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PROBLEMS OF INTEGRATION OF SPATIAL AND SOCIO-ECONOMIC PLANNING ON A LOCAL LEVEL IN POLAND

Abstract: Integration of space planning and socio-economic planning is a general problem discussed in the paper. Its main aim is the description of integration conditions with reference to the contemporary Polish practice. Emphasis has been placed on the dissimilar aims and regulatory mechanics of both sub-systems. Their common features have been presented as well. Finally, the favourable and unfavourable aspects of integration of regulatory mechanisms governing spatial and socio-economic development processes are outlined.

Keywords: Integrated planning, socio-economic planning, spatial planning.

Introduction

One of the main shortcomings of spatial planning in Poland, which can be partly attributed to the questionable quality of the current legal regulations, is the lack of systemic synchronization of socio-economic and spatial planning. The problem is not new and the need to harmonize the two types of planning has been discussed for many decades. Specific arrangements have even been put in place, such as government programmes; this is still reflected in the *Act on Spatial Planning and Management* (Article 48)¹, which remains in force. It should be noted that this act confirms a general observation that “soft” legal provisions prove largely ineffective in steering developments in a desirable direction. Therefore, the recently undertaken initiatives, focused mainly on “improving” the law, without initiatives aimed at systemic rebuilding of the entire model of spatial policy, are not very promising.

¹ “Ministers and central government bodies – acting within their respective competences - draw up programmes that include government tasks, hereinafter referred to as “programmes”, aimed at implementing public investments of national importance.”

1. Spatial planning system, the socio-economic system and mechanisms regulating them

In keeping with the above subject, we shall examine the integration of spatial and socio-economic planning – problems associated with it, including the conditions of and possibilities for the integration of plans. An important aspect of the study is the examination of differences between the carefully defined systems² of spatial plans and socio-economic plans. These differences may form a basis for reflection on conditions and possibilities of integrating the two systems³. They shall be presented separately in further sections of the study. First, key concepts referred to in the study shall be defined and expounded.

Spatial planning system

Important categories referred to in the paper, along with their mutual relations, also require a brief explanation. They are presented in Fig. 1.

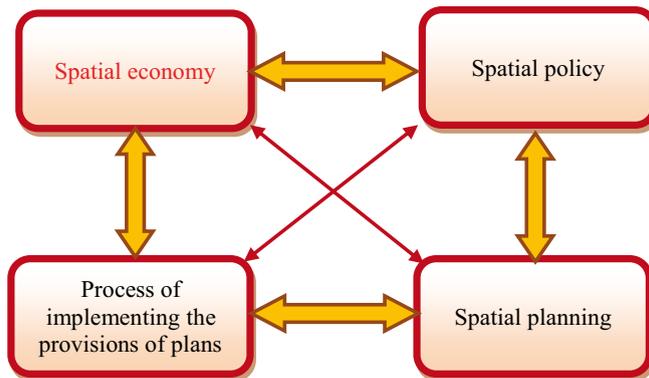


Figure 1. Basic categories in spatial politics and spatial planning

Source: Own study (Figs.1 and 2).

With reference to the categories presented in Fig. 1, it should be noted that *spatial economy* can be classified as a real process, while the other three are the realm of regulation processes. Policy, planning and spatial policy management are to improve

² For the purposes of further discussion, the term *system* has been adopted. Only its specific components are, however, taken into account. It should therefore be regarded more as a problem area for the discussion.

³ The integration of spatial and socio-economic plans referred to as *integrated development planning* has been expounded in [Markowski 2014, in press].

real processes that constitute spatial economy. The author of the paper is aware of the controversy surrounding this term⁴ – it would perhaps be more intelligible to refer to the “*rational organization of space (for the needs of the economy and society)*”, or “*spatial economic order*”. Nevertheless, the term *space economy* has already become a permanent fixture of both Polish literature and academic education. For the purposes of this paper, we define it as “*all resources and activities carried out in the sectors of manufacturing, services, investment, distribution and consumption within a territory (country, region, city, municipality), including their deployment in the physical space, with clear emphasis on arrangement as a focus of attention.*” This definition presents the category in terms of real processes occurring within a defined territory; this aspect of spatial management is the subject of further examination. We shall leave out the interpretation of space economy that highlights the accumulated knowledge and treat it as a separate academic discipline.

The different character of the other three categories deserves reemphasizing, as it is not always sufficiently stressed in discussions on spatial management in Poland. Spatial policy and planning – as well as the implementation process – belong to the sphere of regulation processes. By their very nature, they are aimed at safeguarding the most reasonable situation – in the light of the adopted criteria – but also of the processes of change in what we understand as spatial economy. Among the three categories, the primary is **spatial policy**. It can practically be assumed that the remaining two form an integral part of it, and that they have been identified rather for the purposes of further discussion than as independent entities. It is part of development policy designed to intervene in the management of space within a specific territory. In general, it means setting spatial targets and launching any actions or measures available to political entities that enable achieving these goals. General objectives of spatial policy include:

- rational management of space,
- protection of the natural and cultural environment,
- safeguarding the economic value of space,
- spatial order and functional space management.

The presented targets are, at the same time, quality criteria for space management. It should be emphasized that their system does not constitute a mutually exclusive classification. For example, rational space management is linked to each of the remaining purposes. It can be generally claimed that rational management means management that ensures spatial order, respect for the natural and cultural environment, or taking into account the economic value of space⁵. However, the rationality of space management – just as any other objective of spatial policy – is also contingent on a specific interpretation, and this precisely justifies why it should be distinguished.

⁴ Example: [Komorowski 1977].

⁵ More on the subject: [Kudłacz 2013, pp. 355-371].

Subsequent objectives therefore permeate each other and, above all, enter into two opposite relations, *i.e.* conflict and synergy. This means that when designing space management, it is generally not possible to single out and fully respect each individual goal. Each time, it is necessary to properly balance them and their significance, which is conducive to reaching a compromise solution. The indicated problem reveals both challenges faced by a body in charge of spatial policy and its responsibility for any decisions taken.

The subsequent category is *spatial planning*. We shall abstain from defining this concept and limit ourselves to indicating that it can be interpreted as an instrument of spatial policy. The plan can be construed as an account of future intentions of a policy. If, therefore, spatial policy is understood as a pre-emptive mechanism of intervention, *i.e.* decisions taken at a given time are designed to secure in advance specific spatial objectives, it becomes apparent that the right plan forms an integral part of it. It follows that general elements that constitute spatial planning are fully in line with elements of spatial policy; these are: the subject, objectives and instruments⁶.

The above interpretation of the relationship between spatial policy and planning coincides generally with the interpretation outlined in literature. It does not seem to raise much doubt. It should be noted, however, that the content of plans, even the most professionally developed, may well contribute to success, yet not suffice to guarantee it. Therefore, if we refer to the concept of *integrated planning*, it must, in fact, mean something more than mutually interlinked socio-economic and spatial provisions. Without going into a broader discussion, we shall rely in this case on the following interpretation:

1. Spatial policy means, first and foremost, choices – made pursuant to specific political, social, natural, economic and urban planning criteria:
 - mainly goals and conditions,
 - but also methods of implementation.
2. The process of implementation/management of the implementation process means policy implementation:
 - on-going organization and management of the process, using all possible means and instruments ensuring process efficiency;
 - conducting development policy in an effective and efficient manner.

Socio-economic system

By analogy, interpretations outlined above can be applied to the socio-economic sphere. Basic categories for this case are presented in Fig. 2. They do not seem to

⁶ This in no way contradicts with previous statement that the spatial plan could be regarded as an instrument of spatial policy. The achievement of its objectives must, however, be protected with an appropriate set of instruments available to its stakeholders.

require further explanation. Their essence is outlined in the above description of spatial arrangement. In particular, there are nearly identical relationships between elements of the regulatory sphere.

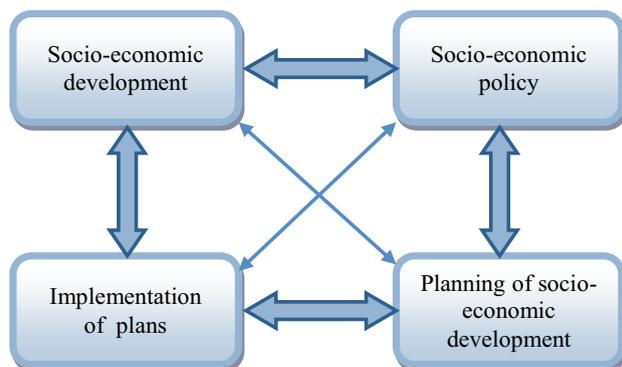


Figure 2. Basic categories related to socio-economic policies and planning

It should be clarified that the following are considered synonymous: *planning of socio-economic development* and *programming of socio-economic development*

The list of socio-economic policy objectives undoubtedly requires completing, as it differs from the previously presented spatial policy objectives. At the level of basic territorial units, the general objectives of the socio-economic policy include:

- creating optimum living conditions for local residents,
- stimulating economic and social development, in all its forms: labour market, entrepreneurship, innovation, attractiveness of location⁷.

2. Convergent and divergent features of the examined systems

Given the key objective of this study, namely issues related to the integration of spatial planning and socio-economic planning, it seems justifiable to examine the similarities and differences of the two systems, as such conclusions can become an important starting point for a discussion on the matter, as indicated above.

⁷ Understood in terms of both investment and residence. Both are essential for the development of a territorial unit [see Kudłacz 2013, p. 355 and subsequent pages].

Similarities

- 1) Both systems encompass the same elements, as shown in the above interpretation: development, policy, planning and implementation. Appropriate integration measures are required with respect to all three elements of the regulation process.
- 2) “Space management” and “socio-economic development” systems are subject to market regulation, which is complemented by a suitable policy of public authorities. The scope of regulation is, however, different for each of the two systems, which is further discussed below.
- 3) In both cases, the subject is the same public authority; at the municipal level, is it the local government, or more specifically its executive body (the head of the commune or the mayor), and partly also the municipal council. This entity is responsible for processes occurring within both systems.
- 4) The policy conducted in the framework of the two systems pursues – generally – similar missions (primary objectives): ensuring optimal functioning and development of the territorial unit concerned.

Differences

- 1) Space management and socio-economic development differ in the extent to which they are impacted by market regulators. From the point of view of market regulation possibilities and in the context of a socio-economic system, two subsystems can be identified. The first includes development processes that could be governed by the market mechanism, yet due to the known shortcomings of this mechanism, they must be corrected through appropriate public policy interventions. In other words, the market could handle the emerging problems if we accepted the “costs” of such regulations (mainly time, as well as social and environmental consequences). The second subsystem consists of processes that are not impacted by market regulation, due to the absence of conditions under which it operates. If we somewhat simplify the problem, it can be assumed that this largely concerns the sphere of public goods. On the other hand, the first sub-system does not really exist in the domain of space management. Physical space may not correspond to the notion of the public good, but it encompasses its main attributes, which justifies why it cannot be market-regulated. Appropriate development processes are, therefore, the responsibility of public entities. And therefore, the “market-state” dilemma pertaining to the socio-economic system, often raised in both political and academic debate, is inexistent in the case of land management.
- 2) The objectives of spatial and socio-economic development policies are partly congruous with each other. To a certain extent, their achievement is interdependent; however, many of them are more or less contradictory. A classic example is the

conflict between securing economic values on the one hand and ensuring investment attractiveness on the other hand. The first objective is much more preventive in nature, as it safeguards limited resources available. The other is characterized by greater expansiveness; it is aimed at seeking out solutions aimed at strengthening the competitive position of a given territorial unit.

- 3) The objectives outlined in spatial plans and socio-economic development plans are formulated differently. Spatial plans focus on the final outcome of the process of managing a given territory to a much greater extent than on the paths that lead to such outcomes. In the programming of socio-economic development, by definition, it is necessary to take into account scenarios illustrating the trajectories of the proposed development. As indicated above, such (socio-economic) plans must determine real phenomena and processes that need to take place, while the focus of spatial management plans is the admissibility and recommendation of a specific socio-economic activity within a particular territory. Socio-economic plans are arguably less demanding than spatial plans. It should be noted that in the first, the development vision is based on parameters highlighting various aspects of the forthcoming socio-economic changes in a territorial unit. The adopted objectives do not, generally, require a comprehensive synchronization. In order to design the necessary measures aimed at achieving them, it is only necessary to consider three possible relationships between them, *i.e.* mutual neutrality, conflict and synergy. A greater complexity of approach is required in spatial plans. They are to enable creating a future vision of spatial management, whose quality is much more complex. Quality depends on individual elements, which are manifestations of development, but – above all – on their mutual relationships forming an overall picture of spatial economy within a territorial unit, expressed by such synthetic categories as spatial order and functionality. This brings us back to previous explanations. Spatial management in a particular territorial unit must take into account a catalogue of elements into which a given space can be developed, that is, a catalogue designed on the basis of socio-economic plans. At the same time, it is necessary to make decisions on the desired spatial composition of the emerging elements of space. In addition, spatial plans cannot be reduced only to the passive role of the design principle that governs the development of a given space. They must also impose changes within the existing space. For this reason, spatial plans are generally characterized by a greater complexity.
- 4) The above description indicates that the role of spatial plans can be reduced to two groups of functions. The first, more determined by socio-economic plans, involves the design of spatial distribution within a territorial unit, taking into account different directions of socio-economic activity, to ensure that the emerging or planned spatial composition is characterized with high internal functionality and an appropriate role in relation to the external environment (the overriding spatial

system). The second group of functions is more autonomous and associated with the development of existing spatial compositions. This concerns in particular the technical infrastructure, as well as the management of public spaces. From the presented explanations, we can derive another difference that occurs between socio-economic and spatial plans. The former must recognize not only what the entity intends to achieve, but also when it is expected to take place, or otherwise must specify a time horizon for the implementation of the plan. Spatial plans are slightly different. They do not encompass time horizons. This is true in particular of spatial plans that fulfil the first of the above-mentioned groups of functions. Once taken, decisions remain valid until the subject of the plan introduces modifications to the space management concept. The introduction of any time horizon would be completely unfounded in this case. The spatial plan, as a future-oriented concept of space development, determines what is to be located in specific places. It does not specify, however, any timeline of this process. It is quite clear if we take into account the potential locations of commercial ventures, as well as supra-local public investments, yet less obvious in relation to the local government's own investments, although also in this case, an entity is not obliged to specify when it is to occur.

- 5) Spatial plans are – inherently – long-term projections. There are no short-term or even medium-term spatial plans. Socio-economic plans, in turn, can cover various periods. A territorial unit should have long-term plans, in particular a comprehensive development strategy, as well as medium-term plans, which include operational plans that serve the purposes of implementing the strategic plan.
- 6) Differences in approaches to both types of interventions of public entities have been rooted in the Polish planning practice – both present and past. With regard to spatial planning, territorial units are legally obliged to have plans and there are specific requirements pertaining to the process (mode) of drawing up plans. Such obligations – pertaining to the existence of plans and the procedure of their preparation – are non-existent in the case of socio-economic development. These divergences result in poorly synchronized practices of drawing up appropriate plans: separate planning teams, different schedules of drawing up and adopting plans, unconnected subjects of plans, as evidenced by the far-reaching autonomy of socio-economic arrangements outlined in *Study of land use conditions and directions* in relation to development strategies or more specialized development programmes.

3. Favourable and restrictive conditions for the integration of mechanisms regulating spatial and socio-economic development processes

For the purposes of the discussion, let us adopt the following assumption: within each territorial unit, there is a single system of operation and development, including intertwined social, economic, spatial and ecological processes. This approach should also be adopted towards any interventions aimed at stimulating growth. For various reasons, specific measures aimed at supporting processes that take place within individual subsystems must be varied. They should, however, stem from and be subordinated to the overriding arrangements that coordinate specific interventions. If we limit the discussion to two systems that are the subject of this study, *i.e.* spatial and socio-economic, it transpires that they constitute a whole that cannot be easily broken down into its constituent parts. If we generalize slightly, we can say that each socio-economic activity involves – on an exclusive basis – a fragment of space. The choice of location cannot be random, dictated solely by market requirements; it must depend on the vision of the entire system. On the other hand, spatial planning does not mean design “filling in” the space with material manifestations of social and economic development without a coherent vision of its development. It is important, however, to ensure that the vision is created without taking into account the relevant socio-economic plans.

The integration of regulation mechanisms of spatial and socio-economic development should encompass all of the three previously discussed components, *i.e.* the policy, planning and implementation arrangements, which should be referred to the general concept of development of a territorial unit.

Development policies provide a most general integration platform, encompassing two further categories.

Development planning, in turn, means codified policy arrangements within a specific future horizon. When reflecting on integration in this platform of intervention manifestations, we should consider two groups of problems, quite evident in the Polish space planning practice. The first involves the process (procedures) of planning; in Poland, they represent the main source of problems that are the subject of these reflections. Planning procedures require an arrangement, which respects the differences between spatial and socio-economic planning, yet allows drawing up projections that take into account both aspects of overall development. While these issues are formal and procedural, the integration of spatial and socio-economic plans is substantive and constitutes the second group of problems. The integration of planning procedures, which is the focus of the provisions of relevant legal acts, does not guarantee a full integration of the provisions of plans. This requires separate systemic decisions taken within the overall development policy model. An example of a possible discussion is

the proposed requirement of a forecast of spatial, financial and environmental effects to be included to in the strategic plan (programme) of development of a territorial unit. In addition, in the diagnosis part, the development plan should include an assessment of the existing land management plan of the given municipality.

The integration of planning procedures or provisions does not guarantee anything: the success depends entirely on the determination of the entity, evidenced in the process of implementation of intervention directions, outlined in the plan and appropriately coordinated.

Going back to the discussion referred to in the above title, it should be noted that limiting conditions that are conducive to integration are – to a large extent – linked to previously presented differences and similarities between the two systems. They can also form the basis for a broader discussion on integration conditions. By limiting the discussion to the present situation in Polish practice, one can point out the following **limiting conditions** that hinder integration:

- 1) Excessive trust of decision makers in regulations governing the subject and procedures to be pursued in development policies. These regulations are essential and a source of necessary, yet insufficient conditions, which cannot ensure an actual integration. Parallel organisational measures are needed to integrate the responsibilities and the organizational structure of local authorities, as well as information activities. A system of properly subsidized financing of development measures of basic administrative units is also of utmost importance.
- 2) The habits of respective planning teams, which are difficult to overcome and frequently based on mutual distrust, also associated with a critical assessment of competences. This leads to the petrification of the largely dominant – until recently – model of education and job promotion among highly qualified planning professionals.
- 3) The above is related to the divergent opinions of various professional groups, including lawyers, urban planners, economists and geographers (especially those specialising in the environment), as well as differences among various interest groups. For example, representatives of local authorities perceive particular problems, especially the requirements of spatial planning, differently than real estate developers.
- 4) It can be expected that the objective conflict between the goals of the current development, which are often short-term, and the long-term goals will hinder the discussed integration. The objectives of spatial policy require long-term reference. The situation may be slightly different in the case of economic and, especially, social policy. Short-term political interests may adversely affect the quality of development policies. The problem can undoubtedly be attributed to the fact that members of local government bodies are elected for short terms of office, and therefore not always interested in long-term perspectives. This can be countered by

institutional arrangements, aimed for instance at creating professional institutions taking over tasks that arise in the process of implementing development plans.

Conditions that are conducive to **integration-enhancing** mechanisms regulating development processes are limited to three issues:

- 1) More and more widespread is the conviction about the need for systemic changes in regulations governing the territorial development policy, in particular in relation to spatial planning. It is evidenced by the results of studies relating to spatial development in Poland, in particular in relation to the functional areas of large cities, revealing a far-reaching ineffectiveness of spatial planning instruments.
- 2) The potential instrumental impact of major development projects and financial resources. At least until the end of 2020, Poland will have access to large European funds that can be instrumental in motivating an integrated approach to designing development orientations.
- 3) Significant changes in the education and training of spatial planning professionals may prove an important and favourable factor. *Spatial Economics* is a university course that has been taught for many years, integrating various academic disciplines and providing future spatial planning professionals with knowledge, skills and competencies to ensure interoperability in multi-disciplinary working groups. An adequately institutionalized initiative of regular meetings between representatives of leading universities seems particularly important in this respect, as it allows them to exchange experiences and seek new, effective teaching and learning solutions.

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