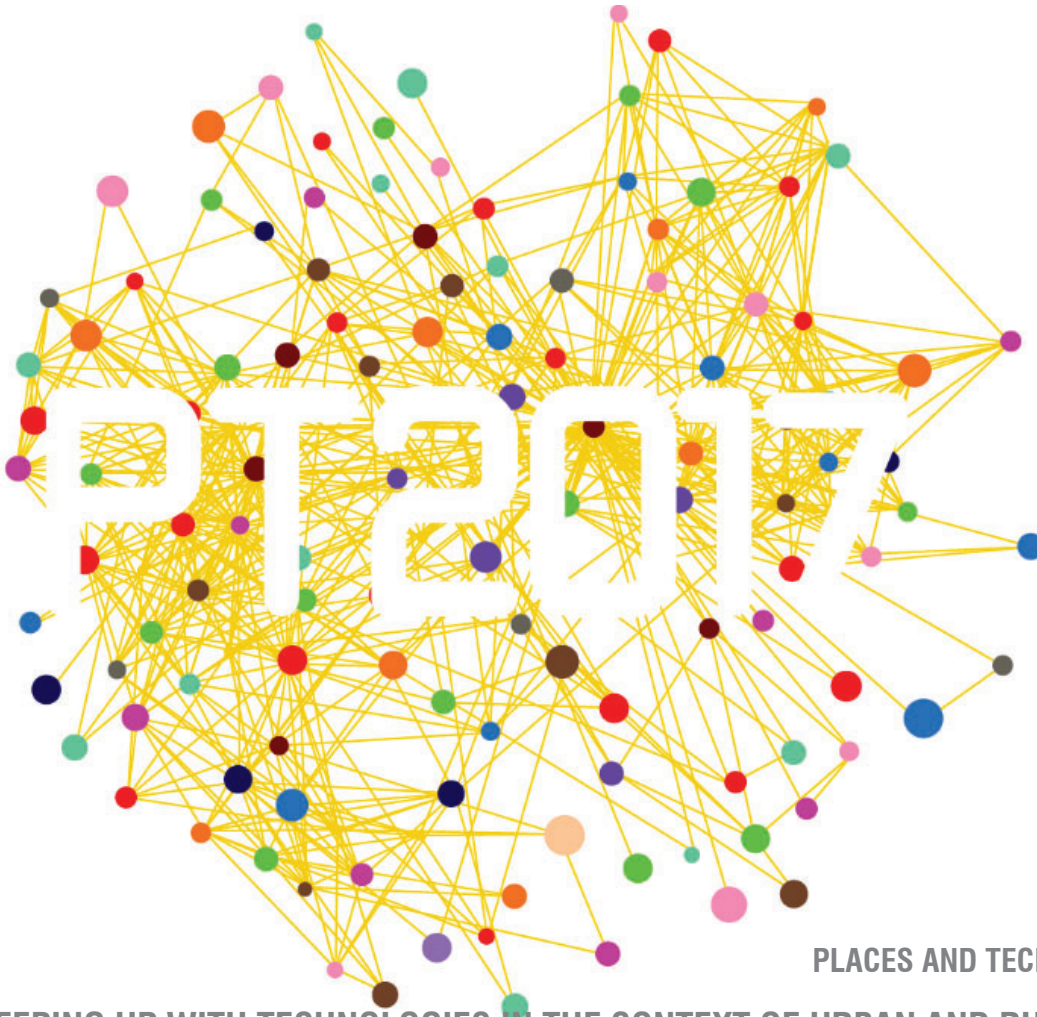


4th International Academic Conference



**PLACES AND TECHNOLOGIES 2017**  
**KEEPING UP WITH TECHNOLOGIES IN THE CONTEXT OF URBAN AND RURAL SYNERGY**  
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**KEEPING UP WITH TECHNOLOGIES IN THE CONTEXT OF URBAN AND RURAL SYNERGY**

08 & 09 JUNE

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**SYNERGY**

**BOOK OF CONFERENCE PROCEEDINGS**

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**Dženana Bijedić, Aleksandra Krstić-Furundžić, Mevludin Zečević**



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## **PLACES AND TECHNOLOGIES 2017**

4th International Academic Conference

## **KEEPING UP WITH TECHNOLOGIES IN THE CONTEXT OF URBAN AND RURAL SYNERGY**

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## INTEGRATIVE AND LOCALLY SENSITIVE APPROACH TO THE COMMUNITY PLANNING IN SERBIA

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### **Biserka Mitrović**

Associate professor, Faculty of Architecture, University of Belgrade, Bulevar Kralja Aleksandra 73,  
[biserkamitrovic@gmail.com](mailto:biserkamitrovic@gmail.com)

### **Biserka Mitrović<sup>81</sup>**

Associate professor, Faculty of Architecture, University of Belgrade, Bulevar kralja Aleksandra 73,  
[biserkamitrovic@gmail.com](mailto:biserkamitrovic@gmail.com)

### **ABSTRACT**

Creating a sustainable and balanced relation between urban and rural settlements cannot be imagined without the integrative approach to the territorial development, which again, relies upon the environmental protection and economic and social cohesion within the spatial framework. Once neglected and not treated as equally important as the ecological sustainability, the social sustainability and cohesion have been gaining importance during the 21st century. As one of the pillars of the social sustainability and cohesion, public places and services have drawn a great attention worldwide recently. At the same time, public services planning remains one of the most important themes of urban and spatial planning and is actual despite the fact that the wider context- planning of the public sector – was treated exhaustively both in theory and practice. On the other hand, public services have been much less the subject of research - and almost exclusively in the field of urban sociology, while very little in the field of the methodology of urban/spatial planning.

In light of this, the focus of the discussion is the spatial aspect and methodological innovation of the planning of public services and its importance within community planning, as a support to the spatial development of the community, with special regard to the locally sensitive approach. Focusing the research on the spatial domain has come from the integrating character of the territory which reflects the relations of the planned activities and land uses, regardless of their spatial characteristics. This choice is entirely in accordance with the integrative character of modern urban/spatial planning, as well as the integrative nature of the sustainable development. The locally sensitive approach ensures better implementation and adaptation of the general concepts to the local needs. The results of the research aim to improve the theoretical basis for planning and contribute to the establishing better practices of the public services planning in Serbia.

**Keywords:** Public services, locally sensitive approach, Urban and rural places, social sustainability and cohesion

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<sup>81</sup> Corresponding author



TOPIC III:  
**SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES AND PARTICIPATION**

**INTRODUCTION: THE CONTEXT OF THE PLANNING OF PUBLIC SERVICES IN SERBIA**

Great challenges faced by urban and spatial planning in Serbia, resulting from its low efficiency and poor implementation warn that, on the one hand, it is necessary to constitute contemporary paradigms of urban and spatial planning and to improve the planning methodology in order to increase the implementation of planning solutions. On the other hand, it is necessary to improve the theoretical and value-based context of planning, based on the fundamental European principles of equality, social cohesion and the concept of socially sustainable community. Additionally, it is preferable to establish a firmer and more direct link with the local community, building the locally sensitive approach and methods of planning work.

Planning of the public services, as an integral part of the public sector planning, is one of the most important themes of urban and spatial planning. In this paper, the term 'public services' refers to the basic services such as education, health facilities, children day care and social services. The treatment of the public good evolves depending on the changeable social, political, economic and the other circumstances. On the other hand, the public services have been much less the subject of research. In Serbia, the spatial planning of public services has been treated mostly during the period of socialism and planned economy, so this value-based-political platform has largely shaped the fundamentals for the public services planning decades ago, basing it on the normative approach. Great influence of the neo-liberal economy model to the managing and planning of the public good, and consequently to the public services planning in Serbia has produced the degradation and weakening of this sector over more than two decades, applying ad hoc solutions and neglecting the role of the public services for the quality of life and general improvement of the local community. The actual situation, when the legacy of the public services' spatial planning is being degraded and the significant resource - the capacities and the network - being neglected (in actual economic conditions it is practically a non-renewable resource), urges for the shaping of the new approach and methodology of the public services planning, with the aim to re-establish its better practices.

**BACKGROUND RESEARCH**

**Social sustainability and cohesion and the rising importance of the public services**

Contemporary urbanisation faces numerous ecological, economic, social and cultural problems to which the concept of the sustainable development continues to give the majority of answers. The sustainability itself becomes the different living concept for the cities and their tributary areas, emphasising the quality of life and the revitalisation of the local values and identity. Comprising different spheres of human activities, including economy, environment, and social life, the concept of sustainability offers the frame for the urban and spatial planning in theory and practice. Some of its most important features are natural conservation, efficient economy, social progress and the enforcement of the civil society, thus forming the foundation for the quality long term development (Haughton, 1996). Choguill, Hardoy and many others, among the other characteristics of the sustainable development underline rational use of

the renewable resources, economic vitality, self-sustainable communities and meeting basic human rights (Choguill, 1996, Hardoy, 1992). UN-Habitat introduces the term of sustainable urbanisation which links the basic aspects of sustainability with the urban-rural territory and its relations (UN HABITAT, 2004). The praxis of the sustainable urbanisation is very much supported by the international organisations, such as UN-Habitat, OECD, World Bank and European Commission (Li-Yin Shen, 2011).

Well known Sustainable development Goals, SDGs, as a new, universal set of general goals, supported by the members of the states within UN, represent a platform of the sustainable development by 2030. They emphasise the role of the public services, namely the Goal no. 3 – Good health and wellbeing refer to the health-for-all concept, universal health safety and the access to quality health facilities. Sustainable development Goal no. 4 aims to ensure the inclusive and equal quality education for all (United Nations, 2015). Almost all important documents prepared by the agencies of UN treat the public services, but rarely in an integrative manner. Public services have been treated singularly, sectorial and in a non-spatial manner, and that fact was one of the motives for this research.

Social sustainability, based on equity and equality – has the common ground with social rights. It is also based on the quality of life, livability, respect for human scale, comprehensive and integrative approach to the urban/spatial planning and social cohesion (Lucas, 2001). Social sustainability is described as the harmonious development of the civil society in which the social interaction is encouraged for all segments of the population (Polèse and Stren, 1999). Bristol Agreement from 2005 defined four key features of the social sustainability: social cohesion, tolerance and safety, while the Sheltair Group (1998) adds that the socially sustainable community should be capable of functioning safely, healthy and to create places for human interaction – educational, cultural and recreational facilities and employment. Similarly, in the sustainable community, there is equity of chances - spatial segregation or isolation do not exist, while the inhabitants have the access to the basic services and facilities (Beatley et al, 1997). Building the common values in a collectivity is conditioned by the certain degree of social cohesion, which is, on the other hand, a prerequisite for the good neighbourly relations in an urban community (Mlinar, 1979). A solid civil society, along with the market economy and political democracy relies on the civil, political and social rights (such as the right to the education, health and social care). Civil rights allow individuals the chance for equal choices, therefore they rest on the principles of equity and equality (Giddens, 2005).

The concept of social cohesion, as an important foundation of the European policies in the future is defined in the document Europe 2020: European Strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth (European Commission, 2010) and is based on the assuring conditions to meet the needs of different population groups in the community, regardless of their political, economic or social power, as well as on the assuring the opportunity to gain the wellbeing to all their members, reducing inequality to a minimum. Although the concept of social cohesion is a new policy platform of the Social Development Goals of the European Union, which are fundamental for the meeting three key domains (human rights, democracy and the rule of law), it is generally not new and has been treated in a theory (Kazepov, 2005). Socially and economically balanced territory tends to reduce the social and economic differences which are manifested through spatial differences that create inconsistency of the spatial and social development.



TOPIC III:  
**SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES AND PARTICIPATION**

Balanced social development enhances social and spatial cohesion through minimising the discrepancy between urban and rural areas, the growth of small urban centres and optimal quality of life (Kazepov, 2005).

Having in mind the above discussion, the operationalization of the principles of the social sustainability and social cohesion should be expressed through: (1) Implementation of the principles of equity by creating the spatial conditions for the social and spatial cohesion and reduced social differences; (2) Sustainable local planning which takes into account the needs of the local population and economy and is based on rational sustainable land use and local characteristics; (3) Enforcement of the public services' network aiming to create equal access to all inhabitants and creating the favourable spatial conditions for its growth.

**Integrative approach to the territorial development**

The integrating character of the territory reflects the relations of the planned activities and land uses and is one of the priorities of the global and European urban and spatial policies. In this sense, Global Report prepared by UN-Habitat (UN-HABITAT, 2009) defined the up-to-date demands towards the urban/territorial planning, the most important being: (1) Urban/territorial planning should deal with the functional integration and the integral treatment of the public space, including the spatial dimensions into the strategies; (2) Introducing the new forms of planning that are oriented towards social equity and equality, and which will enable the adequate access to services for all the inhabitants.

The unifying idea of the spatial development in the European Union is related to the territorial cohesion, which main goals are to contribute to the sustainable development and competitiveness, to enhance the regions, to promote the territorial integration and develop the coherence of the EU policies. The main task of the territorial cohesion is to contribute to the balanced distribution of economic and social resources among EU regions, bearing in mind the spatial dimension. This also means the equal resources' distribution among the population which is possible in the integrative approach is implemented.

The term territorial cohesion has been introduced in 1986 and it includes the economic and social cohesion (The Treaty of Lisbon, 2007, 2009), while the new high strategy Europe 2020 (European Commission, 2010) sets territorial cohesion goals:

- The capitalisation of the strengths of each territory of EU so that they can contribute to the sustainable and balanced development of EU as a whole;
- Managing the concentration with the aim to emphasize the positive trends – intensifying of innovation and productivity, and lessen the negative ones – pollution and social exclusion.
- Better connectivity of the territory and better accessibility to the public services, efficient transport and energy;
- Enhancing the cooperation in order to overcome the negative effects of the climate change, pollution, by macro-regional strategies.

The concept of the territorial cohesion has an important role for the European spatial planning (Faludi, 2006, 2008) and was implemented directly or indirectly in many documents of EU, such as Cohesion report 2000-2006, Green Paper on Territorial Cohesion, 2008, and others. However, the concept of the territorial cohesion, as a backbone of the spatial policies in EU, did not offer clear definitions and the substantial understanding on one hand, while on the other hand did not define the unified policies or mechanisms for implementation. The true value of the concept should be the assessment of its influence on the defining the policies at different spatial levels (Abrahams, 2014).

### **CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK FOR PLANNING OF PUBLIC SERVICES**

Although there are widely accepted principles based on the theoretical and international documents, the universal patterns of the planning of the planning services, fully adjusted to the practice do not exist. Therefore, the redefinition of the contextually specific methodological tools is still a challenging task. There are two main pillars that should shape the conceptual framework for the public services planning. The first one relies on the theoretical background and several relevant aspects that are taken into account. The second pillar is related to the problems identified in the present planning practice in Serbia.

The internationally adopted approach and principles related to public services include the framework of social rights that imply the implementation of the principles of equity and equality. For the realisation of the social rights (rights to education, health care etc.), the spatial distribution of possibilities to achieve these rights is important, as well as the local level of this distribution, since locally available resources are relevant to the local users (Petrovic, 2013). Following the aforesaid, the role of the planning of public services is important, as well as their spatial distribution based on the criteria of equity and equality. As a planning background, a new model in EU countries which includes the territorial and social cohesion, integrative planning approach, and the sustainable social development should be applied. Public services represent a common ground for all these areas, creating an arena in which they overlap, complement or exclude, so it is a challenge to examine if the harmonisation of these starting points is possible. Recent studies and practice have indicated little or no possibility of direct transferring European and other international experiences, with regard to economic, social, political, and consequently and spatial legacy of Serbian cities. Therefore, it is necessary to strengthen and improve the applicability and operability of the adopted principles and concept (Mitrovic, 2016).

The research also relies on the wide fundament of various aspects with the aim to create a multidisciplinary framework for the planning. This is very different from the present model, which is characterised by narrow sectorial approach or limited spatial consideration. The renewed approach should be able to connect the plan content 'vertically' and horizontally', linking the socio-demographic, spatial and economic aspects and indicators while being fully adjusted to the planning level and area. For the realistic operationalization of the concept and for the precise estimating of the capacity of the future public services in accordance with the local needs, but also following the thesis that successful public spaces should be responsive to the needs of their users, (Djukic at all, 2016), it is necessary to know the



TOPIC III:  
**SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES AND PARTICIPATION**

detailed functional, demographic and spatial characteristics of the area. The relations of these criteria and indicators shape the capacity framework not only as per present needs but also bearing in mind the future users, change of their number and structure etc., thus making the concept more flexible and adaptable (Mitrovic, 2016). Flexibility and openness, as well as the self-evaluation process, should be incorporated into the methodology and planning process of public service planning. Rigid models, same principles and the set of unified criteria that aspire to be applicable to any territory are no longer effective.

The last part of the concept relies on the research of the urban and spatial planning practice in Serbia. The main problem of the public services planning over a long period is related to the inadequate, contradictory and unfinished development framework, which found itself in the gap between the (almost) abandoned normative approach, and neoliberal, market-oriented economy, privatisation, de-planification and disintegration of the public services. Except for the urban/spatial plan as a product, no other integrative platform for the public services planning existed. The problems are more noticeable at the local and primary level of the public services' network, which is large and unevenly dispersed. Some of the reasons for such present condition are rooted in the inadequate policy and poorly defined goals and criteria for the spatial development. There is also a problem of 'spatial insensitivity', as well as the of poor inclusion of spatial-physical factors regarding public services planning (Mitrovic, 2006).

Taking into account the local specificities of the area is a key factor regarding the public services' planning, thus the right choice of criteria and indicators, deriving from demographic, economic and spatial aspect and which are adjusted to the detailed spatial conditions have to be included in the core of the planning process. The locally sensitive approach ensures better implementation and adaptation of the general concepts to the local needs.

**CONCLUSIONS**

This paper aims to offer the methodology improvement possibilities for the spatial development planning of public services in Serbia. The previous research and insight into the problem of practice of the public services' planning shaped the motives to contribute to the improvement of its theoretical basis and planning practice. As the long-term policy of the spatial planning of public services in Serbia is hard to recognize, the changes of the existing model seem necessary. They should include a viable, flexible approach to planning that ensures adaptation to local and regional characteristics of the planned area (Mitrovic, 2016). The pillars of the research refer to the concepts of social sustainability and social rights, including equity, equality and social cohesion. The contribution of the paper focuses on the change of the pattern and method of public services' planning, as well as on the chosen methodological tools, such as locally sensitive criteria and indicators. The results should undoubtedly reflex the local characteristics of the planning territory, making it unique in the sense of defining the planning strategy and the concept of development. The research is most applicable to the publicly financed and owned services, managed and/or regulated at the local, regional or national level.

The operationalization of the proposed concept relies on several points: flexible model which is tailored specifically to a chosen planning area; the choice and definition of relevant criteria and indicators, in accordance with the area; synergic effects that arise from the chosen and analysed aspects. It should fulfil the demands regarding the simplicity, operability, flexibility, implementation and efficiency of the future planning document. These are also the instruments of better and more efficient planning institutions and procedures. The proposed methodological changes can be directly implementable in the form of guidance and manuals, thus filling the gap between the (inadequate) legal framework and the planning practice in the tight financial circumstances. That way, the improved concept of planning of the public services could uniform the quality of urban and spatial plans in this domain, as the contemporary urban/spatial plan has to meet the strict standards and be consistent, clear and of standard quality.

The 'traditional' patterns of the market behavior are changing in the contemporary world, establishing new relations with public sector and services; therefore their relation is not only possible but also needful. The results of the research aim to improve the theoretical basis for planning and contribute to the establishing better practices of the public services planning in Serbia, but are also applicable in other countries in the region which are in the process of economic and socio-political transition.

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