

***Economy of European Countries***

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**PUBLIC PARTICIPATION  
IN SPATIAL PLANNING IN POLAND  
AS AN ELEMENT OF EVIDENCE BASED  
URBAN PLANNING – CASE STUDY OF LODZ****Abstract**

The paper presents the problem of public participation in spatial planning in Poland. The author presents the Polish spatial planning system and shows the possibilities of local community participating in the process of preparing the local acts. Significant attention is paid to showing how information from local society could be used to take right decision and could become the basis of the evidence based urban planning on local level.

To illustrate the theoretical problem presented in the first part of the paper, the author of the article used the case study of Lodz as the third largest Polish city. The author presents how inhabitants participate in the spatial planning process of the city. The analysis carried out in this paper shows that remarks from local society are one of sources of information and data about the space of gmina.

**Key words:**

Evidence based urban planning, land-use plan, spatial planning, public participation.

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## Introduction

The main problem of the urban management and spatial planning is taking right decisions based on true facts. The conception of spatial planning in Poland shows that the ordinance of local government is the main strategic local legislation document. The local government takes care about the spatial order and sustainable development by the local legislation such as: study of conditions and directions of spatial development, land-use plans and planning permissions. Many local governments send these tasks to small and medium enterprises because they cannot be handled by local government workers. It is caused by the knowledge gap and the education gap of the office workers. The main problem is that the external companies which prepare the local legislation documents do not know this local unit and do not have enough information about the local unit functioning. This explains why many strategic local documents are out of touch with local unit reality. These documents do not use statistical facts, obsolete data or objective evidence such as information from local society. It shows that local participation functioning in Polish local government is not always used in decision-making process.

It should be pointed out that the Polish spatial planning system allows participating in the decision-making processes on local level. It is set out in the act of law. Another site of this process is that not everyone enjoys the privilege of participation in making local regulations. It should be pointed out that local participation is the way to collect good data and political support. It can be used as the important elements of decision-making processes.

Aspects of evidence-based policy can now be found across the public and private sectors in many disciplines. It should be pointed out that evidence based policy is efficient bridges between research, policy and practice, because the local government should use the research results in practical way. The same concerns the use of qualitative research for decision-making. With regard to this example of data there are many ways of collecting data. Some of them are the research made in the universities or the geosurveys in Internet. All ways of collecting data about the local unit are helpful in the decision-making processes.

### **Spatial planning in Poland – local level**

The system of spatial planning in Poland has been adjusted to the conditions of the market-driven economy since 1995. The Spatial Development Act that was passed on the 7<sup>th</sup> of July 1994 was a response to the needs of adjusting the spatial planning system to the new conditions. The changes in the spatial planning system were upheld in the 2003 year by the Spatial Planning and Land Development Act dated 27 March 2003. This Act came into force on 11 July 2003. Thanks to this it was possible to introduce the unification of the procedure of preparing the study of conditions and directions of spatial development and land-use plans. The Act of 2003 maintained a three-level competence for spatial planning in Poland, which omitted the level of a powiat.

The provisions of the new Act are also formulated in a similar way in the scope of spatial planning in gmina like in the previous Act from 1994. The study of conditions and directions of spatial development is the obligatory document in the spatial planning system on local level. Land-use plans are documents constituting local law. These documents have the greatest influence on the shape of space in gmina and on the implementation of the objectives of spatial order, because everybody must respect its provisions (Feltynowski, 2015). The planning permission is a document which complements the system of spatial planning documents in gmina. The planning permission allows for investment within the area in cases of lack of land-use plans. Each of the documents that determine the use of space in gminas has specific functions. It can be concluded that the study of conditions and directions of spatial development and land-use plans have very similar functions after 2003 year, but the land-use plans have a stronger impact on gminas space due to the fact that this documents are an act of local law. The study of conditions and directions of spatial development is the document of internal management in gmina. Only government and organizational entities of local government must use this document in decision-making processes.

In the literature there are presented following functions of spatial planning documents (Wojtasiewicz, 1991; Markowski, 1999; Potoczek, 2003; Budner, 2004):

- regulatory function;
- coordination function;
- stabilization function;
- creation function;
- activation function;

- promotional function;
- informational function.

The main function is an activation function, because the local community can take an active part in these actions and can shape the provisions of the spatial planning policy on local level. The realization of these functions is facilitated in the age of information society thanks to the use of the geographical information systems by the visualization of different variants of local land-use plans. These systems allow participating actively in the process of preparing planning documents (Feltynowski, 2009, Feltynowski, 2013).

The participation of local society is described in the Spatial Planning and Land Development Act from 2003 in the article 11 and 17. The first one concern the study of conditions and directions of spatial development and possibilities of local community to participate in the process of preparing of this local resolution. The second one concerns the same issues in relation to land-use plans. Both articles of the Act allow the local society to submit an application to the resolution, take part in public discussion, and raise remark to the project of study of conditions and directions of spatial development or land-use plan. On the other hand, these rights of the local society are not always used by the local community. In some cases people do not go and prepare resolutions or remarks to the spatial planning documents and do not execute their laws. In some cases local society does not participate in the public life because they do not believe that it can change anything in their life or in the local unit.

### **Evidence based policy**

The spatial planning policy is one of the main policies conduct by local authorities. It is well known that one of best practice in the field of local government is using the concept of an evidence based policy. The evidence based urban planning can be a bridge between traditional urban planning and research. The evidence based urban planning could use research and new methods to inform the local government about the problems and needs of local society. The participatory and collaborative approaches can be integrated with research methods and finally joined in the spatial planning procedures on local level (Krizek at al., 2009). Facts presented by inhabitants in the participation processes could be useful as empirical evidence in the processes of preparing the land-use plan. This type of participation is connected with a striking change in government in the late 90thies of 20th century. There was the massive rise in the number of organizations and local societies seeking the way to influence on governmental decision-making processes (Davies et al., 2009).

Rise in the role of evidence in the policy making is the results of many elements. One of it is the growth of the information society and widespread access to the Internet. The second one is the availability of statistical data and an increasing emphasis on productivity and competitiveness, and an increasing emphasis on scrutiny and accountability in local government (Davies, et al., 2009). Another thing is that in the EU is a need to use scientific research in a practical way both in business and in local government.

Evidence based policy allows for the rational development of public sector services in the spatial policy of gmina. It helps to understand what kind of costs may occur after the adoption of the land-use plan. Another thing is that it helps to show how to use space resources rationally in gmina and which kind of spatial policy is more cost effective: the using of land-use plan or preparing planning permission without land-use plan. It is well known that spatial policy on the local level is more effective if there is no conflict with local society. It is possible only in case of public participation in the spatial policy. In this field conception of evidence based policy is connected with the concept of good governance which involves participation of inhabitants in decision-making processes. Participation and using results of participation by the local government allows emphasizing the important role of space in bringing people together.

The evidence based policy is connected with development of information and communication technologies (ICT) because this tool can be used in collecting the soft data. That means that some opinions about the spatial policy can be collected in traditional way by discussion or in the paper form but in the other hand it can be collected via Internet. Development of use of ICT tools in all policy development stages can be useful in collecting participatory data and performing analysis to take evidence based decision making and promoting bottom up policy making (Khan t al., 2014). In the Spatial Planning and Land Development Act dated 27 March 2003 there is a possibility such like this and it is signalized in the article 18.

### **Study area**

In Poland there are 18 cities of different potential but with the same status of a regional capital city. The main differentiating criterion was the area of each city which in this particular group varied from 5,834 ha in Zielona Gora to almost 52,000 ha in Warsaw, the capital of the country. Similarly population in these cities in 2013 accounted for fewer than 120 K in Zielona Gora while in Warsaw it exceeded 1,724 K. The coverage of land-use plans show that the average for 18 cities in 2013 was 39% of the area covered with land-use plans while the median was 42%. It shows that Lodz is under both of the index and is only one of the Polish cities with coverage of land-use plans under 10% of the area.

Lodz is a territorial unit which has powiat's rights. It is located in the direct neighbourhood of the intersection of the two main Polish motorways: A1 (E75) and A2 (E30) (Figure 1.). To the North-East of the city there is a part of Lodz Hills Landscape Park, which is also located in the area of other four nearby gminas. At the end of 2013, Lodz had local plans for 6.2% of the administrative surfaces. Territorial development of the city ended in 1988, when 7890 hectares were attached to it that is about 27% of the present surface. Nowadays Lodz is the one of the biggest Polish cities. It has got 707 thousand inhabitants in the end of the 2014 year. It has an area of 29325 hectares.

*Figure 1*

**Location of Lodz**



Source: own work based on Central Geodetic and Cartographic Documentation Centre data.

### **Evidence from local society**

Lodz has got 72 land-use plans. 37 of these documents were prepared before 2007 and in these plans there is no information about the public participation and public discussion inside the documents. Since January 2007 the land-use plans in Lodz have had annex with information about the number of public discussion and about the number of inhabitants who raised remark to the project of land-use plan. Such information allows presenting how many people from local society take a part in planning processes. It helps to conclude if the local government has got any «evidence» from local society and what number of remarks to the local law was taken into consideration.

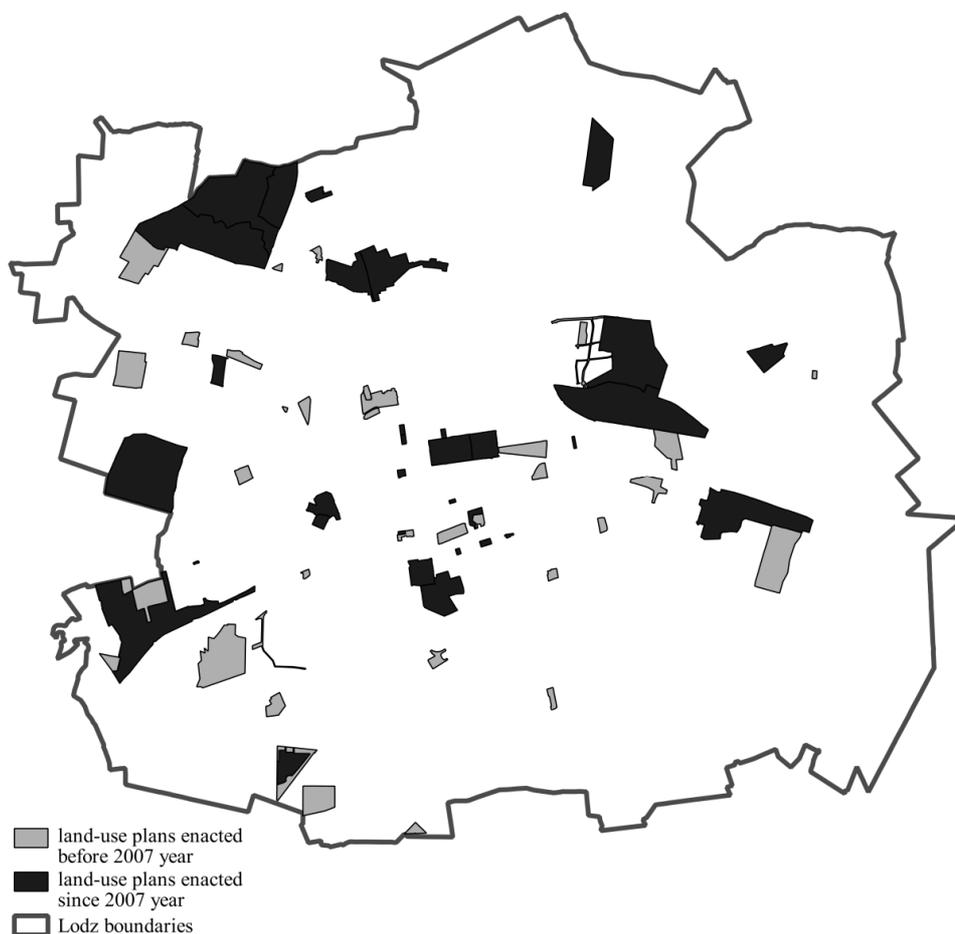
Land-use plans in Lodz are located in different part of the city. In the nearest future there will be new land-use plans in the center of Lodz because of investments provided in this area. The biggest land-use plans are located in the suburbs in the west and north part of the city. Another part of Lodz with wide area of land-use plans are Stokihousing estate and Olechow-Janowhousing estate (Figure 2). It should be noted that since 2007 enacted land-use plans have had a larger surface area in relation to plans enacted in previous years.

There are 35 land-use plans enacted after 2007 year. In this period local government in Lodz organized 49 public discussions relating to enacted land-use plans. At the same time, 1319 remarks were submitted to projects of land-use plans and only 176 (13%) of them were accepted by the local government. According to statistic it must be pointed out that an average of 37 remarks were submitted on each land-use plan and only 5 of them were introduced to the documents.

First, it should be pointed out that in 9 out of 35 land-use plans did not include any remarks from local society. In next 15 land-use plans local government has not introduced any changes to land-use plans resulting from the remarks of residents. It shows that more than two-third (68.5%) of documents do not take into account the suggestions of the local community. Case study of Lodz shows that only in one-third of land-use plans local society some suggestions were incorporated into the land-use plans. The analysis presents that 14% of all remarks to the project of land-use plans were included to the documents.

Another analysis shows that in case of 16 land-use plans there were remarks in the range from 1 to 10. In case of 4 plans there were remarks in the range from 11 to 50. The last range was land-use plans with more than 50 remarks. There were identified 6 land-use plans.

Figure 2  
Land-use plans of Lodz



Source: own work based on Central Geodetic and Cartographic Documentation Centre and City Urban Office in Lodz data.

It should be noted that the discrepancies in taking account of remarks to the land-use plans are very large. Considering only 11 land-use plans, which were filed remarks and which were taken into account, it should be pointed that the divergence between the percentages taken into account remarks amounted

to 67.8 percentage points. It points to a differentiated approach of local authorities in relation to taking into account remarks of inhabitants. It also shows that in some cases undermined the legitimacy of remarks by the local authorities. Analysis of land-use plans in which evidence from local society are incorporated shows that in 11 land-use plans some had very high percent of implemented changes for example 68.3% and some very low index for example 0.5%. It shows that not all remarks to land-use plan must be put into practice, because local government is the major authority, which decides on strategic policies like urban planning policy.

### **Conclusion**

Statistical analysis of remarks to the land-use plans in Lodz showed how many inhabitants take an active part in the spatial planning procedures. It should be pointed that some land-use plans are much more interesting for local community and many more inhabitants discuss with the local government possible solutions. It helps to prevent spatial conflicts in the future and helps to gather information on the needs of residents in the spatial planning sphere.

Polish law allows for participation in urban planning procedures, but not everyone wants to exercise this right. The research shows that in some cases in the procedure for drawing up a land-use plan there were not any remarks to this plan. Many people do not argue with the law contained in land-use plans, but they do not participate in public discussion. This is the main problem of the Polish regulations.

Only 14% of remarks to the land-use plans are taken into account. Some remarks are unfounded. Some of them are inconsistent with the vision of local development promoting by local authorities. This data shows that some of remarks are not connected to the local law documents and they are not included into the land-use plans.

In conclusion, the analysis carried out in the study shows that remarks from local society are one of sources of information and data about the space of gmina. This information is basis to the evidence based urban planning. Connection of this data to the statistical information about the socio-economic situation of gmina allows to take right decision and to manage the space of the city in a better way. It also helps in conducting dialogue between local government and local community.

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