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SMALL SHRINKING TOWNS IN THE POST-SOCIALIST CONTEXT OF DEVELOPMENT

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Abstract. *The process of urban shrinkage is affecting many cities around the world. It is evident in small towns as well, but unlike larger cities, it has not received much attention. Accordingly, this paper analyses small towns' shrinking focusing on post-socialist context of development, which led to new patterns of urban shrinkage in countries of Central and Eastern Europe (CEE). After discussing the specific characteristics of the shrinkage of small towns, their paths of development in different CEE countries are analyzed, in order to highlight the characteristics of urban shrinkage and the influence of post-socialist transition on this process. Thereafter, the shrinkage of small towns in Serbia is analyzed in order to determine whether the identified characteristics are recognized in them and to single out the specifics of that process in relation to other post-socialist countries. Based on the general characteristics of the development and shrinkage of small towns in the CEE countries, it can be concluded that shrinking small towns are not equally represented in all countries, and there are certain differences in terms of dynamics and intensity of shrinkage. The results of the analysis indicate that the previous path of development had a strong influence on their shrinkage after the post-socialist transformation. Three general trajectories of socialist development have been singled out, which influenced different patterns of urban shrinkage. In Serbia, it has also been observed that the shrinkage of small towns is directly related to the unfavourable direction of the urbanization process during socialist development.*

Key words: *urban shrinkage, small towns, post-socialist transition, Serbia*

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1. INTRODUCTION

Shrinking cities have always been part of human civilization, however, in the post-industrial period, the main causes of shrinkage have changed and it has become a global phenomenon [1, 2]. A process of suburbanization and decentralization emerged in US cities after Second World War, emptying the central areas of large cities [3]. The crisis of the Fordist model of development led to the decline of cities in old industrial areas such as the North of England, the Rust Belt in the USA and the Ruhr region in Germany. The new wave of shrinking cities has begun in the 1990s in Central and Eastern Europe (CEE). The collapse of the Soviet Union and the transition from socialist to post-socialist society and economy influenced the dramatic development of the cities of these countries and led to new patterns of urban shrinkage [4, 5]. Post-socialist countries had to catch up with Western countries in terms of political, economic and social development. Post-Fordist changes, which were gradually established in Western countries, acted as ‘shock therapy’ in post-socialist countries [5].

In Europe, unlike other regions in the world, a large part of the population lives in smaller urban areas. Small towns have not been primarily the focus of urban shrinkage research, however, the largest number of shrinking cities in Europe are small and medium-sized towns [6]. Their shrinkage is evident especially in Central and Eastern Europe (CEE) [7, 8]. In Serbia, the demographic and economic decline is particularly pronounced in small towns, while larger cities are stable or growing [9].

The causes of the shrinkage of contemporary cities are most often attributed to numerous transformation processes, including deindustrialization, suburbanization, as well as demographic changes - population aging and declining birth rates [10, 11, 12]. Small towns have different structure and the causes and manifestations of urban shrinkage differ in them. The reasons for this lie in different conditions of urban and economic development, insufficient resources in the field of education, research and skills, and often in insufficiently developed transport infrastructure.

Accordingly, this paper considers the process of urban shrinkage of small towns, which has not received much attention. Starting from the assumption that due to their specifics, shrinking cities in the post-socialist context can be considered as a separate model of urban shrinkage, special attention in this paper focuses on the process and characteristics of urban shrinkage of small post-socialist towns. The main goal is to examine the influence of the post-socialist development context on shaping the paths of shrinking small towns.

2. METHODOLOGY

The methodology of this research aimed to provide an overview of the process of shrinking of post-socialist small towns. At first, the critical analysis of the main international theoretical sources is used in order to highlight the specific characteristics of small towns’ shrinkage compared to large cities. After that, the process of urban shrinkage in the post-socialist context is analysed. Despite many similarities in the causes and consequences of urban shrinkage, there are differences in the trajectories of this process, which are related to different local conditions, as well as to national political and institutional frameworks [13]. Apart from that, the contemporary development of post-socialist cities is influenced by the legacy from the socialist period. Starting from these claims, the patterns and paths of urban development and shrinkage in different CEE countries are analyzed in both socialist and

post-socialist period. This critical analyses served to highlight the characteristics and trajectories of small towns' shrinkage in post-socialist context. The final part of the paper analyses the shrinkage of small towns in Serbia, as one of the post-socialist countries. This analysis is based on literature review and official national statistical data. It served to determine whether the identified characteristics of post-socialist shrinking small towns are recognized in Serbia and to single out the specifics of that process.

3. CAUSES OF URBAN SHRINKAGE OF SMALL TOWNS

With the process of deindustrialization and the shift from the manufacturing to the service sector of the economy in the 1980s and 1990s, many industrial cities began to shrink. Therefore, economic decline resulting from globalization and deindustrialization is considered as one of the main causes of urban shrinkage [5]. The internationalization of production has led to the growth of a large number of small markets concentrated in several leading global cities [14] and small towns are generally considered as losers of the globalization process. They are placed in direct competition with other, larger cities and their function as urban centres is less and less secured. As a consequence of global production and product transport, especially food, the role of small towns as markets for local products from rural areas has weakened [15]. In addition, the shrinkage of rural settlements directly affects the decline of service and trade functions of small towns.

Post-industrial urban shrinkage is closely linked to demographic change [10]. The most significant causes of shrinking cities are negative natural increase and emigration. However, these factors are the result of economic, social and cultural changes, and it is difficult to isolate the influence of the demographic factor only. Changes in the demographic structure and aging of the population are particularly visible in Europe's small towns. These processes are especially typical of autonomous small towns, with weak functional links with the environment [16].

Suburbanization is one of the main causes of urban decline in Western countries [17]. However, this process is not pronounced in small shrinking towns, whose surroundings are also shrinking. In contrast, this process has influenced the growth of some small towns on the edges of densely populated agglomerations.

Political change and institutional context have a strong impact on urban development [11]. The post-socialist transformation, which had dramatic effects on the cities of CEE, certainly stands out. The institutional context and the role of public policies are particularly important at the national and regional level. The focus of policies on the development of certain urban centres and metropolitan areas can jeopardize the development of others and lead to their shrinking [18]. The importance of the national urban system and the position of the city in the hierarchy of settlements especially reflects on small towns, whose development according to some authors depends more on the regional context than on the inherited characteristics of the town itself [19]. Small towns located along economically prosperous agglomerations are growing under the influence of suburbanization, while the towns in peripheral and structurally weak areas are facing shrinkage.

4. POST-SOCIALIST CONTEXT OF SHRINKING SMALL TOWNS

In the post-socialist cities of CEE, the urban shrinkage was additionally affected by the transition from a socialist to a capitalist state system, and the large part of cities began to lose population after 1989 [20]. The CEE countries are specific due to the lower level of urbanization and the lack of larger metropolitan areas other than the capitals. In such an urban network, small and medium-sized towns play a big role. In peripheral areas, they are the only available urban settlements, which is why their urban shrinkage is even more significant.

4.1. The context of development

The main characteristics of socialist urban development are strict centralized control of the state, politically motivated urban planning and institutionalised political decision-making procedures [21]. The nature of urbanization under socialism was different from the rest of the world, because it was directed by the policy of industrialization. Infrastructural development followed the needs of industry, so the growth and decline of cities depended on their industrial function. In small towns, industrialization was promoted only in the 1980s in order to improve living conditions in rural areas, as well as to prevent the uncontrolled growth of large cities. As a consequence of this development policy, numerous monofunctional small towns and a relatively small number of administrative centers with a diverse economic structure have emerged [22].

In the post-socialist period, political, institutional and economic conditions changed. Measures of economic restructuring at the beginning of the transition particularly affected small towns with the closure of industrial and agricultural enterprises, which is marked as de-economization [23]. Lack of human capital and poor ability to adapt to innovation are major barriers to restructuring small towns. Their overall competitiveness is low. New social conditions have enabled the creation of different norms and the tendency towards individualism. The second demographic transition influenced the choice of housing and the consumption has become the main goal of a large part of the population [21].

The urban environment in post-socialist cities has adapted to the new conditions created by political, economic, social and cultural transformations. However, despite the general tendency towards decentralization, the central (state) level has retained a lot of influence on local urban development through the regulation of public control over market processes. Some elements of direct central political control over local government have been retained and the state has regulated the level of public funding transferred to the local level [23].

Research related to post-socialist transformations in cities has mainly focused on large or capital cities such as Budapest, Prague, Sofia, Belgrade. The analysis of the lower levels of the urban system is not framed in the model of post-socialist transformation [24]. However, not all factors of the post-socialist transition have the same impact on small towns, so the following can be singled out as significant:

- political and institutional transformations: decentralization of power that has brought greater freedom in the decision-making process, but with limited financial resources;
- economic transformations: establishment of a market economy, deindustrialization and privatization that led to the closure of industrial and agricultural enterprises (de-economization), which further led to unemployment, low competitiveness and the emergence of unused facilities (brownfields);
- social transformations: demographic changes (second demographic transition) that had the same effects as in big cities.

4.2. The process of urban shrinkage

Post-socialist transformation has brought many cities into political, economic and demographic instability. In Eastern Europe, every second city has lost its inhabitants [25]. For these reasons, the urban decline of post-socialist cities is associated with political and economic changes and their social consequences [24]. The effects of the post-socialist transition were most pronounced during the 1990s. The process of deindustrialization has suddenly hit industrial areas, especially old previously protected industries that were exposed to a competitive world market (e.g. Donetsk Basin in Ukraine or Kuznetsk Basin in western Siberia) [3]. Most state-owned enterprises have not survived privatization, leading to factory closures and huge job losses. Housing reforms increased socio-economic polarization within cities as well as between the city and the periphery. Economic downturns and existential fears have triggered waves of emigration and declining birth rates.

Small towns have been particularly affected by post-socialist transformation. They were often planned as centres of specific industries, and economic restructuring was much less favourable to them. The withdrawal of state funding, lack of interest from private investors, as well as environmental degradation had a particularly negative impact [27]. These factors influenced the prolonged period of economic stagnation, the reduced income and deteriorated quality of life. The weak position of these settlements in the global economic system has further reduced the chances of their recovery.

The growing social and economic inequalities in CEE countries have led to the peripheralization of non-metropolitan areas [28]. In these countries, there are huge differences in the development of central urban and peripheral rural areas, and there is also a pronounced polarization between their main metropolitan area (usually the capital) and the rest of the country. The population is concentrated in a number of urban centers, which is often encouraged by development policies.

The industrial development of small towns during socialism was delayed and centrally coordinated, which led to the establishment of a weak local network. This short-term development of small towns was forced, as well as urbanization in general, so the process of urban shrinkage can be seen as a 'withdrawal symptom', i.e. return to endogenous development path without the support of central resources [24]. Another factor that has contributed to the small towns' shrinkage is the depopulation of rural areas that have been the main source of migration to them.

4.3. Different paths of urban shrinkage in CEE countries

Despite many similarities in the structure of post-socialist cities, there are differences in the paths of urban shrinkage, which are related to different local conditions, as well as national political and institutional frameworks [13]. In addition, their development is influenced by the legacy of the socialist period as well as the period before socialism. For these reasons, in order to determine the patterns and specifics of the urban shrinkage of post-socialist cities, it is necessary to consider how their development and urbanization during socialism influenced the decline within different post-socialist countries.

In East Germany, during socialist development, the settlement hierarchy was crucial for locating investments. Only a small number of small towns received state support, while a large number lost the importance and quality of life [29]. The population decline in small towns began accordingly before the transition period. Today, very few small towns are stable in terms of population and they are mostly located in suburban areas of

large cities or next to busy traffic routes. The neoliberal orientation of regional policy has shifted the focus to larger and more prosperous urban centres, increasing socio-spatial polarization and leading to increasing peripheralization of declining regions [18].

Small towns in Poland also suffer from depopulation, although there are various development paths among them [30]. During socialism, there was a significant emigration of the population from small towns, while after the political and economic changes in 1989, their socio-economic situation improved [28]. In contrast, many geographically remote small towns are shrinking. However, the network of small and medium-sized towns in Poland is uniform and polycentric, which enables the implementation of sustainable development goals [30].

The Czech urban system is based on a dense network of cities and small towns have been a stable category with a constant population throughout the 20th century [31]. Urban shrinkage is most prevalent in late industrialized small towns that had accelerated growth at the beginning of the socialist period and have stagnated or shrunk over the last 30 years [32].

Cities in Slovakia grew intensively from 1970 to 1980, while in the following decade stagnation began, which also affected small towns [33]. The industry has been largely privatized with varying degrees of success and many towns have high unemployment rates, although the situation has improved since 2000. There was also a process of disintegration of rural settlements that were unjustifiably annexed to cities in the previous regime, which led to a decline in urban population.

In Hungary, the rapid growth of small towns was only during the 1970s and 1980s [7]. During the 1990s, many small towns managed to avoid the decline of demographic, social and economic activities, even in regions with a structural crisis. Thus, small towns were considered winners and not losers of the transition. However, since 2000, a large number of small towns have lost their inhabitants due to negative natural growth, selective migration and industrial collapse [7].

In Romania, spatial planning during socialism was based on the rational distribution of production centres. New cities were artificially created and developed in the period from 20 to 30 years, therefore they could not develop a solid urban structure and territorial position, and many of them retained rural character. Thus, the radical political, social and economic changes of the 1990s led to the vulnerability of certain cities, especially small and medium-sized towns [34].

In Estonia, at the beginning of socialism, large cities grew rapidly, but since the 1970s, smaller towns have received more investment. When Estonia regained its independence in the early 1990s, a short-term baby boom began [22]. The birth rate in peripheral areas was particularly high, however, there has also been an increase in the emigration of young and fertile people to big cities for work and education, and with the enlargement of the EU there has been a strong emigration to Finland.

Until the early 1990s, urban population in Russia grew due to natural increase, immigration, as well as administrative and territorial changes [35]. Administrative boundaries have been expanded in some cities, and rural settlements have often been transformed into cities to receive additional funding from the state budget. During the transition, the urban status of small towns aggravated the privatization of the built land. Administrative reforms have ruralized more than 3 million urban residents [36]. Shrinking small towns have lower significance in the settlement hierarchy or peripheral location.

In order to perceive better the common characteristics of small town shrinkage in different post-socialist countries, Table 1 systematizes the basic factors of this process.

Table 1 The main characteristics of urban development and shrinkage of small towns in post-socialist countries

Characteristics of urban development and shrinkage of small towns	
Socialism	Post-socialism
East Germany	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ poor position in the hierarchy of settlements ▪ a small number of cities received state support - politically or economically important ▪ declining population 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ intensive shrinkage of peripheral, border and former mining towns ▪ small number of towns with stable population Causes of urban shrinkage: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ deindustrialization; regional policy focuses on larger centres; de-administration, demilitarization
Poland	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ significant emigration from small towns 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ improved socio-economic situation ▪ uniform network of small and medium-sized towns - polycentricity ▪ shrinkage of geographically remote small towns
Czech Republic	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ dense network of small towns ▪ stable category with a constant population 	Urban shrinkage: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ late industrialized towns since the 1980s ▪ some service towns due to mobility of rural residents ▪ peripheral cities
Slovakia	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ stagnation of small towns since the 80s 	Causes of urban shrinkage: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ deindustrialization ▪ reducing the intensity of daily migrations ▪ disintegration of rural settlements Improved development since 2000
Hungary	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ population losses since the end of the 19th century and during the 20th century ▪ accelerated growth during the 1970s and 1980s 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ shrinking since 2000 Causes of urban shrinkage: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ decline in natural increase; weakened power and the role in regional distribution; economic crisis; demilitarization; increased mobility
Romania	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ rational distribution of production centres ▪ development of new towns ▪ accelerated urban growth ▪ conversion of rural areas into urban 	Causes of urban shrinkage: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ changes in the political system ▪ mono-industrial dependence ▪ deindustrialization, globalization Consequences of urban shrinkage: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ lack of attractiveness and competitiveness
Estonia	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ more intensive growth since the 1970s due to investments 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ the short-term baby boom in the 1990s Causes of urban shrinkage: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ emigration of young people to big cities; economic structural changes; EU integration
Russia	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ growth due to natural increase, immigration, administrative and territorial changes 	Causes of urban shrinkage: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ administrative reform; difficult transition of specialized towns; peripheral position

Summarizing the general characteristics of the development and shrinkage of small towns, some common causes of urban shrinkage can be singled out. These include deindustrialization, political and economic changes, membership in the European Union, national urban policies and administrative reforms. But it can also be observed that the small shrinking towns are not equally present in all countries, and that there are some differences in terms of dynamics and intensity of shrinkage. As it can be seen in the table, in some small towns, population decline has occurred before the transition (East Germany, Slovakia), in others immediately after political changes (Russia), while in some it has taken place from the beginning of the 21st century (Hungary, Estonia). In some countries, such as Poland and the Czech Republic, small shrinking towns are not widespread. However, despite these differences, it is noticeable that the development of small towns in the post-socialist period, and thus their decline, has been conditioned by their development during socialism.

The analyses imply that three basic paths of socialist development of small towns can be singled out:

- 1) intensive growth, especially since the 1970s due to forced urbanization driven by industrialization - delayed industrial development, centrally coordinated (Russia, Estonia, Romania),
- 2) stable development with a constant number of inhabitants - dense network of small towns (Czech Republic),
- 3) population decline from the 1980s or earlier due to poor position in the hierarchy of settlements (East Germany, Hungary, Slovakia).

The post-socialist transition brought the small towns that grew artificially during socialism back to the development path without the support of central resources, which caused a great crisis in them. This way it directly affected their shrinkage. On the other hand, in small towns that were in a bad position during the socialist period, the post-socialist transformation further worsened their position and led to an even greater shrinkage. For small towns that had stable development and well-established position in the national system during socialism, post-socialist transformation did not have a significant impact.

5. SMALL SHRINKING TOWNS IN SERBIA IN THE POST-SOCIALIST CONTEXT

5.1. The socialist and post-socialist context of development

Intensive urbanization in Serbia began only after the Second World War. In this period, major transformations in the settlement system in Serbia occurred, influenced by economic changes in the country. After the politically initiated deagrarization, industrialization took place in parallel with urbanization, which was not properly directed in order to achieve a more balanced territorial development [37]. The future industrial centres have become places of rapid development and concentration of people and activities. Spatial and demographic imbalances have been formed in the settlements network in Serbia, as well as significant mismatch in the concentration of inhabitants and the degree of socio-economic development. Small urban settlements grew intensively in the period from 1953 to 1981 attracting the population from rural areas. During the 1970s, small towns underwent rapid economic growth and socio-economic change. At that time, they had the fastest growth of GDP, as well as high employment rates [38]. Although, their level of development lagged behind larger cities.

In 1989 Serbia, as well as other Yugoslav republics, had relatively good political and socio-economic conditions for entering the post-socialist transition [39]. However, the autocratic regime, the disintegration of the country, the wars in the former republics, as well as political and economic isolation have stopped the transitional reforms. These impacts have led to hyperinflation, a drastic decline in industrial production and GDP, and a huge increase in unemployment, misery and poverty [40]. Throughout this period, there were intensive migrations from the war-affected regions and a constant 'brain drain', i.e. the emigration of skilled workforce from the country.

After the political changes in 2000, which were reflected in the transition from a political authoritarian regime to a democratic order, the transition in Serbia began 10 years later, in much more complex conditions than in most other European post-socialist countries. Political reforms were not accompanied by reforms in the economy, and in most segments the inherited socialist economic system remained unchanged. The privatization was unsuccessful and the economy was not deregulated, which all led to an economic and social crisis. In addition, there are big regional differences in the development of Serbia with developed north (Belgrade region and the Region of Vojvodina), which accounts for over 60% of Serbia's GDP, and the underdeveloped south. The decentralized system, which was the main achievement of the institutional organization of socialism, was completely disrupted in the 1990s due to the authoritarian political regime. Although the position of local governments has improved significantly since 2000, they remain financially and politically dependent on Belgrade.

5.2. Urban shrinkage of small towns in Serbia

Economic and social changes during the 1990s influenced demographic processes in Serbia, changing the network of settlements and creating demographic imbalances. The large parts of the country were left (eastern, southern and to a lesser extent western) and residents migrated to large cities of the main axis (Novi Sad-Belgrade-Niš) [41]. In the period 1991–2002, the Republic of Serbia had a demographic decline of -4.2%, with depopulation being most prevalent in rural settlements (-9.1%). The influx of refugees in this period somewhat mitigated the depopulation trend in Serbia, which was thus a consequence of the negative natural increase. The decline of the urban population has intensified since 2000, which characterize a number of post-socialist countries. In the period 1991–2002, the negative population trend was identified in 31 out of 81 small towns, and in the following inter-census period, that number rose to 57. Figures 1 and 2 show population changes in small towns in Serbia in the periods 1991–2002 and 2002–2011, together with the degree of development of local self-government in relation to the national average.

In the period 1991–2002, the demographic decline affected mainly settlements in the north and east of the country. There can be noticed, however, a great polarization of demographic and economic development of small towns. The difference in economic development between the Region of Vojvodina and Central Serbia is obvious. In Vojvodina, the towns that lost their population in 1991–2002 are mostly located in well-developed municipalities, while in Central Serbia almost all towns are in less developed or underdeveloped municipalities. In the following period, a large number of small towns lost their inhabitants. At the same time, their economic development has declined, although there is still a significant difference between the north and the south of the country.

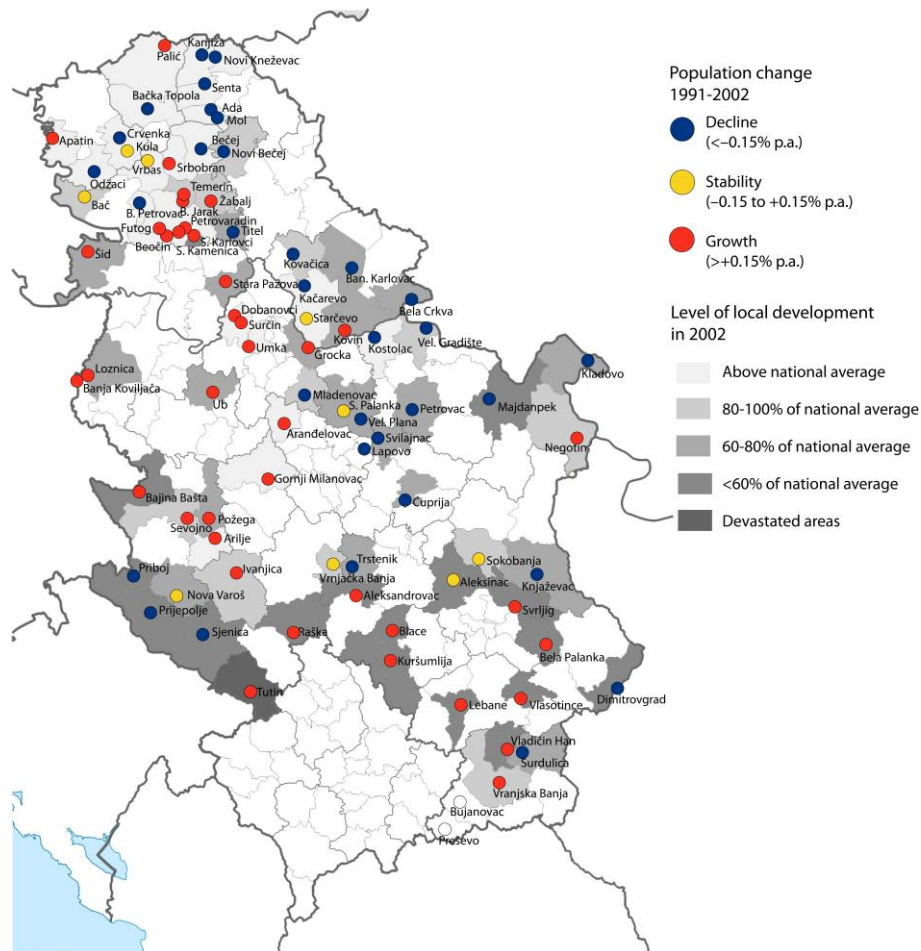


Fig. 1 Change in population and level of development of small towns 1991–2002 [42]

The depopulation of small towns is a consequence of the combined effects of negative natural growth and migration balance, as well as pronounced demographic aging. The trend of negative natural increase began in the municipalities of small towns in Vojvodina, mostly in the 80s, while in central Serbia a decade later. Deindustrialization had a significant impact on the decline of the population in small towns. Former industrial centres (Trstenik, Aleksandrovac, Majdanpek, Prijepolje, etc.) have lost their status due to the inability to adapt to economic transition and gain economic significance in the new context.

Broadly speaking, the problems that small towns in Serbia face today are the result of an insufficiently controlled and directed process of urbanization. After the exhaustion of rural demographic resources, small towns became places of emigration and a source of population for larger cities. Socio-economic changes during the 1990s also affected the population dynamics in small towns and led to a poorer quality of life in them. Due to the centralization of the country, small and medium-sized towns have a weak role in regional

and local development [41], and they are often located in areas with pronounced development problems.

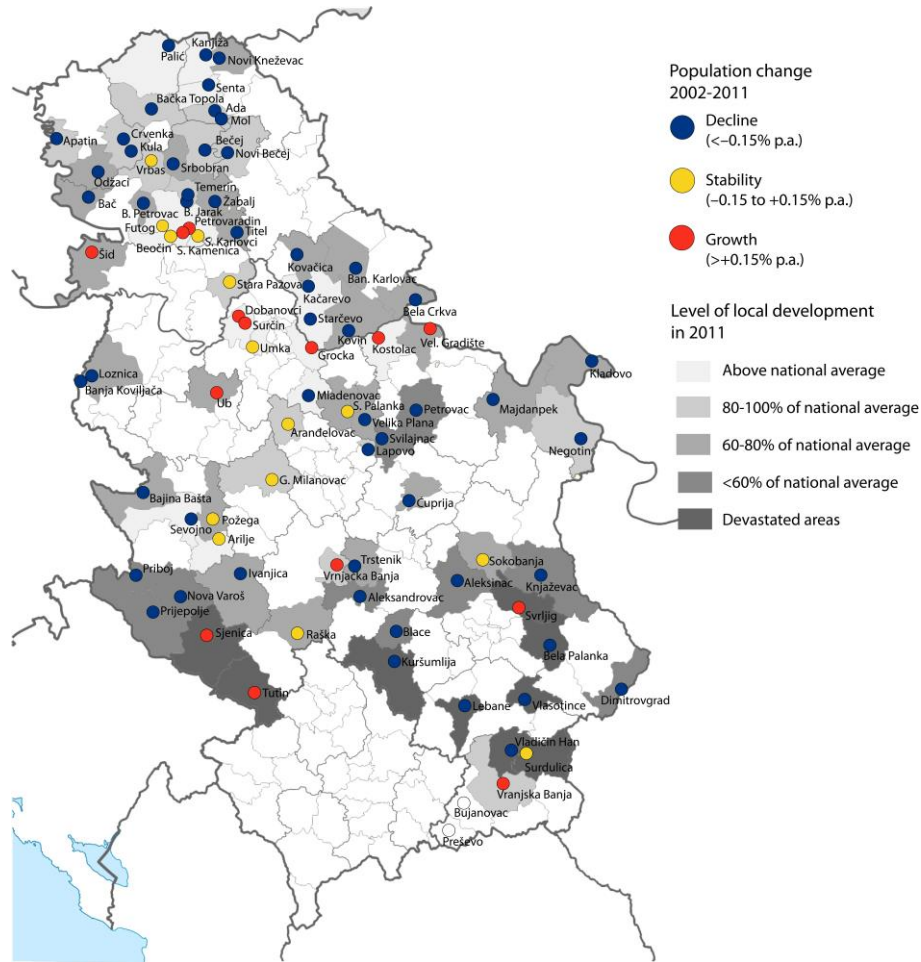


Fig. 2 Change in population and level of development of small towns 2002–2011 [42]

6. CONCLUSION

Small towns are generally neglected in urban research, and therefore the process of urban shrinkage in them has not gained much attention. However, global socio-economic changes have not affected cities and towns in the same way, which is why there are differences in urban shrinkage. The effects and problems shrinking small towns are difficult to counter and require special planning considerations due to limited capacity and resources for recovery.

Based on the analysis of post-socialist development of towns, as well as the process of their shrinkage, it can be generally concluded that apart from global influences, changes in the social system were the main influencing factor of urban shrinkage, whether acting as a direct cause or catalyst. There are significant differences in the paths of urban shrinkage between small post-socialist towns, which are conditioned by national and local contexts. The results of the analysis indicate that the previous path of development had a strong influence on their development after transformations, which implies to the path dependency. The post-socialist transition has returned small towns to an endogenous path of development without state financial support, which has directly caused an economic crisis in their development or worsen already existing economic and demographic problems. It turned out that only those small towns that had a stable position within the dense network of small and medium-sized towns in the national urban system managed to recover from the current effects of the post-socialist transition.

The urban development of small towns in Serbia has its own specifics, so in addition to many similarities, there are also differences in the shrinkage of small towns. Unlike some CEE countries, where a large number of small towns began to lose population before 1989, in Serbia, except for sporadic cases, population loss in small towns was recorded only after the fall of socialism, and has intensified from the beginning of 21st century. The change of the political and social system in Serbia was the main driver of urban shrinkage, as in other CEE countries, but in Serbia it was more complex. Socio-political circumstances during the 1990s had dramatic effects on the economic and demographic development of cities. The delayed transition has further worsened the position of small towns. On the other hand, the influence of previous development trends during socialism is also noticeable in Serbia. Thus, the shrinkage of small towns is directly related to the unfavourable guidance of the urbanization process during socialist development, and since the 1990s, the effects of polarization of development and centralization in the network of settlements have become even more pronounced.

All of the above indicates the importance of the context in the study of urban shrinkage, whereby it is possible to shape the post-socialist context within the general understanding of shrinking cities. However, the additional influence of national and local factors on shaping the shrinking paths of small towns certainly needs special consideration. This creates a starting point for solving the problems caused by urban shrinkage and planning their recovery, which is important not only for these towns but also for their rural environment, which is directly endangered by their shrinkage.

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MALI GRADOVI U OPADANJU U POST-SOCIJALISTIČKOM KONTEKSTU

Proces urbanog opadanja pogađa veliki broj gradova širom sveta. Prisutan je i u malim gradovima, ali za razliku od velikih gradova, nije izučavan u velikoj meri. Imajući to u vidu, ovaj rad se bavi malim gradovima u opadanju sa fokusom na post-socijalističkom kontekstu razvoja, koji je doveo do novih obrazaca urbanog opadanja u zemljama Centralne i Istočne Evrope (CIE). Nakon izdvajanja specifičnih karakteristika opadanja malih gradova, analiziraju se njihove razvojne putanje u različitim zemljama CIE-e, kako bi se izdvojile karakteristike urbanog opadanja i uticaj post-socijalističke tranzicije na ovaj proces. Posebno se analizira opadanje malih gradova u Srbiji kako bi se utvrdilo da li se utvrđene karakteristike i putanje opadanja prepoznaju u njima i izdvojile specifičnosti tog procesa u odnosu na ostale post-socijalističke zemlje. Sumiranjem generalnih karakteristika razvoja i opadanja malih gradova u zemljama CIE-e, može se zaključiti da urbano opadanje malih gradova nije u svim zemljama podjednako zastupljeno, kao i da postoje izvesne razlike u pogledu dinamike i intenziteta opadanja. Rezultati analize ukazuju na to da je prethodna putanja razvoja imala snažan uticaj na njihovo opadanje nakon post-socijalističke transformacije. Izdvojene su tri osnovne putanje tokom socijalističkog razvoja koje su uticale na različite obrasce urbanog opadanja. U Srbiji je takođe uočeno da je opadanje malih gradova direktno povezano sa nepovoljnim usmeravanjem procesa urbanizacije tokom socijalističkog razvoja.

Ključne reči: urbano opadanje, mali gradovi, post-socijalistička tranzicija, Srbija