Internal migration in Serbia through the lens of spatial planning: data sources and possible methodological solutions

In the first two decades of the 21st century, Serbia faced a significant population decline (from 7.5 million to 6.65 million), which affected almost 95 per cent of all settlements and 90 per cent of local centres. Beside general depopulation and “urban shrinkage”, unfavourable migration flows pose an additional challenge for spatial development. The spatial patterns of internal migration trace general socio-economic processes and thus represent one of the most important indicators of the diffusion of development within the territory. At the same time, internal migration flows represent a feedback loop for the increase of development disproportions. Considering that one of the main strategic objectives of spatial development in Serbia at all territorial levels (national, regional and local) is a more balanced distribution of the population, a broader and deeper insight into the extent and flows of internal migration can make an important contribution to spatial planning. Against this background, the study aims to identify various sources of statistical data and possible methodological solutions for conducting an analysis of internal migration in Serbia. The study utilises three different types of data provided by the Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia, including: Population Census (migration characteristics of the population), Internal Migration statistics (immigration and emigration data based on changes of residence) and birth and death statistics (combined with population census data). The data used are partly published via the dissemination database and partly unpublished. The research results provide information on the advantages and disadvantages of using the above-mentioned data sources, e.g. data quality, availability, level of detail, etc. In addition, a comparative analysis carried out with all three data sources using specific examples revealed possible discrepancies in the results.

**Keywords**: Internal migration, Serbia, Data sources, Population dynamics, Spatial Planning