

Landscape issues in EU development/conservation policies

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Review article

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Abstract

Spatial planning within European context has limited powers. EU member states are still very much responsible for their national territories. Two documents European Spatial Development Perspectives (ESDP) adopted by EU and Guiding Principles for Sustainable Spatial Development of the European Continent adopted by Council of Europe intend to influence the European spatial development indirectly. Both of them are based on rather conservative philosophy and the EU member states are allowed to interpret them appropriately at the local level. On the other side, the EU legislation on nature conservation, which has much greater influence on spatial planning within national territories, is even more conservative by its nature. Although it was not meant as a control of spatial development, there is real fear that the importance of innovative approaches within spatial development and environmental conservation will be diminished. There is also a serious fear that the influence of public participation within planning process will be reduced and substituted by expert decisions.

Key words: Environmental planning, Innovation, European Union, Nature Conservation, Natura 2000

Introduction

Physical planning is one of the spheres in which European Union does not provide any common regulation. There is no such thing as 'European Spatial Plan'. The European commission has no powers to make a Grand Plan for Europe. (Treanor, 2000) Nevertheless, efforts have been made and initiatives undertaken to set up some common approach to spatial development of the European Union member states and European continent as well.

Spatial Planning within Europe

A common document on European spatial development has been agreed at the informal meeting of council of ministers responsible for spatial planning in Potsdam in 1999 known as The European Spatial Development Perspectives (ESDP). The document is rather a list of general guidelines listing mostly basic principles and goals:

- economic and social cohesion;
- conservation and management of natural resources and the cultural heritage;
- more balanced competitiveness of the European territory (ESDP, 1999).

From the landscape management point of view the stress on conservation and management of natural resources seems to be most important. The principles include among others large-ecological networks, the choice for restoration ecology ('new nature'), and also a balanced relationship between the urban and the rural Europe. The document should give an impetus for sustainable spatial development within member states.

The ESDP concerns European Union member states only. Within the Council of Europe, a committee of planning ministers (European Conference of Ministers responsible for Regional Planning - CEMAT) has

prepared a similar document - Guiding Principles for Sustainable Spatial Development of the European Continent (Guiding Principles, 2000). The document concerns the member states of the Council of Europe. The document was approved at the CEMAT conference on 7-8 September 2000 in Hannover. It is also known as the Hannover Document. It states guidelines for the spatial planning of the entire continent of Europe - the first official document to ever do this. Incorporated into it are the principles of the ESDP as well as many other planning declarations. Like the ESDP, this document can only supplement national policies, but never oppose or contradict them.

One may share his opinion with critics of the two documents at least in one point. ESDP as well as the Hannover Document are quite conservative. The critics of the European spatial development policies argue that 'both the CEMAT and ESDP represent conservatism...' (Treanor, 2000).

It is somehow understandable that European Union and the Council of Europe did not enter more directly into the sphere of spatial planning by making something like an European plan. 'The vocabulary of spatial planning is still open and flexible, allowing EU member states to sign up to the general principles and interpret it as appropriate locally' (Sykes, 2000). Spatial planning is an activity which is characterized by the optimization of alternative possibilities which should be done before a decision is taken. It means that spatial planning is a sphere where local specifics/specifics should be considered as very important, and the influence of local population should be enabled as much as possible by their participation within the planning process. The room for innovation could be assured through this process. Neither ESDP nor the CEMAT Document do not block innovation although they are conservative in their nature. The idea of elaborating common spatial development perspectives implies conservative philosophy by itself. You cannot elaborate common guidelines for something that does not exist yet and, besides, we do not know where the guidelines will be applied and how they will be locally accepted. The space and the society are continuously changing, through space and in time. The idea of having such guidelines is essentially conservative.

Nature Conservation within the European Context

The EU legislation in the sphere of environmental conservation is much more elaborate, and the conservative philosophy even more clearly expressed. Conservation, and within it nature conservation, is an issue that has to be regulated as it has profound implication in economy, it contributes to the balanced competitiveness, and it represents globally important issues as for example, global warming, bio-diversity, extinction of biological organisms etc.

There are two EU directives that may have particularly important influence on landscapes and spatial planning. Directive on the conservation of wild birds (Council Directive, 1979) was adopted as the first EU Directive on nature conservation. The other one is the so called Habitat directive (Council Directive, 1992) which has even more profound influence on European spatial planning. The two Directives offer legal conceptual models and a set of standards and norms in common use. They both require the EU Member States to take a number of measures in order to protect all bird species as well as many other living creatures, their sites, and their habitats. The habitats to be protected, the sites, and the selected endangered species are listed. The lists are annexed as a part of the Directive. The EU member states are committed to search for the sites and habitats within their territory and to give them specific legal status in order to enable their protection.

The influence of two directives on spatial planning depends very much on the extent of protected areas. As one can see from the size of protected areas within EU member states (Fig. 1, 2) the commitment to the species and habitat conservation varies quite considerably within member states.

It is understandable that European Commission strengthen the environmental regulations to be applied in all member states as they may influence the competitiveness of their economies. One member state can build its competitiveness upon neglecting common environmental standards or upon the use of bad technologies. Such a situation is unacceptable for other members of the common market. It is obvious that some minimum of environmentally acceptable technologies should be compulsory for all that compete on

the common market. The same philosophy cannot be used within nature conservation. The conservation standards defined as have-to-be protected habitats or as important sites have a completely different nature as technological standards and should be treated differently.

The definition of protected areas represents a rudimentary form of land use planning. It is land use planning because it defines areas with specific form of land exploitation or land conservation. In both cases, in the case of exploitation or conservation, one deals with just two different ways of how land uses are defined. It is a rudimental form of land use planning because it implies only one societal interest and because it does not enable the reconciliation of different developmental goals and interests. It is not comprehensive by its nature.

It is obvious that extension of protected areas reduces the space for reconciliation of interest within physical space. Even more, it reduces the innovative effects of reconciliation of societal interests. It reduces search for the best solutions within a planning process. It reduces planning as an innovation seeking process at all.

SITES OF COMMUNITY IMPORTANCE

Update of March 2005

MS	MS Area (km ²)	Total Number	Total Area (ha)	Total Area (km ²)	Terrestrial Area (ha)	Terrestrial Area (km ²)	% Terrestrial (1)	No. of sites in which a marine part is noted	Marine Area (ha)	Marine Area (km ²)	MS
AT	83.859	164	888.393	8.884	888.393	8.884	10,6			-	AT
BE	30.528	278	322.088	3.221	303.968	3.040	10,0	1	18.120	181	BE
CY	9250	26	50.952	510	45.919	459	5,0	5	5.033	50	CY
CZ	78866	864	724.413	7.244	724.413	7.244	9,2			-	CZ
DE	357.031	3535	3.214.628	32.146	2.495.647	24.956	7,0	49	718.981	7.190	DE
DK	43.093	254	1.113.595	11.136	317.696	3.177	7,4	118	795.899	7.959	DK
EE	45226	509	1059108	10.591	717.223	7.172	15,9	34	341.885	3.419	EE
ES	504.782	1382	11.912.184	119.122	11.393.065	113.931	22,6	88	519.119	5.191	ES
FI	338.145	1660	4.793.224	47.932	4.279.054	42.791	12,7	94	514.170	5.142	FI
FR	549.192	1219	4.220.106	42.201	3.729.544	37.295	6,8	86	490.562	4.906	FR
GR	131.940	239	2.764.097	27.641	2.164.296	21.643	16,4	102	599.801	5.998	GR
HU	93030	467	1302497,08	13.025	1.302.497	13.025	14,0			-	HU
IE	70.280	413	1.056.074	10.561	717.450	7.175	10,2	92	338.624	3.386	IE
IT	301.333	2256	4.397.779	43.978	4.175.072	41.751	13,9	162	222.707	2.227	IT
LT	65200	276	140886,33	1.409	138.862	1.389	2,1	1	2.024	20	LT
LU	2.597	47	38.311	383	38.311	383	14,8			-	LU
LV	64589	331	765091,29	7.651	709.461	7.095	11,0	6	55.631	556	LV
MT	316	23	3.935	39	3.935	39	12,5			0	MT
NL	41.526	141	750.837	7.508	395.497	3.955	9,5	24	355340	3.553	NL
PL	312685	184	1171549,6	11.715	1.171.550	11.715	3,7			0	PL
PT	91.990	94	1.650.250	16.503	1.601.235	16.012	17,4	23	49015	490	PT
SE	414.864	3903	6.235.623	62.356	5.652.319	56.523	13,6	320	583304	5.833	SE
SI	20273	259	635961,99	6.360	635.944	6.359	31,4	3	18	0,2	SI
SK	48845	382	573936,22	5.739	573.936	5.739	11,8			-	SK
UK	244.820	610	2.510.046	25.100	1.599.146	15.991	6,5	42	910900	9.109	UK
EU	3.944.260	19.516	52.295.564	522.956	45.774.433	457.744,33	11,61	1.250	6.521.131	65.211	EU

(1) % of SCI terrestrial area compared to MS terrestrial area

Figure 1. Sites of community importance (Eurobarometer March 2005)

It is not uncommon that a planner from Slovenia is calling your attention to the consequence of the extensive definitions of protected areas. As you can see from the Fig. 1 and Fig. 2 Slovenia is far ahead in the extent of protected areas. Combining the two types of protected areas, there is some overlap. But all in all, Slovenia has contributed 36 % of national territory to the European nature conservation network Natura 2000.

SPECIAL PROTECTION AREAS

Update of March 2005

MS	MS Area (km ²)	Total Number	Total Area (ha)	Total Area (km ²)	Terrestrial Area (ha)	Terrestrial Area (km ²)	% Terrestrial (1)	No. of sites in which a marine part is noted	Marine Area (ha)	Marine Area (km ²)	MS
AT	83.859	94	927.549	9.275	927.549	9.275	11,1			-	AT
BE	30.528	229	296.439	2.964	296.439	2.964	9,7	0	0	0	BE
CY	9250	2	10794	108	10.794	108	1,2	0	0	0	CY
CZ	78866	38	693622	6.936	693.622	6.936	8,8			-	CZ
DE	357.031	497	3.207.974	32.080	2.290.884	22.909	6,4	17	917.090	9.171	DE
DK	43.093	113	1.470.894	14.709	253.590	2.536	5,9	59	1.217.304	12.173	DK
EE	45226	67	1206254	12.063	566.827	5.668	12,5	26	639.427	6.394	EE
ES	504.782	480	8.386.271	83.863	8.328.869	83.289	16,5	20	57.401	574	ES
FI	338.145	452	2.837.270	28.373	2.286.145	22.861	6,8	65	551.125	5.511	FI
FR	549.192	174	1.438.142	14.381	1.215.614	12.156	2,2	52	222.528	2.225	FR
GR	131.940	151	1.370.323	13.703	1.329.827	13.298	10,1	4	40.496	405	GR
HU	93030	55	1137637	11.376	1.137.637	11.376	12,2			-	HU
IE	70.280	131	281.480	2.815	200.442	2.004	2,9	66	81.039	810	IE
IT	301.333	503	2486491	24.865	2.446.875	24.469	8,1	13	39.615	396	IT
LT	65200	40	356953	3.570	356.953	3.570	5,5			0	LT
LU	2.597	12	13.916	139	13.916	139	5,4			-	LU
LV	64589	97	675140	6.751	623.186	6.232	9,6	4	51.954	520	LV
MT	316	6	762.78	8	763	8	2,4			0	MT
NL	41.526	77	1.010.930	10.109	519.678	5.197	12,5	7	491.252	4.913	NL
PL	312685	72	3315631	33.156	2.436.183	24.362	7,8	3	879.448	8.794	PL
PT	91.990	50	995.644	9.956	933.433	9.334	10,1	10	62.211	622	PT
SE	414.864	509	2.864.780	28.648	2.563.123	25.631	6,2	107	301.656	3.017	SE
SI	20273	27	465592	4.656	465.306	4.653	23,0	1	286	3	SI
SK	48845	38	1229478	12.295	1.229.478	12.295	25,2			-	SK
UK	244.820	255	1.485.203	14.852	1.410.334	14.103	5,8	5	74.869	749	UK
EU	3.944.260	4.169	38.165.168	381.652	32.537.466	325.374,66	8,25	459	5.627.702	56.277	EU

(1) % of SCI terrestrial area compared to MS terrestrial area

Figure 2. Special protected areas (Eurobarometer March 2005)

Let me add here some theoretical remarks. Direct conservation, i.e. defining protected areas, is a kind of standardization with much more profound implication on spatial planning than other standards, e.g. technological environmental standards can have.

Standardization is a very much known and powerful activity within technical disciplines. It represents the development and the implementation of concepts, doctrines, procedures and designs to achieve and maintain the required levels of compatibility, interchangeability or commonality in the operational, procedural, material, technical and administrative fields to attain interoperability. Nobel laureate H. Simon (1996) uses the term 'standardization' for a type of businessman behavior when confronted with necessity to make a decision while an adequate analysis cannot be carried out. In this respect, standard is any predefined procedure or design or any of above mentioned issues that may be accepted as an adequate solution to a certain problem. Standard is mostly a partial solution of a problem.

Environmental norms are only special cases of standards. They define standardized environmental quality, but are specific in a sense that they represent minimal level of environmental quality or, to borrow from H. Simon (1997), they are "satisfying" decisions about the environment.

Landscape reserves, i.e. national parks, natural reserves, natural monuments, outstanding landscapes, and similar spatially defined restrictions, are types of environmental standards and, in a decision making system, they function accordingly to the characteristics they share with other environmental standards:

- They represent an isolated interest and are as such incomplete solutions,
- As "satisfying" decisions they are not optimal even from the point of view of conservation requirements. Therefore, they tend to be more and more severe with the passing of time,
- They compete with accordingly expressed interests within a political (administrative) context,
- They eliminate the need for optimization and decision making,
- As they are expressed as an environmental condition, e.g. as a noise level or presence of a specific habitat, they remain within expert responsibility and decision is taken as the one that has to be done by experts. Therefore, public participation is considered as unnecessary.

Conclusion

The conservative philosophy with which the European spatial guidelines can be taxed is much easier to be disclosed within European nature conservation policies. Indeed, it is up to individual member states to define the extension of protected areas and to introduce the standardized approach in the decision making process. But, as the example of Slovenia shows, some states are not aware of the consequences of the extensive definition of protected areas. As already mentioned environmental standards are 'satisfying' solutions and are far from being satisfactory for an isolated conservation interest. In the case the isolated conservation interests have the power to make decisions, they may 'explode' while struggling for an ideal conservation. That may be an explanation of Slovenian situation in the case of European nature conservation network Natura 2000.

The elimination of optimizing planning procedures, the reducing of reconciliation of the societal interest, and the potential elimination of public participation in the process of spatial planning also means reduction of innovative approaches in reshaping of our living environment. It is becoming more and more apparent that innovative approaches are by far the most promising in resolving present day environmental problems. Prof. W. F. Geiger (2006), a prominent expert in urban water management from Essen University, Germany, gave an explicit accent in this respect defining three stages in environmental conservation efforts. He claims, explaining a brief history of environmental conservation that we are entering into an innovative conservation stage right now. Searching for innovations is by no means the most promising way out of the impasse that happens when multiple fragmented interests are confronted as Wondolleck and Yaffee (2000) claim. They show this with a description of a new collaborative approach in nature conservation in the USA.

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Problematika krajobraza u razvojno-zaštitnim politikama EU

Sažetak

Snaga prostornog planiranja unutar europskog konteksta ima ograničen utjecaj. Zemlje članice EU-a i dalje zadržavaju pravo i obavezu donošenja odluka kod planiranja, ili šire, uređenja svojih nacionalnih teritorija. Neposredni utjecaj na europski prostorni razvoj proizlazi iz sadržaja iz dvaju dokumenata: Perspektiva europskog prostornog razvoja (engl. *European Spatial Development Perspectives, ESDP*) prihvaćenog od EU i Smjernica za održivi prostorni razvoj Europskog kontinenta (engl. *Guiding Principles for Sustainable Spatial Development of the European Continent*) koje su prihvaćene od Vijeća Europe. Oba su dokumenta temeljena na konzervativnoj filozofiji, a zemljama članicama EU-a se dopušta da ih sukladno lokalnoj razini interpretiraju. S druge strane, zakonodavni okvir EU-a u području zaštite prirode, ima značajan utjecaj na prostorno planiranje i to na nacionalnoj razini. Taj zakonodavni okvir u području zaštite prirode, iako prvotno nije postavljen kao mehanizam kontrole razvojnih prostornih tendencija, je po svojoj naravi još više konzervativan. Ovaj je rad usredotočen na dva problemska konteksta koji proizlaze iz navedene situacije. Prvi se odnosi na realne strepnje koje proizlaze iz smanjenja ili čak nemogućnosti uvođenja inovativnih pristupa u procese rješavanja problema prostornog razvoja i zaštite. U drugom se otvara važno pitanje smanjenog stupnja utjecaja sudjelovanja javnosti unutar samog planerskog procesa, obzirom na to postoji bojazan da se donošenje odluka u potpunosti temelji samo na stručnim procjenama.

Ključne riječi: zaštitno planiranje, inovativni pristup, EU, zaštita prirode, mreža Natura 2000