

## Landscape Transformation in South-Central Bulgaria (2000–2018)

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### Abstract:

This study examines land use changes in Bulgaria’s South-Central Planning Region from 2000 to 2018, a period marked by post-socialist economic transition and land restitution. The objective was to quantify spatial transformations and identify key environmental and socio-economic trends. CORINE Land Cover data from the European Environment Agency were analyzed at six-year intervals using GIS and statistical methods. Results show a steady decline in mature forest areas, particularly coniferous and broad-leaved types, coupled with an expansion of transitional woodland-shrub formations, reflecting ongoing cycles of deforestation and regeneration. Agricultural land displayed mixed dynamics, with shrinking pastures but expanding vineyards and fluctuating arable areas. Urban and industrial land increased continuously, driven by infrastructure and development pressures. The findings demonstrate how economic restructuring and natural processes have jointly reshaped the regional landscape. This evidence provides valuable guidance for sustainable land management and regional planning in post-transition Bulgaria.

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