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URBAN SYSTEM AND ADMINISTRATIVE-TERRITORIAL ORGANIZATION OF CROATIA

Abstract:

This work deals with the necessity of reforming the administrative-territorial organization considering the characteristics of the urban system and settlement structure of Croatia. Up until the 1990s the basic unit of administrative-territorial organization in Croatia was the municipality – in total approximately one hundred of them. During the thirty years period (1963-1992) of their existence, the municipalities became autonomous political and economic units. Such municipal system influenced spatial structures and processes and had an impact on the development of Croatia's urban system. Municipal centers (mainly small and medium sized cities) became spontaneous centers of polarized development on the local levels. After the political and economic changes in the 1990s, a new administrative-territorial organization was introduced. Today Croatia consists of two levels of administrative units - counties (21 higher level units) and municipalities (556 lower level units, with reduced jurisdictions as opposed to previous ones; their average size is around 102 km² and population around 7700). This new administrative-territorial organization, based on the considerably greater jurisdiction of larger – regional territorial units, in which the smaller, local ones no longer have the opportunity of economic decision-making, modified the basic character of the impact the administrative-territorial organization had on spatial structures and processes, and thereby on the urban system and regional development. In such circumstances the smaller cities (apart from county seats) no more have the importance they had before. As the counties have become the basic planning units and were given the jurisdiction for balancing and improving economic and social development in their large territories, even some of the smaller county seats are not strong enough to support such development. Therefore it is necessary to increase the importance of municipalities by reducing their total number at least by half and increasing their territory as well as jurisdictions by giving them opportunities to autonomously plan their development.

Keywords:

Urban system, administrative-territorial organization, regional development, county, municipality, Croatia

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