



SPATIAL AND REGIONAL PLANNING

Lecture 7. Principles of spatial planning

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Globalization, sustainable development, European integration, market economy reforms and demographic changes have a significant impact on European countries.

Spatial planning is a way of responding to these challenges.

Spatial planning can contribute to: achieving more efficient development patterns, initiation of urban regeneration, promotion of community participation and involvement, provision of public facilities such as water and sanitation, and improvement of transport system.

Spatial planning should have clearly defined principles, responsibilities, procedures, instruments and a set of overarching objectives.

There exists no perfect spatial planning model. There are, however, some common basic principles that underlie the detailed legal framework and spatial planning policy.

Scope of spatial planning is defined by the following key principles:

- the democratic principle
- the subsidiarity principle
- the participation principle
- the integration principle
- the proportionality principle
- the precautionary principle

The democratic principle

- The democratic character of spatial planning depends to a large extent on the form of the government in which it is embedded. Good government means good planning quality.
- Spatial planning is a centrally important function of a government that directly affects lives of inhabitants of a country. It is important that planning decisions are made legally by bodies that are responsible through democratic processes.
- In most countries, this means that decisions are formally taken by selected politicians at various levels, taking into account the recommendations of relevant experts.
- Their decisions should be taken consistently through procedures established by law that ensure integrity and respect for human rights. The judiciary ensures that law has been respected in the decision-making process.

The subsidiarity principle

- In some cases, the decision-making process should be based on local requirements. The principle of subsidiarity, however, recognizes that it may be necessary to make decisions at a higher level, because some problems or objectives cannot be properly addressed at a local level. For example, this approach should be adopted in case of decisions related to significant improvements in transport infrastructure. It can also be argued if there are any net benefits when decisions are taken at a higher level.
- In cases where planning decisions in a region, a city or a municipality can impact functioning of other regions, cities and municipalities, it is justified to transfer some parts of the decision-making process to the higher decision level covering a larger area in order to avoid inconsistency in spatial development strategies.
- In this principle, any rigid allocation of competences should be avoided. In practice, the term interconnectedness of decisions means that some competences will inevitably be shared between administrations and/or various levels of government.

The participation principle

- Spatial planning decisions have a broad and direct impact and thus opportunities to participate in these decisions should go beyond the normal democratic process.
- Effective methods of engaging communities in planning processes can improve legitimacy of policy and improve decision-making process, creating sense of local ownership and ensuring that the rights of citizens and property owners are taken into account.
- The decision-making process should be transparent so that all citizens are made aware of the reasoning behind the decisions taken.
- Citizens should have access to information on development proposals, plans and policies, as well as to officials and political committees who make such decisions. The citizens should be able to comment on applications and, if necessary, submit formal objections to draft plans and appeals against planning decisions. Applicants should be able to appeal to the higher authority regarding negative decisions.

The integration principle

- Planning work in sectoral compartments is an effective and efficient way of governing, but in the absence of coordination generates high costs.
- Contradictions and tensions between sectoral administrations have increased in the context of deregulation and privatisation. An example may be the situation in which agricultural policy led to undesirable depopulation of rural areas, which in turn caused increased burdens in neighboring areas.
- Spatial planning plays a key role in improving policy coherence and integration through territorial strategies. Integration between administration levels (jurisdictions) helps create complementary and mutually reinforcing policies and activities.
- Integration in different policy areas can mutually reinforce positive benefits.
- Integration across administrative boundaries creates policy coherence and reduces harmful competition in larger areas

The proportionality principle

- Maintaining a balance between commitment and flexibility in politics can be a significant challenge in managing spatial development.
- Solid and unambiguous policies brings enormous benefits. They encourage development and contribute to raising confidence and risk reduction for investors. They are also important for securing limited resources, such as high-quality agricultural land.
- Spatial planning policy should stimulate innovation and be sufficiently flexible to adapt to economic, social and technological trends.
- Spatial planning should facilitate taking the initiative and reduce restrictive and overly prescriptive measures if they are ineffective and redundant.
- Spatial planning should be based on a minimalist approach, so that priority can be given to issues requiring more urgent attention.

The proportionality principle

- Sometimes (e.g. protection of sensitive national environmental resources), it is necessary to apply rigid and non-negotiable directives. In most cases this approach may, however, lead to an increased flexibility in considering directive's applications due to satellites unforeseen at the stage of regulating. Thus, it is more reasonable to design a spatial policy, focused on the desired results and evaluation criteria rather than a policy based on rigid rules and ready-made solutions.

The precautionary principle

- If the potential damage caused by development activities is serious or irreversible, impact uncertainty should not be used as an excuse for taking improper policy decisions or failure to take corrective actions.
- In case when environmental effects of development cannot be pre-assessed due to lack of information or uncertainty, a precautionary approach should be implemented and an effort made to divert questionable developments elsewhere.

The main themes of spatial policy in European countries:

- commercial development
- economic development
- environmental management
 - heritage
 - housing
- industrial development
 - leisure and tourism
 - natural resources
 - transport
- waste management and pollution.

Main instruments and tools in spatial planning:

- **Planning tools**
- **The legal framework**
- **Decision-making process**
- **Policy statements**
- **Spatial Strategies**
- **Spatial framework plans**
- **Land-use regulation or development management**
- **Enforcement**
- **Environmental assessment**
- **Economic instruments**
- **Evidence and monitoring**
- **Paying for spatial planning**
- **Supervision and probity**

OVERARCHING GOALS FOR SPATIAL PLANNING

- **To promote a system of meaningful and democratic governance that responds to the needs of local communities**
- **To improve urban environmental performance**
- **To facilitate social cohesion and security**
- **To promote market reform in the housing and urban sector**
- **To improve land and real estate markets and securing private rights in land**

Reasons for spatial planning

- **To provide vision and consistent direction, as well as a strategic assessment not only of what is desirable, but what is possible in various contexts**
- **To protect the rights of people. Once people gain access to land, in effect they obtain certain rights and obligations. It is necessary to manage change a way that ensures these rights and obligations are respected.**
- **To protect natural systems. Natural systems have their own operational requirements which must be respected if long-term sustainable human development is to be achieved and if large-scale environment degradation is to be avoided or at least minimized**
- **To make efficient use of resources. Resources, such as land, water, energy, finance, building materials, skills, etc. are in short supply. Those that are available must, in all contexts, be used wisely to ensure that maximum benefit is obtained from them**

Reasons for spatial planning

- **To achieve a higher quality of service delivery by all spheres of government**
- **To coordinate actions and investments in order to ensure the maximum positive impact of resources investment, it is necessary to coordinate actions and investments in time and space. Coordination is of two kinds. The first one is coordination of different forms of public authority actions and investments. The second one is coordination between public and private actions, which should be increased.**
- **To set priorities. In order to enable significant inroads addressing the developmental needs of the country to be made in a fair way, it is necessary to provide a rational basis for prioritisation, and to manage and direct resources to where they are needed most.**
- **To avoid duplication of effort by different departments and spheres of government**

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