



## A CONCEPT OF SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT FOR REGIONAL LAND USE PLANNING: LITHUANIAN EXPERIENCE

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**Abstract.** A concept of sustainable development is a critical key for regional planning. The article deals with the methodology of sustainable land use system adopted in the documents of regional space planning in Lithuania.

The structure of the concept includes determination of problem areas, formation of integrated spatial framework with localised functional priorities and regional regimes and organisation of spatial regional policy. The main spatial axes – urban and nature frames, as well as recreation or conservation belts are the integrated components of sustainable spatial structure of a region. Regional policy making could be organised by constructive, conservative and temperate scenarios, what is the prerogative of regional officials.

**Keywords:** sustainable land use, town and country planning, regional policy, Lithuania.

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### 1. Introduction

Regional land use (or physical) planning is a constituent part of spatial organisation of human activities and environment management implemented by land use management and spatial planning methods. It is designed as a means of coordination of social, economic and ecological interests and creation of harmonious cultural landscape (Kavaliauskas 1992). The spatial physical (or territorial) planning as described in the Law of Territorial Planning of the RL (Lietuvos ..., 2004) is an instituted procedure of territorial development designed to facilitate the elaboration of the general spatial concept and land use priorities, determination of environment and monument protection conditions, formation of a system of residential, productive and infrastructural areas, regulation of employment of the population, and reservation of

the territories for expansion of activity of private and legal entities. Comprehensive land use planning is regarded as its main constituent. It means an integral planning for determining a policy of spatial development of a territory, priorities of territory use, protection and basic principles of management.

Unfortunately, traditional priority of sectorial (branch) approach, even in national and regional planning, is one of the main demerits in realising this idea. Sometimes integral approach is only a declared principle, but not a systemic one. Even one of the most developed planning system in Great Britain (Baker 1998; Hall 2002; Neill 2003; Bishop and Phillips 2004; Cullingworth and Nadin 2006) could be recognised unsatisfactory in real spatial integrity, especially in land use strategy.

The second significant warp in space planning could be the predomination of its strategic or demographical, social and economical directions and insufficient development land use or physical planning, especially on regional and national levels (Alexander 1992; Österreichisches... 1992; Ministry of State... 1994; Allmendinger 2001; Faludi 2002; Zonneveld 2005; Larice and McDonald 2006). The German planning system makes an exception: the autonomous land use planning is named officially as landscape planning, but on the highest levels it is also convertible to administrative strategic programming (Kiemstedt 1993).

All these prerequisites provide a necessity to surmount the strategic sector and to strengthen the integral land use (territorial) approach, especially on national and regional levels of state planning.

A document of land use planning is a result of comprehensive analysis and synthesis. It determines a spatial development concept of the planned territory and principles of use and protection of a territory taking into account the levels and tasks of territorial planning. A document on complex planning of a state or county territory, which defines a spatial development concept for the planned territory and principles of use and protection of a territory taking into account the levels and tasks of territorial planning, is called a master or general plan.

The basic tasks of the comprehensive physical planning are as follows:

- 1) to form a concept of management, use and protection of a territory;
- 2) to optimise the urban structure and infrastructural system of a territory;
- 3) to provide measures and restrictions ensuring a rational use of natural resources, ecological equilibrium of a landscape, formation of natural frame, and preservation of natural and cultural heritage;
- 4) to envisage means for improving the urban spatial composition of territories under buildings and living and environment quality and formation of a system of green areas for public use;
- 5) to define main formation principles of regional policy and implementation;
- 6) to reserve territories for developing the objects necessary for communication corridors, engineering and service infrastructure and other public needs.

Adaptation of the concept of sustainable (sparing and balanced) development for the level of regional planning is one of the basic methodological tasks of physical planning. Today, the conditions for solving this task in Lithuania are favourable. Approval of the new National Comprehensive Plan of the Republic of Lithuania (Ministry ... 2002), Lithuanian Strategy

for Sustainable Development (Ministry ... 2003), the new Law of Territorial Planning (Lietuvos ... 2004) and principles of their implementation have activated territorial planning works (on a regional level in particular). The present article introduces the generalised methodological experience of regional planning carried out in 2001–2007, which could be useful to planners in other countries. Most similar attempts in the sphere of strengthening the land use approach and its autonomy were made in the Finland's space planning system (Bell and Komulainen 2001; Miettinen 2002; Finland's ... 2005).

## **2. The essence of the concept of regional master plan**

According to the Law of Territorial Planning of the Republic of Lithuania the planning process includes the following phases: preliminary work, preparation of a document on territorial planning, assessment of solutions and the final stage. The concept is worked out in the second (preparation of a document) phase, which includes the following stages:

- 1) examination of the actual state of a territory based on investigation of its natural, social, cultural, and economic status, assessment of its perspective and quality potential and analysis of development trends and problematic situations and areas;
- 2) elaboration of the concept: determining the general spatial development concept of a territory, its functional priorities and specific features of territorial management regulation;
- 3) concretisation of solutions on the issues of formation of urban and natural frame, preservation of landscape, biological diversity and cultural heritage, use and management of bioproduction farms and recreational, industrial, trade and other territories, as well as territorial development and reservation of territories for social, cultural, communication and other infrastructures.

The rules of developing the master regional territorial plan (Apskritis ... 2004) obliges that detailed task complexes and solutions shall be specified based on assessing of plans and strategies worked out for a territory, system of strategic territorial development tasks formulated in the National Territorial (Spatial) Development Plan adopted by Seimas (Parliament) of the Republic of Lithuania as well as the actual status and development trends of a territory. The specified tasks and solutions must:

- 1) define the general spatial concept of land use development adopted in the document of national comprehensive spatial planning and localise in detail the territories;
- 2) define the functional priorities of land use and revise and itemise the complexes of functional priorities provided for in the document of national comprehensive spatial planning specifying them according to the implementation feasibility;
- 3) define principles of territorial management, regulation, use and protection itemising them on municipality level;
- 4) itemise the ways and mechanisms of spatial regional policy organisation in the territory of a planned county.

The practical experience of developing the comprehensive plans enabled forming the below structure of the concept elaboration stage:

1. The background and tasks of territorial development.
  - 1.1. The place of the region in the national and external system of relations.

- 1.2. Problematic situations and areas of territorial management.
2. General spatial concept.
  - 2.1. Localisation of urban–economic activity axes.
  - 2.2. Localisation of the principal axes of ecological stabilisation.
  - 2.3. Types of territorial development.
3. Differentiation of land use development.
  - 3.1. Functional priorities of land use.
  - 3.2. Specific features of regulation of land use and protection.
4. Organisation of spatial regional policy.
  - 4.1. Formation of the principles of regional policy.
  - 4.2. General priorities of organisation.

Below are introduced the most methodologically uncertain issues of physical regional planning whose solutions must be based on the ideology of sustainable land use development.

### 3. Setting the problem areas

The problem areas were introduced into the land use planning practice with the Complex Scheme of Nature Protection of Lithuania (Kavaliauskas and Rilys 1995). Today it is a mandatory element of the documents of territorial planning completing the first stage of their preparation (examination of the actual state of a territory). The projecting experience of the company UAB “Urbanistika” showed an expedience of returning to this issue in the stage of elaboration of the concept, making it a point of departure in formulating solutions. This offers a possibility of reviewing the previously distinguished *problematic situations* (understood as entrenchment of unfavourable signs of social, economic or ecological development or contraposition of legal status and different interests in a territory) and *problematic areas* (understood as wide zones combining assemblages of problematic situations or conflict territories), itemising them and reconciling in the context of conceptual planning.

A few groups of problematic situations are advisable in regional planning. They are related to: 1) populated localities, 2) environmental quality preservation, 3) territorial nature protection, 4) demographic and social environment, 5) economic environment, 6) communication system, and 7) land use. Each group should have at least 3 assessment indices. The gravity of the problematic situation is indicated by relative numbers from 1 to 3. The categories of relatively low (<1,5), medium (1,5–2,0) and high (>2,0) gravity problematic situations are distinguished.

There are 3 trends in distinguishing problematic areas: 1) determining relative (compared with the average value over the country) problems of formal territorial units (municipalities, counties) according to a set of social-economic indices and distinguishing the so-called depressive regions, 2) determining relative problems of formal territorial units (municipalities and the smallest territorial administrative units – communes) according to a set of demographic – social, economic, environmental, and urban–infrastructural indices, 3) distinguishing special unformalised land management problematic areas and localities.

The recognised land management problematic areas and localities in the mainland part of Lithuania are:

- a) the main lakes and valleys where conflicting situations are implicated by recreational interests, economic activity and realisation of actual or requisite status of preserved territories;
- b) the preserved large forest tracts where conflict situations are implicated by an interest to preserve natural and cultural heritage and realisation of regulations for preserved territories;
- c) hilly agrarian low forestation areas where conflict situations are implicated by interests of bioproduction economy, soil protection from erosion and realisation of nature frame;
- d) urban localities marked in the comprehensive plan as possible new centres of municipalities.

Practical experience of regional planning in Lithuania and other countries shows a great variety of possible solutions, diversity of natural–cultural and social–economic environments of different regions and inconsistency of territorial development. Failure in finding problem solutions makes the sustainable development of a territory an impossible task.

#### **4. Sustainable development and the general spatial concept**

Principles of regional spatial concept must be based on the ideology of sustainable development adopted in the European Union (Baker 2005). Such a development is understood as a compromise between environmental, economic and social objectives. It stands for a better quality of life for everyone, now and for generations to come within the limits of permissible environmental impacts (Pike *et al.* 2006).

Unfortunately, the idea of sustainable development (Hales 2000; Owens and Cowell 2002; Williams *et al.* 2004; Wheeler and Beatley 2004; Baker 2005; Пузаченко 2006), in spite of its pervasive popularity in all EU countries, often remains a summary of trivial well-wishing objectives with some desirable quantitative indices (CEC... 2003) of natural, economic and social environment quality.

Spatial physical planning of regions based on sustainable development must ensure a rational use of territories, ie an effective social–economic development must go together with maximal preservation of natural resources and landscape. The basic components of spatial composition of a territory in this context are:

- 1) urban framework as a territorial system of centres and axes of active economic and cultural development with most strongly transformed natural environment and highly developed complexes of technical engineering infrastructure;
- 2) nature frame as an integrated network of natural ecological compensation territories ensuring ecological equilibrium of landscape, natural links between preserved territories and other environmentally important areas or habitats, and wild life migration (Kavaliauskas 1995).

The main goal of the regional landscape management is to ensure a healthy environment, protect landscape stability and biological diversity and optimise the natural resources use. The protected natural areas and other areas important from the ecological point of view create the nature frame as an ecological compensation network. Lithuanian concept of nature frame (Kavaliauskas 1995; 2007) has some significant differences from pan-European concept of

ecological networks or American greenways (Jongman and Pungetti 2004) and presents a more integral spatial structure without confining strictly the interests of biological protection. The nature frame really enables us to regulate the urban and industrial development. The main statements of the development of the nature frame are:

- a nature frame is localised in physical planning documents as a spatial system of landscape ecological stabilisation;
- nature frame in the regional master plan consists of: geo-ecological watersheds, internal stabilisation areas of geosystems and migration corridors;
- landscape management in the nature frame embraces: 1) territories where the existing natural landscape is maintained and protected (mostly areas covered by forests), 2) territories in which areas of natural landscape need to be expanded (areas covered by forests and agricultural lands or by forests with a damaged natural potential) and 3) territories in which natural elements of landscape need to be returned or restored (areas covered by intensive agricultural lands or other lands changed by human activities);
- main factors influencing the localisation of nature frame are as follows: compensation importance of the nature frame areas on national or regional levels, status of natural compensation potential, existence of protected areas, richness of biodiversity, intensity of recreation.

Functional structures of the territories of bioproductive economy, recreational use and conservation serve as background (continuous) formations developing the regional comprehensive spatial concept (Fig. 1). All these components are included into the plan after a preliminary assessment of a region position in the system of internal and external links.

The national context of a region is predetermined firstly by its location in the national functional 'backbone', ie zone of activity of social, economic and urban functions surrounding the main axes of urban integration. It is also expedient to assess the region location in the system of macroregions (NUTS-2) and ethnocultural territories of the country (Lietuvos ... 2004).

The level of urban-economic integration of a region is reflected by its proximity to the directions of international and national transport main roads, axes of internal integration of the region, and presence in it of perspective regional and local centres. Determining these centres is one of the main tasks of regional planning and spatial interactions between region centre and municipality centres are accentuated in case of determining the basic self-regional urban framework.

The level of regional integration of other character is reflected by recreational potential and main elements of ecological integration: geoecological divides and migration corridors of nature frame of international, national and regional importance.

Still differentiation and localisation of the types of territorial development are the principal tasks when forming the concept of sustainable regional development. The following nomenclature of the types of development of regional land use is recommended:

1. Urban development; regional centre and its immediate surroundings; perspective development areas in the first place.
2. Sparing urban development; municipality centres and their immediate surroundings.
3. Intensification of the existing bioproductive use; plain areas without major ecological restrictions.
4. Sparing bioproductive use; eroded morainic and sandy hills and areas surrounding valleys requiring ecological restrictions.

5. Bioproductive–conservational use and conversion; areas of the present biosphere polygons and other protected areas.
6. Development of conservational protection; territories of special conservation priority (usually nature or biosphere reserves).
7. Conservational–recreational development and conversion; territories of the existing and perspective national and regional parks.
8. Recreational development and conversion; poorly used lakes and river valleys in agrarian landscapes.
9. Intensification of the present recreational use; existing resorts and recreational resort localities and their immediate surroundings.
10. Extraction development and conversion; present and perspective quarries and peat bogs.

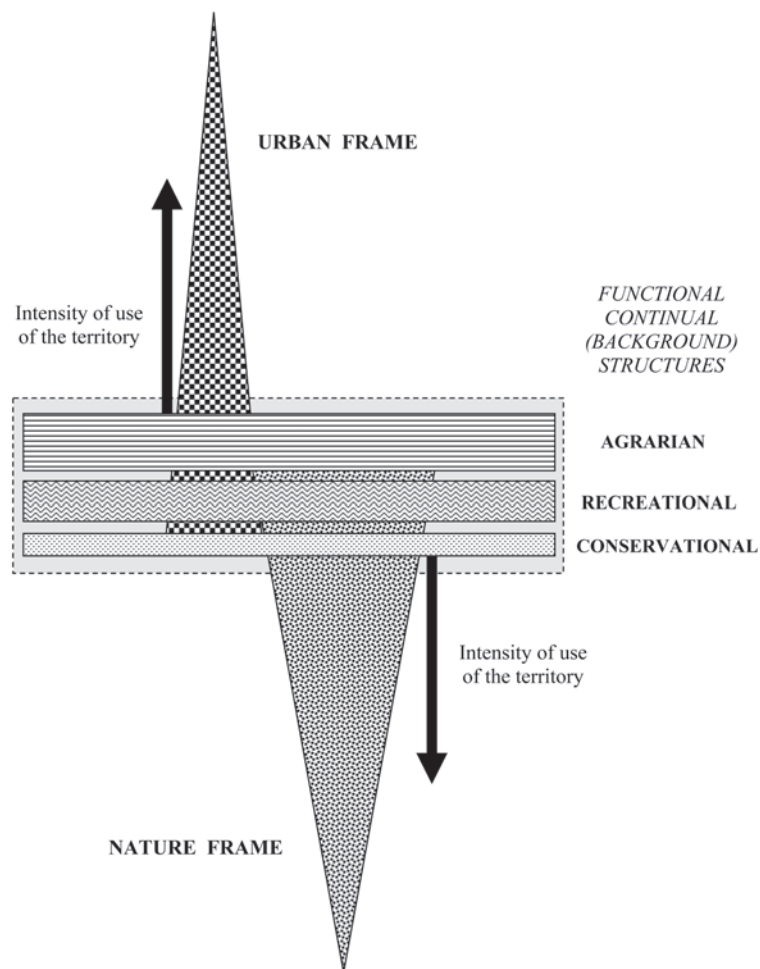


Fig. 1. Principal scheme of sustainable spatial structure of the region

The first 3 types and the last 2 represent the zones of dominant intensive development strategy, whereas types 4 to 7 form the zone of dominant sparing (extensive) development and conversion. It is a territorial guarantee of integrated regional sustainable development and requires a special concern and strict environmental regulations.

In the concept of master plan, the functional differentiation trends of regional territorial development are specified determining functional priorities and regional regulations. The Lithuanian experience showed that from the point of view of sustainable development it is expedient to distinguish the following general complexes of functional priorities of a region:

1. Institutionalised conservation and sparing forestry and farming economy.
2. Institutionalised conservation and various kinds of recreation and sparing forestry.
3. Legally established conservation, sparing forestry and various kinds of recreation.
4. Sparing forestry and farming, extensive recreation and legally established conservation.
5. Various kinds of forestry and farming, extensive recreation and fishery.
6. Intensive recreation, sparing forestry and farming and legally established conservation.
7. Dispersed urbanisation, various kinds of recreation and sparing forestry.
8. Agglomerated urbanisation and intensive recreation.

### **5. Problem of sustainable regional policy**

The ideology of sustainable development emphasises the governance of regional planning process, where the strategic and physical planning subsystems are coordinated and balanced. The solutions worked out in the documents of territorial planning must be recognised as one of the main factors for determining national regional policy. Rational concept of integrated regional policy implicates sustainable and balanced measures in social, economical and ecological policy, human space activity, and landscape and environmental maintenance. It is a result of planning efforts in the sphere of spatial integration of social, economic and ecological development, realised by strategic and especially by physical planning system. The special scheme given in Fig. 2 presents the proposed organisational model of sustainable regional policy.

The projected landscape management models must be developed in all land use plans and as the basic result of the physical planning becomes a significant component in the integrated programme of regional policy. Herewith, the regional policy itself obtains the sense of spatially determinate regulation of social-economical-ecological land management trying for complex avail of the local peculiarities, conserving identity of regions and softening regional disproportions of development and life quality. As the main principles for developing and implementing the sustainable governance of land management, the functional complexity, regional conditionality, historical continuity, spatial polarisation, geo-systemic equilibrium, social expediency and economical reality (Kavaliauskas 1992) could be determined.

Priorities of territorial development depend on many independent and qualitatively different factors and criteria<sup>1</sup> what determines multi-variant or alternative solutions. Priorities of

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<sup>1</sup> The impossibility theorem obtains regarding solution of multi-criteria tasks. It demonstrates that one optimal solution is impossible when there are 5 or more options to choose from. A few sub-optimal solutions are possible whose relative correctness assessment is a task of choice of values rather than objective reasoning or analysis.



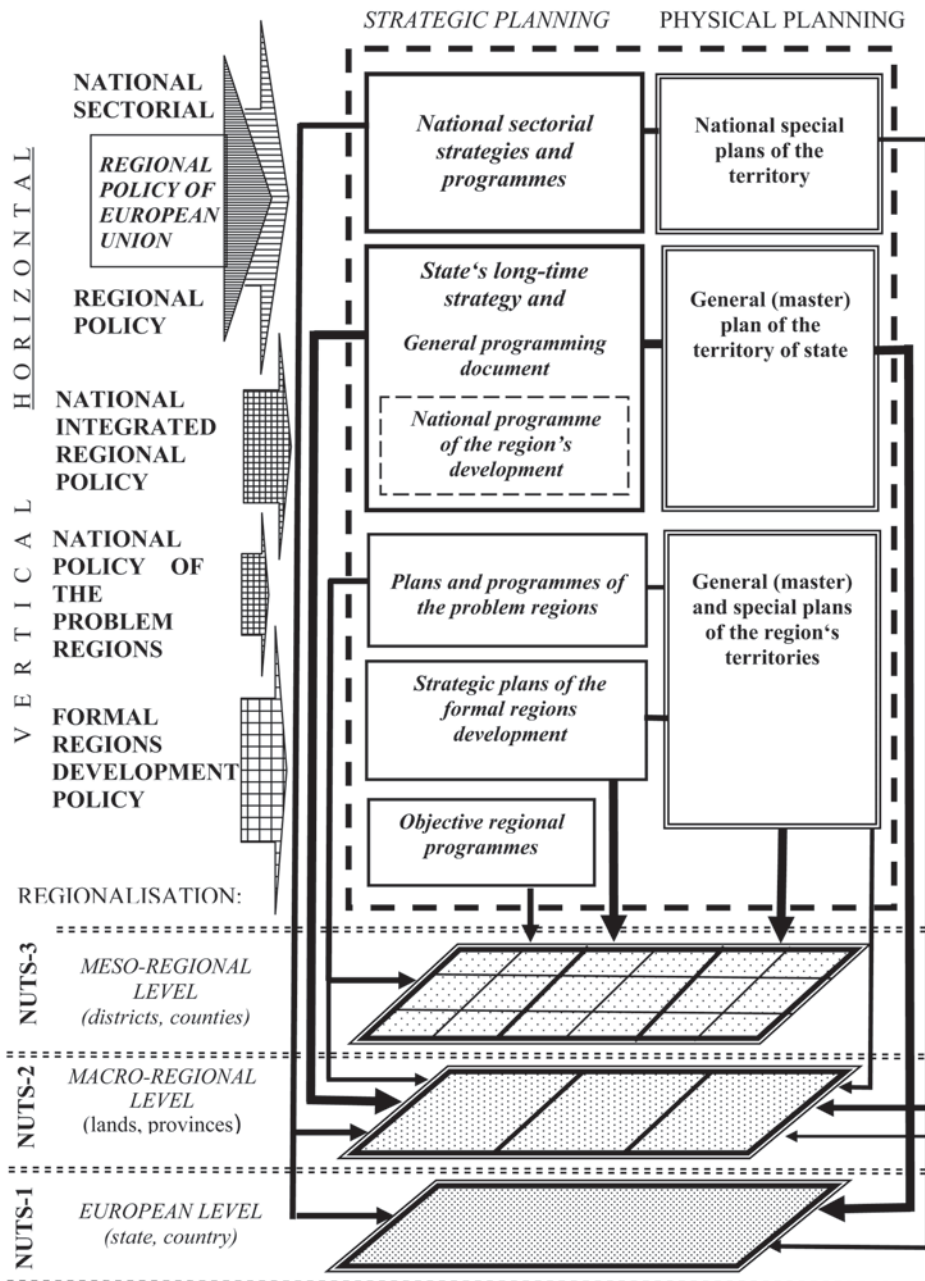


Fig. 2. The proposed model of the regional planning system

regional policy can be motivated by problems of a region or its parts, relative importance of territorial development sectors or perspective relevance of development of some basic elements of spatial structure or territorial differentiation. Therefore it is reasonable to distinguish sectorial and territorial priorities and their joint complexes in a region as possible scenarios or a regional policy. A relative preference may be classed to scenarios (even its temporal rotation is possible) during their consideration and coordination. The final choice is a prerogative of regional government.

The following scenarios or regional policy formation are competitive from the point of view of sustainable development:

A. *Constructive scenario*. Emphasis is placed on conversional and inovational trends of regional development which could activate the territorial development of a region and change the tradition of territorial use. Recreation and tourism, social infrastructure and land use development, and protection and rational use of natural and cultural values of landscape are recognised as priority sectors. Special emphasis is placed on structural development of the most problematic municipalities, formation of priority recreational territories, optimisation of use and protection of existing conserved territories, and formation of new local centres of urban framework.

B. *Conservative scenario*. It includes maintenance of common tradition of territorially undifferentiated development when solutions are based on concrete local motivation. New sectoral priorities are not formed. Efforts are put to maintain all trends of territorial development paying an equal attention to all municipalities and giving priority to already existing trends of social-economic and urban development. Greater emphasis is placed on developing the bioproductive economy, the economic and technical infrastructure, accelerated development of the areas of intensive bioproductive use, and further consistent development of regional centre and social-economic potential.

C. *Moderate scenario*. Efforts are directed at harmonisation of the trends of conversional and traditional development. Recreation and tourism, improvement of bioproductive economy and economic and technical infrastructure, and protection and rational use of natural and cultural values of regional landscape are recognised as priority sectors. Much attention is paid to formation of arterial corridors, protection of natural and cultural landscape, development of preserved territories (national parks in the first place), and development of sustainable bioproductive and recreational use in the main axes of nature frame.

## 6. Conclusions

Based on the experience of physical planning of regional territories in Lithuania, the following principal conclusions about implementation of the concept of sustainable development in regional planning are drawn:

1. The concept of master plans of regions must include the following constituent parts:
  - background and aims of development of the region;
  - general spatial concept of the region;
  - differentiation of regional land use development;
  - development of spatial regional policy.

2. The relevance of the problems of regional territorial development may be assessed taking into consideration the relative level of social–economic–ecological–urban development (compared with the national or regional average values) of administrative territorial units and distinguishing special unformalised problematic areas and localities of land management.

3. The principle of sustainable development applied in physical planning of regions must ensure governance of rational use of territories and harmony between effective social–economic development and maximal protection of natural resources and landscape. Urban and nature frames and continuous functional structures of bioproductive economy, recreational use and conservation of territories are in this context the main components of spatial structure of a territory.

4. Setting the spatial equilibrium between territories of urban (axes of activity) and nature (axes of ecological compensation) frames, defining the territorial strategies of intensifying, sustaining, conserving and conversion as well as zones with various complexes of functional priorities, especially with preference of conservation, recreation and sustainable agriculture or forestry are the main tasks of the concept of sustainable development for physical regional planning.

5. The strategic and land use planning sub-systems must be coordinated and balanced and solutions worked out in the documents of territorial planning must be recognised as one of the main factors for determining the state’s regional policy.

6. Constructive, conservative and moderate scenarios of regional policy are competitive from the point of view of a sustainable development. The choice of any of them is a prerogative of regional government.

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## REGIONINIO TERITORIJŲ PLANAVIMO TVARAUS VYSTYMO KONCEPCIJA: LIETUVOS PATIRTIS

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### S a n t r a u k a

Rengiant šiuolaikinius regioninius teritorijų planus tvaraus vystymo koncepcija pamažu įgauna esminės metodologinės nuostatos vaidmenį. Pagrindinę problemą sudaro visuotinai pripažintų, tačiau gana prieštaringų tvaraus (tausojančio ir subalansuoto) vystymo tikslų realizavimas erdviuose regionų planuose. Ypač tvaraus vystymo idėjai taikyti trukdo nacionaliniu ir regioniniu lygmenimis išlikęs tradicinio šakinio (sektorinio), o ne integruoto sisteminio mąstymo vyravimas bei daugelio šalių teritorijų

planavimui didelę reikšmę daranti strateginio (vadybinio) planavimo metodologija. Lietuvoje, remiantis naujausiu teritorijų planavimo reglamentavimu, stengiamasi įveikti minėtus trūkumus ir sukurti savitą regionų planavimo sistemą, turinčią panašumų į egzistuojančią Suomijoje.

Pagrindinės planavimo nuostatos išreiškiamos regionų vystymo koncepcijoje, kurios metodologija apima probleminių arealų išaiškinimą, bendrosios funkcinės erdvinės struktūros nustatymą, funkcinių prioritetų, regioninių teritorijos tvarkymo reglamentų parengimą bei erdvinės regioninės politikos organizavimą. Kuriamos erdvinės struktūros tvarumą teritorijų harmoningos plėtros kontekste užtikrina tinkamas svarbiausių erdvinių ašių – urbanistinio ir gamtinio karkaso – santykių nustatymas, taip pat regionų bioprodukcinio, rekreacinio bei konservacinio vystymo strategijų subalansuotas lokalizavimas.

Regioninė teritorijų planavimo politika formuojama pagal tris strateginius scenarijus: konstruktyvų, konservatyvų ir nuosaikų, kurių elementų pasirinkimas yra regionų valdžios prioritetas.

**Reikšminiai žodžiai:** tvari žemėnauda, šalies ir miestų planavimas, regioninė politika, Lietuva.

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