



Integrated Regional Development Concepts: Case of Rezekne City

Sandra Ezmale

*Rezeknes Augstskola, Faculty of Engineering, Scientific Institute of Regionalism (REGI).
Address: Atrivosanas aleja 76, Rezekne, LV-4601, Latvia*

Abstract. As to impact of European level planning activities and initiatives on planning practice in the Member States of the European Union, an important issue is practical application of theoretical aspects of planning that includes results of discussions on basic conditions for elaboration of a high quality and effective integrated planning documents and concepts in accordance with theoretical conclusions. The significance of cities with regard to regional development is testified by political and strategic documents – the strategy “Europe 2020” (EC, 2010) and others. Attractiveness is now linked to economic growth to provide a broader framework for the analysis of the process during which cities will reach higher standards of their inhabitants’ life quality, as well as the most favorable environment for attraction of investments and visitors. Therefore it is important to understand what creates the attractiveness of cities for residents, investors and visitors and the way it could become an element of policy and planning process to contribute to balanced regional development.

The aim of the research is to explore the importance of elaboration of integrated development concepts to increase the city attractiveness and the way it could become an element of policy and planning process to contribute to balanced regional development. Three tasks have been set within the framework of the research:

- to investigate the theoretical aspects of planning methodology and city attractiveness;
- to identify the most important factors of city attractiveness for Rezekne city;
- to set up the integrated regional development concepts’ priorities of the Rezekne city to enhance its attractiveness.

Keywords: integrated approach, city attractiveness, planning documents, spatial planning, strategic planning, regional development.

I INTRODUCTION

The terms “regional development” and “development planning” are closely related with regional development theory, the main task of which is to determine causes and regularities of differences between economic growth and competitiveness of regions. Lately, academic literature has started paying more attention to elaboration of new theories and concepts, the task of which is to solve long – term problems in an innovative way. An impressive number of empirical researches in the fields of spatial planning and city attractiveness in integrated way have been carried out.

In the recent academic and the European Union debates on regional development territorial assets and spatial qualities have increasingly been understood as factors for attracting inhabitants and economic activities and, consequently, as important features for local development planning documents (like development concepts strategies, spatial plans and development programs e.g.). However, the capacity and potential of cities and regions to elaborate a high quality policy and planning documents to attract population, investors and visitors is unexplored [1]. Ezmale S. (2012) concluded that local governments having a higher quality of spatial planning documents have better conditions for territorial development [2].

As to impact of European level planning activities and initiatives on planning practice in the Member States of the European Union, an important issue is

practical application of theoretical aspects of planning that includes results of discussions on basic conditions for elaboration of a high quality and effective integrated planning documents and concepts in accordance with theoretical conclusions. Spatial and non-spatial policies, planning documents, particularly those of the EU, may have a significant role in enhancing the attractiveness of cities by changing endogenous factors (determined mostly by geographical, cultural, institutional and historical factors) and producing shifts related to the relative positioning of regions [3].

The significance of cities with regard to regional development is testified by the European Union political and strategic documents – the strategy “Europe 2020”, European Union Territorial Agenda 2020, the Leipzig Charter and others. Attractiveness is now linked to economic growth to provide a broader framework for the analysis of the process during which cities will reach higher standards of their inhabitants’ life quality, as well as the most favorable environment for attraction of investments and visitors. Therefore it is important to understand what creates the attractiveness of cities for residents, investors and visitors. Also the documents on the regional policy of Latvia determine that for enhancing polycentric development it is especially important to sustain the medium-sized and small cities which, as prescribed by the planning and political documents of the state, are distinguished as the centres of development of national, regional and municipal-scale importance.

The aim of the research is to explore the importance of elaboration of integrated development concepts to increase the city attractiveness and the way it could become an element of policy to contribute to balanced regional development. Three tasks have been set within the framework of the research:

to investigate the theoretical aspects of planning methodology and city attractiveness;

to identify the most important factors of city attractiveness for Rezekne city;

to set up the integrated regional development concepts' priorities of the Rezekne city to enhance its attractiveness.

The object of the research – city attractiveness in the context of regional development planning.

The subject of the research – integrated approach in planning documents of municipalities based on the Rezekne city case.

The novelty of the research – it is the first time in Latvia when a research of integrated development planning is prepared, regarded as a tool for improving cities' attractiveness for residents, business and visitors considering the case of Rezekne city.

The methods of the research – theoretical analysis of scientific literature, comparative analysis, different tools of strategic planning (brainstorm, visioning, situation analysis, public involvement e.g.).

II MATERIALS AND METHODS

Many theoretical researches characterize the “good practice” of spatial planning documents by analysing the key – elements for elaboration of a high – quality, effective and successful planning document (Larsson, 2006; Adams, Harris, 2005; Healey, 2009; Hudalah, 2010; Forinos, 2004; Aldens, 2006; Böhme, 2002; Böhme, Waterhout, 2008; Healey, 2009; Forinos, 2004; Healey, Khakee, Motte , Needham, 1997; Lichfield, 1998, 2001a; Olivera, 2010; Madanipour, 2010; Böhme, 2002; Archibugi, 2008; Aitken, 2010; Adams, Ezmale, Paalzow, 2006; Boelen, 2010; Bäcklund, Mäntysalo, 2010; Hudalah, 2010; Tosics, Szemzo, Illes, Gertheis, 2010; Olivera, Pinho, 2010; Mehmood, 2010 e.g.) [4]. By summarizing conclusions analyzed in theoretical researches, it can be concluded that the key – elements characterizing the compliance of spatial planning documents with the “good practice” of planning are as follows: (1) aims of planning documents, planning horizon and status; (2) vertical and horizontal coordination; (3) integrated approach; (4) participation and awareness of the society; (5) strategic dimension or vision, aims and strategy e.g. [5].

There is a range of elements, observance of which is substantial for elaboration of a high – quality planning document, and these elements are as follows:

- in the document, it is important to analyse institutional, economic, environmental and social context;

- strategy of a planning document must suggest a clear vision, aims and values, as well as a clear strategy for introduction of the latter;

- it is necessary to involve broad target groups during the entire process of document elaboration;

- it is necessary to organize a well – considered and appropriate information and communication strategy aimed at target groups;

- a good planning document must be strategic, short and easy to understand; it should contain a limited number of priorities;

- a good planning document should be integrated, namely, it must be related with other field policy documents, compatible with planning documents of a higher level, as well as according the needs and preferences of different target groups;

it is important to identify a clear introduction mechanism to introduce resources, as well as to establish a simple though effective frameworks for monitoring activities [6]. Servillo L., Atkinson R. and Russo A. (2011) outline that the empirical assessment of the attractiveness of cities and regions is addressed in two main ways: through the measurement of the most important aspects of a city's or region's factor endowments and by evaluation of the outcome of these endowments in terms of the actual economic performance [8]. Clark T.N. (2000) describes the need for creating cities more attractive not only for companies, but also for people, since human resources are an important factor for companies. He argues that city attractiveness strategies must be related to policies aimed to enhance the quality of life of inhabitants by improving the local economy [9]. Van den Berg L., Van der Meer J. and Otgaar A. H. J. (2007) emphasize criteria which reflect city attractiveness from the point of view of inhabitants (employment opportunities, a clean and safe environment, high – level education, cultural, health and social care services e.g.), entrepreneurs/ investors (a real estate, tax environment, labour force, the presence of a supplier and customer e.g.) and visitors (accommodation, access to entertainment, restaurants, public transport and other amenities attractive to visitors) [10]. Servillo L., Atkinson R. and Russo A. (2011) noted that attractiveness of places consists of three main aspects: (1) the asset side of the attractiveness of a place and its different characteristics, called “territorial capital”; (2) different potential users for whom attractiveness should be measured; (3) the way such assets are mobilized by governmental and non-governmental organizations and institutional actors [11]. Consequently, increase of attractiveness of territories and places (regions, cities e.g) is an important topic in the regional policies of the Member States of the European Union nowadays. Development planning coordinates the location efficiency of infrastructure and economic activities, as well as it addresses the region – scale issues such as environment, social and economic concerns [12]. The governments at different levels develop and manage

space through the development planning documents (development concepts, strategies, spatial plans and development programs e.g.) and their implementation. It makes it necessary at all levels of government to use an integrated approach, in the policy and planning process to promote the growth of territories and places and attract new inhabitants, investments, enterprises and visitors, simultaneously creating attractive places. An integrated approach emphasizes that promoting development requires close coordination of public policies and activities, as well as it is necessary to take into account the needs and preferences of different target groups. Aldens (2006) indicates, however, that the unique possibilities of spatial planning are related with its inter – disciplinary nature binding the social and the economical spheres, as well as the dimensions of culture and environment in the framework of regional development. Studying the most significant factors of city attractiveness indicated by various target groups, local governments can adopt decisions related to a set of the most effective strategies and measures for enhancing the attractiveness of cities. As a result, the integrated approach relies primarily on integrated regional development planning documents [13]. Development planning should be oriented to target groups with regard to the needs and preferences of each group, thus facilitating the attractiveness of the city (see Figure 1).

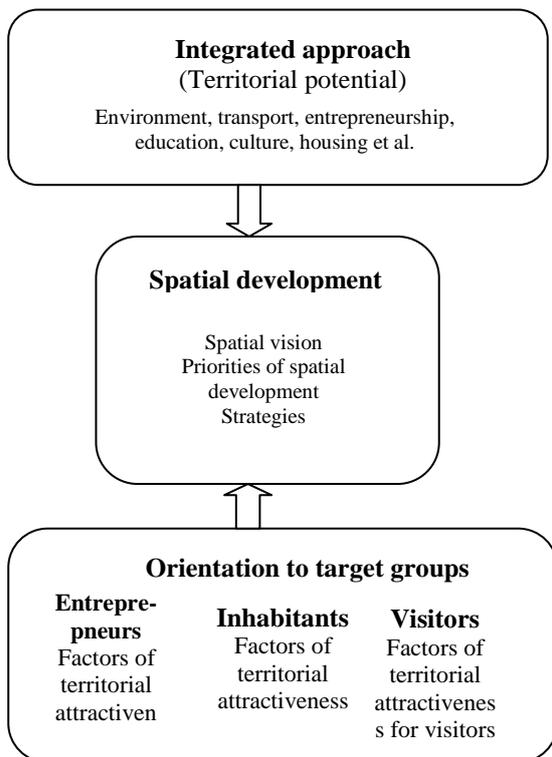


Fig. 1. Spatial strategies for territorial attractiveness

The source: Ezmale S., 2012 [14].

III RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Pursuant to the results of theoretical, empiric researches and working groups the author has

elaborated suggestions for integrated development planning for facilitating the attractiveness of Rezekne city. The results are summarized in the document “Conception of Rezekne City Attractiveness” [„Rēzeknes pievilcības koncepcija”] [15]. Cities compete with each other to attract new companies or fields, inhabitants, tourists and visitors. The author suggests that city development planning should be organized according to the target groups needs and desires, as well as taking into account territorial assets.

Every city has unique combination of attractiveness criteria and factors, and each city in its development may focus to the advantages, unique assets and values/competencies in relation with other cities. The crucial step in this process is to identify the most important factors of the attractiveness of the city. Within the framework of the RHEI ESF project “Linguo-Cultural and Socio-Economic Aspects of Territorial Identity in the Development of the Region of Latgale” (TILRA Project) during the period 2010 – 2011 inhabitants of Rezekne city (380 respondents) were surveyed to collect information for a qualitative assessment of the cities’ attractiveness and to elaborate particular measures for the city development concept and increasing attractiveness in the future. Within the framework of the survey of the Rezekne city’s inhabitants their opinion on such aspects of city attractiveness and life quality as the welfare, work and employment perspectives, ecological quality, health, social care, culture, leisure time, education, sports, safety and security, public transportation, the quality and availability of services et al. was asked. In total, 81 question of the survey was answered and information about 252 variables or indications was obtained; however, there was found out the inhabitants’ satisfaction with the living conditions in the city and the assessment of their attractiveness. Investigating the Rezekne city inhabitants’ opinion of a city’s attractiveness factors, the method of correlation and factor analysis was applied for processing the data obtained by the survey. To gather information about the most significant Rezekne’s city attractiveness factors, 108 indications characterizing the city attractiveness criteria were analyzed. Applying the method of factor analysis combining the abovementioned indications, three most significant factors which characterize the attractiveness of a city from the inhabitants’ viewpoint were outlined: (1) culture, (2) welfare, employment and security, (3) education, sports and leisure activities [16].

Within the framework of the RHEI ESF project “Linguo-Cultural and Socio-Economic Aspects of Territorial Identity in the Development of the Region of Latgale” study , an entrepreneurs' survey was carried out (130 respondents) to find out the point of view of economically active market units in the cities of Latgale region (EAMU) regarding the essential criteria for decision making on setting up business in a particular place, as well as the business environment in the cities of Latgale region. The chosen sampling

method – determinate quota sampling. Using the factor analysis method has identified three factors to determine the key factors influencing a decision on setting up business in a particular place in Latgale region:

1. local business environment: good accessibility, favorable local taxes, fees and normative regulations, safe environment for business;
2. quality of life: leisure time activities, availability of housing, safe living environment;
3. technical infrastructure and real estate: competitive real estate prices, appropriate real estate availability, provision and quality of technical infrastructure [17].

The city - visitors look for a temporary accommodation offer (hotels, apartments, camping, family houses, etc.), as well as good accessibility and availability of these facilities. Such factors as cost and accommodation facilities, access to entertainment and restaurants, public transport and other amenities are attractive for visitors. The urban habitats (landscape, tress, rivers) and urban landscape, which has been developed by people (architecture, parks), contribute to attractiveness of Latgale cities [18].

By taking measures for increasing the attractiveness factors in the city planning documents, it would create favourable conditions for attractiveness improvement in the future. Regarding an analysis of the attractiveness criteria, as well as identifying Rezeknes city's most important factors of attractiveness from the point of view of different target groups, the author worked out proposal for the "Conception of Rezekne City Attractiveness" [„Rēzeknes pievilcības koncepcija"] in collaboration with scientists of Rezekne Higher Education Institution and representatives of Rezekne Municipality. Proposals from "Conception of Rezekne City Attractiveness" will be incorporated in the "Rezekne Sustainable Development Strategy" [„Rēzeknes ilgspējīgas attīstības stratēģija"] developed by Rezekne City Council.

In the studies of Healey (1997) there is analysed the role of the vision and outlined the need to formulate a clear framework for the desired spatial development perspective, as well as a strategic framework for regulatory and investments activities in the future. In the other studies (Adams, etc., 2005, and Myers, 2000) it is proposed to formulate a vision, which reflects the views of all target groups [19]. The author holds an opinion that it is necessary to elaborate the document "Conception of Rezekne City Attractiveness" in respect to different fields regarding to spatial issues and target groups (inhabitants, entrepreneurs/ investors and tourists/ visitors) which would thus ensure an integrated approach. The proposed vision of Rezekne city is: "Rezekne is an internationally recognized, attractive, environmentally and socially friendly, innovative and easy accessible city for citizens, businessmen, tourists and visitors. It is an important economic, cultural, educational and

research center of Eastern Latvia with a well-developed international co-operation network. Rezekne is a popular tourism destination, where everyone can find Latgalian culture. The strengths of Rezekne enrooted in its inherited and created values of education, culture, in its Latgalian language and culture, in its industrial traditions, as well as its favorable geographic location between the European Union and global world" [20].

In relation to the development strategies several scientists (Alden, 2005, Albrecht 2004; Healey, 2009; Scheer, 2006, Mintzberg, 1994; Mehmood, 2010) highlight that it is important to: (1) ensure integration between the objectives of the economic, social and environmental sectors with a focus to a small number of priorities; (2) comply with the principles of sustainability; (3) focus on the priorities; (4) provide the link between vision, strategy, objectives and measures, as well as to formulate a logical and clear a implementation mechanism of strategies, which focuses on vision and goals; (5) to ensure the harmonization of interests of different target groups and sectors, (6) to define a clear institutional framework and resources for implementation. There are many approaches to strategic planning but in the Rezekne case the Situation-Target-Proposal (Situation - evaluate the current situation and how it came about is used, Target - define goals and/or objectives, Proposal - map a possible route to the goals/objectives), as well as an appropriate techniques is used.

The proposal for improving of attractiveness of Rezekne city is prepared according to the theoretical and empirical research (see Figure 2). In the document "Conception of Rezekne City Attractiveness" [„Rēzeknes pievilcības koncepcija"] there was brought four strategic priorities linked to strategic aims:

P1. Rezekne – economic development centre of international and national significance.

P2. Rezekne – The Capital City of Latgalian culture, creativity and national identity.

P3. Rezekne – Eastern Latvian Educational, Research and Sport centre.

P4. Rezekne – a people and environment friendly, modern and safe city in the eastern Border area of the EU (See Figure 3).

The manner, in which the vision and its content were formulated, generally influences the favourable development. The vision of Rezekne is complemented by the strategy, which outline 4 strategic aims, 4 priorities and 11 strategic development directions (measures) for achieving the vision (See Figure 2).

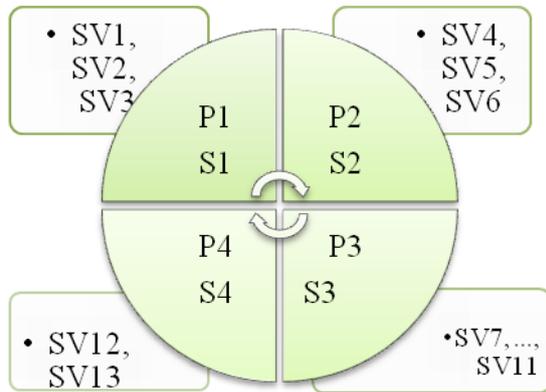


Fig. 2. The schematic illustration of strategy for Rezekne attractiveness.

Essential part of any planning document is implementation of the strategy – is there defined a mechanism for implementation of the strategy according defined aims, objectives and priorities, as well as is there included an action plan that reflects implementation of the strategy [23].

It will be next important step in the process of elaboration the “Rezekne Sustainable Development Strategy” [„Rēzeknes ilgstpējīgas attīstības stratēģija”]. Implementation depends, amongst other things, on a number of key factors: the institutional and legal framework, the available delivery mechanisms and resources. The importance also designing frameworks for monitoring evaluation and review is clear.

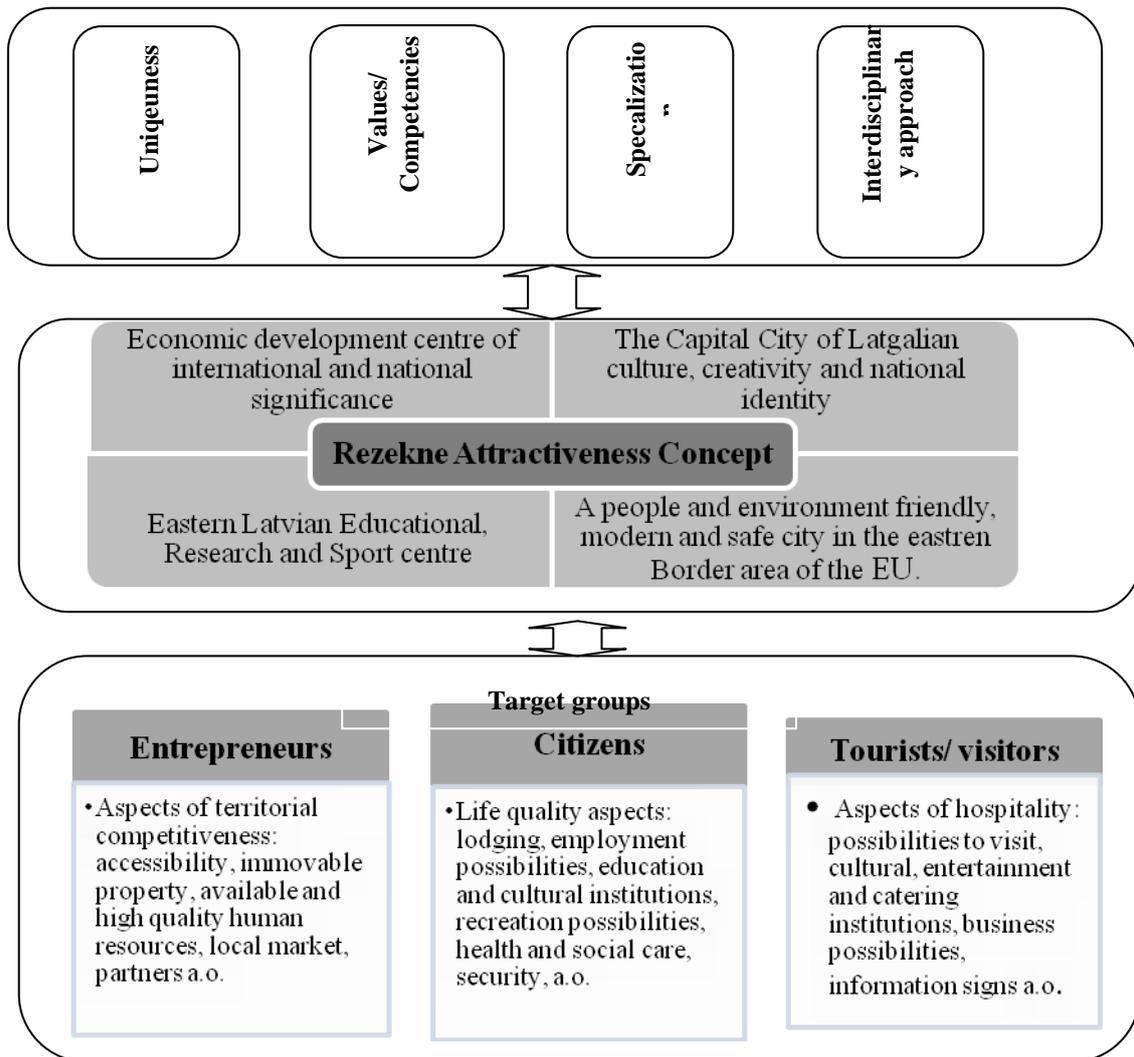


Fig. 2. The pattern of Rezekne Attractiveness Concept

IV CONCLUSIONS

There has been a growing interest and academic literature in recent years in developing new paradigms of regional development to find new ways of tackling longstanding regional problems. An impressive number of empirical researches in the fields of spatial planning and city attractiveness in integrated way have been carried out.

City attractiveness can be defined both as the capacity to attract new residents, visitors, enterprises and investments as well as the ability to retain and develop these mobile communities and assets. Cities compete one with another to attract new inhabitants, visitors, and business or investments that create jobs and thus provide increased material welfare. It makes it necessary at all levels of government to use an integrated approach in the policy and planning process

to promote the growth of territories and places and attract new inhabitants, investments, enterprises and visitors, simultaneously creating attractive places. In order to strengthen the role of planning to increase attractiveness in Rezekne city it is necessary to pay more attention:

to such factors as culture, welfare, employment and security, education, sports and leisure activities in order to make the city to be attractive to residents as a target group;

to such factors as competitive local business environment and technical infrastructure and real estate, safe environment for business activities in order to attract new business and investments;

to such factors as a temporary accommodation offer (hotels, apartments, camping, family houses, etc.), a high quality urban landscape, as well as good accessibility and availability of these facilities in order to attract new tourists and visitors. Therefore there was brought four strategic aims and priorities in "Conception of Rezekne City Attractiveness" [„Rēzeknes pievilcības koncepcija”] to improve the attractiveness of Rezekne city: (1) Rezekne – economic development center of international and national significance; (2) Rezekne – The Capital City of Latgalian culture, creativity and national identity; (3) Rezekne – Eastern Latvian Educational, Research and Sport center; (4) Rezekne – a people and environment friendly, modern and safe city in the eastern Border area of the EU. The strategic aims and priorities of Rezekne is complemented by the 11 strategic development directions (measures) for achieving the vision.

Essential part of any planning document is implementation of the strategy – is there defined a mechanism for implementation of the strategy according defined aims, objectives and priorities, as well as is there included an action plan that reflects implementation of the strategy. Therefore the next important step is to elaborate implementation mechanisms for the strategy, as well as to develop the framework for monitoring and review system.

The planning documents of local governments that take into account the investigation results of attractiveness of each territory or place may facilitate development of a many spatial assets and attractiveness factors that play a substantial role in development of particular territory or place.

V ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The research is performed within the framework of the RHEI ESF project Nr.2009/0227/1DP/1.1.1.2.0/09/APIA/VIAA/071 "Linguo-Cultural and Socio-Economic Aspects of Territorial Identity in the Development of the Region of Latgale".

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