meet the basic needs of the population. According to the functional capacity, the municipal centres were ranked in six categories (Addendum 1, Table 3). Spatial distribution of the population and total demographic capacity were observed from the aspect of deviations from average population density in the country.

Application of the aforementioned criteria differentiated the Republic of Srpska territory into four areas of different development levels and demographic potential (Addendum 1, Table 1).

Over 60% of the Republic of Srpska territory might be referred to as a peripheral or problematic area covering 34% of the Republic of Srpska population [According to preliminary results of the 2013 Census of Population, Households and Dwellings in Bosnia and Herzegovina, for the territory of the Republic of Srpska, Banja Luka, 2013]. These areas are characterized by negative migration balance and population density and they mostly cover eastern and southern parts of the country as well as peripheral areas of Banja Luka region (newly-formed municipalities along the entity borderline). These areas have extremely poor functional capacity and demographic potential (Addendum 1).
As a part of South-Eastern Europe, the Republic of Srpska and Bosnia and Herzegovina in general, are peripheral in comparison with economic and cultural power centres in Europe, which further complicates their growth. The marked problematic areas in the Republic of Srpska are its periphery in comparison with national regional centres in the country and in the neighbouring countries as well. Political-economic disintegration of SFR Yugoslavia triggered destructive processes in the region and caused larger problematic areas, which further makes it difficult to establish transboundary cooperation and development. Thus, development strategies to revitalize demographically poor and problematic areas must be based upon territory, local communities and
functional connections with the wider region. It is only the economically developed and demographically vital neighbouring countries that might positively affect the growth of depressive areas. A long-term exposure to crisis might cause problematic areas to deviate from “social-economic modern events and miss the regional integration” [Territorial agenda, 41].

### Table 1. Republic of Srpska spatial differentiation according to center-periphery model

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area</th>
<th>No. of municipalities</th>
<th>Surface km²</th>
<th>Area coverage (%)</th>
<th>Average surface km²</th>
<th>Population number</th>
<th>Population ratio (%)</th>
<th>People/ km²</th>
<th>Mean population per municipality</th>
<th>Inner migration balance (2007–2012)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Primary core (center)</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>7,193</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>798</td>
<td>390,354</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>122</td>
<td>97,588</td>
<td>7,882</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secondary core</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>3,010</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>376</td>
<td>308,810</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>102</td>
<td>38,601</td>
<td>2,889</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boundary area</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>3,340</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>477</td>
<td>174,359</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>24,908</td>
<td>-1,242</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Periphery</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>15,044</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>350</td>
<td>453,468</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>10,545</td>
<td>-3,109</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RS total</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>24,587</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>396</td>
<td>1,326,991</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>21,403</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


**DEMOGRAPHIC DEVELOPMENT OF PROBLEMATIC AREAS**

Dynamics of social-geographic processes in the second half of 20th century (mostly industrialization and urbanization) defined the functional development of the settlement network and demographic migrations. A harmonized population distribution was typical of 1960s and 1970s Bosnia and Herzegovina when the rural areas reached their demographic peak. Ratio of municipal centres in total municipal population ranged from 4% in Srbac and Šipovo to 54% in Banja Luka and it illustrated differences in relevance and development among municipal centres. Unequal functional development of municipal centres affected a constant weakening of demographic potential. Hence, the 1981 Census showed that most territorial-administrative problematic areas (municipalities) belonged to depopulated-vital-emigrational type of population number change. Therefore, at the municipal level, population decreased, natural increase was positive and the age structure was still favourable but this natural increase was still affected by negative migration balance. Some municipalities (Goražde, Vlasenica, Srebrenica, Bratunac, Kneževo, Kotor Varoš, Čelinac, etc.) belonged to expanded-vital-emigrational type [The great geographical atlas of
Yugoslavia, 44] and their population increased due to high birth rates. Still, functional underdevelopment of the municipal centres caused emigration that led towards depopulation.

There was also a spatial redistribution of population within municipalities from urban to rural areas, which was more intense during poor infrastructure periods. For the purpose of our analysis, we extracted four types of spatial redistribution of population within territorial-administrative units.

Table 2. Types of migrations and spatial distribution of the population

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of population spatial distribution</th>
<th>Rural settlements</th>
<th>Municipal centres</th>
<th>Total municipalities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>growing – dispersive</td>
<td>growing</td>
<td>growing</td>
<td>growing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>growing – concentrated</td>
<td>falling</td>
<td>growing</td>
<td>growing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>depopulation – concentrated</td>
<td>falling</td>
<td>growing</td>
<td>falling</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>depopulation – dispersive</td>
<td>falling</td>
<td>falling</td>
<td>falling</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Up to 1961, the total population growth had been preserved in both rural and urban areas. In 1971, rural area population started to yield and positive trend was maintained only in municipal centres. In 1981, ratio of agricultural population in problematic areas was 30% to 50%, and city population ranged from 10% to 30%, whereas the ageing index varied from 20 to 40 [The great geographical atlas of Yugoslavia, 228–230; Population of Bosnia and Herzegovina, The share of different nationalities in settlements, 1995]. In 1990s, municipalities with fewer urban centres were affected by the process of depopulation that was typical of most municipalities in the Republic of Srpska at the beginning of the 21st century. Current demographic trends indicate that the first two types of population distribution and migration no longer exist, which brings to attention the matter of demographic sustainability of problematic areas. Stagnation and depopulation are also typical of some municipalities, centres of which are also regional centres (Trebinje, Zvornik, Foča), with the exception of East Sarajevo, where population growth was caused by war migrations. In some municipalities, population grows only in centres (Nevesinje, Ugljevik, Kotor Varoš) which polarizes demographic migrations within territorial-administrative units. Urban population ratio ranges from 21% in Rudo to 81% in Trebinje and 100% in East Sarajevo (which is also a compact urban settlement) except newly-formed undersized municipalities with no urban settlements. High level of urban population ratio in some municipalities is not a consequence of urban development but rather of rural exodus caused by the insufficient functional development of municipal centres. Some municipalities (Rudo, Novo Goražde, Kalinovik, Foča, Višegrad, Gacko, Bileća, Trebinje) have a large number of settlements with less than 10 people – 300 of total 765 settlements [According to preliminary results of the 2013 Census of Population, Households and Dwellings in Bosnia and Herzegovina, for the territory of the Republic of Srpska]. Spatially connected, they represent problematic areas of great coverage the sustainability of which is threatened due to alarming demo-
graphic potential. The same processes are typical of some municipalities that are not included in the defined problematic areas in the paper, which only further complicates possible solutions.

Republic of Srpska inner migration balance is positive in areas of primary and secondary cores. Furthermore, problematic areas are characterized by extreme process of emigration, which additionally advocates for our typology of differentiated problematic areas (Table 1).

There are many factors of causal connections that have been affecting current demographic trends such as rural exodus, post-war social and demographic destabilization, and negative post-war transition processes. Constant emigration of the young and working population, weakening of social energy, ageing and depopulation only deepen the regional differences and are all typical of problematic areas. It is troublesome to see that an area of negative demographic trends constantly expands, which further imposes the necessity for demographic development strategies.

Criteria of conditional space typology of population migration show that there are no demographically progressive areas in the Republic of Srpska. Demographically stable areas mostly cover northern peri-Pannonian parts of the Republic of Srpska, i.e. primary and secondary cores with predominantly urban centres of rank I, II and III. Weakened regressive areas are so-called boundary areas with predominant centre network of rank IV. Demographically threatened and extremely threatened areas are peripheral in municipal centres of rank V and VI (Addendum 1, Table 3). Comparative analyses of functional capacities of settlements and population distribution indicate the mutual dependence of these two.

Table 3. *Classification of municipal centers according to the level of functional and demographic capacities*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Level of functional capacity</th>
<th>Surface</th>
<th>Demographic capacity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I</td>
<td>II</td>
<td>III</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Primary core</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secondary core</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>–</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boundary area</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Periphery</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R. Srpska total</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2013 Census of Population, Households and Dwellings in Bosnia and Herzegovina, for the territory of the Republic of Srpska, Banja Luka, 2013.
There are a poor percentage of problematic areas within Doboj-Bijeljina nodal-functional region and in southern parts of Banja Luka region whereas the total eastern part of the Republic of Srpska (Sarajevo–Zvornik and Trebinje–Foča nodal-functional regions) is characterized as national problematic areas. Demographic capacity of municipalities of Pale and East Sarajevo is a consequence of territorial division of the city of Sarajevo and war migrations. The lack of commercial activities only further threatens the existing demographic potential.

The fact that most of the Republic of Srpska territory is covered by problematic and demographically threatened areas, makes it necessary to adopt a system of harmonized measures of revitalization. From the geographic point of view, the revitalization of the problematic and demographically threatened areas matches the re-structuralization of their spatial-functional organization, which means:

- redistribution population policy,
- polifunctional development based upon autochthon resources,
- coherent spatial-functional organization.

The aforementioned measures might lead towards the stabilization of population and economic growth in compliance with advantages of an area, i.e. its functional revitalization and sustainability.

CONCLUSION

Spatial distribution of population and trends of demographic migrations in Republic of Srpska indicate congruence with spatial distribution of development centres and features of functional capacity. It is necessary to raise the level of functional connection in order to keep demographic stability and territorial cohesion.

Problematic areas are a consequence of development processes that did not take place in accordance with functionally balanced polycentric development. Despite the territorial capacity, poor social capacity is still a limiting factor of development. The existing spatial-functional organization of problematic areas and demographic development are leading towards economic, environmental and demographic unsustainability that might further cause a potential loss of control over the national resources. On the other hand, global processes are not leading towards spatial coherence and national growth.

Taking into account the borderline position of the country, the policy of transboundary cooperation is crucial for development strategies. Encouragement of total economic development is crucial for the population stabilization and demographic revitalization. Revival of problematic areas currently makes the demographic development strategy a top priority.
REFERENCES


Слабљење укупног демографског потенцијала простора Републике Српске, које се у континуитету одвија од краја 60-их година прошлог вијека, посебно изражено у руралним подручјима, намењено као нужност промјену приступа у успостављању стратегија демографског и укупног одрживог развоја.

Радом се, с теоријског и практичног аспекта, указује на посљедице неуравно-тежене просторне дистрибуције становништва и изразито поларизованог развоја Републике Српске, чиме се угрожава укупна одрживост демографски депресивних, развојно периферних (проблемских) подручја и отежава њихово интегрисање у савремене развојне процесе.

КЉУЧНЕ РИЈЕЧИ: проблемска подручја, демографски развој, просторни размјештај становништва, диференцирани просторни развој, Република Српска