

Analysis of Central Functions Provision in the Settlements of the West Herzegovina Canton

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Abstract

The provision of the settlement with central functions gives stimulation, and creates spatial, and social relations and processes within a certain space and population. This paper analyses the settlements' central function provision in West Herzegovina Canton. The settlement's centrality was determined based on the base groups of central functions: administration, education, health, supply, financial operations, post and telecommunications. After the collected and processed data, the settlements were classified into 4 categories of settlements based on the possession of certain functions; settlements without centrality, settlements with insufficient centrality, and settlements of the 3rd and 2nd rank of centrality. The research was conducted in September 2022 and developed model was applied, which is based on the quantitative procedure of evaluating the settlement's centrality.

Keywords

settlements, central functions, West Herzegovina Canton, polarization

Izveleček

Analiza zagotavljanja centralnih funkcij naselij v Zahodni Hercegovini

Zagotavljanje naselja s centralnimi funkcijami spodbuja in ustvarja prostorske in socialne odnose ter procese v določenem prostoru in populaciji. Članek analizira zagotavljanje centralnih funkcij naselij v Zahodnem hercegovskem kantonu. Centralnost naselja je bila določena na podlagi osnovnih skupin centralnih funkcij: uprava, izobraževanje, zdravstvo, oskrba, finančne storitve, pošta in telekomunikacije. Po zbranih in obdelanih podatkih so bila naselja razvrščena v 4 kategorije naselij glede na prisotnost določenih funkcij; naselja brez centralnosti, naselja z nezadostno centralnostjo ter naselja 3. in 2. reda centralnosti. Raziskava je potekala septembra 2022, uporabljen je bil model, ki temelji na kvantitativnem postopku ocenjevanja centralnosti naselja.

Ključne besede

naselja, centralne funkcije, Zahodna Hercegovina, polarizacija



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1 Introduction

Central functions can be defined as all activities a settlement has for the needs of its own population as well as the surroundings (Malić, 1981; Radeljak Kaufman, 2015). The number and quality of functions for each settlement is determined by the degree of the settlement's centrality (Njegač, 1999). Although central functions dominate in urban areas, their existence represents an extremely important factor in the development and survival of the population in rural areas. The theory of central settlements was first applied by Walter Christaller in 1933. (Laci, 1979). Christaller's theory is based on the fact that each settlement is a joint, which ensures supply and various services for the population of that settlement, as well as the immediate and wider surroundings (King, 1985). Given that the degree of concentration for an individual settlement's functions also determines the socioeconomic level of development, the theory of central settlements has become a common subject of research by human numerous authors (Rogić, 1962; Crkvenčić, 1971; Malić, 1981; Vresk, 1986; Šimunović, 1997; Glamuzina & Glamuzina, 1998; Njegač, 1999; Lukić, 2012; Radeljak Kaufman, 2015; Dragić et. al., 2018; Bećirović & Kudumović Dostović, 2022). According to the basic model, central settlements are determined in such a way that for each level the basic central functions, which settlements have (health, trade, education) are determined. Given that the settlement network is conditioned by natural and socio-economic conditions, that are constantly changing, there is no single and permanent model of organization for central functions in the settlement (Šimunović, 1997).

Crkvenčić (1971) names central settlements as those settlements which have 5 functions; (local office, primary school, clinic or pharmacy, grocery store and post office). Laci (1979) researches the system of central settlements in Međimurje and separates three categories of settlements: settlements without central functions, settlements with a smaller number of central functions, and central settlements. The author determines the centrality of the settlement according to qualitative functional characteristics according to the W.K.D. Davies model. Which is based on the coefficient of the location. Precisely, the centrality of the function of an individual settlement is obtained by multiplying the corresponding coefficient with the number of units of a certain function in the settlement (Laci, 1979). Njegač (1999) analyses the functional differentiation of settlements in Croatian Zagorje. According to the level of equipment, settlements are divided into three groups: settlements without central functions, settlements with partial centrality, and central settlements. Radeljak Kaufmann (2015) analyses the provision of central functions in the settlements of Dalmatia, and in his work analyses six groups of functions: administration, education, health, supply, financial operations, post office and telecommunications. In this work, the author also deals with selected demographic indicators and the altitude of the settlements.

The natural-geographic basis and socioeconomic processes of industrialization and urbanization in the area of West Herzegovina Canton determined the spatial and functional transformation of settlements, and thus the importance of certain central functions. Šimunović (1997) in work Hierarchy of Central Settlements of Western Herzegovina analysed the central functions, and distinguished five categories of settlements: settlements with insufficient centrality and settlements of the 1st, 2nd, 3rd and 4th rank of centrality. The author emphasizes the importance of the natural-geographic basis for the spatial distribution of settlements and population, but also emphasizes the problem of emigration, which are characteristic of the analysed area.

Galić (2015) pointed out the issue of the polarized development of Canton, which greatly influenced the demographic characteristics of the area.

The subject of the research paper is provision of West Herzegovina's Canton settlements with central functions and determination of the settlement's belonging to separate categories. The aim of the work is to point out the necessity of having central functions in the settlements in order to reduce the pronounced polarized development of the Canton.

2 Methodology

The spatial scope of the research area is the West Herzegovina Canton, which is located in the southwest part of Bosnia and Herzegovina (Figure 1). West Herzegovina Canton was founded in 1996 and consists of the towns of Široki Brijeg and Ljubuški and the municipalities of Grude and Posušje. Its area is 1,362.2 km², and according to the last Population Census from 2013, it has 94,898 inhabitants. The municipality of Posušje is the largest by area with 461.1 km², while the city of Široki Brijeg has the largest population (28,929). The average population density of this canton is 69.7 people/km², and the city of Ljubuški is the most densely populated with 94.4 people/km² (Putica Džajić, 2020).

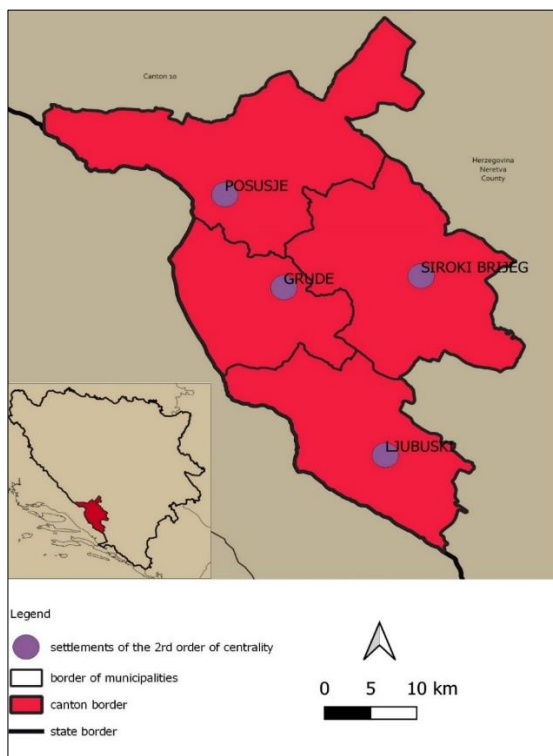


Figure 1: Geographical position of West Herzegovina Canton.
Source: Putica Džajić, 2020.

The model of the author V. Marinković (2018) was used for this research, which is based on the quantitative procedure of evaluating the settlements' centrality. The settlement's centrality is analysed on the basis of 6 functions: administrative, educational, health, supply, financial business and telecommunication functions.

According to available sources (official acts, websites of the Croatian Post, bank websites operating in the territory of West Herzegovina Canton, and store chains websites), locations of educational institutions, shops branches and supermarkets, post offices, health institutions, bank branches and ATMs were analysed so as headquarters of individual ministries within the Canton. After collecting and analysing data on the individual settlements' functions, they are classified into one of the five corresponding categories:

- Settlements without centrality - settlements that don't contain any content of central functions,
- Settlements with insufficient centrality - settlements that contain one or two contents, which are usually a small store,
- Settlements of the 3rd rank - settlements that contain three to four contents; market and/or district school and/or ATM and/or general practitioner,
- Settlements of the 2nd rank - settlements that contain a minimum of 5 contents, 2 contents of a higher rank than the previous category of settlements. For example, if the settlements' category of the 3rd rank contains a district school in the settlements' category of the 2nd rank, the higher hierarchical rank is the primary school; or an ATM/ bank office,
- Settlements of the 1st rank - settlements that contain all six contents of central functions, but at least three contents more compared to the previous category of settlements (Marinković, 2018).

Settlements were also analysed based on the number of settlements in each category and selected demographic data (number of inhabitants, population density, share in the total number of inhabitants of the Canton). A detailed analysis of all settlement categories in Široki Brijeg was also conducted on the basis of the previously mentioned demographic data and the intercensal change D and altitude.

The research was conducted from September 1 to September 20, 2022. The analytical set consists of 102 settlements, with the exception of Bare i Konjsko settlements that had no inhabitants according to the last Population Census from 2013.

3 Results

The research of the settlement's central functions in West Herzegovina Canton was carried out by distributing the contents and ranking the settlements based on certain functions' possessions. Out of 100 analysed settlements, 85 met at least one of the criteria for belonging to a particular category, i.e. the level of provision, while 15 settlements did not meet any of the mentioned criteria. Settlements that don't meet any of the criteria for being provision with certain functions are classified as settlements without centrality. The other 85 settlements are classified according to their existing functions into categories of settlements with insufficient centrality, and centrality of the 3rd, 2nd and 1st rank.

3.1 Distribution of central functions in West Herzegovina Canton

The analysis of settlement provision with central functions' individual content indicated the dominance of contents from the supply category, during which the stability of the convenience store was determined as the lowest rank from the

mentioned category in 60 settlements of the Canton. A detailed supply analysis of these convenience stores was not carried out in this research; however, it is certain that these are stores with basic groceries (flour, oil, milk, salt etc.) for the needs of the local population. The convenience store's organization is particularly important in the hilly and mountainous area of Canton (Gornji Crnač, Gornja Britvica, Gornji Gradac, Izbično, Crne Lokve), with the predominately elderly population, unable to go to a nearby larger rural or urban settlements every day. The existence of convenience stores guarantees the local population a sense of security and at least partially reduces dependence on urban centers (Figure 2). Only four settlements (Grude, Ljubuški, Posušje and Široki Brijeg) have the highest rank in the hypermarket supply category, which speaks of a highly polarized development of the area, with clearly defined poles of development that form the backbone of the economic development of the area.

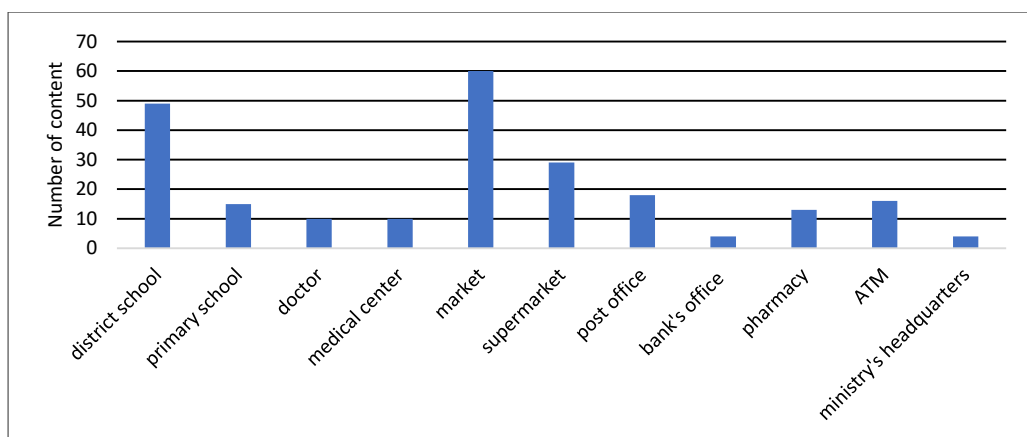


Figure 2: Central functions distribution in West Herzegovina Canton.
Source: Authors' research.

In addition to the supply category, the content from the education's function dominates, according to which 49 villages (57.6%) have a district school, 14 have a primary school (16.5%), while only 4 urban settlements (Grude, Ljubuški, Posušje and Široki Brijeg) have secondary schools. The lack of educational institutions at all levels results in daily circulations as well as permanent migrations in Canton. In addition to negative demographic processes, which result in a decreasing number of students, numerous district schools are closing. The problem of the survival of regional schools is particularly expressed in rural hilly and mountainous settlements (Gornji Crnač, Gornja Britvica, Zagorje, Tribistovo), therefore it is necessary to ensure the functioning and operation of schools regardless of the number of pupils during a certain school year, because they are one of the basic conditions for survival and revitalization of rural settlements. The results of other central functions' contents indicate insufficient content stability of the functions related to health, financial operations, administration and postal communication services. After the categories of supply and education, the most represented contents in Canton are in the category of telecommunications. The layout of post offices depended on the number of inhabitants, population density, area that gravitates towards it, and traffic connections. Postal services should be equally and timely available to everyone, however, with the depopulation of rural areas of Canton since the mid-20th century and the development of modern technologies in recent decades, post offices are losing their importance. The development of technology also influenced the modernization

of post offices, which, in addition to the original services (receiving and sending parcels), also offer numerous other services, such as completing monetary transactions. In Canton, there are 18 (2.1%) post offices, which cannot meet the needs of the local population, and a large percentage of the population is forced to use daily circulation due to the function of communication.

As for the category of financial operations' content, only four settlements have the highest rank of bank headquarters (Grude, Ljubuški, Posušje and Široki Brijeg), while the lowest rank of having an ATM is 16 (18%) settlements. If we analyze the spatial distribution of ATMs, the conclusion is that ATMs are owned by those settlements (Drinovci, Vitina, Ljuti Dolac, Kočerin) that, in addition to ATMs, also have other functions mentioned earlier, such as: primary school, convenience store, post office. These results indicate an insufficient number of contents from the financial business category in a large number of settlements within Canton. The analysis of the health function content showed that four (4.7%) settlements in Canton have a medical center. In addition to medical centers, there are family medicine outpatient clinics in six (7.1%) settlements (Vitina, Uzarići, Kočerin, Sovići, Drinovci and Poklečani). It should be emphasized that family medicine outpatient clinics have shorter working hours, usually only one shift, so the population of the surrounding settlements is forced to travel very often to the cities, i.e., the headquarters of municipalities. When it comes to the results of the administration category content, they are located in 4 cities/municipal settlements (Grude, Ljubuški, Posušje and Široki Brijeg). The Ministry of Health and Social Welfare and the Ministry of Croatian Homeland War Veterans are located in Grude; the Ministry of Internal Affairs and the Ministry of Finance are located in Ljubuški; and the Ministry of the Economy and the Ministry of Spatial Planning, Construction and Environmental Protection and the Ministry of Justice in Posušje; while the Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sports is located in Široki Brijeg and it is the headquarter of the Canton.

Polarized development is a result of industrialization and urbanization as well as the overall economic development of the area. In the middle of the 20th century, the metal processing industry started developing in the area of West Herzegovina County, which was based on the deposits of bauxite ore in western Herzegovina. It all leads to the construction of industrial factories in city/municipal residence, thanks to the mineral wealth: metal industry – Metalac, Feal; motor industry – Famos; textile and shoe industry - Đuro Salaj; linen/weaving mill factory - Viko. Industrial facilities that were newly opened, required a large number of unskilled labours, therefore the population from the surrounding primarily mountain settlements permanently moved to urban and suburban settlements. The urban network created during the industrialization phase in the area of West Herzegovina Canton has not changed significantly even today. Jobs diversification and a greater division of labor have ensured the population concentration in the city/municipal headquarters which are becoming development centers within the canton (Grude, Ljubuški, Posušje and Široki Brijeg), while rural areas are experiencing significant instead depopulation. City/municipal centers in the industrialization phase acquire significant central functions: residential, business, educational, health and service functions. Given that the process of polarization implies the gathering of people and goods in certain points/poles of development, central functions are also concentrated in them, which ensures their faster economic development.

3.2 Settlements of West Herzegovina Canton according to categories of centrality

Out of 100 analysed settlements, 85 of them meet at least one of the criteria for belonging to a particular category. According to their provision to the selected criteria, settlements are categorized into 4 categories: settlements without centrality, settlements with insufficient centrality, and settlements with 3rd and 2nd rank centrality. 15% of settlements belong to the category of settlements without centrality. The largest number of settlements, 62% of them, belong to the category of settlements with insufficient centrality, while 19% of settlements belong to the group of settlements of the 3rd rank of provision (Tab.1). The city/municipal headquarters of the canton are in the category of settlements of the 2nd rank of equipment: Grude, Ljubuški, Posušje and Široki Brijeg. City/municipal headquarters experienced intense development after the emergence of the industry during its peak in the second half of the 20th century. Industry development influenced the permanent relocation of the working population from nearby rural areas, and within Canton, city/municipal headquarters are clearly distinguished as centers of the economy and the population gathering. Considering the functions they perform, it is clear that the four city/municipal headquarters, that is, settlements of the second level of provision, have similar, almost the same functions. Široki Brijeg is the headquarter of the canton, so it stands out as such within the mentioned area. Also, its advantage is proximity to the regional center of Mostar (20 km), which the entire county West Herzegovina gravitates towards, mainly because of the functions of higher education and healthcare. In the territory of Canton, not a single settlement belongs to the 1st rank category of settlements.

Table 1: Provision of the settlement with central functions.

Settlement categories	Settlements
Without centrality	Greda, Lipno, Doci, Gornji Crnač, Gornji Gradac, Podvranić, Predgrađe, Jabuka, Grabova Draga, Potkraj, Podbila, Vučipolje, Puteševica, Kašće, Zavelim
Insufficient centrality	Blaževići, Borjana, Donji Mamići, Dragićina, Drinovačko Brdo, Bijača, Cerno, Crnopod, Crveni Grm, Dole, Grab, Grabovnik, Lisice, Miletina, Mostarska Vrata, Orahovlje, Otok, Proboj, Prolog, Stubica, Studenci, Šipovača, Teskera, Vašarovići, Veljaci, Vojnići, Zvirići, Batin, Broćanac, Gradac, Sutina, Tribištovo, Vinjani, Vir, Vrpolje, Zagorje, Buhovo, Crne Lokve, Čerigaj, Dobrkovići, Donja Britivica, Donji Crnač, Donji Gradac, Dužice, Gornja Britivica, Gornji Mamići, Izbično, Jare, Ljubotići, Potkraj, Privalj, Rasno, Turčinovići, Čitluk, Rastovača, Rujan, Gradska, Grljevići, Osoje, Hardomilje, Hrašljani
3rd rank centrality	Drinovci, Gorica, Ružići, Tihaljina, Radišići, Poklečani, Biograci, Dobrič, Ljuti Dolac, Uzarići, Humac, Knešpolje, Trn, Oklaji, Lise, Radišići, Sovići, Vitina, Kočerin
2nd rank centrality	Grude, Ljubuški, Posušje, Široki Brijeg

Source: Authors' research.

Figure 3 clearly shows that the largest concentration of settlements with central functions is in the central part (the area of the town of Široki Brijeg and the

municipality of Grude) and the southern part of Ljubuški, where the population is actually the largest. It is also important to emphasize that the number of functions in individual settlements decreases with the increase in altitude, so settlements in the northern - mountainous part of Posušje Municipality have the smallest number of central functions. In fact, these are settlements that have almost merged with city/municipal headquarters and their functions attract an increasing number of residents, as well as daily commuters.

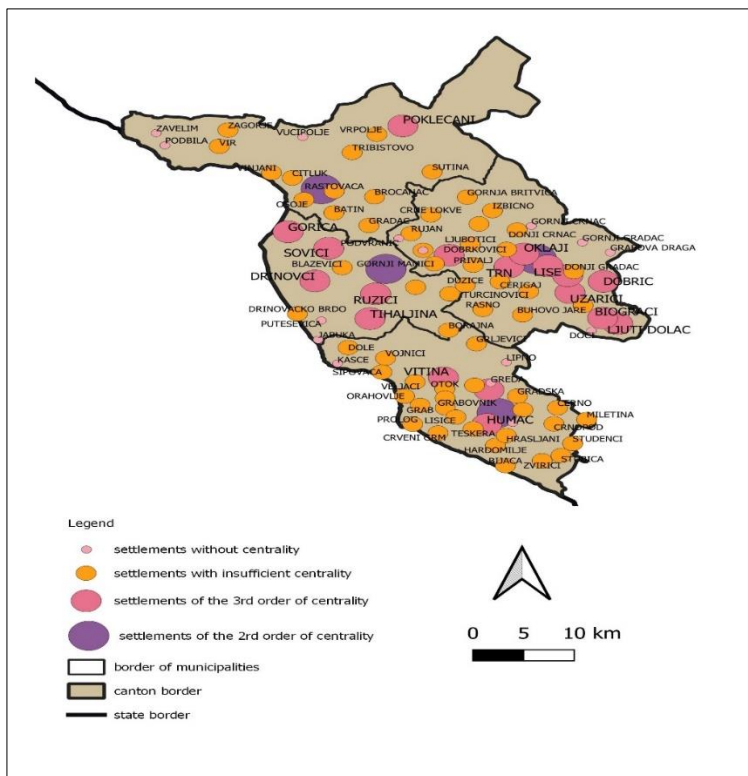


Figure 3: Rank of central functions.
Source: Authors' research.

The largest number of settlements (62) is in the category of settlements with insufficient centrality, where the largest share of residents of West Herzegovina Canton is located (40%) with an average population density of 72.3 people/km². These are the settlements with the highest percentage of daily commuters, whose population is obliged to travel to the nearby municipal/city headquarters every day due to their employment. An additional activity for the population is agricultural production. However, the mentioned additional activity mostly refers to the production of agricultural products mainly for the household's needs. Such data are the result of socio-economic development since the mid-20th century, where polarized development with 4 poles (Grude, Ljubuški, Posušje, Široki Brijeg) is clearly expressed in the area of the Canton.

The smallest number of settlements is in the category of settlements without centrality (15), and there is also the smallest share of inhabitants, 3% in the same category. Also, the category of settlements without centrality is characterized by the

lowest population density with 45 people/km². These are also areas of constant depopulation since the mid-20th century due to the process of industrialization and urbanization. Previously, these settlements (Gornji Crnač, Gornji Gradac, Vučipolje, Podbila) represented the centers of the livestock economy, and due to the aforementioned socio-economic processes, their population moved to lowland areas along the main newly built roads, but also peripheral parts of the city/municipal headquarters (Table 2).

Table 2: The number of settlements and demographic indicators by settlement category in the West Herzegovina Canton.

Settlement categories	Number of settlements	Population	Population density ppl/km²	Percentage of Canton's population
Without centrality	15	3179	45,35	3%
Insufficient centrality	62	38199	72,33	40%
3rd rank centrality	19	30923	174,53	33%
2nd rank centrality	4	22103	1.090	23%

Source: Census of population, households and apartments in BIH 2013, Sarajevo, 2017.

Among individual settlements within the same category, certain differences are clearly expressed, and as an example, we singled out and analysed the settlements of Široki Brijeg (Table 3). In the intercensal period between 1991 to 2013 Široki Brijeg (1387) recorded the largest increase in the number of inhabitants as a settlement of the 2nd rank. In addition to the central settlement, a significant increase in the number of inhabitants was recorded in the observed period by settlements located next to the central settlement, i.e., the so-called suburban settlements of Trn (1271), Oklaji (603), Lise (634), Knešpolje (268), i.e. settlements of the 3rd rank of provision equipment category (Tab. 3). These are settlements that have almost completely merged with the central settlement, and with their functions (residential, educational, service, employment functions) attract an increasing number of daily commuters and residents. The functional development of these settlements is primarily the result of the industrialization process, which enabled employment and the permanent relocation of a large number of the population from the surrounding mountain settlements. In addition to the mentioned suburban settlements in the 3rd rank of provision of the settlements category, the settlements Dobrič and Kočerin, which are located on the main traffic route Posušje-Široki Brijeg-Mostar, and the settlements of Mokro, Uzarići, Biograci, Ljuti Dolac. Negative demographic processes are present in almost all settlement categories without centrality and settlements with insufficient centrality. The process of depopulation is particularly expressed in the hilly and mountainous regions of the county, which were previously the centers of the livestock economy. The population of hilly and mountainous areas is moving to lowland areas along the main newly built roads, but also peripheral parts of city/municipal headquarters.

Table 3: Selected demographic data and altitude by Široki Brijeg settlements according to the central functions provision in 2022.

Settlement category	Population	Population density	Census change	Altitude
Without centrality				
Docí	189	48,46	2	155
Gornji Crnač	190	6,29	-283	660
Gornji Gradac	208	68,83	-131	690
Grabova Draga	46	3,9	-55	680
Podvranić	152	56	-30	430
Potkraj	431	120	52	355
Insufficient centrality				
Buhovo	441	24	-77	395
Crne Lokve	163	7,8	-194	850
Čerigaj	185	34	-216	430
Dobrkovići	569	78	140	460
Donja Britvica	176	22	-116	690
Donji Crnač	577	20	-227	630
Donji Gradac	709	68	-88	301
Dužice	620	54	34	455
Gornja Britivica	80	6	-158	940
Gornji Mamići	1562	63	72	410
Izbično	210	20	-105	770
Jare	797	108	120	265
Ljubotići	800	48	-80	415
Privalj	415	54	56	305
Rasno	658	26	-121	345
Turčinovići	682	70	-9	290
3rd rank centrality				
Biograci	809	80	68	250
Dobrič	658	72	-9	235
Knešpolje	1378	164	268	275
Kočerin	1204	101	61	325
Lise	2040	566	634	308
Ljuti Dolac	1510	86	14	260
Oklaji	1150	310	603	310
Trn	2545	519	1271	278
Uzarići	1400	101	108	270
2nd rank centrality				
Široki Brijeg	6426	74,64	2649	280

Source: Census of population, households and apartments in BIH 2013, Sarajevo, 2017.

In the category of settlements with insufficient centrality, the largest decrease in population in the inter-census period between 1991-2013 was recorded in settlements Donji Crnač (-227), Čerigaj (-216), Donja Britvica (-158), Izbično (-105), Rasno (-121), while in the same category of settlements, the largest increase in population in the observed period was recorded in settlements Dobrkovići (140), Jare (120) and Gornji Mamići (72). In the observed period, in the category of settlements without centrality, only two settlements Potkraj (52) and Doci (2) recorded a positive change, while other settlements Gornji Crnač (-283), Gornji Gradac (-131), Grabova Draga (-55), Podvranić (-30) recorded a decrease in the number of inhabitants. A very important factor in spatial distribution is the terrain, which is also shown by the average altitude of individual categories, where the average altitude of the categories of settlements without centrality and settlements with insufficient centrality is 495 meters, while the average settlements' altitude of the 3rd and 2nd rank of provision is 270 meters (Figure 4). With the increase in altitude within the Canton, the number of central functions has decreased, due to unfavourable climate conditions, the cessation of cattle breeding, and poor transport infrastructure.

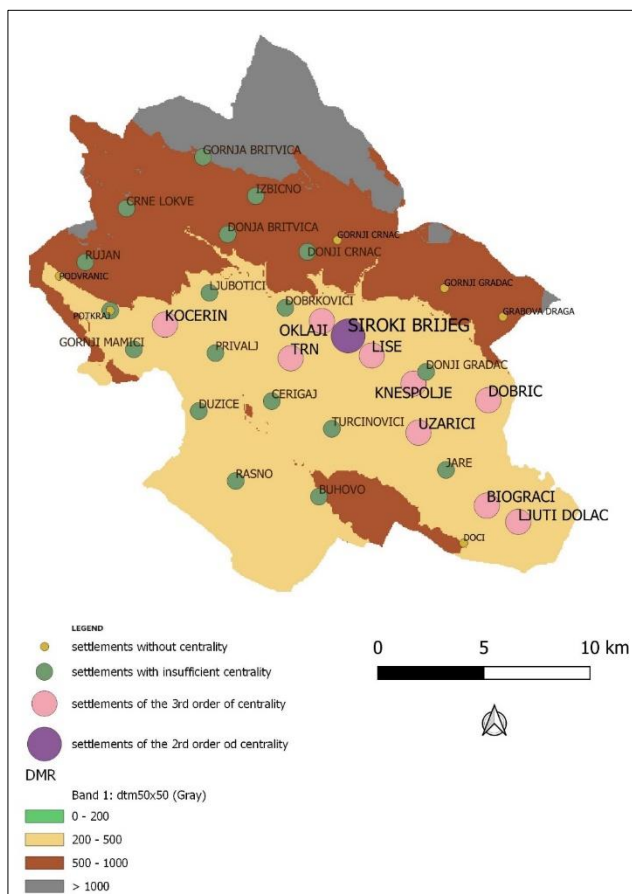


Figure 4: Settlements of Široki Brijeg by altitude and central functions provision. Source: Census of population, households and apartments in BIH 2013, Sarajevo, 2017.

4 Conclusion

The analysis of the settlements' central functions provision within the West Herzegovina Canton indicated a pronounced polarized economic development in which the holders of central functions are the city/municipal headquarters of Grude, Ljubuški, Posušje and Široki Brijeg. The uneven distribution of central functions is the result of economic development after the mid-20th century, as a result of which significant permanent population migrations were recorded, especially from the hilly and mountainous areas to suburban and urban/municipal settlements. Due to the permanent relocation, some settlements (Gornji Crnač, Grabova Draga, Kašće, Jabuka, Lipno, Podvranić) remain without a population, but consequently also without some central functions. Demographic analysis on the example of Široki Brijeg Municipality showed positive demographic indicators recorded by settlements of the 3rd and 2nd rank provision with central functions, while settlements with insufficient centrality and settlements without centrality (with the exception of certain settlements) have negative demographic indicators. These results point to the necessity of planning and strengthening individual centers in the settlement system of West Herzegovina Canton, with the exception of suburban and municipal/city headquarters.

Changes in the central functions of settlements are closely related to spatial specificities and functional differences, and they can only be acted upon by an effective local, regional and national sustainable socio-economic policy. The scientific contribution of the work is the analysis of the existing central functions of the settlement, which can be used in some future research as a basis for showing the comprehensive relationship between human activities and spatial specificities in the region of West Herzegovina Canton, with the aim of determining the reference value of the optimization for the settlement' spatial layout.

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Povzetek

Predmet raziskovalnega članka je zagotavljanje naselij Zahodnega Hercegovskega kantona s centralnimi funkcijami in določitev pripadnosti naselja posameznim kategorijam. Cilj dela je poudariti nujnost centralnih funkcij v naseljih, da bi zmanjšali izrazito polariziran razvoj kantona.

Za to raziskavo je bil uporabljen model avtorja Marinkovića V. (2018), ki temelji na kvantitativnem postopku ocenjevanja centralnosti naselij. Centralnost naselja je analizirana na podlagi 6 funkcij: upravne, izobraževalne, zdravstvene, oskrbne, finančno-poslovne in telekomunikacijske funkcije. Naselja so bila analizirana tudi glede na število naselij v vsaki kategoriji in izbrane demografske podatke (število prebivalcev, gostota prebivalstva, delež v skupnem številu prebivalcev kantona). Podrobna analiza vseh kategorij naselij v Širokem Brijegu je bila izvedena tudi na podlagi prej omenjenih demografskih podatkov ter spremembe med popisi prebivalstva in nadmorske višine.

Raziskava je potekala od 1. do 20. septembra 2022. Analitični nabor vključuje 102 naselij, razen naselij Bare in Konjsko, ki po zadnjem popisu prebivalstva iz leta 2013 nista imela prebivalcev.

Analiza zagotavljanja centralnih funkcij naselij v Zahodnohercegovskem kantonu je pokazala izrazito polariziran gospodarski razvoj, pri čemer so nosilci centralnih funkcij mestna/upravna središča Gruda, Ljubuški, Posušje in Široki Brijeg. Neenakomerna distribucija centralnih funkcij je posledica gospodarskega razvoja po sredini 20. stoletja, zaradi česar so bile zabeležene pomembne trajne migracije prebivalstva, še posebej iz hribovitih in gorskih območij v primestna in urbana/mestna naselja.

Demografska analiza na primeru Občine Široki Brijeg je pokazala pozitivne demografske kazalnike, zabeležene pri naseljih 3. in 2. ranga z zagotovljenimi centralnimi funkcijami, medtem ko naselja z nezadostno centralnostjo in naselja brez centralnosti (z izjemo določenih naselij) kažejo negativne demografske kazalnike. Ti rezultati kažejo na potrebo po načrtovanju in krepitvi posameznih središč v naseljnem sistemu Zahodnohercegovskega kantona, z izjemo primestnih in mestnih/upravnih središč.

Spremembe v centralnih funkcijah naselij so tesno povezane s prostorskimi specifičnostmi in funkcionalnimi razlikami ter jih lahko učinkovito obravnavamo le s trajnostno lokalno, regionalno in nacionalno socioekonomsko politiko.