

**PERSPECTIVE OF SUSTAINABLE SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT
AND DEVELOPMENT OF PUBLIC SERVICES
IN KURŠUMLIJA MUNICIPALITY**

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Abstract. *The paper deals with the planning basis, analysis and assessment of developmental status and general trends of Kuršumlija municipality, as well as the status of development planning, resource management and the constraints of social development and public services. Although not considered as a prioritized development and planning choice, the local sustainable social development represents a significant support to long-term development strategies and to demographic stability. This segment of spatial development planning is closely related to social values, political and economic context, which perform a variety of effects on the constitution of its concept. The aim of the paper is to show that different, and sometimes conflicting concepts of the social development that are defined at higher planning levels, need to be checked in relation to local specificities and requirements. Based on that, it is possible to create a concept of public services spatial development that will be applicable and will meet the demands and potentials of the local community.*

Key words: *sustainable social development, public services, spatial plan, local specificities*

1. INTRODUCTION

Although not considered as a prioritizing development and planning decision, the local sustainable social development represents a significant support to long-term development strategies and to the demographic stability and is thus the element of economic development. Position and importance of local social development can best be seen in the context of local development strategies, primarily in the context of spatial planning solutions within the spatial plans.

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The spatial development of Serbia is faced with numerous challenges that are not evenly distributed since there are big spatial differences in the development potentials, opportunities and constraints. Among the most challenging areas of Serbia is its southern part, which was for decades faced with problems in the sphere of economics, demographics and other domains of development. The advantage of these parts of Serbia is still well-preserved environment and numerous valuable natural resources. A typical example of such area is the local community of Kuršumljija, which is located in the very south of Serbia, by the administrative border of Kosovo and the municipalities of Blace, Prokuplje, Bojnik and Medvedja. Kuršumljija municipality occupies 952 km² and according to the last census has 19.011 inhabitants (RZS, 2011).

2. CHARACTERISTICS OF SOCIO-DEMOGRAPHIC DEVELOPMENT AND DEVELOPMENT OF PUBLIC SERVICES IN KURŠUMLIJA MUNICIPALITY

2.1. General characteristics of Kuršumljija municipality significant for social development

Pursuant to its characteristics and location, according to the Spatial Plan of the Republic of Serbia 2010-2020 (PPRS 2010-2020, 2010.), Kuršumljija municipality belongs to the region of South Serbia and is described as: „a space of the most complex social problems, significantly fragmented and insufficiently integrated into total space of the Republic of Serbia“. Therefore, this area requires "special programs and projects of regional development that will strengthen economic activity and direct them toward an improved model of economic and social cohesion“. The same document recognizes the key (mostly negative) characteristics in the field of social development of the municipality: high average age of the population, a large number of small settlements, a large number of spontaneously abandoned villages, etc. Spatial plan of the Republic of Serbia highlights natural values of the area, convenient for the development of certain branches of the economy - forestry, agriculture and tourism, in the first place. This planning strategy should support curbing the negative demographic trends, along with the obligatory reinforcing of social infrastructure.

According to the "Network of urban centres and the regional organization" in the Spatial Plan of the Republic of Serbia, Kuršumljija municipality has been marked as demographically extremely vulnerable area, and as such is one of the least favourable areas in Serbia. Municipality centre Kuršumljija is labeled as a small urban centre that belongs to the functional area of Niš, whilst the rest of the municipal territory has a quality environment and is suitable for tourism development (PPRS 2010-2020, PPPPN Radan, 2014).

The demographic projections of the Regional spatial plan for the territory of Niš, Toplica and Pirot Districts (RPP za područje Nišavskog, Topličkog i Pirotskog upravnog okruga, 2013.) predict continuity in the trend of reducing the number of inhabitants in the entire spatial plan, therefore also in Kuršumljija municipality. The absolute amount of the population will be reduced from 21,608 (2002) to 19,528 by 2015 (-9.6%) and to 18,725 by 2020 (-13.3%). According to the plan above, the perspective development of the municipality largely depends on the planned traffic infrastructure, so solutions envisage raising the quantity and quality of the entire traffic network: planned highway Niš - Priština, improvement of railway network, establishment of quality routes to the tourist

areas (Radan mountains, spa villages), reconstruction and construction of the local traffic network. This network needs to increase transport accessibility and mutual connection of small settlements – villages, as well as their connection to the micro-development centres, sub-municipal centres and municipal and regional centres.

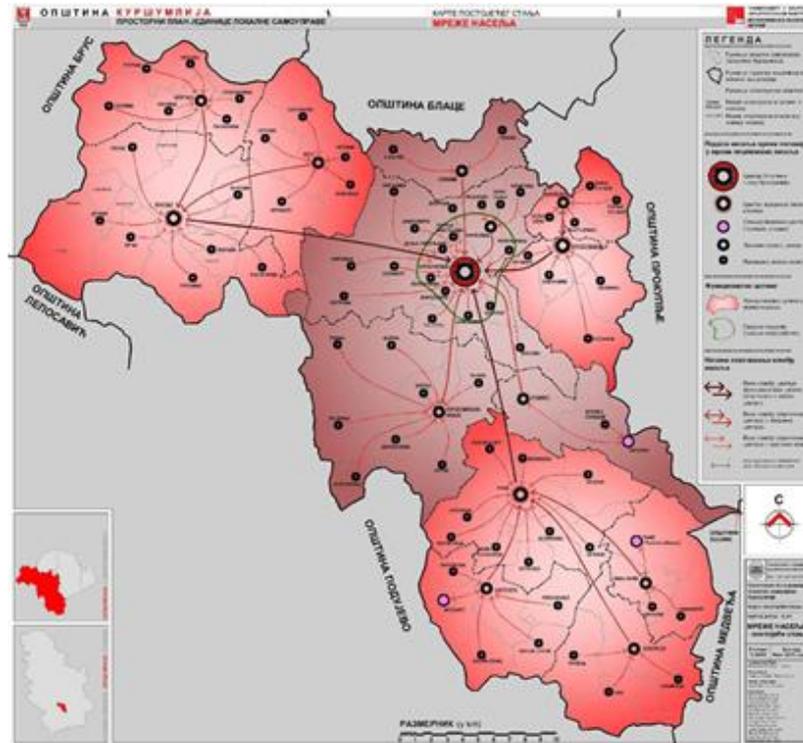


Fig. 1 Existing settlements' network in Kuršumljia municipality
(Source: PPJLS Kuršumljia, 2015.)

According to the Municipal spatial plan of Kuršumljia (PPJLS Kuršumljia, 2013) and its SWOT analysis, summarized weaknesses and threats significant for the social development are:

- Very unfavourable demographic situation of the municipality, especially in rural areas,
- Poor traffic connections within the municipality and the lack of cross-links,
- Decline and disappearance of a large number of villages and whole parts of the municipality,
- Poor infrastructure equipment of the large part of the municipality,
- Unfavourable established patterns of settlements and numerous scattered villages without the centres,
- Periphery position of the municipality in relation to actual development trends in Serbia.

At the same time, following potentials stand out:

- Outstanding natural values, recognised at the regional and national level (three spas - Kuršumljija, Prolom, Lukovo and natural monument of „Devil’s town“) and good condition of the environment (forests, water, ore resources, geothermal and mineral water, potentials of renewable energy),
- municipality’s good traffic position - international corridor E-80,
- Chances for modern forms of tourism development,
- The existence of national programs of cooperation and support for southern municipalities.

Different planning levels and plans have defined similar constraints related to demographic, public services and traffic and infrastructure specificities of the local community. At the same time, they have pointed out different potentials and strengths, which would lead to various development options of the municipality and its public services.

2.2. The settlements network a precondition for social development and the development of public services

The settlements network in Kuršumljija territory is extremely complex and dispersed. It includes over 90 very small villages, relying on bad and discontinuous settlement links, as well as a monocentric structure, dependent from the municipal centre - Kuršumljija. Although this centre is growing slowly, the majority of population, facilities and activities are concentrated in it, generating one-way and radial connections to the rest of settlements. The regional spatial plan for the territory of Nišava, Toplica and Pirot District (2013.) points out the future hierarchical structure of settlements: (1) Kuršumljija settlement as a primary municipal center; (2) Lukovo, Zuč, Kuršumlijska Banja, Raca, Dobri Do and Grabovica are the village community centres; (3) Merđez, Spance, Barlovo, Rudare, Ivan Kula and Degrmen as villages with a limited degree of centralization; (4) Prolom, Lukovo and Kuršumljija spa centers as special-purpose centres; (5) All other villages (around 75% of total number of settlements) are positioned in the last hierarchical level. According to the same document, the most convenient model for settlements’ network planning of Kuršumljija municipality is the model of decentralized concentration, i.e. the concept of village community centres - the nucleus of socio-economic transformation of rural and poorly urbanized parts of the region. These nuclei should develop public social infrastructure, as well as production activities and services which can rely on local natural resources.

2.3. Existing features of socio-demographic development and the development of public services of Kuršumljija municipality

Kuršumljija is a rarely populated municipality, with its 21,608 inhabitants, low density of 22.69inh./km² and the trend of population declining about 11%. Other demographic processes are also unfavourable and are characterized by a low birth rate and natural increase, increasing mortality rates and migration processes. The municipal centre has recorded a significant increase of the population as a result of internal migration from villages to the city. The population of 10,555 residents in 1981 rose to 13,639 in 2002.

Settlements can be divided into the following size categories in relation to the demographic size:

Table 1 Demographic size of settlements in Kuršumljia municipality
(Source: PPJLS Kuršumljia, 2015)

1 settlement – no inhabitants
Less than 50 people - a total of 31 settlements, ie 34.4%;
Of 50-100 inhabitants - a total of 23 settlements, ie 25.5%;
From 100-300 inhabitants - a total of 35 settlements or 39%;
From 300-1000 inhabitants - there are no settlements;
Over 1,000 inhabitants -1 settlement (Kuršumljia)

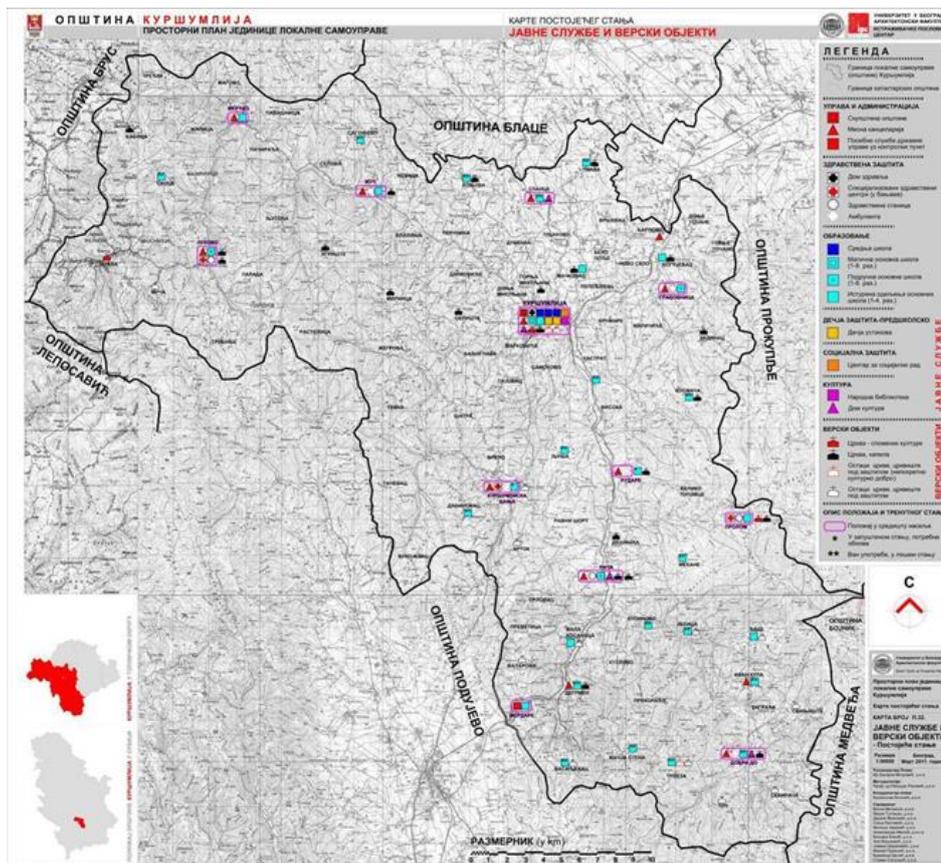


Fig. 2 Existing public services map in Kuršumljia municipality
(Source: PPJLS Kuršumljia, 2015)

The demographic size of the settlements is an important part of the information base for planning the development of public services, for certain categories of settlements should be classified in relation to the threshold of the rational organization of public services, which is usually taken as min. 1,000 inhabitants. Having in mind big share of very small settlements in Kuršumljia, villages of min. 300 inhabitants are taken into consideration, which means that about 39% of settlements tentatively may serve as the

basis for the development of this sector, along with the municipality centre (PPJLS Kuršumljija, 2015). The average annual population growth rate is negative, as well as total and natural increase, which indicates the depopulation problem in all settlements of the municipality with the exception of municipal centre. The age structure of the population is conditionally favourable from the point of view of the development of public services since the total number of persons under the age of 20 years is 4928 (22.8%), while the total number of persons over 65 years is 3,897 (18.3%). According to the last census, the number of preschool children was 1427/ 6.6% - a bit more than the minimum standard of 6%). On the other hand, the number of students aged 7-18 was 2014/ 9.3%, which is less than 12% - the average minimum for this age group in Serbia. Some demographic contingents indicate the unsatisfactory renewal of the population, while the characteristics of other groups indicate the demographic ageing and weak demographic potential. It is safe to say that the demographic situation is complex because of the process of depopulation and emigration and rare density, while at the same time there is a demographic potential, especially for certain categories of population.

For the purposes of this paper, the existing network of health, education and children's day care facilities, as well as and social services in the municipality of Kuršumljija are analysed. The network of health services is very underdeveloped, compared to the level of development of this network of central Serbia. The observed parameters given in Table 2 show that Kursumlija municipality is far behind the average values of central Serbia, but the most dramatic parameter is the number of settlements per health facility, as well as the number of population per health facility. Averagely 9 settlements gravitate to one health facility, while there are 556 inhabitants per one doctor. At the same time, an average of about 2,400 inhabitants gravitates to one health facility. Only 10 of the 90 settlements are serviced by the health services, while the remaining population of 80 settlements has no primary health care services. In relation to the population, about 68% of the municipal population has access to health services, while the remaining 32% of the population lacks access to it. Bearing in mind the significant share of the older population in small villages, very large distances between settlements and poor road infrastructure, it can be concluded that the situation in this area is extremely unfavourable.

Table 2 Primary health care
(Source: Opštine u Srbiji, 2002. RZS)

Territorial unit	Number of health facilities	Number of settlements	Number of settlements per health facility	Total number of inhabitants	Number of inhabitants per health facility	Number of inhabitants per one doctor
Republic of Serbia	3375	6152	1,82	9778992	2897	398
Central Serbia	2006	4238	2,11	5808906	2896	396
Kursumlija	10	90	9	21608	2400	556

According to the 2002 Census data and the field research, there were 10 health facilities in Kursumlija: Health centre in Kursumlija, 3 specialized centers in spa villages, 3 medical stations and 3 ambulance stations. There is no data on the mobile health services. There is a trend of lower use of health facilities and services.

The network of education facilities in Kuršumljia is characterized by a large number of small satellite elementary schools some of which are not in operation, while there are only 5 main elementary schools. Therefore, the education facilities network look quite different in case all, or just main elementary schools are taken into account. In the first case, the network is very reduced as there are even 18 settlements per school facility, which is significantly below the average of Serbia; at the same time, there are 368 students per school on average, which can be considered rational organization. If we take into account small satellite elementary schools, then the network seems better developed since, averagely, 5 villages gravitate to one small elementary school; at the same time the average number of students per elementary school is small (102 st./facility) and below the rational and economically efficient level. Generally, the distribution of the primary education facilities is not as much dispersed as it is the case in many other municipalities in Serbia. Based on the estimates of the equipment and building quality of schools done for the Spatial plan of Kuršumljia municipality, only 14 schools are in the state of use, while remaining are not in operation.

Table 3 Primary education in Kuršumljia
(Source: Opštine u Srbiji 2009, RZS)

Territorial unit	Number of settlements	Number of primary schools	Number of settlements per school	Number of students	Number of students per school
Republic of Serbia	6152	3943	1,6	847557	214,95
Central Serbia	4238	3066	1,4	594513	193,91
Kuršumljia	90	5 (18)	18 (5)	1839	368 (102)

In addition to primary schools in Kuršumljia, there is a musical school branch and two high/vocational schools, all three of which meet needs of the population, the local community and bordering municipalities. The total number was about 1,500 high school students, with the declining trend.

In the municipality of Kuršumljia there are only 2 complete child care facilities, both located in the municipal centre, with 447 children attending. The situation is even worse bearing in mind that existing facilities operate with full capacity, although they are not well equipped. According to the survey results in relevant institutions, both the network and capacity should be improved and new models of organisation introduced, such as mobile service. Taking into consideration that, according to the Law on Primary Education, it is obligatory to attend preschool preparation for all children 6-7years of age, it is safe to say childcare facilities network and capacity has to be significantly improved and enlarged.

The Social service centre in Kuršumljia deals with the providing of social security to the citizens, family legal protection, as well as field visits. For a better and complete social service provision in the future, it is necessary to provide better spatial conditions and equipment so each activity could be carried out smoothly and facilitate field work. According to available data, there are no other facilities under the auspices of the Social service centre (no nursing homes nor facilities for persons with special needs); the demographic data on one hand, and healthy environment and good spatial conditions on the other, prove that there are potentials and needs for such purpose.

3. CONCLUDING REMARKS: THE POTENTIAL AND CONSTRAINTS OF THE PUBLIC SERVICES DEVELOPMENT OF KURŠUMLIJA MUNICIPALITY

The planning documents that deal with the municipality of Kuršumlja point out important limitations for the development, which are the result of long-term negative trends or negative development solutions for this area. At the same time, they highlight the activation of significant natural resources, the potential for development of tourism and agriculture, and the necessity of improving traffic and other infrastructure. Supporting overall development by the social development and the development of public services has been treated differently, sometimes even marginalized.

On the other hand, the local spatial plan of Kuršumlja municipality has given a detailed overview of the status and importance of social development and the development of public services. This document has taken into account the fact that limited demographic potential exists. General characteristics of the development of public services of Kuršumlja is a relatively good development of networks and wide distribution of facilities (taking into consideration the huge territory of the municipality), and lack of coverage of small villages with primary services. Such a development of primary services has been influenced mostly by the network of settlements and their size and structure - a very large number of dispersed, fragmented settlements with a small population. The situation is exacerbated by a steady trend of declining population and a negative natural increase. School network is very dispersed and irrational in relation to the number of children, while there are much fewer health facilities and a network of child-care facilities is almost non-existent. Municipal centre Kuršumlja is an exception to the other villages. The specific value of the municipality is represented in specialized health service in spa villages.

Models proposed by long-term spatial plans, which include the concentration of functions in the hierarchically higher placed villages in the network, would not significantly decrease the negative trends. It is, therefore, necessary to consider other models of the development of settlement network which should be long-term sustainable and able to support the economic development. One of the main goals should also be the preservation of the demographic potential of the municipality, without which it is not possible to plan any other development. Finally, it is also necessary to reconsider the importance of the network of public services in the municipality, as well as their role in preserving the demographic capacity, strengthening settlements and raising the quality of life.

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PERSPEKTIVA ODRŽIVOG SOCIJALNOG RAZVOJA I RAZVOJA JAVNIH SLUŽBI OPŠTINE KURŠUMLIJA

Rad se bavi planskom osnovom, analizom i ocenom stanja i opštih razvojnih kretanja opštine Kuršumljia, kao i stanjem razvijenosti i planiranja, potencijalima i ograničenjima socijalnog razvoja i razvoja javnih službi. Iako se ne smatra prioritetnim razvojnim i planskim opredeljenjem, lokalni održivi socijalni razvoj predstavlja značajnu podršku dugoročnim strategijama razvoja i oslonac za demografsku stabilnost. Ovaj segment planiranja prostornog razvoja u tesnoj je vezi sa društvenim vrednosnim opredeljenjima, političkim i ekonomskim kontekstom koji vrše različite uticaje na konstituisanje njegovog koncepta. Cilj rada je da pokaže da je različite, ponekad i oprečne koncepcije razvoja ovog sektora definisane na višem nivou je potrebno proveriti u odnosu na lokalne specifičnosti i zahteve i u odnosu na to kreirati koncept prostornog razvoja javnih službi koji će biti primenljiv i odgovoriti na zahteve i mogućnosti lokalne sredine.

Ključne reči: *održivi socijalni razvoj, javne službe, prostorni plan, lokalne specifičnosti.*