

SOME CONSIDERATIONS ON SPATIAL INTEGRATION PROCESSES

NEKATERA RAZMIŠLJANJA O PROSTORSKIH INTEGRACIJSKIH PROCESIH

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ABSTRACT

Although the fact is well known that space does not end at its administrative borders (municipalities, towns, regions, the state), it is still planned within territorial units defined by borders. As technological progress has made every space more accessible, and fast economic development brings about mutual conflicts between the various uses of space (for housing, industry, services, tourism, etc.), there are increasing requests for consideration and planning of the space/territory in a wider context, i.e., not only in the local, regional or national contexts, but in the European context as well. In globalisation and integration processes space is less and less treated and planned as a space for which vital location factors are significant (water, proximity of arable land, defence security), but it is more and more considered and planned through the prism of: spatial networking, territorial capital, space management, ecological and cultural resources, etc. Since the implementation of a number of policies (trade, transport, environment, etc.) is carried out within the framework of integration processes which have an impact on space transformation, we may, in a sense, talk also of spatial integration processes and of territorial cohesion policy. The above mentioned indicates that more significance should be given to space when making and implementing various policies.

KEY WORDS

space, territory, spatial integration processes, territorial cohesion, European spatial planning

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IZVLEČEK

Čeprav je znano dejstvo, da se prostor ne zaključi v administrativnih mejah (občine, mesta, regije, države), pa se ta še vedno načrtuje oziroma planira znotraj prostorskih enot, ki jih opredeljujejo meje. Glede na to, da je tehnološki napredek vsak prostor naredil dostopnejši, pa hitri ekonomski razvoj različne rabe prostora (stanovanjsko, industrijsko, servisno, turistično itn.) privede v medsebojno nasprotovanje. Zato se pojavljajo vse številnejše zahteve po proučevanju in planiranju prostora/teritorija v širšem kontekstu, ne samo v lokalnem, regionalnem ali državnem, temveč tudi evropskem. V globalizacijskih in integracijskih procesih se prostor vse manj proučuje in planira kot prostor, kjer so pomembni nekateri lokacijski faktorji (voda, bližina obdelovalnih tal, obrambna varnost), in se vse bolj preučuje in planira skozi prizmo prostorske premreženosti, teritorialnega kapitala, upravljanja prostora, ekoloških in kulturnih resursov itn. Glede na to, da se izvedba posameznih politik (trgovske, prometne, okoljske itn.) izvaja v sklopu integracijskih procesov, ki vplivajo na spremembo prostora, bi lahko govorili o prostorsko integracijskih procesih in kohezijsko teritorialni politiki. Našteto narekuje, da mora prostor dobiti pomembnejši značaj v ustvarjanju in izvedbi različnih politik.

KLJUČNE BESEDE

prostor, teritorij, prostorsko integracijski procesi, teritorialna kohezija, evropsko prostorsko planiranje

1 INTRODUCTION

Today the concept of integration (economic, social, political) is most often linked with the establishment of the EU, although the European community was primarily founded as a trade block. The implementation of various policies at the EU level (agricultural, transport, environmental etc.) occurs in space and makes growing demands upon space. Space is affected by various political integrations, which by their border regimens may slow down or advance the regional development (Majcen, B.)¹ of certain areas.

Since the implementation of sectoral policies occurs in space, we may say that a spatial dimension is contained in sectoral policies. Although it still cannot with certainty be planned and established in what manner and to what extent specific policies may have an impact on space through the implementation of their programmes, it is certain that space is exposed to changes due to the implementation of these programmes. When implementing a number of policies (trade, transport, environment) within the European integration processes, the question is posed whether we may also talk of spatial integration processes or territorial cohesion. The question is often posed whether in the framework of integration processes a common spatial policy is needed which would lead to a better territorial cooperation among and within territories. Hence documents are adopted at the EU level (ESDP 1999, the Territorial State and Perspectives of the European Union document 2006, Territorial Agenda 2007, etc.) fostering sustainable development, harmonisation of spatial policies, territorial cohesion, etc. to enable space to meet the more and more numerous demands of various sectoral policies.²

In order to enable a comparison and harmonisation of national spatial policies, monitoring and awareness of trends and changes occurring in space is necessary through a common database.

2 OBSERVATION OF THE EUROPEAN SPACE

Spaces differ in terms of geographic, economic, social and natural conditions and the manner of their use. Due to certain characteristics, manner of use and degree of equipment with infrastructure, some spaces are becoming increasingly attractive, and thereby also more competitive, while others stagnate. Considering the complex changes occurring in the society in general, and thereby also in space, there is a growing awareness that space is exposed to increasing pressures (construction, regulation of water courses, intensive agricultural production, tourism growth), and due to the growing threats to space, it needs to be examined from various aspects. How to make a comparison between spaces? How to establish their values and potentials? How to determine criteria for the identification of space? How to monitor changes in space? Is it sufficient to describe space only by statistical data? On the basis of which data should equivalent³ living conditions be planned and secured in space?

¹ Also Majcen, B., in his article *Regionalno in prostorsko uravnotežen razvoj states that through the establishment of the Schengen Agreement the zone along the Slovenian and Croatian border will be exposed to degradation, while the zone along the Hungarian and Austrian border will be exposed to faster development.*

² Regardless of the fact whether the Constitution will be ratified or not, the ministers responsible for spatial planning are expected to adopt, in Leipzig in June 2007, the *Territorial Agenda of the EU (2007-2010)*, which proposes a number of concrete measures aimed at achieving a certain form of territorial cohesion policy.

³ Equivalent living conditions do not mean identical living conditions. Refer to *Perspectives of Spatial Development in Germany, Bundesamt für Bauwesen und Raumordnung; Bundesministerium für Verkehr, Bau und Stadtentwicklung, Bonn/Berlin, 2006, p. 6.*

Therefore at the European level the need arises for the establishment of a uniform classification of data to compare the values of space and to monitor trends and changes in space. In order to enable certain comparisons of values and potentials of certain spaces, space first needs to be characterised, and trends occurring in it need to be identified (positive or negative ones). In order to consider the changes in space in an integral manner, in addition to the basic statistical demographic data (which are standardised at the EU level) which are used to elaborate forecasts, projections, population trends, nationality, population density, number of housing units etc., data need to be taken into consideration also from the sociological aspect (housing, health, crime), economic aspect (free market, economic activities, poverty, employment, disparity), degree of education, environment (climate, air quality, noise level, water, waste management, land use, energy use), traffic and transport, use of information technology, essential data on culture, landscape and recreation (culture and recreation, tourism). Trends in space may be also considered by insight into implementation of legislative regulations (illegal construction, urban reallocation, regulated titles in land registers, etc.).

In global terms, spatial differences may be represented through a material dimension, however thereby no information is provided on the spiritual dimension, which is essential for a long-term perspective.

The question however poses itself on how to represent, measure and compare changes in space from the aesthetic or spiritual aspect. How to describe and measure changes in the landscape which occurred after construction? Such and many other questions arise when wishing to compare spaces.

Although the ESPON (European Spatial Planning Observation Network) programme represents a major step towards the harmonisation of concepts, methods, data and understanding of results related to space at the European level (29 countries are involved in this programme), due to numerous historical, economic, social and cultural differences among states and regions, unified spatial indicators (Kranjčević, 2005) on the basis of which spaces could be compared have still not been established neither in Europe nor in Croatia. In other words, there is no way of proving that a certain space is undergoing qualitative changes of its values over the long term, after having exceeded a certain quantitative value (e.g., population number, employment, income per capita, and the like). When planning the space, it is therefore important to take into consideration other elements as well.

Statistical data should not be underestimated, since they are necessary in planning, and since a balanced and updated spatial database (statistical, legislative) represents a good basis for spatial policy and spatial development. Observation of space and recording of changes is not only important to enable mutual harmonisation of the designations of space, and to enable a balanced development or to prevent negative consequences in space, but also for reasons of a more equitable distribution of financial resources from funds.

Regardless of the fact that space represents a finite resource which can be renewed, its capacity of meeting the growing demands of individuals and communities (municipalities, towns, regions, states, Europe) over the long term is nevertheless uncertain. Therefore the following question

poses itself: What provides quality to space, or what does the wealth (value) of space consist of? In any case, they definitely consist of various and numerous resources.

3 THE TERRITORY AS A DIMENSION OF EUROPEAN POLICY

The understanding of the value of space is relatively recent and has arisen after the awareness of its growing endangeredness. It is a fact that the resource space is constantly changing, as is its meaning. If only the spatial impact of technological progress (which has caused social and economic changes) is considered, significant changes can be observed. The space as a resource is gaining in significance and value (economic, ecological and aesthetic) both at the local, regional, national and at the European levels.

The European space is still divided into states, and territory is still seen as a single spatial structure to which laws of a certain state are applied, which has a certain government, parliament, army, etc. The territories of single states vary due to different geographical, historical, economic, political and other conditions. Each state plans its territory by its legislative regulations on spatial planning, and has its own spatial development objectives which differ from those of other states.

When implementing various policies, which take place in space and within the framework of integration processes, in EU Member States, space is increasingly seen as a territorial capital (which, in addition to its economic value, has also a social and cultural one), and through the adoption of the ESDP (European Spatial Development Perspective) document territory has gained a certain dimension in the European policy (Perspektiva evropskog prostornog razvoja, 1999).

When considering the entire European space, it is well known that there is no plan in terms of spatial planning, but only an Atlas of Europe. It is understandable why there is no such plan, as the area is very wide and the set of problems related to it is complex. While some experts question the possibility of such a type of planning, due to the vast area and numerous diversities, and believe that the spatial regulation of such a large area would resemble utopian planning, other experts see a form of European spatial planning in a stronger territorial cohesion (Faludi, 2006) (connectedness) through monitoring of the following: spatial development trends and impacts on the development of space; new findings or beliefs on the connectedness of space; socio-political values and their trends; new tasks for spatial development; new motives and objectives for further development of the space. All this is a confirmation of the fact that spatial planning represents a complex task when planning various development policies, as it also represents an increasingly important segment in the planning and implementation of various policies.

Since spatial planning at the European level has not been established on a regulatory basis, neither has an authority been established which would be responsible for addressing issues related to space.

Due to the large area and numerous differences, documents adopted at the European level are general, although sometimes limiting, however they cannot have a significant impact on any type of spatial changes.

Since in the case of spatial planning it is a matter of harmonisation of various spatial structures within as well as between various territories, which have to be coordinated and whose balanced development needs to be enabled, it may be stated that the European space needs to be viewed as a connected spatial whole.

4 SPATIAL INTEGRATION PROCESSES

Since the implementation of a number of policies (trade, transport, environment, etc.) is carried out within the framework of integration processes which occur in space and have an impact on the transformation of space⁴, the question may be posed, whether we may, when implementing integration processes, talk of spatial integration processes or of territorial cohesion. It is to be expected that space will be exposed to numerous and long-lasting changes. It is not possible to establish with certainty how and to what extent space will change, however there is no doubt that certain changes will occur. Therefore we may ask ourselves two questions: How and to what extent can the planning of spatial development at the European level have impact on space, and thereby also on its transformation? What are the prospects and opportunities for using spatial planning for the planning of spatial development?

There exist certain studies (De Boe, Ph., Grasland, C., Healy, A. 1999) which consider space in a context wider than the territorial one, so we may, in a way, also talk of spatial integration processes. Spatial integration processes may be considered through: mobility, networking, economic trends, environmental protection, cultural heritage conservation, etc. Spatial integration may be considered within the framework of integration processes between various territories and within territories. Spatial integration may also imply the integration of various sectoral policies or territorially based objectives. As a matter of fact, spatial integration can be generated if there are links in the geographical location, common culture, political sensitivity and the manner of using space.

Spatial integration viewed through co-operation at international or common projects should in any case be voluntary, and, in this sense, human motivation can play a major role. Difficulties in the realisation of spatial integration may certainly be identified in: failure to utilise the development potentials of space (failure to identify the potentials or lack of financial resources to direct their development potentials, etc.), low-quality planning, failure to utilise human potentials, territorial ineffectiveness, and the like.

5 CONCLUSION

Consideration, planning and implementation of various sectoral policies within the framework of European integration processes indicates that some policies taking place in space are planned and implemented on the basis of commonly established objectives (agricultural policy, transport policy, monetary union, etc.). Therefore identifying the territorial approach when planning various

⁴ Communications are developed, settlements are expanded, and statistical indicators show that the area of built and developed space is increasing in relation to natural space. For users and inhabitants of space, vital location factors of settlements (availability of land, water, defence security, etc.) are losing in importance, while they are increasingly focused on the market, rents, costs of developed land, recreation, education, conservation of natural and cultural heritage, environmental protection, etc.

sectoral policies is an important instrument for creating high-quality changes in space, and at the same time it can be a link between various sectoral policies. Negative changes in space may be caused if, when implementing integration policies, only economic or social elements are taken into account, and spatial elements are left out. This indicates that space represents an important resource which needs to be carefully managed in the framework of integration processes. To what extent are individual states aware of their spatial values and of the opportunities for using their space in integration processes?

Care for space does not imply only the development and adoption of spatial plans, but it also implies a professional approach and awareness of the processes and trends which take into account the preservation and improvement of various spatial values. Therefore, when implementing integration processes, the question has to be posed on how to plan development which, in the long term, will benefit space. An indication whether space, within integration processes, should be viewed through the prism of territorial cohesion or "supra-territoriality", is provided by the latter, when taking into account territorial capital. Dealing with either territorial cohesion or the implementation of spatial integration processes, both affect national territorial interests.

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