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PROBLEMS OF REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT

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INTRODUCTION

At the beginning of the 1970s the European Commission developed the so-called Nomenclature of Statistical Territorial Units (NUTS). This NUTS classification becomes important for the collection of harmonized and thus comparable regional information for the purposes of planning the development of territorial communities and the country.

The NUTS classification defines three levels of hierarchical classification for the regions. According to the classification, each EU Member State is divided into several regions at NUTS level 1. Each region is divided into subregions at NUTS level 2 and each subregion at NUTS level 3.

In order to establish the relevant NUTS levels, where a given category of administrative units in a Member State has to be classified, the number of the population in the region is used as the main criterion.

For the purposes of planning, programming, management, resource provision, monitoring and evaluation of regional development in Bulgaria, number of regions are distinct and divided into levels according to the requirements of the common classification of the territorial units for statistical purposes applied in the European Union.

The decrease of the population in Bulgaria in the whole country and in the different regions, as well as the strong disproportion of the Bulgarian regions by a number of indicators characterizing their development – for instance strong and developing Southwest region and underdeveloped Northwest region etc. – necessitate future possible changes within the scope of the regions in Bulgaria at level 1, level 2 and level 3 (NUTS 1, NUTS 2 and NUTS 3), based on the current state of development and prospects for development in the context of the common classification of territorial units for statistical purposes of EU.

This specialized publication of Public Policy.bg, prepared under the general methodological guidance of Prof. Yordan Botev from the Public Administration Department at Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski", aims at assisting the administrative authorities in the country when they adopt their decisions (normative and organizational) for the future division of the country and for the successful implementation of the Regional development policy.

The published articles in this release of Public Policy.bg represent a personal author's view. The publishers of the Journal believe that the articles contain ideas that deserve to be publicized and discussed in the institutions directly involved in the formulation and implementation of regional development policy.

Yordan Botev, Responsible editor

PROBLEMS OF REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT

STRATEGIC THINKING IN ECODEVELOPMENT: THE EMERGENCE OF A NEW TYPE OF ECO-NEIGHBORHOOD THROUGH BROWNFIELDS REGENERATION

Stella Kyvelou, Georgia Gemenetzi

Abstract

*The creation of the first eco-neighborhoods coincides with the emergence of concerns about the antagonistic relations between society and nature and the development of ecological and environmental movements in 1960s. Currently, eco-neighborhoods are a fully recognized "institution" that is called upon to implement the concept of sustainable community. Despite their diversity, there are common axes of organization such as (a) the empowerment and revival of the local community with the key elements of open governance, widespread participation and sound social and political networking (b) the implementation of sustainable practices in the management of natural and cultural resources, accessibility and the built environment. The paper aims to discuss **the strategic thinking in ecodevelopment** focusing on eco-neighborhoods in the Euro-Mediterranean area. Lessons learned from this region are the integration of the protection and enhancement of natural and cultural heritage given that natural and cultural resources are central for place identity. In this context, and after briefly discussing the development of eco-neighborhoods in Greece, examples of strategic urban interventions are being examined such as the potential regeneration of the port-industrial area of Drapetsona which, in our view, is striving for a vision of environmental protection and economic development based on both the reconnection of natural and cultural heritage and on the mobilisation of public-private cooperation in urban planning and governance.*

Key words : Strategic thinking, Ecodevelopment, Econeighborhoods, brownfields, regeneration, Southern Europe, Greece

1. Introduction: about eco-neighborhoods

Even though there are various approaches regarding the concept of eco-neighborhood, an eco-neighborhood is commonly defined on the basis of high-density, walkable residential or mixed use district which has a low ecological footprint, a local identity and a strong sense of community (Barton, 2000). It is worth noting that gradually there has been a shift from environmental issues through health and social inclusion to the more abstract concepts of freedom and community. (Barton, 2000, Kyvelou and Papadopoulos, 2011, Joss, 2011, Medved, 2017). Furthermore, Bayulken & Huisinigh (2015) in their extended and systematic review of Northern European ecotowns suggested that political commitment, timing, financial aspects, physical qualities, stakeholder involvement and environmental planning were key elements in achieving the ecotowns' goals.

Concerning the typology of eco-neighborhoods there are three phases, according to the existing literature (Souami, 2009). The onset of the first eco-neighborhoods coincides with the development of ecological and environmental movements in 1960-1970 and the emergence of

concerns about the antagonistic relations between society and the natural environment. The initial eco-neighborhood type -well known as “eco-village”- was most often a small pool of buildings located in rural areas or in the periphery of cities organized with the principle of community, and even co-housing. The initiators of such projects were usually professional and experts, politically active, enrolled in so-called alternative movements. This type of eco-neighborhood is often met during the 1980s in Austria, Netherlands and Germany (Souami, 2009, Kyvelou et al., 2012)

The second type includes the «prototype» of eco-neighborhood of the '90s. These projects are developed as exemplary neighborhoods that take advantage of exceptional urban events (such as World's Fair in Hanover, B01 exhibition in Malmo), show ambitious environmental goals and promote a learning procedure for both stakeholders (developers, technicians, local politicians) and citizens. They are implemented by public-private partnerships and using funds that come from local, national and international sources (Kyvelou et al., 2012).

The third type of eco-neighborhood appears from the mid-90s and is based on environmental quality objectives. These projects are being planned in a long-term period and implemented in a conventional manner since they adopt ordinary tools of development and construction and common production methods (Kyvelou et al., 2012).

On the other hand, it is worth noting the three phases of eco-city development distinguished by Joss (Joss, 2011): During the first phase, extending from 1980s to early 1990s, the so-called grassroots/visions phase, the ‘eco-city’ remained mainly a normatively prescriptive concept, ‘a collection of ideas about urban planning, transportation, health, housing, economic development, natural habitats, public participation and social justice...’ with relatively few practical examples. The second phase extended from 1992 to early 2000s is the local and national experimentation period during which eco-city concepts were increasingly translated into practice. The third phase that is the post-2000s period is, according to Joss, the global expansion/policy mainstreaming period. This third phase began to manifest itself in the early to mid 2000s through the concurrent globalisation and mainstreaming of the eco-city phenomenon. A proliferation of eco-city initiatives is observed during this last period all over the world and several high profile policy initiatives at national and international levels have begun to promote eco-city innovation (e.g the Clinton Climate Initiative, the EC Eco-City Project, the World Economic Forum's SlimCity initiative etc.)

Our own hypothesis is that we are currently running a new era of eco-urbanism as this was influenced by the economic crisis and the fact that ecosystems thinking and resilience thinking are gaining ground in spatial and urban planning.

2. Comparing eco-neighborhoods in Northern Europe and Euro-Mediterranean area

2.1 The Northern European VS the South European Eco-neighborhood model

The experience from the development of eco-neighborhoods projects shows that there are common features that characterize the Northern Europe eco-neighborhood model. The North-European model is mainly described by its technical and environmental components and its performance in terms of energy, saving water or recycling materials. This model is managed by communities leading a strong environmental policy, with regard to the implementation of Agenda 21. Therefore, its environmental approach and performance seems to be not only a strong mechanism to move from principles and visions to the effective implementation of sustainable development, but also a powerful tool of communication and reverse of the social and economic depreciation. Furthermore, the communities have the land ownership that allows them to develop long-term and integrated community and neighborhood policies. Besides, the demonstration and the exemplarity of eco-neighborhoods project is another common element

used by communities to showcase their expertise in sustainable development and report on the project internationally and within their communities. Finally, the high diversity and level of involvement of public and private actors during both the operational phase and the lifetime of these neighborhoods is a common feature that is related to the success of these projects (Kyvelou and Papadopoulos, 2011, Kyvelou and Papadopoulos, 2010).

Table 1 shows the comparison of 16 examples of eco-neighborhoods in Southern Europe that have been either completed or are in the design phase. For the identification of the types of eco-neighborhoods Bioregional One planet living framework has been used as methodological tool (Kyvelou et al., 2012). The table shows that environmental performance issues (such as zero carbon, zero waste, sustainable use of water) are common in the most projects. However, it is clear that sustainable transport is a key field of Mediterranean interest together with health and happiness issues. Besides, there is a focus on aspects that were neglected in the Northern European model, such as land and wildlife as well as culture and heritage (such as San Rocco in Italy and MonteQuinto/Dos Hermanas in Spain) highlighting the importance that natural and cultural heritage have for the euro-Mediterranean area. Nevertheless, the focus on cultural experience as a tool to promote ecodevelopment is also met in other continents. Rizhao (City of sunshine, in China) and Songdo in South Korea with thematic parks/districts are some examples referenced by Joss (Joss, 2011).

Table 1. Comparing eco-neighborhoods in the Euro-Mediterranean area

ONE PLANET LIVING PRINCIPLES	Zero Carbon			Zero Waste		Sustainable Transport			Sustainable Materials Local-Sust. Food		Sustainable Water		Land and Wildlife		Culture and Heritage		Equity and Local Economy		Health and Happiness								
	Solar - panels, wind control orientation	Renewable energy	Biomass	Photovoltaic systems	Thermal stations	Waste management	Pedestrian routes	Bicycle network	Green belts	Urban bus lines	Covered parking	Sustainable materials	Local and sustainable foods	Rainwater storing	Water reutilization	Water nets	Water devices	Land and wildlife	Connection with historical districts	New cultural centres	Social services	Generation mix	Integrating urban environment	Sports facilities	Public buildings	Kindergartens	Urban parks
Portugal																											
Mato de Sesimbra, Lisbon																											
Spain																											
Entrenucleus, Seville																											
Valdespartera, Zaragoza																											
Logroño Montecorvo, Rioja																											
France																											
Andromède quarter, Biagnac																											
Ville de Pézenas, Saint Christol																											
Italy																											
St.Rocco, Faenza																											
Malizia, SienaCognento																											
BICEP, Modena																											
Sanpolino quarter, Brescia																											
Parco Ottavi, Reggio Emilia																											
Public Buildings, Pietrasana																											
Villa Fasliggi, Pesaro																											
Quartier de la Bolognina																											
Greece																											
Elefsis																											
Iasmos																											
Aghia Yvanna																											

Source : Kyvelou et al., 2012

The socioeconomic and urban contexts are different in each case showing that there is no common profile to serve as a basis for the creation of an eco-neighborhood. The main findings from the Euro-Mediterranean area show that they seem to prefix social, economic and governance issues and less attention is paid to environmental performance at least from the point

of view of their initial definition and specification. They are not merely expressions of integration of sustainable development in city planning or products integrating new technologies and alternative energy resources (Kyvelou et al., 2012). Instead, the high degree of diversity that characterizes the Mediterranean cities is often associated with local aspects of strategic spatial planning in which territorial management has a predominant role. There are constraints in their implementation and a relative delay.

2.2 Planning eco-neighborhoods in Greece: constraints and perspectives

To date, the only integrated residential projects that are based on the integration of sustainability principles and environmental performance and are part of a central action plan have been developed by the Greek Workers' Housing Organization. The Workers' Housing Organization was the main public body responsible for housing workers and lower social classes until 2012 (Georgiadou, 2010). Under his jurisdiction, the innovative eco-district -named "Solar Village"- was built in the 1990s in Pefki, a suburb in Northern Attica. Nowadays, there are many problems concerning the environmental performance of the "Solar Village" due to lack of maintenance of passive and energy systems and low degree of cooperation between the tenants and the stakeholders. Besides, the Elefsis Project regarding the construction of 88 housing units in the city of Elefsina in West Attica was carried out in order to upgrade in environmental and social terms this part of the city. Last, Iasmos Project concerning a pilot social housing project in Northern Greece (Rodopi) has been designed by Workers' Housing Organization having as a central pillar the consultation between the various stakeholders. However, it was not implemented, proving that eco-neighborhood ideas are still immature in Greece (Kyvelou et al., 2012).

There are many barriers with regard to the planning and implementation of eco-neighborhood projects in the country. Since, currently, affordable housing policies have weakened due to the austerity measures, eco-neighborhood projects need to be unassociated with social estate policy and relate to real estate prospects through the activation of private initiative in cooperation with local and regional authorities and non-governmental organisations. Besides, the lack of guaranteed financing, especially in the era of economic recession is a hurdle needed to be jumped, along with bureaucracy that is related to planning issues. Finally, concerning territorial management, there is difficulty in setting up engagement strategies that would bring together different stakeholders (such as municipal authorities, land owners, property developers, Greek utilities) assigning them at the same time distinct roles (Georgiadou, 2010).

3. Converting the brownfield of the port-industrial zone of Keratsini- Drapetsona into an eco-neighborhood

3.1 Area Profile

The former port-industrial zone of Keratsini-Drapetsona is a wide coastal area in the Municipality of Keratsini-Drapetsona that is located between the passenger and commercial port of Piraeus (Figure 1). This area, which in the past was a major industrial area for the Piraeus region, is currently inactive industrially and therefore, in economic and social terms. Unemployment has escalated and significant environmental degradation problems have been arisen. Nowadays it is a brownfield near the sea that obstructs the access of the citizens in the waterfront (Strategic Plan of the Municipality Keratsini-Drapetsona, 2015).

The emergence of this port-industrial zone was interconnected with the incoming wave of industrial workers (Armenian and immigrants from the Dodecanese islands) that settled in Keratsini as well as the inflow of refugees that arrived in the country after the Asia Minor

catastrophe and settled mostly in Drapetsona. In particular, Drapetsona was converted into a 'spontaneous' (self-made) refugee settlement with low-quality dwelling structures (usually wooden shacks, even tents). Large industrial and harbor establishments had been gradually settled in the coastal zone and formulated a boundary -a 'concrete' industrial block of 3km length between the residential areas and the sea. Since 1930 it has gradually been converted into a working class neighborhood with an intense political and ideological orientation. After the World War II new homeless people have been moved towards Drapetsona and settled expanding the slum area.

In short, urban development in Drapetsona and Keratsini started at the beginning of the 20th century and is closely related to the port of Piraeus and the industrial development of the greater area (Georgiadou, 2010, Strategic Plan of the Municipality Keratsini-Drapetsona, 2015).

Figure 1. The former port-industrial zone of Keratsini- Drapetsona.



However, in the mid 1970s most of the factories close down or moved to other areas, aligning with the de-industrialization trends that dominate in Europe. Since the early 1990s the emblematic Fertilizers Factory, which had 9.000 employees in the 1960s, gradually reduced its labor force and turns off definitely in 2000. In 2003 the largest part of the complex had been demolished, along with most industrial buildings. Since then, the area has been abandoned (Figures 2a and 2b) (Mourgou et al.2017).

Being the last remaining free area in the waterfront, this former port-industrial zone is a brownfield that struggles for livability. It is a site of vital importance for the western Piraeus as well as the Municipality of Keratsini-Drapetsona. Even though the discussion for this area's regeneration has set off since 1979 without any results, currently, it is programmed as a strategic intervention area for the qualitative upgrading of both western Piraeus and the municipality of Keratsini-Drapetsona capitalizing its location next to the sea, its wide waterfront as well as its significant historical and cultural background (Strategic Plan of the Municipality Keratsini-Drapetsona, 2015).

Figures 2a and 2b. The area that was occupied by the old Fertilizers Factory: before and after the demolition of its largest part.



Taking into consideration the concept of eco-neighborhood, the paper examines the ways in which the port-industrial zone of Drapetsona-Keratsini could be converted into an eco-neighborhood making the most of the reconnection of cultural and natural heritage and mobilizing public-private cooperation.

3.2 Key elements of cultural heritage, both tangible and intangible

The port-industrial zone of Keratsini-Drapetsona has a strong historical background. Urban development had been identified with the inflow of refugees fleeing into the country in the aftermath of the Asia Minor Catastrophe, and later on, with the incoming wave of industrial workers.

In the beginning of the 20th century different social strata such as refugees, working class people, internal migrants mainly from the islands as well as groups of marginal people coexisted in Drapetsona area resulting in the formulation of a specific local identity. An essential feature of this identity was the birth of the forbidden popular song -well known as 'rebetiko'- in 1920s. Rebetiko songs were reflected the various problems of the area along with the social and political scene of the era (living in popular neighborhoods, working class strata, environmental degradation, political assertions) (Mourgou et al., 2017). Later on, Drapetsona had become the epicenter of civil war. Its population was enthusiastic supporters of the left. The prison Vourla, located in the waterfront area, was well known for the breakout of communists but it was demolished. Apart from rebetiko and other popular songs, many references of Keratsini and Drapetsona had been in various novels that were catching the spirit of the city.

The industrial memory is strong since the former industrial buildings act as landmarks. The part of the Complex of Fertilizers and Chemical Products in Drapetsona that has not been demolished

has been characterized as modern monument by the Ministry of Culture (Gaz 1417/B/2002). Its most outstanding feature is the tall chimney that dominates in the brownfield.

In the surrounding area there are other historical places and monuments, such as St. George Hill, Balatzian Baths (Keratsini) and Hetionia Tower (Drapetsona). Furthermore, the Mount Aigaleo that is the physical boundary of the urban development is characterized since 1969 as a place of special protection, whereas the sea area in the bay Abelakia and Salamina consists an archaeological site.

For many years, people claimed the right for this zone to be part of the city. Within this context, the Municipality of Keratsini-Drapetsona organizes successfully the cultural event “Festival in the Sea – Fertilizer” for first time in 2017.

Nowadays, almost a century later, the remnants of this industrial zone remind the history of the place, showing the way to the future with respect to the past. In short, this brownfield is a place of historical memory that in combination with its wide waterfront has a hyper local importance. Despite the environmental degradation caused by the air and sea pollution, the cultural background and the potential of natural environment especially at the land-sea interface, give the area added value and sets off the issue of its urban regeneration.

3.3 Stakeholders and ownership issues

The port-industrial zone under study has a total surface of 66 hectares. However, it is divided in nine sections which include both private and under public control estates that belong to seven different land owners (Table 2). The surface of private estates is 408 ha corresponds almost to the 66% of the total surface. These estates belong to oil and cement companies (Mobil, BP, Aget Heracles) and mostly to Protypos Ktimatiki-Touristiki S.A. (affiliated to the National Bank of Greece), which has under its ownership the largest part of the zone (241ha). The estates that are under public control expand to 211ha that account for around 34% of the total zone. The Piraeus Port Authority, the Municipality of Drapetsona-Keratsini and the Hellenic State are the public bodies that are responsible for the management of these estates (Mourgou et al., 2017).

Table 2. Ratio of private and under public control estates

<i>Estates under public control</i>	210,75	34,08%
Municipality of Keratsini-Drapetsona	68,35	11,05%
Piraeus Port Authority	89,65	14,50%
Hellenic State	52,75	8,53%
<i>Private Estates</i>	407,59	65,92%
Protypos Ktimatiki S.A. (National Bank)	241,75	39,10%
Mobil	33,7	5,45%
Aget Heracles	94,05	15,21%
BP	38,09	6,16%
Total area	618,34	100%

Source : Bellavilas, 2015

Recently, a significant part of the enacted Terrestrial Piraeus Port Zone has been provided by the Government for use and exploitation to the Municipality of Keratsini-Drapetsona (Gaz 1603/B/9.5.2018) for fifty years. The grant concerns an area of a total surface 56.975 square

meters, satisfying a long and constant demand of the local communities for free access to the coastal zone. At the same time, the Municipality has an upgraded role concerning the exploitation of the zone and the definition of its strategic vision.

Nevertheless, this complicated ownership status reflects the diversity of the aspects that the various stakeholders have for the desired activities and the land uses with reference to the exploitation of the zone. Therefore, apart from the cooperation that is difficult to be achieved between the stakeholders, conflicts with regard to land uses hamper the zone's regeneration.

3.4 The Strategic spatial planning framework

The former port-industrial zone of Keratsini-Drapetsona is enacted by the reformed Strategic Spatial Plan of Attica (L. 4277/2014) as an area of Urban Regeneration and Special Intervention of Metropolitan character. The main objectives are to ensure a high-quality environment with regard to technical and social infrastructure, basic functions (such as recreation and urban green) and access to the waterfront, which will address the needs of both the local society and the western Piraeus. More specifically, the urban regeneration-development of the area is based on the following directions:

- a) The formulation of a hyper-local pole for the upgrading of western Piraeus, where the permitted land uses and activities concern culture, education, health, sport, green spaces and recreation.
- b) Ensure significant open spaces for recreation and other collective activities that will contribute to the restoration of the adjacent hinterland and the coastal area mainly through the formulation of an expanded green park. The maximum building factor is set at 0,15 of the total area.
- c) The protection and promotion of the industrial archeology monuments through their re-use with compatible activities related to the history, culture and traditions of the greater area.

The above-mentioned directions have been formulated in 2015 after the reformation of Strategic Spatial Plan of Attica in order to exclude some of the previous enacted land uses such as industry, manufacturing and activities related to port function, which were considered that downgrade the environment and undermine the urban sustainability of the area. Additionally, residential areas have been excluded, despite the fact that residential development was a target of Prototypos Ktimatiki S.A. which is the largest owner.

Finally, it is worth noting that the strategic guidelines have not yet been applied, since currently the area is "outside of the city plan". This means that it lacks of the planning tools that could activate the regeneration of the area.

4. Discussing the regeneration of the port-industrial zone and its transformation to an urban eco-neighborhood

Brownfields such as the Drapetsona port-industrial zone could be regenerated making use of the concept of eco-neighborhood. This does encompass not only the sustainability principles, both in terms of environmental upgrading and social and economic revitalization, but is also based on the high involvement and participation of various actors from public and private sectors (such as developers, policy-makers, landlords, architects, associations, technical services). The latter is a crucial element for overcoming problems related to financing and investment, bureaucracy and inefficient management, that are all common in Greece.

Besides, in Greece the development of urban eco-neighborhoods and, in general, any integrated urban regeneration requires a series of institutional interventions in order to overcome the fragmentation of land property and the peculiarities of the regulatory planning system. However, the recent reformation of the spatial planning system (law 4447/2016) gives the opportunity to use the tool of “Special Spatial Plan” (EXS, art.8 of law 4447/2016) in order to implement a new model of eco-neighborhood. According to the law, this Special Spatial Plan may be initiated by the private sector as well. This allows to re-plan this zone from the beginning under the condition that the identity of the greater area is not adversely affected and with respect to the natural and cultural heritage.

The achievement of the consensus of all stakeholders is an issue of high importance so that the project may be implemented. The development of a strategic vision which will satisfy both stakeholders and the local society and at the same time will formulate a strong local identity, is crucial. Within this context, the possibility of residential development is greatly recommended, almost imposed. Residential use is totally compatible with the programmed activities of culture and recreation and at the same time allows real estate development. This may ensure financing from private funds and minimize the risk of investment for the private sector. Besides, political support is necessary for the approval of the plan. Finally, the implementation of the project requires the enactment of a development agency, which will be consisted of all stakeholders, both private and public, including local authorities. The establishment of such an agency may successfully activate the development process.

Summing up, we conclude that the development of eco-neighborhoods in Greece may be structured around the following key strategic axes:

- ✓ Integrate the concept of place-based development founded on the need of place making and urban regeneration;
- ✓ Reclaim the local identity of the area with reference to the natural (land-sea interface) and cultural heritage in the shaping of place-making identity;
- ✓ Reconnect and promote natural and cultural heritage to create strong cultural branding;
- ✓ Identify commercialization opportunities for the private sector – create a real estate prospect, including affordable housing, thus avoiding “green gentrification” effects;
- ✓ Ensure public-private-people cooperation and establish public-private-people partnerships;
- ✓ Stimulate local economy dynamics.

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REGIONALIZATION OF BULGARIA: SOCIO-ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND GEOPOLITICAL IDENTIFICATION

Kosyo Stoychev

Abstract

The creation and designation of regions, namely, the establishment of borders and the definition of territorial formations according to some attributea or group of criteria is a fundamental problem of science and practice. Regional changes are slow and rare. So, it should be. Often, people do not reflect them in their personal horizons of human life, but once they have occurred, they remain valid for a very long time and irreversibly affect the lives of whole countries. Consequently, modern geography no longer needs to inform the public about geographic data, phenomena and facts. This is publicly available information in the global network and libraries. Geography thinks and creates for their relationships, interconnections, connectivity, coexistence and synergy. In this regard, I am sure that geography science and profession will not disappear in the future, as many of the worlds of information technology predict, but will simply evolve into another intellectual form.

About Regional Science

The creation and designation of regions, namely, the establishment of borders and the definition of territorial formations according to some attributea or group of criteria is a fundamental problem of science and practice.

Regional changes are slow and rare. So, it should be. Often, people do not reflect them in their personal horizons of human life, but once they have occurred, they remain valid for a very long time and irreversibly affect the lives of whole countries. Consequently, modern geography no longer needs to inform the public about geographic data, phenomena and facts. This is publicly available information in the global network and libraries. Geography thinks and creates for their relationships, interconnections, connectivity, coexistence and synergy. In this regard, I am sure that geography science and profession will not disappear in the future, as many of the worlds of information technology predict, but will simply evolve into another intellectual form. As British Professor Harvey says - "Geography is too important to be left only to geographers." That is, a more community understanding of the space and the regions that form it, the habitable environment that we defend, develop and call our own home is part of our cultural identity.

There are numerous scientific literatures about the methods for professional definition of regions, whose roots have been since Hetner's horology (1923). Systematic research directions exploring spatial differentiation and analysis of space-time processes, as well as the formation of their territorial (regional projections), evolve later. The scientific direction of economic and regional geography and consequently emerging regional science have a major role to play. Regional science is a more unified concept, as in addition to geographers, it includes economists, urban scientists, landscape scientists, sociologists, philosophers, political scientists and other humanitarian disciplines. The reason is that the "region" - the main subject and object of research that was first placed in science for the first time by the American geographer Richard Hardshorne in the distant 1939, is too complex, multilayered and only one kind of science is not able to satisfy regional analysis and synthesis. Therefore, today there are science schools that give

importance and favor certain criteria, factors and conditions according to the national and regional space they work for and seek to manage.

In this regard, we can not expect the results of the work of any academic geographic school to be the same with another. For example, the French school would put man and human activity at the center of attention. The German school would put the settlement network and the existing transport and production links. The American school would use both previous criteria and incorporate the American way of life and the scale of agglomeration, concentration and specialization of productions that have never occurred in such a volume in Europe, etc. This is an extremely natural process and comparability must not be sought, except one - measuring the results obtained for quality of life, infrastructure, satisfaction, socio-economic indicators, etc. For us, it is enough to have a clearly written methodology that gives us the systematic and verifiable results. In other words, there should not be misinterpreted regions, but there would be mis-structured regionalization methodologies that artificially generate territorial and regional socio-economic imbalances. The European Union has grown extremely territorially and has included 28 countries with different history, culture and territorial-regional tradition. Four of the major academic schools in geography and regional science are part of it - French, German, Dutch and English¹.

They all have a strong regional basis and their own vision. For the purposes of this paper, we will present the summaries of one of the honorable authors in geography, Professor Peter Hagget. In his view, the term "region" is used to designate a territory in which selected criteria, exploring the nature of the phenomenon sought and its spatial manifestations, create a specific effect on the territories outside of it; there are certain amount of homogeneity. Therefore, the key factor in regional research is the choice of meaningful criteria. (Hagget, 2001)² The author proposes the following classification of regions, which has a common scientific continuity:

1. Uniform (homogeneous) regions;
2. Nodal (Polar) regions;
3. Planning or programming regions.

In turn, they are divided into:

1. Regions defined based on one attribute;
2. Regions defined on several grounds;
3. "General" regions - (localities, districts, provinces).

Uniform (homogeneous) regions are homogeneous in terms of the indicator chosen to be the lead in their determination. The nodal regions focus on the centers and their spatial organization. They are extremely useful in analyzing urban areas of the center-periphery type. One of the important differences between the uniform and nodal regions is in terms of their borders. The first ones have precisely defined boundaries in space as they are the result of measurable, most often quantitative and qualitative criteria. The second type of regions have no precise boundaries, but rather their effect (like gravity determined by a spatial-forming effect), which is a function proportional to the increase in distance from the main center-forming city. Because of this, the boundaries of this type of region are more of a shared influence zone than the lines in the space that are reflected on a map³. The regions that Bulgaria rethought today are uniform (homogeneous) regarding the criteria of the Regulation No 1059/2003, they are defined on several grounds and planning / programming regions in the sense of Hagget. There are

¹ Notwithstanding Brexit, the English academic school has had tremendous influence on the continent before Britain's accession to the EU in 1971, which is likely to continue in the future.

² Haggett, P., (2001) *Geography, A Global Synthesis*, Pearson Education Limited.

³ Stoychev K. (2012) *Localization approaches for regional development*, Printing house "St. Kliment Ohridski" - ISBN 978-954-07-3398-2

established urban centers within them, that is, relationships have been realized in the spatial structures of the center-periphery type. All of this makes their spatial defining a complex intellectual task.

NUTS regions – EU Hierarchical Territorial System

From a practical point of view, for EU territorial governance purposes, for a fairer and more efficient allocation of financial resources between Member States and in accordance with their needs and capabilities, the EU has undertaken the establishment of a unified system of Nomenclature of Territorial Units for Statistics⁴, adopted by Regulation (EC) No 1059/2003⁵. In addition, several studies at EU and regional level⁶ have demonstrated deepening regional disparities, despite Union policies through common funds, as well as a number of new regional studies that continue to identify problems related to regional development, economic development, overall competitiveness, domestic challenges and more.

In regard of these analyzes, the classification was renewed in 2016 and it came into force on January 1, 2018. We can conclude that NUTS regions are a compromise designed to make the current socio-economic situation of the EU regions statistically measurable, to identify groups of regions with similar problems, to define common long-term goals and to define policies for their achievement. This compromise is fully justified, but the EC allows national governments and their expertise to determine the number, territorial scope and names of these regions by themselves. Bulgaria is a country that has distanced itself from applying scientifically sound management approaches using limited expertise, which is a prerequisite for assuming management risks in solving regional tasks requiring high scientific background and public consensus.

Today, NUTS 2016 at European level includes 104 NUTS 1 regions, 281 NUTS 2 regions and 1348 NUTS 3 regions. By regulation, the NUTS classification is a hierarchical system for dividing the EU's economic territory into three specific objectives:

1. Collect, develop and harmonize European regional statistics;
2. Development of socio-economic analyzes of the regions:
 - *NUTS 1: Major socio-economic regions*
 - *NUTS 2: Key regions for implementing regional policies*
 - *NUTS 3: Small regions with specific profiles*

3. *Defining the regional policy of the Union:*

- Regions eligible for Cohesion Policy support. At this stage, mainly for NUTS 2 level.

Due to the enormous diversity in the socio-economic profile of the regions, and for practical reasons, the EC considers that it would be most effective to work with a territorial level, which is intermediate. These are NUTS 2 regions that are large enough to meet the conditions of regional significance, homogeneity and identity, while are small enough not to conceal some statistical summaries related to national trends in key indicators. That is why Art. Article 3 (2) of the Regulation sets out the classification criteria to predict the relative homogeneity sought by Hagget. The Regulation defines the administrative units that are to be used on a territorial basis at the different levels:

⁴ NUTS classification (Nomenclature of territorial units for statistics) -

<https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/nuts/background>

⁵ Regulation (EC) No 1059/2003 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 26 May 2003 on the establishment of a common classification of territorial units for statistics (NUTS)

⁶ https://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/en/information/publications/studies/2009/regional-challenges-in-the-perspective-of-2020-regional-disparities-and-future-challenges

"For this purpose," administrative unit "means a geographical unit with administrative authority which has the power to take administrative or political decisions on the area within the legal and institutional framework of the Member State." In addition, there are population thresholds that are required on the regions:

Level	Minimum	Maximum
NUTS 1	3 million	7 million
NUTS 2	800 000	3 million
NUTS 3	150 000	800 000

Article 3 paragraph 5 states "If, for a given NUTS classification level in one Member State, there are no administrative units of an appropriate scale in accordance with the criteria set out in paragraph 2, this NUTS level shall be established by aggregating an appropriate number of existing smaller neighboring administrative units. Such aggregation must take into account such relevant criteria as geographic, socio-economic, cultural or environmental conditions."

As it is evident, the Regulation gives great freedom to the respective member states to do what they think best for their countries and their regional traditions. This makes it possible, in addition to meeting the requirements of the regions as a territorial basis for collecting statistics, but also to apply other criteria that have more significant national targets. The latter condition is very important to us because Bulgaria has a specific post-Liberation experience, and that was the first NUTS regionalization.

It was the population criterion that proved to be a serious challenge because our country failed to implement a successful package of measures that would lead to a change in the reproductive behavior of the population and to control internal and external migration. Therefore, for a very short period, we have had to revise the system of NUTS 2 hierarchical level already twice since its initial introduction in Bulgaria in 2006.

Bulgaria's experience for regionalization

Our problems are at the level of a conceptual apparatus, as the terms used by geographers and regional economists in Bulgaria are evidence of this, because there are two terms - "rayon-район" and "region". This "error" has also multiplied to the "Regional Development Act" level, which defines "rayoni", and regional development takes place. The error has received a regulatory basis at the highest state level. One of the major tasks of the new zoning/regions and changes in the law is the term "rayon" to be completely removed and replaced by "region".

In general, the term "rayon" is used only in the former Soviet Union and Bulgaria. According to many authors in our country, the origin of the word "rayon" comes from the French word "rayon". From the review of specialized geographic dictionaries, it becomes clear that the word is content that has nothing to do with territory. The French word "rayon" literally translates as a ray or radius. In the geographic dictionaries issued by Penguin books, the word "region" is absent, and in The Little Oxford Dictionary (1990), the word is translated as a "textile pulp" derived from cellulose.

In this respect, it is very interesting to interpret the word "rayon" in the "Glossary of Foreign Words in the Bulgarian Language" (1978), which states that "the word is of French origin and has the following meanings":

- 1) Locality with economic or geographic features;
- 2) Part of a settlement or neighborhood;
- 3) Administrative-territorial unit in the USSR;
- 4) Place where a particular action is taken; area of action."

These interpretations in the glossary are borrowed from the Soviet (Russian) dictionaries without making a critical reference to other sources of the content of the term. This is an example of the danger of multiplication in the conversational Bulgarian language and science of foreign words with unclear and even wrong content.

From this brief review of the interpretations of the content of the word "rayon" it is misused to characterize geographically distinct parts of the earth's surface. Proof of this is written by E. Alayev⁷ (1983). In his view, the term "rayon" is rusified and it has no "territorial" content in either France or other French-speaking countries. The term "rayon" was first introduced by the Russian geographer, Hermolov in 1879, in the characterization of agricultural areas in Russia. Today there is a denial of the use of the term "rayon" even in Russia, which is mainly due to the very "precise" geographic content of the term "region". According to E. Alayev (1983) the term "region" has a multifaceted content:

- (1) Synonym of an area, or in the sense of a territory characterized by similar territories and characterized by unity and interrelationships between its elements, which determines its integrity;
- 2) Used to designate comparable taxonomics belonging to different taxonomic systems or to different levels in one system;
- (3) Used to designate any territory which, by its very nature, does not conform to a system of taxonomic units of a particular class already adopted in a specific system of charging.

In the "Geographical Encyclopedia" (1962), the Latin word "regio" refers to the district or region and its use in the characterization of large areas. This understanding is much closer to the logic of the EU in creating the NUTS hierarchical system.

According to the remarkable American geographer R.J. Johnston (1987) defines as a "region" any part of the earth's surface with its specific and characteristic features of nature or human development. They, on the other hand, give in this territory identity, differentiation and distinction from other similar parts of the earth's surface.

According to S. B. Cohen (1973), the geographic region is a space organization based on quantitative and qualitative criteria and expressing the unity of its various elements.

According to Boyadzhiev (2005) there are two possible explanations for the region's definition. One is related to the Latin word "regere", i.e. the territory on the border line. In Rome, "region" meant an area that was to be governed in principle without being associated with a particular state institution. The region has not been associated with political power and organization. Its competence is expressed by limited territorial power resources. The other understanding of the origin is from the Latin "Rex," meaning ruler possession. (Boyadzhiev, 2005)

Against this background, it is striking that in Russian and many Bulgarian publications the definitions of "rayon" completely coincide with the definitions of "region". For example, Э. Алаев (1983) points out that "a rayon" is a territory that is distinguished from other similar territories, having its internal unity, integrity and interconnection between its elements.

From what we have said, we can draw the following conclusion: the word "rayon" is not only a Russian version of the French word "rayon", but its content is entirely borrowed from the content of the word "region" of Anglo-Saxon origin. This gives us reason to believe that the term "rayon" should be completely removed and replaced by a "region", at least in connection with the alignment of our terminology with the EU countries.

In the following pages are analyzed some basic models for regionalization of Bulgaria in connection with attempts to justify "new" NUTS 2 regions. How many proposals that were considered by the MRDPW are "new" is a controversial issue. Bulgaria has no great options for significant changes in the scope as the socio-economic processes of transformation are going too

⁷ Алаев, Э. Б., Социально-экономическая география. Понятийно-терминологический словарь, Москва, 1983

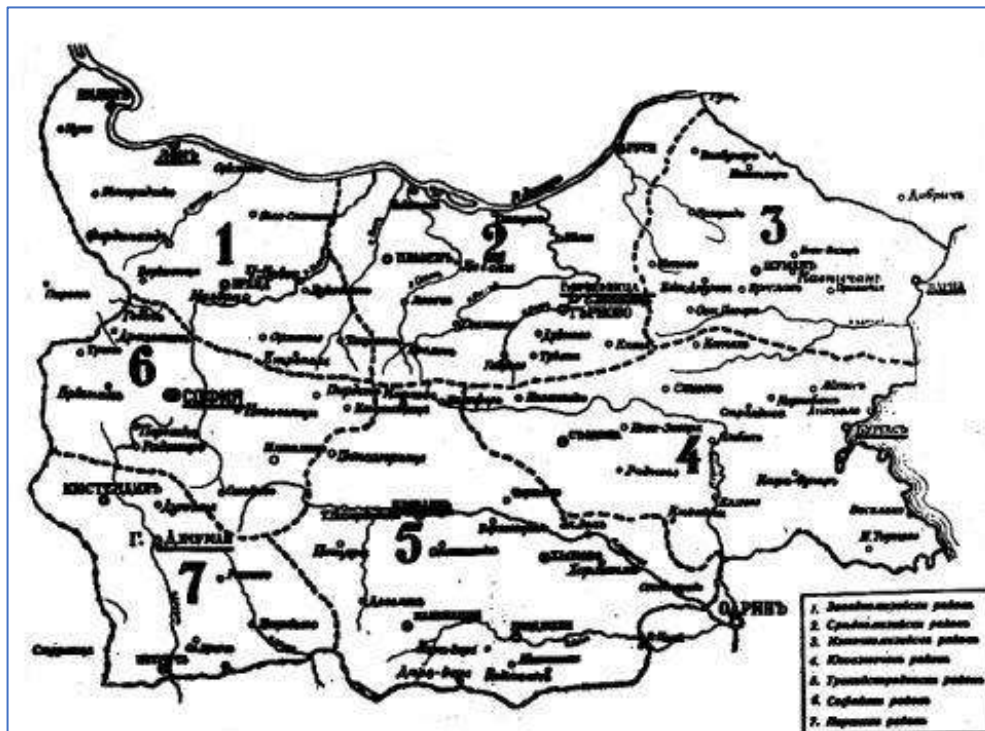
slowly. The only accelerated process is the depopulation of the regions, but this is a separate topic. Our country should only answer three important questions about the NUTS 2 regions:

1. Where Sofia should be – alone or part of bigger region?
2. How many are the new NUTS 2 regions?
3. What should be the names of the new NUTS 2 regions?

Long before the current NUTS regionalization of Bulgaria was carried out, a number of prominent scientists have worked on this topic and through many criteria and approaches have developed significant number of regionalization schemes. We can consider the present and the future regionalization scheme of Bulgaria as their derivative. For the purpose of academic honesty, we will mention several basic models. The first specialized zoning is by geographer Ivan Batakliiev in 1934 ("Landscape division of Bulgaria"). Although it is landscape, it is the first to introduce specific names of the regional division of Bulgaria. It is based on geotectonic, morphological, climatic, plant-geographic and anthropo-geographic "foundations" of 5 landscapes or landscape areas, as he calls them, which are the main species of natural zoning: Macedonian-Rhodopian, Middle-Bulgarian, Staroplaninski (Balkan), Danube plateau and Black Sea shore. Paragraph 5 of Article 3 of the Regulation allows the participation of this type of criteria in the regionalization process.

The first economic zoning of Bulgaria appeared in the same year by the geographer Anastas Beshkov⁸ (1934), which remained the highest quality division until 1944. Acad. Beshkov divided Bulgaria into 7 economic areas (economic complexes) based on criteria such as economic specialization of the territory in terms of agricultural development, production traditions of the population (development of crafts), ethno-cultural and cultural characteristics, peculiarities of the population territory and its natural characteristics. It defines seven regions: West-Moesian, Middle-Moesian, East-Moesian, Southeast, Thracian-Rhodope, Pirin (Strumsky) and Sofia (Figure 1). As can be seen, a mixed approach is used in naming them - historical-geographic province, directions of the world, morphology, settlement name.

⁸ Бешков, А., Стопанско-географско поделение на България. София, 1934, с. 11.

Figure 1: Economic regions of Bulgaria by A. Beshkov (1934)

After the changes of 1944, Acad. Beshkov attempted to defend his thesis and in 1946 in his article "From militant to peaceful economy. Economic Planning and Economic Zoning" indicates the need to know the different regions by the way of their complex research⁹.

Two years later, Prof. Ignat Penkov conducted a first regional survey attempt, raising the question of the "economic geographic area" as a "territorial-production complex" with maximum developed domestic production links and specialization on a nationwide scale. This formulation will continue to be maintained by a number of scholars during the socialist years until the end of 1989.

As a result, I. Penkov and T. Hristov present their view of division of the country (December 1952 - January 1953) at a session on economic zoning of Bulgaria conducted by the Geographical Institute of BAS with the departments of geography in Sofia University and the Institute of Economics at BAS. They define only 3 major areas (Figure 2): West, Southeast and Northeast, as well as nine sub-regions.

This economic zoning of the country's territory is based on the following criteria and conditions:

1. the industrial bases – thermal power-energetics, metallurgical, machine building, etc. ;
2. sectoral areas and the formation of industrial cores, nodes and areas, including agricultural areas;
3. the territorial distribution of labor;
4. forms of complexity;
5. the most important rail highways. and road junctions;
6. areas of ports;
7. the functions of the cities and the changes in the urban network;

⁹ Пенков, И., Т. Христов, Икономическа география на България. София, 1975, с. 344.

8. party and government documents;

9. the international division of labor, scientific and technological progress and the integration of the countries in the CEA. (Penkov and Hristov, 1975)

Figure 2: Economic regions and sub-regions by I. Penkov and T. Hristov.



1 - boundary of a region; 2 - boundary of a sub-region

Again, during this period Academician A. Beshkov, Prof. T. Yordanov, Prof. Hr. Marinov, I. Zahariev, P. Popov argue that no economic division of the country has been made and that the existing scheme of administrative-territorial units (districts and counties) does not coincide and could not coincide with the economic regions. According to them, economic zoning represents an "objective scientific process of revealing and proving the existence of objective economic areas on the territory of the country" which are formed as a result of the development of the settlement network on the national territory, the distribution of the productive forces and the industrial, and economic ties. The limiting influence of the natural environment, especially the relief - the barrier of Stara Planina, some cultural and household peculiarities of the population, the daily and weekly labor trips, etc. are taken into account. (The Geographic Institute of the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences, 1954). To date, Bulgaria has not overcome the differences in urban and infrastructure development between Northern and Southern Bulgaria.

Contrary to this thesis, Ignat Penkov (1954) maintains the notion that "administrative-territorial units (counties) are economic regions", ie. argues that there is a coverage between the scheme from the administrative and territorial units and the economic regions.

Another scheme (Figure 3), proposed by Prof. T. Yordanov (1954), includes five economic areas - two in the north (northwest and northeast) and three in southern Bulgaria (Southwest, Marisho-Rhodopi and Southeastern).

Figure 3: Economic regions of Bulgaria under the scheme of T. Yordanov.

The currently active NUTS 2 regionalization almost completely coincides with that of Yordanov, with the small difference that the Stara Zagora region is not in the Southeast as it was never previously considered a Southeastern region, as well as the fact that today in Northern Bulgaria the regions are 3, but the new proposal for NUTS 2 will again bring us back to 2 in northern Bulgaria.

Particularly intensive work on the regions was carried out in the period 1956-1960. Results are published in "Geography of Bulgaria", item 2, 1961, where 6 regions are described, namely: Northwest, North Central, Northeast, Southwest, South Central and Southeast. This is the beginning when the Bulgarian national space falls under the "iron curtain" of the directions of the world. Even today the Bulgarian regions are represented precisely by these names in the EU, created in 1961. The names based on a river or sea basins, morphostructure approach or historical-geographic provinces forever disappear.

At that point, the authors of the monograph underline that "economic zoning is a prerequisite for the complex development of the national economy." More results from the expeditionary surveys were published in "Economic Zoning of the People's Republic of Bulgaria", 1963. More than ten options for schemes of the country's economic regions were presented. The regions that are offered have a different territorial scope, natural, demographic, economic and infrastructure potential.¹⁰

Other scholars present their schemes - Christ. Marinov - 3 regions (1953), T. Yordanov - 5 districts (1954), Radka Naydenova and F. Nikolov - 8 districts (1974), V. Dakov - 1 district, D.S. Timoskin and others, using one or other criteria and metrics.¹¹

It is clear that there was no specific logical link and systemicity between the perceived factors, criteria and indicators that influenced the formation of the territorial basis of zoning.

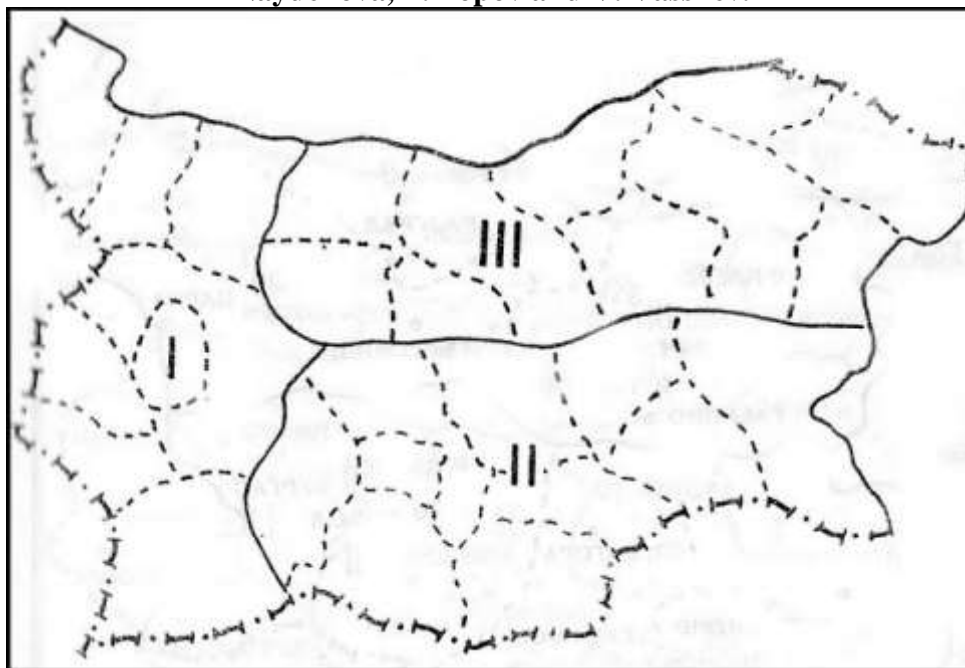
In 1956, with the publication of the 273th Regulation, the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences and other government departments were commissioned to carry out the necessary

¹⁰ География на България: Физическа и социално-икономическа география. София, БАН, 2002, с. 671.

¹¹ Икономическо райониране на НРБ, 1963 г.

researches by the end of 1960 and to come up with a scientific project for pre-zoning, and by the end of 1965, with a final project for the overall zoning of the country. In 1962 the cited authors' team (Prof. Iv. Zahariev, Prof. D. Bradistilov, Prof. Radka Naidenova, Prof. P. Popov and V. Vassilev) developed divisions under Regulation 273. The development of productive forces on the territory of Bulgaria, there are two distinct (West and Southeast) and one third (Northeast) under construction of economic and territorial complex areas. (Figure 4)

Figure 4: Economic regions of Bulgaria under the Iv. Zahariev, D. Bradistilov, Radka Naydenova, P. Popov and V. Vassilev.



1. West (together North-Western and South-West Bulgaria) with the center of the industrial agglomeration Sofia-Pernik;
2. Southeast (together Southeastern and Southern Central Bulgaria) with Plovdiv center, uniting all industrial agglomerations;
3. Northeast, which unites all industrial cores and agglomerations in northeastern and central northern Bulgaria. There is no center in it.

On this principle an attempt was made economic zoning of Bulgaria, which is done with the "General scheme for the territorial location of the production sectors" (preliminary version). In it, on the basis of the formed industrial-territorial complexes and the territorial concentration and specialization of the main branches and the transport, there are eight territorial-production complexes, which form eight economic regions (figure 5):

- South-West, West - Upper Thracian, East-Upper Thracian, South-East Primorski, North-West, North Central, North-East Danube and North-East Primorski.

Basically these eight regions coincide with the sub-regions described above in the scheme of I. Penkov and T. Hristov (1952-1953).

Figure 5: General Economic Areas (1972).



Later Prof. Doncho Donchev (1983) brought out 7 economical regions (Figure 6) - Sofia-Pernishki (the largest by economic potential and by degree of economic development), Western Upper Thracian (Plovdiv-Pazardzhik, second largest and economic including the cities of Plovdiv, Pazardzhik, Karlovo, Smolyan, Panagyurishte, Asenovgrad, Velingrad, Peshtera), Eastern Gornotrakiyski (Eastern Maritsa, includes the lands of Stara Zagora and Haskovo and parts of Kardzhali, Yambol and Sliven).

Figure 6: Economic regions of Bulgaria by D. Donchev (1983)



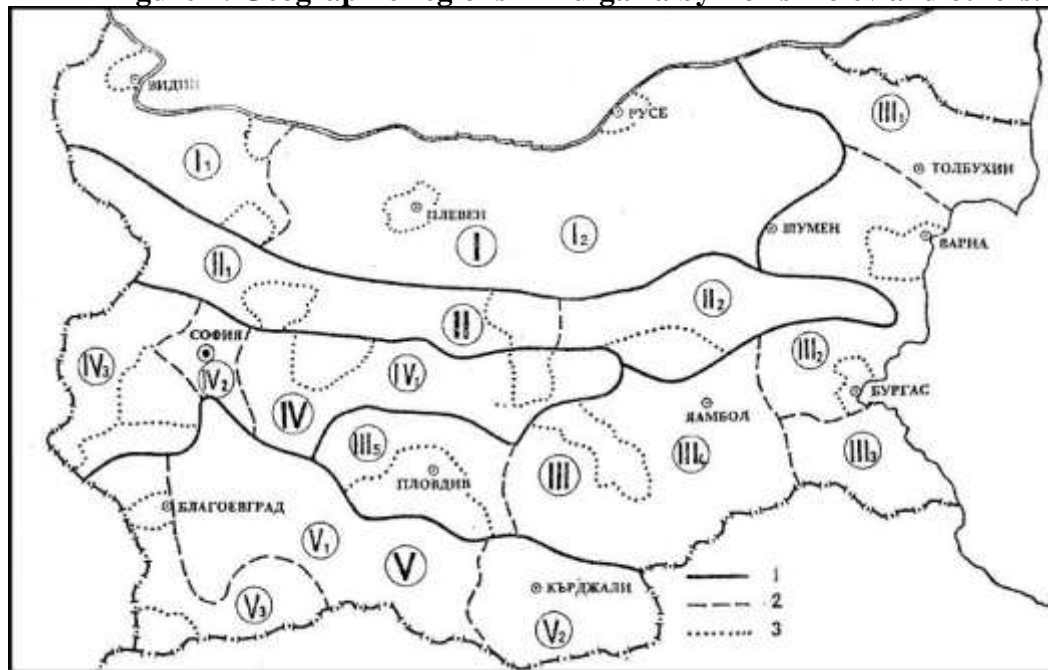
Donchev defines intra-regional relations as an important regional factor, but first places the role of "business centers". He clearly states that if the territorial scope of one or another region has to be expanded in a given direction, no change of the economic center is possible, precisely because there is a larger number of productive forces on its territory, resistant as a region-forming factor. That is, the first conditions for viewing our national space through the prism of a mosaic of centers and peripherals models occur. Concept, which is now fully realized in the country in its primarily negative plan, and which was the reason for the creation of the National Spatial Development Concept 2013-2025, which sets the options for future development.

A special place in that period is the article of "Experiences of natural-economic (geographic) zoning of Bulgaria with application of multi-dimensional statistical analysis" (1984) by Prof. Boris Kolev and others. This is the first scientific-complex geographic zoning in Bulgaria, taking into account the basic properties of both the natural and the anthropogenic subsystem. On the basis of a variety of natural and socio-economic components, typological territorial classification is performed using multidimensional statistical analysis and complex areas with similar characteristics are outlined.

The credibility of this zoning gives us the principles that were used as the basis for determining the extent of the regions - the principle of homogeneity of the territory (expression of the relatively uniform expression of the initial indicators on the territory - the homogeneous regions of Hagget), the principle of contrast (the relative difference between the magnitudes of the typical indicators for individual homogeneous groups of territorial units) and the principle of complexity (simultaneous completion and analysis of all or most of the indicators, characterizing the territory). All these principles for comparability and verifiability of source data.

29 indicators (12 natural and 17 socio-economic), related to 291 settlement systems, were used to carry out this zoning. After a statistical transformation, a matrix of so-called Euclidean (taxonomic) "distances" is obtained. These are actually "distances" between the points in a multi-dimensional space.

After the establishment of minimum taxonomic "distances" linking the individual points, groups of closely spaced points, called taxonic, are formed. On the basis of their grouping, a scheme of complex geographic regions in Bulgaria is comprised of 5 regions and 15 sub-regions. Outside the examined areas and sub-regions, urban systems with exceptionally large dimensions of their indicators remain unlike their neighboring territories, which is why they are not associated with them and are not included within the respective sub-regions.

Figure 7: Geographic regions in Bulgaria by Boris Kolev and others.

1 - boundary of a region; 2 - boundary of a sub-region; 3 - Locality

In the course of the division work from the territory of the whole country, twenty relatively small units of the territory have been allocated, which are called "socio-economic localities". They are single (Vidin) or groups - from several urban systems (Plovdiv, Asenovgrad). As seen in the figure, these are settlement systems, on whose territory were concentrated very large production capacities of national importance (Kolev et al., 1984). Today, some similar dependencies of large concentrations can still be taken into account. A typical example in this respect are Lukoil-Neftochim for Burgas, the Marishki Thermo-Power Energetic Complex for Stara Zagora, Cluster "Srednogorie" for the extraction of rare metals for the municipalities of the Sofia region, Kozloduy NPP for Vratsa region and others.

Today's socio-economic conditions are completely different and at the basis of the modern regionalization of Bulgaria there must be completely different motives leading to regional identification of a new type that places the human activity, his habitat (the populated place) and the regional territory (its name) as the main source of cultural identity. As can be seen from the above analysis, far more complex regions have been developed in the country than the criteria set by the EU regulation.

In the period after 1989, the regionalization of Bulgaria is placed in the sphere of the executive public power, thus not giving priority to the systematic study of the regional structure of the socio-economic and cultural development of Bulgaria (Dimov, 2006). In other words, the scientific approach to this problem has almost ceased, with a leading role being given to the administrative-command approach, which is subordinated to other objective criteria in decision-making.

The modern zoning of the country is located in the Constitution of the Republic of Bulgaria since 1991 and in some of its subsequent laws, including the Regional Development Act and its subsequent amendments. This law specifies the role of the state for regional development and the issue of the planning regions is defined, which term is then eliminated because the NUTS 2 regions in Bulgaria have no administration and budget and have nothing to plan respectively. In

this connection, they are really statistical. By decision of the Council of Ministers the territorial scope of 6 such areas used for the purposes of the National Plan for Regional Development - 2000-2006 of the pre-EU membership period was determined. Thus it formally meets the requirements and conditions related to the accession of Bulgaria to the European Union (EU) in the field of regional policy. These regions were very much in line with the requirements of Eurostat and, under its nomenclature, are units of the so-called NUTS level 2. According to Chapter 21 "Regional Policy and Coordination of Structural Instruments" of the EU Accession Negotiation Process, as of 01.01.2006 the country has had the opportunity to change both the number and the territorial coverage of the level 2 regions, but this chance has been missed. In that way the model since 1961 is borrowed, based on the geographical directions and our country joins the EU as follows:

Northwest (Vidin, Montana and Vratsa centers), North Central (Pleven, Lovech, Gabrovo, Veliko Tarnovo and Rousse centers), Northeastern (centers Silistra, Targovishte, Razgrad, Dobrich, Shumen and Varna), Southeastern (centers Bourgas, Sliven and Yambol), South Central (centers Plovdiv, Pazardzhik, Smolyan, Stara Zagora, Haskovo and Kardzhali) and Southwest (centers Sofia, Pernik, Blagoevgrad, Kyustendil and Sofia district).¹²

Figure 8. NUTS 2 regions in Bulgaria as of 2007.



Source: NCTP, 2007

¹² Закон за регионалното развитие. ДВ бр. 26 от 1999 г.

Only seven years later due to the negative demographic trends, it turned out that two of these regions no longer met the conditions of Art. 3 of the Regulation. (Southwest and Northwest). This imposed an administrative-command change in the territorial basis of the regional planning and the Stara Zagora region "migrates" to Southeastern Bulgaria and the regions of Lovech and Pleven "migrated" to the Northwest. This questioned the statistical reliability of the data collected by region, as the change in the territorial base led to difficulties and distortions in the reliability of regional comparisons.

Figure 9. NUTS 2 regions in Bulgaria as of 2010.

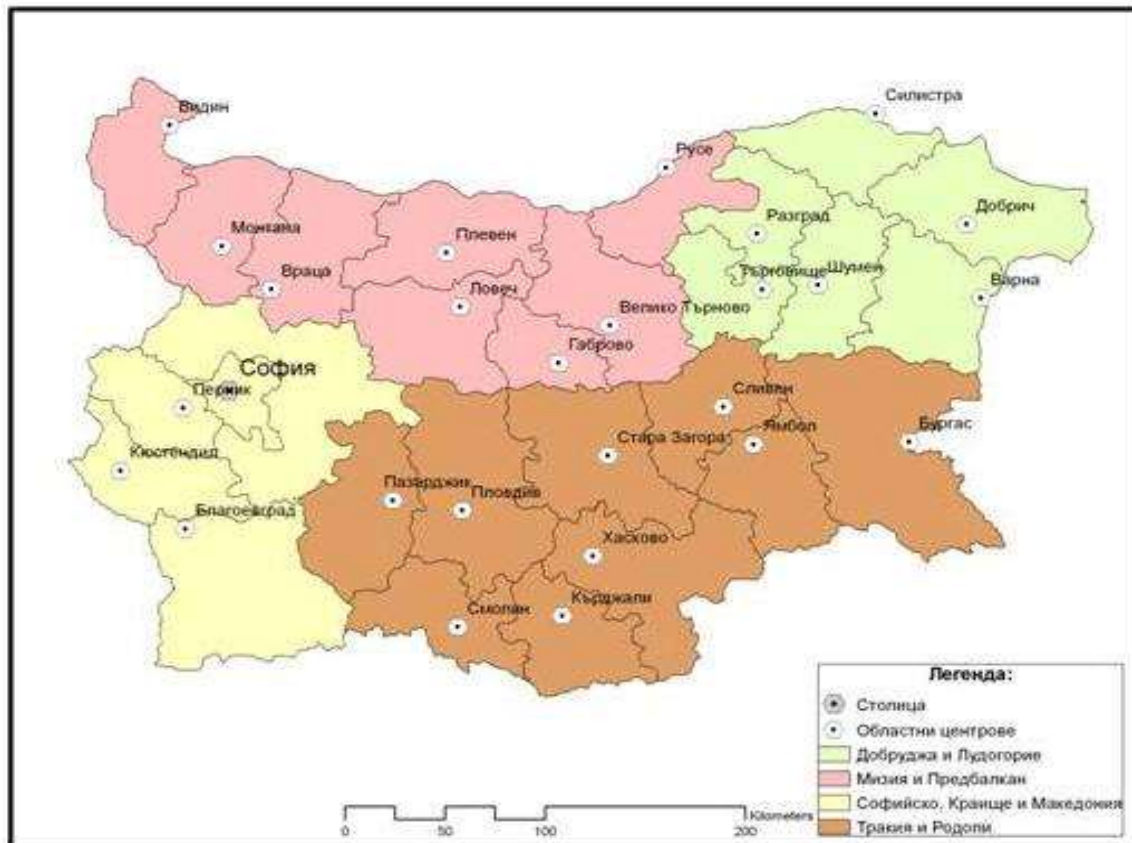


Source: NCTP, 2007

In accordance with the severe dynamics of demographic processes as early as 2010, Karastoyanov and Stoychev (2010)¹³ propose a new vision for new regionalization of the country, based on an approach that defines regions that are in line with the Regulation, but according to the authors, they are more sustainable in time, possessing the corresponding natural and historical-geographical identification.

¹³ Karastoyanov, S., K. Stoychev, Cultural Civic and Natural Approach in the Regionalization of Bulgaria, B: Bulgarian Diplomatic Review, vol. 5-6, 2010.

Figure 10: Limits of the NUTS 2 regions based on the cultural-civilization and natural approach (Karastoyanov and Stoychev, 2010).



The authors propose a cultural-civilization and natural approach, with the help of which they identify four regions on the territory of the country. Their names give priority to the designation of a historical and geographical affiliation - Thrace and the Rhodope Mountains; Sofia, Kraište and Macedonia; Dobrudja and Ludogorie; Moesia and Forebalkan. Each name has a major historical geographic province and a basic morphological structure. This is an attempt to overcome the impersonal names based on the directions of the globe and Sofia (Serdika, Sredets) to cease being a Southwest city as a center of Southwest Bulgaria.

Status quo and the "new" old regions of Bulgaria

The sensitivity of people to space is heavily blunted over the sense of time. Every adult person has a personal understanding for 10 years, but very few people understand what is 10 sq. / Km. Due to these peculiarities, in our personal identification, we stick to our personal and social past, that is, to the history of our lives, to celebrities and events with human imprint, to our language and scripture. Few are the peoples who have developed their cultural identity on wider geographical borders and have large spaces. We often mention the historical fact that Bulgaria is the oldest country in Europe that has retained its original name. One reason for this is the connection of people and territory that happened during the First and Second Bulgarian Empire. Then the Bulgarians were not a larger number than today, but they had the ability to rule and manage much more space.

At first sight, Bulgaria is no exception to this connectivity of people and territory and seeks its place in global and European spatial and regional challenges. Their structuring as

mental categories and their corresponding territorial projection give the boundaries of thinking - spatial thinking builds the categories and the conception of the regions that are the "mosaic" of the national space. In fact, our national space - geotoriya (territory, aero, aquatory, and earthly bowels) is the most constant capital available to a nation. Therefore, the attitude and understanding of this space and its internal division - the regions and the process of regionalization itself - are fundamental knowledge and attitude. On the other hand, this constant leads to a relationship as to a givenness, caused by the thought that we will always have it, it belongs to us and will always serve us. This thought is fraudulent because the care for the national space is like taking care of the home.

Bulgaria is about to create a "new regions" at NUTS 2 level, which it intends to use in the next 30-40 years, taking into account the regional (spatial) development of our country. This is the third change for the past 19 years, which is very short period in geography, in fact terribly short. The formal political-administrative reason for these frequent changes is the above-mentioned Regulation on Population Number, as well as some other conditions that have little relevance to the process of regionalization but have been administratively subordinated to them. From this point of view, this is an irreplaceable necessity and we must respond to it. Therefore, the more important question is how do we respond, what is the prospect for the new regions, how long and whether they will accurately reflect the national reality?

To begin with, the names and the territorial scope of these regions are the most important because they give the regional identification of the national space, answering the question "Where Bulgaria is"? and the more important question of which are Bulgarian regions today? If we look back on history, the territory of our current national space covers several historical geographic provinces that are marked on ancient and medieval maps and whose identification is categorical - Moesia, Dobrudja, Thrace and Macedonia.

Since the Liberation for various supranational reasons, Bulgaria has never allowed itself to use them in its official region's names. In fact, in some regions before 1961 there have been names such as Macedonia, Dobrudja, Rodopi, Thrace, Pirin and others. Since after, completely disappear over a period of over 50 years, but without full regional system based on cultural identity. That is why for a whole century of time the naming approach based on the directions of the world has been applied. Thus, we disguise what historical-geographic provinces Bulgaria occupied today. Bulgaria's "problem" is that these provinces are geographically partly located in our neighboring countries, which is the reason for all the "geopolitics" that arises in our minds. Thus, a Czech man that may live in Bohemia, a name that can be traced back 20 centuries is using the name Bohemia, but man who is a resident of Sofia, whose city history is older than that of Rome, lives in Southwest Bulgaria, who's name of a region was determined in 1961.

However, in the different periods of the development of our country appear Northwest, North-Central, Northeast, South-East, South-Central and South-West. As described above, there were variants with 8, 6, 5 regions, but all based on this naming approach - the geographic directions of the world. An approach that strived to turn the country into a homogeneous area in which everyone is the same, equal, and just like themselves. We are always excited by the question: since Serdika, that is, Sofia, is the center of Southwest Bulgaria, which geographic object is located southwest after its name means a center?

There has been a process in which other factors and forces have taken the lead part and have defined both the names and the territorial coverage of the regions. In other words, Bulgaria has stubbornly masked where it is, looking for its national identity in artefacts from archeology and sources from history back in the centuries, but unrelated to today's territory and regions. Thus, if a Thracian treasure is found, it is Thracian for archeology and history, but the region is

there is a regional cluster of cities of similar rank, problems and solutions. If Sofia remains the center of Southwestern Bulgaria, its role is reduced to a geopolitical and geostrategic level.

The natural city center of the so-called Southwest, which we do not consider to be favorable, is Blagoevgrad, not Sofia. In the current structure of the hierarchy of settlements, Sofia has the first national rank and should not be equated with other towns and cities in Bulgaria. That is, Sofia may have a special status. This will enable it to lead completely different policies from the periphery (provinces) - spatial, regional, economic, geostrategic. Bulgaria needs a city that is not cohesive to start developing smarter policies and projects. Last but not least, this future new zoning does not satisfy the geopolitical and regional interests of Bulgaria and its capital.

External political challenges and the "new" regions

One of the existing countries in the Balkans, based on its name of a historical-geographic province, is about to get the addition "Northern or North". Through this action, it is recognized that this historical geographic province is not only found in one of the modern Balkan countries, but still in Greece and Bulgaria, and at the same time uses a non-defining geographic identification - "Northern". Perhaps one day for the geography will be found South, West and East. The latter seems to me the most important for us - the Bulgarians. This type of administrative-command naming and regionalization is like a useless indication of a GPS navigator, who in a completely unknown place tells you "take the northwest direction"!

As our European partners are poorly acquainted with the regional geography of Bulgaria and the Balkans, they are inclined to pursue the important political goal of FYR Macedonia becoming an EU member and avoiding further complications - for a very short time are open to declare the issue for the name solved problem. Probably this solution will remain, but it is not in Bulgaria's interest. There are many examples in geography that we have accepted without thinking, for example: Bulgaria has taken the Russian geographic school to call Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia - Baltic republics. These republics are the pre-Baltic only if the observer is east of them. If, however, it is viewed from the position of Denmark, which is also a Baltic country, this pre-Baltic is losing meaning.

In such a complex situation and in our own history the Berlin Congress of 1878 opened the name "Eastern Rumelia", which was the first territorial name we removed as a nation after the 1885 war. That is, congressional diplomats call Rumelia, indicating its eastern part. Probably somebody in mind had a Western one. Nowadays, in the map is about to come "Northern Macedonia". In geostrategic struggles, when geography is to be masked in favor of another geopolitical identity, uncertain geographical identifications are often placed as they "blur" the picture. There are similar examples in Western Europe, do we wonder if the citizens of Northern Ireland feel less Irish than those living in Ireland itself?

If our country "miss" the emergence of "Northern Macedonia", then we forever allow the fragmentation of the idea of a united Macedonia of our ancestors. Today, the historical-geographic province of Macedonia is located in three countries - FYR Macedonia, Greece and Bulgaria. This is a political-geographic division, but it does not question the fact that the historical-geographic province of Macedonia is a whole region. Allowing the impersonal "North or Northern" will forever divide the map and disturb the culturally-historical and geographic integrity. History will remember, but it requires intellectual effort, memory, attitude. Our Western partners do not have the time and desire to get a glimpse into these small Balkan themes, but they are a serious risk for us. Adding our intellectual difficulty to finding a new

Bulgarian name for Southwest Bulgaria and leaving Sofia as "Southwestern" city, we get two geographic incorrect names will be obtained - North Macedonia and Southwestern Bulgaria.

The question arises, what message will we send to all outside of Bulgaria, who are also interested in these issues, and especially the European peoples, because also these regions should serve as a territorial basis for measuring the degree of development of Bulgaria? How do I explain that west of Southwestern Bulgaria is Northern Macedonia? How will these two regions bordering on the EU and will implement territorial policies, since wall is still there even at names level?

The paradigm that Bulgaria is everywhere there are Bulgarians can only be protected if they can answer the question: "Where is Bulgaria" and more so, what is the region from which they come from? Regional identification is not genetic inheritance, it is cultural and is important just as much as the national, and today the European continental.

Here is the possibility that the Bulgarian identity will become a cultural and civilization category, which is the only condition for it to be transferred in time, not to the genes. They, the genes, will mix, as has happened so far, and will happen in the future. We will be part of a great Europe and these processes have begun. However, it has always survived the Bulgarian identity that needs its regional projection, not a certain ethnic profile. In the globalizing world, the two paradigms were opposed, and in fact, they were complementary. We could realize an intellectual plan in which to use them in favor of Bulgaria. In this way, we will remain a loyal European partner contributing to the "big idea", but we will also create conditions for everyone born in Bulgaria and all who will come to live on its territory to recognize the regional, that is, the Bulgarian identity for its own.

Bulgaria has a long way to go to its national identification in the large PanEurope family. A path that does not go through the concealment of its regional peculiarities, identities and names but, on the contrary, through their conception and use in cultural and socio-economic terms.

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DEINDUSTRIALIZATION AND URBAN DECLINE IN THE BORDER MOUNTAINOUS REGIONS IN THE CONTEXT OF REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT (AFTER THE EXAMPLE OF THE RHODOPES AND STRANDZHA-SAKAR)

Velislava Simeonova, Kalina Milkova

Abstract

This paper analyses the effects of the process of deindustrialization immediately expressed in processes of urban shrinkage in border mountainous municipalities of the Rhodopes and Strandzha-Sakar in South Bulgaria. These are areas defined as regions for targeted impact on a variety of geographical, social, industrial and economic indicators. Included is the assessment of urban shrinkage and identification of the trends in the development of the southern border mountainous municipalities caused by the deindustrialization.

Introduction

Deindustrialization and shrinkage of urban regions are not obscure processes in the context of the territorial development and planning in Europe. They are interconnected and driven by global economic and political processes and phenomena. In Bulgaria, they are the result of political, social and economic observations and transformations of the transition to a market economy starting from the beginning of 90`s of the last century. However, the geographical literature does not describe fully the effects of the deindustrialization, especially on the development of towns-and-villages network and urban space, as expressed by the processes of urban shrinkage, inner-space fragmentation and decline.

The border regions, in turn, show dynamics in the social and economic development, which differ from those in the interior of the country; moreover, a large part of them (southern and western border municipalities) include mountainous and hilly territories where the process of deindustrialization has not just led to the closing of enterprises – the backbone of the economy (mono-structural businesses and towns), but along with the high unemployment, changes in investment potential and active migration processes, this process has contributed to the dynamic shrinkage of urban and municipal territories. There, the process of deindustrialization has not just led to the closing of enterprises and factories, an increase in unemployment and migration, but also to the loss of industrial identity and depopulation characterized as one of the highest for Bulgaria.

The timeliness of the selected theme is confirmed with the fact that the concept of urban shrinkage is still poorly covered in the geographical literature, regardless of the need for its study, given the emerging demographic trends and predictions. According to the latest ones, Bulgaria shall become one of the fastest declining countries where the examples of the axis *shrinking city-shrinking region* have already shown well-defined outlines.

The paper analyses the after-effects of the post-socialist deindustrialization, expressed in the process of urban shrinkage in the border mountainous areas (municipalities) of the Rhodopes and Strandzha-Sakar. Calculated for this purpose, is the intensity of the process of urban shrinkage based on demographic and economic indicators, analysed in the context of the deindustrialization and post-communist structural changes in predominantly small peripheral towns and

municipalities. Addressed are the urban villages and municipalities of Smolyan and Kardzhali regions – all Rhodope-mountains, bound in the social and economical development with the Bulgarian-Greek border; Topolovgrad and Ivaylovgrad and Madzharovo - Haskovo region, Bolyarovo and Elhovo – Yambol region, and Malko Tarnovo - Burgas region. Some of them have no direct connection with the political boundary, but are included in the study because of the similar development and "shrinkage" factors and characteristics. Their development is largely dependent on the proximity to the border, which is a reason to treat them as border regions. At the same time, some municipalities of Haskovo region (Lyubimets, Harmanli, Simeonovgrad) and Sredets have been excluded, as they are not typically mountainous and show different trends in the process of urban shrinkage.

Theoretical framework

Post-socialist deindustrialization

Deindustrialization is considered a part of the structural changes in the economy that took place in the second half of the twentieth century in all countries with developed economies (Rangelova, 2009). The deindustrialization proceeds differently in every country, reflecting their historical and national peculiarities.

The process of deindustrialization is well studied in Europe and takes into account the specificities of the political and economic context in Eastern and Western Europe. Generally speaking, this is a process of shutting down, closing down of enterprises (many of them leaders in the sectors) and loss of jobs in the industry, leading to transformations in the spatial and functional use of factories and their equipment. The process in Central and Eastern Europe started with the political changes in the former socialist countries from the late 80 's and early 90`s of the last century. The fall off the share of industry in the Gross Domestic Product of the country and in the total employment should be considered as a logic process in countries with market economy (Rangelova, 2009).

Simion (2016) describes two phases of deindustrialization: diminishing of the manufacturing and closing of the factories and turning of large at that time industrial area into brownfields. In this context, the problems associated with deindustrialization in the post-socialist countries are most prominent in the mono-industrial regions, where the mining industry and steel production were well developed. Changes in the structure of the economy, especially at regional and local level, are often accompanied by a change in the professional career and orientation of employees, with increasing unemployment and poverty and intensifying of the social conflicts (Rangelova, 2009). The result of these processes is expressed in the search for new opportunities, usually expressed in the creation of the daily labour migrations, interregional migration, emigration and subsequently in the demographic shrinkage, at the expense of the smaller municipalities and towns with no opportunities for professional development.

Deindustrialization is the process by which: production is not only cut, gives less production, but also becomes more primitive, loses its technological level; production infrastructure is destroyed, funds are reduced, the level of mechanization and automation and complexity of manufacturing operations are lowered, cut is the intellectual basis of production, etc. (Bodrunov, 2014). The greatest harm deindustrialization causes on the population employed in the industry and especially the people in the higher age group. However, this growing sector of services is not able to compensate for the loss in the level of well-being of the population. Apart from unemployment, deindustrialization can lead to such social problems as the rise in the level of crime, etc. negative social phenomena (Putilova, 2018).

Deindustrialization in Bulgaria is associated with the economic reforms undertaken in the transition to a market economy and the deep economic crisis in the first half of the 90 's. To some

extent, it is also due to the selected forms and methods for making the transition and privatisation (high relative share of labor-management companies without adequate financial and professional resource), and not so much associated with the development of the tertiary sector and even less with the increase of labour productivity (Vladimirova, 2008). The radical change of ownership, the loss of traditional markets, the rapid liberalization of trade, the disintegration of the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance (CMEA) has a direct impact on deindustrialization. The belated adoption of the Privatization and Post-Privatization Control Act (2002) accelerates the deindustrialization and the negative consequences. The rapid decrease of the share of the industry, especially of the leaders in many industries such as coal mining, ore mining, mechanical engineering, etc., has an effect on both - the economic development, employment, migration behaviour and the structure of the settlements and the urban network.

Because of the process of deindustrialization, production areas, zones, and even small and medium-sized towns are seriously affected by depopulation and desertion. Administrative districts and regions become totally problematic areas with low competitiveness. The process of deindustrialization of the national and regional economy and its effects in Bulgaria are the subject of study in Economics, Architecture, Sociology, Geography (see Iliev (2004), Vladimirova (2008), Komitova (2013), Ilieva (2012), etc.).

Urban shrinkage and decline

Urban shrinkage is a global phenomenon. The study is part of the broader presentation of the evolution and fate of the cities (Fol and Cunningham-Sabot, 2010). There is no single definition of what is "shrinking city". However, you may assume that shrinking city is the urban area, subjected to dramatic deindustrialization and depopulation, especially when related to Central and Eastern Europe (Martinez-Fernandez et al., 2012). The process of shrinking has a complex and multi-dimensional character. It is a consequence of both, the demographic and the economic and social factors of development, therefore, its analysis should not include only the change in the number of population.

Urban shrinkage may cover urban area, part of the city or the entire metropolitan area which has suffered population loss, deterioration of the economy and a decline in employment, social issues and conflicts as symptoms of a structural crisis (Martinez-Fernandez et al., 2012). According to Shetty (2009), shrinking cities are the ones that have lost more than 25% of its population over the past 40 years and are characterized by physical abandonment of ownership and ruins.

Urban decline may be considered as a synonym of urban shrinkage or as one of the ultimate forms of urban shrinkage, taking into account that the expression "shrinkage" may be the result of various factors and is in a strong dependence on the national and regional context. The period of the reduction of the volume of the businesses in the cities and the fall of their importance in the hierarchy of urban network made the term ***shrinking cities*** appear, defining the prolonged suffering of the loss of population and jobs, as a result of which the physical dimensions of the city and its infrastructure significantly exceed the needs of its current and future generations (Putilova, 2013).

Yovcheva (2012) emphasizes that deindustrialization should be seen as one of the four main reasons for the emergence of shrinking cities.

Border regions

Following the classical approach of research, borders are associated as barriers to international trade, and the border regions –as economically adverse that in turn makes them unreliable for urban development. This situation is also interpreted in the thesis that the Government is willing to develop the peripheral areas economically and socially. Usually this is the reason for the

border regions to have the status of military buffer zones, which explains why big cities, regional centres or capitals are relatively rare near the border, while border regions in most cases are not highly urbanized. Border towns are in places not only located near the border, but their very existence is largely determined by the border. (Sohn and Stambolic, 2015)

The concept of border region refers to that part of space, where economic and social life are directly and significantly affected by the existence of an international border. In this sense, we can distinguish open and/or potentially open regions and closed regions (Hansen, 1977). The definition determines the main types of border regions, which reach the point where the social and economic modifying effects of the border are still notable.

Border regions are peripheral in the context of the developed regions, and the periphery can be regarded as a precondition for development and a particular characteristic, due to the specific location (Morachevskaya and Zinovyev, 2013). The problems there are often associated with the theory of localization and the growth poles theory, though these approaches fail to formulate a separate theory of border regions (Hansen, 1977).

In the social and economic sense, the importance of the peripheral (border) region may be expressed with the high percentage of low-tech economic activities, extractive industries in the economy, low income, low level of consumption, dependence on the "technologies located in the center", narrow specialization of local businesses. In demographic terms: the low density, degradation of the urban system, negative migratory balance (including leaving of the working age population).

The post-socialist context is characterised with a change in the understanding of the border in Europe (EU), which is interpreted in the discourse of the globalisation of the economy, the flow of cultural exchange, the expansion and consolidation of the mechanisms of European integration (INTERREG programme of the 90 's), or increased passing through the checkpoint of State borders within the EU. The changing border functions and the means of their use as a resource gave reason to develop a conceptual framework, showing the different ways the open borders allow for cross-border cooperation, strengthening of cross-border economic networks and structures, etc. (Sohn and Stambolic, 2015).

In the territorial context of the EU, these are inner-border regions of the community, with poor results in terms of economic indicators or when compared to other regions where access to public services (hospitals, educational centres) is usually more limited.

The urbanization of border regions is poorly studied in the literature, including in Bulgaria. The borders, as a component of the country are associated with the remoteness, while the cities – with the idea of the centralization (economic, political, cultural), with growth, with accumulation and connectivity. The research on the relationship between the political border and cities may outline a new theoretical perspective in the study of border regions (Sohn and Stambolic, 2015).

Methodology

The methodological framework of the study involves the use of primary and secondary sources of information. These are scientific publications, regulatory, strategic and planning documents; statistical reference books, quantitative and qualitative assessments obtained from semi-structural expert interviews conducted with representatives of municipal administrations and members of local non-governmental organizations from the region in the period 2015-2016. Taken into account, when assessing the shrinkage, is the number of urban population and its demographic peak (census) until 2017 and the dynamics of the shrinkage from 1992 to 2017, as a period of intense deindustrialization processes. Included in the assessment are the municipal centres with settlements of urban-type.

The results are analysed in contrast with a number of economic indicators such as unemployment, investment, employment, etc. The organization of the section Results and Discussion is supplemented by more systematic-structural analysis, discourse analysis, comparative analysis based on some of the quantitative indicators and retrospective analysis, where the basic time benchmark is the transition from a centralized to a market economy.

Geographical features of the southern border regions of the Rhodopes and Strandzha-Sakar

Because of the mainly mountainous character of the municipalities and regions, these border regions have always had a special place in the territorial policies of Bulgaria, though in most cases, not with the expected result. Most of the municipalities fall within "the targeted support regions" under the criteria of the Act on Regional Development (ARD) (Nikolova, 2016). The National Spatial Development Concept classifies these regions as the regions with specific characteristics. Excluding the municipalities located along the Danube and the Black Sea, we must emphasize that the southern border regions are characterized with the predominant mountainous and hilly nature and administrative centres of 4th and 5th level, as Kardzhali and Smolyan are an exception of the ones discussed in this article. There are no urban agglomerations formed there, as a formed urban core can be found only around Smolyan (Yankov, 2000).

The municipal centres of these border municipalities suffer of a serious loss of human resources, especially intensified in the 90's. The fact that contributes to this situation is that the peripheral location of these municipalities has determined their isolation, not only physical, but also social and economic isolation from the dynamic processes of development in the interior of the country. In addition, they are characterized by poor transport accessibility, insufficiently developed public services, as well as with the insufficient number of border checkpoints, that restricts development and cross-border cooperation.

The urban settlements in southern border regions of the Rhodopes and Strandzha-Sakar have special regional context. On the one hand, this is their peripheral geographical position (political borders of Bulgaria with Greece and Turkey), and, on the other hand, the towns there (with the exception of Smolyan) have a peripheral significance, as estimated from a geographic and economic viewpoint. The economic indicators are relatively low and very often they are a result of underdeveloped economic structures, the absence or underdeveloped communication connections, etc. The municipalities have low investment activity, missing transnational companies and no large trans-European projects implemented.

The population of these areas shows clear trends to ageing, and respectively demographic shrinkage, with some exceptions for Kardzhali region. Depopulation processes cover a large part of the lands of these municipalities, as the depopulation is particularly intense in Smolyan, Madan, Momchilgrad, Krumovgrad, Madzharovo, Ivaylovgrad, Elhovo, Sredetz, Malko Tarnovo.

Historical context

The border location is neither an advantage nor a disadvantage, and the treatment of one and the same border may differ in historical periods. This is also analysed by taking into consideration of the economic and geographical position – a dynamic category, the assessment of which reflects the different spatial experience of the society in time. The political and economic realities before 1989 give interpretation of the border regions in the context of the border - the barrier and the border zone with restricted usage regime.

The border zone was created at the beginning of the 50 's, covering an area around the border with an average width of about 20 km. In 1951 these regions got some preferences –the right to

get additional amounts of basic foods (especially flour); a reduction of 30% of the tax on the total income of all the inhabitants of the border zone; supply with goods hard of access, sold at "free prices". These preferences aimed at achieving a compensation effect at the expense of the communication and economic isolation of the local communities.

No large industrial sites of national importance from the point of view of public safety and security were built in the border regions of the Rhodopes, Sakar and Strandzha. In addition, no large urban systems were built that could play a role in organising the space – an indicator of the weakly expressed urbanization processes.

In the border regions of the Rhodopes, Sakar and Strandzha is not build large industrial sites of national importance from gen. so the public security and safety and. Do not develop and large urban systems that play a role in organising the space – an indicator of weak expressed the urbanization processes.

The government conducts a targeted policy to stabilize the demographic and settlement processes in the peripheral mountainous regions. One example is the adoption in 1982 of the 22nd Decree of Council of Ministers (COM) providing incentives for young people to settle in the undeveloped regions of Bulgaria. The emphasis is on the Strandzha and Sakar that are most highly depopulated. The decision of the Council of Ministers is known as Programme for 'Accelerated social and economic development of the towns-and-villages systems of the 4th and 5th functional type of the border regions in the Strandzha-Sakar area. The reasons for the adoption of the decree are that the area of Strandzha-Sakar is depopulated, sharp social issues have not been resolved – 561 settlements along the southern and western border have no water supply, 200 have no roads to the center of the settlement system or to a different place, 550 have no direct telephone connection and provided radio-television coverage. The campaign is called "Republic of youth" and its main purpose is comprehensive and accelerated development of the industry, agriculture, and the building the social and technical infrastructure in the undeveloped regions. It provisions, by 1990, the living and working conditions and the living standards for the population in the area of Strandzha-Sakar to reach, and in certain terms to surpass the average growth of the country.

Results of the study

The modern borders are diffuse ones and easier passable. Today, border regions are open systems, but encumbered with new geopolitical, demographic and social and economic burdens, bearing the inertial heritage.

The majority of the border towns have mono-structural economy (50% of a leading depressive industry), high proportion of the employed in the industry, high unemployment, declining relative share of the employed in the mining and manufacturing industry. Characterized with higher industrial employment in 80-90`s of the last century are Dzhebel, Kardzhali, Dospat, Madan, Rudozem, Topolovgrad, Madzharovo. The mono-structural economy (a leading depressive industry) for the same period is typical for Rudozem, Madan, Zlatograd, Dospat, Madzharovo, Topolovgrad, Malko Tarnovo. Some of them fall within the restructured mining area of "Gorubso" with the closed down inefficient mines and production capacities of ore-dressing plants and Lead-Zinc plant in Kardzhali; "Ustrem" mine and "Burgas Copper Mines". The municipalities of this border region with unemployment higher than the average national are Madzharovo (21.6%), Kirkovo (20.3%), Ardino (19.5), Bolyarovo (18.4%), Dzhebel (18%), Ivaylovgrad (17.9%), Dospat (15.8%), Devin (15.3%) (2017). The decrees of the Council of Ministers (CMD) 140/1992 for the restructuring of the mining sector and the closure of inefficient production capacity, CMD 235/1993 and CMD 37/1995 have a direct impact on the social and economic development of the southern border mountainous towns and villages and high levels of unemployment for a long period. The ore-dressing areas are affected by the

"resource cycles", where the long-term mode of exploitation of resources and subsequent collapse are inevitable. The mining towns are in the critical zone of decline, depression and "shrinkage", in need of re-cultivation in peri-urban areas.

A large number of the border regions are of no interest for the economic diversification, which makes them vulnerable. At the same time, they have a poor social and economic potential for an endogenous development and therefore, require targeted actions and policies at different territorial levels. The border regions have limited urban resource – areas, inherited buildings in good condition and infrastructure. In Smolyan and some of the small towns of the area, the reserves for revitalization, conversion and re-utilization are not used; and in Kardzhali - the non-functioning facilities have a linear structure.

The predominant mono-structural economy in the border municipalities has a negative effect on the quantitative and qualitative indicators of urbanization. So today, Kardzhali is the least urbanized region in the country – only 41.2% urban population (2017) and the estimates of the urban population for Smolyan are below the average ones for Bulgaria–55.5%. (2017). The two mountainous regions had in the past and still have low daily occupational mobility, due to the mountainous terrain, the remoteness from the major industrial centres and investment cores, the problematic transport infrastructure. Similar is the social and economic situation in the municipalities of Malko Tarnovo, Bolyarovo, Madzharovo and Ivaylovgrad, which in the 80`s were part of the Kardzhali region. In contrast, Topolovgrad has a higher daily labour mobility, because of its proximity to the Maritsa Iztok, which emerged as less directly affected by the deindustrialization, and stronger affected by the demilitarization. In the southern border towns, the deindustrialization is not associated with the tertiarization of the economy and takes place in a different way compared to the urban centres in the interior of the country.

Table 1 shows the urban shrinkage in the southern mountainous periphery compared to the demographic peak of towns and villages (1975, 1985, 1992) to 2017. The urban settlements reviewed are centres of municipalities with a strongly decreasing employment in the industry, which is an indicator for the expression of the process of deindustrialization. The closure of heavy industry businesses and the decline of tobacco production has led to the emergence of reverse migration, typical for Bulgaria until 1944. The farm workers seasonal migrations are oriented to the vegetable farming in the Pazardzhik-Plovdiv field, Greece and for the construction workers - to Sofia, Plovdiv, etc. Less than 25% is the reduction of the population in Devin, Chepelare, Dospat, which have a highly developed tourism features – an alternative for the local development. Smolyan is the region with the greatest reduction in the population in 2017 and it is the smallest regional town.

Urban centers	Demographic peak	Demographic shrinkage until 2017 (%)	Demographic shrinkage from 1992 until 2017
Devin	1985	24.1	4.8
Dostap	2001	21.9	22.0
Smolyan	1992	18.3	18.3
Chepelare	1992	22.7	22.7
Zlatograd	1985	26.6	27.2
Madan	1975	50.9	37.2
Nedelino	1992	27.5	27.2
Rudozem	1965	49.9	30.1
Kardzhali	1985	22.1	5.7
Momchilgrad	1985	24.4	3.4
Dzhebel	1985	32.5	-
Ardino	1985	28.7	-
Krumovgrad	1985	29.3	11.5
Ivaylovgrad	1992	37.8	36.8
Madzharovo	1985	70.8	66
Topolovgrad	1992	33.8	33.8
Bolyarovo	1992	42.8	42.9
Elhovo	1992	31.7	31.7
Malko Tranovo	1965	56.4	45.2

Table 1: Demographic shrinkage in the urban centres. The authors (NSI data, 2017; Mashke.org: Population of Bulgaria)

What impresses is the fact that the demographic shrinking, from the demographic peak in 1965 in Malko Tarnovo and Rudozem to 2017, is about 50% or above, and the subsequent shrinkage continues at lower rates until 1992, and then the rate of population loss increases. The demographic peak of the towns of Kardzhali, Devin, Zlatograd and Madzharovo is in 1985 and it is caused by the deportation of Turkish population (the so-called Revival process of the 80 's), and by the worsening of the demographic situation. The Rudarski settlements (Madzharovo and Rudozem) increase the rate of "shrinking" after 1992, showing the clear relation with the closure of the mines there. Seven towns reach the demographic peak in 1992 – Smolyan, Chepelare, Nedelino, Ivaylovgrad, Topolovgrad, Bolyarovo, Elhovo. The demographic collapse in the last three towns is associated not only with liquidation of business entities, but also with the curtailment of the Third Army and the closure of the barracks and related service activities. Only

Dospat is with a demographic peak in 2001, which can be explained with the fact that most businesses are of the light industry, forestry and production of electricity, therefore, less affected by deindustrialization processes. Towns like Ardino and Dzhebel have recorded a slight increase in the population over the last few years.

The towns of the Kardzhali region covered in the study show no clear shrinkage of towns after 1992 (the start of deindustrialization), taking into account also that the region has a positive natural growth in 2017. On the other hand, the processes of depopulation in the rural areas is more alarming. Only in 2017, 10 villages of the region have no inhabitants and 23 are of a single-digit number of the population, delimiting an area of threatened villages in the Eastern Rhodopes. These results outline an interesting territorial situation – on the one hand, poorly-expressed urbanization processes and, on the other hand – regressive development of the rural settlement system. The new upsurge of mining in Krumovgrad and the nearby settlements shall undoubtedly play a positive role in the local development. This conclusion is confirmed by the fact that there are no conditions for the development of high-tech industries in these villages.

The effects of deindustrialization can be mitigated with the inflow of foreign direct investment (FDI). This has a direct connection with the development of the urban social and economic environment. The border regions have low investment activity, and in recent years Smolyan and Kardzhali regions, have moved between 16-18th position among the 28 regions. Some of the regions of the southern peripheral model of foreign investment register active participation in the investment process of companies from Greece and Turkey, and even from Germany, Austria and the Netherlands, which has no direct correlation to their geographical location (Milkova and Dokov, 2017). For example, in municipalities and urban centres as Bolyarovo, Ivaylovgrad, Malko Tarnovo and Elhovo the investment interest is missing and the compensatory mechanisms against deindustrialization are highly limited. The lack of industrial zones, clusters and technology parks in the border areas, the unfavourable educational structure of the population (Kardzhali region – the people with graduated higher education are 17.2%, Smolyan region - 21.7%, mean value for Bulgaria – 27.5%, 2016) limits the development of high-tech industries, which is the reason for registered economy of a "factory-type". This delineates the border urban regions as dysfunctional, possessing features of an industrial society, and not a post-industrial one.

The solution of the problems of deindustrialization beside at the governmental level, should be a priority of the local and regional authorities. Local civic associations, voluntary work, solidarity to the general problems, consolidating on territorial interests is one of the reliable markers for measuring the status of social transformations in the space section on local problems solving. The ability to interact is one of the main qualities of the location, and the combined efforts of NGOs, the regional elite, entrepreneurs and authority structures is the possible stimulus for the development of these territories. The NGOs in Smolyan region, are over 130 (2016), with domination of the ones with public benefit (94%). More than 20% have as the main objective the social and economic development of the municipality. Most of the local initiative groups (LIG) are of the cluster principle (e.g., Chepelare - Devin), that makes them more effective. The largest number of local development organizations out of the regional center, are registered in Devin. No organization has listed as a specific objective the surmounting of the consequences of the deindustrialization or stimulation of the reindustrialisation. The NGOs in Kardzhali region are about 110 (2016), of which only 3 are of private benefit, about 10.8% have the local social and economic development as main objective, only 3 organizations use volunteer labor. Kardzhali, in contrast with Smolyan region, has the most sports NGOs and some municipalities have no established voluntary structures. What makes an impression is the activity of the local communities in Elhovo (17 NGOs), Malko Tarnovo (6), Ivaylovgrad (7) (2016), some of which

are directly involved in cross-border cooperation projects, mainly in the field on tourism. The Committee for Economic and Cultural Rise of Malko Tarnovo and its district deeply impresses with its more than 90 years of existence. The positive fact is that there are organizations working in the field of education and culture in almost any administrative unit. The approach adopted "Local development led by the community" is in the basis of the principle of decision making "bottom-up" and is perceived as a factor of sustainable development. It is clear the condition sufficient for success is not in the large number of organizations, but in their effectiveness and, more importantly – their coordination and interaction.

Discussion

No doubt, the results shown in Table 1 outline several groups of towns, formed in accordance with the demographic shrinkage resulting from the deindustrialization started in Bulgaria. Without sticking to a specific typification or categorization of shrinking small-and medium-sized towns, the following groupings of shrinking could be formed:

- < 6% - Momchilgrad, Devin, Kardzhali;
- 10-25% – Krumovgrad, Smolyan, Dospat, Chepelare;
- 25-40% – Zlatograd, Nedelino, Rudozem, Elhovo, Topolovgrad, Ivaylovgrad, Madan;
- 40-60 – Bolyarovo and Malko Tarnovo;
- > 60% – Madzharovo.

The first group includes the towns and villages of predominant Turkish and Bulgarian- Muslim population; the second group includes the towns and villages with not highly developed extractive industries and tourism features expressed after the 70`s of the last century. Most affected by the shrinkage are the typical mining towns, with poorly diversified structure of the holdings and the military-garrisoned ones that confirms the theoretical formulations for deindustrialization and urban shrinkage in the border region.

The analysis of the results shows that the processes of industrialization, urbanization and deindustrialization have the specific signs of the mountainous border regions in Bulgaria. Urban life in the southern peripheries is attuned to the rhythms of agricultural production cycles, especially to the tobacco production and in this discourse, some municipalities can even be characterised with the processes of pseudo-urbanization. In the course of deindustrialization, the mines and the factories lose their place in the cultural and social life in the Rhodope Mountains and Strandzha, without being replaced by new structures. This inevitably affects the weakening of local communities and their demographic and urban shrinkage. These findings are the result of the interviews conducted (2015-2016) with local entrepreneurs, members of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and representatives of the local administration in Banite, Zlatograd, Rudozem, Madan, Nedelino, Dzhebel, Ivaylovgrad, Topolovgrad and Malko Tarnovo.

The study shows that the number of NGOs is quite great, but most of them have no coordination and agreements for joint actions with the municipal management. Indicated as major problems are the closure of enterprises, the decline of mining and agriculture, migration with effect of depopulation. Some of the people interviewed in the small municipalities consider urban farming as an alternative to creating sustainable local communities in the shrinking towns. Zlatograd, Madan and Rudozem suffer from nostalgia for the old mining glory, and Topolovgrad – for the military-garrisoned features. The views in terms of the perception of the border regions as a transit zone are divergent. The people interviewed from Ivaylovgrad and Zlatograd say that the opening of the border checkpoint does not give the estimated value at the expected degree for local transit position.

The people interviewed in the municipalities of the Rhodope Mountains do not feel the need to increase industrial production, but to focus on tourism and ecosystems services. One of the arguments in support of this is the fact that the Smolyan region has the lowest levels of carbon dioxide in Bulgaria (2016). The representatives of municipal administrations and NGOs in Malko Tarnovo and Topolovgrad think it shall be appropriate to develop an overall concept for the border region, not to work on the piece; and as a problem in the municipalities they consider the growth of Roma population (11.3% of Malko Tarnovo, 2011), settling in the free buildings, where the degradation processes continue; and on their activities – the limited human resources with administrative capacity. They have a pessimistic view to the new programme for the development of agriculture in the rural areas of Strandzha-Sakar, although in some of the border municipalities no more than 1/3 of arable land by 2016 is cultivated. Dominating is the opinion of the representatives of all municipalities that the local authorities have to be more active in promoting the region as a place for living, business and tourism.

Conclusion

The restructuring of the economy and employment, accommodation, adaptation, the surmounting of the consequences requires enormous management efforts at different levels (national, local), as well as the study of their effects with the aim of finding adequate policies and programs, and instruments for their implementation. This could contribute to the improvement of new actions to be undertaken in similar regions for restructuring with a view to enhancing their effectiveness and reducing the economic and social costs of developing processes of restructuring, deindustrialization (Vladimirova, 2008).

Deindustrialization in the southern mountainous border municipalities leads to the loss of industrial identity, disruption of the daily norms and values, change in the spatial stereotypes. The deindustrialised and border regions are getting a clear image of declining regions, given the condition of urban shrinkage and decline, though the specific example in the study clearly shows that a number of social, cultural, and physiological and behavioural factors of the population have an impact on the status of these relatively small towns. The analysis of these types of studies is an imperative.

The process of urban and demographic shrinkage seems irreversible for many of these border mountainous towns considering the specified trends and the results of territorial policy conducted to 2017. In this context, the mixing of urban, regional and industrial policies fails to reduce the social costs of deindustrialization. The political response to the spatial strategies comes down mainly to the refusal of the "perspective uniform for all", but should focus on an approach based on: "place, relation, complementarity and cooperation" within the border territorial context. A tricky intersection between the deindustrialization and the social inequalities is in formation and it should be articulated from the positions of targeted local and regional policy.

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REGIONAL DISPARITIES IN BULGARIA – AN INSURMOUNTABLE CHALLENGE

Elena Kalfova

Abstract

The inequalities in economic development have increased in recent years – both at a national level and at the regional and local levels in the EU Member States. Reducing disparities between regions is widely seen as a goal of regional policy. The purpose of the article is to analyse the dynamics of cohesion among the regions in Bulgaria for a period of 10 years (2007 to 2016). The multidimensional scaling method is used as a method for defining possible groupings across regions. The analysis is done at district level that correspond to a NUTS III level of the EU classification, In the particular case of Bulgaria, at the NUTS II level, there is no equivalent administrative territorial unit, but only statistical regions. On the other hand, the district level in Bulgaria is the traditional regional level of government. In addition, a specific emphasis is placed on the analysis of developmental disparities between the capital and the other districts.

Key words: regional disparities, regional policy, multidimensional scaling

Achieving sustainable regional development and reducing disparities between regions is widely seen as the goals of public governance in recent decades. However, defining the concept of 'equitable and sustainable development' is not unambiguous. In fact, adopting a particular understanding of regional development is crucial to the regional policy model that is being developed and implemented.

The inequalities in economic development have increased in recent years – both at a national level and at the regional and local levels. The higher requirements to the quality of life, citizens' welfare, the degradation of the environment and climate change, energy insecurity, demographic changes in the context of globalization, changing governance systems (decentralisation and deregulation, on the one hand, and expectations for more serious interference by the state after the financial crisis of the early 20th century, on the other) pose a number of questions about the need and the ways of implementing a regional policy (Pike, A., Rodríguez-Pose, A., Tomaney, J., 2011, p. 10-15).

It is difficult to come up with a single definition and a unified conceptual and theoretical framework for analysing local and regional development. In fact, the most beneficial approach is to assume that there is no single best way to achieve development, and there is no single governance approach to its implementation. It is more appropriate to adopt the understanding that this is a multi-factor process covering a multitude of social, economic, environmental and governance processes.

The various definitions of 'local and regional development' seek to capture and reflect the geographic differences, the uneven economic, social, political, cultural and environmental conditions. Underlying the understanding of the concept of 'local and regional development' are, of course, the classic economic measures – level of GDP, unemployment rate, employment rate, etc., as well as demographic indicators – population growth, migratory trends, age and educational structure, etc. Adopting the concepts of endogenous development places the focus of scientific and management interest not only on the preservation of the physical environment and the economic resources, but also on the social aspects of development. Thus, regional

development is also defined as a process related to the characteristics of a particular place such as innovation, knowledge and human capital (Riain, S., 2011, p. 26).

The broad adoption of such an understanding of regional development determines to a large extent also the main objectives set by the regional policies of the European countries and of the EU as a whole. Regional policy in the European countries was first implemented in the 1950s. This period is characterized by significant economic growth. Thus, naturally, the main objectives of regional policy are related to the equitable distribution of this growth. The economic crises of the late 1970s and the early 1980s have led to a lag in the development of certain regions. This calls for a shift in regional policy and changes to its objectives. The reduction of unemployment and the development of infrastructure in the lagging regions became its main objectives. In the early 1990s, the regional policy objectives of the European countries were redirected to supporting national and/or regional competitiveness, combined with support for a balanced regional development (OECD, 2010, p. 10-13). However, despite the long-term management efforts, regional disparities in development have remained a problem in most European countries. The problems in regional development that nation states recognize are still largely related to the disparities in regional development. However, intra-regional disparities are also recognized more and more often. Some countries have a constitutional commitment to ensuring a territorial balance (for instance, Germany, Italy and Spain). In other countries, emphasis is placed on overcoming regional disparities (e.g. Finland) and territorial cohesion (e.g. France and Norway). The concept of balancing the development of the regions, apart from the general economic conditions, also includes equal access to collective public services such as education and basic transport infrastructure. In most countries, the territorial balance of development and regional growth are seen as interlinked goals (OECD, 2010, p. 15-17).

The European Union has a heterogeneous structure with significant differences in the socio-economic development of the individual member states and regions. These differences are mainly due to the uneven spatial distribution of economic activities, which results in different levels of the quality of life. The EU's regional policy sets as its main goals stimulating competitiveness and overcoming the disparities in the development of regions. EU's cohesion policy seeks to support economic, territorial and social cohesion (Kyriacou, A., O. Roca-Sagalés, 2012, p. 267-269).

In the preamble to the Treaty of Rome of 1957, we can find the following statement: 'Anxious to strengthen the unity of their economies and ensure their harmonious development by reducing the differences existing between the various regions and the backwardness of the less favoured regions.' Since the establishment of the European Regional Development Fund in 1975 to help correct regional imbalances, EU's regional policy has been constantly expanding both in terms of volume of funds and in terms of content. The Single European Act of 1986, Article 130a, also sets out a clear concept for regional policy objectives – economic and social cohesion. '... the Community shall develop and pursue its actions leading to the strengthening of its economic and social cohesion. In particular the Community shall aim at reducing disparities between the various regions and the backwardness of the least-favoured regions.' (Tvrdon, M., 2012, p. 92-93).

Regional differences remain a serious problem for the EU currently as well. A number of studies report convergence in the development of individual Member States, but at a regional level, the disparities in development persist and increase, measured by employment rates and by the level of GDP (see Martin, Martin, 2009; Farole, Rodríguez-Pose and Storper, 2009). Although in the last two programming periods the European Regional Policy has substantially changed its priorities, placing an emphasis on stimulating growth, employment and innovation potential, overcoming regional disparities also remains a key objective. The main arguments for this are

related to the argument that the rather big differences in development are an obstacle to the further economic, social and territorial integration of the Union, that the aggravation of the lag in particular regions is not beneficial for the economic development of all the others, the lagging behind in the development of the a significant number of regions in the EU could lead to an overall lag in the development of the Union, failure to attain reasonable degrees of cohesion undermines confidence in the community as a whole (Tvrdon, M., 2012, p. 89-90).

The size, structure and level of regional disparities measured by selected macroeconomic indicators can be a criterion for a successful or failed cohesion policy.

Methodology

Bulgaria as an EU member state follows a similar model of defining regional problems and choosing regional policy objectives. The Regional Development Act stipulates that regional policy will ‘... development of a balanced polycentric network and integrated urban rehabilitation and development; territorial connectivity and access to public and private services; sustainable development and preserved natural and cultural heritage; improvement of the condition of specific territories with unfavourable socio-economic, geographic and demographic parameters’ (Regional Development Act, promulgated in State Gazette No. 50 dated 30 May 2008, Art. 3). In addition, the EU’s regional policy is naturally applied, with the country taking advantage of a considerable amount of funds to overcome the lagging behind of the regions. Regardless of the policies implemented and the continuous growth of GDP reported for the last 10 years at a national level, different social and economic processes take place in the individual regions. Tendencies for concentration and over-concentration of economic activity and population in certain regions stand out. Such a pattern of development could create difficulties in ensuring sustainable development at a national level. This gives us grounds to ask ourselves questions about the development of regional differences in Bulgaria.

The main hypothesis upheld in the present article is that regional development has remained inequitable within the last 10 years (2007 to 2016). It is reported that there is convergence of the regions in terms of some basic economic indicators, but also the disparities between the most developed regions, especially the capital, and the other regions of the country persist.

The purpose of the article is to analyse the dynamics of cohesion among the regions in Bulgaria for a period of 10 years (2007 to 2016). Emphasis is placed on the analysis of the specific model in which the regions in Bulgaria are converging/diverging in their development over the past 10 years.

Analysis design

The analysis is focused on some economic and social aspects of cohesion between the regions. Mainly the deviations among the regions are examined, and not so much the problems of growth. Convergence between regions is analysed through the lens of reduction of disparities between the regions in terms of basic economic and social indicators. The broadly applied approach is followed, to examine the disparities across regions by means of a common statistical indicator showing the overall convergence between regions in a particular country. This classical approach gives a good idea of perhaps the most important issue (from the viewpoint of both practitioners and decision-makers): to what extent the regions are converging towards each other.

Nevertheless, this general statistic does not allow us to get a deeper insight into the details of cohesion. In our capacity of researchers, we need to ask at least two important questions. Is the convergence between regions even or uneven? Are all regions at an equal distance from each

other or, despite the common statistical indicator, clusters can be found among them, grouping several regions with similar characteristics. Even if the convergence between the regions is a fact to date, how has that happened over time? Even supposing that, at some point, the regions are close together, we should ask whether this state is permanent. The answers to these questions require a search for a set of tools to reveal the internal structure of 'relations' between the regions.

The appropriate method for defining possible clusters among the regions is multidimensional scaling. This is a descriptive technique that calculates and results in visualisation of the disparities between the individual observed units in a common conceptual space. Multidimensional scaling shows the discrepancies between the units of the analysis (in this particular case, regions) in a common plane, calculating 'distances' between individual objects based on different variables. A result of the calculations can be visualized in a two-dimensional plane, making it possible to illustrate and describe the distance/proximity of the objects to each other. As a result of the visualization, the different types of clusters among the objects (regions) are clearly visible. Another important advantage of multidimensional scaling is the possibility for clusters among the regions to be traced over time. This can be achieved by calculating the distances between the objects in several different time periods. In this particular case, four time slots (snapshots) were examined, and their comparison could give a clear idea of the dynamics of inter-regional disparities.

Putting the objects in this common space of differences is a matter of multiple iterations in the quest to find the best position of the particular object in relation to the others on the basis of the pre-calculated matrix of differences. The matrix of differences is designed to calculate the distance between objects (in this case, these are districts) based on several different indicators. This is also the great advantage of the method: its ability to estimate the distance between the objects of analysis (districts), by including a number of variables. This statistical model allows to find and visualize the disparities between regions based on selected variables. Accordingly, the comparison of 4 spaces of disparities between the regions (one for each selected year of analysis: 2007, 2010, 2013 and 2016) makes it possible to compare the movement across regions.

When describing the statistical set of tools used, it is important to mention that the matrix of distances between the districts is calculated on the basis of a correlation between the variables (Chi-square). All data is standardized (-1 to + 1) due to the different nature of the scales of each of the variables (ranging from GDP to population). The points in the common space are located by calculating the Euclidean distance.

The following variables are used in the analysis to examine the convergence between regions:

- GDP per capita, in BGN;
- Average annual gross salary of employees under labour and employment relationship (BGN);
- Average annual unemployment rate of the population aged 15 and over, %;
- Foreign direct investment in non-financial enterprises, cumulative by 31 December (thousands of US dollars – till 2006, inclusive; thousands of Euro – after 2007);
- Population as of 31 December – in total;

The selection of the variables is based on two main arguments. Firstly, these indicators are the key ones used to take account of the economic and social cohesion in the EU. Secondly, some of these indicators are also used to monitor and report progress on the implementation of operational programs and are criteria for the regions' access to funding under these programs.

GDP per capita is a classic measure of the disparities in the development of the regions. Despite the reasonable doubts about the extent to which this indicator reflects regional development with full accuracy, it remains central to the regional policy of the EU.

Average annual gross salary is also a measure of economic development therein. It is a kind of a reflection of economic progress, viewed from the perspective of the demand and supply of specialized labour. On the other hand, the salary level should also be seen in the perspective of a factor that determines the movement of labour from one region to another. The salary level is one of the main factors for labour mobility. In turn, migration to the regions with higher salary levels strengthens regional disparities, leaving the regions that are donors of labour without substantial prospects for development.

The average annual unemployment rate also reflects the economic development in the region and, again, like the salary level, it is a factor in labour migration. It differs from the salary due to the fact that unemployment is a negative factor for mobility of labour from a particular region and directing it to another.

The foreign direct investment (FDI) reflects the degree of attractiveness of a region for investment originating outside the nation state. In itself, it is very important as it reflects the complex assessment of foreign investors for the business climate in a particular country, and also the differences in the assessment by foreign investors of the economic environment in the particular regions, respectively. The differences in FDI are also indicative of the differences in the regions' potential for economic growth.

The total population is indicative of the workforce potential in the region (aged 15 and over). On the other hand, considering the total population (including the population beyond the working age), we can draw conclusions about the reproduction of the workforce. The total population is a complex indicator that includes not only the aspect of the workforce (population aged 15-65) but also the social context of its reproduction.

As already noted, one of the main research tasks is to find out whether the model of convergence between the regions is sustainable over time. Examining the issue in more detail involves trying to recognize different clusters across the regions, as well as tracking the movement of these clusters over time. The ability to track historical changes in the clusters across regions (in the common plane that multidimensional scaling calculates) is implemented by making four temporal 'snapshots' of regional differences. The planes of the disparities between regions have been built for four years, and comparing them makes it possible to analyse the changes. The years that are included in the analysis are the following:

- 2007 – this is the year of Bulgaria's accession to the EU and, officially, the implementation of the EU's regional policy in the country started;
- 2010 – this is the year in which the first programming period is in its midst. It is logical to see intermediate results;
- 2013 – this is the last year of the first programming period;
- 2016 – this is the last year for which there are official, final data on the individual indicators.

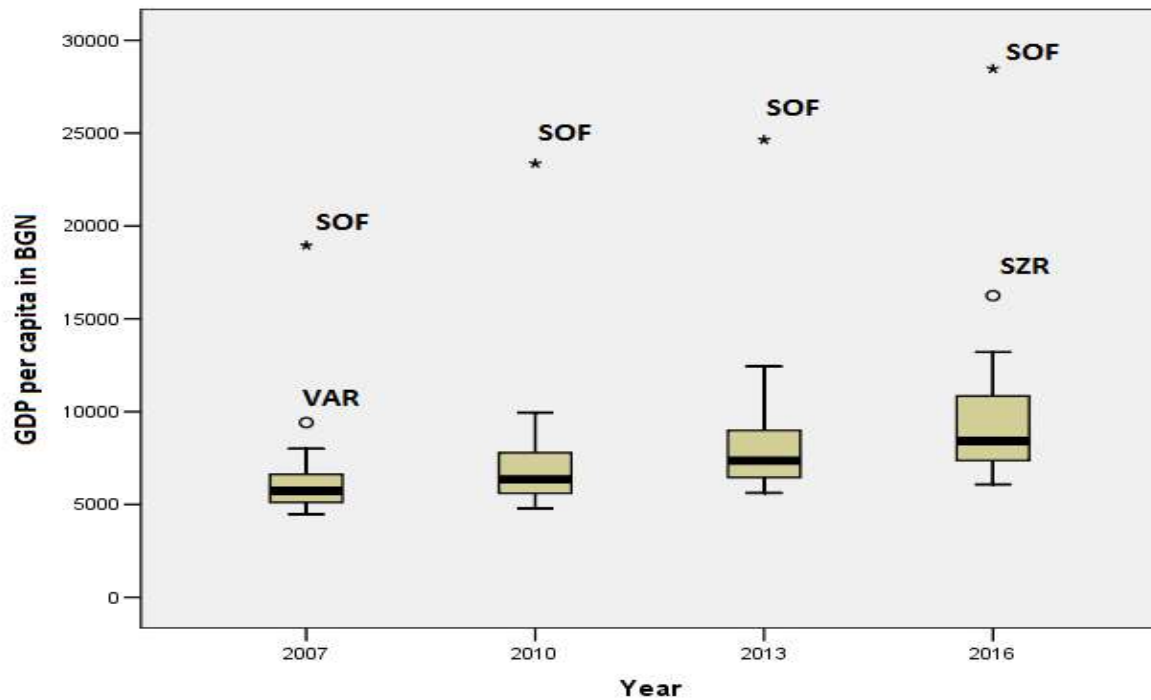
The analysis is done at district level that correspond to a NUTS III level of the EU classification, the capital being assessed separately. There are two reasons for this choice. In the particular case of Bulgaria, at the NUTS II level, there is no equivalent administrative territorial unit, but only statistical regions. Moreover, the negative trends in the demographic development and the concentration of population in several urban centres call for a forthcoming change in the scope of second level regions (NUTS II). On the other hand, the *district level in Bulgaria is the traditional regional level of government. It is based on traditional economic centres* (Kalfova, E., 2015, p. 85-89). This gives us reason to do the analysis precisely at the district level (NUTS III). Secondly, a separate assessment is made for Sofia capital district, as it is characterized by over-concentration of economic activity and population, which reaches almost a quarter of the entire population of the country. These patterns of development of the country

require a specific emphasis in the analysis of the differences in development between the capital and the other districts.

Results

Before we analyse the results of multidimensional scaling, we need to get a more detailed picture of the general development. Thus, we will get an idea of the peculiarities in the development of the individual districts and of the processes of convergence or lack thereof across them in Bulgaria during the period analysed. For this reason, for each of the variables examined, one-dimensional distributions were analysed for each year within the period of the analysis. Another very substantial specific feature is that, during the preliminary analysis, the tendency stood out for one of the objects (Sofia capital) to be placed extremely far away from the other objects, as already noted. This makes it necessary to do an analysis excluding the capital both from the one-dimensional distributions and with multidimensional scaling. The reason is that, if there is a strong deviation of one of the objects (the so-called extremums), this has a strong impact on the average indicators or correlation coefficients that are the basis of the matrix of differences with multidimensional scaling.

GDP per capita (all districts)¹⁴



Unceasing growth of GDP per capita is reported during the analysed period. This is a clear sign of positive economic development in all districts of the country. Throughout the analysed period, the level of GDP per capita for Sofia capital is times above the average for the country. In addition, the std. deviation across the individual districts increases. In 2007, the districts had relatively the smallest disparities among each other in terms of GDP. During the analysed period, the disparities across them increased, and the std. deviation the districts was greatest in 2016.

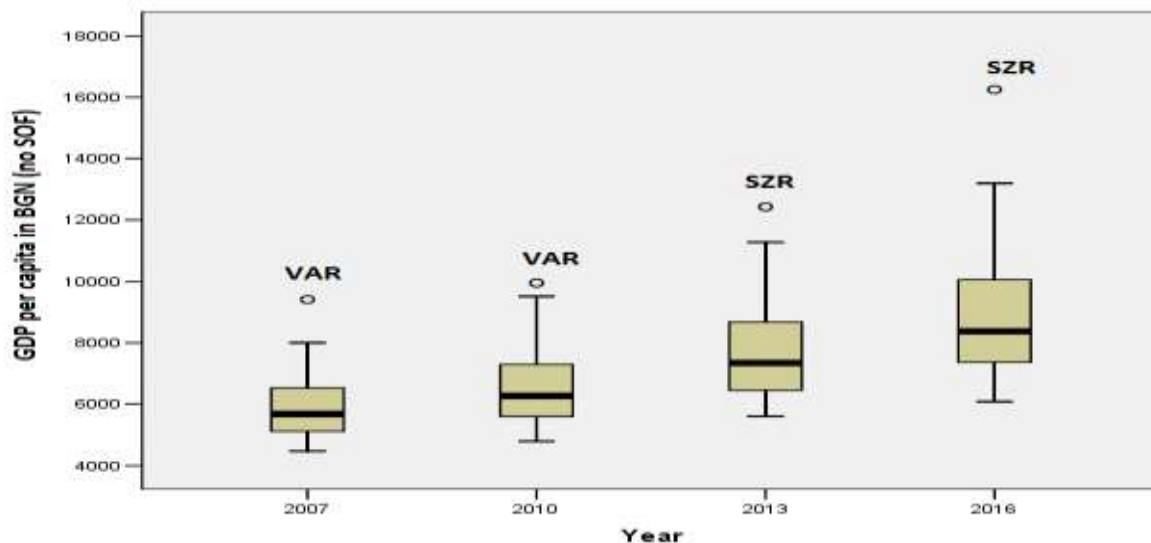
¹⁴ All data used in the article were taken from the National Statistical Institute:

<http://www.nsi.bg/en/content/11252/regional-statistics-and-indicators-monitoring>, last visited in November 2018.

The results of all statistical analyses are on the author.

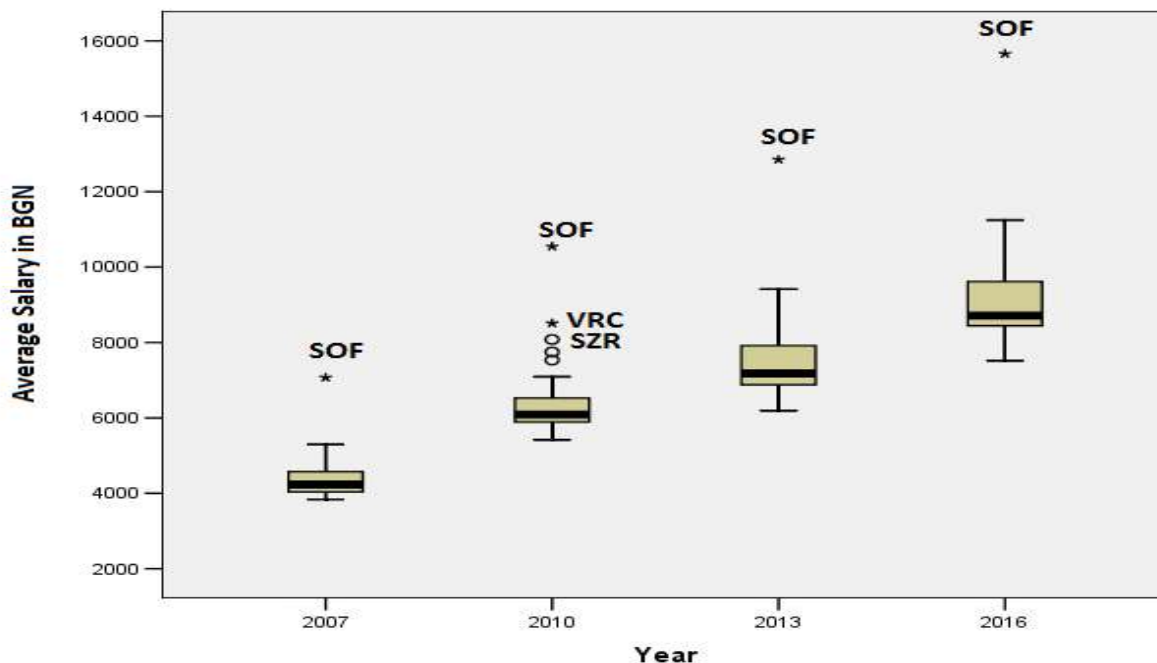
This indicates an increase in the disparities in the level of economic development. Which is a sure sign of greater disparities between more regions.

GDP per capita (excluding Sofia capital)



The analysis of the data for GDP per capita for the 27 districts, excluding Sofia capital, confirms the negative trend towards an increase in the disparities between the districts. The std. deviation across the districts is growing, and a clear difference becomes prominent between 2007 and 2016 – the disparities between the districts are becoming more and more significant. In addition, the Varna district and especially Stara Zagora stand out with a much higher growth of GDP per capita, and the difference between Stara Zagora district and the district with the lowest GDP per capita is more than two times for the year 2016.

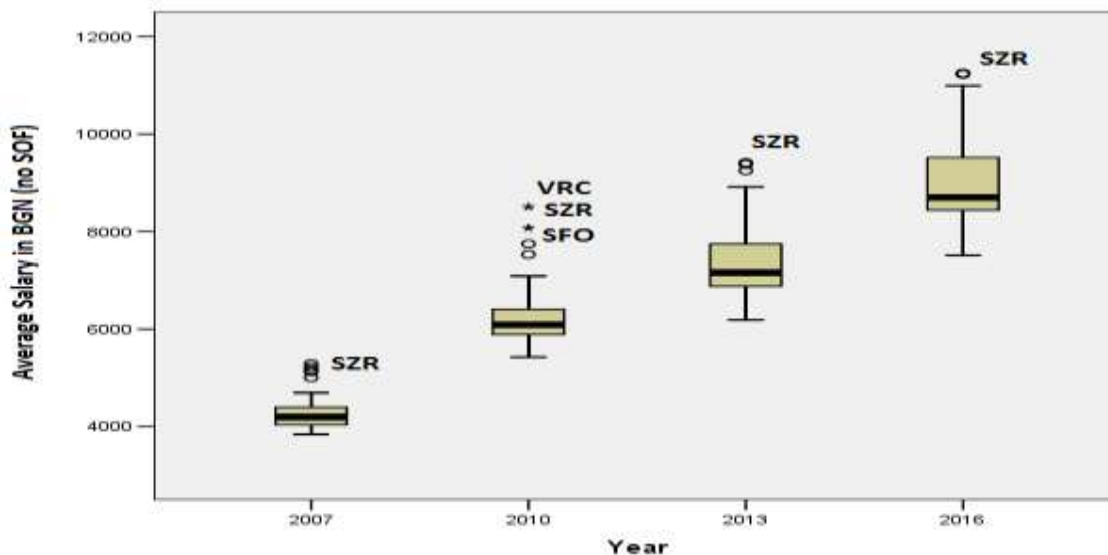
Average annual gross salary (all districts)



The analysis of the data on the ‘average annual gross salary’ indicator shows similar trends with those reported with the previous indicator. The growth of the average gross salary for 10 years is

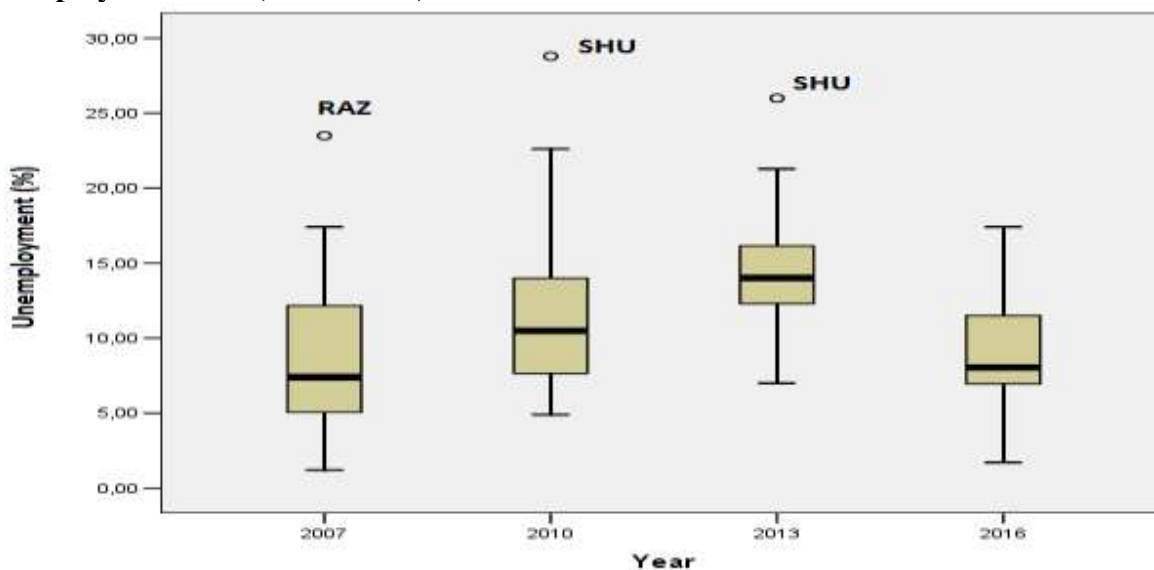
considerable. Practically, it has doubled – from BGN 4,000 in 2007 to more than BGN 8,000 in 2016. Despite the considerable growth, the salary level remains very different in the various districts and the disparities across them are increasing during the analysed period. Again, the average salary level in the capital city is significantly higher compared to other regions.

Average annual gross salary (excluding Sofia capital)



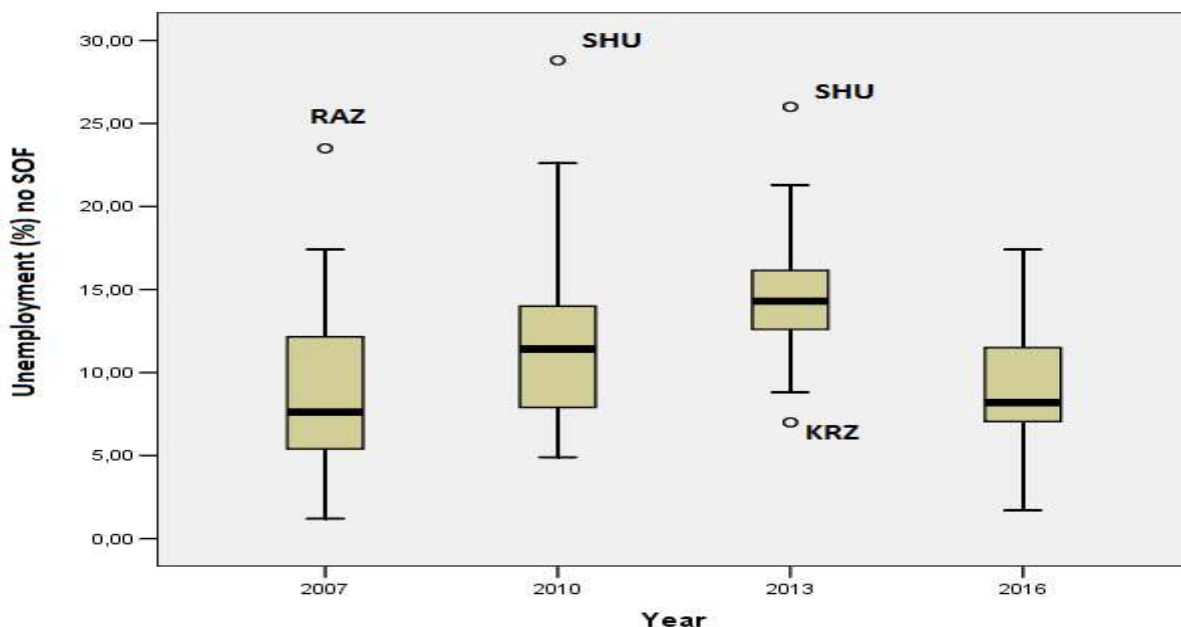
The std. deviation among the districts is significant even with the exclusion of the data on the capital. Again, we are seeing an increase in the salary level disparity across the individual districts. Over the analysed period, a higher salary level for Stara Zagora district compared to the other districts is observed. Only for one year (2010), we report a relatively higher salary level for Sofia district and Vratsa district. We can reasonably assume that this is due to the specifics of the development of one particular sector – energy, and, above all, to the salary level particularly at Kozloduy Nuclear Power Plant. If we have to summarize – the increased std. deviation across the districts under the ‘average annual gross salary’ indicator is a clear evidence that no convergence between the districts can be reported despite the overall growth of the salary level.

Unemployment rate (all districts)



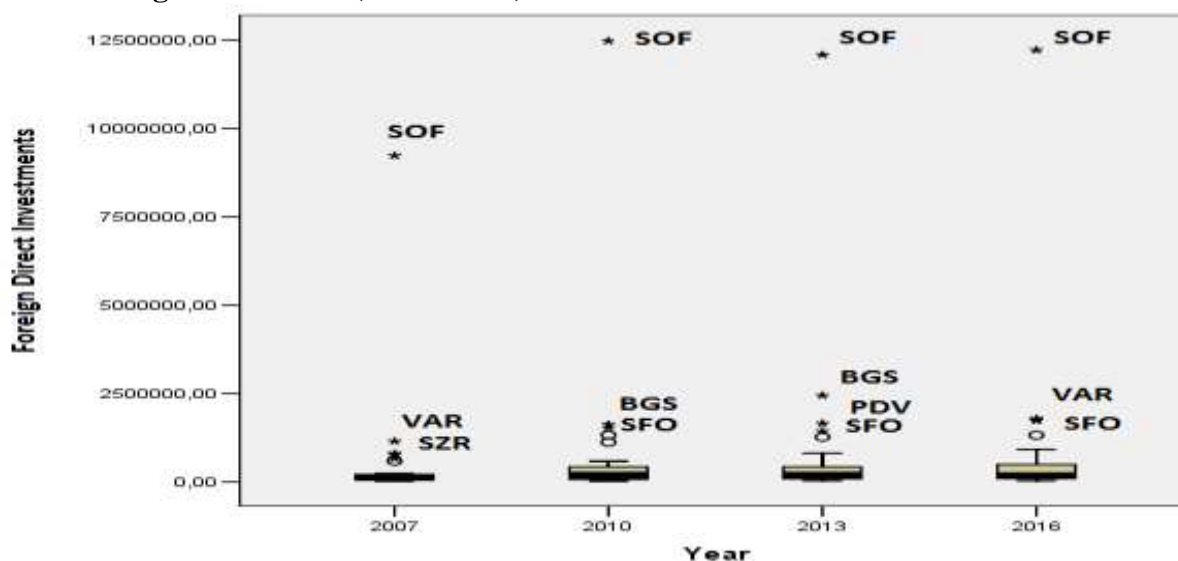
As a result of the overall positive economic development for the analysed period, the unemployment rate is decreasing in all districts. The analysis of the data also shows a significant reduction in the std. deviation across the individual districts. This gives us grounds to uphold that the disparities across the districts under this indicator are decreasing significantly.

Unemployment rate (excluding Sofia capital)



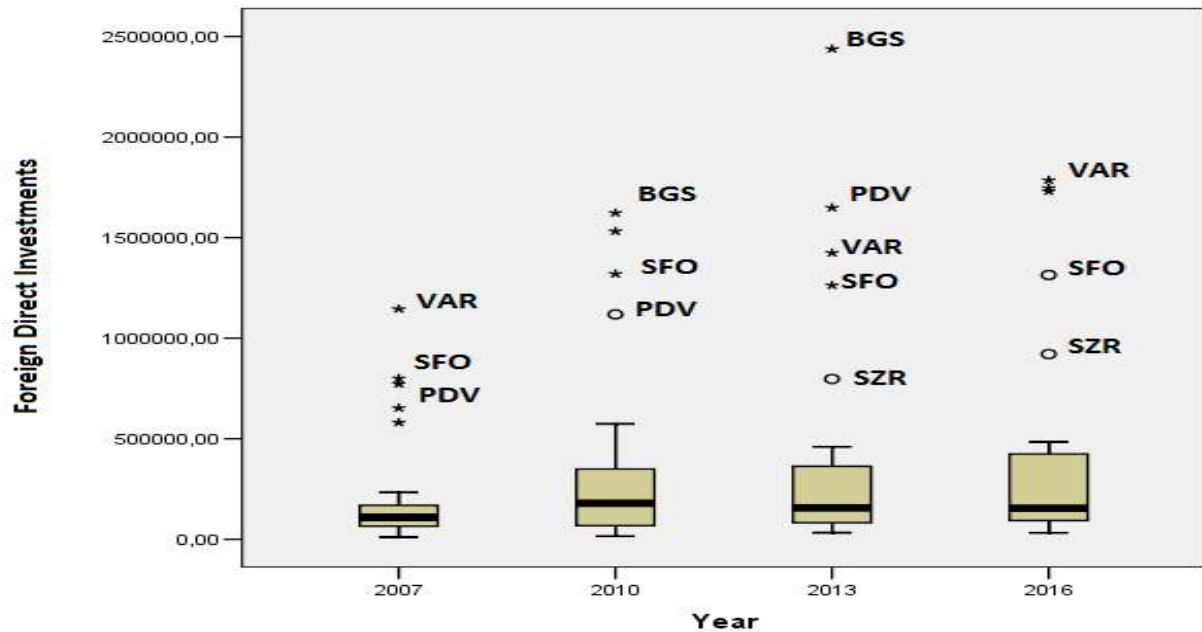
The comparatively low std. deviation across the districts is preserved also when analysing the data excluding those for the capital. The highest drop in the unemployment rate is recorded for Razgrad and Shumen districts. A comparatively small drop (beyond the average values) is reported for Kardzhali districts. The overall decline in the unemployment rate and the decrease in the disparities across the districts under this indicator is undoubtedly a positive trend. It gives us reason to expect a reduction in the salary level as well, due to saturation of the labour market, although no such trend has been reported for the time being, as already noted.

Direct foreign investment (all districts)



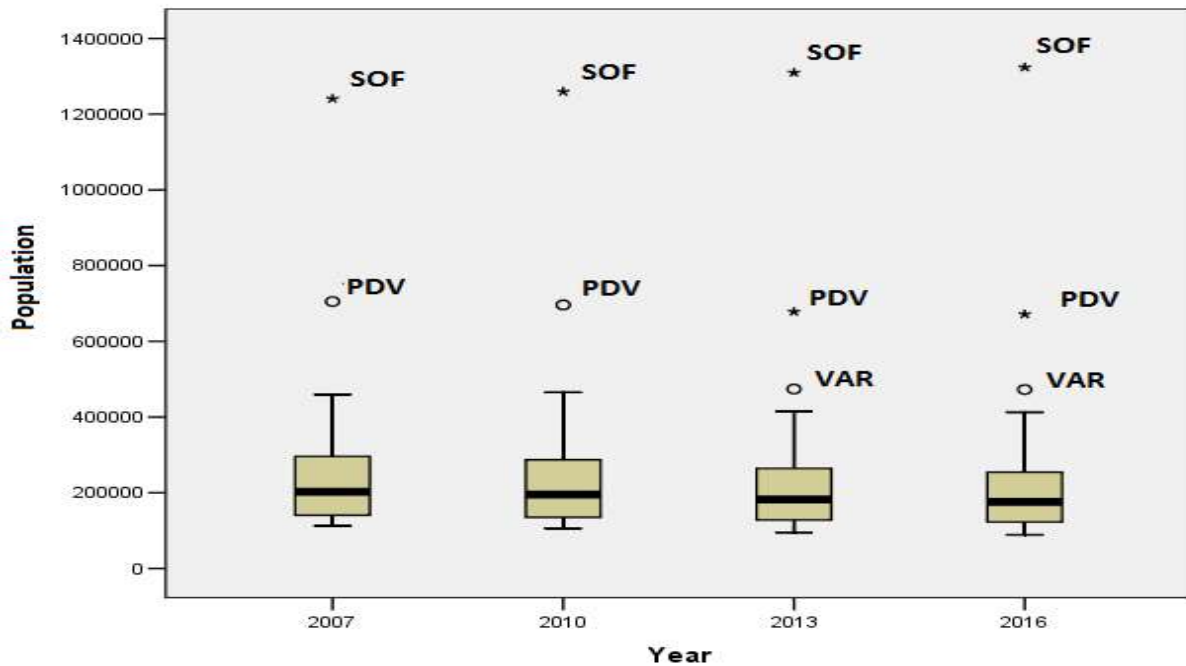
The analysis of the data on the ‘direct foreign investment’ indicator proves a negative and, at this point, insurmountable trend – direct foreign investment is concentrated in the capital. The disparity between the capital and the other regions is dramatic. Direct foreign investment is increasing only for Sofia capital at a subdued rate. This trend in the development greatly limits the opportunities of other districts to accelerate economic development.

Direct foreign investment (excluding Sofia capital)



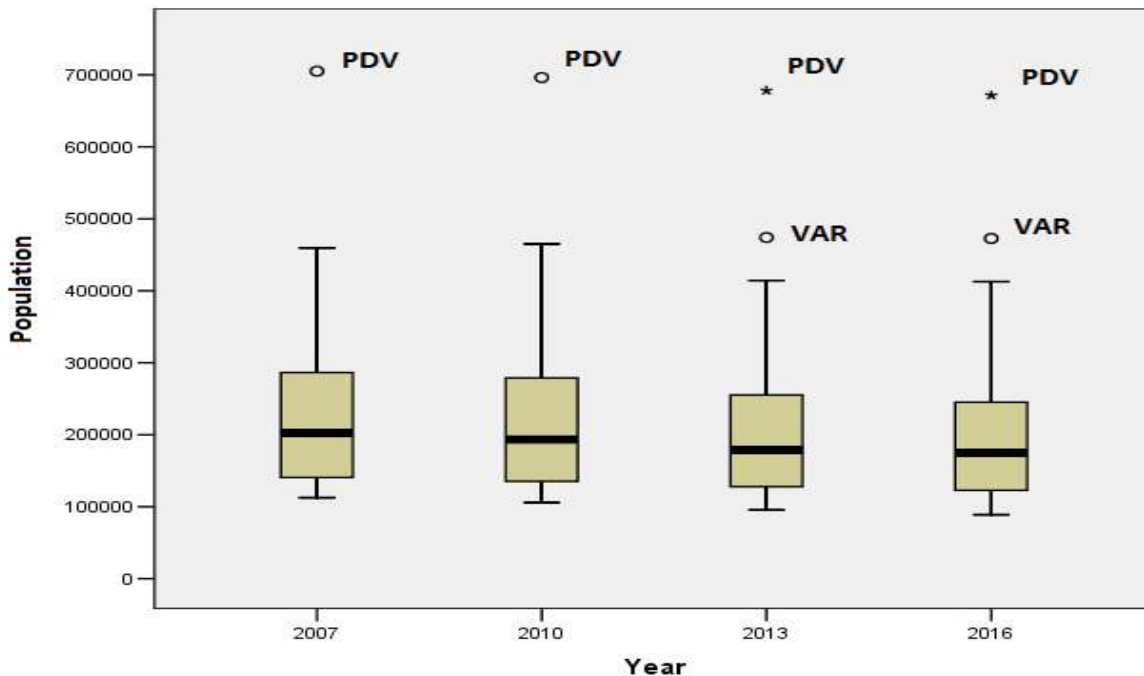
The analysis of direct foreign investment data without the ‘Sofia capital’ extremum shows some interesting results. The average values of direct foreign investment did not increase during the period examined. Albeit with minor changes, it remains at the same level. The std. deviation across districts significantly increases after 2010. This leads to the conclusion that only a limited number of districts manage to attract direct foreign investment. On the one hand, these districts begin, albeit insignificantly, to narrow their disparities with the capital, but on the other hand, the disparity between them and all the rest is increasing. This could hardly be interpreted as a positive trend. For the districts of Burgas, Plovdiv, Sofia district, significantly higher levels of direct foreign investment are reported compared to the average level for the other districts (excluding Sofia capital).

Population (all districts)



The population in the country has been decreasing over the whole period studied, and this process affects relatively evenly all districts. A low std. deviation is reported under this indicator compared to the other analysed indicators. A considerably higher population decline is reported for Smolyan and Pleven districts throughout the analysed period.

Population (excluding Sofia capital)

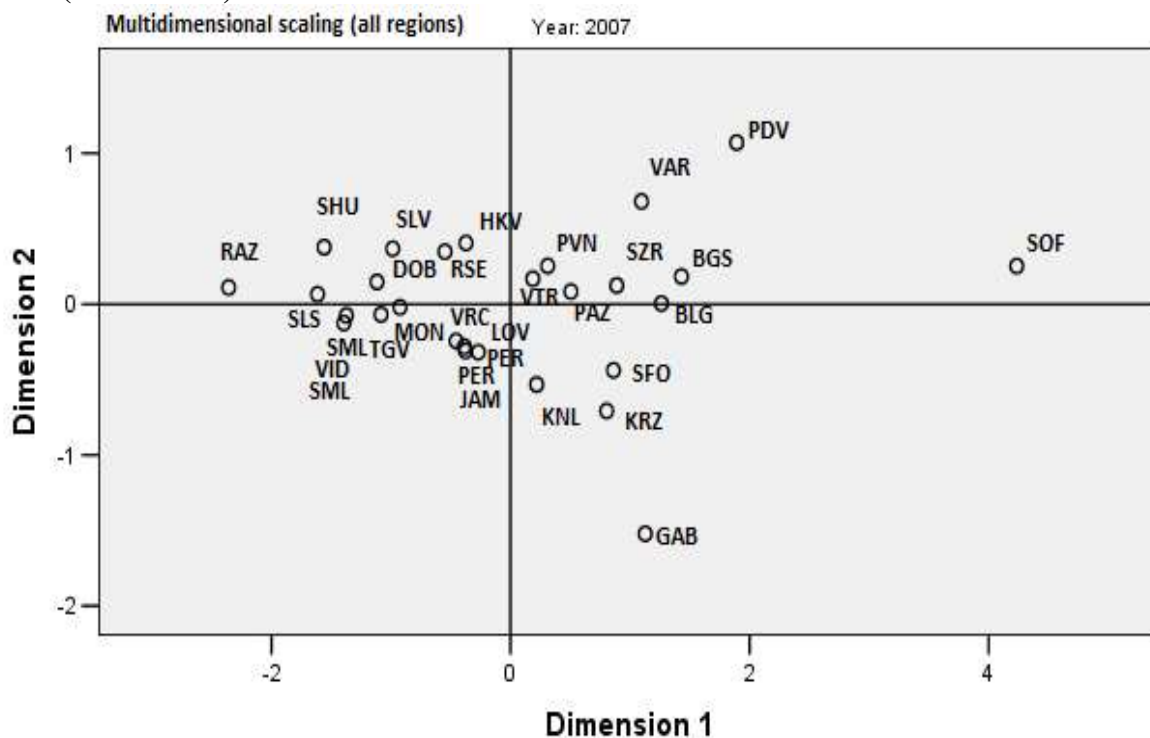


A strengthening in the negative trend is recorded for Burgas district as well, for 2013 and 2016. The population decline rates are considerably higher than the average ones. The low std. deviation for this indicator is preserved even without considering the data for Sofia district.

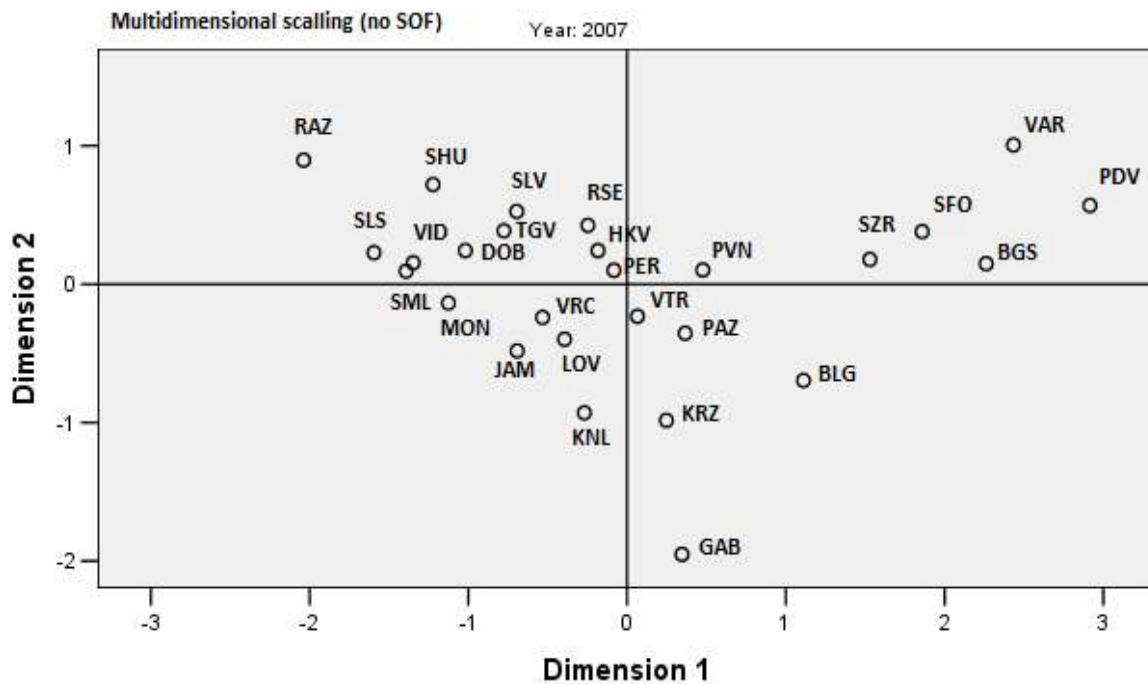
During the analysed period, an overall positive economic development of the country can be observed, despite the constant decline of the population. This economic trend also has a positive impact on the salary level and the level of unemployment. Unfortunately, there is also a strong territorial polarization in development. The level of lagging behind in the development of all districts compared to the capital is dramatic, and no significant catching-up processes can be seen. Reduction of the disparities across the districts is recorded only under the 'unemployment rate' indicator.

Analysis of multidimensional scaling results

2007 (all districts)



The analysis of the multidimensional scaling data for all indicators clearly outlines the huge disparity between Sofia capital and all other districts in 2007. The districts of Plovdiv, Varna and Burgas are closest to the capital, but the level of difference with it is considerable again. In addition to 2007, these districts cannot stand out significantly compared to all other districts. It is necessary to note that a large group of districts that are in the negative quadrant are standing out and they differ drastically by the studied indicators compared to the other districts (Vidin, Smolyan, Haskovo, Vratsa).

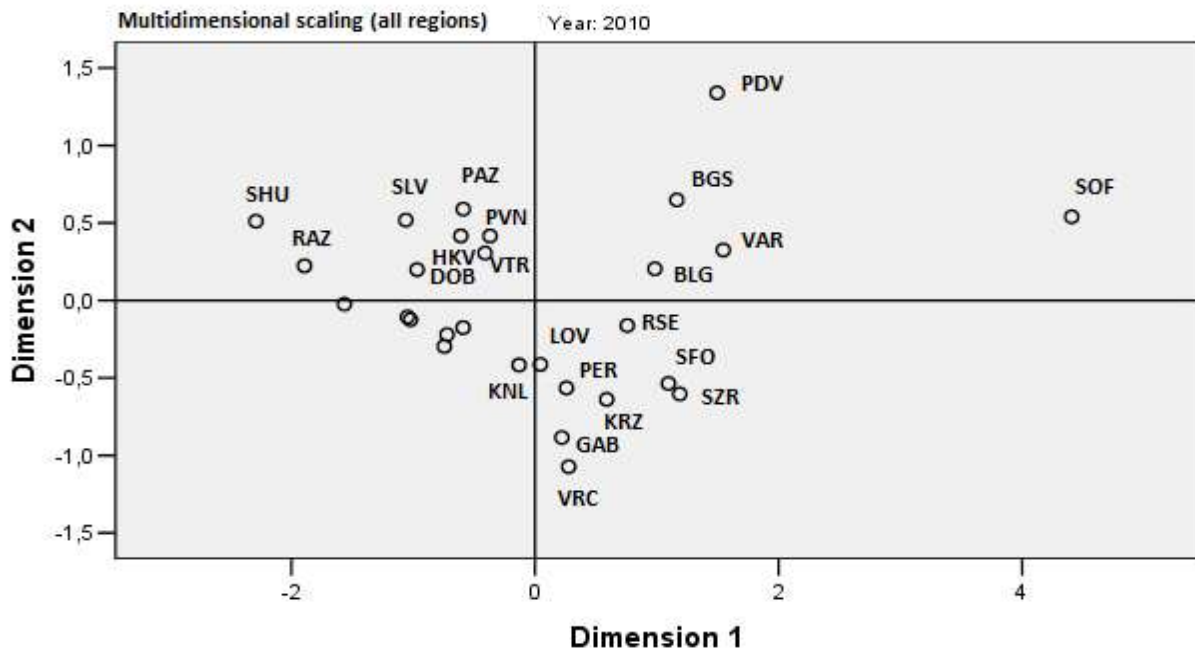
2007 (excluding Sofia capital)

It is necessary to emphasize that, from the viewpoint of the multidimensional space, in which a district with a drastic difference from the others is included (Sofia capital), it is difficult to distinguish an internal division between the other objects of analysis – the other 27 districts. For this reason, it is important to analyse the data without including the capital.

Again, we record significant disparities across the districts in Bulgaria. A small group of districts is formed that are ‘catching up’. The indicators for their development are closer to the capital (although they remain very far from behind it). These are Plovdiv, Burgas, Varna, Sofia district and Stara Zagora. It should be noted that, although with small differences, this group can be divided into two subgroups. On the one hand, these are the districts Plovdiv, Varna and Burgas, which have the best performance compared all other districts. The second subgroup includes the district Stara Zagora and the Sofia district, which, although standing out considerably against the districts lagging behind in their development, have significantly lower indicators than the first three districts.

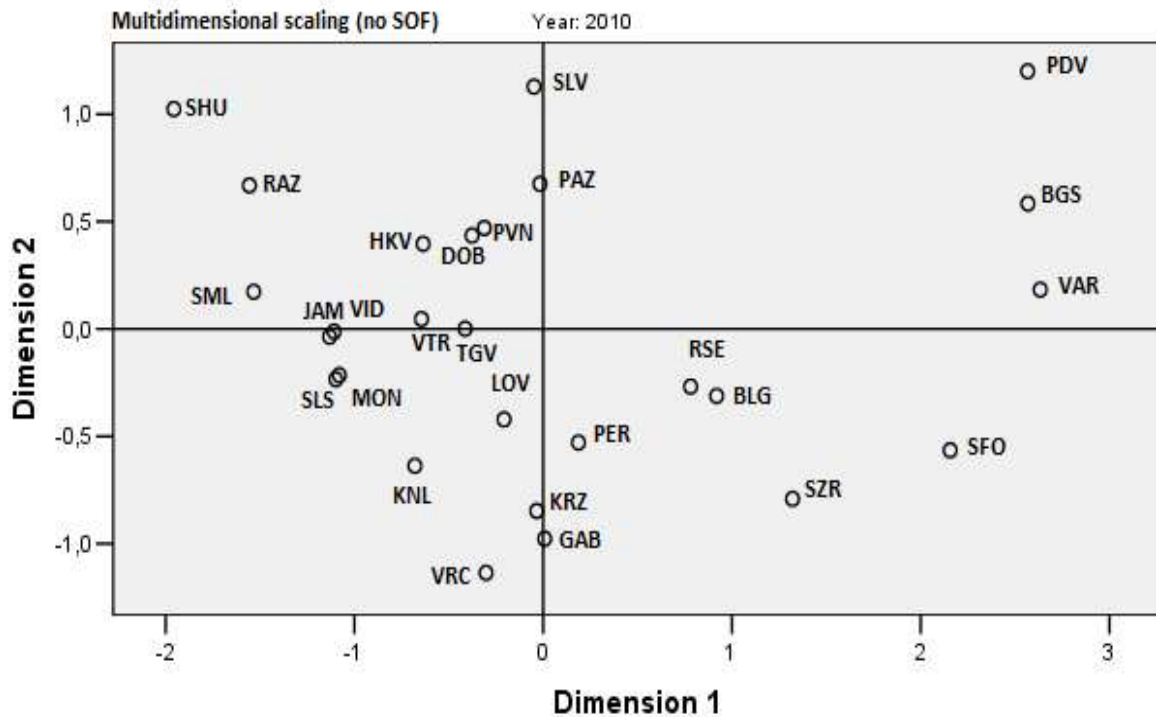
Unfortunately, there is also a group of districts that differ considerably from the others, in a negative direction. This group includes, besides the ‘usual suspects’ of the Northwest planning region – Vratsa and Montana, the districts Kyustendil, Yambol, Lovech and Smolyan as well.

2010 (all districts)



The trends in the development of regional disparities remain the same for 2010 as well. The huge disparity in development of Sofia capital and of all the other districts is preserved in 2010 compared to 2007. The group of districts closest to the capital can still be identified, but the gap is still too great. Again, this group comprises the districts of Plovdiv, Varna and Burgas.

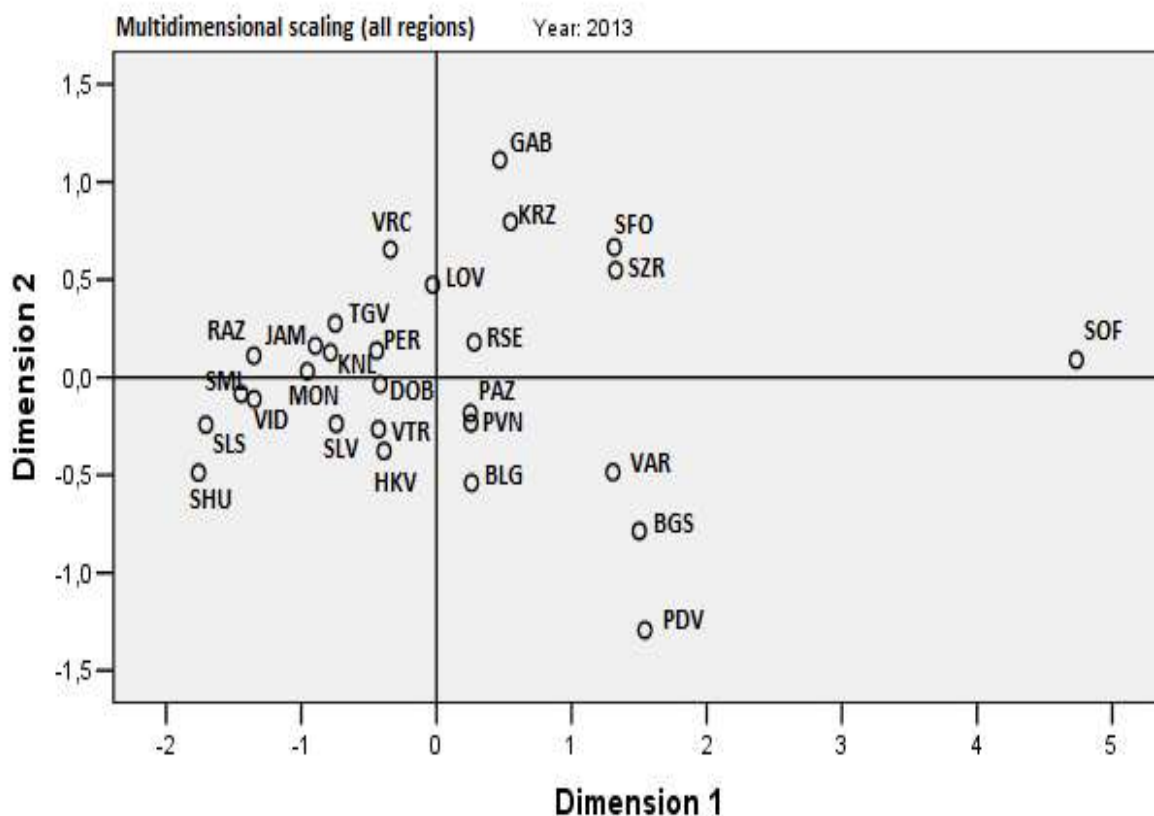
2010 (excluding Sofia capital)



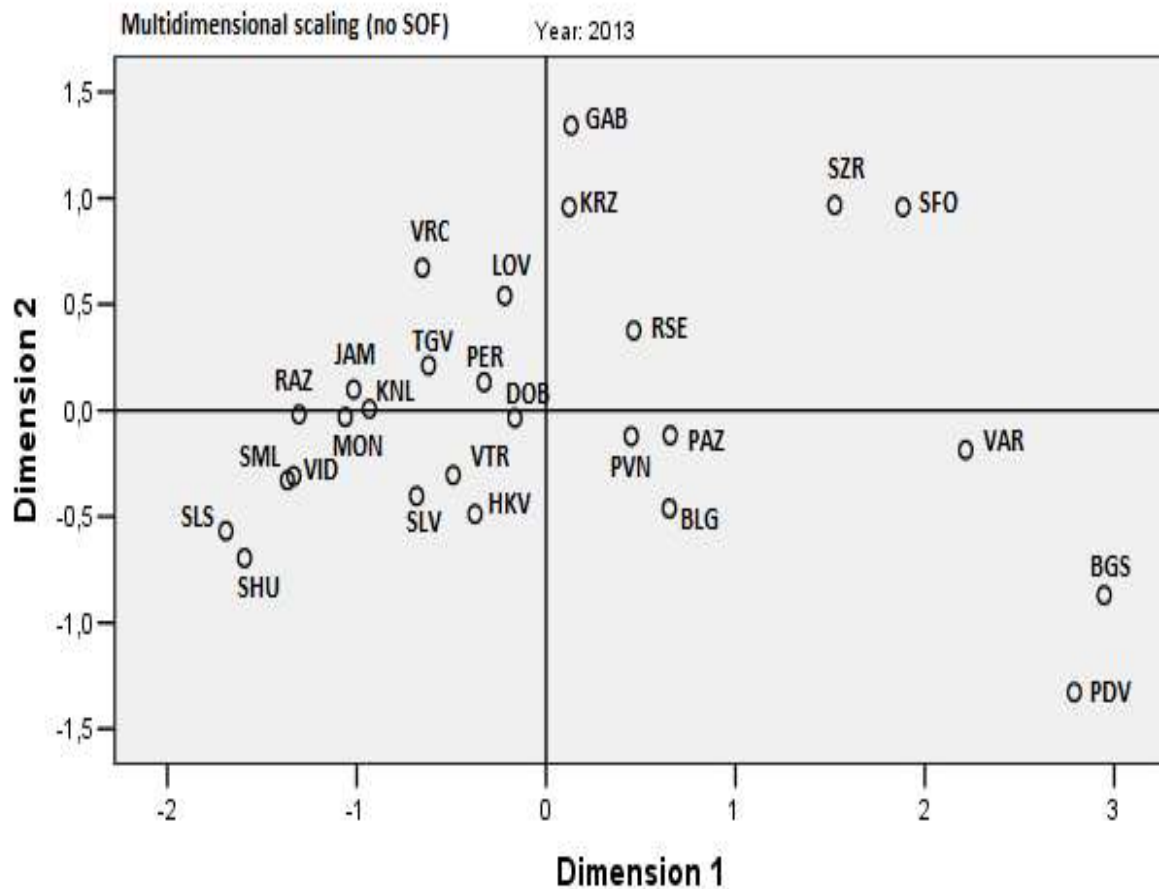
Due to the persisting serious imbalance in the development between the capital and all other districts, it is necessary, for 2010 again, to analyse the data without those for Sofia capital. Unlike the situation in 2007, the disparities across the 27 districts are increasing. The group of three districts (Plovdiv, Varna and Burgas) that are closest to the capital in terms of their development, is preserved, but the disparity between them and the capital remains. It should be noted that the districts of Stara Zagora and Sofia district have significantly reduced their disparity with the districts Plovdiv, Varna and Burgas.

An increase in the disparities within the next group of districts can be observed, compared to the situation in 2007. A group of districts can be identified that succeed in reducing the disparities with the more developed districts – Blagoevgrad, Ruse, Pernik, Gabrovo, Kardzhali. Again, the presence of a group of districts that are significantly lagging behind in their development is recorded – Shumen, Razgrad, Smolyan.

2013 (all districts)



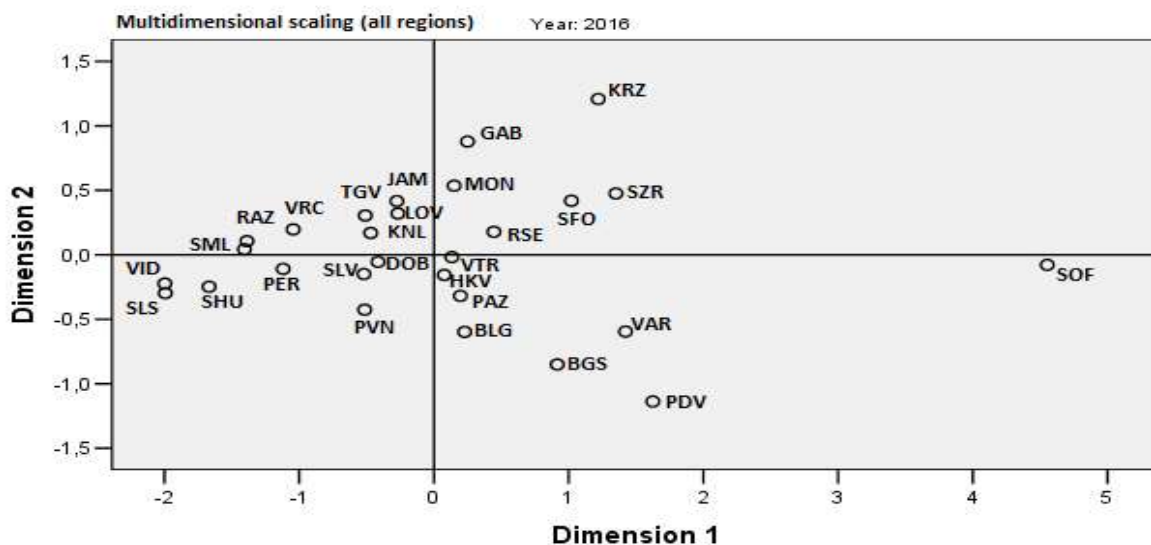
The analysis of the data for 2013 shows several negative trends. The level of divergence in the development across the districts increases in 2013. The disparity between the capital and the other districts is increasing. There is also an increase in the disparities between the already lastingly established group of five districts with the highest performance and all other districts in the country. It should be noted that, within this small group, the disparities between the districts Plovdiv, Varna and Burgas, on the one hand, and Stara Zagora and Sofia district, on the other hand, are more significant. Still, we can note a positive trend for 2013 as well – several regions have managed to reduce the disparities in their development and to come closer to the more developed districts – Gabrovo and Kardzhali.

2013 (excluding Sofia capital)

The negative trend toward an increase in the level of disparity between the capital and all other districts again requires that data analysis should be made excluding the data for Sofia capital. The disparities across the districts in Bulgaria remain considerable in 2013. The analysis confirms the presence of a small group of districts which are reported to have significantly higher levels of development than the rest of the country, but they still remain far from the capital, as already noted.

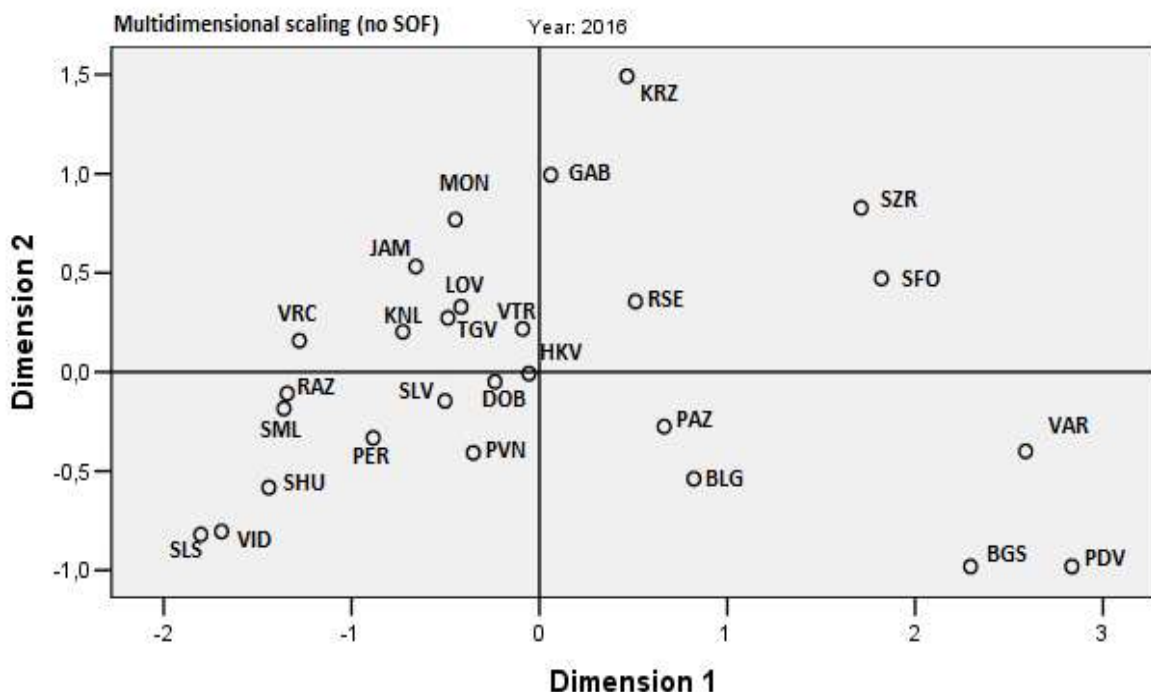
The stratification in the large group of lagging districts persists as well. The districts Blagoevgrad, Ruse, Gabrovo and Kardzhali show slightly better performance (but still distant from the previous group). Only two districts have managed to reduce the disparities compared to the small group of the more developed districts – Pazardzhik and Pleven.

2016 (all districts)



The development of regional disparities in the last year of the period analysed confirms all the negative trends reported so far. The process of extreme polarization in the development and forming of a many times more developed centre is reinforced. The huge disparity in the development of the capital compared to all other districts remains unchanged. The polarization of the five relatively more developed districts – those of Plovdiv, Varna and Burgas, on the one hand, and Sofia district and Stara Zagora, on the other, is also preserved. The disparities among all other districts are also deepening. It should be noted that several districts have managed to accelerate their development in relation to the other districts – Kardzhali, Gabrovo and Ruse.

2016 (excluding Sofia capital)



The analysis of the data for all districts, excluding Sofia capital, shows the occurrence of increasing fragmentation and an increase in the development disparities across the districts as of 2016 compared to 2007. The group of five relatively more developed districts preserve the level of disparity compared to both the other districts and the capital. These districts are failing to catch up with the capital, and the other districts are failing to catch up with them. The internal polarization in this group is also preserved. Two positive trends can also be reported. The districts Blagoevgrad, Ruse, Pazardzhik, Gabrovo and Kardzhali have managed to offset their lagging behind compared to some of the other districts, but their lag is still significant. We also note a tendency for convergence, although not strongly expressed, between the backward districts and the two groups of districts with comparatively better performance. It should also be noted that several districts are lastingly lagging behind in their development compared to all other districts – Shumen, Silistra and Vidin.

Survey summary

This study applies multidimensional scaling as the main method for analysing the disparities in the development across regions. It is a descriptive technique of calculating and subsequently visualizing the differences between the objects of research in a common conceptual space. Multidimensional scaling places the disparities across the individual observed analysis units – districts, in this particular case – within a common plane by calculating ‘distances’ between the individual objects based on different variables. The result of the calculations can be visualized in a two-dimensional plane, which allows to illustrate and describe the distance/proximity of the objects to each other. As a result of the visualization, the different types of clusters among the objects (regions) become clearly visible and these can be traced over time.

The analysis is carried out at the districts level corresponding to a level of NUTS III units of the EU classification. In the particular case of Bulgaria, there is no equivalent administrative territorial unit at NUTS II level, but only statistical regions. Besides, the negative trends in the demographic development and the concentration of population in several urban centres call for a forthcoming change in the scope of regions of the second level (NUTS II). On the other hand, the district level in Bulgaria is the traditional regional level of government based on traditional economic centres. This gives us reason to do the analysis precisely at the district level (NUTS III). Secondly, the differences in the regional development are assessed in two stages – including Sofia capital district and excluding it. This is done because the latter is characterized by overconcentration of economic activity and population. This model of development of the country necessitates a specific emphasis in the analysis on the disparities in the development of the capital compared to the other districts.

The survey has demonstrated the hypothesis that, within the analysed period (2007 to 2016), regional development has remained inequitable. During the analysed period, an overall positive economic development of the country is observed, despite the constant decline of the population. Unfortunately, a strong territorial polarization in the development is also registered. The disparities in the development across the districts have increased during the examined period. Convergence between individual districts in terms of some economic indicators is reported, but the disparities between the most developed districts and the others are preserved. The tendency of overconcentration of economic activity and population in the capital remains insurmountable, and no significant catching-up processes in the other districts can be observed.

Several groups of districts have also been identified in terms of their level of development and the disparities therein. Besides the clear polarization in development centring on capital, a group of five districts (Plovdiv, Varna, Burgas, Stara Zagora and Sofia district) is delineated, increasing

their level of development to a greater extent than all other districts. The disparities between them and the other districts increased during the period under review. However, they fail to catch up with the capital. The districts Blagoevgrad, Ruse, Pazardzhik, Gabrovo and Kardzhali form a further group of districts that are getting ahead of the large group of more backward districts, but again the level of disparity between them and the previous group remains. It should also be noted that several districts are lastingly lagging behind in their development – Shumen, Silistra and Vidin.

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IMPACT ASSESSMENT OF LEGISLATION IN THE CASES OF CONSTRUCTION IN PROTECTED AREAS ALONG THE BULGARIAN BLACK SEA COAST, SET IN NATURA 2000

Desislava Valerieva

Abstract

In recent years, impact assessment has proven to be a useful tool for handling of bills and regulations that would be hard to enact after adoption, as well as a crucial part of the public policy cycle for unification of the regulatory systems in the countries of Eastern Europe that are part of the EU. Impact assessment is a tool used for studying various economical, ecological and social effects of legislation. Its use enables solutions to be offered and laws to be adopted based on a clearly defined correlation between the set goals and expected outcomes as the decisions made are based on the objective evaluation of concrete data and indicators.

Keywords: *impact assessment, public policy, decision making*

1.1. Impact assessment - historical context

Impact assessment has been known in the United States since the 1970s. Its initial appearance took the form of an "Inflation Impact Assessment", and the cost-benefit method was introduced in the 1980s. The mechanism for assessing the impact of legislation has been adopted by all economically developed countries that are members of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development. The World Bank also encourages countries with which it is partnering to introduce an impact assessment.

1.2. Impact Assessment in Europe and the European Union

In Europe impact assessment came in the late 1990s and early 21st century. Among the most successful countries in implementing it are the United Kingdom, Germany, Denmark and the Netherlands. EU Member States have introduced the impact assessment for their legislative programs about two decades ago in support of the notion that new legislation may have significant and sometimes unexpected impacts and consequences not only on the budget but also on different spheres of the economy and society generally. Today, the Member States share the view that some form of impact assessment should take place before the introduction of legislative changes.

In an effort to achieve its policy objectives at a minimal cost and to the benefit of European citizens, businesses and workers, while avoiding any unnecessary regulatory burden, the European Commission is setting up an impact assessment system in 2002. It has been seen by the Commission as one of the smart regulation tools. It is successfully used at an early stage in the policy-making process and, in particular, in the development of new proposals. The Impact Assessment ensures that the Commission's initiatives and proposals for European Union legislation are drafted on the basis of transparent, comprehensive and balanced information on the nature of the problem to be addressed, the added value of action at EU level as well as on the cost and benefits of alternative modes of action for all stakeholders. In 2009, the Commission adopted guidelines for impact assessment.

Six years later, in 2015, the European Commission announced its new "Program for Better Regulation: Enhancing Transparency and Control for Better Lawmaking in the EU". It is presented as a comprehensive package of reforms covering the entire policy cycle that will make the decision-making process in the European Union more open and transparent, will improve the quality of new laws through better impact assessments legislative proposals and amendments, and will promote a consistent and coherent review of the current legislation of the European Union.

The specific program is aimed at drafting and evaluating European Union policies and legislation in a transparent way based on evidence and opinions of citizens and stakeholders. The program covers all policy areas and strives for targeted regulation, whereby minimum goals and benefits are achieved with minimal cost.

Impact assessments examine whether action at EU level is needed and analyze the possible impact of possible solutions. They are carried out during the preparatory phase before the Commission finalizes the work on a legislative proposal. They provide facts and information to support the decision-making process.

Impact assessments are prepared for the needs of various initiatives that are expected to have significant economic, social or environmental impacts. Such initiatives include:

- legislative proposals;
- non-legislative initiatives (eg financial programs, recommendations for negotiating international agreements);
- implementing acts and delegated acts.

The results of the impact assessment process are summarized in a report, the quality of which is checked by the Regulatory Committee, an independent authority providing opinions. One such impact assessment report should include a description of:

- the environmental, social and economic consequences, including the implications for small and medium-sized enterprises and competitiveness, as well as an explicit declaration if any of these consequences are not considered significant;
- who will be affected by the initiative and how;
- the counseling strategy and its outcomes.

Impact assessment reports are published with the proposals or acts adopted by the European Commission. They are also sent to Parliament and the Council to be taken into account when deciding whether to adopt a proposed law.

1.3. Impact Assessment in Bulgaria

Impact assessment in Bulgaria has been introduced for the first time in one of the strategic documents of the executive power - the Strategy for Development of the State Administration (2014-2020). As a result, the expectation for 2020 is that "100% of the new legislation should be accompanied by an impact assessment, except where it is not required by law".

This is related to one of the main problems in the work of the administration that has to be adapted in the course of the numerous legislative changes resulting from the pre-accession period of Bulgaria upon its admission to the European Union but also with the transposition of the European law after 2007.

1.4. Background on the introduction of impact assessment in Bulgaria

However, the introduction has its own background. In July 2008 under the Administrative Capacity Operational Program the administration of the Council of Ministers became a

beneficiary of the project "Better Public Management: Institutionalization of the Impact Assessment Process in the State Administration" co-funded by the European Social Fund. The aim of the project is to ensure better quality of regulatory acts and strategic documents by institutionalizing the process of impact assessment in the Republic of Bulgaria. It has produced seven preliminary and seven subsequent impact assessments, as well as a questionnaire containing questions on the complexity of existing laws. The results were produced a year later, in July 2009, and were the first impact assessments of legislation carried out in Bulgaria, both on legislative projects and on certain applicable laws. This is the first positive practice that has begun to pave the way for introducing the mechanism for impact assessment of the legislation in Bulgaria. From the end of 2011 in Bulgaria starts a slow and gradual process of entry at the central administration level of elements, concepts and procedures from the impact assessment mechanism of the legislation applied in the European Union.

In August 2013, at the initiative of the President of the 42nd National Assembly (2013-2014), a new unit to the parliamentary administration started, called the Unit for the Study and Analysis of the Effect of Legislation. It is tasked with monitoring how the adopted laws and legislative amendments are working in practice, what are the main groups of problems, what are the areas in which there is potential for optimizing one or another legislative solution, etc.

The State Administration Development Strategy adopted by the Government in 2014 underlined that "Impact assessments of legislation are not satisfactory, and improving practice in this area will lead to increased transparency and predictability and reduction the frequency of regulatory changes". It is also noted that "the activity of assessing the impact of legislation, monitoring and evaluating its implementation as well as policies are new to the Bulgarian administration and the improvement and development of capacity is an important condition for more effective policies". The Strategy commented that "managers and officials in the administration do not recognize this activity as the main one and do not make enough efforts to better understand the approach and logic of carrying out impact assessments. There is a need to impose a mandatory evaluation practice, including through regulatory input, which will allow real measurement of the impact of proposed measures and policies". It is concluded that the problems that arise from the implementation of the European legislation arise from the lack of an integrated common approach to the transposition of European legislation and the lack of a mechanism for systematic examination of good European practices.

Among the main objectives of the Strategy for Development of the State Administration is the creation of a sustainable regulatory framework. The active implementation of the impact assessment mechanism is one of the important means by which this objective will be achieved. It is stated that "the administration will need to actively assess impact as a key instrument for measuring the effect of introducing new regulations and policy implementation". Emphasis is placed on making preliminary impact assessments of bills. The strategy document also states that: "Concurrently with the accumulation of experience in this area, capacity will be developed to carry out follow-up impact assessments of the legislation". It also forecasts that "along with the regulatory regulation of the impact assessment process, it is necessary to work on the practical implementation of this approach for better public governance as well as on the strict application of the requirement to mandatorily motivate the need to introduce new regulations".

There is also a problem with the use of external consultants in collecting the data necessary for carrying out impact assessments. The Strategy provides for the corresponding internal capacity to carry out impact assessments in each ministry by 2020.

Bulgaria's main strategy document on public administration reform clearly shows that the impact assessment mechanism should be seen as an important European practice. Therefore, it is necessary to build not only the administrative capacity in the executive bodies, but also the

implementation of the impact assessment to be established as a mandatory element of the preparation of the acts, the legislative process and their subsequent analysis.

In November 2016, nine years after Bulgaria's entry to the European Union, Impact Assessment was introduced as an integral part of the legislative process in Bulgaria. This is done through a change in the Law on the Normative Acts.

2.1. Use of Impact Assessment in the Ecology Sector

Ecology is one of the areas where the impact assessment mechanism is most actively used. In this sector, the mechanism is primarily used as an environmental impact assessment (EIA). It is a preventive tool to identify potential impacts on the environment and human health carried by the construction and exploitation of investment proposals in all sectors of the economy and infrastructure development, at the early stage of their exploration and development, before a decision is made on the realization at a specific place with the respective technology, way of construction, etc. The EIA results should be taken into account when planning, building and operating the investment proposals.

EIA is applied in identifying the environmental impact in the process of sustainable development of various sectoral policies, such as transport, energy, construction, agriculture, tourism, industry, etc.

The EIA procedure in Bulgaria was introduced in 1991 with the Environmental Protection Act (EPA). The regulated procedure is in line with the EU Directive (85/337 / EEC) and introduces preventive action as a fundamental principle of environmental management. Regulation No 1 on EIA, detailing the procedure and requirements laid down in the law, was adopted in 1992, and in 1995 a new ordinance was adopted on the basis of the accumulated experience. Following are some amendments to the Environmental Protection Act - in the EIA section, in line with the practical development of the process in Bulgaria as well as with the experience and knowledge of the implementation in the EU Member States. The most significant in volume and essence is the amendment from 1997 when specific criteria for carrying out a mandatory EIA is laid down and the competent authorities are clearly regulated.

In 1998, the Regulation of 1995 was repealed and a new Regulation No 4 on Environmental Impact Assessment was adopted. This was necessary in order to fulfill the requirements for complying with the Bulgarian legislation with that of the European Union, as well as for the full integration of the EU practice. It clarifies the requirements related to the scope and content of the EIA reports for plans and programs, projects and sites in operation. The sequence of the process for the various projects and sites, as well as the place of the EIA in the process of approving and solving the investment intentions, etc., is regulated in detail. The legal regulation also clearly regulates the procedure for judicial review of the EIA decisions taken by the competent authorities, the Ministry of Environment and Water (MOEW) or the Regional Inspectorates of Environment and Waters (RIEWs).

In 1999 was established Interdepartmental Commission at MOEW with the participation of representatives of the Ministry of Health, Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, the Ministry of Regional Development and national experts, which specifies the requirements for the scope and content of the EIA report on the development plans and their amendments. In 2003, a new Regulation on the conditions and procedure for environmental impact assessment was adopted, which - after amendments and supplements in the period 2006 - 2016 - is still in place.

According to the Bulgarian legislation, EIAs are mandatory for investment proposals for construction, activities and technologies (according to Annex 1 of the EPA), as well as for their amendments or extensions, where significant environmental impacts are possible. The necessity to carry out an EIA shall be assessed for the investment proposals for new construction, activities

and technologies (according to Annex 2 of the EPA), as well as for any extension or amendment thereof, if it is expected to lead to significant negative impact on the environment.

2.2. „Natura 2000“

Natura 2000 is an ecological system of protected areas in the European Union aimed at ensuring the long-term survival of the most valuable and endangered species and habitats for Europe in line with the main international agreements on environmental protection and biodiversity. It has to be implemented in all the member states of the European Union and is required for the accession of the candidate countries of the Union. With Bulgaria joining the EU in 2007, Bulgaria is obliged to identify the territories to be included in the system.

The process of creating the Natura 2000 ecological network in Bulgaria started in 2002 with the adoption of the Biological Diversity Act, which introduces the norms of the two European directives. According to this law, protected areas in the country are declared as part of the National Ecological Network. These are places within the territory and the country's aquatic environment that meet the requirements for the presence of plant and animal species and habitat types of importance for biodiversity included in The Annexes to the Habitats and Birds Directive. From 2002 to 2006, through the implementation of a number of projects and expert evaluation of the Ministry of Environment and Waters, a national list of potential sites for inclusion in the Natura 2000 network was developed. The originally proposed list contains 114 protected areas for the protection of wild birds (Natura 2000 sites under the Birds Directive) covering approximately 23.6% of the country's territory and 225 protected areas for the conservation of natural habitats and wild flora, and fauna (Natura 2000 - sites under the Habitats Directive) covering approximately 30% of the country's territory.

With subsequent decisions of the Council of Ministers in the period 2010-2013 this list has been increased. At present, the network of protected areas is almost fully built up, with national lists of protected areas being approved by the Council of Ministers and the European Commission. It includes 119 protected areas for the protection of wild birds, covering 22.7% of the territory of Bulgaria and 233 protected areas for protection of natural habitats covering 30% of the territory of Bulgaria..

3.1. Case studies with building sites on protected Natura 2000 territories on the Bulgarian Black Sea coast

Since the beginning of the 21st century, one after another a number of protected areas in Bulgaria have been the subject of numerous violations for the purpose of implementing various investment projects. All of them triggered political scandals and a sharp public reaction, manifested in civil protests. Some of these occur in a territory that enters the Natura 2000 ecological network, and over the years they turn into a relapse.

3.2. The Irakli case

Among the first such cases is the one with the Irakli area, considered to be one of the few intact areas of development on the Bulgarian Black Sea coast. The area "Emine - Irakli" is a protected area of the European ecological network "Natura 2000". In addition, Irakli was declared a protected area by the Council of Ministers in May 1994. However, in 1997, following an EIA procedure, a Territorial Development Plan of Nessebar Municipality was approved, for the construction of the Irakli resort on Irakli beach area on 75 hectares of agricultural land.

Later, it became clear that the EIA report, which gave grounds for approval of the plan by the Minister of Environment, had a significant omission - to highlight the existence of protected habitats in the area. In 2004, the offshore company "Swiss Properties" purchased the land and in

2006 started building activities but without EIA and no mandatory Natura 2000 compatibility assessment. As a result of the illegal construction activities, the bed of the river Vaya and the dense (riverine) forest occupied by various protected species of birds and animals were affected. This caused mass protests by citizens and environmental organizations. A civil group, "Let's save Irakli," was set up to submit a petition to the Parliament asking for the Irakli area to be designated as a Natura 2000 site. Public pressure forced the Minister of Environment and Water to issue an order for a temporary ban on construction in the area.

By the end of Sergei Stanishev's government, the MOEW did not complete the procedure for declaring the Emine-Irakli area a protected area under the Protected Areas Act, which would introduce a construction ban on a much wider perimeter around Irakli.

The non-compliance with the Natura 2000 network, which includes Irakli, is not unnoticed by the European Commission, and it is launching a criminal procedure against Bulgaria on the case. It is transferred to the next office of the Borisov Cabinet (GERB). Representatives of nature conservation organizations say that the plans of the Nessebar municipality for Irakli not only do not comply with the biodiversity, EU legislation and Natura 2000, but the MOEW suggests that Natura 2000 should comply with the plans for the construction of the municipality.

The European Commission's request to the Bulgarian government is to take measures to rehabilitate the bed of the Vaya River and remove the dyke illegally built by the municipality of Nessebar and the investor. Instead, in 2008, the regional branch of the Ministry of Environment and Water in Burgas undertook coordination actions on construction. A lawsuit against the construction in Irakli, filed by the Bulgarian branch of the World Wildlife Fund (WWF - the Danube-Carpathian Program), has been started. In 2012, the Supreme Administrative Court declared the construction of Irakli illegal. The court ruled that the „Swiss Property” project should be abolished and the area recovered from illegal construction.

At the end of 2013, however, during the Oresharski cabinet, the Burgas Administrative Court repealed the order of the head of the Regional Directorate for National Construction Control, Southeastern Region, which declared the investment projects and the building permit for Irakli beach to be null and void. This judgment, which is final, entitles companies Dars Invest EOOD and Emona 2000 EOOD to start the construction works. The investment intentions of the companies envisage in the land of the village of Emona, Nessebar municipality, a holiday village with one-storey and two-storey bungalows and a swimming pool to be built.

3.3. The precedent with Strandja Nature Park

In 2007, another precedent occurred, resulting in legal proceedings taken by a private investor, which almost legally wiped out the Strandja Nature Park, which is the largest protected area in Bulgaria. There were intentions for building on the territory since 2004 under the office of the Saxe-Coburg-Gotha (NMSS and MRF). The author of the investment intention is Krash 2000, which is referred to in various publications as indirectly related to structures close to the „Multigroup” economic holding.

The company declares its intention to build a villa settlement "Golden Pearl" on the territory of Strandzha Nature Park in the village of Varvara, Tsarevo municipality. The construction plan of the holiday village is approved by Tsarevo Municipality. The approval was made contrary to the current municipality construction plan, which does not foresee building there. The construction is inadmissible because of the status of Strandja Nature Park as a protected area.

Apart from these violations, the Regional Directorate "Agriculture and Forests" in Burgas changed the purpose of agricultural lands with "non-agricultural needs" in violation of the Protected Areas Act. Immediately afterwards, Tsarevo Municipality granted permission for construction of the complex without an EIA being carried out. After the scandal expanded, the

Minister of Environment and Water Dzhevdet Chakarov stopped the implementation of the investment proposal of the company "Krash 2000" on the territory of Strandja Nature Park. This, however, does not disturb the investor who is pouring the foundation of the construction near Varvara. It comes to a protest of a group of ecologists and a referral to Prime Minister Simeon Saxe-Coburg-Gotha for a ban on the construction of the village of Varvara, which is within the boundaries of the nature park. A prosecutor's inquiry starts on the case, which establishes that the company has submitted a fake co-ordination letter from the MOEW, according to which the project does not need an EIA. Crash 2000, however, disputes before the Supreme Administrative Court (SAC) and wins the case. The SAC assumes that the Nature Park has not adopted a management plan outlining its boundaries, which is a mistaken conclusion, as this was fulfilled with the order for declaring Strandja Nature Park as early as 1995. With subsequent complaints Tsarevo Municipality with the mayor Petko Arnaudov and Krash 2000 nearly managed to erase the Strandja Nature Park. In 2007, on the basis of their requests, a panel of the SAC declared null and void the order that Strandja was declared a natural park in 1995. A public scandal followed that leads to suspicions towards the court and doubts about the objectivity of the law.

The Parliament reacted without delay by adopting a change in the Protected Areas Act, which does not allow the orders to declare protected areas to be subject to judicial review. In this way the Strandja Nature Park is saved. In 2008, it was included in Natura 2000.

After lengthy procedures and litigation, Krash 2000 is forced to demolish the construction of 10 villas in the illegally built Golden Pearls complex in 2012. The investor also sued the European Court of Human Rights in Strasbourg, but the court rejected his claims.

In the coming years, however, the danger of Strandja's construction remains. The reason for this is a general development plan of the Municipality of Tsarevo from 2008, which foresees building up two-thirds of the coast of the nature park south of Tsarevo or with 75,000 beds - all in its territory which is part of the Natura 2000 econetwork. The layout was prepared by a team led by arch. Kalin Tiholov, whose name is also involved in the so-called 2012 Duniyat case, and who was nominated as Minister for Investment Projects at Oresharski's unfortunate office in 2013 but withdrew the position following the threat of protests.

The case law of the Supreme Administrative Court in cases related to the Strandja Nature Park is still controversial. In 2013, a court panel considered that the Tsarevo construction plan was void and adopted without an environmental assessment, but half a year later, in January 2014, another panel of the SAC allowed construction along the coast of Strandja Nature Park, permitting the entry into force of the General Plan of the Municipality of Tsarevo.

3.4. The liquidation of Kamchia Sands

Protected area "Kamchia Sands" includes the biggest Black Sea sandy beach in Bulgaria. It preserves a unique combination of several species of dunes and dense forests. Its significance is recognized both by its national conservation status and by its inclusion in the European ecological network Natura 2000 together with the Kamchia Reserve.

The area is the largest dune complex on the Bulgarian Black Sea coast, which is threatened with destruction after the closure of the Kamchia Sands Protected Site by the Supreme Administrative Court. This is at the request of a private company, which then replaced all the dunes in the area, during the Saxe-Coburg-cabinet, when Minister of Agriculture and Forestry is Nihat Kabil from the quota of the Movement for Rights and Freedoms.

Subsequently, the replaced properties were transferred from agricultural land and forests to urbanized lands with an illegal Detailed development plan with a decision of the Council of Ministers with Prime Minister Sergey Stanishev. Despite the change of several governments, the

only serious obstacle to building is the introduction of a temporary ban on the construction of the replaced land. The legislative, executive and judicial authorities in Bulgaria have so far failed to do the necessary to solve the problem, restore the legality and restore the state property of the dunes

The transformation of land from the exclusive strip of land to private state property takes place in the summer of 2005 at the end of the Saxe-Coburg-Gothic Cabinet when 1500 decares are excluded of the beach area in Dolni Chiflik municipality, the lands of the villages of Shkorpilovtsi and Dolni Chiflik. Part of this territory falls within the borders of "Kamchia Sands" Protected Site. By the same decision, the Council of Ministers transforms the ownership of these properties from exclusive state property into a private state in violation of the Protected Areas Act and the Constitution of Bulgaria, which defines the public character of state ownership in coastal beaches and in protected areas.

In execution to this decision of the Council of Ministers, Petar Kandilarov, District Governor of Varna issues acts for part of the land of Shkorpilovtsi, as well as property from the land of Novo Oryahovo. With this decision part of the land is changed from exclusive state property to private state and sand dunes in the protected area are transformed into agricultural land - pasture category 10. Subsequent acts of the same regional governor have established separate lands - plots that are on the very border of the Protected Site "Kamchiyski Sands" and those that fall entirely within the protected area. This update contradicts the Protected Areas Act, according to which the state property in the protected areas is public.

There are other administrative procedures that have been used to replace land from the beach with farmland. This was done in 2006 with a contract between the Minister of Agriculture and Forestry, represented by Georgi Stefanov Georgiev, Regional Director of Agriculture and Forests, Varna, and Rees International EAD. It is a replacement of parts of property 999 in the land of the village of Shkorpilovtsi with an area of 407 decares, state land fund, type of land use: pastures, measures, 10th category, valued at 55 673 BGN, or 0.14 BGN / m², against 31 real estate agricultural lands in the municipalities of Vidin, Bregovo and Makresh with a total area of 650 decares, valued at 415 340 BGN, or 0.64 BGN / m². At real market prices of the property on the sea line, reaching up to 500 BGN / m², the state was offset by the Minister of Agriculture and Forestry and Rees International EAD with a minimum of 150 million BGN.

After acquiring land ownership, Rees International (owned by Raiffeisenbank) disputes before the Supreme Administrative Court (SAC) the order to declare the "Kamchiyski Sands" Protected Site on the grounds "due to unclear boundaries" of the site. Defendants in the case are the Ministry of Environment and Waters and the Council of Ministers.

By a decision of 27 June 2006, a panel of the Supreme Administrative Court, chairman Andrei Ikononov, decided that the order for declaring the protected site was void on the basis of completely formal arguments - in 1980 the order was signed by the chairman of the then Committee on the Protection of the Natural Environment, and not by the Minister of Forests and Forest Resources, according to the court only the latter had the right to declare new protected areas. Thus, the court does not accept the motives of Rees International EAD concerning the "unclear boundaries" of the protected site, but finds other grounds for wiping it out, which are inconsistent with the factual circumstances - grounds which the applicant itself has not raised, as well as grounds from a reference to untruthful texts of the law then in force. The decision was appealed by the MoEW and several environmental organizations were admitted as interested parties.

In November 2006 five members of the SAC with Chairman Konstantin Penchev obliterated the Kamchiyski Sands Protected Site by declaring the order of 1980 void, with which the area became protected. The reasoning stated that "the insufficient individualization of the territory of

the Kamchiyski Siesta locality (lack of a clear southern border of the protected site) leads to the nullity of the administrative act due to the lack of a "fit object" - the subject of the official will. Immediately after the property of the dunes was changed from "exclusive state property" to "state-owned" and their use was changed from "beach" to "pasture category 10". This allows, in the beginning of 2007, with a contract for the exchange of real estate between the Minister of Agriculture and Forestry Nihat Kabil and Met Real Estate EAD 1015,265 acres of dunes to become private property. For the purpose of this replacement, they are estimated at 186 809.00 BGN or 0.18 BGN per m².

Other replacements have been made as well. In 2007, Minister of Agriculture Nihat Kabil carried out the replacement of 9208,782 acres of forests owned by Beta Forrest, mainly located in the Troyan region, with 1364,067 acres of dunes, leading as a state forest fund. And also the replacement of 9356,871 decares of forests owned by Mirta Engineering EOOD, located mainly in Svoge, with 1344,763 decares of dunes.

Thus, all the exchanges of the subsidiaries of Raiffeisen Centrobank - Austria, amount to at least 4100 decares at an average price of about 4.5 BGN per m². This happens while the minimum beachfront market price is up to 500 BGN / m², which means a state damages of up to 2 billion BGN.

In January 2008, the company "Met Real Estate" EAD received an investment certificate class "A" from the Bulgarian Investment Agency, which declares the company as first class investor for its project "Sports and Recreation Complex" Kamchia Park Resort ". The strongest reason is the presence of the Austrian Raiffeisen Centrobank, a 100% owner of the MET Betfairswerverwaltungs GmbH (Real Estate Management Company), which is the owner of Metre Real Estate. According to the company's estimates for a three-year period, Metropol Real Estate must invest 411 million BGN and open 3200 new jobs after the project.

With the 2008 decision of RIEW - Varna, the project of Raiffeisenbank "Kamchia Park" is coordinated. In the same year, with the orders of the Mayor of Dolni Chiflik, the project was finally approved.

In September 2008, with the decision of the Stanishev Cabinet, the purpose of the land and its exclusion from the forest fund was changed in order to implement the investment project "Innovative Complex for Mixed Housing and Service Activities" Kamchia Park. By its decision, the Council of Ministers affirmed that the lands of Beta Forrest and Mirta Engineering are excluded from the forestry fund and are already part of the detailed development plans of the villages of Novo Oryahovo and Shkorpilovtsi..

Neither a completed EIA procedure, environmental assessment nor assessment of compatibility with the Natura 2000 objectives of the project "Innovative Complex for Mixed Housing and Service Activities" Kamchia Park are known to have been made. Thus, for two years, during the time of the Saxe-Coburg-Gotha and Stanishev Governments, the four related companies Mirta Engineering, Rees International, Beta Forest and Met Real Estate managed to liquidate the Kamchia Sands Protected Site and acquire over 4,000 acres dunes.

3.5. The Dunigate case

At the end of 2012 in the sand dunes between Nessebar and Ravda the construction of a residential complex of over 120 two-storey houses appiered to be another investment attack on a territory protected by Natura 2000. In the course of the scandal, it is understood that a favorable opinion was submitted for the construction by the RIEW - Burgas. And also that the land was sold by the Ministry of Agriculture and Food in November 2012 and through a number of sophisticated procedures, the sand dunes have been turned into a forest fund that has been acquired with state purchase and has changed its purpose. As early as 1999 the dunes were

excluded from regulation and declared a forest park by the Municipal Council - Nessebar with the adoption of the territorial development plan of the municipality. In 2007, however, the mayor of Nessebar municipality approved a detailed development plan and a plan for regulation and construction for a specific area on the land of Nessebar with permanent use in the territory "urbanized" and a way of permanent use - unbuilt property for residential needs. This plan is made by arch. Kalin Tiholov but in violation of the law presents a boundary between zones A and B on the Black Sea coast, placing the bulk of the property in zone B. The approved project is for 30 houses and 400 inhabitants. The detailed development plan is presented by a private person, although the property is owned by the state and on its behalf has no written permission to draw up such a plan.

Mayor of Nessebar Magdalena Manduleva signed this plan and the person managed to acquire 29 decares at a price of BGN 580,000 in November 2012. The property was resold for 4 million BGN the next day after the acquisition.

Subsequently, it comes to knowledge that in November 2012 the Ministry of Agriculture and Food sells to the person the same territory for BGN 20 per m² at a tax assessment of BGN 50 per m². At the end of 2012 the individual resold the purchased state land to the company "SLE GROUP OOD" for about 140 BGN / m², or 7 times higher price. A project for the construction of one-family residential buildings and a residential building for seasonal occupation has been submitted for this property in Nessebar municipality. The project presents 124 single-family houses for 1,800 inhabitants.

The company deposited the Regional Inspectorate of Environment and Waters - Bourgas with a notification of the change of the plan. In response, on 17 December 2012, the inspection gave a green light to the company's plans. With the new certificate, the company received approval from the Municipal Expert Council of Nessebar on December 19, 2012, and only two days later was issued the building permit. Preparatory works for construction begin immediately with the equalization of sand dunes.

After the environmentalists spoke of the case, the scandal grew into a political one and finally reached Prime Minister Borissov. It has even been proposed to impose a moratorium on the construction of the Black Sea coast. Environment Minister revokes the last opinion of the Director of RIEW - Burgas on the case. In February 2013 the 41st National Assembly adopted amendments to the Law on the Structure of the Black Sea Coast and a number of other laws prohibiting the construction of the dunes, declaring them state property and restricting their use. Several dismissals and resignations followed, including the director of the Executive Forestry Agency, Bisser Dachev, and Deputy Minister of Agriculture and Food Svetlana Boyanova, who signed the sale of the dunes of SLE Group. The Director of the Regional Directorate for National Construction Control - Burgas Georgi Georgiev was fired.

The mayor of Nesebar Nikolay Dimitrov and the chief architect of the town Valentin Dimov have been removed for a certain period of office. The Prosecution Office attracted them as accused in the Dunigate case. The Commission for the Forfeiture of Unlawfully Acquired Property requires disposal of their property. The investigation against them was terminated in May 2015.

In June 2013, the parliament adopted a moratorium on state property transactions in areas A and B of the Black Sea coast. The Ministry of Environment and Water is obliged to take the initiative to create a protected area - national or natural park. In March 2016, the Supreme Administrative Court puts an end to the dispute by ceasing the oppourtinity to build on the dunes near Nessebar, confirming the decision of the Administrative Court in Burgas to ban the construction of the Aheloy - Ravda - Nessebar Protected Zone.

3.6. 3.6. The attempt to build Karadere

In 2014, during the Plamen Oresharski's office, a further attempt was made to build at Karadere - another wild spot on the Black Sea coast, which falls within two Natura 2000 protected areas: Kamchia Mountains - Protected Area for Birds, and the Shkorpilovtsi Beach Protected Area - for the protection of the habitats. By decision from March 2014, the government approved the issue of a certificate of priority investment project of Black Sea Gardens Class A of the joint venture "Madara Europe" AD, which plans the construction of a massive holiday complex of three hotel structures with over 4,000 apartments on 247 acres in the Karadere area for 105 mln BGN.

In this case, the Oresharski office gives the green light to an investment project that violates a number of laws and requirements. In addition, in various media publications, a conflict of interests has been pointed out, as the brother of BSP leader Sergei Stanishev - Georgi Stanishev works as an architect on the project. He was included as a design consultant from the start of the project in 2006 when he worked with London's Foster & Partners studio of the famous English architect Sir Norman Foster. At that time his brother, Sergey Stanishev, is prime minister. The media reported that in December 2007 the exhibition of Norman Foster, organized in Sofia, where he was presented by Georgi Stanishev. Then Prime Minister Sergei Stanishev and Minister of Regional Development and Public Works Asen Gagauzov discussed projects of the world-famous architect, including the project for the construction of Karadere. Just six months after the British architect's visit to Bulgaria, 700 decares of land was transferred to Karadere from the State Forestry Agency at the Council of Ministers to "Madara Byala" in return for "properties in another region". The revised project by the new investor, Madara Europe, which receives Investment Class A from the Oresharski Cabinet, is the same project prepared by Foster and Stanishev but has been redesigned for the realization of a smaller part of the buildings - three hotels and 1500 houses with apartments. The offshore company Madara Europe expressly states in its reports in 2013 that the quality of the Foster & Partners project is a pledge of successful sales.

The decision of the Oresharski Cabinet provokes a political scandal. According to nature conservation organizations, the decision of the Council of Ministers for the investment project is illegal, as the project itself has no assessment of compatibility with Natura 2000, as well as an environmental assessment.

Citizens and environmental organizations undertake a campaign to protect Karadere, all the more so that in the summer of 2014 a second investor for construction of Karadere - Maxi 1 AD - appeared. The company submitted documents for the implementation of a luxury camping project to RIEW - Burgas for 1860 people. After the coalition "Let's save Karadere" is referred to the MOEW, a number of irregularities have been identified in the opinion of the Regional Inspectorate of Environment and Water - Bourgas, which gave permission for the construction of the "luxury camping". The final decision on the fate of Karadere depends on the alignment with the environmental legislation of the General Plan of the Municipality of Byala, which guarantees the protection of the area. Karadere can be preserved as a habitat if it is declared a protected area.

4.1. Has the mechanism "Impact Assessment" been implemented on law-making by the MoEW?

The listed cases, as well as some other, are definite proof of a serious recidivism and gross violation of Natura 2000 sites, accompanied by a number of violations of different laws, as well as the relevant control procedures under the Ecology sector, including the compromise of the environmental impact assessment. The violations are recorded by different political majorities and are the expression of non-transparent policies, which hide different economic and financial interests.

From this point of view, they are a serious prerequisite in this sector to apply the impact assessment mechanism on the legislation in terms of both the preparation of new amendments to the laws in this field and the evaluation of the implementation of the existing normative acts. A statistic on the number of amended laws in Bulgaria since 2000 shows that the most frequently amended laws are the Territorial Development Act - 64 times and the Water Act - 46 times (see the chart below).

Despite the problems that arise in the middle of the first decade of the 21st century, the Ministry of Environment and Waters is not among the ministries involved in the first project on impact assessment on the legislation, carried out in the period 2008 - 2009. The MOEW website lacks published documents to show any interest from the government on policy adopted by the Council of Ministers in the administration on the implementation of the new European mechanism. The sites of the different nature conservation organizations also lack information that the MoEW has used the impact assessment mechanism on the legislation.

With a review on the vicious practice of the last two decades and the likelihood of it continuing, it is logical for the Ecology sector to actively introduce the mechanism for impact assessment on legislation that could help to overcome and curb corruption in the state and municipal administrations. Otherwise, the measures adopted by the Bulgarian governments for the practical use of this mechanism are likely to remain on paper only.

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