

STRATEGIC PLANNING AS A REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT POLICY MECHANISM – EUROPEAN CONTEXT

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The increasing interest in a strategic approach to space arrangement at all levels, and particularly on the intra and interregional level, as well as the changes in the area of spatial and regional planning, are some of the basic characteristics of theoretical and practical activities and efforts undertaken and realized in the field of organization and arrangement of space in the European Union during recent decades. Strategic planning gained importance in the framework of those changes, particularly owing to the growth of the environmental complex and sustainable growth planning, but also because of the need for a higher security of markets and states. Strategic spatial planning can be defined as a quite diverse planning activity. It is considered that "new" strategic planning will not represent a return to comprehensive planning, but will rather be a combination of traditional and new approaches to planning of sustainable development where an integrative role will be progressively assumed by spatial and regional plans and programs. Apart from a review of the development of strategic planning, this paper considers the importance and role of strategic planning as a mechanism of regional development and "new" regional politics, based on the contemporary development of critical thinking and practical experiences in the European Union.

Key words: strategy, spatial strategic planning, regional planning, regional policy

INTRODUCTION

This paper consists of three parts. The first part selectively presents a variety of interpretations of the concepts of strategy, strategic planning and strategic spatial planning which have been in use in the theory and practice of spatial planning in the EU in recent decades. Further, general changes in the theory and practice of spatial and regional planning in the same period are considered, and (cor)relations between these changes and the increase of interest in the strategic approach in spatial and regional planning policy have been considered. Finally, through an analysis and interpretation of the role of strategic planning in the

framework of "new" regional policy, a commentary is made on the creative potential of strategic planning as a mechanism of regional development.

STRATEGIC SPATIAL PLANNING - MEANINGS AND GENERAL FRAMEWORK

Terms such as **strategy and strategic spatial planning** have been theoretically interpreted in a variety of ways in the ambiguous and complex field of planning. Thus there are several different available definitions. Many authors are of the opinion that in the world of planning the notion of a blanket definition for the terms **strategy and strategic** is both impossible and inappropriate. For an analysis of the implementation and role of strategy in planning practice a **contextualization** of terms in respect to the contemporary and frequently

specific social, economic and cultural change is required (Calvaresi, 1997).

The term **strategy** has its origin in warfare science (Salet & Faludi 2000, Lacaze 1996, Piroddi 1996), and F. Sartorio (2005) holds that the original meaning of the concept of strategy is important it sums up two components of planning that occur – one in the theory of planning, the other in the practice of planning. The first component deals with *implementation*, long term visions, desired and sustainable ideas about the potential future. The second component relates to the *presence of one or more stakeholders* who conduct different activities in order to achieve divergent and frequently opposite goals, which have different manifestations.

It is believed that the terms **strategy and strategic planning** in contemporary town planning practice were first systematically employed by the end of 60s during debates on

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structural planning which was the focus of interest in Britain, Holland, France and Germany (see Table 1). Strategy and strategic planning were then interpreted as a **part** of the complex **process of planning and as an inter-institutional interaction** (not yet as a long-term vision of development). It must be stressed that the development of theory was at that time under the strong influence of strong economic and demographic growth, which sought a certain framework for spatial transformation. During these years, discussions on spatial planning and strategic planning affected the development of new planning theories as well as the expansion of the boundaries of planning activities and actions (F. Sartorio, 2005).

circular or parallel, the strategic spatial planning processes, especially in last two decades, have been more democratic and transparent, more complex in character and often slower to arrive at an agreement compared to military or corporate processes – the main reason is the large number of stakeholders involved. The period of the 70s and 80s was characterized by the public emergence of private investors as the first non-governmental stakeholders and participants with certain interests in the planning process, aside from the state.

During the 90s, a crisis occurred in which the powerful stakeholders gradually lost their role and authority, and the domination of the market as a basic regulatory mechanism of

balanced spatial development. It can be understood as a social process for coordinating actors and institutions in fragmented, uncertain environments in order to empower and motivate key stakeholders and to provide a decision framework for the management of spatial change (Hutter&Wiechmann, 2005).

In practice, there is a definition which has been used more than others, because it has seemed the most acceptable - Albrechts (2001) sees **spatial plans** as a strategic framework for action, and **strategic spatial planning** as a **"set of concepts, procedures and tools that must be tailored to whatever situation is at hand if desirable outcomes are to be achieved.** Strategic plan making is

Table 1. The term strategy in planning and strategic planning

	Discourses	Main concept	External influences
Orign of the term	Goal-oriented action	Assumption of both a <i>static</i> and <i>dynamic</i> environment	Warfare sciences
1950s – 1960s	Structural planning	Introduces a <i>process</i>	Theories of design-making
1970s – 1980s	Organizational planning	Introduces <i>uncertainty</i> and <i>performance</i> of the city as a system	Enterprise and organizational planning
1990s	Strategic planning Strategic behaviors	Introduces <i>interaction</i>	Policy analysis Governance

Source: F.S. Sartorio (2005): *Strategic Spatial Planning*. In: *disP* | 62:3

The new meaning of strategic planning is related to a time of crisis and the complete collapse of planning as a discipline during the 70s and 80s of the previous century, when the principles of rationality and efficiency came onto the stage, and the market was positioned as a dominant regulatory mechanism (the so called period of "Thatcherism" and "Reaganism"). One part of the professional public thinks that **strategic planning** in the public sector actually **originates** from corporate strategic planning, which was in expansion in this period. The reasons for this interpretation of corporate strategic planning in the field of spatial planning lie in the fact that transnational companies in this period, and until the present have been stronger, more influential and important organizers of the world economy than the national states. That is, this type of planning and the instruments used by private corporations, have yielded positive effects in the field of spatial and town planning (Vujošević, 2002). Thus, some of the new strategic principles are based on a conventional rational approach in the preparation and decision making process: 1) status overview; 2) analysis; 3) research and evaluation of alternatives; 4) selection of strategy; and 5) monitoring. In all of this there is much more interaction and cooperation. Within the procedures, which are not linear but

development came to an end. This brought about the renaissance of planning and the establishment of the latest type of strategic planning whose basic characteristic was the onset of involvement of the civil sector in the planning process.

This variety of strategic planning, to a certain extent exists even today, although in divergent forms. Strategic planning in practice today, and even more so the implementation of strategies in planning, are constantly varying and changing. In general, **strategic planning** can be used to determine mission, vision, values, goals, objectives, roles and responsibilities, timelines, etc. It can be described as the systematic, integrated approach of policymaking, which takes into account context, resources and the long term (Dimitrou, Thomson, 2007).

Across Europe there is a growing interest in **strategic spatial planning**. Still, the terminology used to discuss strategic spatial planning is constantly evolving, as it relates to and comprises a variety of approaches and the institutional contexts in which it is developing are very diverse too (Sartorio, 2005). So, strategic spatial planning can be defined as a **quite diverse planning activity**. Strategic spatial planning emphasizes the dynamic nature of strategy-making for sustainable and

as much about the process, institutional design and mobilization as about development of substantial theories."

According to A. Faludi and W. Salet (2000) three strategic planning approaches can be distinguished today, primarily as a result of various administrative frameworks. Those are:

- (1) institutional approach,
- (2) communicative or "discursive" approach, and
- (3) interactive approach to planning.

A short commentary of each of them follows:

▪ **The Institutional approach** results from the normative arrangement and setup of a society, which is also a framework for the interpretation of planning issues, where the planning issues can affect the reconstruction of the normative framework, but yet it is the framework defining the role and responsibility of stakeholders in the planning process. This approach connects the strategic planning theory with the social theories and political system theories in the field of economics, politics and legal framework (Faludi, Salet, 2000). The institutional approach develops in two basic directions: one oriented towards the legitimization of planned activities, and the other observing the institutionalization

processes mainly in terms of its potential for the implementation of plans and projects.

• **The Communicative approach** has the longest tradition and comprises the capacity of a strategic plan to use the symbols to represent the social attitudes and establish new grounds for action (Salet&Faludi, 2000). With a premise that it is possible to "picture" even the "collective consciousness" and social interest by the formation of spatial representation, represented through the spatial plan, this approach relies on the planning concepts, cartography, land usage presentations, etc. Lately, interest has been focused on the social discourses and ways in which they have been structuring changes, with the goal of improving planning process characteristics.

• **The Interactive approach** developed in the 80s and 90s as a reaction to traditional approaches, where state services and institutions had the role of main coordinators of the spatial planning process. Such a one-sided practice compromised not only the legitimacy of planning but its efficiency, too. The interactive approach thus developed various forms of state participation and coordination, as well as links among the stakeholders, with an ever present tendency towards liberalization and efficiency of state policy on one hand, and the development of the social awareness and participation of the civil sector on the other hand.

Against this background, according to P. Healey (1997), strategic spatial planning can be understood as a "social process through which a range of people in diverse institutional relations and positions come together to design a plan-making process and develop contents and strategies for the management of spatial change. This process generates not merely a formal output in terms of policy and project proposals, but a decision framework that may influence relevant parties in their future investments and regulatory activities. It may also generate ways of understanding, ways of building agreement, of organizing and mobilizing to influence in political arenas."

SPATIAL AND REGIONAL PLANNING – LINK WITH STRATEGIC APPROACH

Spatial planning is a very complex issue – it is a way that we intervene in the processes of spatial development in order to create a different and hopefully more sustainable

structure. Planning actions and functions from past to the future are very different (see Table 2). Spatial planning operates at different scales: local, regional and increasingly at the transnational and cross-border level. Therefore, **it is a wider concept than regional planning; it embraces this**, but is a wider concept. It is "a political as well as technical process - it is political not only in the sense of the politics in the process, but the concepts and ideas that we use in spatial planning are also political" (Nadin, 2000).

to define spatial planning thus "spatial planning goes beyond traditional land use planning to bring together and integrate policies for the development and use of land with other policies and programs which influence the nature of places and how they function" (ODPM, 2004).

Spatial planning according to the EPSON³ aims to create a more rational territorial organization of land uses and the linkages between them, in order to balance the demand for development with the need to protect the environment, and

Table 2. Planing actions and functions: from past to future

Time orientation	Planning actions	Planning functions
Past	React Respond Mitigate Control Manage	Operational
Present	Adapt Anticipate Prepare Change Shape	Managerial
Future	Create	Strategic

Source: Couclelis H.(2005): Where has the future gone? Rethinking the role of integrate land-use models in spatial planning. In: *Environment and Planning A*37: 1353-1371

In spite of the broad definitions of spatial planning, two dichotomy conceptual models are present: 1) spatial planning is land-use management and regional planning (in the traditional sense, as a branch of land use planning); and 2) spatial planning includes sectoral co-ordination through territorial strategy - an "umbrella" activity embracing the interests of various sectors with spatial policy impacts. Those currently in the field have tended to favor the second model – spatial planning is a wider, more inclusive approach to considering the best use of land than traditional land-use planning. PPS 12² goes on

to achieve social and economic objectives. In that sense, Dimitrou (2007) defines spatial planning as a "set of policies and tools of intervention at different levels and for different horizon dates, designing to assist the management of **strategic change** taking place within territories, their economies and societies, directed largely (but not exclusively) by the public sector."

Along with the change of political and socio-economic circumstances in the last decades of the 20th century and the reinterpretation of traditional regional theories, planning moved through several phases. In the fifties and sixties, during the times of the so-called planning optimism and enthusiasm, planning was a **dominant mechanism** for solving social and economic issues. In the 70s and 80s a **planning crisis** occurred and almost a complete collapse took place when the market mechanism and efficiency principles gained

² PPS 12 (Planning Policy Statement 12), Committee on Northern Ireland Affairs, Sixth Report. PPS 12 provides government guidance on the new arrangements for the preparation of local development documents, which will comprise the local development framework. The local development framework is largely a portfolio of local development documents that collectively deliver the spatial planning strategy for the local planning authority's area. Local development frameworks are intended to streamline the local planning process and promote a proactive and positive approach to managing development.

³ European Spatial Planning Observatory Network – Study Programme on European Spatial Planning (EPSON)

primacy in the period of deregulation and privatization. By the turn of 90s, there was a **renaissance/restoration** in planning, incited by the development and implementation of new "hybrid" planning approaches and models. These were based on a combination of traditional approaches in the field of regional/spatial planning and environmental protection under the paradigm of **sustainable development**.

One of the obvious results of the changes in theory and practice of spatial and regional planning, especially in the European Union territory in the last twenty years has been a renewal of interest in a **strategic approach** to spatial arrangement at a variety of spatial-functional and organizational levels. This has remedied the degraded role and legitimacy of spatial planning within the system of the social regulation of development. After a period dominated by a "project-led approach" and a "market-led approach" in the issues related to the relationships between social regulation and the market, the public and private sectors, spatial organization and land use, during the nineties a shift towards the so-called middle way occurred during the 90s towards a "proactive approach" and a "development approach". There are tendencies, not only in the well-developed but also in a number of transitional member countries of the European Union, the Czech Republic for instance (Sykora, 2000), to manage the spatial development and arrangement via an **integral strategic approach** instead of through "planning minimalism" which was favored until recently, using a number of strategic planning documents at a national and regional level.

Strategic/developmental planning has been gaining importance due to the increase of the environmental complex and the planning of sustainable development, but also due to the need for a higher security of the market and planning authorities in the circumstances of the negative consequences of uncontrolled growth. In fact, as the shift towards the models of sustainable development is a question of social survival, it is impossible to realize the sustainability concept without planning (by relying, for instance, on market mechanisms and environmental policy which are not in accord with other decisions). Yet, certain authors think that planning, however, "cannot assume a new, modernizing and emancipating role unless it has been transformed itself, because the existing theoretical and

methodological approaches and institutional arrangements in planning do not facilitate that" (Blowers, 2000).

Many commentators think that new strategic planning will not mean a reverse of comprehensive planning, but will represent a combination of modified regional marketing from the 80s and new approaches to sustainable development planning from the 90s. Most can be expected from the development of a synthetic approach in the field of spatial arrangement, environmental protection, urban and rural development. This approach could represent an adequate conceptual framework for (new) attempts to integrate economic, spatial and environmental planning, where the integrative role is progressively assumed by the spatial and **regional plans and programs**, uniting in this way the elements of spatial planning, environmental protection and socio-economic development in the fold of sustainable development. In this, the **projects**, and those joined as **programs**, become an **important guiding instrument of development**. Equally important are the **strategic developing frameworks** wherein the programs and projects are formed and conducted. It is likely that developmental programs and projects will be frequently located within the strategic framework of spatial/regional and town planning. Bendavid (1972) even provided a draft of a special planning approach "concept - strategies - projects" in regional planning which facilitates inclusion of developmental programs and projects during the entire planning process, that is, attempts to balance "planning" and "program-project" approaches². Yet in theory and practice the question of ways and modalities of integration of strategic programs into planning remains open. A part of the scientific and professional public is of the opinion that a "danger" is present, to reduce planning to a mere preparation and implementation of programs and projects.

EU STRATEGIC SPATIAL POLICY - IMPLICATIONS FOR STRATEGIC PLANNING IN MEMBER STATES

EU institutional and policy framework is going through a period of considerable change and it is clear that they will also influence the way in which strategic spatial planning evolves in the member states. Many documents and program activities are relevant for strategic planning in the EU, such as the Leipzig Charter on sustainable European cities (2007), ESPON,

the Green Paper on Territorial Cohesion (2008), URBACT etc. Yet, three major aspects of EU strategic spatial planning and development policy, which has influenced the development and practice of strategic spatial planning in the member state, are:

▪ The making of the **ESDP** and **Territorial agenda**

A document on European spatial planning that is intended to be used as a common reference point for spatial policy coordination and as a means of supporting the work of national and regional spatial policy-making bodies. Returning to the ESDP itself, it is important to emphasize that the ESDP, despite much inaccurate description and discussion, is not a "master plan", nor is it a "big structure plan" that attempts to define or develop the future settlement pattern and spatial shape of the EU as a whole. The objectives of the ESDP are much more modest and consist of the three fundamental goals of European policy:

- economic and social cohesion;
- conservation of natural resources and cultural heritage; and
- more balanced competitiveness of the European territory.

In the words of the **ESDP**, in order to "achieve more spatially balanced development, these goals must be pursued simultaneously in all regions of the EU, and their interactions taken into account" (ESDP, 1999). These three general goals have influenced the form and content of three policy guidelines for the spatial development of the EU: 1) development of a balanced and polycentric urban system and a new urban-rural relationship; 2) securing parity of access to infrastructure and knowledge; and 3) sustainable development, prudent management and protection of nature and cultural heritage.⁴

⁴For example, a key principle of Irish National Spatial Strategy (NSS, 2002) is polycentric development as the most appropriate way for balanced regional development without halting the growth of the Greater Dublin Area or national competitiveness. Despite a lack of explicit reference to the ESDP and its underlying concepts, such as polycentric development, it is clear that the NSS approach to developing a strategic framework for the future spatial structure of Ireland mirrors the ESDP's approach for development of Europe as a whole (Davoudi&Wishardt, 2005). There are clearly

▪ **The Territorial agenda** (Leipzig, 2007) is a document founded on the ESDP, but with new elements introduced. In this document, for the first time the notion of spatial cohesion is included in strategic spatial planning. Territorial cohesion is considered the third dimension of cohesion policy, and therein the requirement that the territorial dimension should obtain a more prominent role in the future cohesion policy has been stressed, with the aim of achieving economic and social welfare. It is recommended that the **territorial dimension should be integrated into the strategic processes** supporting the cohesion policy both at the **national and the EU levels**. Cities and regions are given a stronger role in conducting EU policy. Regional identities and potential, the needs and diverse characteristics of regions, cities, rural and other areas have gained importance through the policy of territorial cohesions (as well through the other regional development policies) by assuming a **strategic approach to the integrated territorial development** and by implementing the **subsidiary principle**. "Cohesion policy of the EU should be able to adapt, in a more efficient way than nowadays, to the territorial needs and importance, to the specific geographical challenges and potentials of regions and cities" (Territorial agenda). On the other hand, "certain strategies of development of cities and regions should more closely consider the national and European context. It is important that national, regional and local questions are closely coordinated with the EU policy... which particularly refers to the rural development policy, environmental protection and traffic policy as well as to the cohesion policy of the EU" (Territorial agenda).

▪ The evolution of the **EU Structural Funds** - four aspects of the operation of the

Structural Funds are of particular interest in relation to strategic spatial planning in the member state: 1) the level of coincidence between the distribution and utilization of the Structural Funds budget and the ways in which domestic regional policies are elaborated and implemented, 2) the Structural Funds regional programs can be seen to influence the ways in which domestic infrastructure policy has emerged, and this, in turn, is reflected in other aspects of strategic planning policy, 3) the preparation of the Structural Funds regional programs was the first experience in many regions of partnership working at a regional level, and 4) the new territorial governance models which have emerged in recent years reflect many of the lessons from the Structural Funds learning experience.

▪ The development and growing influence of the planning elements of EU **environment policy** - Subsequent programs have seen the introduction of many new policies and legislation, including a series of measures that have a number of direct and indirect implications for strategic spatial planning. Examples of the influence exerted by EU environment policy include the introduction of measures concerned with environmental assessment (EA), strategic environmental assessment (SEA), waste management, pollution control, water management, transport and land use. As a result of these initiatives, and alongside the incorporation in the Treaty of Amsterdam in 1999 of a duty of sustainable development as a central task of the EU, it is now reasonable to conclude that EU policy and action has "become the single most significant factor affecting the development of the national environmental legislation of the member states" (Barns&Barns, 1999).⁵

⁵In some situations the influence of EU environment policy upon strategic spatial planning has been direct, as in the case of the introduction of SEA as a fundamental screening mechanism which is used to ensure the conformity of plans with sustainable development criteria, whilst in other cases the pattern of influence has been indirect. In some member states the environment policy is primarily a framework for spatial and regional policy - in Sweden, the national environmental quality goals represent guidelines for spatial planning and the construction sector. Central and regional government agencies have to coordinate their community planning across sector boundaries in order to promote ecologically sustainable development and a good living environment for all.

Although a number of other EU policies also influence strategic spatial planning, including matters related to transport, agriculture, trade, industrial development, research and development, social inclusion, competition, and energy policies, it is not intended to deal directly with the content of these policies. However, because in recent years the EU has increasingly attempted to establish a more corporate approach to its policy-making and to its implementation processes and procedures, a number of what are described as "horizontally-supporting", or indirect policy influences are evident in the ESDP/Territorial agenda, Structural Funds and environment policies. This emphasis on the greater coordination of policies and actions is, in itself, one of the areas of influence exerted by the EU on the design and operation of strategic spatial planning systems in member states.

The influence of EU policies upon the structure, organization and purpose of strategic spatial planning and planning practice at the national-regional-sub-regional level in member states is very different and primarily depends on the institutional and methodological framework and approach in every member state, but also on the political climate.⁶

However, the new territorial policy dimension - confirmed by the Treaty of Amsterdam - offers opportunities for new networks and linkages between governments, cities, agencies and regions.

STRATEGIC PLANNING AS A MECHANISM OF REGIONAL POLICY

Regional issues, reflected in the existence of social, economic and spatial differences, is a platform for **institutional intervention at the regional level - regional planning and regional policy** as regulatory and directional mechanisms of interregional and intraregional development. Many authors think, and the

⁶ For example, a central theme in the recent history of the relationship between the strategic planning system of the UK and the context for strategic spatial planning that is provided by the relevant EU policies, is the tension which exists between the essentially adversarial and responsive nature of the UK (and especially the English) planning system and the more strategic and proactive approach which is the hallmark of the ESDP and some (but not all) of the planning systems in continental European member states (Roberts&Beresford, 2003).

indications that the Strategy has adopted a "potential" rather than a "redistribution" based approach to achieving balanced regional development (Walsh, 2004), mirroring the ESDP's departure from traditional regional policy (Davoudi, 2003). The NSS draws on the European experience and concludes that, "successful regional development in today's Europe" has been achieved by adopting three forms of spatial planning: "urban clusters of neighboring cities ..., urban networks between more distant cities... (and) urban-rural partnerships" (DELG,2002).

practice in the European Union countries seems to confirm this, that the **nature of certain developmental problems always require intervention at levels between the central and the local**, that is, that the **regional, "middle" level of planning and management is necessary** for a legitimate and efficient public business administration (Martins, 1986; Wannop, 1995; Pusić, 1989; Vujošević, 1996). In theory, it is a dominant opinion that there will always be disparities and that due to this fact regional planning and regional policy must remain a constant activity. The **regional planning**, which in the past had a **primarily political and social motivation**, in the EU and the majority of developed countries in the last decades obtained its **developmental and economic dimension** and has evolved into a **new approach to the totality of socio-economic and spatial development. "New" regional development policy** now unites two components – **developmental and regional**, and is viewed both as: 1) a new approach to the **development of the national economy** based on the **regional principle** ("regional growth of economic activities leads to the growth of the entire national economy") and 2) a new approach to **regional development** with significantly **broader developmental influence** on the total social and spatial development.

Throughout Europe an increase of interest in **strategic spatial planning** is notable. Strategic spatial planning concerns major spatial development, which may arise on any scale, but is more **typical of the regional and national scale** (Faludi, 2000). Strategic spatial planning at this level is a typically public-sector led socio-spatial process, aimed at influencing the future spatial distribution of activities (Albrechts, 2004).

The renaissance of strategic planning is beyond doubt within the context of urban and regional planning in Europe (Healey et al. 1997, Salet&Faludi 2000). In many respects current approaches take part in a general shift within the planning system from physical land use planning to extensive strategic planning to articulate a more coherent spatial logic for land use regulation, recourse protection, and investments in regeneration and infrastructure (Albrechts, Healy&Kunzmann, 2003). Instead, **strategic spatial planning is focusing on territorially integrated policy approaches and long – rang planning to improve the quality of life, to strengthen regional identity, and to develop new forms of**

regional collaboration. Symptomatic in the implementation of recent concepts of strategic planning in practice is the close linkage between vision and action and a general attempt to enhance a **regional capacity**. Strategic spatial planning requires a continuous social plan-making process to fulfill its functions of empowering and motivating stakeholders and of providing **orientation for local and regional actors** (Hutter&Wiechmann, 2005)⁷.

When discussing potential for restoration of the legitimacy of spatial and regional planning, there are diverse opinions. The affirmative arguments can be observed in the successful operation and created credibility of planning-management activities and policies, programs and projects. Regional planning demonstrated the ability to successfully address some problems concerning region, such as, for example, solving the issues of socio-economic disparities within several territorial units, and the development of rural regions within tourist regions. The opportunities of regional planning according to numerous authors (Faludi&Valk,1994; Ward, 1994; Rydin 1994; Vujošević, 2000) result from its potential as a development regulation mechanism, and those are: 1) solving developmental issues whose nature requires intervention at a "medium" level (implementation of subsidiary principle); 2) integrating spatial planning and economic policy at a regional level (the so called "spatial efficient sectoral planning") with the aim of a balanced and regular regional and spatial development; 3) integrating environmental protection into regional interventions; 4) integrating urban and rural development; and

⁷For example, until 1996, Scotland had a "two-tier" system of local government with regional and district councils. Generally, the regions were responsible for strategic policy through the preparation of structure plans, while district councils were responsible for a local plan and development control issues. The new unitary authorities (with an obligation to prepare both a structure plan and a local plan) are both strategic and local planning authorities. However, in a number of areas (notably around Glasgow and Edinburgh), for strategic planning purposes, a number of unitary authorities are brought together to produce strategic plans on a joint committee basis. The Scottish Government is of the view that the preparation of both a structure plan and a local plan is an unnecessary burden for most parts of the country, so that it is likely in the near future that only the 4 conurbations (plus possibly Inverness) will have a strategic development plan, with most parts of the country having only a local plan (Bowman, 2008).

5) more efficient planning and managing interventions.

On the other hand, some authors (Friedmann, 2004) argue that too much attention in planning practices has been given to the production of strategic plans and too little to locally-based studies of the dynamics of urban socio-spatial development.

However, in general, regional spatial strategies are expected to:

- establish a "spatial" vision and strategy specific to the region - for example, identifying in general terms areas for development or regeneration for a longer period
- contribute to the achievement of sustainable development
- establish regionally specific policies, which are expected to add to rather than replicate national ones
- address regional or sub-regional issues;
- establish priorities for environmental protection and enhancement;
- outline key priorities for investment, particularly in infrastructure, and identify delivery mechanisms, in order to support development;
- identify how the region's waste should be dealt with;
- be consistent with and supportive of other regional frameworks and strategies.

CONCLUSION

Across Europe there is a growing interest in strategic spatial planning. The renaissance of strategic planning falls beyond doubt within the context of urban and regional planning. Still, the terminology used to discuss strategic spatial planning is constantly evolving, the very term "strategic spatial planning" relates to and comprises various approaches and the institutional contexts of its development is also very diverse. So, strategic spatial planning can be defined as a quite diverse planning activity. If we focus on the practice, under the term "strategic spatial planning" it is most often comprised of a set of concepts, procedures and tools that must be tailored to whatever situation is at hand if desirable outcomes are to be achieved, and spatial plans see these as a strategic frameworks for action.

Strategic spatial planning concerns major spatial development, which may arise on any

scale, but still are more typical for the regional and national scale. The relationship between these levels and the EU policies is very important for the EU. In this light, three major aspects of EU strategic spatial planning and development policy that has influenced the development and practice of strategic spatial planning in the member state are: 1) the making of the ESDP and Territorial agenda, 2) the evolution of the EU Structural Funds and 3) the development and growing influence of the planning elements of EU environment policy. Integration of the territorial dimension into the strategic processes supporting the cohesion policy at the EU and national level is recommended. Cities and regions are given a stronger role in the implementation of EU policy, and regional identities and potentials, needs and different characteristics of regions, cities, rural areas and other areas strengthen their importance in the process of territorial cohesion through assuming a strategic approach to an integrated territorial development, and through the application of the subsidiariness principle.

Still, the influence of EU policies upon the structure, organization and purpose of strategic spatial planning and planning practice at the national–regional–sub-regional level in member states is very different and primarily depends on the institutional and methodological framework and approach in every member state, but also of the political climate.

At the regional level, strategic spatial planning is a typically public-sector-led socio-spatial process, aimed at and influencing the future spatial distribution of activities. Strategic spatial planning focuses on territorially integrated policy approaches and long – term planning to improve the quality of life, to strengthen regional identity, to establish a "spatial" vision and strategy specific to the region, to establish regionally specific policies, to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development and to develop new forms of regional collaboration. Still, the EU is of the opinion that certain city and regional development strategies should take into account the national and European context and that it is important that national, regional and local issues are closely related to EU policy, which particularly refers to the rural development policy, environmental protection and traffic policy, as well as the cohesion policy of the EU.

When discussing the potential for restoration of the legitimacy of strategic spatial and regional planning, there are diverse opinions. Although the opportunities for strategic planning at a regional level are great, there are also opinions that too much attention in planning practices has been given to the production of strategic plans and too little to locally-based studies of the dynamics of urban socio-spatial development.

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