

Resourceful Cities

Berlin (Germany), 29-31 August 2013

The New Boundaries of Skopje Urban Invasion vs. Rural Serenity

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Paper presented at the International RC21 Conference 2013

Session: Suburbs and Boundaries: the Continual Push for Perpetual Expansion

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Abstract

Currently, one-third of the total population of Macedonia lives in the capital city, Skopje. The growth of the largest Macedonian city started in the 1960s, when after a disastrous earthquake the city was reconstructed which doubled its size and population. In the 1990s, the spreading of Skopje followed a steady and continuous path until five years ago when a building boom happened. Numerous residential areas grew on the perimeter of the city moving its boundaries towards the rural lands. Since these enlargements were not planned, their impact was not calculated. The paper will explore how these new borders could affect Skopje and the region.

Among the many new extensions of the city, the research will focus on two builds: the first one, called "Novo Novo Lisiche", situated on the south-eastern border of the city; and the settlement "Panorama", located on the mountain "Vodno". Both locations formed the now vanishing greenbelt of Skopje. Since these suburbs are still in process of completion, the paper will speculate on the possible consequences they could cause on the urban lifestyle of Skopje and the area, from the aspects of infrastructure, destruction of rural landscapes, social live transformations, as well as, the spatial development of the country.

1. Introduction

The paper will discuss the urban growth of Skopje, the capital of Macedonia, with focus on the building boom that happened in the last five years, which visibly moved the borders of the city towards its rural surroundings. The growth of Skopje started in the 1960s when the country was still a part of the Yugoslavian Federation. Namely, after the great earthquake in 1963 that destroyed 80% of Skopje's built environment, it was proposed to reconstruct the city by doubling its size and population in the following twenty years. Until the mid 1980s, the plan was more than successful – the population grew from 190.000 to 440.000 inhabitants. After Macedonia declared independence in 1991, the spreading of Skopje continued mostly within its border until five years ago when residential settlements that resembled small towns, started appearing on the outskirts of the city. While the post-earthquake growth of Skopje was done according to a master plan for the whole city area, these enlargements were not – they were planned with Detailed Urbanistic Plans (DUP, an urbanistic plan of a district), but they were added in the General Urbanistic Plan (GUP, an urbanistic plan for a city) of Skopje 2001-2020. Hence, their existence was questionable: whether they are part of the city, or not. With the passing of the new GUP in 2012, this problem was solved by embracing all the new-built settlements as part of Skopje.

The research will analyze the spreading of the city borders by exploring two residential areas: the neighborhood "Panorama", which is build upon the natural landscapes of the mountain "Vodno", and "Novo Novo Lisiche", a settlement erected on agricultural land in the south-eastern part of Skopje. "Panorama" is situated within two kilometers from the most urbanized part of Skopje – the central area, and "Novo Novo Lisiche" is on the very end of the city. Both settlements are located within the green belt of Skopje, on the supposed tampon zone between the highly urbanized and the rural. These enlargements of the city will be discussed from the aspects of mobility and infrastructural connections, pollution and destruction of rural landscapes, and social live transformations. On a more general note, the paper will examine the influences of these small-scale urban projects over the regional development of Macedonia that at this point is characterized as highly monocentric.

2. Overview of the Urban Growth of Skopje

Skopje was always the economic and political center of the country, but there was time when it was not as spatially dominant as it is today. In the beginning of the 1960s, when the spatial development of the country was more balanced and equally distributed, the population of the Skopje was 165.529 inhabitants (United Nations, 1970). As a comparison, today, the number of citizens is 668.518 (Census 2006, 2006). The first and most extensive growth of the city happened after a disastrous earthquake which stroke Skopje in 1963. This unfortunate event that left 80% of the built environment destroyed, and 150.000 people homeless, gave the incentive to rethink the existing urban environment and to picture the city greater then it was before (United Nations, 1970). The master plan for reconstruction of Skopje that was elaborated in 1965, proposed a vision of the city becoming a large regional center within the Yugoslav Federation and the Balkans. Consequently, it presented a long-term spatial development agenda according to which the city was to double its size and population from 1965 to 1981(United Nations, 1970) (Fig. 1, Fig. 2).¹

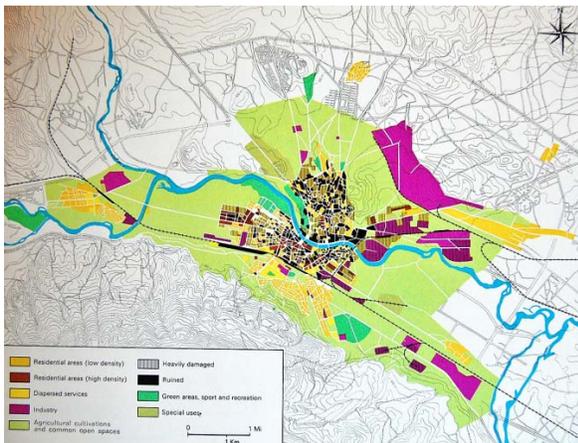


Fig. 1, Skopje in 1963

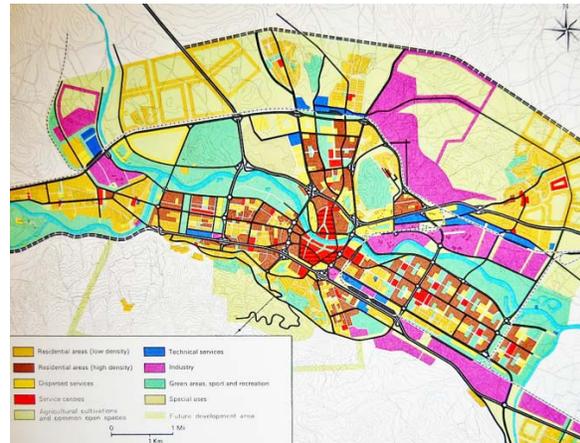


Fig. 2, Predicted growth of Skopje by 1981

This planned enlargement of the capital was successfully carried out, seeing that in the following twenty years, whole new settlements and infrastructure grew around the central area, mostly, in the north-western and south-eastern directions. Except for

¹ The plan predicted a population growth of 350.000 by 1981.

couple of neighborhoods built within the existing metro area, the new residential builds were erected upon the farmland and villages that clustered Skopje. Until the mid 1980s, most of the building activities were finished, the new residential areas were inhabited, and the population of Skopje was noted to be 440.000 (United Nations, 1970), almost 100.000 more than predicted with the master plan. But even after twenty years of intensive expansion, during which Skopje grew in size, power and population, the city did not become the regional center envisioned in the master plan - the Yugoslavian Federation disintegrated at the beginning of the 1990s, and Macedonia declared independence in 1991.

In the 1990s, Macedonia started the transition from socialist to democratic-orientated society, during this period, similar to other post-socialist countries, it underwent complete change of the political system, reestablishment of the institutions, privatization of institutions and companies, and decentralization of the countries' territory. Until the beginning of the new millennium, Skopje continued to grow, but mostly in a steady manner, and within its borders. In the period from 2003 to present time, with the accent on the last five years, the city surprisingly burst out of its limits. Among the many reasons that supported the continuous growth of Skopje in this period, there are two that are crucial, that are in the same time, very typical episodes of the post-socialist transition period (Stanilov, 2007): a. village to city migrations (mostly towards Skopje), and b. dysfunctional institutional work. The internal migrations which were mainly focused towards the capital, is something that began in the time of Yugoslavia,² (Agency for Urban and Spatial Planning, 2002), continued after the declaring of independence, and reached their peak in the last ten years. Due the unstable economic and political situation, followed by a decline of the agricultural industry and termination of the largest state factories,³ the rural areas became even more deprived then they were. On the other hand, everything is concentrated in Skopje - political power, the largest and most successful companies, the state and most of the private universities – so, people from

² The village to city migrations in Macedonia started in the 1950s when with the industrialization, rural areas started to decline. Favoring industrial over other types of development was considered as essential part of the planning agenda of the East and Central European socialist countries. The emergence of internal migrations is noted as a typical episode that followed the urban and spatial transformations during the industrialization.

³ During the privatization process most of the state factories and mines were closed, leaving thousands people unemployed (Spatial Plan of Republic of Macedonia 2002-2020, 2002)

all over Macedonia were pouring towards the capital, seeking education, work and better life. In many cases people from the rural areas were selling their farmlands in order to buy an apartment in the city (Nova Makedonija, 2011). Furthermore, due the institutional dysfunctionality,⁴ the issuing of permits for building a new object, or supplementing an existing one, became a common procedure. For some neighborhoods, new urbanistic plans were adopted, which allowed high-rise builds upon existing four-floor houses and single-floor houses with yards (DUP Debar Maalo 2008-2013, 2008). The urban growth of Skopje began in the city center, continued in neighborhoods near the central area, and, since five years ago a new trend was introduced - town-like residential areas were erected on the city outskirts. During this period the term “urban mafia” was massively introduced in daily newspapers, describing illegal building activities (Vecer, 2006). Due to the institutional mess, many of the built objects in this period were proclaimed as semi-legal, but because of their massiveness, demolishing them was not a choice. Therefore, a “Law for Legalizing the Illegal Constructions” was adopted in 2011, which was a “win-win” strategy to overcome the chaotic situation - people successfully legalized their illegal buildings, after which the state was able to collect taxes on private property (Sluzben Vesnik, 2011).

Although the paper is focused on residential spreading of the city, it is important to mention that from 2010 to present time, another building boom in the very central area is in progress – the Project “Skopje 2014”. This project is focused on state and public buildings erected in so-called “baroque” style, as well as, a large number of statues and monuments. For now, it cost 207 million Euros form the state budget, and it is the second largest state investment into urban development after the post-earthquake reconstruction of Skopje. In one of Economist’s articles on the Project “Skopje 2014”, titled “How many building booms can one city take?” this project is described as crazy (Economist, 2011).

The fast growth of Skopje led to the point where the exact borders of the city and its population were unknown. The main reason for this chaotic situation in the planning system is that most of the abovementioned extensions of Skopje, especially those on the borders of the city, were done in accordance with the changes made in the DUPs

⁴ which in Macedonia similarly to the other post-socialist countries was a result from the fast process of re-establishing the law system and institutions

that were not updated in the GUP of Skopje.⁵ So there were many changed DUPs but the picture showing the overall situation of Skopje was unknown. The first GUP of Skopje was adopted in 2001, and it was made for the period 2001-2020 (Fig. 3). In 2012, a new GUP was adopted that included all the changes in the DUPs made in the previous years (Fig. 4).

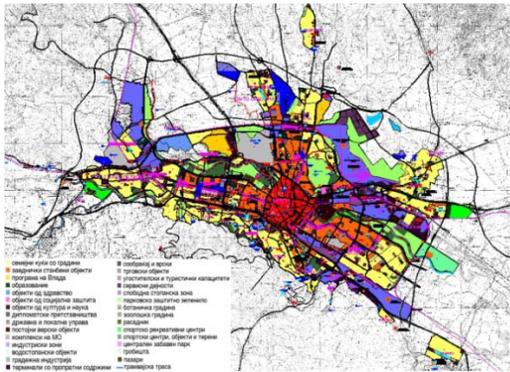


Fig.3, GUP of Skopje 2001-2020



Fig. 4, GUP of Skopje 2012-2022

With the new GUP, the extended neighborhoods (finished and the ones in progress) were embraced in the city borders, but we are yet to see the impact of their unplanned existence.

3. Extending the Borders of Skopje

From the many suburban growths in Skopje built in the period 2003-2013, the paper explores two newly-erected neighborhoods that could play an important role in the future development of the city - the neighborhood “Panorama” and the neighborhood “Novo Novo Lisiche”.⁶ Both are residential areas built upon natural and agricultural landscapes that shaped the green belt of Skopje. Another common characteristic of these neighborhoods is that they resemble small independent towns, and yet, they are fully

⁵ The GUP of Skopje is divided on many DUPs.

⁶ “Novo Lisiche” meaning New Lisiche, is the name of a much larger district than the explored area that for now has no official name. “Novo Novo Lisiche”, meaning New New Lisiche, is a name given by the locals, and as such, will be used in the paper.

attached and dependent on the city's infrastructure and life. But apart from these similarities, "Panorama" and "Novo Novo Lisiche" are spatially very different; "Panorama" is built on the margins of the city center - the most densely urbanized part of the city, and "Novo Novo Lisiche" is situated on the very edge of the city, as part of the municipality "Aerodrom" where the buildings are literally scattered amidst green areas.⁷ These districts were chosen for the research not only out of their individual urbanistic importance for the city, but also because they represent recognizable types of urban spreading in Skopje - "Panorama" could be seen as a typical example for an area built near or amid densely populated parts, and through researching "Novo Novo Lisiche", the impact of residential extensions situated on the city outline could be understood.

3.1. Penetrating the mountain "Vodno": Neighborhood "Panorama"

The city of Skopje is situated in the Skopje ravine, almost touching the 1066 meters high mountain "Vodno". As it rises from the borders of the city central area, this mountain is the nearest recreational site where the people of Skopje go hiking, biking, climbing, or just relaxing in the natural environment. Part of the mountain is preserved as a natural heritage because of its beauty and rare ecological species. The clean air, the view to the city and the short distance from the centre, made this location the most valuable and expensive land in Skopje. The neighborhood located on the foot of the mountain, also called "Vodno", is known to be the most elite place in the city. It is a common joke that only rich people live there. Even the house of the President of the Republic of Macedonia is situated there. All this eliteness triggered the idea to create a new neighborhood on the opposite side of the existing one. First, the local authorities altered the existing DUP and in 2004 couple of construction companies started the construction. The new neighborhood got the name "Panorama" after the old and famous Hotel "Panorama" that was demolished in 2010 for the purposes of the new settlement.

⁷ The city of Skopje is consisted of ten municipalities; "Aerodrom" is one of them.



Fig. 5, Location of neighborhood “Panorama” in 2003 and 2013

In the period 2003-2013, a new residential area mushroomed on the mountain “Vodno” (Fig. 5). A large number of old and new trees, including green areas were devastated while preparing the terrain for the foundations of the new settlement. Most of the buildings planned with the DUP are already built and inhabited.⁸ Advertised as luxurious and exclusive, the “Panorama” homes were sold for 1500 Euros per square meter, making them the most expensive apartment space in Skopje, and by that in the whole country (Kapital, 2011). As stated in the DUP, some of the buildings are zoned as residential, but others are classified as “A3” that stands for collective dwelling (DUP Tasino Cesmice 1, 2008). The local newspapers wrote that the initial idea for these lots was a hotel, but as the owners changed their mind and the land-use remained the same, the buildings were planned as semi-hotels, with large apartments and collective rooms such as pools, fitness-centers, garden-terraces, restaurants, and joined parking spaces (Kapital, 2011).

The neighborhood “Panorama” provoked negative critics among the citizens of Skopje. While local ecological organizations protested against the destroying of Vodno’s natural landscapes and biodiversity (Globusmagazin, 2013), professors from the Faculty for Civil Engineering were concerned about the supporting wall constructed on the mountain slope. Professor Goran Markovski stated that Vodno’s hills were never meant to be populated with buildings and repeatedly pointed out the risk of a landslide (Vecer,

⁸ For the purpose of the research detailed information on the number of finished buildings in the “Panorama” area, was not attained.

2013). Despite these warnings the local authorities did not stop the construction processes, and the first landslide happened in July, 2012 (Pulsinfo, 2012), followed by the second in April, 2013 (Vecer, 2013), when two buildings were evacuated. During the landslides, the supporting wall was visibly damaged (Fig.6, Fig.7). What is interesting is that neither the first, nor the second of these life-threatening events, reasoned the local authorities and the investors to stop the building activities, or the people to stop buying apartments. Even the apartment prices remained the same.



Fig. 6, The landslide in “Panorama” in 2012



Fig. 7, The landslide in “Panorama” in 2013

Another feature of this luxurious mountain town is the sufficient infrastructural connectivity. The state with the transport infrastructure is concerning since the whole neighborhood is connected to the rest of the civilization, only by a two-lane road that at the same time is the single link between the city and the mountain peak. Peter Roth, one of the investors promoted “Panorama” as quiet and safe neighborhood, saying “What we offer is distance from the city traffic and fast connection to the city centre which is two minutes away” (Kapital, 2011). However in reality the complete opposite happened: during rush hours, the street to “Panorama” usually gets blocked by cars, sometimes people are waiting for an hour to get home.⁹ Also, the public transport network (bus network) is not connected to the neighborhood, forcing cars to become the primary means of transportation.

Today, the building activities on “Vodno” are still in progress (Fig. 8). While people are buying apartments with 100 square meters living rooms, others with houses

⁹ The author attained this information from interviews with local residents of neighborhood “Panorama” and “Vodno”.

underneath and nearby “Panorama” live in fear from the possible third landslide that could destroying their homes.¹⁰



Fig. 9, The finished part of “Panorama”

3.2. Agricultural Land Gone Missing: Neighborhood “Novo Novo Lisiche”

The case of “Novo Novo Lisiche” does not have the apocalyptic note of “Panorama”. The neighborhood is an extension of “Novo Lisiche”, which is a residential district within one of the biggest municipalities in Skopje, Aerodrom, built as part of the post-earthquake enlargement of the south-eastern part of the city. Unlike the densely urbanized center, the dispersed urban fabric of “Novo Lisiche” consisted of large boulevards and high-rise buildings surrounded by parks, seemed much easier for inserion of new residential blocks. Namely, in the last ten years, this area was constantly replenished with buildings. Currently, three forty-floor skyscrapers are in the construction phase, as well as the town-like settlement, “Regional Center Aerodrom” (Pulsinfo, 2013). But all this urban transformations were/are done within the borders of the municipality and the city, unlike “Novo Novo Lisiche” that was not in the limits of the GUP of Skopje when its foundations were laid.

¹⁰ The author attained this information from interviews with local residents of areas near “Panorama” and “Vodno”.



Fig. 9, Location of “Novo Novo Lisiche” 2003 and 2013

The construction activities of “Novo Novo Lisiche” began in 2010, and today they are still in progress (Fig. 9). For now, the residential part of the settlement is consisted of nineteen buildings; eight of them are already inhabited.¹¹ The area’s spatial appearance is visibly different from the urban morphology of the surrounding environment - the buildings are built so close to each other leaving no space for parks, public spaces or playgrounds for children. Unfortunately, “Novo Novo Lisiche” resembles “Panorama” more than the nearby community (Fig. 10, Fig. 11).



Fig. 10, “Novo Novo Lisiche”



Fig. 11, “Novo Novo Lisiche”

¹¹ This information is attained form the field research done by the author.

The most concerning issue about this neighborhood is that it is build upon what was once agricultural land. If this was the only arable land destroyed by the growing city, it would not have mattered much, but it is not. “Novo Novo Lisiche” is a typical example of the many suburban growths that occupied Skopje’s hinterland (Agency for Urban and Spatial Development of Macedonia, 2002). In the planning documents, issued by the local authorities, the transformation of agricultural land into a building lot is done without any previous research; the decision depends only on the will of the land owner. Out of this collective negligence, the amount of destroyed agricultural land around Skopje is not known. Moreover this land is also the green belt of the city, the barrier between the urban and the rural. Settlements such as “Novo Novo Lisiche” are “eating” the green belt, and by that, reducing the distance between the city and the surrounding regions.

Unlike “Vodno”, the apartments in “Novo Novo Lisice” with a price 945 Euros per square meter were/are advertised as accessible for every citizen (Porta 3, 2011). People bought and inhabited this outskirts district before it was finished. After some time it come to light that the buildings were not connected to the water supply network, hence the new citizens protested and threatening to sue the investors. During the field research, done two years later then the first buildings were inhabited, workmen were noticed painting the crosswalks on the streets, bonding the newly-build with the existing environment.

4. The Possible Aftermaths of the Enlarged City

Today, “Panorama” and “Novo Novo Lisiche” are still half-finished and semi-inhabited, and out of that reason, the research cannot provide the exact impact done with the spreading of the borders of Skopje within the region, but instead, it will speculate the possible and plausible aftermaths of this unplanned urbanization over the infrastructural network of the city and its rural surrounding; the possible decline of the property market, as well as the relation between the growth of Skopje and the spatial situation of Macedonia.

4.1. Infrastructure and mobility

Pierre Belanger in his studies on infrastructure states that every inhabited system, no matter the scale, functions upon the existence and merging of five infrastructures: energy network, water supply, waste disposal, food production, and transport (Belanger, 2010). From all these five networks, that the newly-build settlements are plugged into, the state of the transport infrastructural connection is the most concerning one, since, the city streets and boulevards were planned and constructed for certain build environment which is overstepped with every new building (GUP of Skopje, 2001). Since “Novo Novo Lisiche” is build near large boulevards, this analysis will focus more on the “Panorama” settlement and its inadequate connection to the city, which as stated above, is consisted of a two-lane street.

The analysis of the transport infrastructure consists of a mathematical calculation of the number of cars that “Panorama” is planned for, and the convoy that they would form if all the drivers go to work (or come back from work) at the same time. The DUP states that there are 2195 parking places in the neighborhood, so that number will be taken as the possible number of cars. If for each car, five meters length (as in a parking space) is added, the total length of all the cars would be 10.975 meters, or approximately 11 kilometers. So if all the 2195 cars go to work at the same or similar time, an 11 kilometer long line of cars would be formed. On Fig. 12, the distance from “Panorama” to the city center is shown to be 1.9 kilometers. And on Fig.13, a length of 11 kilometers is shown.

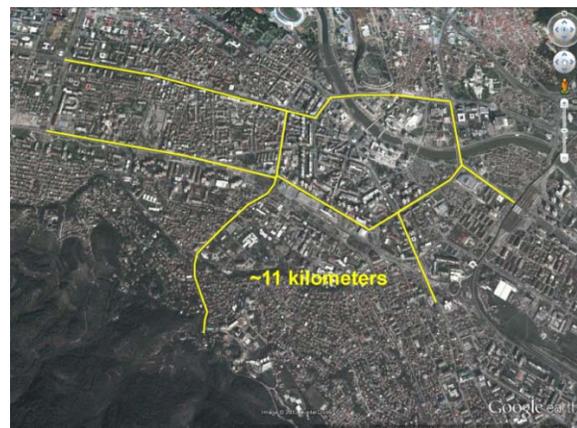


Fig. 12, the road from “Panorama” to the city centre Fig. 13, 11 km streets in the city center

In this very simple math calculation some parameters are not included, such as the data that an average household in Skopje has more than one car (State Statistical Office, 2013), or that some of the streets have two lanes in one direction, or all the cars of the surrounding environment. Nevertheless, when the neighborhood is finished and all the building inhabited, some version of this scenario is possible, and the aftermath is – traffic congestion not only for the people that paid 1500 Euros per square meter to enjoy the quietness of the mountain atmosphere, but for the whole city center as well. The luxury district “Panorama” is planned without any consideration of the settlement itself, or of the rest of the city.

4.2. Destroying Rural Landscapes

In 2009, when a regional network was added to the existing municipal one, the borders of the Skopje Region (with its center in Skopje), were administratively defined (Ministry for Environment and Spatial Planning, 2009). This borders followed an already existing territorial organization - the ones of the municipality of Skopje 1976-1996 (Agency for Urban and Spatial Planning of Macedonia, 2013), so it is fair to state that this territory - city of Skopje and its surrounding - has functioned as a region for a long time. The Skopje Region, which covers seven percent of the total territory of the country, is the only urban region among the existing eight (OECD). The professor of Landscape Ecology, Richard Forman in his book “Urban Regions Ecology and Planning beyond the City” talks about the spatial arrangement of land in urban regions, and states that each urban region is consisted of: a mayor city and its metro area, suburbs, satellite cities, towns or villages, and green space surrounding the metro are, composed of cropland, grassland and forests (Forman, 2008) In the same book he explains the importance of the spatial balance between these regional features - the surrounding of the city is there to provide for the city (Forman, 2008). Out of this perspective, the decreasing of Skopje’e green belt, on account of the growing of the city’s metro area, is a negative product. The hinterland of Skopje is consisted of: a. villages and farmland - the most fertile agricultural land in the Skopje region, called “Skopsko Pole”, is located on the south-eastern borders of the city; and b. mountains and natural landscapes, such as the

mountain “Vodno”, which as stated before, is the closest recreational site to the city, visited by the citizens of Skopje on a daily or weekly basis (State Statistical Office, 2013). For instance, if this role of “Vodno” is canceled due the building of the residential neighborhood “Panorama”, the citizens of Skopje would need to find other places to perform the activities (sport and relaxation) that usually took place on the mountain area. Furthermore, this could mean a. building of new infrastructure, (from Skopje to the new place), or reconstructing an existing one, b. transforming some natural landscape into recreational sites, c. changing of people’s habits built with years and generations, and d. spending more time in traveling to the new site - going somewhere further would take more time. At this point it is important to state that in the nearest surrounding of Skopje there are no landscapes similar to “Vodno”, (with exception of “Skopska Crna Gora” – a mountain near Skopje), so the alternative to “Vodno” might be somewhere out of the Skopje Region. The case with wiping out of the agricultural land around Skopje has similar aftermaths. “Skopsko Pole” is the main food producer for the Skopje Region. The process of transformation of arable land into building sites is something that on a long run could affect the process of production and supply of food within the region. If “Skopsko Pole” does not exist (or is significantly smaller then now), alternatives for food could be: a. local recourses from other regions, which means organized transport of food, extending of infrastructural networks, and transformation of land-use in order to provide for Skopje, and b. imported food, which would support the negative trend of importing food - one-fourth of the country is high-quality agricultural land, and yet, the imports of food exceed the exports.

These developments are slightly exaggerated in relation to the current situation - they are actually the worst case scenarios. Both cases show possible futures if the chaotic urbanization and spreading of Skopje continues, disabling the surrounding of the city to provide for the city.

4.3. Ghost towns

Since these neighborhoods, (but also many others) are still under construction, a very common and logical question to ask is - who is going to live there? There are a couple of

possible answers, for instance people from other Macedonian towns that migrate towards Skopje, or citizens of Skopje, or foreigners, but the possibility that some apartments will not be bought also exists. It is stated that around 30.000 new apartments were built in the last years, and out of this massive building boom, the apartment selling process is slower than before. Nikola Velkovski, the president of the Construction Association within the Chambers of Commerce of Macedonia, stated that many buildings remained empty, and that Skopje is yet to see the result of the unplanned urbanization (Nova Makedonija, 2013). For now, allegedly, the property prices in Skopje are still stable (Nova Makedonija, 2013), but what if they go down? Decline of property prices in the region are already noticed (Nova Makedonija, 2013). One of the effects of this unpredictable market future is the “ghost town” effect; deserted settlements that loom empty after an unsuccessful apartment sale. Due to the overall situation, the possibility of “ghost towns” in Macedonia should not be excluded.

4.4. The Growing Monocentricity of Macedonia

The relation between the constant expansion of Skopje and the spatial monocentricity of Macedonia is very tight. Namely, the accumulation of economic and political power and population in Skopje is the reason why the country is monocentrically developed. It is not a lie to state that almost everything is situated in Skopje: the Government the Parliament of Macedonia, all the foreigner embassies, the headquarters of the most powerful local and regional companies, the first and largest state university, as well as, most of the private ones, the Academy of Science and Arts, the State Hospital, the Museum of Contemporary Arts and the Museum of Macedonia, the largest shopping malls, the Olympic Pool, most of the army establishments, etc. It is not that other towns do not have museums and hospitals, but the quality comparison is impossible to make. There has always been a development gap between Skopje and the rest of Macedonia, but now, with the residential building boom and the Project “Skopje 2014” this gap has become an abyss. Ilija Aceski, a sociologist and professor at the Faculty for Sociology, stated that Skopje must diminish its population by 25 percent, because it is needless to

pile up everything in the capital (Dnevnik, 2013). The “Strategy for Regional Development of the Republic of Macedonia 2009-2019” promoted the idea to redefine the budget for regional development by redistribution of the Skopje funds (Strategy, 2009). But, for now, the country does not have a solid and clear strategy for overcoming the development discrepancies between Skopje and the other regions. The continuous growth of the capital supports this status quo, and boosts the monocentricity of Macedonia.

5. Conclusion

The paper explored the spreading of Skopje into the surrounding region, due the inconsistent urbanization processes in the period 1991-2013, with specific focus on the last five years when a building boom happened. The settlements, “Panorama” on the mountain “Vodno”, and “Novo Novo Lisiche” on the south-eastern end of the city, were researched as typical examples of dubiously planned residential areas on the Skopje outskirts that pushed the limits of the city towards what was once rural land. Although, the adoption of a new GUP of Skopje in 2012, set new borders of Skopje, what happened the last ten years created a trend of careless behavior towards the build and un-build environment that already has a negative effect, and more is yet to come. Since the examined neighborhoods are not finished and completely inhabited, the paper just speculates on possible future developments of the city life, but also, on the role that Skopje has in the overall spatial development of Macedonia. Possible impacts of the extended borders of Skopje could be the following:

- Infrastructural mess and constant traffic congestions. As the analysis showed that “Panorama” is planned and built without research that would include infrastructural development of the area;
- Insufficiency of agricultural land due to reckless destroying of fertile arable areas around Skopje. This would further contribute to the decline of the food production industry which on a larger scale could affect the over-all spatial development of Skopje and the near-by regions;

- Lack of places for recreational activities as a result of the destruction of natural landscapes near the city;
- Probable merging of the urban and rural as an aftermath of the shrinking green belt around Skopje; and finally,
- Growing monocentricity of the country that only enlarges the already existing spatial injustices between Skopje and the other regions.

All of the above could be recognized as chaotic urbanization schemes typical for the post-socialist cities during the transition period (Hamilton, 2005). According to Kiril Stanilov, these uncontrolled urban processes originated from the unorganized institutional work that emerged in the post-socialist countries during the reestablishment of the political system (Stanilov, 2007). Many discussions on Skopje end with the conclusion that the situation of the urban planning and development is a phase that the country needs to go through.

But even so, the time spent in the transitional “limbo” is proportional to the damage done on account of unplanned urbanization. Another aspect that is stated in Stanilov’s “The Post-Socialist City”, is that other post-socialist countries ruined valuable land during the transitional urbanization to the point where applying concepts for sustainable urbanistic development became impossible. That is something to have in mind.

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