

## 2. Introducing Belgrade

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### 2.1. Position

Belgrade, the capital and the largest city in Serbia, has very favourable and significant traffic-geographic position within the Serbian, Balkan and European space. It is located at the border of Middle Europe and the Balkan Peninsula, i.e. at the border of the Pannonian basin and the Šumadija region, where the spur of the mountains of Šumadija mostly extended out into the spacious plain in the north. The cape, on which Belgrade lies, is cut by terraces and it suddenly slopes down to the confluence of the Sava and the Danube.

The position of Belgrade is favourable, first of all, due to the fact that it is intersected by two long navigable rivers which represent important corridors. The Pannonian plain, as very convenient way to Middle Europe, extends in the north. On the other hand, the way through the Balkan Peninsula is opened towards Istanbul and Asia Minor, facilitated by the meridian valleys of the Velika Morava, Južna Morava and Vardar (Macedonia) towards Greece and the Aegean Sea, i.e. by the branch through the Nišava and Marica valleys. Moreover, the city is positioned where the two out of ten European corridors (VII and X) intersect, which enables the connection with the network of the Danube and other European metropolises. Owing to its position, Belgrade has great potential advantages for taking the leading role in connecting and integrating Serbia into broader economic, social and political geo space. The causes why it has not been achieved should be found in the fact that it was the battlefield of the struggles for dominance for centuries, which, after all, could be seen from its historical development.

### 2.2. Historical development of the settlement

In the 4th century BC, the Balkan Peninsula was inhabited by the Celts who founded Singidunum (present-day Belgrade) aiming to use the natural superiorities of the position (Stojadinović M, 1927, 9). In the 1st century AD, Singidunum was taken by the Romans who built the first fortress at the confluence of the Sava and the Danube (Bojović D, 1975, 71 - 85). The civil settlement extended south from the fortress, with constructed trade centre, administrative and religious centres and Roman thermae. The well-off inhabitants had their properties in the surroundings of the city. The arts of this period were characterised by the early Christianity. The frequent breaks of the barbarians during the 5th, 6th and 7th centuries weakened the borders of the Roman Empire and the defence capability. By the middle of the 5th century, the Huns took the fortress, conquered the city, robbed it and left it in the ruins. Thereafter, it was conquered by the Sarmatians, the East Goths, and then by coming under Byzantine rule the city was restored (Todorović J, et al., 1963, 25 - 36). By the beginning of the 7th century, Singidunum was considerably inhabited by the Slavs. Over the ruins of the antique and early Byzantine Singidunum, soon the new city was built under the Slavic name - Beograd. The arrival of the Hungarians in the Pannonian Plain at the end of the 9th century greatly changed the balance of power in this part of the Balkans, and Belgrade often changed its owners. From the 9th to 12th centuries the city was com-

ing under rules of Bulgaria, Byzantium and Hungary. At the end of the 13th century Belgrade for the first time came under Serbian rule which caused the more intensive settling of the Serbian population (Istorija Beograda, 1974, 147-150). In the following century Belgrade came under the Hungarians who prepared the border areas for the struggle against the Turks. The Turks did not give up the idea of taking the city - the rampart of Christianity (Elezović G., Skrivanić G. 1954, 37 - 76). Belgrade was under Turkish rule from 1521 to 1717, when it changed into the oriental city. At the time of the Austrian occupation in the first half of the 18th century, the great part of the Serbian settlement expanded out of the fortified part of the city. Despite the constant war conflicts, trade, handicrafts, agriculture, fishing, shipping were flourishing. Old fortresses were restored and new ones were built.

By the beginning of the 19th century Belgrade was liberated from Turkish rule and became the military, administrative, political and cultural centre of Serbia. The city had about 10.000 inhabitants and above craftsmen and traders it also attracted educated people from the surrounding countries (Vujović B. 1994, 44). The population also increased. In 1867 Belgrade had around 25.000 inhabitants, in 1900 the number increased on 70.000, while in 1910 the population was around 90.000. At the end of the 19th century many economic facilities were built, as well as railroad tracks, the first ships, power station, horse-drawn trams were introduced, and soon after the electric trams, too. At Knez Mihailo Street, new buildings, shops, cafes, hotels, banks, theatres and other cultural and educational institutions appeared. The city extended in the direction of Slavija and Vračar (present-day inner city core).

During World War I, which lasted from 1914 to 1918, Belgrade was under frequent artillery attacks, so after the liberation the destroyed and robbed city more resembled on the huge military camp. Until 1918 Belgrade was the border city of the reduced gravitational zone and vulnerable geopolitical position, while after that, by adjoining the areas north from the Sava and the Danube, it got the chance for its not only free functional and gravitationally complete and spatial development, but also for the formation of its present-day asymmetrical administrative-territorial unit (Stepić, M, 2003, 21 - 33).

The period between the two world wars was characterised by more intensive development of the city which became an attractive centre for the domestic and foreign capital. In 1940 there were 240 industrial enterprises of about 25.000 workers. The population increase was also significant. In 1921 the population of Belgrade and Zemun was 130.000, ten years later there were 266.000 inhabitants, while in 1940, shortly before World War II, the population number was 430.000. During World War II the city was hit by massive bombing and vast areas of the city were destroyed.

The period of industrialization, after World War II, was followed by the construction of the industrial zones in the periphery, while the zones which passed the phase of the industrialization were in the centre of the city with the high concentration of the population and servicing activities. The industrialization brought to the influx of the population, mainly from other settlements of central Serbia. That influenced the over-population and unplanned growth of the city, followed by the housing and other social problems. The population increased radically by 1981, but later, due to difficulty of settling, the immigration was reduced, while the population growth rate was negative. That would cause the population stagnation in Belgrade in the future. By the time, it came to the population redistribution in some parts of the city. It was redistributed in the suburban municipalities, while elderly population structure prevailed in the central parts, and servicing activities were concentrated in these parts of the city.

From the end of the 20th century the economic strength of Serbia and Belgrade became weak and considerably exhausted. The decrease in the production caused the national income reduction, dismissing of employed, uncontrolled growth of the black market, particularly when the export and import flows were broken off, which had certain socio-economic consequences, such as strengthening the tendencies of the corruption and disturbing the legal system.

### 2.3. Size of the city and administrative distribution

Today, the Belgrade settlement belongs to the wider administrative area, the Belgrade region or the City of Belgrade, i.e. to the territorial level of the macro-region NUTS 2. In the period after World War II up to the 1970s, this area grew and extended gradually by the municipalities from the surroundings, especially towards the south, to radius of about 60 km<sup>1</sup>.

The total area of the administrative area of the City of Belgrade is 3224 km<sup>2</sup> (3.65 % of Serbia). There have been 157 settlements there, while the total population of the 2002 was 1.574.050 (21 % of the population of Serbia). In the very settlement of Belgrade, there were 1.119.642 inhabitants or 454.408 inhabitants less than in the whole administrative area of the City, i.e. the Belgrade settlement itself comprises 71 % of the population of the administrative area of the City of Belgrade (The Regional Spatial Plan of the Administrative Area of Belgrade - RSPAA, 2004). The area of the City of Belgrade includes 17 municipalities, whereof 10 are the urban ones. In those urban municipalities, either the Belgrade settlement itself or a part of the urban area is situated and some of 26 surrounding settlements of the urban, urbanised or rural type. Other 130 settlements are in one of 7 suburban municipalities. The average population density of the whole area is 407 people per square kilometre.

The proposal of dividing the Belgrade administrative region into smaller territorial units, which would correspond to the NUTS 3 level, has been defined by the latest Regional Spatial Plan of the Administrative Area of Belgrade (2004). However, neither this division nor any other has been accepted legally.

The status of Belgrade, as the centre of the metropolitan area, is not defined. Functional-spatial organisation of Belgrade is closely connected with the spatial organisation of the surrounding areas - the Velika Morava and Kolubara valleys, Srem and south Banat. The administrative area is certainly smaller than the area which could be considered as the metropolitan, especially concerning the Vojvodina part (Tošić B. et al. 2004). The obstacle in the functional expansion of the administrative area of Belgrade was the administrative border of Vojvodina and it became as greater as the legal constitution of the provinces was firmer (Bojović B., Borovnica N. 1998).

<sup>1</sup> By the law of name and the division of the Kingdom on administrative areas from 1929, a special capital administrative whole was constituted, confirmed by the Constitution of 1931, within the structure of which Belgrade, Zemun and Pančevo entered. After World War II, Pančevo was assigned to the AP of Vojvodina as its peripheral town. This functionally unexcused division has existed until the present day as a barrier in the expansion of Belgrade in the north from the Banat side. Zemun, which remained in the structure of the AA of Belgrade, was physically separated from its administrative centre, so that just by the construction of New Belgrade it integrated in its urban whole. By the law of municipal areas and districts in the National Republic of Serbia, the city of Belgrade obtained its inner city zone with 10 municipalities. Finally, in 1961, four more municipalities of its wider surroundings joined Belgrade (Obrenovac, Barajevo, Sopot and Grocka), in order that the municipalities of Mladenovac and Lazarevac also joined this area in 1973. The outer administrative borders of the City of Belgrade have not been changed until today (Šećerov, 2007).

## 2.4. Characteristics of the Belgrade region

The natural conditions on the area of the Belgrade region, i.e. the administrative area, are very heterogeneous. The most fertile soil is north from the Sava and the Danube (RSPAA). The agricultural areas comprise 2211 km<sup>2</sup> (69 % of the Belgrade region) and they are being reduced gradually, on average for over 1000 ha per annum, and this is enough to feed not only the population of Belgrade and its administrative area, but the population of the broader areas of Serbia. The forestation of the Belgrade region, in the form of isolated complexes, is about 11 %. The quality of forests has only meliorating-protective and recreation character. The water potentials are different. The alluvial flats of long rivers (the Danube, the Sava and the Kolubara) are rich in underground waters used for the water supplying. The southern, hilly parts are characterised by the small capacity of ground waters and the phenomenon of torrents. By the capacity, almost all alluvial springs exceed the needs of the present users and they can be used for the regional water supplying. Lignite is of great significance for the economic development. The coal zone southwest from the Belgrade settlement, with the area of about 600 km<sup>2</sup> and the established reserves of 3.4 billion tons, enables the power supplying not only of the economy and the settlements on the territory of the Belgrade region, but also out of this territory. Many factors influence the climate of Belgrade, but most its geographical position. The city is completely opened towards west, north and north-east. According to precipitations, it belongs to the transitional type, from the modified Mediterranean towards the continental (62 cm per year). Wind that blows from southeast is most expressed (MB - Meteorological Bureau, 2002).

The today's Belgrade agglomeration is a complex functional urban system of the urban, less and more urbanised and rural settlements, the integration of which originates from the functional connections and interactions established among its structural elements. The agglomeration has the characteristics of the functionally urban region i.e. arranged spatial system with relatively stable hierarchy of the centres. The urban settlements in the region are differentiated into several basic groups - Belgrade, municipal centres, industrial and housing-industrial suburbs and centres of smaller settlement communities (villages). The functional typology of the settlement points out that there is a wide range of the functional types, from clearly agrarian to industrial and servicing, over many transitional forms (RSPAAB).

Differences in the accomplished social development characterize the territory of the Belgrade region. The areas out of the municipal centres are of the less developed public services, bad housing conditions, weak infrastructural facilities and low qualification structure of the population.

The ecological system of the surrounding of the city is greatly endangered by functioning or not functioning of some systems, illegal construction and undeveloped ecological conscience. The communal system of the city survived more by people's efforts than by technological or organisational conception the large city needs. Traffic is one of the most difficult problems, especially connecting of all parts of the city in the consistent network of the public, railroad and road transportation and further connecting with the regional networks. In the 1990's the system for settling was characterized by complete absence of the corresponding land use policy and other elements concerning housing (public services). The land of the city was considerably used in the inappropriate manner, causing ecological economic and social damages.

Belgrade and its region, consequently, have great problems. In the 1990s Belgrade lost its role of the European metropolis by excluding it from the processes of the European cooperation and integrations. Most part of its economic power and urban identity was also lost.

## 2.5. Geographical Researches

The capital of Serbia and its surroundings were often treated in the geographical researches in the second half of the 20th century. The studies were very heterogeneous and included many fields of the geographical science, starting from the natural characteristics of the terrain, over the characteristics of the population and settlements, economic activities, traffic function and communal infrastructure to the social living conditions.

The development of the city on a terrain of steep slopes influenced the study of the relief as of the beginning of the Šumadija's reef where the city core lies, so of the coastal lake relief and landslides of the Belgrade surroundings (Jovanović P), the relief of Podunavlje (Jovičić Z.) or Posavina (Zeremski M.). The climate and waters were studied on the characteristics of winds (Milosavljević M.), insolation and precipitations (Rakičević T.), climate warming (Rakić T.), Belgrade climate (Vujević P), reconstruction of thermal conditions of Belgrade (Ducić V), underground waters (Milojević M.), hydrological changes (Gavrilović Lj), rivers of the Belgrade surroundings (Dukić D.), etc.

The social aspects are associated with the following studies: demographic structure (Penev G.), population mortality (Vojković G.), migration flows (Djurić V.), natural components and national population structure (Spasovski M.), refugees in Belgrade (Lukić V.), changes of the economic population structure and settlement transformation of the Belgrade region (Lutovac M., Veljković A.), development of rural settlements in the region (Kostić M., Lješević M., Cavić B.) or the characteristic of economy - agriculture of the Belgrade surroundings (Djurić V.), industrial development (Grčić M.) or the study of this activity for the needs of the spatial planning (Veljković A.), the urban traffic intensity, transportation with Belgrade and characteristics of communal infrastructure and water supplying of Belgrade (Ilić J., Lukić B.), tourism in the economy of Belgrade (Stanković S.) and various aspects of the geographical change of Belgrade (Vasović M.).

Many other papers cover different fields of applied geography, e.g. the use of space in the Belgrade region - Nedović Z., as well as the researches made for the needs of the spatial and urban plans of the city and the administrative area. Therefore the reason for publishing the thematic collection of papers titled "Belgrade and its region" (2003) by Faculty of Geography of the University of Belgrade was making the Regional Spatial Plan of the Administrative Area of Belgrade. The monograph is one of the most significant publications, which treats the Belgrade region from the aspect of fundamental geography and from the complex fields of applied geography particularly.

## 2.6. Planning activities referring to Belgrade settlement and its region

The influence of the historical circumstances under which Belgrade developed was such that the first planning activities of the construction and organisation of the settlement

dated from the second half of the 19th century. The ideas which preceded the making of the first regulation plans had originated from Prince Milos Obrenović who began to change the oriental structure of the settlement. This Serbian ruler adopted the European concept of the settlement structure with straight and wide streets which framed the rectangular blocks.

The first urban projects date back from 1867 when an engineer Emilijan Josimović, by order of Prince Mihailo Obrenović, made the first regulation plan of Belgrade, which together represented the first legislative act in the area of urbanism in Serbia. By that plan, the most important traffic artery of the city - Knez Mihailova Street (today's walking zone in the centre of the city) was marked out. Josimović replaced the amorphous structure of the oriental town, with its numerous narrow and winding streets, by the modern network of streets, intersected at right angles (Maksimović B. 1956, 47, 66, Medaković D. 1976, 271 - 283). In 1878 the first situation plan of Belgrade was made, while during 1894 the proposal on law of construction was made for Belgrade and other towns in Serbia. At the end of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th century many other skilled architects also came to Belgrade by whose works Belgrade was more and more included into the developmental flows of the European construction. The Russian architects who immigrated to Serbia after the October Revolution left, by their creative work, the indelible seal on the architecture of Belgrade.

By World War I (in 1893, 1910 and 1912) three more plans were done, while the last one left the deep trail in the spatial organisation of the central part of the city.

The General Plan of Belgrade, adopted in 1923, was the attempt of arranging the urban-architectural development of the city. The plan was made in scale at 1 : 4 000 and the basic positions of the city were set in relation to the narrower surroundings. The significant expansion of the city towards the south, the activation of the left bank of the Sava, the construction of bridge and a special addition related to New Belgrade were planned. The regulations of the construction were made within the plan, while there were not any instructions concerning outer suburbs, so that poorer citizens built their houses away from the city because they could not satisfy the building regulations and thus they made labour settlements there. Special regulation plans were done for them, by which the existing situation was kept with some corrections (rebuilding plans) and the unplanned development of the city was legalized. Such plans referred only to urgent issues of newly created zones (at that time Senjak, Voždovac, Čukarica, Topčidersko brdo, etc.) which were formed and developed as separate wholes, not much connected with the city. In 1931 Law of Construction with Regulations was made in order to put an end to these phenomena (Šećerov V, 2007).

By the plan of 1927, which was made in scale at 1 : 10.000, it was continued with the trend of the city's organisation and expansion towards periphery parts, especially at the Banat left bank of the Danube. By the last plan of 1939, which was made before World War II at a scale of 1 : 10.000, it was also continued with the trend of organizing and expanding the city to periphery parts.

The ideological plan of Belgrade from 1948 was defined by the key traffic corridors of Belgrade with the surroundings. The construction of New Belgrade on the left bank of the Sava River was the key constructive project of Belgrade after World War II.

In the post-war period Belgrade got two general plans (in 1950 and 1972), so that urbanism became the permanent component in its more intensive development.

By the General Plan of Belgrade from 1950 at a scale of 1 : 10.000, the solutions for the construction of the major facilities and lines of transportation were defined, but many of them have not been realized even until today (the roundabout way has still been under construction). New Belgrade was built in such a way that for a long time it represented a large settlement - a dormitory, but gradually it became independent and received all other functions. Nevertheless, new housing projects were built on the southern Šumadija periphery of the city.

The General Plan of Belgrade from 1972, at a scale of 1 : 20.000, was considerably realized (the ideas concerning the protection of Ratno ostrvo and Ada ciganlija vacation area at Lake Savsko jezero, the construction of sports facilities). Taking the quality of residence and the effects of the urban functions and activities into consideration, the territory of the city, by this plan, was divided into inner and outer urban area, as well as into the suburbs. By the change and supplement of this plan in 1985, the expansion of the city was reduced and the intensification was hurried within the existing area of the city.

The last General Plan of Belgrade was adopted in 2003 and it was done parallel with the Regional Spatial Plan for the Administrative Area of the City of Belgrade. The intentions about this plan were that it should be turned to the process, not the form, to be more flexible in relation to the previous stern forms of the city planning and to be subject to changes and constant planning due to the dynamics of the economic and structural changes in the country and the City itself. This plan sets the position of Belgrade in the wider encirclement as the secondary issue in relation to the local problems of the city itself. The key part of the Plan referred to the regulation of transportation at the edge of the city.

Nowadays, due to laws of property on land, which have not been solved yet, the municipalities of the old core are facing the problem of attracting the investments. In the last fifty years, Law on expropriation was such that the land was deprived to the benefit of the state due to common interests. Today many owners have tried to turn back their property. Many buildings cannot be sold due to unsolved ownership. Considering that the question on property of land has been solved in New Belgrade, and there were not any previous owners in most part of the municipality, many investors from other countries and former Yugoslav republics chose the locations from this municipality (Postić A, 2003). Therefore, New Belgrade has become the significant secondary centre of the capital. Today, this is the largest urban municipality (218.000 inhabitants according to the last census of 2002).

Starting from the first plans and laws up to present days, the urban plans of Belgrade have often been rebuilding, concentrated to the central zones of the city, while less have they been strategic with the perception on the future development of the whole territory of the administrative area of the City of Belgrade.

Belgrade represents the significant, powerful and influential part of the Republic of Serbia in the wider regional surroundings, because of which its spatial development should be observed trans-bordering (interdependently with the municipalities which surround it), trans-nationally (interdependently with the broader European encirclement over the

geographic or functional elements which connect many states) and trans-regionally (functions and interests which connect the city of Belgrade as the region with the other European regions).

The relationship of Belgrade and its region changed its form throughout the time. From the small town of the insignificant functional zone from the end of the 19th century and the first decades of the 20th century, when the present-day intra-urban regions used to be the distant periphery, it has come to the metropolitan of the European rank with much larger influential zone than its own administrative territory. The interregional plans, i.e. the coordinated planning of Belgrade with the adjoining regions, have not been made yet.

The work material, which was made on the occasion of making the project Spatial Planning of the Region of Belgrade - Inter-Report on the Critical Phenomena in the Region of Belgrade in 1975, meant the end of the first phase of diagnosing the administrative area of the City. Based on the work of some methodical units, analytical and synthesized, the final report included: the critical phenomena in the area of the nature, society, economy, facilities, communications and settlement net. Thus the generalisation of the problem in the Region was done through the selection of only those factors which had the regional dimension. Above the administrative area, the functional area of Belgrade, which included 59 municipalities with more than a third of its total population, was also estimated by this plan.

By making the Spatial Plan of the City of Belgrade in 1980, the basic goal was defined on finding the possibilities of moving from the previous unbalanced and centralised form of governing the development to the more balanced and decentralised form on the whole territory of the City and opening the possibility of planning the whole region of Belgrade. The indivisibleness of the planning procedure was clearly defined on sector planning and the trans-border regional cooperation with the inter-municipal regional communities of that time on the territory of Central Serbia was emphasized. By the connection over the Sava and the Danube, Belgrade is opened towards its surroundings. Parallel with the navigable directions, the dominant road directions are also defined, stretching down the Danube valley towards the east, the Sava and Kolubara towards the west and the Velika Morava, i.e. the Avala - Šumadija direction towards the south (the Sumadija reef: Avala - Kosmaj - Bukulja). Connecting Belgrade with adjoining and more distant regions would be done through the system of the central places which already exist or which would be formed at these directions (Šećerov V., 2007).

The last Regional Spatial Plan of the Administrative Area of the City of Belgrade (RSPAA) was adopted in 2004. The plan was made with the intention to activate the potentials of Belgrade in spirit of the sustainable development and to raise the attractiveness and competitiveness of the City similarly to the present European metropolises. The scope of the Plan referred to the urban area of Belgrade, the Belgrade metropolitan and the Belgrade macro-region, i.e. morphologically urban, administrative and functional area.

According to the RSPAA of Belgrade, except 17 municipalities of the administrative area, the level of the functional region also includes the interest municipalities: Pančevo, Stara Pazova, Pećinci, Ruma, Ub, Smedervska Palanka and Smederevo. These 24 municipalities are estimated as the metropolitan area, i.e. as the functional region of the City of Belgrade.



The complex work for the needs of the Plan demanded standardizing the system of the settlements on the territory of the City, its position in relation to Serbia and the possibility of including into the European developmental flows by intensifying the cooperation and applying the projects for the European structural funds. The basic aims of the Plan referred to:

- redefining the role of Belgrade in the European encirclement;
- formation of the efficient traffic infrastructure that would work into the European network;
- decentralisation of the economic system and public services;
- increase of the infrastructural access for the urban and rural settlements in the urban area;
- establishing the new housing policy and the policy of construction;
- increase of the cultural identity of the City (cultural and natural values);
- advancement and protection of the environment;
- increase of the economic efficiency and social cohesion in the City.

Polycentrism and decentralisation have been applied literally by division on 6 + 1 district (central urban municipalities at one district), i.e. meso-region within the administrative area (Stojkov B., Tošić B. 2003, 1 - 20). Today, therefore, the City of Belgrade has the planned support to the projects which can be proposed for the financial and organisational support at the European structural funds.

One specific characteristic distinguishes the Belgrade region from other towns in Serbia. The administrative system is centralised, one mayor of the whole area of the City (17 municipalities) and administration which makes decisions about major and other significant projects on one side, while on the other side, the urban municipalities are covered by a planned act (general plan), while 7 other peripheral municipalities have their own general plans and the administrative system which make them partially independent in relation to the City. Furthermore, some peripheral municipalities make their own spatial plans and thus organize the space of their own territory. In this way the equality of 10 central urban municipalities which do not have the right on it is endangered and their planning on partial organisation of some parts is reduced by the urban plans of lower rank which are adopted by the Assembly of the City. Therefore, the system of organizing and governing the City becomes the dominant issue, not only in the implementation of some planned acts, but in the essential relationship towards planning and strategic determinations, i.e. the relationship of the City and its administrative region (Šećerov V, 2007).

The basic aim of the development has been defined by the Regional Spatial Plan of the Belgrade Administrative Area – the organised activation of the regional spatial potentials of the Belgrade region, based on the principles of the sustainable development, by which its attractiveness would increase and the conditions for achieving the standards of the European metropolis would be ensured.

Figure 2: Territorial Development of Belgrade.

