

## **SIMILAR AND DIFFERENT ASPECTS OF SPATIAL DEVELOPMENT PLANNING IN LATVIA AND ENGLAND**

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### **Abstract**

Spatial sustainable development planning and providing is a very responsible process. During the process, many spatial development planning documents for specific different time periods on different planning levels are being developed. However, there are only slight differences between the spatial development planning in many European countries where few of them can notice more than the others. Latvia and England, two European Union countries, which had some significant changes in legislation regarding spatial development planning in 2011, were selected for the comparison.

The research aims to evaluate similar and different aspects of spatial development planning in Latvia and England. To achieve the aim, the information on spatial development planning tendencies in both countries, legislation, development order of planning documents and other aspects. The result is a comparison of different and similar aspects of spatial development planning in Latvia and England.

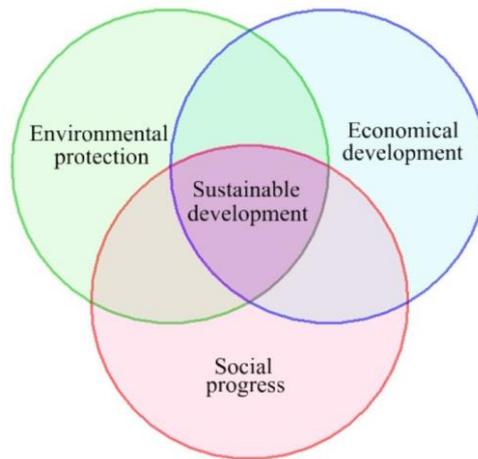
Keywords: spatial development planning, sustainable development

### **Introduction**

The providing and furtherance of Spatial sustainable development are one of the main aims of any country. In this case, spatial development planning can be understood as the process of the planning of spatial development. This process results in long-term and middle-term spatial development planning documents for a specific period accordingly to spatial development planning levels.

There are only slight differences between the spatial development planning in many European countries, few of them are more noticeable, where we can mention England as one of the examples. On 2011 there was a reform with some significant changes in the spatial development planning system, where one of them was a transition from three-level to two-level spatial development planning system along with replacing a significant part of legislation regarding spatial development planning. In Latvia also 2011 was a year of changes because on 1<sup>st</sup> December 2011 new "Spatial development planning law" came to force. In addition to spatial development planning legislation, several new planning document types as spatial development planning strategy, development programmes, and thematic plans are prescribed by the law.

Sustainable development is defined in *Our Common Future* (also known as Brundtland Report, 1987), a report by United Nation's (UN) World Commission on Environment and Development, and widely used internationally since the UN conference "Environment and Development" in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, 1992. Sustainable development in the report is explained as *development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs*. Also indicating that mainly it consists of three components – environmental protection, economic development and social progress (Figure 1) – where they all can develop and act independently and meanwhile also interacting without being in contradiction with or degrading any of other components. For example, economic development must not degrade environment or worsen quality of life (Ilgtspējīga attīstība (n.d.); Our Common Future, 1987).



**Fig. 1.** Sustainable development components  
*Source: Created by authors*

The research aims to evaluate similar and different aspects of spatial development planning in Latvia and England. To achieve the aim Latvia (EU Member State since 2004) and England as a part from The United Kingdom (EU Member State since 1973) were selected for the research. In the research, there are compared the information on spatial development planning tendencies in countries, legislation, development order of planning documents and other aspects.

The result is a comparison of legislation regarding spatial development planning in both countries, about the planning process and different and similar aspects of them.

#### **A methodology of research and materials**

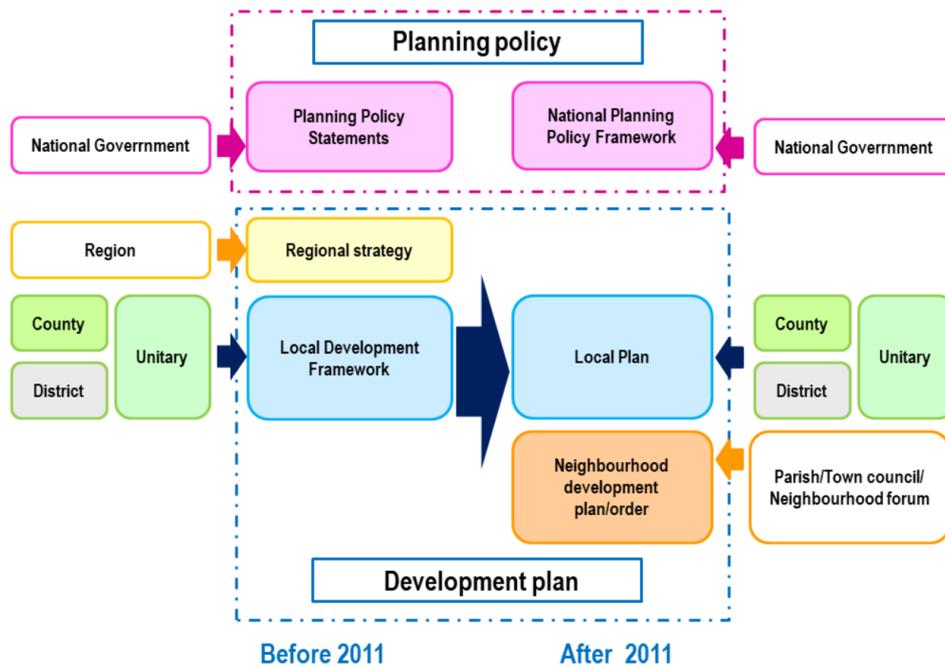
The current direction of spatial development planning in Latvia started only after the collapse of the Soviet Union when Latvia regained its independence in 1991 because the political system changed and many changes arose in country's economic activities. The establishment of the Ministry of Environmental Protection and Regional Development in 1993 must be considered as the first significant step towards country's sustainable and balanced development. The primary task and function of the Ministry was the development and implementation of regional policy (Ieskats vesture, (n.d.)).

Latvia joining European Union (EU) in 2004 must be considered as one of the next significant steps in spatial development planning in Latvia. The country had to start following EU directives, standards and other documents binding to EU countries for different economic activities, spheres, and processes including spatial development planning. Today there are laws and other regulations which states what the processes are, how they must be accomplished, what are the outcomes and what documents should be developed in the process among all that what principles must be respected when developing planning documents (Spatial Development Planning Law, 2011).

While Latvia joined EU only on 2004, the United Kingdom (UK) joined EU on 1973 which is more than 30 years before Latvia, and that means it started following EU directives and other documents sooner and had a different pace in developing spatial development planning. However, researching the UK focusing only on England, it was found that the most considerable changes in spatial development planning in England started after the United Nations accepted *Agenda 21* in 1992 in Rio, which affected the progress of spatial development planning on a global scale (Cave et al., 2013).

Before the more significant modifications in English spatial development planning system in 2011 and 2012, the initial planning policy document of the government of the United Kingdom was *Planning Policy Statements*, where spatial planning was divided thematically by sectors. Additionally, there was *Regional Spatial strategy* determining spatial development policy in all regions of England (9 in total), but local authorities developed *Local Development Framework* (Figure 2).

Figure 2 shows that since 2011 there are only two spatial development planning levels in England and the regional planning level was removed, but instead, the *Neighbourhood Plan* was introduced.



**Fig. 2.** Spatial development planning in England before and after 2011

Source: Created by authors from the data of the research „An Overview of Spatial Policy in Asian and European Countries.“

There are three planning levels in Latvia – national, regional (5 planning regions) and local (119 municipalities) planning levels with development of multiple planning documents in each of them (table 1). There are three planning documents on a national level - *Latvian Sustainable Development Strategy*, *National Development Plan* and *Maritime Spatial Plan*. When developing regional and local level planning documents such as Sustainable Development Strategies or Development Programmes or Plans, the hierarchy of planning levels must be taken into account, which means that need to follow the directions and conditions described in hierarchically higher level planning document (Spatial Development Planning Law, 2011).

### Discussions and results

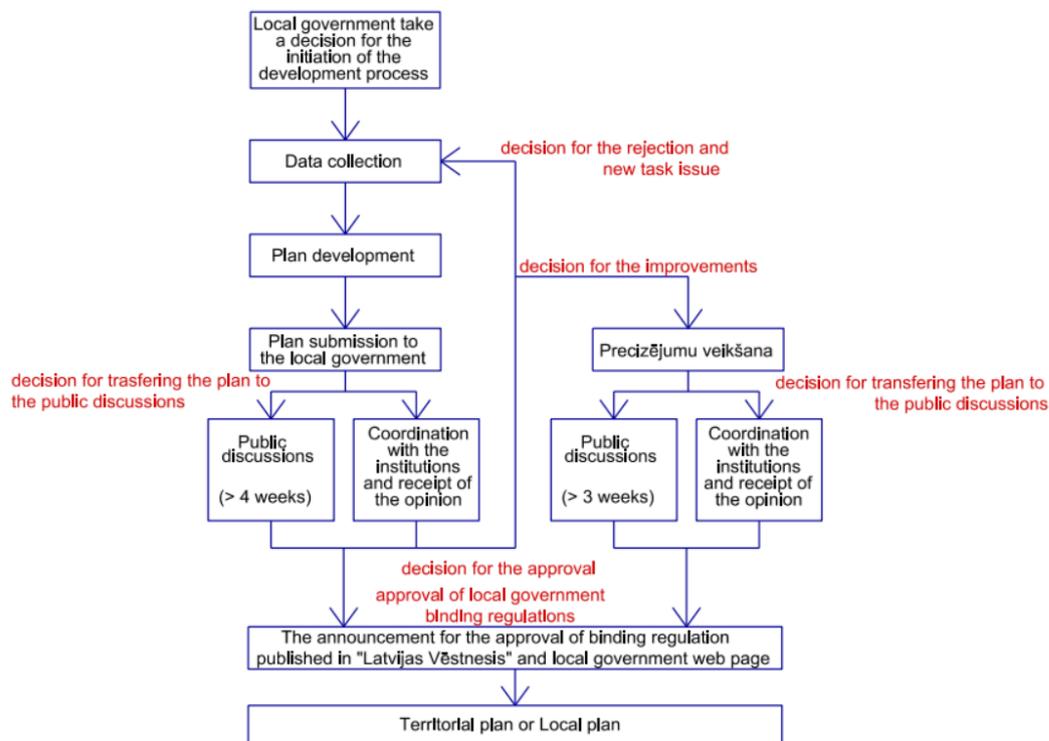
Comparing the developed planning documents in both countries on each planning level, in table 1 it is shown that in Latvia there are at least three planning documents on each planning level while in England it is just *National Planning Policy Framework* on the national level and two plans and *Core Strategy* for 15 years period on local level. Apart from Latvian planning documents of national planning level, *the National Planning Policy Framework* serves only as a guideline in developing *Local Plan*, *Neighbourhood Plan* and *Core Strategy* (National Planning Policy Framework, 2012). While *Local Plan* and *Neighbourhood Plan* are laid-out plans, *Core Strategy* is a document where the aims of the territory's development for next 15 years are described.

**Table 1**

Planning documents in Latvia and England

Planning level	Latvia	England
<b>National</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Latvian Sustainable Development Strategy</li> <li>• National Development Plan</li> <li>• Maritime Spatial Plan</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• National Planning Policy Framework</li> </ul>
<b>Regional</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Regional Sustainable Development Strategy</li> <li>• Regional Development Programme</li> <li>• Thematic Plans</li> </ul>	---
<b>Local</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sustainable Development Strategy</li> <li>• Development Programme</li> <li>• Territorial Plan</li> <li>• Local Plans</li> <li>• Detailed Plans</li> <li>• Thematic Plans</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Core Strategy</li> <li>• Local Plan</li> <li>• Neighbourhood Plan</li> </ul>

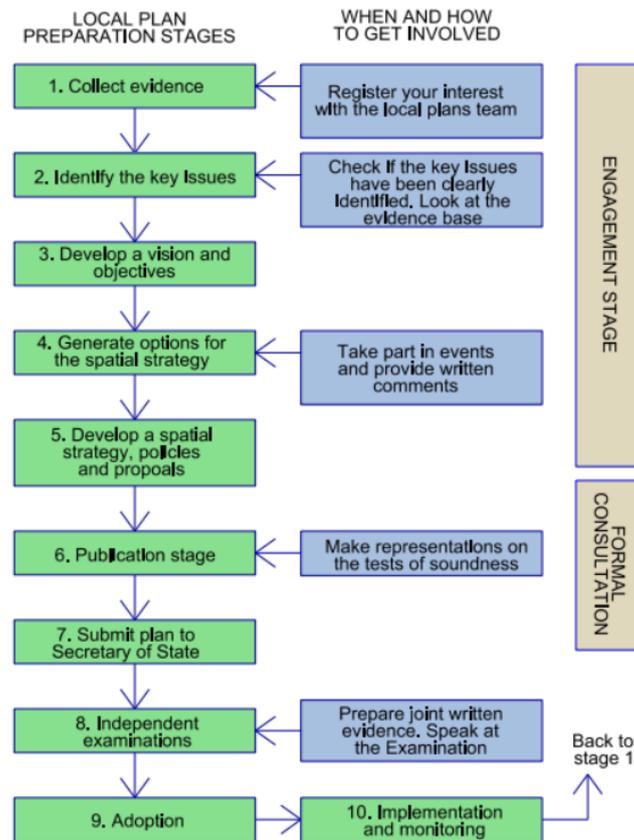
But not only the number of planning levels and the number of documents on each level are different in both countries, but also the development process of spatial development documents on a local level. For example, comparing the development process of *Local Plan* in England and the development process of *Territorial Plans* and *Local Plans* in Latvia, it was noticed that in England public involvement in the planning process is available in more planning steps than in Latvia (Figure 3, Figure 4).



**Fig. 3.** The development process of Local Plan and Territorial Plan in Latvia

Source: Created by authors from Latvian laws and regulations

Even though the public involvement is possible in both spatial development planning, in Latvia, it is possible for few weeks on steps 5 and 8 (Figure 3), while in England it is possible on steps 1, 2, 4, 6 and 8 (Figure 4).



**Fig. 4.** The development process of Local Plan in England  
 Source: Created by authors from *Guidance: Local plans, 2016*

There are also many principles that must be considered in spatial development planning in both countries. The principles described in *the National Planning Policy Framework* and the legislation in Latvia are similar, mostly pointing out that *economic, cultural, social and environmental* aspects should be harmonized. They also describe that interests of different industries and spheres should be coordinated, regional development planning priorities of different planning levels should be hierarchically coordinated and the planned solutions' influence on surrounding areas and the environment evaluated (Spatial Development Planning Law, 2011; National Planning Policy Framework, 2012).

The vital importance of the *economic aspect* of the spatial development planning is directed to the questions regarding land as the primary planning object and its the most effective usage economically (Larsson, 2006). In order to ensure the prosperity and needs of people, the promotion of economic development is practically the most critical precondition. It is because to provide the needs of people maximally, firstly, they need to live in an economically secure and stable environment, and the main components of such environment are developed infrastructure and sectors of an economic system (Lektauers, Trusins, Trusina, 2010). In order to promote sustainable development in Latvia and other EU countries, EU funding is attracted and realized in many different development support programs, for example, as for rural territories, tourism, and business development.

Evaluating the *cultural aspect* in Latvia, it was noted that great accent is being put on preservation, renovation, and maintenance of cultural and historical objects. These objects are excellent instruments in tourism development and also for preservation of cultural heritage of the area, which, based on the country's architecture and unique landscapes, promotes the preservation of national identity (Antrop, 2005). However, cultural heritage in rural areas and cities may be different. In rural areas, it is essential to prevent open landscape's deterioration by overgrowing with forests and have a tendency to preserve hedges, masonry walls, natural pastures and other natural objects, which shows the magnificence of the former countryside. In the preservation of city landscapes there are different

values, for example, separate historical buildings, constructions or parks, very often they can be several residential districts (Larsson, 2006).

*The environmental aspect* is considered as the most crucial spatial planning and development aspect. It is because environment firstly is a union of natural, anthropogenic and social factors (Environmental Protection Law, 2006), which makes it very important in sustainable territorial development because it has a significant influence on people's desire to stay and live in that area. The dominant factors in cities and rural territories are different, but the influence on the landscape and people's living condition very often is easily noticeable.

For a very long time, the aim to preserve and improve environment was suffering from too little attention, especially, if it conflicted with economic interests. However, during the last few decades the situation on a global scale has been changed significantly, and nowadays one of the main problems with particular importance in spatial development are the consequences from the too frivolous attitude towards the environment (Larsson, 2006).

*The social aspect* is also significant and sometimes even especially accented spatial development planning aspect (Chazdon, Lott, 2010). Social aspects are environment created for human's needs, and it includes healthcare, education, culture, active lifestyle, social work and services, and security, which all together are the most critical issues of social aspect, but it is essential to have people's participation in the development of the territory (Cimdins, 2015).

Population's well-being manifests with improving living standards, different available services, including transport, recreational territory, and public building. All improvements from viewing this and other aspects are closely related to land (Larsson, 2006).

As examples from Latvia there are projects accepted in 2012 and 2015 and many other projects, in order to develop sports and cultural squares, to develop new and upgrade existing tourism routes, and many more, but all of them with full or partial funding from EU. In order to attract more finances for tourism, a unique support programme regarding tourism development for 2014-2020 has been developed. Great importance is being put on investments in researching and development, mostly to increase capacity for innovation and also capability to create new products and services, because then the opportunities of international competition for Latvia would increase. A significant problem in Latvia at the moment is increased numbers of unemployment, but it is considered to reduce the number with developing new industries with an accumulated essential knowledge as financial service, transit, and logistics (National Development Plan, 2012).

As examples from England, there are multiple projects of sustainable development in England's National Parks since 2003. Also, there is a specially founded Sustainable Development Fund which supports with funding many environmental, mostly water, hydrology or water technics related sustainable development local projects.

## **Conclusions and proposals**

1. 2011 was a year of significant changes in the spatial development planning of Latvia and England because new "Spatial development planning law" with several new spatial development planning documents prescribed by the law came to force in Latvia, while England had a reform of spatial development planning system.
2. In comparison, the development of planning documents in Latvia is more complicated than in England, because there are multiple types of planning documents on all planning levels in Latvia, while in England there is only one planning document on national planning level and only two types of planning documents on the local planning level.
3. In comparison, the people in England can get involved in the development process of the local level planning documents more easily than in Latvia because the public participation is allowed from the initiation to the moment of public discussions, while in Latvia all the objections and suggestions are allowed only during the process of public discussions.
4. In both Latvia and England, spatial development planning must follow the principles, which points out that economic, cultural, environmental and social aspect must be harmonized, that interests of different industries must be coordinated and that influence on the environment must be evaluated.

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