

SOME PROBLEMS OF INTEGRATING THE LANDSCAPE PLANNING INTO THE SPATIAL AND ENVIRONMENTAL PLANNING IN SERBIA

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A short review has been given of Serbian spatial and environmental planning, and in particular of relevant legislation. Attention has been paid to the landscape treatment within legislative grounds, and correspondingly in planning practice. Few assumptions have been made, upon the lack of methodological and integrated approach to the landscape protection and management. Strategic plans (spatial and town master plans), sectoral plans and policies (for soil, forestry etc) have been reviewed in attempt to verify the stated assumptions. The problems of landscape and open green space protection and maintenance have been brought up. In reference to the EU recommendations, legislation and instruments have been investigated regarding the entrenchment of the landscape concept and landscape planning into the spatial, environmental and related sectoral planning. Prior to the landscape concept implementation is the survey and establishment of regional landscape diversification so as to differentiate regional approaches to landscape planning.

Key words: *spatial planning, environmental planning, landscape planning, survey, and landscape diversification, landscape protection.*

INTRODUCTION

In the waves of transition and recent changes to political system and regulatory planning mechanisms in most Eastern and Central European countries, the Serbian planning practice is discovering new avenues trying to develop original activities within the framework of economic, political and professional independence.

Planning in Serbia has lost its former legitimacy, but has not yet achieved the new authority and role in directing and controlling the development.

After periods of centralization (before 1974) and decentralization (1974-1990), in the last decade of the 20th century and at the beginning of the 21st century the whole planning system, but foremost the socio-economic planning collapsed, leaving spatial/physical planning to muddle its way through (without basic inputs from socio-economic planning), and environmental planning system in the unfinished state.

The widespread rejection of planning since early 1990s inflicted the disregard of its pertinent role in the transition period. On the other hand, the planning system and practice have long been in need of a radical reconstruction; consequently the present changes only reiterated such an urge.

The main idea of this paper is to discuss the present state and problems of the Serbian spatial, environmental and landscape planning practice, to develop possibilities to improve the landscape planning practice and to integrate it into the planning system, while being in the re-definition and re-conceptualisation phase. The necessity to adopt and implement numerous EU frameworks, legislation and instruments might be working to the benefit of the processes in question. At the same time, this approach would reflect how the Serbian planning community might improve its "own values" whilst looking forward to creating a modern and efficient planning mechanism.

KEY PROBLEMS OF SERBIAN SPATIAL, ENVIRONMENTAL AND LANDSCAPE PLANNING

Spatial planning

Legal grounds for spatial utilization, protection and construction, in comparison with the European countries, ought to be classified into the category of extensive non-codified legislation. Some parallels might be drawn to Greek, Italian and Portuguese state of affairs because of the lack of codification, actuality, consistency, uniformity and circumstances of the legal solutions. (The EU compendium of spatial planning systems and policies, 1997.) The hyper-production and non-codification of laws and secondary legislation represents a real drawback of Serbian society and the planning system at all levels. For example, nearly 40 laws have direct or indirect impacts on the spatial utilization, protection and construction. Legal grounds, both in the previous period and in latest attempts during 2001-2003, failed to establish the necessary principles and mechanisms, so as to gain the

executive powers in terms of coordinating different interests, influences and activities in urban or rural areas.

In comparison with the planning practice in European countries, the spatial planning in Serbia is relatively developed in respect to the contents and the representation of various strategic and regulatory plans foreseen for different planning levels. As a binding and indicative framework, strategic planning includes: national, regional and local (for communes) spatial plans, spatial plans for special purpose areas (i.e., areas of natural and cultural heritage, infrastructure corridors, lignite basins or open cast mining, water basins, tourism areas, etc.) and town master plans. In the past, spatial plans for communes, plans for special purpose areas, as well as town master plans played the most significant role in view of the land use, spatial development and protection. Due to over-centralization, since 1995 the spatial plans for communes have been abandoned, with sound claim for its restoration ever since.

The expectations of the planners that the passing of the strategic planning framework on the national/republican level (The Spatial Plan of the Republic of Serbia, 1996), was to bring about an important improvement in the changing role of the spatial planning, which would incite the re-definition of the planning system in Serbia have failed.

The current social problems and those of the planning profession within frequently changing legal conditions are well documented by Perisic and Bojovic (1997) who say that "we can help society only to the extent society, i.e. its political factor on its behalf, understands the problems and wishes to solve them". They further claim that we are far away from political consensus on the goals and a strategy concerning the development of the national territory, towns and cities, because everyone believes their interest to be the most important and most legitimate. Consequently, the ruling elite does not consider the physical planning and urban manifestations of public interest as societal preferences. That is as true now as when it was written.

Subsequent to passing of the Spatial Plan of the Republic of Serbia, the elaboration of the strategic and regulating planning grounds has stagnated. Instead of the planning bases, which ought to guide the spatial development, utilization and protection, and coordinate various interests, planning instruments are

widely used to ensure the interests of groups and individuals in the spatial organization and utilization. The category of urban development and comprehensive (town) master plans, which existed for almost 50 years, were replaced by the so-called urban design projects. Perisic and Bojovic (ibid) argue that in practice, today's urban planning is almost nonexistent, as are corresponding urban analyses and reports. Technical documentation (most often infrastructure design projects) has often been considered as adequate substitute for urban plans, enabling the granting of planning and building permits by the state and local authorities. Due to the planning activities decrease, in Serbia, a wide-spread spatial disorder has evoked numerous illegally erected or adapted buildings, encompassing mostly individual housing units, and small business premises, as well as a number of large state/publicly owned assets.

In relation to the planning systems of the European countries, the spatial planning system in Serbia can be classified as incomplete and inefficient comparable to the Greek, Italian, Portuguese, and Spanish (The EU compendium of spatial planning systems and policies, 1997), especially in view of the inefficient implementation of strategic and regulatory planning grounds.

The need to regard the preparation and implementation of plans as two interrelated components of an integrated professional and legal development process, rather than as two separate activities, has not been emphasized in the Serbian political and socio-economic practice, moreover it was neglected/avoided in the current legislative. Therefore, the activities of the state and the social community in the provision of corresponding support to the effectuation of the plan implementation are missing. Crucial problems of the organization and accomplishment of the plan implementation are insufficient and slow coverage of the space with appropriate strategic and regulatory plans, absence of programming, information and monitoring support, insufficient and extensive institutional-organizational arrangements on all levels of management etc. A specific problem resides in the lack of important policies (regional, land, housing, etc.), or in the deficiency of measures and instruments of various policies that might serve to control and curb the spatial use (fiscal, credit, investment etc.). On the other side, the disregard of the local population in view of providing proper information and education,

the lack of professional help and organization of the local public and private sector's participation is more than obvious. (Maksimic, 2000)

Environmental planning

Similarly to the spatial planning system, legal grounds for environmental protection can be classified into the category of extensive non-codified legislation. In the mid-1990s, new aspects in the environmental policy and planning came to force. A number of the ex ante EIA procedures was prescribed in the preparation of urban design projects, technology programmes and technical documentation. An effort was made to prescribe, in legal terms, an approach pertinent to sustainable development. The practice has been lagging far behind normative protection, producing poor environmental conditions, thus in a sharp contrast to both a dense web of legislative and other environmental regulations, and achieved level of socio-economic development in Serbia.

With regard to the relation between environmental policy and spatial and town planning policy, the key characteristics of the existing situation could be specified. In practice, the level of harmonization between different planning processes and procedures is relatively low. This, in particular, applies to the ex ante planning and environmental evaluation assessment. Therefore, it could be stated that the environmental protection is not sufficiently integrated in the decision-making on spatial development and other related matters. This is partly caused by rather undeveloped methodology for integrating planning policy and environmental policy. Both in spatial planning and environmental policy, there has been almost no example of a systematic ex post or ex continuo evaluation/assessment, the ex ante evaluation/assessment being practiced by far the most frequently. The majority of ex ante evaluation studies, however, handle a rather narrow scope of impacts, inferred costs and benefits. Likewise, the assessment of a single (anticipated) development and protection option dominates over the evaluation of alternative strategies.

The National Assembly of the Republic of Serbia is in the ratification procedure of the new "umbrella" environmental law, with strengthened attempts to insure the overall coordination of spatial, environmental and sectoral planning. As for the planning and environmental evaluation assessment instru-

ments and procedures, for the first time the SEA and ex-post EIA are stipulated. Following the EU directive, SEA is connected with the spatial, town and sectoral planning processes and procedures, and ex-post EIA with the investment projects realization. The methodology for SEA preparation being still under way may be a serious handicap for its application.

Key problems of integrating the landscape planning into the spatial and environmental planning

Cvejic, Vider, Prokic (2001) argue that the landscape planning has not yet become a properly defined planning field within the planning system and practice. This is mainly due to the lack of an adequate legislative framework. The way that landscape is treated and integrated in the planning systems in European countries has never gained acceptance and turned into tradition in Serbian practice, contrary to some of the former republics of the FRY (e.g. Slovenia, Croatia). Nevertheless, since 1970s some experts, not only from the biology disciplines (Bogdanovic, 1973; Milinkovic, 1978; Jankovic, 1987; Gostovic, 1989 etc.), have spoken in favour of advanced approaches to the landscape treatment.

The landscape as a specific planning aspect, and related planning field has been neglected not only in the spatial and sectoral planning, but also even in the environmental planning. The landscape concept and landscape planning have neither been adequately embedded within an array of Urban and Regional Planning Acts, and Environmental Protection Acts, nor by the related legislation on natural resources (agriculture land, forestry, water, mine etc.).

In the current Urban and Spatial Planning Act, as well as in the Act in preparation, it is not provided for the element of landscape, neither of landscape planning, protection and management within the planning process, nor of the landscape as a binding component of the strategic plan's contents. Furthermore, not even the provision of open green spaces as a component of regulatory plan's contents has been suggested. This has partly been bridged by the secondary legislation, however only in the regulatory plans and instruments (design projects) for urban areas. On the other hand, not a single provision related to landscape or open green spaces has been stipulated when speaking of the regulatory plans and instruments for rural areas.

In the current Environmental Protection Act, the landscape concept has been related exclu-

sively to the natural heritage, as one of the prerequisites for its establishment. At the same time, landscape protection and management are not mentioned in any of prescribed environment and nature protection related policies, plans or programmes, not even in those associated to natural heritage preservation. Similarly, the forthcoming "umbrella" environmental law, though relatively ambitious and progressive, failed to forward the approach to landscape treatment vis-à-vis previous legislation. In fact, environmental legislation, with the "umbrella" law is first and foremost essential for the creation of the landscape concept, landscape planning, protection and management, but also for contriving interrelations with other planning fields, their planning processes and procedures.

In the spatial and town planning, the landscape treatment has been fragmented and reduced to particular landscape components. Spatial planning at all levels has completely neglected the landscape, its ecological, cultural, socio-economic, aesthetic and other values. This is the case with the Spatial Plan of the Republic of Serbia, as well as with the spatial plans for the specific purpose areas with intensive spatial/physical and socio-economic transformations (i.e. construction of regional water reservoir or highway, open cast mining etc.). Any attempt to analyse and assess expected impacts, and to steer and reduce landscape changes and damages have been avoided. For example, the spatial plan for lignite basin deals with the problem of the revitalisation and restoration of damaged areas after mining. At the same time they deal very little with the landscape damages and arrangement. So far, the first attempt of the kind has been undertaken during the preparation of the Spatial Plan of the Pan-European Multi-modal Transport Corridor "10." - Section Belgrade-Nis (2001). The idea was to analyse the highway construction and exploitation impacts on landscape, and to prescribe measures and actions for landscape protection and management. Nonetheless, the first problem has been the already caused landscape damages due to the fact that the highway section has been constructed a decade ago. The second problem has been the lack of the basic research of the landscape typology at the national, regional and local level. In such circumstances the spatial plan could deal only with the presumptions of different landscape types and alterations, and measures for their recovery or restoration, and arrangement. The other spatial plan for the Corridor "10." -

section Nis-FRY Macedonian border, has taken into consideration the landscape design at the level of regulatory plans for highway sections and different kinds of highway facilities (e.g. gas stations, motels, resting places etc).

Vider (1996) discussed the spatial planning practice of the natural heritage areas, some of which have been competing for or listed at the Ramsar and MAB list etc. She pointed out that from the nature protection and preservation standpoint, the spatial plans for natural heritage areas (e.g. national parks, wetlands, gorges etc.) were deficient in terms of the landscape functions and complexity treatment, especially in regard to the eco-biological component.

So far, interceding the integral approach in the spatial planning methodology has been incomplete, considering the missing comprehensive treatment of the landscape protection and management in the planning process. In the process of preparation and evaluation of planning options and concepts the landscape valuation and landscape plan deficiency has been evident. When introducing the SEA into the planning process, the landscape plan should be considered as an instrument for the alternative planning strategies and variant planning options evaluation assessment.

Essentially, Serbian territory has very diversified landscape, from distinctive plains and valleys, to hilly and mountain areas. So far, neither basic comprehensive and systematic research of the landscape typology has been undertaken, nor the regional diversification and classification of the landscapes (or landscape units)¹ has been established. As a result, serious limitations have occurred to creating protection policies and management frameworks for diverse landscape types, as well as to prescribing adequate recommendations and measures to the spatial, environmental and sectoral planning.

Cvejic, Vider, Prokic (ibid, p. 37) emphasize other problems of the Serbian planning practice. In the first place, they underline the undeveloped application of the landscape methodology and methods into the planning

¹ For example, in the Strategy of Spatial Organization of the Republic of Croatia (1997) the 16 regional landscape units have been differentiated, and the accompanying propositions and measures for the lower-level of the spatial planning prescribed.

process, which they assume is partly the result of lacking landscape data base, and techniques for their preparation and appliance (e.g. GIS, cadastral register, vegetation maps etc.). Secondly, they stress out the insufficient public education and information on the landscape diversity values, and their protection and management.

Somewhat better is the state of the town planning practice despite the insufficient legislative provisions for master plans. As a legacy of relatively successful and long tradition of the urban planning practice, foremost of the planning methodology established during the "golden age" of urban planning in SFRY and in Serbia (the end of 1970s and 1980s), a particular form of the landscape planning application has since been in practice – the plan of the open green and recreation spaces. On the other hand, the neglect of the aquatic landscapes and of diverse landscapes of the peri-urban zone has been one of the main weaknesses of the master plan preparation. Problems arose in regard to the extent of the pollution, land use pressures, and land speculation to which landscapes in this areas have been exposed. They cannot be addressed with fragmented measures of sectoral policies, without integrating landscape protection and management policies into the problem solving process.

As for the open green and recreation spaces the strategic urban planning practice can be valued as satisfactory, but the same does not stand for the regulatory plans and instruments, especially in Central Serbia. Both in Vojvodina and Central Serbia, the regulatory plans and instruments for urban districts display serious deficiencies, often defining open green spaces as "leftovers", only after all other land uses and activities have been defined in plan concepts.

A drastic handicap from the functional and landscape viewpoint, not in relation to the strategic but the regulatory plans level (for urban districts, peri-urban zones and rural areas), are the inadequate and incompatible constructions, encompassing mostly individual housing units, and small business premises. For example, Negotin is the outstanding traditional-cultural region in the Eastern part of Central Serbia, with a rich construction tradition and cultural heritage correlating with distinctive plain landscape. At the same time, this is the region of a high emigration rate. First migrations were to Slovenia, afterwards to Austria and Germany, and eventually Sweden.

Each migration brought a new life style and a non-critical adoption of the construction types characteristic to the Alps or other mountain landscapes. Today in the Negotin region, the visitors are visually misled as far as new building and construction types are concerned, unable to discern whether they are in the plain or some mountain area.

Similarly to the plan implementation limitations in other planning fields, the problem lays in the implementation of planned open green and recreation spaces. Opposite to the "golden age" of urban planning, with a good practice of green space arrangement, particularly for the new housing within urban areas, the early 1990s have been the turn-point in abandoning the previous practice. The dearth of financial and other investment resources led to the decrease of public investments in building, usually by cutting down the budget costs for erecting the planned public open green space, or their maintenance. Nevertheless, planned public green or existent open green spaces have become subject to all kinds of speculation. As a result, degradation and loss of the made public green spaces has expanded over the last decade. The planned public green spaces have neither been created, nor have they been protected from re-planning for other land uses, mainly for building. Since the cadastral register of the green space systems has not been established, it makes it easier to re-plan the land use according to particular interests, rather than to public interests. At the same time, this deficit limited the strategic and regulatory plans preparation, and hence the monitoring of the plan implementation of open green space. Land speculation and spill over of the illegal and unplanned construction in urban areas, especially prevailing in peri-urban zones, has brought up an extremely poor practice of disregarding the citizens' needs for the open public green spaces. The same goes for leaving any reserve space for the creation of new ones in the future.

The landscape planning and protection have been absent from sectoral planning and policies. Such a practice is unacceptable in consideration of the utilization and protection of agriculture land, forestry and deforested soil, open mining, transport infrastructure and other land uses with enormous impacts on the landscape protection and management.

According to Cvejic, Vider, Prokic (ibid, p. 37), the environmental planning and policies, in particular those related to natural heritage

preservation, show differences between the landscape protection and natural heritage protection/preservation concept, which have not yet been resolved. Moreover, divergences are evident on the subject of the criteria for defining the boundaries of the protected area, and of its buffer zone. Therefore, the research and establishment of the natural heritage areas have not taken into consideration the survey of the landscape typology, of landscape sensitivity and vulnerability, of their potentials and constraints for different activities development. Hence, it was not deliberated upon the protection measures and buffer zones adjusted to various landscape types. The same stands for the cultural heritage protection practice.

POTENTIALS OF INTEGRATING THE LANDSCAPE PLANNING INTO THE SPATIAL AND ENVIRONMENTAL PLANNING

Ahead of us is the period of the planning system and planning methodology confirmation, and the re-establishment of its legitimacy and effectiveness. The confirmation of the planning system and relevant legislation should be done in reference to EU legislative and frameworks for common areas, in the planning field in particular. This circumstance may be an advantage, which will contribute to defining the role and position of the landscape planning within the future planning system development.

Such a presumption is in accordance with at least two of numerous EU documents, which set the framework and instruments, namely with ESDP (European Space Development Perspectives, 1999) and with ELC (European Landscape Convention, 2000). ESDP has underlined conservation and wise management of natural resources and cultural heritage as one of three fundamental goals of the European policy. Further on, as for the creative management of cultural landscape, it is stressed out that policy options will be: (i) the increase of the value of cultural landscapes within the framework of integrated spatial development strategies; (ii) improvement of the development measures co-ordination, those which have an impact on landscapes. (Ibid, p.34) In ELC general measures refer in particular to: (i) the recognition of landscapes in law as essential components and an expression of the local diversity and identity; (ii) integration of landscapes into regional and town planning policies as well as sectoral and other policies of direct or indirect impact on landscape. (Ibid, p.3)

Bearing in mind the proposals and prescriptions of the EU frameworks and regulations, and taking into account the necessity of re-defining the Serbian planning system, some of the promise for landscape treatment improvement could be predicted, in particular in the spatial planning field.

Prior to all will be situating and defining the landscape concept and the landscape treatment into the environmental law and legal instruments. Consequently, the next step will be defining the landscape planning and protection as a specific planning aspect of the spatial planning and relevant sectoral planning processes, i.e. the landscape treatment as a binding component of the strategic plans concepts.

As for the landscape treatment positioning in the planning methodology, two opposite approaches figure so far. The first, delivered by experts from the landscape disciplines (Cvejic, 1996; Vider, 1996; Cvejic, Vider, Prokic, 2001), has pledged for the landscape plan as a sectoral plan, which would be a binding foundation for strategic plans preparation, in reference to landscape planning practice in the German land Nordrhein-Westfalen. The second, being promoted by experts from the biotechnology disciplines (Jovic, Medarevic, 1996), disagrees with first, seeing the landscape plan as a particular planning aspect or as component integrated in the sectoral strategic plans, i.e. forestry management plans.

From the spatial planning standpoint there are at least four problems that should be taken into account: (i) Sectoral lobbies are powerful, especially those of forestry management, transport infrastructure, water management etc. (ii) The planning lobby has an inferior position within the political and economic decision-making hierarchy; Landscape architects have not yet been in coalition with any of the existing lobbies, apparently not having enough strength to establish one of their own. (iii) Strategic planning has been in a deep crisis, which affected the sectoral planning less than other planning fields, especially in comparison to the landscape planning. (iv) The re-definition of the planning system, and of the spatial planning system in particular, would have to establish the legal requirement and the legitimacy for integrated and inter-disciplinary supervised spatial development. In that sense, different approaches to the landscape treatment within the planning system and planning process ought to be reviewed.

In this respect, the approach to the landscape treatment as an integral component and specific aspect of the spatial and environmental planning, as well as the element of sectoral planning fields with predictable impacts on the landscape seems more realistic and operational.

Essential to introducing the landscape concepts into the spatial planning practice is the establishment of regional landscape diversification and of diversified regional approaches to landscape planning. In Serbia there is at least 10-15 regionally diverse landscape types (units). In achieving the desired improvement of the strategic planning, a systematic basic survey of the landscape typology and regional landscape diversification will have to be undertaken. The outcomes of such a survey would set up the framework, measures and propositions for strategic plans, i.e. spatial, environmental and sectoral plans and policies at the national/republic, regional and local level. This survey should be focused on the essential components and characteristic values of particular landscape types (units). In strategic plans i.e. in the spatial development planning, in land use and organization, and construction, the major issues preferably will be the protection of the diverse landscape values, natural and cultural ones, being recognized as essential spatial characteristics. Besides there are other imperative reasons: ecological, cultural, aesthetics etc.

The outcome will possibly be the introduction of the landscape protection and management as an instrument for spatial planning and environmental evaluation assessment, both within the ex-ante and the ex-post planning policy evaluation. As for particular methods and techniques, in the light of the increasing relevance of interest planning aspects, as well as of the claims to integrate environmental concerns into strategic planning, plausible seem various combinations of approaches in the tradition of SCBa (Social Cost Benefit analysis), on the one hand, and those from the now emerging SEA (Strategic Environmental assessment), on the other. Predictably, the landscape protection and management may easier define its position and role in such combinations.

CONCLUSION

Despite at times very critical words, the main intention of this article, from the physical planner's standpoint, was to give a positive

outlook of the current planning system changes in Serbia.

As far as the planning system is concerned, the socio-economic planning, which used to be the dominant planning mode, has collapsed. As regards the spatial/regional and urban planning, it is expected that the legal shortcomings and planning system deficiencies will be removed. In this respect, it is believed that the landscape concept and treatment will get a real chance of integrating into the spatial planning, sectoral planning and environmental planning processes and procedures.

The assumption is that the shift from solely economic and physical planning relations to the introduction of environmental impact assessments, feasibility studies, GIS, social cost and benefits analysis, will initiate qualitative changes of the existing planning system, which might work to the benefit of the landscape protection and management.

In addition to this, there is also a strong necessity for landscape architects to establish interest coalitions with physical planners and environmental lobbies at the start, so that concept lobbying can be promoted, agreed upon and efficiently implemented.

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