



SUSTAINABLE URBAN DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY OF SERBIA

Marija Maksin¹⁶⁸, Vladica Ristić¹⁶⁹

Abstract

This paper aims to highlight the tendencies in strategic spatial planning and its role in the territorial and urban development in Serbia. We will apply research instrumentarium based on the consistent theoretical platform and a new planning tool as a composite framework. The Europeanization of statutory and strategic spatial planning and planning methodology has brought about dynamic changes in planning systems of European countries, as well as in Serbia. First attempts of a new strategic spatial planning are taking place in Serbia through Urban Development Strategies at local and national level. The integrated and territorial place-based approach were applied for the first time in 2018/2019 within the National Sustainable Urban Development Strategy/NSUDS. Introducing this strategic planning tool and new approaches should increase the adaptability of planning instruments and statutory planning system. In this paper the implemented approaches, methodological choices, achieved public responds and results are analyzed and discussed. Limitations and threats for proposed implementation support are pointed out and discussed. Based on this research, recommendations for future spatial planning system, statutory and strategic, and its possible role and impacts on governance for sustainable territorial and urban development in Serbia are given.

Key words: *Strategic spatial planning, sustainable urban development, integrated and territorial place-based approach, National Sustainable Urban Development Strategy/NSUDS, Serbia.*

Introduction

Over the past twenty years, a series of development planning documents have been adopted in the European Union, as well as several pan-European initiatives. These documents are a new generation of strategic documents and also a strategic framework for governance and planning of territorial development. With the adoption of the Lisbon Treaty, a third dimension is added to the objective of cohesion – territorial dimension. In the Europe 2020 and Cohesion policy 2014-2020, it is

¹⁶⁸ Marija Maksin, PhD, Professor Emerita, Academician of IRASA, Institute of Architecture and Urban & Spatial Planning of Serbia, Belgrade, Republic of Serbia, maja@iaus.ac.rs

¹⁶⁹ Full Professor Vladica Ristić, PhD, Academician of IRASA, Belgrade, Republic of Serbia, vladicar011@gmail.com



stressed that multiple challenges confronting Europe – economic, environmental and social – show the need for an integrated and territorial place-based approach to deliver an effective response. The introduction of an integrated territorial development strategy and a new territorial tool – integrated territorial investments, have been suggested. Within the EU Cohesion Policy 2021-27, the integral approach is one of the four mandatory elements of territorial strategies, with regulations requiring "a description of the integral approach to address the recognized development needs and potential of the area". [1]

The European Spatial Development Perspective (ESDP, 1999) exerted a powerful influence on Europeanization of spatial planning and planning methodology. [2] The Territorial Agenda of the EU - Towards a More Competitive and Sustainable Europe of Diverse Regions (2007), and its revised version Territorial Agenda of the EU 2020, Towards an Inclusive, Smart and Sustainable Europe of Diverse regions (2011), as a continuation and correction of the ESDP, introduced the mandatory implementation of an integrated strategic territorial approach, i.e. implementation of integral planning and management for all actors. [3]

The Europeanization of spatial planning and its methodology has brought about dynamic changes in the planning systems of European countries. The changes that took place mainly have to do with the fact that the planning systems in the countries are not static but rather flexible and dynamic constructs. Stead identifies general trends in government and governance that result in dynamic changes in spatial planning systems, among which we highlight: "increasing marketization of the public domain"; "the changing rationale for planning" in the light of new challenges, "the influence of the European policies and initiatives" (p.21). [4] Comprehensive planning practice is not based only on the application of coordinative, collaborative and communicative activities, but is rather based more and more on bargaining, consensus and agreements. [5, 6]

Albrechts, as well as Albrechts and Balducci classify statutory (institutional/formal) spatial planning systems as traditional spatial planning, as opposed to new strategic spatial planning. [7, 8] Both Kunzmann and Mäntysalo consider that informal (non-institutionalized) strategic spatial planning should be an additional tool to overcome the shortcomings of statutory spatial planning. [9,10] Albrechts and Balducci note that in the last twenty years some kind of strategic spatial planning has been added to statutory spatial planning in many European cities. [8] The most widely used additional strategic planning tool has been integrated urban development policy.

With the rapid levels of urbanization currently being seen globally, the growth of cities – along with climate change – has become one of the most defining features of the twenty-first century. With the growth of human settlements come both opportunities and challenges. Opportunities such as the betterment of social services, employment options, the provision of better housing options, local economic development and country-wide economic competitiveness contrast with urban challenges such as unemployment, migrations, the growth of slums, and lack of basic services. Many of these challenges have emerged due to relatively uncontrolled urbanization and globalization process, where urban planning and policy have failed to accommodate



rapid rates of growth. It is for this reason that twenty-first century cities demand twenty-first century urban policies, or, a new generation of urban policy. This new generation of urban policy reaches beyond the traditional boundaries of the city and fosters stronger horizontal and vertical linkages, and creative partnerships in order to tackle complex urban problems in a coordinated way.

First attempts of a new strategic spatial/urban planning are recently taking place in Serbia through Urban Development Strategies at local level and the National Sustainable Urban Development Strategy (NSUDS). [11] Based on the trends in spatial governance and strategic spatial/urban planning in Europe, this paper examines its influence on the preparation of the NSUDS. The influence has been checked through the integrated and place-based approach, collaborative and participative approach, as well as the integrated territorial investments suggested in the NSUDS.

The trends in spatial governance and spatial/urban planning

The trends in spatial governance and statutory spatial planning

The latest research in ESPON COMPASS on the trends and changes in spatial governance and planning systems (SGPS) in Europe since 2000 covered 28 EU countries plus 11 additional countries (Serbia among them). [12] The conclusions about the main trends in territorial governance and statutory spatial planning systems are the following:

- Systems of spatial planning and territorial governance in Europe are well established and maintained. Territorial governance and spatial planning systems in Europe are diverse. This means that there is no one-size-fits-all solution to territorial governance and spatial planning in Europe.
- In only a third of the countries is spatial planning really steering territorial development. In other countries, planning is having a very limited or even no influence on territorial development.
- There is a huge amount of energy expended on multiple types of plans at all levels. These tools are used to pursue a common objective to steer spatial development in order to achieve a wide range of economic, environmental and social objectives.
- The structure of planning instruments and procedures in most countries is under constant revision, mostly concerning simplifications in order to reduce the regulation, and to simplify and/or streamline structures and procedures.
- Reforms have been made in order to: increase transparency and citizen engagement in the planning process; improve sectoral policy coordination; improve the adaptability of planning instruments – to be less rigid and robust in the face of uncertainty, and able to adapt to changing circumstances; to strengthen implementation and impact on development, etc.
- The awareness of the potential of more integrated place-based approaches to sectoral policy-making is increasing and spatial planning is playing a role in making this happen, especially pertaining to transport, energy, environmental, waste and ICT policies.



- Planning systems in the Eastern European countries were not well-prepared to deal with spatial and environmental impacts of the large number of EU-funded projects. National and sub-national actors are addressing this inconsistency and new mechanisms are being used to improve joining up.

In comparison with the previous, the statutory system of spatial planning in Serbia is well-established, but has very limited influence on territorial development. There have been modest reforms in citizen engagement in the planning process. One can add that in Serbia, similarly to Turkey [13], spatial planning has been subject to centralization mechanisms. Hence, the political authority attempts to centralize spatial and urban planning, to reduce mechanisms of participation in decision making and to impose an authoritarian and top-down decision-making style at dominant mode of decision.

The ESPON COMPASS proposed five types of SGPSs presented in Figure 1.

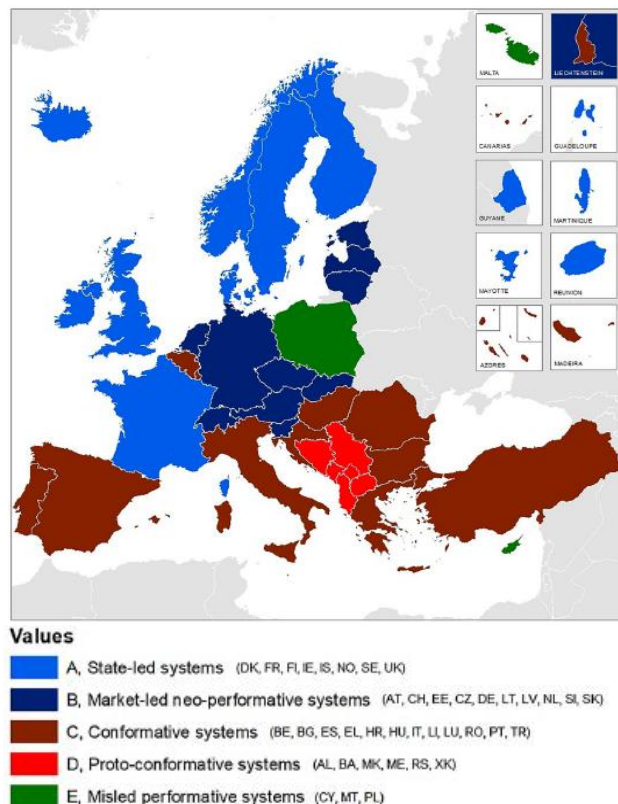


Figure 1: Typology of European Spatial Governance and Planning Systems
Source: Berisha, E., Cottela, G., Janin Rivolin, U., Solyy, A. *Spatial governance and planning systems and public control of spatial development: a European typology*, *European Planning Studies*, 2020, Published online 10 Feb 2020, pp. 13, DOI: 10.1080/09654313.2020.1726295 [14]



Type D, which concerns Serbia, can be defined as that of "proto-confirmative systems", since the method of assigning land use and development rights through binding general plans is based on the top-down relations between the levels of planning and of dirigisme (state-led implementation of plans). However, spatial development proves to be mainly driven by market interests. In the Central and Eastern European countries the transition from the socialist economic system to the neoliberal capitalist market one has taken place in parallel which, in the field of spatial governance, tend to accelerate the release of building permits to attract and facilitate private investments. In the whole Balkan region, a high level of corruption and the limited capacity of the public authority to withstand the pressures and logic of the market, have led to the privileging of private rather than public interests, even in spite of what law establishes. [14]

The trends in spatial governance and strategic urban planning

A strong impetus to establish informal as well as statutory urban planning was given by the new global urban development framework - United Nations New Urban Agenda (NUA, 2016), which ties in with Transforming our World: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (United Nations 2030 Agenda, 2015), the Goal 11: Make cities inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable (SDG 11) being finally a decisive framework for the NUA. [15, 16] The European Union has set a number of policy papers, charters and declarations determining the framework for sustainable and integrated urban development in the member states. Several documents have been elaborated, i.e. the Leipzig Charter on Sustainable European Cities (2007, 2020), the Marseille Statement (2008), the Toledo Declaration (2010), the Territorial Agenda of the EU 2020 (2011), the Cities of Tomorrow report (2011), the Commission Staff Working document "Results of the Public Consultation on the key features of an Urban Agenda for the EU" (2015), the Riga Declaration (2015), and the EU Urban Agenda – the Pact of Amsterdam (2016).

The integrated urban development policy, as proposed by Leipzig Charter on Sustainable European Cities, means simultaneous and fair consideration of the concerns and interests which are relevant to urban development. The integrated urban development policy is a process in which the spatial, sectoral and temporal aspects of key areas of urban policy are coordinated. The involvement of economic actors, stakeholders and the general public is essential, as it enables citizens to play an active role in shaping their immediate living environment. At the same time, these measures can provide more planning and investment certainty. The integrated urban development policy offers a set of instruments which have already proved their worth in numerous European cities in developing modern, cooperative and effective governance structures. [17]

The New Leipzig Charter – The transformative power of cities for the common good, this non-binding document builds on the basic idea of the 2007 Leipzig Charter that all areas of urban policy must be coordinated in a spatial, sectoral and temporal manner through an integrated approach that gives simultaneous and fair



consideration to all concerns and interests relevant to urban development. Compared to the 2007 Charter, however, the text includes specific references to the contemporary global challenges that are having a direct impact on European towns and cities, and can intensify disparities in our societies, such as climate change, resource scarcity, migration, demographic change, pandemics and rapidly changing economies. The consideration of digital challenges, such as the rise of digital technologies, the digital divide and market dependencies is another new item, with the revised charter also providing a policy framework to deliver global and European agreements. Transformative power of European cities identifies three spatial levels of European cities – the neighbourhood level, local authorities and functional area – as well as three dimensions of European cities – just, green and productive – which, when combined, can help to build resilient cities that can deal with social, economic and ecological challenges and ensure a high quality of life for all. It outlines five key principles of good urban governance: urban policy for the common good, integrated approach, participation and co-creation, multi-level governance and a place-based approach. It urges for empowering cities to transform **and** encourage all levels of governance to support active and strategic land policy and land-use planning and to actively shape the digital transformation, stressing that solid urban governance is necessary to transform all cities into just, green and productive urban systems. It also emphasises the need to ensure adequate policies and funding for cities, and provide a powerful national urban policy framework and funding as well as coherent EU regulation and funding instruments. [18]

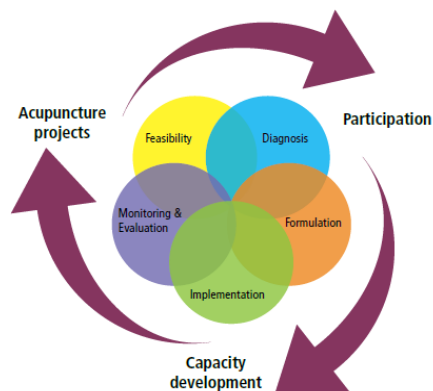


Figure 2: The NUP Process

Source: *National Urban Policy: Guiding Framework*, UN Habitat, pp. 10 [19]

According to the National Urban Policy: Guiding Framework (2015), the new generation of urban policy now requires an approach that reaches beyond the limited approach to the spatial planning that has traditionally been considered as adequate in defining “urban” policy areas. Complex social problems that manifest themselves in urban areas require a broader approach to urban policy and a higher level of vertical and horizontal coordination, as well as creative partnerships outside the public sector.



Through public policy, and particularly urban policy, governments, in collaboration with other actors, have the opportunity to define shared goals, set a national urban development agenda, and act in the necessary proactive and coordinated way in order both to take advantage of the opportunities presented by urbanization and to take steps to limit the challenges that urbanization also creates. The NUP process should provide a plan for the identification of problems and/or opportunities, the establishment of goals, the delegation of roles, and the ability to monitor and evaluate the success of the policy (Fig.2). [19]

The aforementioned UN and European documents set the principles of the NUP Process. In summary, the principles are as follows:

- integrated planning approach,
- place-based approach,
- integrated territorial investments,
- collaborative approach,
- participative approach.

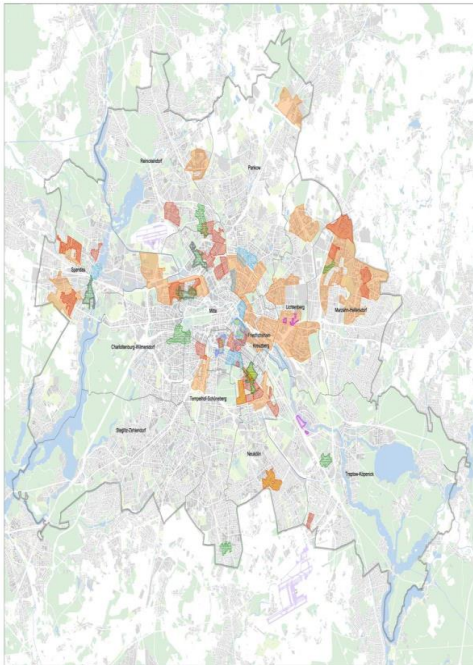
According to the Global State of National Urban Policy (2018) out of the 150 countries half (76) have adopted explicit NUPs, and half (74) have partial NUPs. In terms of the NUP development stages, 92 countries (61 per cent) already implement their NUPs, whereas 58 countries (39 per cent) are in the process of developing NUPs. Only 19 countries (13 per cent) have reached the monitoring and evaluation stage. In the Europe and North America region, most countries already implement NUPs. [20]

In order to overcome the specific disadvantages of spatial (and urban) governance and statutory spatial planning in Serbia, it is important to introduce informal urban planning as a complementary framework. Taking the mentioned UN and European documents as the starting point, we used the experiences of informal urban planning in Germany, the EU leader in the sphere of integrated urban development. Despite being put in the type B, which corresponds to market-led neo-performative systems, so that spatial development is driven by a mix of state and market interests, the minimal prevalence of the latter is ensured by development of informal planning tools (which have no statutory binding force) and their combining with formal planning tools. [14, 21] In Germany, the NUP is implemented through 6 programs (Social city, Active city and district centers, Urban monument protection, Urban restructuring – East and West, Small and medium sized towns and municipalities, Urban green space) supported by national, regional and local government funds combined with the EU funds. Local governments apply for these programs with urban development projects based on local strategies/concepts of urban development for urban settlements, which falls under informal planning tools (Fig.3).

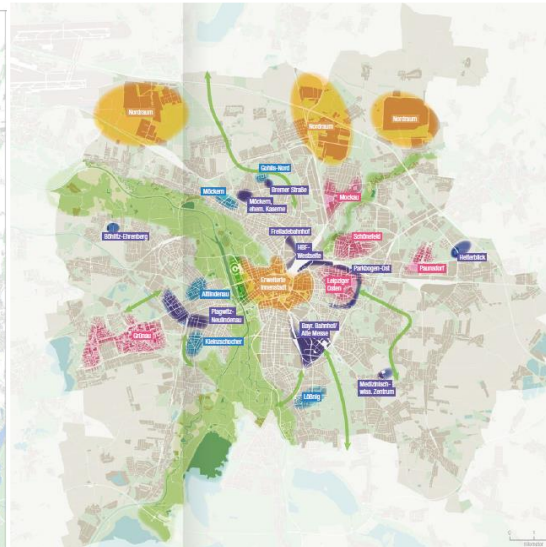
Local integrated urban development strategies have been adopted in several Serbian cities between 2007 and 2014 as informal planning tools. They have all been realized within the “Strengthening of local land management in Serbia” project led by Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH on behalf of the Government of the Federal Republic of Germany. In 2017, an initiative to draft the NUP for Serbia was started within this project. Originally, the NUP was envisioned as



an informal planning tool, but in the course of drafting the NUP it became a formal/statutory planning tool.



Berlin



Leipzig

Figure 3: Areas of intervention in accordance with the NUP programs

Sources: *Urban Development Concept Berlin 2030*, *Senatsverwaltung für Stadtentwicklung und Wohnen Berlin, Stadt Berlin, 2015: 58-59*; *Integrated Urban Development Concept Leipzig 2030*, *Stadtplanungsamt, Stadt Leipzig, 2018:36* [22, 23]

The strategic urban planning in Serbia – the case of NSUDS

In this chapter we analyse the application of the principles and methodology of the NUP to the National Sustainable Urban Development Strategy 2030 (NSUDS). [24] Germany's experiences in implementation of the NUP are adapted for the local context of urban development in the Republic of Serbia. Contrary to Germany, the Republic of Serbia has no specific instruments for urban development financing. Urban development financing takes place for the most part at the local governance level, particularly in the domain of construction land and activities of the utility economy, whereas investments in economic projects are partly made with the national support and foreign sources of financing. One particular issue, foreign to European countries, is illegal construction en masse as a specific urban development phenomenon since the 1960s, and particularly in the post-Socialist period. Illegal construction is coupled with uncontrolled urban growth of construction areas, intensive expansion of some urban settlements of enormous and turbulent



proportions (mostly contrary to the existing plans or without any planning whatsoever) predominantly at the expense of agricultural land.

The applied methodology is based on 5 steps and a combined application of 5 principles: integrated, place-based, collaborative and participative approach, and integrated territorial investments. [11, 24] This represents an improved application of certain principles taken from spatial/urban planning practice (integrated, place-based and participative approach), and application of new approaches (collaborative approach and integrated territorial investments).

The methodology steps in the NSUDS drafting were as follows:

1. Contextual analysis by topical areas;
2. SWOT analysis through identification of key problems of urban development and needs assessment;
3. Vision, goals and priorities (areas of spatial intervention);
4. Sources of financing; and
5. NSUDS implementation.

Integrated approach

Integrated approach entails inclusion of relevant topical areas and tools/means of various sectoral policies, actors and institutions at various spatial and administrative levels (local, regional, national and/or supranational) in order to achieve a comprehensive (holistic) approach to urban development planning and management. Integrated approach was applied in all methodology steps. Its application to the first two steps – Contextual and SWOT analysis – resulted in identifying 11 key problems of urban development [11, 24]:

- Concept of urban settlement economic development based on predominant share of services sector and marginalization of the role of manufacturing industry;
- Deterioration of economic base and social structure of urban settlements in transition/post-Socialist period;
- Poor efficiency of the local self-governments system of financing in the segment of own fiscal and non-fiscal revenues and expenditures pertaining to construction land (common utility consumption, utility infrastructure and efficiency of utility services financing), along with a diminishing role of construction land-related instruments in local budgets;
- Spontaneous and unbridled urban growth and proliferation of construction sites, along with extremely inefficient construction land use and excessive conversion of agricultural and forested land;
- Deterioration in the quality of development and identity of urban spaces and growing urban chaos in peripheral urban zones and suburbs fostered by illegal construction as a complex urban development phenomenon;
- Heightened risk of poverty and/or social exclusion, particularly affecting youth and various vulnerable groups;
- Inadequate state of the existing and lagging development of new transport, technical, utility and social infrastructure and public spaces;



- Deepening disparities in the quality of life and accessibility among central urban zones, peripheral urban zones and most rural settlements;
- Lopsided quality of environment, health care and safety for residents and the lack of adaptation of the urban settlements to climate changes;
- Lack of adaptation of regulatory, institutional, social, implementation and financial frameworks to urban development planning and management;
- Inefficiency of urban development planning and management, democratic deficit in participation and management of urban settlements.

The application of integrated approach to the third step resulted in the NSUDS's baseline that urban settlements shall strive for the sustainable and integrated overall development so as to achieve the desired quality of life, environment and spatial development as well as to strengthen their respective identity and competitiveness. Integrated approach was applied to defining strategic directions of urban development. Taking the key problems and potentials defined in the SWOT analysis and the vision as a starting point, the following 5 strategic directions of urban development are set forth:

- Sustainable economic development,
- Development of urban settlements,
- Social well-being,
- Quality of environment,
- Urban governance.

Sustainable economic development of urban settlements and urban development governance constitute the basic support for the accomplishment of the other three strategic directions. Urban governance is also an integral element of each of the first four strategic directions. Improvement in governance facilitates and ensures necessary support for accomplishment of the urban development goals in other four strategic directions. These are the key reasons for singling out urban governance as a separate strategic direction.

Urban development strategic directions constitute the general framework for:

- general and specific urban development goals,
- measures for achieving urban development goals,
- identification of priority areas of intervention,
- criteria for the selection of priority urban development programs and projects,
- key performance and monitoring indicators for the implementation of the NSUDS.

In order to achieve the goals, sets of measures are brought forth constituting a batch of key interrelated activities which are conducive to the accomplishment of a sustainable and integrated urban development until 2030 in Serbia. These sets of measures are harmonized and contribute to the integrated accomplishment of the general goal and multiple specific goals of sustainable and integrated urban development.

In the third step, in order to established priority areas of spatial intervention, integrated approach was combined with place-based approach. In the fourth step integrated approach was applied to the sources of financing and combined with place based approach and suggested use of integrated territorial investments. In the fifth



step integrated approach was applied to the guidelines for: urban development legal and planning bases, National Urban Development Fund, institutional framework, monitoring plan and performance indicators for monitoring the NSUDS's implementation.

Place-based approach and integrated territorial investments

Place-based approach was applied to identify priority areas of intervention. Priority areas in urban settlements encompass various forms of urban and spatial interventions and transformations (above all, physical regeneration of a part of an urban settlement – central urban zones, neighborhoods, zones, housing blocks, peripheral areas, complexes, architectural units or streets), various processes and interventions which are to be implemented in parallel with economic development of urban settlements, creation of jobs, general social progress (socio-spatial connections, structures, inclusion) and improvement in quality, identity and efficiency of urban environment, including adaptations required to improve the environmental resilience of urban settlements.



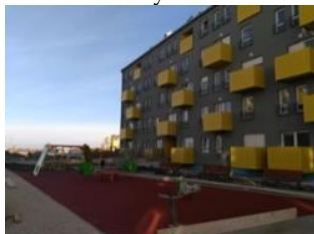
Priority area 1



Priority area 2



Priority area 3



Priority area 4



Priority area 5



Priority area 6

Figure 4. Priority areas of intervention in urban settlements

Source: National Sustainable Urban Development Strategy 2030 (NSUDS), 2019 [24].

In accordance with NSUDS [11, 24] priority areas of intervention in urban settlements are as follows (Fig. 4):

1. Industrial/business and commercial zones and brownfield sites;
2. Illegally built and undeveloped peripheral urban zones (urban sprawl) and degradation of rural area;
3. Endangered urban structures, urban matrices and central urban zones;
4. Parts of an urban settlement with a concentration of social problems – social inclusion and poverty reduction;



5. Settlements or parts of settlements adversely affected by environmental protection and climate changes-related issues;
6. Spatial units with cultural and architectural heritage, important milestones in cultural and historical development of urban settlements/clusters of urban settlements.

Integrated approach allows for measures to achieve the proposed goals and to be applicable to the identified areas of intervention from one or several strategic directions of urban development.

Integrated territorial investment principle plays an important part of integrated approach. The intention was to use limited resources more efficiently which is accomplished by their pooling. It has been combined with place-based approach for identified priority areas. It was anticipated that integrated territorial investments should apply to priority areas of intervention by combining different national, European and international funds (opportunities for combining these financing sources were examined for each priority area).

Based on the recognized priority areas of intervention, national support programs for sustainable and integrated urban development have been proposed.

The NSUDS designates priority areas of intervention as course-setting for local integrated urban development strategies. Priority areas of intervention are set forth in the local sustainable and integrated development strategy of urban settlement. Local self-government units are preparing and implementing local integrated urban development strategies used for the determination of strategic projects/sets of projects. The participation and support of local population and the private sector, the coordination of key stakeholders in the public sector at the national/provincial and local levels, and the approach to market and public sources of financing (budgets, private sector funds, EU funds and financial instruments and international support programs) should be ensured as part of the preparation and implementation of programs and strategic projects for priority areas of intervention.

Collaborative and participatory approach

Collaborative approach was applied through the inclusion of all relevant sectors of the national level of government (inter-sectoral working group) in the preparatory and decision-making process concerning the NSUDS. On this level of strategic planning the inclusion of the private sector, anticipated during the preparation and realization of local urban development strategies, was omitted.

The application of collaborative and participatory approach in the public dialogue and interdisciplinary cooperation of a broad spectrum of stakeholders from various sectors, professional domains and levels of government was included in a series of workshops, thematic round-tables and consultation meetings of the inter-sectoral working group. The applied procedure featured diversity (of represented institutions/participants, levels of government, policies, disciplines, etc.), interactions through consultations and active participation, and selection (prioritization) mechanisms. The purpose was:



- to identify key issues of urban development and improve the utilization of urban capital;
- to define a strategic framework (for a time horizon up to 2030) incorporating a set of firm elements and a significant portion of flexible (indicative) elements (as well as criteria for the selection of Serbia's urban development strategic priorities) based on multidisciplinary instruments for planning oriented towards more efficient and more effective implementation;
- to provide for an open and flexible approach to issues of urban development management in a local context taking into account administrative, legal and institutional framework, capacities, etc.;
- to provide for an interdisciplinary discussion on cross-cutting urban development issues with a view to overcoming sectoral approach limitations;
- to ensure participation of stakeholders in resolving key problems and challenges, identification of areas for spatial intervention and prioritization of urban development programs and projects; as well as
- to provide for an optimum pooling of resources and compiling of financial and interdisciplinary expert analyses.

The organization of the process of drafting the NSUDS entailed the coordination among various levels of government, facilitated communication with participants in the planning process, formation of networks of government and the surrounding stakeholders, as well as involvement of local businesses, representatives of public institutions, and other relevant stakeholders in the planning and implementation of urban development programs and projects.

Conclusions

The existing systems and instruments of spatial and urban planning and public policies affect urban development in Serbia in different ways and have diverse effects. Owing to an inadequate coordination and participation of all relevant actors in the preparation and implementation of planning instruments, the process is dominated by partial planning and investment, fragmented sources of financing, and the lack of integration of program and investment activities in urban development. This kind of situation indicates the need to introduce a new informal planning instrument – national and local strategy of urban development. This planning instrument is not set to replace the existing and established instruments within the statutory planning system, but rather to complement them, uses them and influence their change.

First attempts of a new strategic spatial planning are recently taking place in Serbia through Urban Development Strategies at local and national level. The combination of integrated and place-based approach, collaborative and participative approach with integrated territorial investments were applied for the first time in 2018 within the National Sustainable Urban Development Strategy. [24]

The NSUDS achieved to be a coherent set of decisions stemming from the process of coordination and cooperation among various stakeholders for the purpose of determining a strategic framework designed to set the course for a productive,



inclusive and resilient long-term urban development in the Republic of Serbia. Also, the NSUDS has become an instrument for urban development governance including strategic (long-term) pillars and a series of flexible elements, which are stochastic in their nature, as a support to sustainable urban development decision-makers.

A special innovation/contribution the NSUDS has brought about is the achieved political consensus in defining 6 priority national programs of urban development supported by national sources of financing, opening the possibility for international funding, as well as for integrating urban development projects into the middle-term development plan, local government budget, and capital investment plan. [11, 24] In that way the NSUDS has contributed to the advancement in local government public finances planning in the sphere of urban development, land construction management and utility services. In addition to that, besides statutory planning instruments, the NSUDS has opened a possibility for applying new management instruments to the development of urban settlements and their functional areas.

One thing is certain introducing this informal planning tool and the mix of approaches increases the adaptability of planning instruments and performance of statutory planning system, as well as the effectiveness of the spatial and urban development governance in Serbia.

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