

DEVELOPMENT NEEDS FOR PLANNING FUTURE HUMAN SETTLEMENTS: WHAT IS IT ALL ABOUT?

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Abstract: The Urban Planning Institute of the Republic of Slovenia, together with other partner institutions, made ready the expert basis for the preparation of regional spatial plans for the 12 development regions in Slovenia. In the analytical part of the expert basis, we have also carried out an analysis of the development needs in the area of settlement, which are based on the development documents in force at the national and regional level. We were particularly interested in the conceptualisation of the notion of development needs in the field of development and spatial planning in Slovenia, as well as other concepts such as development and human settlement. In the text, we offer basic conceptual considerations of these concepts and present in a synthesised form the results of the analysis of development needs of key national development documents and regional development programmes. Finally, we wrap up with key conclusions and expectations for meeting future development needs in Slovenia.

Key words: development needs, development, human settlements, spatial planning, Slovenia

RAZVOJNE POTREBE ZA PLANIRANJE BUDUĆIH NASELJA: O ČEMU SE RADI?

Apstrakt: Urbanistički institut Republike Slovenije, zajedno sa drugim partnerskim institucijama, je u zaključnoj fazi pripreme stručne osnove za izradu regionalnih prostornih planova za 12 razvojnih regiona u Sloveniji. U analitičkom delu stručne osnove, izvršili smo i analizu razvojnih potreba na području naselja, koje su zasnovane na razvojnim dokumentima koji su na snazi na nacionalnom i regionalnom nivou. Posebno nas je zanimala konceptualizacija pojma razvojnih potreba u oblasti razvojnog i prostornog planiranja u Sloveniji, kao i drugih koncepata kao što su razvoj i naseljenost. U radu nudimo osnovna konceptualna razmatranja ovih koncepata i u sintetizovanom obliku predstavljamo rezultate analize razvojnih potreba ključnih nacionalnih razvojnih dokumenata i regionalnih razvojnih programa. Na kraju, rezimiramo sa ključnim nalazima i očekivanjima za ispunjavanje budućih razvojnih potreba Slovenije.

Ključne reči: razvojne potrebe, razvoj, ljudska naselja, prostorno planiranje, Slovenija

1. INTRODUCTION

The analysis of development needs is one of the essential substantive steps in the process of preparing the mandatory expert bases for regional spatial plans and, in addition to the analysis of the spatial situation, it forms the basis for the preparation of guidelines for the development of settlements, development in the landscape and public economic infrastructure. This raises the question of how to conceptualise the notion of development needs, which arises quite frequently in the preparation and implementation of strategies,

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programmes and projects in the field of development and spatial planning. In addition to this notion, the notion of development interest is also frequently used in planning discourse, as are the notions of conservation need and conservation interest as their counterpoints. How are these concepts understood and used by development and spatial planners as well as other development and spatial planning stakeholders? It is not known to the author of this text whether an analysis of the ways in which these concepts are understood may have been made so far.

We were interested in whether the concepts of development need, development interest, conservation need and conservation interest are defined in key strategic documents and legal acts concerning spatial planning, environmental protection and nature conservation, which are closely related to spatial development and planning. To our surprise, we found that none of these concepts, which many representatives of the state administration take for granted and self-explanatory in their everyday use, are defined in the key strategic and legislative acts that (in)indirectly concern the spatial development sphere: the Spatial Development Strategy 2050 (SPRS 2050), the Spatial Planning Act (ZUreP-3), the Environmental Protection Act (ZVO-2) and the Nature Conservation Act (ZON). This fact has made it objectively difficult for us to effectively identify the development needs in the field of human settlements at the national and regional level.

Moreover, there is no attempt to define the concept of development in the above mentioned documents, as well as in the Slovenian Development Strategy (SRS 2030), which is a strategic development document closely linked to the SRS 2050. In the following section, we attempt to compensate for this shortcoming by proposing our own definitions of the concepts of development, development needs and settlement.

2. CONCEPTUAL DEFINITIONS

The concept of development needs for the human settlements domain contains three interrelated concepts: development, needs and human settlements. Of the three concepts, only the concept of human settlement is legally defined.

The concept of human settlement is defined in the ZUreP-3. 'Settlement is the composition of physical structures for human habitation and the exercise of social, service, productive and leisure activities in settlement areas' (ZUreP-3, Article 3). The concept has pleonastic characteristics as it is partly described by a related term. "Settlement ... in settlement areas"? It also highlights the importance of physical features (physical structures) as the basis for "human habitation and the exercise of social, service, productive and leisure activities". This concept is characterised by a physico-spatial deterministic approach. Adherence to this definition further complicates the possibility of linking it to the concept of development needs. Development needs of human settlements or development needs of the composition of physical structures for human habitation ...? What is this supposed to mean? What development needs can be/are expressed by the "composition of physical structures"? In our view, this is a semantic nonsense. Only humans can have and express needs, as well as other living beings.

The ZUreP-3 and SPRS 2050 also define the related concept of settlement. "Settlement is an area of existing settlement comprising land built up with dwellings and other buildings and civil engineering structures and associated areas necessary for their use, and public areas; a settlement shall consist of a group of at least ten residential buildings; settlements shall be distinguished from each other by their function and role in the settlement network, as well as by their size, urban layout and architecture; settlements shall be classified as

towns, other urban settlements and other settlements” (ZUreP-3, 3. This concept, like the concept of settlement, also has pleonastic characteristics as it is partly described by a related term. “Settlement is the area of an existing settlement ...”? This term also highlights mainly the physical characteristics of the defined phenomenon, such as land, buildings and civil engineering structures.

Both concepts are meaningfully related to the definition of space in the ZUreP-3. The concept of space is the initial and fundamental concept in the ZUreP-3, on which the other concepts defined in the law, including the concepts of settlement and settlement, are based. “Space is the aggregate of physical structures on and under the earth’s surface, formed by the interplay of settlement areas and landscapes, and the sea” (ZUreP-3, Article 3). It is a metaphysical definition of space, which is a constant or only gradually changing phenomenon that can be understood as if it were God-given or predetermined by a higher power. It does not contain a dynamic or process dimension. It has only a physical aspect, not a functional one, which is brought into being by economic, supply, service and other activities.

In view of this conceptual ambiguity, we propose a different definition of human settlement. A human settlement is an area where people live permanently in an organised community in which they are connected to each other and to the outside environment by a variety of economic, supply and service activities that satisfy most of their daily living needs.

In addition, we propose below our own definitions of development and development needs.

Development is the process of long-term optimisation of the economic, social and spatial capacities of an area and the synergistic integration of its key stakeholders in order to implement activities that generate positive changes that raise the standard and quality of life of its inhabitants, while at the same time making sustainable use of the available natural resources and protecting the environment.

A human settlements development need is an identified and publicly expressed lack of resources, infrastructure, activities, organisation and management that can be used to promote the all-round development of an area and improve the quality of life of its inhabitants. The development needs in the area of human settlements can be divided into the following groups of needs, following Maslow’s (1987) hierarchy of needs:

1. Physical needs - lack of adequate housing, quality public infrastructure services, healthy living environment, etc. (Demand / aspiration to live in a quality living environment where residents can drink healthy drinking water, breathe unpolluted air, eat food grown on healthy soils, access a variety of sites and services in a sustainable manner, etc.).
2. Security needs - living in a safe environment where people’s living conditions are regulated and predictable and where people feel in control of their lives (e.g. people are safe from natural and other disasters, elderly people are adequately cared for).
3. The needs for love and belonging - living in an environment where residents experience a sense of connectedness and belonging, and where they work together to face challenges at community level. (Residents work together for the progress of the area in economic, cultural, sporting and other areas, and work together to face potential problems, such as dealing with the consequences of potential natural and other disasters).
4. The need for respect - living in a living environment where residents can experience a sense of self-worth on an individual and collective level, where their achievements are valued and respected (Creating opportunities for residents to

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take leadership roles in their communities and empowering them to participate in decision-making and community development initiatives. Community residents recognised and honoured, local events and festivals, etc.).

5. Self-actualisation needs - referring to the realisation of the human potential of residents, their self-fulfilment and their aspirations for personal and collective growth (Creation of a platform for residents to participate in projects, exchange ideas and work together towards common goals. Establishment of communal gardens, workshops and clubs to promote collective creativity, etc.).

3. ANALYSIS OF THE OBJECTIVES AND STRATEGIC PRIORITIES FOR THE HUMAN SETTLEMENTS SECTOR

3.1 Analysis of objectives and strategic priorities at national level

3.1.1 Analysis of the objectives and strategic priorities of the Slovenian Development Strategy (SDS 2030)

The central objective of the SRS is to ensure a quality of life for all, which can be achieved through balanced economic, social and environmental development (SVRK, 2017: 17). The country's strategic orientations for achieving a quality of life are: an inclusive, healthy, safe and responsible society, learning for and throughout life, a highly productive economy that creates added value for all, a preserved and healthy natural environment, and a high level of participation, competence and efficiency in governance (SVRK, 2017: 18). The five strategic orientations to achieve the central objective of the SRS will be pursued through action in various interrelated and interdependent areas, which are rounded up in the twelve development objectives of the SRS.

We were interested to know whether the identified objectives (in)indirectly include any sub-objectives, guidelines or measures that would be relevant to the area of human settlements. This link is not elaborated in such a way that it does not affect the overall assessment, which is that the SRS has overlooked the importance and role of human settlements as an important theme for the future development of Slovenia. At the same time the SRS also does not use the term development need in its text.

3.1.2 Analysis of the objectives and strategic priorities of the Spatial Development Strategy of Slovenia (SPRS 2050)

SPRS 2050 defines a vision and five strategic objectives for Slovenia's spatial development: to create the right conditions for the transition to a climate-neutral society, to make Slovenian cities internationally competitive, to ensure the quality of life in urban and rural areas, to strengthen spatial identity, and to improve the resilience and adaptability of the spatial environment to change.

The vision, in a comprehensive text in twelve thematic areas, offers a very optimistic vision of the future to come. In the area of human settlement, the vision offers a long-term vision that "the composition of human settlements will be preserved in the settlement pattern ... a polycentric and spatially balanced system of centres at different levels will allow adequate and equal access to services of general interest for all inhabitants, while remote and sparsely populated areas will be provided with forms of care tailored to local needs , Slovenian settlements will be pleasant to live and work in, prosperous, environmentally sustainable and climate-neutral ..., the process of suburbanisation will be halted ..." (MNVP, 2023: 6338). The other thematic areas offer a similarly optimistic and reader-appealing vision.

We were interested in the relationship between the optimistic visions of the SPRS 2050 vision and the findings in the introductory analytical chapters of the document, which we would expect to present the results of a critical analysis of the state of play and current processes in Slovenia's spatial development. Instead of the expected critical analysis of the situation and processes, which would have resulted in the identification of a set of key development problems and their causes, the document offers in two chapters a calm general description of the spatial characteristics and trends in Slovenia's spatial development and a description of the key spatial development challenges. At the same time, the visionary definitions are almost diametrically opposed to the descriptions in the chapters dealing with trends in Slovenia's spatial development and key spatial development challenges.

3.2 Analysis of development projects and development priorities and measures related to the human settlement sector at the level of statistical/development regions

In this chapter, we present the results of an analysis of a set of approved projects from the Regional development agreements² in the 2014-2020 period, which are also being implemented in the 2021-2027 programming period.

Table 1. Classification of projects addressing human settlements development needs by regions

Number of projects addressing human settlements development needs by defined categories					
Statistical/ development region	Physical needs	Security needs	The needs for love and belonging	The need for respect	Self-actualisation needs
Gorenjska	25	1	0	0	0
Goriška	13	1	0	0	1
Jugovzhodna Slovenija	28	1	0	0	1
Koroška	26	0	0	0	0
Obalno-kraška	13	0	0	0	0
Osrednjeslovenska	22	0	0	0	0
Podravska	35	0	0	0	0
Pomurska	16	0	0	0	0
Posavska	14	0	0	0	1
Primorsko – Notranjska	12	0	0	0	0
Savinjska	33	0	0	0	0
Zasavska	9	0	0	0	0

We were interested in which human settlement development needs are predominantly addressed/met by the current projects in each region. In doing so, we drew on the concept of human settlement development needs defined in Chapter 2. Classification of projects addressing human settlements development needs by regions is presented in Table 1 and in Figure 1.

² The Regional Development Agreement is a regional policy instrument that implements the Regional Development Programme by identifying key regional and sectoral projects to overcome development constraints in the region, as well as sources of funding.

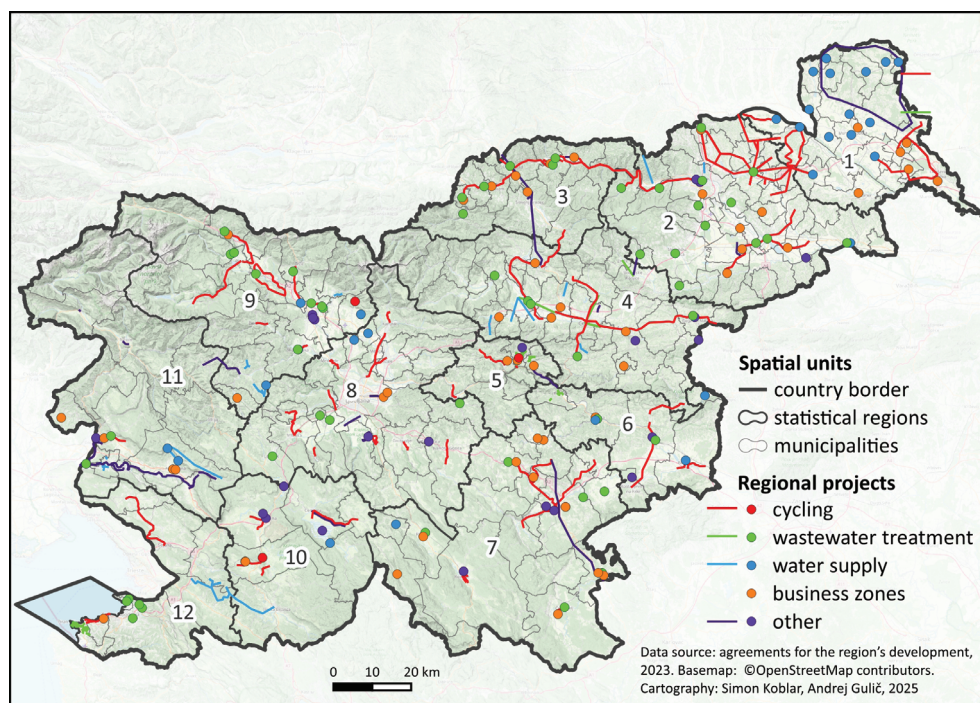


Figure 1. Schematic presentation of current development projects in 12 Slovenian statistical/development regions

4. CONCLUDING OBSERVATIONS

The analysis of development needs in the area of human settlements has shown that in all regions, the Regional development agreements are strongly dominated by projects aimed at meeting the physical needs of human settlements. These are projects aimed at the construction of cycling links, waste water drainage and treatment, drinking water supply and sewerage networks, the renovation and construction of new road links, and the expansion and modernisation of business zones. Only in some regions have projects been approved that meet the team's needs for security and self-actualisation.

At the same time, none of the measures proposed in the programme components of the regional development programmes that (in)directly relate to the area of human settlement development were included in the Regional development agreements.

In the context of the recovery from the catastrophic floods and landslides that affected parts of Slovenia in August 2023, we expect a redefinition of key development projects at national and regional level, which will be even more focused on meeting the physical needs of human settlements. It is expected that the needs for: security, love and belonging, respect and self-actualisation in the area of human settlements will be realised through other available financial mechanisms.

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