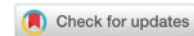


SPATIAL-FUNCTIONAL CHARACTERISTICS OF LOCAL SELF-GOVERNMENT UNITS FROM A SECURITY ASPECT

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Abstract: Observing, analyzing and comparing functional authority that local self-government units (LSGUs) have in developed countries, in comparison to LSGUs in Bosnia and Herzegovina (B&H), precisely in B&H autonomous entities, it can be stated that B&H is still far behind from modern society. Although there are valid and comprehensive legal regulations, both on a national and entity level, in practice, those regulations have not yet been fully implemented. The legal regulations in two autonomous entities differ when it comes to regulating LSGU as well as their jurisdictions. The purpose of the paper focuses on the comparison of legal regulations of LSGUs in Bosnia and Herzegovina on an entity level, and only in some segments will those regulations be compared to regulations that can be found in developed countries. In order to achieve the defined goal of the paper, which is that a properly spatially and functionally organized LSGUs can offer a higher level of security and safety to the population that living in its territory, unlike LSGUs that are neither spatially nor functionally organized, several scientific methods will be used, such as: the method of synthesis and analysis, induction and deduction, comparison, and, to some extent, generalization. The result of this paper is reflected in the recommendations provided to improve the safety and security of LSGU. A variety of activities needs to be undertaken, such as: spatial planning improvement, technological innovations, coordination between services, decentralization of security structures, improving legislative and regulatory framework, strengthening resilience to natural disasters and the role of community and citizen. LSGU plays a key role in shaping the security policies that respond to specific challenges faced by the community. Integration of modern technology, development of flexible management methods and improvement of LSGU capacities are the basis for creating of secure and more resilient communities in the future.

Keywords: Local Self-government Units, Bosnia and Herzegovina, security, protection, spatial-functional characteristics

Field: Social sciences

1. INTRODUCTION

Practice and science are familiar with various different situations that form procedures for solving specific problems in regards to territorial organization in individual countries. When establishing spatially-functional organization on local level, it is needed to consider and analyze all components and characteristics of a certain area, including the safety aspect, where the problems such as underpopulation, natural disasters that present a threat to LSGU as well as new security threats in terrorism, organized crime etc. are highlighted (Smith, 2021). Understanding a way in which LSGU are organized, spatially and functionally, is of imperative value for creating efficient security policies and strategies that protect its inhabitants as well as safeguard natural and social resources which enable normal development of each individual LSGU.

Historically, B&H has been through numerous changes of state system, territorial organization, and political and social circumstances. The result of all the aforementioned is a complicated state system, defined by the Constitution, which is in itself an integral part of the Dayton Peace Accords, that birthed the primacy of ethnic territorial-spatial organization. This form of organization is only possible in a multiethnic society that has come out of a conflict that, besides military-territorial, had premises of ethnic and religious conflict. Precisely, this aspect of the spatial-territorial organization of LSGU enabled a certain imbalance because it conditioned more LSGU being formed, where there used to be only one LSGU, depending on the percentage of one of three constituent people that were living there. This way of organizing LSGU results in uneven implementation of spatial development planning at the local level, which is based on the low capacity of LSGU, whose size, income, and administration cannot provide the necessary capacity to address competencies and responsibilities imposed on them. By the definition of the European Charter of LSG (2017, Article 3), "Local self-government denotes the right and the ability of local authorities, within the limits of the law, to regulate and manage a substantial share of public affairs under their own responsibility and in the interests of the local population."

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The problem of establishing efficient territorial organization on a local as well as regional level represents a major development and security problem at the same time. Bosnia and Herzegovina, in regard to its territorial organization, faces numerous issues such as major differences in demographic characteristics (population and its structure, level of education, vitality coefficient, etc.) between LSGU, the size of its territory, (un)population, existing infrastructure, fiscal and administrative capacities, economic potentials, etc. The goal of this paper is to analyze the above-mentioned elements and define guidelines that will, through a holistic approach, enable LSGU to manage security at the local level, through adequate planning, reaction, and prevention of security problems. Besides the aforementioned, this paper will shed light on the LSGU problems of oversight and control of its territory from a legislative perspective.

Spatial-functional characteristics of LSGU, from a security aspect, include several key elements that contribute to secure, efficient, effective, and economic (3E) functioning of LSGU. The purpose of aforementioned terms is to enable faster economic development of a country, i.e., the purpose of administration is to satisfy 3E (Council of Europe, 2023), which, in turn, directly affects the security aspect of a country. Through analysis of the spatial-functional position of LSGU, from a security aspect, it is necessary to take into consideration geographical position and administrative boundaries, demographic picture, infrastructure equipment, public facilities, legislative and regulatory framework, security infrastructure and resources, risk planning and management, citizen participation, and economic and general development. Spatial distribution of key infrastructure, like police stations, fire department and emergency service, directly affects the ability of rapid response to incidents, whether they are natural disasters, terrorist threats or everyday security situations. On the other hand, functional organization, i.e., the way that the local institutions are coordinated and integrated, has a key role in ensuring a comprehensive response to these challenges.

The main goals of this research are to identify key factors that influence the vulnerability of local communities from spatial and security aspects (legal framework) and to analyze the application of new technologies in improving security and how spatial and functional innovations can reduce the risks and improve the overall resilience of local communities. The main hypothesis of this paper is that local administrative units in B&H, from the aspects of sparse population and unprofitability of managing entrusted natural resources, are highly vulnerable to security challenges, risks, and threats arising under the influence of natural factors but also under the influence of a human factor, which, for the purposes of this paper, includes modern forms of security threats that negatively impact the security of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

2. MATERIALS AND METHODS

Globalization, urbanization, and other significant demographic changes, with an emphasis on migration, have led to major security challenges on the local level. Decrease in population density, weakening capacity of LSGU, and social changes contribute to increasing vulnerability of communities. As a result of that, LSGU is faced with new risks that require redefining security strategies as well as adapting spatial and functional structures in order to successfully respond to new challenges. When writing this paper, numerous scientific methods will be used to ensure fulfillment of set goals: methods of synthesis and analysis, induction and deduction, comparison, and, to some extent, methods of generalization. The basic method that is used is the comparative method. The significance of this research lies in possibilities of developing better spatial-functional planning models in Bosnia and Herzegovina that will enable LSGU to improve their resilience to threats, ensure security and safety for their citizens, and optimize coordination between key institutions.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Spatial-functional characteristics of LSGU, from a security perspective, were analyzed through several key elements that contribute to security and safety as well as efficient functioning of these administrative units. Integration of spatial and functional aspects: efficient local government integrates spatial and functional organization so that the safety of citizens could be improved. For example, urban planning in cities such as Barcelona shows that spatial connectivity, such as disposition and accessibility of public services, directly reflects citizens' sense of security and the effectiveness of security interventions (Johnson, 2019). The concept of security has expanded to include new subjects that strive to ensure their security and, at the same time, has deepened in terms of emergence of new subjects that work together to ensure it (Green & Smith, 2018). The definition of security has expanded in the last few decades to keep up with the globalized international community of the 21st century, its rapid technological development,

and the global threats that arise from this process. According to Al-Rodhan (2007), the principle of multiple-sum security is based upon the assumption that in a globalized world, security cannot be considered a zero-sum game that involves only states. Instead of that, global security has five dimensions that include human, ecological, national, transnational, and transcultural security; therefore, the global security of any state or culture cannot be achieved without good governance at all levels of local government that guarantees security through justice for all individuals, states, and cultures. Therefore, LSGUs, being closest to citizens, need to build effective ways that ensure the safety and security of their citizens.

International and national security are inevitably intertwined. In the modern world, which is characterized by increasing interconnectedness and dependence, national security is becoming an integral part of international security, which is not just a sum of individual national security but a permanent international framework of generally acceptable values. Today, interethnic relations significantly determine the stability of the state, but also of the international system. Unfortunately, B&H has been the scene of conflicts throughout its history, which more often had ethnic and religious characteristics. Precisely because of this, B&H functions as a modern, multiethnic, decentralized state whose entities have a wide range of independent decision-making powers regarding the governance of their territory.

The Republic of Srpska (RS) is one of the B&H entities, alongside the FB&H. Geographical location and administrative borders of the Republic of Srpska indicate its specific longitudinal shape, „consisting of two relatively equal parts: the western part, which covers about 12.350 km², and the eastern part, with about 12.700 km²” (Popović & Čekrija, 2021), i.e., approx. 24.641 km². Territorial non-cohesion of the RS can be seen through the lack of an active and direct connection between the administrative center and LSGU (vertical coordination), as indicated by the high degree of republican administrative centralization, which, in turn, directly affects the revitalization of empty and devastated areas (Popović 2021). According to administrative and territorial division, the RS is composed of 53 municipalities and 11 official cities (Law on territorial organization of RS, 2023). In addition, only Istočno Sarajevo consists of several municipalities.

The Federation of B&H comprises 51% of the territory of B&H. Geographical location and administrative borders of FB&H point to its compact shape with the total length of the state border being 1.538 km. It spreads on the surface of approx. 26.110,5 km² (Institute for Statistics of FBiH, 2020). The Federation of B&H is divided into 10 cantons, which, in turn, are divided into municipalities, with the Federation having 22 cities and 58 municipalities (Association of Municipalities and Cities of the FB&H, 2022). Unlike the Republic of Srpska, the FB&H decentralized its territorial organization through the establishment of cantons. The Federation of B&H, just like the RS, is facing significant population decline, depopulation of certain areas, and weakened spatial and functional capacities of LSGU.

The Federation of B&H, unlike the RS, has a compact territorial and administrative organization, and because of that, it has an advantage in terms of spatial-functional organization. The Federation of B&H has a larger population compared to the Republic of Srpska; however, population decline and depopulation of certain areas present a problem in both entities. Official research from the Union for Sustainable Return and Integrations in B&H confirms that, from the period of 2013. to 2021, more than 170.000 citizens have left the country, which is equal to the population of one large city in B&H (Vidačak, 2024). The Western Balkans region (WB) had one of the highest emigration rates in Europe in the last couple of years, with approximately one third of citizens now living outside the region. Data from the World Bank report „Western Balkans Labor Market Trends 2019“ confirm that most emigrants from WB are young and educated (IOM UM Migration B&H, n.d.). These trends raise concerns about the negative impact of the emigration of young professionals, men and women alike, on human capital formation, competitiveness, growth, and economic convergence in the region. According to UN data from 2019, B&H is among the leading emigration countries in Europe. For B&H, it is stated that it is 500.8 per 1000 inhabitants (Vidačak, 2024). American business magazine Forbes, in 2022, ranked B&H second on its list of the countries with the largest share of native-born populations living abroad (N1, 2022). The Institute for Youth Development “KULT” conducted research on the situation of young people in B&H, which clearly showed that young people do not leave B&H only for economic reasons, but in general because of poor living standards and insecurity for their families (Vidačak, 2024).

Law on Local Governance in the RS (“Official Gazette of RS,” no. 97/2016 and 61/2021) and Law on the Principles of Local Governance in the FB&H (Official Gazette of FB&H“, no. 49/06) define the competencies of LSGU at the levels of these two entities in B&H. By analyzing the aforementioned laws, we can conclude that LSGUs do not have authority over security matters. Law on Local Governance in Republic of Srpska (Article 29.) stipulates that LSGU have certain responsibilities in the field of citizen security and protection of material assets from natural and other disasters, and (Article 33.) which stipulates that LSGU provide public information on issues of significance to the life and work of its citizens. Article 8

of the Law on the Principles of Local Governance in the Federation of B&H stipulates that LSGU have the authority to analyze the state of public order and peace, safety and security of people and property, and to propose measures to the institutions competent for these matters. The security aspect of the organization system is moved to a higher level of governance, i.e., at the entity and state level.

Besides the differences in the matter of territorial organization of both entities, i.e., the existence of two different systems of local governance (Republic of Srpska without the cantons and FB&H with them), by analyzing the aforementioned laws, we can notice that both entities have kept a monotype way of LSGU organization, which was one of the characteristics of the socialist system in the former Yugoslavia. The security aspect of the organization system in both entities is similarly structured, i.e., transferred to a higher level of governance.

Throughout this paper, it will not elaborate theoretical explanations of different legal regulations on the entity level nor the level of the Brčko District of B&H because of the administrative organization B&H with two entities and the Brčko District. The focus is on common jurisdictions of LSGUs in B&H that regulate competencies in the field of safety and security of the local population, such as the legislative process in the field of infrastructure and urban planning of LSGUs, as well as the management of natural resources on the territory of LSGUs.

Analysis of the first aspect of LSGUs responsibilities, relating to infrastructure and urban planning, points out that small number of LSGUs in B&H implements adopted infrastructure and urban plans for their territories. This conclusion was reached based on field research by the author of this paper, who participated in the development and creation of spatial-planning documents in B&H. There are numerous reasons for this situation, with the leading one being the lack of financial resources of LSGUs to invest in infrastructure projects. Traffic infrastructure, like communal, is on a low level of development or is not developed at all and has a negative impact on possibility of engaging protection and rescue services in the events of natural disasters. Likewise, failure to invest in sanction of riverbeds and landslides, as one part of critical infrastructure, has negative consequences for the safety and security of local population and material assets. Uncontrolled and excessive use of natural resources in LSGU also has a negative impact on safety and security of local population. Apart from infrastructural and urban planning disorganization of LSGUs, and excessive exploitation of natural resources, according to the authors' opinion, there is one more factor that negatively impacts safety and security of local population and material assets and that is uninhibitedness of LSGU. According to the official census form 2013. there are 3.531.159 living in B&H (Agency for Statistics of B&H 2021), and that number in 2023. is much smaller - 3.264.873.

Table 1. Population estimates and population density in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Name	Area/ km ²	1991	2013	2023	Population density
Bosnia and Herzegovina	51.222.84	4.377.033	3.531.159	3.264.873	63.74
Federation of B&H	26.110	-	2.360.817	2.150.054	82.35
Republic of Srpska	25.053	-	1.170.342	1.114.819	44.5

Source: Processing by the authors based on the data from Agency for Statistics and Institute for Statistics of RS

Analysis of census and population density is based on the data of Agency for Statistics of B&H as well as B&H census from 2013. In B&H, there are 121 urban settlements with 42.7% and 6.020 rural settlements with 57.3% total population (Agency for Statistics of B&H, 2016). Capital of B&H is Sarajevo with 275.524 inhabitants. In Sarajevo Canton there are 413.593 inhabitants and with, according to official B&H statistics, population density of 325,9 inhabitants/km². Second-biggest city in B&H is Banja Luka with 185.042 inhabitants and population density of 149,4 inhabitants/km². The other most densely populated economic, cultural and industrial centers are: Zenica, Tuzla, Bijeljina, Bihać, Mostar, Doboje, etc. Average population density in B&H is approx. 68,9 inhabitants/km². The population of B&H is unevenly distributed on its territory. The most populated region is Posavina region with approx. 100 to 120 inhabitants/ km², and the least populated regions are West Herzegovina region and Southwest Bosnia region with the population density of approx. 13 to 20 inhabitants/km². City areas are characterized by a high concentration of inhabitants in small areas. A lower concentration of inhabitants is recorded in the hilly-mountainous areas. In mountain depressions and basins of composite valleys, population concentration is increased. This especially applies to the river valley of Bosna, Neretva, Vrbas as well as Sarajevo-Zenica region, Tuzla region and Banja Luka region. Significantly rare population density can be found in East Herzegovina region, Dinaric divide region, West Bosnia region and Sokolac-Glasina highlands. The listed data shows that entities in B&H are becoming increasingly uninhabited; vast areas in B&H are becoming deserted and left to their own devices. Because of this, the governments at both

the entity and state levels should consider new ways to regulate and organize LSGU. Spatial organization directly affects a community's ability to respond to security threats. In urban environments, the presence of well-planned traffic routes, well-lit streets, and the proximity of security facilities enhances the sense of security and shortens the reaction time in crisis situations. According to research by Johnson (2019), cities with centralized spatial organization of security services achieve better results in reaction time, while a decentralized distribution of facilities can be more efficient in areas with a higher number of incidents. This research could serve as one of the guidelines for how the authorities in B&H might initiate changes in legal procedures for the regulation of LSGUs in the near future.

The spatial and functional organization of LSGUs after the last conflict in B&H was carried out based on religious and ethnic characteristics, i.e., the inner-entity line divided 28 of the 109 LSGUs (Popović, 2021). New LSGUs that do not meet even the minimum criteria for functional organization were formed in both entities, which, in essence, represents a huge obstacle considering that the functional organization directly affects the efficient management of security challenges. In practice, this means that coordination between police, fire department units, emergency services, and local government is of fundamental importance for the quick and efficient resolution of incidents. For example, in well-functioning, organized LSGUs, there is a strictly defined chain of command in emergency situations, as well as tested communication channels between different services, which enable quick reactions and lower the possibility of spreading panic among the population (Raaijmakers, 2019). Using the example of developed countries such as Germany and Sweden (Kuipers et al, 2015), the functional organization of local governments includes predefined procedures for dealing with crisis situations. In these countries, local governments have highly functional systems of coordination between different services that enable them to efficiently solve even the most complex situations like natural disasters or terrorist threats (Garcia & Lopez, 2022).

At the local level, security includes numerous activities and policies that are implemented by local authorities with the goal of protecting citizens and assets, as well as preserving public order and peace. The security challenges faced by local communities can vary depending on geographical, political, economic, and social factors. Security can be viewed through different dimensions: physical safety (protection from violence and crime), economic security (protection of economic resources and stability), social security (protection of social rights and services), and cybersecurity (protection of digital data and infrastructure). Within modern states, LSGUs play a key role in maintaining security through prevention and reaction to crises, as these local authorities are often the first responders to such situations, whether they involve everyday incidents like crime and accidents or major emergencies such as natural disasters and terrorist attacks. The ability of local authorities to efficiently manage these challenges depends on their spatial and functional organization, as well as the resources and technologies at their disposal.

According to some research, local communities that successfully integrate preventive measures into their security policies have considerably lower crime rates and higher resilience to major emergencies (Nubani et al, 2023). The spatial distribution of security resources, such as police stations, hospitals, fire department stations, and emergency services, significantly impacts efficiency in responding to crisis situations. This distribution often depends on the characteristics of the area, population density, availability and accessibility of traffic routes, and specific community security needs. Centralized services can be efficient in urban areas where distances are short and a developed supporting infrastructure exists, while decentralized distribution is more suitable for rural or spatially dispersed areas. In rural regions, due to limited access to traffic infrastructure, establishing fire department units and emergency services in strategic locations can significantly reduce response times and save lives (Raaijmakers, 2019). Given its demographic-geographical and economic characteristics, along with demographic decline, B&H entities should, in the upcoming period, consider and initiate procedures to amend current legal norms and regulations to facilitate the decentralization of services focused on protection and rescue. The need for decentralization of services focused on protection and rescue specifically targets rural and sparsely populated areas, which encompass two-thirds of the territory. Analyzing past experiences from developed countries, we can observe that LSGUs that are spatially organized have responded more effectively to security challenges.

On the basis of researched studies and theoretical frameworks, this paper proposes several key recommendations for improving the safety and security of LSGU: Spatial planning improvement: Spatial organization must be adjusted to security needs, which implies planning public spaces, traffic infrastructure, and positioning key facilities in a way that enables rapid response in emergency situations; Technological innovations: Local communities are recommended to invest in technologies like AI, IoT, and smart surveillance systems to enhance crime prevention and crisis management. It is also necessary to develop strategies for privacy protection and cybersecurity; Coordination between services: Key to efficient

security management lies in coordination between different services. It is recommended to strengthen digital platforms for real-time information sharing, as well as to implement regular training and simulation of crisis situations; Decentralization of security structures: Communities with complicated geographical characteristics or with a large surface area should consider decentralizing security services to increase flexibility and adaptability. Decentralization enables local services to respond more effectively to threats and improves security in remote or rural regions; Improving legislative and regulatory frameworks: Each local government unit can have specific legislation and regulations related to security. Coordination with regional and national governments is imperative for effective management of security-related issues; Strengthening resilience to natural disasters: Investing in resilience to natural disasters, through strengthening infrastructure, building early-warning systems, and conducting training for citizens, can significantly reduce the consequences of natural disasters and increase the safety of local communities and The role of community and citizen participation: Active citizen participation in security issues can help improve the efficiency of local security strategies and can be carried out via training and education of citizens in matters related to security procedures and preparation for crisis situations.

In the 21st century, advances in technology have opened up new opportunities for optimizing spatial organization and improving security. Smart cities utilize innovations such as geolocation, surveillance systems, and IoT (Internet of Things) devices to create a secure and functional environment for their citizens.

4. CONCLUSION

The connection between spatial-functional characteristics and security cannot be viewed in isolation. The spatial organization of LSGU shapes how different services within the community function, and functional organization affects these LSGU ability to efficiently utilize spatial resources for security assurance. The results obtained from the analysis indicate the problems and challenges faced by B&H, as well as both of its entities, regarding spatial-functional management and spatial planning from a security perspective.

The spatial organization of local self-government plays a key role in the ability of communities to respond to security threats and challenges. Proper planning of urban and rural areas, allocation of key security resources, and adequate infrastructure for emergency situations contribute to faster and more efficient reactions by security services. These spatial characteristics not only improve operational efficiency but also positively affect the perception of security among citizens, reducing the possibility of crime and enhancing the quality of life in the community. Due to technical and technological developments and the use of advanced technology, such as smart cities and digital platforms, it will further transform the way spatial organization supports local security, creating safer and more resilient communities across the world.

In conclusion, the security of local communities depends on a number of interrelated factors - spatial organization, functional characteristics, use of technology, coordination efficiency, and resilience to security risks. Local self-government plays a key role in shaping the security policies that respond to the specific challenges faced by the community, whether in urban centers or rural areas. The integration of modern technology, the development of flexible management methods, and the improvement of local self-government capacities are the foundations for creating secure and more resilient communities in the future. Uninhabited and uncontrolled areas not only negatively impact demographic growth but also prevent the establishment of spatially functional connections and equitable development in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Abandoned areas are both unprotected and uncontrolled and, therefore, vulnerable.

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