

## THE SIGNIFICANCE OF REGIONAL PLANNING

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### **Abstract**

#### **The significance of regional planning**

The article is a short summary of lectures at the 1<sup>st</sup> International Summer School GEOREGNET held at Faculty of Arts, University of Maribor in Maribor 23 September, 2008. The aim of the lecture was to discuss some of the basic dilemmas about the role of regional planning in a contemporary society within the context of market economy.

#### **Key words**

regional development, regional planning

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## **1. The context of regional development**

Regional development must mean a clear improvement in the economic, social, spatial and environmental conditions because every person is entitled to better conditions. The development is possibility open to all of a country's inhabitants to enjoy material and spiritual prosperity (Friedmann 1995, xi). Such claims have at least two foundations: human rights and human development. In The Universal Declaration of Human rights (adopted by the General Assembly of the United Nations in 1948) it is stated in the article 25.1: "Everyone has the right to a standard of living for the health and wellbeing of himself and his family, including food, clothing, housing, and medical care and necessary social services, and the right to security in the event of unemployment sickness, disability, widowhood, old age, or other lack of livelihood in circumstances beyond his control" (Friedmann 1992, 10).

"Development is lived by people where they live, learn, work, love, play - and die. The primary community, whether geographical or organizational, is the immediate space open to most people. It is in the village, the neighbourhood, the town, the factory, the school, the union's local, the party's branch, the parish, the sports club, the association - whatever its purpose - that personal and societal development first and best interact" (Friedmann 1992, 4).

We may never know the ultimate limits of human development, nor may we be certain of those conditions that are most conducive to a proper human development, but we can and do know what inhibits it: hunger, poor education, a life of backbreaking labour, a constant fear of dispossession, chaotic social relations. Minority and low-income individuals and groups residing in decaying urban centres and rural hinterlands are often systematically excluded (lacking the time, training, resources, leadership, information, or experience required to participate effectively in the political process, these groups have no effective voice in determining the public policies that shape their world).

The mainstream models of economic development are not fully capable to address the massive problems of development because they emphasis mostly on rapid cumulative growth, its regional and urban bias, and the single-minded pursuit of development. Market is enabling to provide stable economic growth and an adequate standard of living for all of society's members. Market fails adequately to provide collective goods and services that provide small benefits to a large number of individuals.

The classical liberal tradition is based on the minimal state interference in society's economic affairs: to protect individual liberty and promote freedom of choice and action. Competitive markets should coordinate the actions of individuals, provide incentives to individual action, and supply those goods and services that society wants, in the quantities it desires, at the prices it is willing to pay. According to this, government has no independent role other than establishing and enforcing the rules of the game and ratifying the political adjustments worked out among the competing groups.

Market competition, properly structured and augmented, can be more efficient and equitable than traditional forms of public sector planning and regulation; traditional

models of centralized coordination are not possible in a decentralized democratic society.

The normal interplay of private action and market forces often results in situations which the nation is not willing to tolerate and which can only be improved by means of a control mechanism – planning. Special government actions within the system of regional planning referring to reduce conflicts between incompatible land uses, coordinate private development and public infrastructure, preserve open space and historic buildings, and examine the long-range impacts of current actions.

## **2. The aims of regional planning**

Regional planning is extremely ambiguous and difficult to define. It is inherently very complex. Many of the fundamental questions concerning regional planning belong to a much broader inquiry concerning the role of the state in social and spatial transformation. Regional planning is influenced by a wide variety of substantive and procedural ideas beyond its own modest disciplinary boundaries (studies of planning refer to works in political science, law, decision theory, and public policy; writings in urban history, urban sociology, geography and economics).

It covers almost the whole of human experience. It is multi-dimensional and multi-objective in its scope. The basic objective is not well understood; there is more than one objective, and perhaps dozens (economic growth, fair distribution of income, social cohesion and stability, reduction of psychological stress, a beautiful environment – the list seems endless) - these objectives may not be readily compatible, and may indeed be contradictory. Most of the processes which need controlling are human processes, which are less well understood and work with much less certainty than laws in the physical sciences (we have to work with laws of statistical tendency rather than with laws which are constantly reliable. Its method is shared with other sorts of planning activity; its subject matter is distinctively spatial, so it would produce spatial representations of how activities should be ordered on the ground.

The boundary between regional planners and related professionals (such as real estate developers, architects, city council members) is not mutually exclusive – regional planners do not -just plan, and non-planners also plan. Regional planners not only plan development, they also negotiate, forecast, research, survey, and organize financing. On the other hand planners do not have an exclusive influence over regions - developers, businesses, politicians, and other actors that also shape development (Hall 1992).

Regional planning can be understood as a sequence of actions which are designed to solve problems in the future. Regional planning is primarily a way of thinking about economic, social, spatial, and environmental problems, oriented predominantly toward the future. Regional planning as a practical field must be able to predict the consequences of development. This process can be conceptualised into a number of stages: (1) the identification and evaluation of economic, social and spatial conditions and trends of development (2) the identification of the problem; (3) the formulation of general goals and (4) more specific and measurable objectives relating to the problem; (4) the identification of possible constraints; (6) the projection of the future situation; (7) the generation and evaluation of alternative courses of action (policy statement, strategy) (Černe 2005).

Regional planning has an economic bias and is primarily concentrated with the allocation of resources between regions to achieve certain regional and national objectives. It involves the spatial, economic and social planning of development within regions and sub-regions. Regional planning should consider the human and environmental costs of economic growth. Regional planning can and must articulate market and nonmarket relations.

Regional planning is oriented towards process. The subject matter is really that part of geography which is concerned with regional and urban systems. It is concentrated on the objectives of the plan and on alternative ways of reaching them. The emphasis is on tracing the possible consequences of alternative policies.

Regional planning is planning with a spatial, or geographical, component. It considers the effect of the variable, geographical space and distance, environment. The spatial aspect of regional planning need not be limited to the three-dimensional space of Euclidean geometry, but may extend to include notions of economic space (the costs involved in traversing distance), and psychological or perception space). It is concerned with the effect of occupational mobility on the inner city – as against the new suburb – on changing household structure as it affects the housing market near the centre of the city, on household income in relation to items like travel cost for the low-income family. The relationship of parts of the regional system in geographical space is the central concern of the regional planning.

Regional planning is a response to certain problems with a regional dimension with two dominant regional issues: (1) problems of urban regions: rapid population growth, increasing urbanisation and increasing standards of living and personal mobility; (2) problems of depressed regions suffering from economic malaise.

Regional planning is an extension of local planning, dealing particularly with those matters - the movement and distribution of population and employment, the complex interaction or social and economic needs, the provision of major recreational facilities and the main communications network, for example—which can only be decided for areas much larger than the areas of existing local planning authorities.

Regional planning is concerned with inter-regional flows of population and employment, with the availability and use of resources, and with long term economic prospects which cannot properly be considered except in the context of the balance to be achieved between growth in one region and growth requirements. Intra-regional planning is directed towards resource allocation within regions - its concern is with the allocation of resources between the subregions of the region, and between various policy fields economic development, social, environmental, transport, etc. within the region and its sub-regions; to achieve a satisfactory relationship between people jobs and the environment within the regions - social objectives concerned with factors such as the provision of housing, social, cultural and recreational facilities. Economic objectives are relating to the control of the diseconomies of the congested cities and the distribution of new investment. Environmental objectives are relating to issues such as the quality of urban form and the prevention of urban sprawl, can be identified (there may be conflict, for example, socially desirable housing distribution may conflict with the preservation of

areas of attractive landscape, and a ranking of priorities and trade-off between them may be necessary) (Glasson 1978).

Balance in the regional context does not imply equality, uniformity or conformity. Equality of opportunity for each region means to redress demographic, economic, social and environmental weaknesses and to achieve its full potential, thus ensuring that the quality of life is not mere a function of the area of the country in which people happen to live and work.

### **3. The role of regional planning**

What role can regional planning play in development within the constraints of a market economy and a democratic political system? The need for regional planning is not constant. There are considerable disagreements over the scope and function of regional planning. Glasson (1978) rises four basic questions: (1) why is there a need to plan at all, (2) what is planning, and how does regional planning fit in, (3) why is there a need for regional planning and (4) what form does it take? Regional planning as an intervention with an intention to alter the existing course of events - the timing and legitimacy of planned intervention become questions central to regional planning: Why and in what situations should regional planners intervene? Basic questions within the concept and the system of regional planning are therefore (1) who shall plan, (2) for what purposes, (3) in what conditions and (4) by what devices.

Regional planning neither overrides nor fully controls all aspects of development. Regional planning can be defined as a form of professional intervention in the development process dominated more or less by the private sector. Any justification for regional planning thus demands evidence that such intervention produces a better regional development than that which could be generated by the economic development or by the market alone. Nevertheless, regional planning does not replace the economic and spatial development, but work through it, and with it, effecting the regional development and creating potentially development opportunities for others to implement. The extent to which regional planning can successfully influence the development process is dependent on the institutional structure of the planning itself on the different resources it can attract, the powers with which it is entrusted, and particularly on the depth of its relationship with landowners, developers, investors and other significant actors within the planning process (Thornley 1993).

Regional planning can be fully consistent with consumer sovereignty, individual freedom in production and trade, and decentralized market choice: (1) providing the information needed for informed market choice through indicative planning, the development of urban information systems an a preparation of long-range population economic land use projections; (2) provision of public goods, through transportation, environmental, and economic development planning; (3) control of externalities and resolution of prisoner's dilemma conditions (urban renewal, community development and natural resources planning, and the use of traditional land regulatory devices); (4) health housing and other forms of social planning to compensate for inequities in the distribution of basic social goods and services.

Regional planning intervenes in the private market. The duality between planning and the market: a person's opinion of planning reflects assumption about the

relationships between the private and public sectors - and how much regional planning should intervene. Triad of conflicting goals of economic development, social justice, and environmental protection has created deep-seated tensions for regional planning. It is most commonly assumed that the alternative to regional planning is the free market, but it could equally be chaos or myopic self-interest. On the one hand, regional planning should replace the chaos of the market; on the other hand, the logic of the market should replace the chaos left by regional planning. The function of regional planning is to confront the private market or helping the market along. It has no monopoly on power or expertise over its object of work. It works within the constraints of the economy, and their visions compete with those of developers, consumers, and other more powerful groups. Regional planning cannot command the resources to make it happen. It must rely on either private investment or a commitment from political leaders. Regional planning works within the constraints of democracy and of the bureaucracy of government (their goals, often have low priority within the overall political agenda). Regional planning is frequently restricted to regulatory roles. The most powerful regional planning is that who can marshal the resources to effect change and get projects built; public-private partnerships (planners as developers) make the planner more activist. The aim of regional planning is to coordinate the multiple development and regulatory initiatives undertaken in a region or between regions. Success depended on a high level of knowledge and capability to use it. It requires a level of knowledge, analysis, and organizational coordination which is extremely complex (Hall 1992).

Regional planning can intervene in the regional and spatial development process at least through three main instruments: plans, control and promotion. Therefore, regional planning has two main levers: (1) the power to control public investment, especially in elements of infrastructure (roads, railways, airports, schools, hospitals and public housing schemes); (2) the power to encourage or discourage initiatives from the private sector for physical development, through incentives or disincentives to industrial development, controls on land use, and environmental regulations (Adams 1994).

Regional plan provides a context for control decisions by stating the aims, principles, goals, objectives and targets, strategies, programmes and projects that the planning authority will adopt in seeking to manage different aspects of development. Regional plan indicates whether an planning authority wishes to encourages development (also by allocating land for special purposes), prevent it (by defining land as green belt or protected area because of natural beauty, heritage or conservation) an direct it (through a combination of the first two actions, it is by allocating land for new industrial development within the region, while preventing its development in agricultural area). Such regional guidance provides a framework for the land market, bay helping landowners, developers, investors and society as a whole to know in advance what is likely to be acceptable in some areas as well as in neighbouring communities.

Development control provides first of all a planning instruments and an administrative mechanism for the planning authority to exercise directions on specific development proposals, by deciding in each case whether to uphold the regional development plan or depart from it. Development control those enables landowners, developers and investors to challenge the regional development plan, after its adoption. The planning authority may try to control the spatial form of the development (polycentric, concentric, dispersed, corridor) as well as its location

(spatial pattern), specifying requirements for matters such as transport access, scale, environmental impacts. Although regional development control is in essence a passive process, responding to the proposals submitted for the approval for the planning authority, it is far from negative, since many authorities aim by negotiation to transform proposal that conflict with the regional development plan into ones that contribute to its implementation. Refusal is usually a last resort, except in protected areas or areas of particular restrictions (natural heritage, river, sea and lake banks).

Development promotion is the most active way in which regional planning interacts with the development process. Authorities seek to stimulate development and investments within the region or area by promoting and marketing areas, settlements and locations, making land available to developers and providing different grants and subsidies. Such important activities are often neglected in academic account of regional, spatial and urban planning, since they are usually not statutory duties under regional and spatial planning legislation and are often undertaken in specialist units or departments which have no responsibility for regional planning and control. However, as a form of planning intervention in the regional development process, promotion of development is conceptually no different from the regional plans or control.

#### **4. The constraints and justification for regional planning**

Regional planning attempts to plan for and direct developmental change have always been controversial. Conflicts are referring to comprehensive versus incremental planning, objectivity versus advocacy, centralization versus decentralization, top-down versus bottom-up leadership, and planning for (with) people versus planning for place.

Traditional arguments for planning: (1) need for representing the collective interests of the community: calls for planning as an independent function of government charged with promoting the public interest; (2) need for considering the external effects of individual action: conception of planning as comprehensive coordination - planning is required to provide information on the physical development and the long-range implications of current actions.

According to Klosterman (in Readings in Planning Theory 1996) there are four major types of arguments that have been used to criticize and defend planning are: economic, public goods, prisoner's dilemma conditions and distributional questions.

Economic arguments for abandoning planning, reducing regulation, and restricting the size of government call for increased reliance on private entrepreneurship and the competitive forces of the market. Regional planning has been accused to stifle entrepreneurial initiative, impede innovation, and impose unnecessary financial and administrative burdens on the economy.

Prisoner's dilemma refers to conditions that are linked with circumstances in which individuals' pursuit of their own self-interest does not lead to an optimal outcome for society or for the individual involved.

Distributional questions refer to presumption that perfectly competitive markets will allocate resources (given an initial distribution of resources) in such a way that no one can benefit without someone else being harmed (neither the initial nor the final

distribution can be assumed to be in any way optimal, both are determined largely by inherited wealth, innate talent, and blind luck and can range from states of perfect equality to extremes of tremendous wealth and abject poverty economic efficiency alone provides no criterion for judging one state superior in any way to another. Given a societal consensus on the proper allocation of resources, government tax collection and income transfer programs are justified to achieve these objectives with minimal market interference.

Within this context many believe (Readings in Planning Theory 1996) that, despite limitations, markets are still more effective than attempts at centralized coordination by government through the regional planning system:

- Government responsibility in a market society need not be regional planning matters at all - government decisions concerning the provision of public goods, the control of externalities, and so on can be made in a number of ways: by professional planners, elected or appointed public officials, by the proclamations of a divine ruler, or by pure happenstance involving no deliberate decision process at all.
- The inability of existing markets to allocate society's resources adequately does not necessarily imply that government provision, regulation, or planning are necessary advisable.
- Suitably defined and administered performance standards, building codes, development requirements may guide the land development process more effectively than traditional master planning and zoning techniques.
- Effluent charges can often control pollution discharges more efficiently than the direct enforcement of effluent standards.
- Public facilities and services may be provided more equitably by leasing and voucher systems than directly by government.
- The appropriate role for regional planning may not be the preparation of formal end-state plans but the establishment and maintenance of the appropriate system of quasi - markets.

From this aspect regional planning is limited to the "adjunctive" functions of providing information, analyzing alternative public policies, and identifying bases for improved group interaction (improving existing decentralized decision processes by providing the information needed for more informed decision making).

According to Hall (1992), regional planning should not claim the instant ability to solve complex problems, unique expertise and should not claim to know what is good for people. Regional planning should be exploratory and instructive. It should aim to help communities think clearly and logically about resolving their problems. It should try to examine alternative courses of action and trace through the consequences of each of these for different groups of people in different places. Regional planning should not seek to avoid the difficult questions of who exercises political power on behalf of whom, and by what legitimacy. It should make recommendations, but it should not seek impose prescriptions. And at last but not list it should claim modestly that planners may perhaps be more capable than the aver-age person to conduct this kind of analysis (it should aim to provide a resource for democratic and informed decision-making).



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## **POMEN REGIONALNEGA PLANIRANJA**

### ***Povzetek***

Regionalno planiranje niti ne more preseči niti v celoti nadzorovati neprestane spremembe v regionalnem razvoju, vendar pa na njih poskuša vplivati na tak ali drugačen način. Regionalno planiranje lahko opredelimo kot oblika intervencije v razvojnem procesu v katerem prevladuje zasebni sektor.

Kakršno koli opravičevanje regionalnega planiranja zahteva neko obliko dokazov o tem, da posegi v razvoj ustvarjajo boljše regionalno strukturo, kot pa je tista, ki bi bila posledica zgolj tržnih razmerij. Kljub temu pa velja poudariti, da regionalno planiranje ne more nadomestiti tržišča, marveč deluje skozi tržne pogoje, saj vpliva na vrednost zemljišč in s tem na njihov nakup in prodajo ter ustvarja potencialne razvojne možnosti. V tržnih gospodarstvih ni torej veljavna nobena teorija o regionalnem planiranju, ki bi predpostavljala, da lahko regionalne planerske institucije v celoti nadzirajo regionalni razvoj. Nasprotno, uspešnost vplivanja regionalno planerskih institucij na razvojni proces je odvisna pravzaprav od virov, ki jih te institucije lahko angažirajo, moči zaupanja in še prav posebej od razmerij z lastniki zemljišč, investitorji, lokalnimi skupnostmi in drugimi pomembnimi razvojnimi dejavniki.

Regionalno planiranje lahko vpliva na razvojni proces, več ali manj samo na dva načina: (1) z močjo nadzora javnih investicij, posebno na področju infrastrukture (ceste, železnice, letališča, šole, bolnišnice, socialna stanovanjska gradnja) in (2) s spodbujanjem ali preprečevanjem pobud zasebnega sektorja pri razvoju, in sicer na podlagi politike regionalnega razvoja, nadzora nad rabo zemljišč, okoljskih normativov in standardov itd. Regionalno planiranje lahko intervenira v regionalnem razvoju na podlagi treh glavnih instrumentov: planov, nadzora in spodbud.

Regionalni plani so neke vrste kontekst za sprejemanje odločitev, ki se nanaša predvsem na namene, načela, cilje, strategije, programe in projekte, ki jih regionalno planiranje oblikuje za potrebe doseganja ciljev na področju regionalnega razvoja. Regionalni plani kažejo na to kje želi država, zaradi doseganja regionalno-razvojnih ciljev spodbujati razvoj (tudi z določanjem območij za poseben razvoj), v katera območja in področja ga želi usmerjati (z opredeljevanjem posebnih razvojnih območij) in na katerih območjih ga želi preprečevati.

Nadzor nad razvojem je predvsem tisti planerski instrument in administrativni mehanizem, ki omogoča regionalno planerskim institucijam uresničevati usmeritve na področju regionalnega razvoja, in sicer na podlagi ugotavljanja skladnosti regionalnih planov s politiko in strategijo regionalnega razvoja. Planerske institucije lahko nadzorujejo prostorsko obliko regionalnega razvoja (policentrično, prostorsko koncentrirano, koncentrično), kakor tudi samo prostorsko razporeditev (prostorski vzorec). Čeprav je nadzor nad razvojem v bistvu pasivno dejanje, saj predstavlja odgovor na predloge za razvoj, pa vendar ni negativen, saj se na podlagi medsebojnega sporazumevanja med različnimi razvojnimi dejavniki najpogosteje oblikujejo nove in primernejše rešitve za uresničevanje ciljev regionalnega razvoja. Zavrnitev predloga za razvoj je najpogosteje zadnja opcija, razen v nekaterih varstvenih območjih oziroma območjih, ki so pod posebnim varstvenim režimom.

Promocija razvoja je verjetno najaktivnejša oblika s katero lahko regionalno planiranje sodeluje v razvojnem procesu. Institucije poskušajo spodbujati razvoj in

investicije znotraj regija ali posameznih območij na podlagi promoviranja in »trženja« teh regij in območij, njihovih naselij in posameznih lokacij. Take dejavnosti regionalnega planiranja najpogosteje nimajo velike podpore v akademskih krogih, saj najpogosteje niso del uradne politike in strategije regionalnega planiranja. Čeprav promocija razvoja, kot oblika planerske intervencije v razvojnem procesu, ni konceptualno v nasprotju z regionalnimi plani in nadzorom nad razvojem.

S teh treh vidikov se zastavlja vprašanje, kakšno vlogo naj ima regionalno planiranje v razvoju sodobne družbe v pogojih tržnega gospodarstva in demokratičnega političnega sistema. Temeljna razhajanja med planerskimi strokovnjaki glede sodobnega koncepta in sistema regionalnega planiranja se nanašajo na vprašanja o tem (1) kdo naj planira, (2) s kakšnim namenom (3) pod kakšnimi pogoji in (4) na kakšne načine.

