

**FROM POST-SOCIALIST TRANSITION TO GLOBALISATION AND EUROPEANISATION? METROPOLITAN DEVELOPMENTS IN BELGRADE, BUCHAREST AND SOFIA**

Daniel Göler\*<sup>1</sup>, Holger Lehmeier\*

\* University of Bamberg, Institute of Geography, Bamberg

**Извод:** Балканске метрополе (као што су Београд, Букурешт и Софија) су кључне тачке у економском, друштвеном и културном развоју својих нација. Упркос различитој историји, током последње две деценије суочиле су се са сличним процесима реструктурирања и транзиције. Кључне тачке анализе су одговарајући ефекти на градску средину као и функционалност метрополитанских области у Југоисточној Европи.

**Кључне речи:** Урбани развој, метрополе, транзиција, Југоисточна Европа, Београд, Букурешт, Софија

**Abstract:** Balkan Metropolises (i.e. Belgrade, Bucharest and Sofia) are the hotspots of economical, social and cultural developments in their nations. Notwithstanding their different histories they faced common processes of restructuring and transition during the last two decades. The focal points of the analysis are the corresponding effects on the urban fabric as well as the functionality of the metropolitan areas in South East Europe.

**Keywords:** Urban development, metropolises, transition, South East Europe, Belgrade, Bucharest, Sofia

*Date submitted:* 17 August 2012; *Date accepted:* 27 October 2012

### **Introduction**

At the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, in the light of ongoing globalization, it is time to scrutinize metropolitan developments in the Balkans. Of course, it is rather complicated to find a consensus on the exact borders of this region, given the relative nature and the changing meanings of the term “Balkan” (cf. Todorova 2009). Beside the territorial delimitation and with regard to the topic of our contribution, it is more important to notice that the lens is fixed on a region, which has consisted mainly of rural structures for most of its his-

---

<sup>1</sup> Correspondence to: daniel.goeler@uni-bamberg.de

tory. In large parts, this still is the case even today. The analysis of Balkan Metropolises deals with impacts of urban history, post-socialist transition and Europeanization. At first, we look at the consequences of these challenges on urban geographies and underline our findings with some examples, each of them taken from one of the three metropolises. Secondly, we highlight the role of large centers for structural changes and spatial development in their national context by asking how far they act as key agents of transition. Third, we discuss the cities' position within the European metropolitan landscape. As it will be showed, the three major metropolises in the Balkans have certain things in common which separate them from many other post-socialist cities.

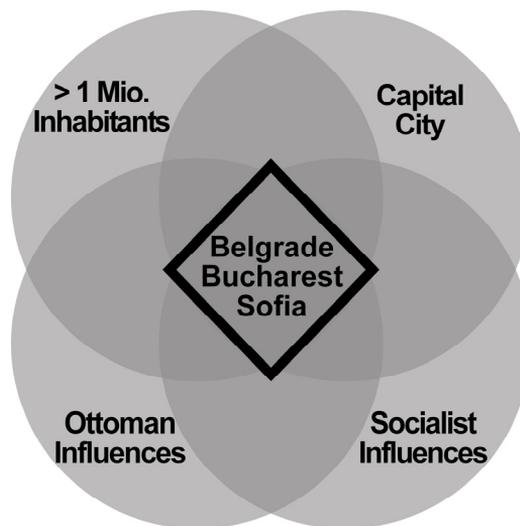


Figure 1 - *The Balkan "metropolitan diamond"*

The argument follows three theoretical key concepts of research on (urban) transitions. The first of them is the concept of path dependency, which was adopted in transition research by Stark (1992) and Grabher & Stark (1997). Both reinterpret post-socialist transitions as innovative forms of organization that ground on existing (historical) structures. The German geographer Nitz (1995) emphasized the general relevance of socio-economic discontinuities for the formation of the cultural landscape. In the given context we use these reflections to explain the tremendous change of the shape in urban landscapes. We refer to transitions such as the step from the Ottoman Empire into the national states during the 19th as well as from socialism to post-socialism at the end of the 20th century. Lastly, „Multiple Transformations“ (Sýkora & Bouzarovski 2012) stress, in a sectoral perspective, the interdependencies of political-institutional, social and urban changes as relevant parts of processes, which recently took place in the Balkan Metropolises.

For this study, we define “Balkan Metropolises” as capital cities with more than 1 Mio. inhabitants, which share the experience from the Ottoman as well as from the socialist period. An intersection of those four criteria leads to the “metropolitan diamond” (fig. 1), which includes the cities of Belgrade (Serbia; 1.6 Mio inhabitants), Bucharest (Romania; 2.0 Mio.) and Sofia (Bulgaria; 1.2 Mio.; Table 1)<sup>2</sup>. They are by far the country’s biggest cities, even if their relevance for the global economy is lagging behind the sheer size (for Belgrade c.f. Matznetter & Musil 2011, p. 11). All of them are functionally important cities which play a major significance in their national context.

Table 1 - *Balkan Metropolises – a statistical comparison (Data: See footnote 1)*

<b>Metropolis</b>	<b>Area (km<sup>2</sup>)</b>	<b>Inhabitants (Mio.)</b>	<b>Percentage of national population</b>	<b>Percentage of national GDP</b>	<b>Percentage of FDI</b>
<b>Belgrade</b>	3.227	1.55 (1991)	20.70% (Serbia) 6.60% (YU)	-	-
		1.58 (2002)	21.02%	-	-
		1.69 (2010)	23.27%	40.0% (2010) <sup>3</sup>	-
<b>Bucharest<sup>4</sup></b>	1.821	2.39 (1990)	10.32%	12.0% (1989)	-
		2.28 (2000)	10.18%	20.1% (2000)	62.1% (2003-2008)
		2.22 (2006)	10.28%	21.7% (2005)	
		2.04 (2011)	10.72%	-	
<b>Sofia</b>	1.349	1.19 (1992)	14.03%	-	-
		1.17 (2002)	15.16%	27.26% (2001)	56.34% (2002)
		1.26(2010)	16,78%	39,07% (2010)	56,37% (2010)

### **Historical Background**

#### *Ottoman influences – and the struggle to get rid of them in the 19<sup>th</sup> century*

One of the reasons for the predominance of “the rural” on the Balkans can be seen in the influence of the Ottoman Empire, which shaped large parts of South East Europe for almost half a millennium. Although the Ottomans had

<sup>2</sup> Sources of the statistical data used in this paper Nae & Turnock 2011; Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia 2010, 2012; Institute For Informatics And Statistics 2011; Republic of Bulgaria, National Statistical Institute 2004, 2008, 2010, 2012; National Institute of Statistics Romania 2011.

<sup>3</sup> Data for Belgrade NUTS-2-Region

<sup>4</sup> Data includes Ilfov-Region (the surrounding county)

larger cities and urban culture, agriculture and stock farming were the most important economic activities especially in the peripheral zones of their empire, hence in large parts of the Balkans.

The Balkan Metropolises have been political, economic and functional centres at some time during their history, even before the Ottoman times. Belgrade, the “white city”, was located at the border of larger empires twice in its existence. For the first time, this was the case in the time of the late Roman Empire and then again during the 17<sup>th</sup>/18<sup>th</sup> century, when it was a stronghold for the Ottoman Empire, facing the Hapsburg town of Zemun at the opposite site of the river Sava (Hirt 2009, p. 294ff). The military importance prevailed over economic or political functions in this time, but Belgrade was still the only urban centre in very rural surroundings. Similarly, Sofia’s history also traces back to military uses: a Roman *castrum* was located close to today’s city centre. Lastly and as a kind of exception, the town of Bucharest became increasingly important from the 17<sup>th</sup> century onward, mainly because of the favourable position on an important international trade route. Oriental style markets and corresponding infrastructure were constructed in this period (cf. Turnock 1990, p. 107).

But as far as the origins of the settlements may trace back in time, the Balkan Metropolises became places hosting an urban society a good deal later than their central or western European counterparts. It was not until the 19<sup>th</sup> century that they were shaped into modern capital cities following the examples of London, Paris or Vienna. Their reshaping is connected to the formation of the national states Bulgaria, Romania and Serbia. In these states, the perception of national history is centred on the struggle against the imperial yoke of the Turks. Thus, the break-up with the Ottoman past was the paramount planning and building policy in these years. As a consequence, the inner cities were thoroughly altered. Apart from some singular monuments, almost all Ottoman structures had been removed. This happened rather quickly: In Sofia, for example, in the year 1914, nothing reminded of the “miserably poor place” (Monroe 2011/1914, p. 342) the city has supposedly been in the 1840s. Broad boulevards, modern parks and representative buildings were the result of this policy of ‘de-orientalization’ (Höpken 2010, p. 73), which changed the cities from oriental towns to (western-central) European capitals.

In the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century the western influences remained, yet there were bigger problems to come by: The mitigation of damages inflicted by the two World Wars and the massive population growth within the capital cities in that time turned out to be the most important issues.

### *Changes during the socialist period*

The influence of the socialist regimes, that came in to existence in that region after World War II, on the structure of the Balkan Metropolises was enormous. Until today, the remnants of the socialist time dominate their ap-

pearance. Nonetheless, the fact that political contexts differed greatly between the South East European cities has to be kept in mind. Whereas Yugoslavia developed a rather liberal form of socialism, the Bulgarian and Romanian interpretations were closely orientated to Stalin's Soviet Union. It is generally agreed upon that there is a wide range of forms of 'Socialist Cities', providing many regional and temporal subtypes (cf. French & Hamilton 1979). But the main idea of all socialist cities is the subjection of urban planning and construction to the political will (cf. Burdack & Rudolph 2001, p. 262).

The transformation of the inner city of Bucharest and the construction of the oversized *Casa Poporului* (cf. Vossen 2001, p. 18) is surely an extreme and, of course, a very late example for this. Plans have been made during the 1970s, urban "restructuring" started 1984 by erasing traditional two-storey buildings and villas. A new political and administrative centre arose in an area of 4.5 km length and 500 up to 2500m width – in total 200 ha, which was equivalent to 25% of the inner city. 40,000 inhabitants have been relocated. Ironically, the construction of *Casa Poporului*, one of the world's biggest buildings, was finished after the totalitarian regime was discarded.

On a smaller scale, impressive socialist buildings like cultural palaces or people's party headquarters also changed the appearance of the city centres in Belgrade and Sofia. Additionally, housing zones were built at the cities' fringes during the socialist period – usually on a big scale. In Sofia, the residential districts *Mladost* and *Ljulin* provided living space for more than 100.000 people each (cf. Staddon & Mollov 2000, p. 383). Quarters like these are well known from other socialist cities; in terms of architectural design, usually a notorious monotony prevails.

Due to the political path that Yugoslavia took after 1945, this is quite different in Belgrade. In contrast to most other socialist cities, the development of the city concentrated more or less on one single project: *Novi Beograd*. In 1948, the city began to utilize the zone at the left bank of the Save river, which until then had not been used for lasting urban expansions. At first, only some representative administrative buildings were constructed. But the continuing population growth increased the need for new housing. Thus, in the 1960 it was decided to provide living space for about 250.000 people in *Novi Beograd*. All in all, the prestigious character of the project, the good economic situation and the internationally embedded Yugoslavian architects lead to an untypical example of socialist housing: The architectural quality and variety were enormous and the supporting social and commercial infrastructure had a very high standard (cf. Le Normand 2004).

### **Urban developments in the post-socialist period**

Another turning point (in the historical sense according to Nitz 1995) shared by the Balkan states is the breakdown of the socialist systems and the

creation of capitalist and democratic states. Along with it came many structural problems of the transition period, more or less comparable to other spaces of transition: for example a massive deindustrialization, an increase in interior and exterior migration and impoverishment of significant parts of the society (Sailer-Fliege 1999). Both Romania and Bulgaria entered the transition period during the years 1989/1990; to set a fixed date for this period in Yugoslavia is not easy. The 1990s—held further, even greater problems for Yugoslavia and the evolving Serbian state: The wars following the break-up, the military conflict with the NATO and most notably the UN-embargo are elements of an interrupted path of transition (Göler 2010, p. 37). Each had severe consequences for Serbia and for the city of Belgrade. If we take the downfall of the Milošević-regime in the year 2000 as the turning point towards political, social and economic renewal, that would mean a time-lag of 10 years in comparison to the other central and east European countries. To some part, this explains the poor condition of Serbia's economy at the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. But neither were the 1990s times without troubles for Romania and Bulgaria. The economic development of Romania was characterized by severe inflation and Bulgaria's national debt led to a heavy economic crisis in the years 1996/1997.

#### *Informal housing and the question of suburbanization*

The Population of Belgrade's metropolitan area increased slightly during the last two decades, from 1.65 Mio. in 1991 to 1.69 Mio. in 2010, only due to migration. Many ethnic Serbian refugees from other ex-Yugoslavian countries came to the city. Bucharest (including the surrounding Ilfov-county) lost a remarkable percentage of its inhabitants in that time; the population dropped from 2.39 Mio. in 1990 to 2.04 Mio. in 2011. Sofia experienced a small increase in population, having 1.19 Mio. inhabitants in 1992 and 1.26 Mio. in 2010. All in all, there were no drastic changes in population, like the hyperurbanization that for instance took place in Tirana, Albania (cf. Doka & Göler 2008, p. 61). The Balkan Metropolises either remained relatively stable or were even slightly growing, while other, rural parts of their countries experienced a massive loss of population.

At the beginning of the transition period, scholars argued about the effects the new market mechanisms and the import of western lifestyles would have on the shape of former socialist cities (cf. Burdack & Rudolph 2001). Would the typical western patterns be taken over or would there be a distinct post-socialist way? After twenty years of transition (and 20 years of corresponding research) it became clear that there is a significant regional variety in the answers for that (cf. Borén & Gentile 2007, p. 95). Looking at suburbanization, this is also true. Whereas some post-socialist cities in central and eastern

Europe ‘discovered’ the urban fringe (cf. Fassmann & Matznetter 2005, p. 57), this phenomenon has not (yet) taken place in the Balkan Metropolises in the same intensity as in Moscow, Prague or Tirana. In order to achieve a massive residential suburbanization as a phenomenon of prosperity, like it occurred in the US or some western European countries, certain preconditions have to be given. Key requirements are demographic and economic growth, resulting in an increase of wealth in large parts of the society, especially in the middle classes. Another necessity would be a sufficient level of private motorization or a very capable public transport system. There may be some slight regional differences on those issues, but in general, these preconditions are currently still not met sufficiently in the Balkan Metropolises.

Anyway, there was a need for housing space. Not only migrants from poorer rural regions – or in the case of Belgrade ethnic refugees – required new places to live but also the newly emerging middle class was looking for living space which fulfilled their ideals of modern lifestyle. But instead of the famous one family (detached) house in the city’s surroundings, the most popular choices are currently modern apartment blocks in well-connected locations within the city limits. In the case of Sofia, countless large apartment buildings are currently under construction south of the city centre. These buildings provide commercial stores in the ground floor and 4-5 stories of owner-occupied flats above. The poorer and less mobile parts of the population still remain in the existing, socialist housing districts, usually in privatized small flats. This phenomenon is, to some degree, connected to the high and rising price level for real estates and the limited possibilities to get reasonable conditions for private loans (cf. Nae & Turnock 2011). As a result, these districts have still almost no vacancies, whatever their current appearance may look like.

Of course, there are also high-class residential zones and gated communities in Sofia (Stoyanov & Franz 2006) as well as in other Balkan Metropolises. In Sofia, we find phenomena like these preferably in the south of the city along the slopes of the Vitosha-mountain range. But in contrast to Hirt’s explanation (2007, p. 761), this is not an expression of typical post-socialist suburbanization. There have been secondary homes of Sofia’s upper class already around the year 1900, which continued in the socialist period as a kind of *Datcha*-settlement. So, the location of “Vitosha-class” (Staddon & Mollov 2000, p. 384) shows a long-term, path-dependent explanation.

Another very specific tendency is the wide spread informal housing. In this context, the term ‘informal’ (and in contrast to ‘illegal’; cf. Herrle 2010, p. 232f) is used to describe building activities which took place without official building permission, but on a piece of land that is owned by the person who is building the house. Thus, informality is to some degree a result of a lacking administrative system which cannot cope with the dynamics of building activities during the transition period. When informal construction happens in a lar-

ger scale, thus forming whole informal districts, it results in shortfalls of technical and social infrastructure. One of the presumably biggest informal settlements in the Balkans is *Kaluđerica*, a large neighborhood at the city limits of Belgrade, which has between 26.549 (the official number from last census, cf. Republički Zavod za statistiku 2011) and 70.000 (an estimation, cf. Bobić 2004) inhabitants, depending on its administrative definition. The sheer size of that district forced planning authorities to legalize some of the constructions ex post and to supply the missing infrastructure by establishing public bus lines, etc. In any case, it is important to note that the people involved in informal building activities are vulnerable in these terms, but not necessarily poor. Informality is used as a common way to get the desired living space by large parts of the middle class.

Informal construction is no new ‘phenomenon of transition’; rather, we are facing another path-dependent development. In fact, informality is a more than 50-year-old social practice, which started at least after the introduction of the socialist system. At that time, a massive rural-urban migration occurred all over Yugoslavia. Some parts of the society had an access to the public housing market, others (those with low qualification and “less important” jobs) did not. Consequently, the latter group was forced to solve their housing problem on their own. A widespread solution which intensified especially in the first half of the 1970s was to settle on former agricultural land in the suburban area. As a part of the new migrants to Belgrade are acting more or less in the same manner we presume that informality in this shape as a kind of a (post-) socialist routine.

### *Changing forms of retail trade*

Many modern shopping centers have been built in each of the Balkan Metropolises during the last years; they form another brick of “Multiple Transformations” (Sýkora & Bouzarovski 2012). These large, clean and air conditioned installations are the most striking symbols of the new possibilities and luxuries of the western, capitalist lifestyle. Recently opened examples of luxuriously equipped malls are “The Mall” in Sofia (opened in 2010) and the Ušće-Shopping-Centre (2009) in Belgrade. Both of them are easily accessible – here public transportation is more important than large parking lots – and located relatively close to the city centre. The malls’ stores offer mainly international and quite exclusive brands on an international price level; thus the prices are exceptionally high when compared to the income of the average local customer. Therefore it is not surprising that many (of the numerous) visitors rather seem to enjoy the atmosphere and – in summer time – the air conditioner than to actually purchase much in these malls. Notwithstanding many similarities in their appearance and popularity, there is one major difference between the examples in Bulgaria and Serbia: Sofia (and quite similar, Bucharest) has become

a target of international companies and investors; “The Mall” is dominated by a large hypermarket of the French company Carrefour. In Belgrade, most investments still come from Serbian (e.g. Delta Holding, MPC Holding) or other ex-Yugoslavian (e.g. Mercator) sources.

Apart from the new malls, similarly expensive products can be found in the most exclusive streets in the city cores. Many smaller stores in Belgrade’s premier shopping street *Knez Mihajlova* offer more or less luxurious goods for preferably rich customers (cf. Göler & Lehmeier 2011b, p. 352). In any case, the many small, open markets within the Balkan Metropolises are still more important for the daily needs and other regular purchases. In Sofia, there are approximately 30 of those markets (cf. Nae & Turnock 2011), usually located close to the densely populated housing areas. Equally important are many small owner-managed stores and kiosks.

### **Positioning in the metropolitan system of Europe**

Usually “[...] cities act as sites of control and regulation for production and consumption” (Beaverstock, Faulconbridge & Hoyler 2011, p. 192). In a similar way, the term metropolis does usually require demographic and functional primacy (e.g. Bronger 2004, p. 31), which means that these are not only large cities, but also the places where decisions are made and power is exercised. Importance in social and cultural terms is also often included in these considerations. Consequently, Belgrade, Bucharest and Sofia can surely be named (regional) metropolises. But, none of the three cities can be considered as a ‘global city’ (Sassen 2001). Being situated in the new periphery of the European Union (Bucharest, Sofia) or close to it (Belgrade), they are currently of no greater continental or global importance (Göler & Lehmeier 2011a, p. 40).

The quantitative study ‘Metropolitan areas in Europe’ pictures these cities and their surroundings as metropolitan areas with certain limitations: According to the used statistical material, they are classified as type 3 (of 4), namely “metropolitan areas with a limited variety of functions” (BBSR 2011, p. 101), thus belonging to the same type as many western European cities of minor importance, like Belfast, Innsbruck, Nantes or Zaragoza. The study generally distinguishes between different types of metropolitan functions (politics, economy, science, transport and culture). The comparison with other European metropolitan areas shows that some of those functions (science, transport) are severely underdeveloped in the Balkan capitals (BBSR 2011, p. 97; cf. fig.3). The metropolitan character of them is almost exclusively based on the three remaining fields: They contain various seats of important (though only national) political institutions and larger – though only regionally operating – companies and several cultural functions. Given general belief, that innovation (connected to applied science) and connectivity (relying on capable transport

infrastructure) is two highly important factors for competitiveness in the age of globalisation, these results are quite alarming.

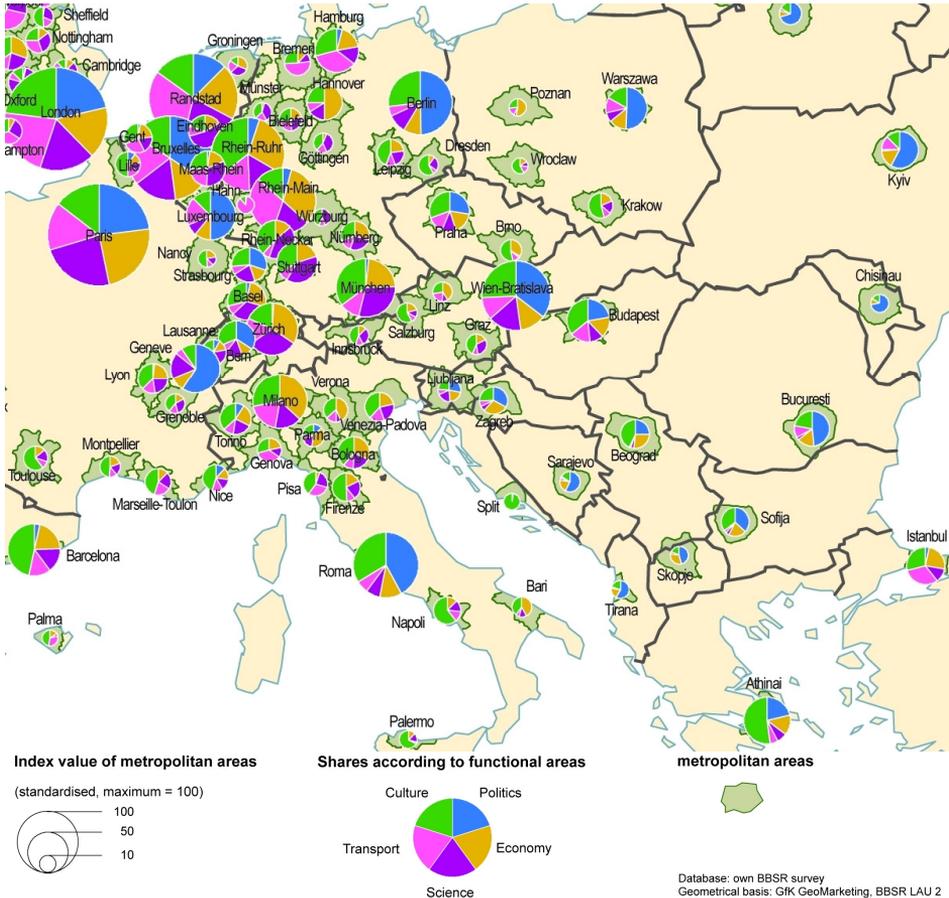


Figure 2 - Metropolitan areas and their functionality in South East Europe; based on BBSR 2011

The amount of air transport may serve as a simple but striking example for the limited connectivity. Belgrade's Nikola-Tesla-Airport served 2.7 Mio. passengers in 2010 – a marginal figure in global and even in European comparison. In a regional ranking this number is outmatched by the factor 3 (Budapest) or 6 (Athens)<sup>5</sup>. On the other hand, Serbia's former state carrier JAT provides (multiple) daily connections into the post-Yugoslavian space. The corresponding figures for Sofia in 2009 (3.1 Mio) and Bucharest in 2010 (about 6

<sup>5</sup> See [www.flugplandaten.de](http://www.flugplandaten.de) (accessed 12/08/2012) and [www.jat.com](http://www.jat.com) (accessed 7/1/2011)

Mio in two airports) are slightly higher, but still not comparable to the air traffic of other European metropolises.

But still, the importance of the Balkan metropolises in their national contexts is overwhelming. Almost a quarter (23.27%) of the Serbian population lives in Belgrade, 16.78% of the Bulgarians in Sofia and 10.72% of the Romanians in Bucharest (see fig. 2 above). The economic significance is even greater, since large parts of the national GDPs are generated in the Balkan Metropolises, ranging from more than 20% in Bucharest to about 40% in Sofia and Belgrade. The cities' role as gateways to their national economies is also enormous. Over 60% of all foreign direct investments (FDI) going to Bulgaria or Romania are made in the capitals. We can assume that not only the majority of the investments, but also important strategic information and innovation is getting there first, which underlines and intensifies the regional primacy of the Balkan Metropolises.

## **Conclusions**

Some of the described phenomena can be considered as typical developments of post-socialist cities. Informality, as seen in the case of informal housing in Belgrade, is surely not a *proprium* of the Balkans, since similar cases are also known from many other (not only post-socialist) examples. The same can be said about the changing structures in retail trade or generally about the persistent physical structures of the socialist times. And yet, there are three specific aspects, which apply to all three analyzed cities. At the same time these findings separate the Balkan Metropolises from other post-socialist examples.

The Balkan capitals share an important phase of urban development in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. This is not so much caused by the Ottoman influences, but rather by the post- (or even anti-) Ottoman developments, that started in the second half of the century. Our examples have been capitals of young nation states at that time, resulting in a high symbolical importance of their urban appearance. Even more so, urbanity (by reproducing the role models of Vienna and Paris) was seen as a significant aspect of modernity. These radical changes of the city cores can only be explained by the political and socio-economical breaks during that time (cf. Nitz 1995). The long-lasting effects of that still show in the city centers today.

Some of the typical post-socialist developments cannot (yet) take place, due to the slow and discontinued (somehow "interrupted") economic developments during the 1990s. Those physical transformations of urban structures have to be seen as processes that need political transitions and social changes as necessary preconditions (Sýkora & Bouzarovski 2012, p. 46). Wars, inflation and financial crises hampered the creation of fully functional and working market economies in all three states. This affected the conditions for post-

socialist urban phenomena, such as suburbanization. Because of the insufficient number of reasonably wealthy middle-class people and the lacking motorization, two main prerequisites for a large-scale, western-style residential suburbanization were missing. These arguments are – in addition the more or less instable political environment during the 1990ies – equally valid for explaining the lack of economic internationalization.

Lastly, the continuing integration of South Eastern Europe into the European Union seems to be the crucial factor for the future. This process puts the Balkan Metropolises in one group with numerous cities of Central and East Europe, but separates them from many post-soviet and Asian post-socialist examples. Bucharest and Sofia have been in the EU since 2007, but nevertheless are located in Europe's periphery. The economic integration of these nationally important cities has only just begun and could possibly be stopped in the time of the current global and European financial crisis. The case of Belgrade is a bit different. Serbia has recently been authorized as a candidate for the future enlargement of the EU, after several steps towards political rapprochement had been undertaken during the last years (Brey 2011, p. 20). On the long run, the accession of EU-membership seems inevitable to most observers of the situation. But already now, the economic and to some degree also the political environment in Belgrade is highly influenced by the European Union's framing policy. Especially the economic integration processes, but also the transmission of innovation and administrative procedures, are important conditions for the future urban development in the Balkan Metropolises.

All in all, there is obviously a big gap between the regional and the European (or global) relevance of the Balkan Metropolises. Their national primacy is undoubted. Regarding international metropolitan evidence we have to point out certain distinctions. Notwithstanding the EU-membership, Sofia and even more Bucharest suffer from an unfavorable position in Europe. Another problem may rise with the mid- and long-term consequences of demographic shrinkage on demand and consumption as well as on qualification of labor force and production capacities. In a certain way, Belgrade has to be considered as the most "international" among the Balkan Metropolises. But this is mainly due to the economic, functional and somehow political radiation in former Yugoslavian republics: There is a remarkable number of companies from former socialist times still working in the whole region, which kept their headquarters in Belgrade.

### **Summary**

The three major metropolises in the Balkans – Belgrade, Bucharest and Sofia – have much in common. Until the 19th century they all shared a similar history of Ottoman influences. In the early 20th century as well as in socialist

times the three capitals experienced vast changes. Since the fall of communism they have been affected by post-socialist urban developments in similar ways.

Their appearance has changed substantially in many aspects. Being the main destination for domestic and foreign investments, all three cities steadily became more and more important for their national contexts – in demographic as well as in economic terms. Compared to other metropolises in Central and Western Europe however, they (still) can only be considered as minor regional centers.

Using a comparative approach, the study gives an overview of the main discontinuities of the 20th century and the most important recent urban developments. It takes a look at tendencies of suburbanization, segregation and informal housing as well as the rapid growth of new retail trade facilities and the massive creation of new office space. Much of that can be considered as typical developments of post-socialist cities. But their historical subtexts and their economic and political situation during the last years had specific effects on the Balkan Metropolises. To some degree, this separates them from other post-socialist cities in Central and Eastern Europe.

### **Acknowledgements**

This paper presents the results of research on project No. 176017, financed by the Ministry of Science of the Republic of Serbia as well as on project “Structural change and regional development in Serbia between transition and globalisation” (PPP Partnership Project, supported by DAAD and the Ministry of Science of the Republic of Serbia).

### **References**

- BBSR (Bundesinstitut für Bau-, Stadt- und Raumforschung/ Federal Institute for Research on Building, Urban Affairs and Spatial Development) (Eds.) (2011). *Metropolitan areas in Europe*. BBSR-Online-Publikation 01/2011. Bonn: BBSR.
- Beaverstock, J. V., Faulconbridge, J. R. & Hoyer, M. (2011). Globalization and the City. In A. Leyshon, R. Lee, L. McDowell & P. Sunley (Eds.), *The SAGE Handbook of Economic Geography* (pp. 189-201). London: SAGE.
- Bobić, M. (2004). Belgrad: Eine Multiple Edge City. *StadtBauwelt*, 163, 42-49.
- Borén, T. & Gentile, M. (2007). Metropolitan Processes in Post-communist States: An Introduction. *Geografiska Annaler, B 89(2)*, 95-110.
- Brey, H. (2011). Serbiens mühsamer Weg in die EU. *Geographische Rundschau*, 63(4), 20-26.
- Bronger, D. (2004). *Metropolen Megastädte Global Cities. Die Metropolisierung der Erde*. Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft.
- Burdack J. & Rudolph, R. (2001). Postsozialistische Stadtentwicklungen zwischen nachholender Modernisierung und eigenem Weg. *Geographica Helvetica*. 56(4), 261-273.

- Doka, D. & Göler, D. (2008). Tiranias Weg ins 21. Jahrhundert. Vom Latecomer der Urbanisierung zum Newcomer im Postkommunismus. *Südosteuropa Mitteilungen*, 48(5/6), 57-67.
- Fassmann, H. & Matznetter, W. (2005). Stadtentwicklung in Ostmitteleuropa: Konvergenzen, Divergenzen, Transformation. *Geographische Rundschau*, 57(10), 52-59.
- French R.A. & Hamilton, F.E. (1979). Is there a Socialist City? In R.A. French & F.E. Hamilton. (Eds.), *The Socialist City. Spatial Structure and Urban Policy* (pp. 1-21). Chichester, New York, Brisbane, Toronto: John Wiley & Sons.
- Göler, D. (2010). Post-socialist Transition and Transformations: A Never-ending Story? Notes on History, State of Affairs, and Perspectives of (Geographical) Research on Transition. In S. Stamenković (Edt.), *Teritorialni Aspekti Razvoja Srbije I Susednich Semalja* (pp. 35-40). Belgrade: Faculty of Geography.
- Göler D. & Lehmeier, H. (2011a). Balkanmetropolen. Urbane Entwicklungen in Belgrad, Bukarest und Sofia. *Geographische Rundschau*, 63(4), 34-41.
- Göler D. & Lehmeier, H. (2011b). Belgrad – Periphere Metropole im Europäischen Städtesystem? In W. Matznetter & R. Musil (Eds.), *Europa: Metropolen im Wandel* (pp. 341-358). Vienna: Mandelbaum.
- Grabher, G. & Stark, D. (1997). Organizing Diversity: Evolutionary Theory, Network-Analysis, and Post-Socialism. *Regional Studies*, 31(5), 533-544.
- Herrle, P. (2010). Informelle Siedlungen. In D. Henckel, K. von Kuczowski, P. Lau, E. Pahl-Weber, & F. Stellmacher (Eds.), *Planen – Bauen – Umwelt. Ein Handbuch* (pp. 232-234). Wiesbaden: VS Verlag für Sozialwissenschaften.
- Hirt, S. (2007). Suburbanizing Sofia: Characteristics of Post-socialist Peri-urban Change. *Urban Geography*, 28(8), 755-780.
- Hirt, S. (2009). City Profile Belgrade, Serbia. *Cities*, 26, 293-303.
- Höpken, W. (2010). Die „südosteuropäische Stadt“. In: T.M. Bohn & M.-J. Calic (Eds.), *Urbanisierung und Stadtentwicklung in Südosteuropa vom 19. bis zum 21. Jahrhundert*. Südosteuropa-Jahrbuch, 37 (pp. 67-91). Munich, Berlin: Verlag Otto Sanger.
- Institute for informatics and statistics. (2011). Statistical Yearbook of Belgrade 2010. Belgrade: Institute for informatics and statistics.
- Le Normand, B. (2009). Urban development in Belgrade, 1945-1972. *Informationen zur modernen Stadtgeschichte*, 1, 60-69.
- Monroe, W.S. (2011). *Bulgaria and her people*. Sofia: Kliment Ohridski University Press (Reprint of the volume of 1914, published in Boston: Page).
- Nae, M. & Turnock, D. (2011). The new Bucharest: Two decades of restructuring. *Cities*, 28(2), 206-219.
- National Institute of Statistics Romania. (2011). Homepage. Retrieved August 8, 2011 from <http://www.insse.ro;08.08.2011>
- Nitz, H.-J. (1995). Brüche in der Kulturlandschaftsentwicklung. *Siedlungsforschung*, 13, 9-30.
- Privedna Komora Beograda. (2011). Homepage, Retrieved August 8, 2011 from [http://www.kombeg.org.rs/Komora/centri/CentarZaEkonomskuPolitiku.aspx?v\\_eza=3014](http://www.kombeg.org.rs/Komora/centri/CentarZaEkonomskuPolitiku.aspx?v_eza=3014)
- Republic of Bulgaria. National Statistical Institute. (2004). *Sofia in Figures 2003*. Sofia: Republic of Bulgaria. National Statistical Institute.

- Republic of Bulgaria. National Statistical Institute. (2008). *Regions and Districts in the Republic of Bulgaria 2002-2006*. Sofia: Republic of Bulgaria. National Statistical Institute.
- Republic of Bulgaria. National Statistical Institute. (2011). Homepage. Retrieved August 9, 2011 from <http://www.nsi.bg>
- Republic of Bulgaria. National Statistical Institute. (2012). Regions, Districts and Municipalities in the Republic of Bulgaria 2010. Sofia. Retrieved from [http://www.nsi.bg/publications/REGIONS\\_2010.pdf](http://www.nsi.bg/publications/REGIONS_2010.pdf)
- Republički zavod za statistiku. (2002). Popis stanovništva, domaćinstava i stanova u 2002, dokumentacioni materijal. Belgrade: Republički zavod za statistiku.
- Republički zavod za statistiku. (2011). 2011 Census of Population, Households and Dwellings in the Republic of Serbia – First results. Retrieved from <http://webrzs.stat.gov.rs/WebSite/Public/PublicationView.aspx?pKey=41&pubType=9>
- Sailer-Fliege, U. (1999). Characteristics of post-socialist urban transformation in East Central Europe. *GeoJournal*, 49 (1), 7-16.
- Sassen, S. (2001). *The global city: New York, London, Tokyo*. 2nd edition. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Simeunović, V. (2010). *Serbiens Einzelhandel im Umbruch – Aktuelle Entwicklungen am Beispiel der Hauptstadt Belgrad*. (Unpublished master thesis). Erlangen.
- Staddon, C. & Mollov, B. (2000). City Profile Sofia, Bulgaria. *Cities*, 17(5), 379-387.
- Stark, D. (1992). Path Dependency and Privatization Strategies in East Central Europe. *Eastern European Politics and Societies*, 6, 17-51.
- Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia. (2012). *Serbian Regional GDP 2009-2010*. Belgrade
- Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia. (2012). *Municipalities of Serbia 2009*. Belgrade.
- Stoyanov, P. & Franz, K. (2006). Gated communities in Bulgaria. Interpreting a new trend in post-communist urban development. *GeoJournal*, 66, 57-63.
- Sýkora, L. & Bouzarovski, S. (2012). Multiple Transformations: Conceptualising the Post-communist Urban Transition. *Urban Studies*, 49 (1), 43-60.
- Todorova, M. (2009). *Imagining the Balkans*. Updated edition. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Turnock, D. (1990). City Profile Bucharest. *Cities*, 7(5), 107-118.
- Vossen, J. (2001). Bukarest: Rumäniens Hauptstadt im Übergang zum 21. Jahrhundert. *Geographische Rundschau*, 53(11), 18-22.

Оригинални научни рад

Daniel Göler, Holger Lehmeier

**ОД ПОСТ-СОЦИЈАЛИСТИЧКЕ ТРАНЗИЦИЈЕ ДО ГЛОБАЛИЗАЦИЈЕ И  
ЕВРОПЕИЗАЦИЈЕ? МЕТРОПОЛИТАНСКИ РАЗВОЈ У БЕОГРАДУ,  
БУКУРЕШТУ И СОФИЈИ**

**Резиме**

Три главне метрополе на Балкану – Београд, Букурешт и Софија, имају много тога заједничког. Све до XIX века биле су под сличним утицајем Отоманског царства. Почетком XX века, као и у време социјализма, три престонице су доживеле велике промене. Од пада комунизма, на сличан начин су биле изложене постсоцијалистичком урбаном развоју. Њихова улога се значајно променила. Као главне дестинације за домаће и стране инвестиције, сва три града су постајала све значајнија у националним оквирима, како у демографском тако и у економском смислу. Међутим, у поређењу са метрополама Средње и Западне Европе, оне се још (увек) сматрају малим регионалним центрима. Користећи компаративне методе, рад даје приказ главних догађаја у XX веку, као и скорашњи урбани развој. Пружа осврт и на тенденције субурбанизације, сегрегације и неформалног становања, као и на брзи раст нових малопродајних објеката и масовно стварање новог пословног простора. Велики део свега тога се може сматрати типичним развојем пост-социјалистичких градова. Њихово историјско наслеђе, као и економска и политичка ситуација током последњих година, имала је специфичне ефекте на балканске метрополе. То их је, до неке мере, издвојило од осталих постсоцијалистичких градова Средње и Источне Европе.