

Spatial planning as an instrument for the differentiation and enhancement of Greek mountainous areas and the formation of a new partnership between towns and rural areas

C. Zambelis, Architect - City Planner, Director of Secretariat General of Physical Planning
Th. Gialyri, Architect - City Planner, Secretariat General of Physical Planning
Hellenic Ministry for the Environment, Physical Planning and Public Works

Abstract

This study deals with the basic spatial problems which characterize the less developed and remote mountainous areas of the country, as a consequence of the traditional discrimination against these areas in comparison with the eastern axis of development and other more developed areas with better access to the national network of transportation and other public works of large scale. The trends of abandonment of mountainous areas for coastal and urban areas and depopulation are considered as additional effects of urbanization and the dominance of tertiary sector activities.

The basic target of this study is the specification of strategic directions to an integrated development of the mountainous areas through global measures of spatial policies and proposals of specialized productive activities, according to a proper typology that characterises the differentiation of regional problems, needs and perspectives of those areas.

From a methodological point of view mountainous areas are categorized into three types related to the existent productive structure that is focused to the agricultural sector in cooperation with other suitable activities, as well as eight more types referring to the spatial interdependencies with the national and regional space. This criterion differentiates the potential of the sub regions and local areas according to the spatial relations and dynamic transformations in close collaboration with the urban system and the more developed areas of the country in a unified network.

The data that have been used in this study are based on the studies for the General framework for national spatial planning and the regional plans, as well as on some special research programs concerning mountainous areas, as a system of mountains or series of mountains, and as a specialized totality of spatial zones with autonomous spatial problems and perspectives and a dynamic relation with the urban network and the rest towns and villages.

The spatial features, advantages and disadvantages of the mountainous space of Greece that could be developed in a new cooperative relation between the urban network and the mountainous and rural areas, strengthening the spatial impact and perspectives of the new public infrastructure works of large scale and promoting the local spatial diversities and qualifications such as the traditional products, the cultural and the natural features of the network of little villages are evaluated.

The study finally sets some strategic directions for integrated development of mountainous areas through a specific spatial planning, the attraction of new investments with a suitable relativity to the natural and cultural environment, the financial promotion of the public infrastructure that strengthens the polycentric structure within the country and achieve a better transportation connection between the regions through interregional road network, the promotion of cultural heritage and protected natural environment and the establishment of new management bodies for mountainous areas.

The sustainable development of the mountainous and rural areas of Greece is specifically considered as a means for spatial transformations in the direction of a polycentric structure of national space aiming at regional and social cohesion in the framework of the following strategic targets:

- Integrated development of mountains and mountainous areas and concentration of private and public investments to them, aiming at the environmental protection and economic revitalization of forests, agricultural land, tourism activities, cultural heritage and network of villages, as well as total environmental upgrading.
- Adjustment of the economy of mountainous areas to the European and international evolution multiplying the distribution of public economic recourses and taking the proper restructuring measures for the improvement of the competitiveness of enterprises and the implementation of new technologies, management measures and economic incentives.
- Improvement of the general conditions (quality of the urban network, natural environment and infrastructure) of mountainous areas in order to be attractive for new competitive investments, taking into account the European economic environment and promoting the local specialties as an advantage of upgrading and development.
- Strengthening of the transportation system in mountainous areas and improving the access to the basic infrastructure system, as well as new means that could be developed in relation with information society, in order to solve isolation problems.
- Protection and upgrading of the natural ecosystems, the aesthetic forests, the natural and cultural resources of the mountainous areas.
- Establishment of new management bodies focusing on the integrated management of mountainous areas and the promotion of programme implementation, in cooperation with existing bodies responsible for mountain development, local authorities, institutions dealing with protected areas, non-governmental environmental organizations, agricultural cooperatives and other agencies.