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URBAN PLANNING AND THE URBANISATION PROCESS IN SERBIA IN THE EARLY 1950s

Abstract: After suffering extensive damage caused by the Second World War, Serbia went through a reconstruction period. Between 1944 and the mid-1950s, the government prioritised economic growth and worked on rebuilding and modernising the infrastructure, urban structures, and systems. Urban planning was seen as crucial in creating the conditions for state development. Societal and five-year plans, supported by urban plans, enabled accelerated economic progress and growth. The urban planning profession was institutionalised, with planning theory and practice introduced alongside social, economic, and political changes. Through an examination of the activities of the Urban Planning Institute of the People's Republic of Serbia, established in 1946, this paper rethinks the link between urban planning and the social aspect of the planned economy in response to the rapid urbanisation and industrialisation of cities.

Keywords: urban planning, urbanisation, economic plan, socialism, decentralisation, Serbia.

Urban planning has been a practice of fundamental relevance since the emergence of the first cities.¹ However, the urban planning profession was established in the 19th century, and it focused on creating regulatory plans for individual cities.² It was not until the turn of the 20th century that it became regulated at the national level. In this early stage, the development of urban planning was strongly influenced by doctrines

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¹ Spiro Kostoff, *The City Shaped: Urban Patterns and Meanings Through History*, London 1991, 43–51.

² Thomas Hall, *Planning Europe's Capital Cities: Aspects of Nineteenth-Century Urban Development*, London and New York 1997, 155.

introduced by influential urban planners of the time. In 1910, “the science and theory of human settlements”, known as urbanism, was defined.³ Serbia’s process of creating and developing urban planning followed these same patterns.⁴

Radical changes in social relations, the economic and political system in Yugoslavia, and thus in Serbia, in the first years after the Second World War, set new tasks and goals for architecture and urban planning. The state set two major historical tasks before professionals: the reconstruction of cities and the construction of the environment for a new society⁵. The former goal, the reconstruction, was necessary to mitigate the devastating effects of the war. Serbia’s economy was in shambles, and its infrastructure, roads, buildings, and settlement systems were destroyed. To address this, it was necessary to “build a new life in a new community” to move forward, as the urban planners Jozef Kortus and Dragoljub Momčilović put it⁶. The latter task, i.e. the creation of the “material framework of life” for the new society, stemmed from the process of urbanisation and deagrarianisation that began immediately after the war.⁷

In the interwar period, the urban population was moderately growing throughout Serbia, except for Belgrade: in 1921, it accounted for 19% and there was an average annual increase of 2.2%. In 1948, the urban population in Serbia accounted for about 21%.⁸ A more intensive process of urbanisation occurred at the turn of the 1940s and the 1950s, when the annual population growth rate reached 7%⁹, after which “industrialisation caused a significant influx of population into cities”¹⁰. In Serbia, as in many other countries, urbanisation progressed alongside industrialisation, contributing to the growth of the urban population. However, this rapid increase in population highlighted the inadequacy of the physical framework in Serbian cities, resulting in a growing discrepancy between the

³ Françoise Schoe, *Urbanism, Utopia and Reality*, Belgrade 1978, 2.

⁴ Branko Maksimović, *Urbanizam u Srbiji: osnivanje i rekonstrukcija varoši u Srbiji u 19. veku* [*Urbanism in Serbia: establishment and reconstruction of towns in Serbia in the 19th century*], Belgrade 1962; Vladimir Macura, *Urbano planiranje u Srbiji 19. i 20. veka* [*Urban planning in Serbia in the 19th and 20th centuries*], Belgrade 1983.

⁵ Aleksandar Kadijević, “Leskovac u urbanističkom izveštaju arhitekta Ratomira Bogojevića iz 1953. godine” [Leskovac in the urban planning report of the architect Ratomir Bogojević from 1953], *Leskovački zbornik* 39 (1999) 209.

⁶ Jozef Kortus and Dragoljub Momčilović, “Današnji problemi urbanizma u Srbiji” [Today’s problems of urbanism in Serbia], in: *Gradovi i naselja u Srbiji. Razvoj, urbanistički planovi i izgradnja 1946–1953* [*Cities and settlements in Serbia. Development, urban plans and construction 1946–1953*], ed. Mihajlo Mitrović, Belgrade 1953, 11.

⁷ V. Macura, *Urbano planiranje u Srbiji* [*Urban planning in Serbia*], 108.

⁸ Branka Tošić, “Proces urbanizacije u Srbiji u periodu posle Drugog svetskog rata” [Process of urbanisation in Serbia in the period after the Second World War], *Zbornik radova Geografskog instituta “Jovan Cvijić” SANU* 47–48 (1998) 148.

⁹ J. Kortus and D. Momčilović, “Današnji problemi urbanizma u Srbiji” [Today’s problems of urbanism in Serbia], 14.

¹⁰ V. Macura, *Urbano planiranje u Srbiji* [*Urban planning in Serbia*], 108.

needs of the people and the available resources¹¹. Urban planners believed that such problems required a “completely new [...] solution method”.¹²

The link between urban planning and the economic plan

The broader framework of the newly established urban practice arose from the social concept of a planned economy and the connection of economic and urban (regulatory) plans. Proper urban planning could bring numerous benefits to a city's economy, including an improved infrastructure, better job opportunities, overall economic growth and prosperity for the entire community. The urban planner Branko Maksimović, one of the prominent actors at that time, wrote in 1948: “The planned industrialisation and electrification of the country appear as the main lever and the main force for achieving the primary tasks of the five-year plan.”¹³ The third key aspect was the post-war reconstruction, and the national economy was seen as “the basis for urban development.”¹⁴ The architect Nikola Dobrović, one of the most influential professional and political protagonists at the time, emphasised that urbanism, as a unique artistic and technical discipline, was assigned crucial and multiple roles in the major “enterprises aimed at electrifying and industrialising the country.”¹⁵ Along the same lines, Dobrović developed the idea of a specific Yugoslav socialist urbanism and defined the place for its technical and artistic aspects in the process of creating new social, political and cultural patterns.¹⁶ In this light, Dobrović makes a direct connection between urbanism, the development of the national economy and the construction of the socialist society of the new Yugoslavia.

The first Five-Year Plan (1947–1951), which aimed to promote the development of the state and ensure the influx of funds into the state budget to make it possible to fund future projects, provided for the reconstruction, development and planning of the 20 largest cities in the country “in the spirit of modern urbanism and in line with the economic, communal and cultural needs of the socialist society”.¹⁷ The 1949 federal Basic Decree on General Urban Plan was passed,¹⁸ confirming the connection

¹¹ Ibidem.

¹² J. Kortus and D. Momčilović, “Današnji problemi urbanizma u Srbiji” [Today's problems of urbanism in Serbia], 13.

¹³ Branko Maksimović, *Razvoj gradograditeljstva: od starog veka do sadašnjosti* [Development of town planning: from the old century to the present], Belgrade 1948, 239.

¹⁴ V. Macura, *Urbano planiranje u Srbiji* [Urban planning in Serbia], 107.

¹⁵ Nikola Dobrović, *Urbanizam kroz vekove 1, Jugoslavija* [Urbanism through the centuries 1, Yugoslavia], Belgrade 1950, 62.

¹⁶ Ibidem, 61–63.

¹⁷ Ibidem, 61.

¹⁸ *Official Gazette of FPRY*, no. 78/49 of 14.09.1949. Reprint published in: Vesna Cagić-Milošević and Verica Međo, *Zakoni za arhitekturu i urbanizam u Srbiji od 1945 do 2012* [Laws for Architecture and Urbanism in Serbia from 1945 to 2012], Belgrade 2014, 100–101.

between urban planning and economic development. Already in its first article, it is stated that a general urban plan should direct the development of the city “taking into account the provisions set out in the economic plan, as well as the assumed development of productive forces in general”, while directing the process of urbanisation and improving the social life of the city.¹⁹ The Decree was the main legislative framework for urban planning in the following decade.²⁰



Figure 1. Comparative view of the existing and planned appearance of Novi Sad. The author of the plan is the architect Dimitrije Marinković. Source: Mitrović, editor, 1953, 71.

Institutional establishment of urban planning and the Urban Planning Institute of Serbia

The new socialist governance required a new organisation of professional activities. The period following the war witnessed a wider institutionalisation of the urban planning profession, practice and theory in Serbia. According to the urban

¹⁹ V. Cagić-Milošević and V. Međo, *Zakoni [Laws]*, 100.

²⁰ V. Macura, *Urbano planiranje u Srbiji* [Urban planning in Serbia], 108.

planner Vladimir Macura: "It all started in 1945. That year, a unified front of engineers and technicians was formed,"²¹ including urban planners, who were not numerous at the time. The Anti-Fascist Assembly of the People's Liberation of Serbia organised a series of practical and theoretical trainings. One of the major events important for the establishment of the urban planning profession and the education of urban planners was the three-month Course for the restoration and urban development of settlements, which was also organised in 1945 by the Anti-Fascist Assembly. In January 1946, the Urban Planning Institute was established under the Ministry of Construction of the People's Republic of Serbia. By the decree of the Government of the People's Republic of Serbia from the same year, the task and functions of the Urban Planning Institute were defined – in the words of Nikola Dobrović, who was also the first director of the Institute, this implied "fostering the theory and practice of urban planning".²² Already in the following year, 1947, the Institute was transformed and it changed its name to the Urban Office at the Planning Commission of the People's Republic of Serbia.²³

The Tito-Stalin rift of 1948 had a profound impact on the socio-political system of Yugoslavia, leading to the development of a unique form of Yugoslav socialism that differed significantly from the Soviet model, with workers' self-management as a distinguishing feature. At the time of intense social events, even the formation of urban planning institutions could not have had a peaceful course. In the same year, 1948, the Urban Planning Institute of the Executive Committee of the People's Committee (IONO) of Belgrade was separated from the Urban Planning Institute of Serbia, whose main task was the preparation of a new General Plan for the capital city.²⁴ Then in 1950, a separate Urban Planning Institute of the Autonomous Province of Vojvodina was formed. Three years later, in 1953, as part of a wide-scale decentralisation and the introduction of self-management, the Urban Planning Institute of Serbia, as a central planning institution, was closed down, and the work of urban planning passed into the hands of newly founded architectural and urban planning studios. However, contrary to expectations, urban planning activities were not transferred to municipalities throughout Serbia, but the primacy of Belgrade was maintained, and the leading architectural and urban planning offices, among which planning tasks were divided, operated from the capital city. The true decentralisation and localisation of urban planning in Serbia began only a decade later, when the Niš Urban Planning Institute was formed (1963), which, as Macura notes, "really transferred planning activities to the jurisdiction of the municipality."²⁵ Already in the following two years, until 1965, the number of urban planning institutes in Serbia rose to twenty-two.

²¹ Ibidem, 107.

²² N. Dobrović, *Urbanizam kroz vekove [Urbanism through the centuries]*, n.p.

²³ V. Macura, *Urbano planiranje u Srbiji [Urban planning in Serbia]*, 108.

²⁴ Miloš Somborski, "Problemi urbanističkog planiranja Beograda" [Problems of urban planning of Belgrade], in: *Beograd. Generalni urbanistički plan 1950 [Belgrade. General urban plan 1950]*, Belgrade 1951, 5.

²⁵ V. Macura, *Urbano planiranje u Srbiji [Urban planning in Serbia]*, 108.

The subject of planning and urban plans

Intensive development at the national level, industrialisation and subsequent urbanisation, i.e. the influx of population into cities, resulted in growing demand for apartments and industrial areas. This posed great challenges to urban planning. The work of the Urban Planning Office (Institute) of Serbia provides an opportunity to analyse the role of urban planning in establishing new spatial and social relations in the new socialist state. The work of the Urban Planning Institute included a wide range of activities related to the development of regulatory plans, urban projects and studies. The Institute operated on a commercial basis and it initially received orders for the development of regulatory plans directly from people's committees, which were, in a way, the equivalent of today's local self-government units. Between its establishment in 1946 and 1953, when the decentralisation of architectural and urban planning institutions began, numerous plans for cities and settlements in Serbia were designed in the Urban Planning Institute.

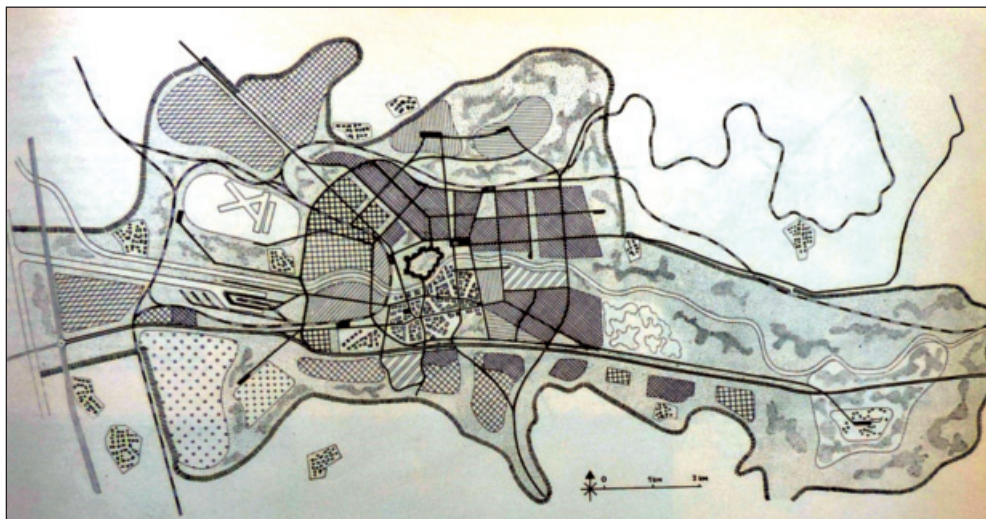


Figure 2. A regulatory sketch of the city of Niš made around 1949 at the Urban Planning Institute. Author: architect Jozef Kortus, collaborators: architects Mihajlo Mitrović and Dobrivoje Barlovac. Source: Mitrović, editor, 1953, 183.

In the early years of the Institute's operation, a significant part of its tasks were associated with Belgrade, including the preparation of studies on traffic and regional problems, or the projects for the reconstruction of several spatial units within the old

urban core. In many cases, the author of these projects was the director of the Institute, Nikola Dobrović. Several preliminary programme solutions and conceptual plans for the construction of New Belgrade – a new city and a symbol of the new country – were developed at the Institute.²⁶ After the mentioned separation of the Urban Planning Institute of Belgrade, the activities of the Institute remained focused on other cities in Serbia.

During the seven years of its existence, the Institute developed general and regulatory plans for 22 cities in Serbia, including Leskovac, Kraljevo, Čačak, Titovo Užice (today Užice), Negotin, Kragujevac, Niš, Novi Sad, Subotica, Svetozarevo (today Jagodina), Šabac, and others. In addition, 25 plans for mining, industrial, spa and other smaller settlements, such as Aleksinac, Bor, Majdanpek, were designed.

The character and content of these plans are vividly evidenced by the book published by the Urban Planning Office (Institute) entitled *Cities and Settlements of Serbia. Development, Urban Plans and Construction 1946–1953*.²⁷ The plans were primarily focused on planning industrial zones, creating new residential areas, improving traffic organisation, and enhancing the quality of urban infrastructure. The restoration of buildings, green spaces, and the preservation of architectural heritage elements also received significant attention.

The reports presented in the publication *Cities and Settlements of Serbia* also offer a good insight into the characteristics of the new approach in urban planning in the unique socio-political circumstances of socialist Serbia. In the first place, the position of urban planning in the context of planned economy was defined and the role of urban planning in planned development was determined. The urban planners wrote: “We are decidedly against reducing the tasks of urban planning to urban space design and the embellishment of streets, squares and piazzas.”²⁸ From a predominantly artistic activity, urban planning should develop into a discipline tasked with the “planned distribution and development of productive forces.”²⁹ All urban plans for cities, settlements or territories developed in the Urban Planning Office (Institute) were an integral part of the economic plan and the “method to implement it”, to cite the words of Kortus and Momčilović.³⁰ The practice of urban planning was employed to achieve the goals of the Five-Year Plan, which envisaged the planned reorganisation of the largest cities in the country in the spirit of modern urbanism, plans that would be, as Dobrović put it, “in the closest harmony with the economic, communal and

²⁶ Zlata Vuksanović-Macura, “New Belgrade: From a Socialist Ideal to a Fragmented Space of a Fashionable Architecture”, in: *Post-Utopian Space: Transforming and Re-Evaluating Urban Icons of Socialist Modernism*, eds. V. Mihaylov and M. Ilchenko, London and New York, 164.

²⁷ Mihajilo Mitrović (ed.), *Gradovi i naselja u Srbiji. Razvoj, urbanistički planovi i izgradnja 1946–1953* [*Cities and settlements in Serbia. Development, urban plans and construction 1946–1953*], Belgrade 1953.

²⁸ J. Kortus and D. Momčilović, “Današnji problemi urbanizma u Srbiji” [Today’s problems of urbanism in Serbia], 12.

²⁹ Ibidem, 19.

³⁰ Ibidem, 12.

cultural needs of society”,³¹ which is at the same time “an epochal phenomenon” because urban planning no longer serves to the “privileged private sector” but to man and the community.

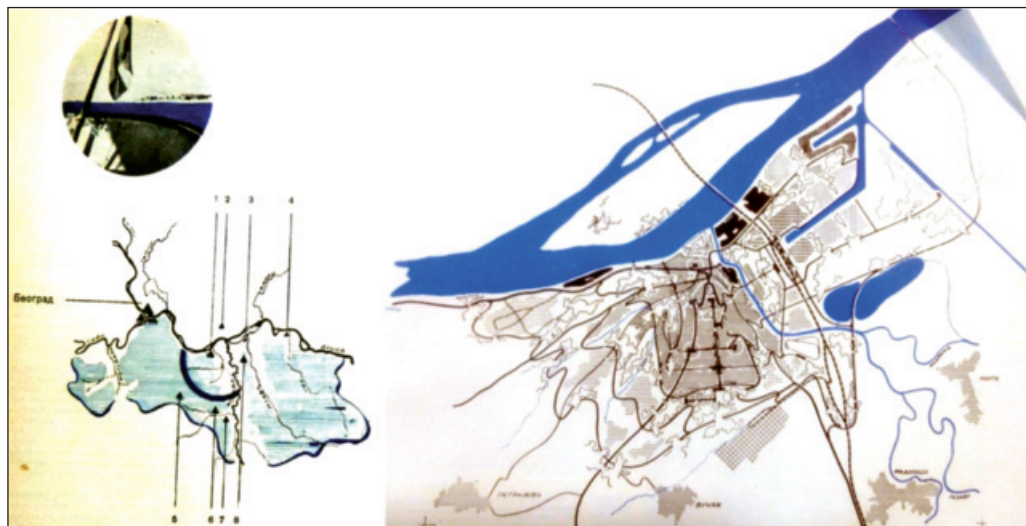


Figure 3. Smederevo, gravity zones (left) and a regulation sketch (right).
Author: architect Milorad Macura. Source: Mitrović, editor, 1953, 1 92, 201.

The need for innovative planning methods led to their introduction. One of the main innovations was connecting urban planning as a practical discipline with urban theory. Experts also believed that the development of plans should start from the existing situation, that it should contain elements of spatial design to create a “unique character of each city”, but also that it must rely on statistical data, as well as on research and a comprehensive analysis of conditions and possibilities for development. In this regard, the need to introduce a regional approach to planning was emphasised, where cities and settlements were not viewed in isolation but as parts of a region and a settlement system. Regional analyses were made where the influence of broader gravity zones on the city and *vice versa* – the impact of the city on its region – were examined. In this way, regional and national (state) spatial plans were gradually introduced into the planning practice. Moreover, those regional and state national plans should have been directly related to the economic agenda.

³¹ N. Dobrović, *Urbanizam kroz vekove [Urbanism through the centuries]*, 62.

Concluding remarks

The early goals of industrialisation, electrification and urbanisation set by the new Yugoslavia after the end of the Second World War transformed the state, economic and social order and contributed to its intensive development, and all that concerned Serbia. Urban planning was developing in close connection with the newly established socialist ideology. From the very beginning, it was seen as crucial in creating the conditions for national development, and societal and five-year plans, supported by urban plans, enabled accelerated economic progress and growth.

Viewed on a broader level, the elements that marked urbanism in Serbia in the years immediately following the Second World War opened the door for the introduction of comprehensive planning into the urban discourse of Serbia. This approach to urban planning was typical of European modernism of the period. Also, the unification of development programme settings (the economic plan and the Five-Year Plan) and urban plans of a city or wider territory were the forerunners of the practice that would become common in Europe and all over the world a few decades later.

Злата Вуксанович-Мацура

**УРБАНИСТИЧНОЕ ПЛАНИРОВАНИЕ И ПРОЦЕСС УРБАНИЗАЦИИ
В СЕРБИИ В НАЧАЛЕ 1950-х ГОДОВ.**

Резюме

Период восстановления городов в Сербии после больших разрушений во Второй мировой войне начинается уже в 1944 году и длится до переломных пятидесятых годов. Это период восстановления экономики, а также физической реконструкции и восстановления строительного фонда, городских структур и систем. В первые послевоенные годы в Сербии произошла институционализация градостроительной практики и теории планирования города, которая развивалась переплетено с турбулентными изменениями социальной, экономической и политической системы. Анализируя деятельность новообразованного Урбанистического института Народной Республики Сербии, основанного в 1946 году, в работе показана связь городской практики с социальным аспектом плановой экономики в ответ на интенсивную урбанизацию и индустриализацию городов.

Городское планирование в Сербии развивалось в тесной связи с вновь установленной социалистической идеологией. Первый Пятилетний план (1947–1951), который имел целью стимулирование государственного развития и обеспечение поступления средств в государственный бюджет для финансирования будущих проектов, предусматривал восстановление, развитие и плановое переустройство двадцати крупнейших городов в стране “в духе современного урбанизма и в соответствии с экономическими, коммунальными и культурными потребностями социалистического общества”. В 1949 году было принято федеральное Основное положение о генеральном урбанистическом плане, которое подтверждало связь урбанизма и экономического развития. Это положение стало основным законодательным каркасом планирования городов в следующем десятилетии.

Деятельность вновь созданного Урбанистического института (завода) Сербии включала широкий спектр работ по разработке регуляционных планов, городских проектов и исследований. С момента основания, в 1946 году, до 1953 года, когда началась децентрализация архитектурно-градостроительных учреждений, в Урбанистическом институте были разработаны многочисленные планы городов и поселений в Сербии. Приоритетные темы, затронутые планами, касались восстановления строительного фонда, размещения промышленных зон, формирования новых жилых поселений, реорганизации транспорта, повышения качества городской инфраструктуры. Городское планирование рассматривалось как ключевой элемент создания условий для государственного развития, а социальные и пятилетние планы, при поддержке урбанистических планов, позволяли ускоренное экономическое развитие и рост.

Элементы, характеризующие урбанизм в Сербии в годы непосредственно после завершения Второй мировой войны, открыли двери для внедрения всеобъемлющего планирования в урбанистический дискурс Сербии, что было подходом к планированию города, свойственным европейскому модернизму того времени. Объединение программных установок развития (экономического плана и Пятилетнего плана) и урбанистических, пространственных планов какого-либо города или более широкой территории были предтечей практики, которая войдет на планерную сцену, европейскую и мировую, несколько десятилетий спустя.

Злата Вуксановић-Мацура

**УРБАНИСТИЧКО ПЛАНИРАЊЕ И ПРОЦЕС УРБАНИЗАЦИЈЕ
У СРБИЈИ РАНИХ 1950-ИХ ГОДИНА**

Резиме

Период обнове градова у Србији након великих разарања у Другом светском рату наступа већ 1944. године и траје до преломних педесетих година. То је период обнове привреде, као и физичке реконструкције и обнове градитељског фонда, урбаних структура и система. У првим послератним годинама у Србији је дошло до институционализације урбанистичке струке и праксе и теорије планирања града, која се одвијала испреплетано са турбулентним променама друштвеног, економског и политичког система. Анализирајући деловање новоформираног Урбанистичког института Народне Републике Србије, основаног 1946. године, у раду је приказана повезаност урбанистичке праксе са друштвеним аспектом планске привреде као одговор на интензивну урбанизацију и индустријализацију градова.

Урбанистичко планирање у Србији развијало се у тесној вези са новоуспостављеном социјалистичком идеологијом. Први Петогодишњи план (1947–1951), који је имао за циљ подстицање државног развоја и обезбеђивање прилива средстава у државни буџет ради финансирања будућих пројеката, предвиђао је обнову, развој и планско преуређење двадесет највећих градова у земљи „у духу савременог урбанизма и у складу са привредним, комуналним и културним потребама социјалистичког друштва“. Године 1949, донета је савезна Основна уредба о генералном урбанистичком плану која потврђује везу урбанизма и привредног развоја. Ова уредба била је у наредној деценији основни легислативни оквир планирања градова.

Делатност новоформираног Урбанистичког института (завода) Србије обухватала је широк спектар послова на изради регулационих планова, урбанистичких пројеката и студија. Од оснивања 1946, до 1953. године, када почиње децентрализација архитектонско-урбанистичких установа, у Урбанистичком институту израђени су бројни планови градова и насеља у Србији. Приоритетне теме којима су се бавили планови тичале су се реконструкције грађевинског фонда, размештаја привредних (индустријских) зона, формирања нових стамбених насеља, реорганизације саобраћаја, повећања квалитета градске инфраструктуре. Урбанистичко планирање је било виђено као кључно у стварању услова за државни развој, а друштвени и петогодишњи планови су, уз подршку урбанистичких планова, омогућавали убрзан привредни напредак и раст.

Елементи који су карактерисали урбанизам у Србији у годинама непосредно по завршетку Другог светског рата, отворили су врата за увођење свеобухватног планирања у урбанистички дискурс Србије, што је био приступ у планирању града својствен европском модернизму тог доба. Обједињавање програмских поставки развоја (што су били привреди план и Петогодишњи план) и урбанистичких, просторних планова неког града или шире територије, били су претеча праксе која ће на планерску сцену, европску и светску, ступити неколико деценија касније.