

STRATEGIC SPATIAL PLANNING UNDER PRESSURE IN UKRAINE: BETWEEN LEGAL FRAMEWORKS AND LOCAL IMPLEMENTATION

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Abstract

This article examines the transformation of Ukraine's spatial planning system in the context of decentralisation, regulatory reform, and the growing role of local communities in decision-making. It emphasises the significance of comprehensive spatial development plans as instruments of integrated local governance. Using the Chernihiv region as a case study, the paper analyses institutional, financial, and organisational challenges in implementing planning decisions and highlights gaps between legislation and practice. The study stresses the need to align spatial planning with modern community development strategies, focusing on digitalisation, local capacity building, and stakeholder engagement. Recommendations are proposed to enhance strategic planning tools and promote balanced territorial development.

Keywords:

Spatial planning, strategic management, public governance, local communities, sustainable development, urban planning documentation

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1. Introduction

Ukraine and its spatial planning system are facing challenges that are unique in scope and scale. These challenges are the result of the armed aggression of Russia, the resultant large-scale destruction of infrastructure, demographic changes, and the transformation of the institutional foundations of Ukrainian local development. Territorial communities have a significant role to play in shaping sustainable models of recovery and development. They are in a unique position to influence decision-making processes related to spatial planning, resource allocation, and the organisation of people's lives. It is considered beneficial to have comprehensive spatial development plans for communities that combine the functions of master plans, zoning plans, and land use documentation (Anisimov, Smirnova, and Dulko, 2024; Chervonoslobidska Hromada, 2023). These plans can be key instruments for long-term management and strategic recovery.

Concurrently, extant research (Maruniak et al., 2024; Dolan-Evans, 2023; Lytvynchuk et al., 2022) has demonstrated that the degree of preparedness among Ukrainian communities to adopt comprehensive spatial planning strategy remains limited. This phenomenon can be attributed to a confluence of legal, organisational, and financial factors, as well as a paucity of adequate methodological support. The experience of a number of European countries (Nowak et al. 2021; OECD 2022) demonstrates that integrated planning can serve as a foundation for both regional economic recovery and territorial cohesion. However, this approach necessitates a substantial degree of institutional capacity on the part of local authorities.

In Ukraine, legal regulation of comprehensive plan development was initiated by Law No. 711-IX, adopted on 17 June 2020, which changed the procedure for preparing urban planning documentation, and emphasised its integrative nature as well as the need for compliance with European standards (Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine, 2020). However, as empirical data shows, as of the end of 2023 (Ministry for Communities and Territories Development of Ukraine, 2023), less than a quarter of territorial communities had started work on comprehensive plans, and the vast majority were at the stage of deciding on their development or collecting initial data. This poses a significant risk to the synchronisation of spatial development measures with comprehensive territorial recovery programmes implemented with the support of international partners (USAID, EU, UNDP).

To date, there has been insufficient coverage in scientific literature pertaining to how spatial planning reforms are combined with territorial recovery and development processes, particularly in terms of organisational practices, financial support, and public participation in decision-making (Anisimov et al., 2024). The issue of implementing comprehensive plans for regions that have undergone large-scale changes and challenges, such as the Chernihiv region, is particularly relevant. Recent research and practical recommendations emphasise that the successful implementation of comprehensive spatial development plans largely depends on the active participation of local residents, entrepreneurs, civil society organisations, and other stakeholders (Chervonoslobidska Hromada, 2023; The Public Participation Handbook, 2023; Cedoss, 2024; Ro3kvit, 2025). Public involvement ensures transparency, accountability, and the consideration of local needs in the planning process, while also contributing to the effective implementation of decisions (UN Habitat, 2023; ESPON, 2019).

Despite the implementation of updated legislation on spatial planning, Ukrainian local communities encounter substantial challenges when it comes to implementing comprehensive plans under crisis conditions. A discrepancy exists between the legislative provisions and the prevailing practices on the ground. These are attributable to three factors: limited institutional capacity, inadequate coordination between governmental levels, and the repercussions of the war. The absence of empirical research that has systematically examined these challenges at the level of specific communities impedes the efficacy of spatial policy adaptation to recovery conditions.

The objective of this study is to examine the specific features of strategic spatial planning in Ukrainian communities, using the Chernihiv region as a case study. The present study focuses on analysing the relationship between regulatory frameworks, institutional practices, and local implementation in the context of war and post-crisis recovery. The study also analyses the factors that influence the implementation of comprehensive spatial development plans, including the factors that facilitate and hinder that process. A key scientific challenge addressed by this study is identifying the reasons for the discrepancy that exists between regulatory requirements and the current state of planning in communities. The issue of ensuring the consistency of integrated planning with current territorial development programs is addressed separately.

The article's structure is as follows: the second section delineates the theoretical foundations of spatial planning and public administration; the third section describes the methodology; the fourth section is devoted to the results of the analysis of the state of planning and recovery programs; the fifth section discusses the conclusions and recommendations. The final section summarises the main results and outlines directions for further research.

2. Literature review

The study of public administration mechanisms in spatial planning is grounded in a comprehensive array of international and Ukrainian scientific works. The theoretical and methodological foundations of research in the field of public administration and spatial planning are highlighted in the works of Booth et al. (2003), Cropley (2019), Snyder (2019), Dawson (2007), Hill and Lynn (2015), Lynn (2006), and Farazmand (2023). These scholars underscore the significance of adopting an interdisciplinary approach as well as rigorous research methodologies in the domain of public administration (Bekkers et al., 2007; Peters, 2018; Wilson, 2000).

The conceptual development and terminological evolution of spatial planning are discussed in the works of Danielzyk and Munter (2018), Taylor (2010), Lakhotska (2018), Maruniak (2014), and Makieiev (2021). These studies place significant emphasis on the transformation of approaches to spatial planning in European and Ukrainian contexts, as well as on the adaptation of international practices (Komelina and Kondratyeva, 2023; Khvesyk et al., 2018; ESPON, 2019; European Commission DG, 2000; Maier et al., 2021; Zaspel-Heisters and Henger, 2015). As posited by Ukrainian scholars Zhidkova and Shchepetylnyk (2021), there is a clear necessity to harmonise the country's national spatial planning system with European standards.

The contemporary management and decentralisation processes associated with Ukraine's territorial reform, and the creation of amalgamated communities are pivotal to the transformation of spatial planning in the country. Dolan-Evans (2023) analyses decentralisation as an administrative reform and management tool in times of crisis. Tyminskyi (2022) elucidates the hybrid nature of urban policy, and in so doing emphasises the dynamic interplay among international donors, state institutions, local authorities, and civil society. The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD, 2022) and the Council of Europe (2023) have underscored the significance of multi-level governance, institutional capacity, and decentralisation for effective spatial development. A comprehensive overview of the innovative governance and public sector reform literature can be found in the works of Dale et al. (2020), Osborne (1993), Rainey (2020), Pollitt and Dan (2011), Catlaw (2008), and Chen et al. (2020).

A distinct research domain encompasses the modernisation of spatial planning through digitalisation and innovation. Anisimov, Smirnova, and Dulko (2024) underscore the significance of leveraging GIS and digital platforms to ensure transparency and efficiency in planning. In addition, Sokolova and Semenchenko (2023), and Kumar et al. (2022) explore the potential of digital solutions and technological innovations to enhance the adaptability and sustainability of spatial management.

The evolution of local planning tools in Ukraine is explored in the works of Lytvynchuk, Denysenko, and Melnychuk (2022), which outline the problems of fragmented documentation and weak integration with budgeting. Empirical studies of urban reconstruction, sustainability, and strategic planning are presented in the works of Bachynska (2022), Dudar and Brychanskyi (2023), and Danyliuk (2023). A comparative analysis of local spatial development policies in Ukraine, Poland, and neighbouring countries has been conducted by Nowak, Lozynskyy, and Pantyley (2021) and Nowak et al. (2023). This analysis emphasises the importance of public participation and inter-level coordination.

The regulatory framework for spatial planning in Ukraine has undergone significant changes, especially after the adoption of Law No. 711-IX (Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine, 2020), which introduced comprehensive spatial development plans and emphasized the importance of integration with European standards. Further legislative acts have been issued by the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine (2022), the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine (2021, 2024), and the On Regulation of Urban Development (2024), which serve to further shape the institutional and procedural framework of the current spatial planning system. The Ministry of Development of Communities and Territories of Ukraine (2021) and relevant government resolutions also play important roles in regulatory support.

A comprehensive review of international and comparative studies reveals the evolution of planning paradigms, as well as the increasing role of public-private partnerships in urban development. In particular, Alexander (2020) examines public-private partnerships as a novel paradigm for urban development, asserting that they substantially influence contemporary approaches to spatial planning. This finding aligns with the conclusions of Maier et al. (2021), ESPON (2019), and the European Commission (2023), which examined the impact of European policy, cohesion frameworks, and best practices on national spatial planning systems. These findings offer valuable guidelines for Ukraine.

In recent years, research on public participation, inclusiveness, and local urban practices has become particularly important. Practical recommendations for engaging the public in the spatial planning process are presented in *The Public Participation Handbook* (UN-Habitat, 2023), as well as in contemporary Ukrainian examples Chervonoslobidska Hromada (2023), Cedoss (2024), and Ro3kvit (2025). The effective implementation of comprehensive spatial development plans is contingent, to a considerable extent, on the active participation of local residents, entrepreneurs, civil society organisations, and other relevant stakeholders. The involvement of the public ensures transparency, accountability, and consideration of local needs in planning processes. It also contributes to the effective implementation of decisions (UN-Habitat, 2023; ESPON, 2019).

The subject of socio-economic and financial mechanisms for sustainable regional development is addressed in the works of Pastukh (2017), Pylypiv and Tychkovska (2013), and Prasolova and Danylyshyn (2022). These works emphasize the importance of integrating spatial planning with socio-economic policies and smart specialisation strategies.

In summary, it can be argued that extant literature provides a robust theoretical and empirical foundation for research on spatial planning in Ukraine, which considers international experience, innovations in governance, digitalisation, inclusiveness, public participation, and regulatory reforms. However, the practical aspect of implementing new legislative changes, as well as consideration of the factors influencing the implementation of comprehensive plans at the community level, remain understudied (Shcheglyuk, 2019; Anisimov et al., 2024; Chervonoslobidska Hromada, 2023; Cedoss, 2024; Ro3kvit, 2025; UN-Habitat, 2023).

3. Materials and Methods

The present study employs a qualitative interdisciplinary approach which combines tools of legal analysis, public administration research, and spatial planning. The methodology was structured in five analytical stages.

The initial stage entailed a thorough examination of the legislative and regulatory framework. The examination encompassed Law of Ukraine No. 711-IX (2020), its accompanying regulations, state strategies, subordinate documents, and its methodological recommendations. The analysis yielded insights into the reform's underlying logic, its planning principles, and its specific procedural mechanisms.

The subsequent stage in the sequence of events pertained to the process of mapping the institutional environment. The analysis examined the manner in which key actors interact, including local self-government bodies, technical implementers, state agencies, and international partners. The distribution of powers, digital tools, decision-making mechanisms, and the administrative capacity of communities are the focal points of this study.

The third stage of the process entailed the selection and justification of a case study. The territorial communities of the Chernihiv region, which suffered significant destruction as a result of military operations in 2022, were selected for analysis. This territory is indicative in the context of implementing comprehensive planning under conditions of crisis, recovery, and limited resources.

The fourth stage encompassed the collection and analysis of empirical data. A documentary analysis was conducted, encompassing strategies, reports, public registers, and local planning documents. To ensure a comprehensive analysis, expert interviews and analytical reviews were also utilised. The information was then systematised by topic and correlated with legislation.

The fifth stage of the research process was dedicated to interpreting the results. The relationship between legal provisions, institutional practice, and actual implementation was examined. The identification of gaps, barriers, and points of adaptation was a key objective of the study. The results were analysed within a multi-level governance approach.

This five-stage approach enabled the integration of policy analysis, legal assessment, and an examination of implementation practices. The system under discussion is characterised by the provision of a particular set of mechanisms.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1. Theoretical Context of Spatial Planning in Ukraine

In recent years, Ukraine has witnessed a gradual yet pronounced surge in the significance of spatial planning as an instrument that can help ensure that the concerns of all stakeholders are duly considered in territorial planning (Anisimov et al., 2024). This process is occurring, in particular, as part of the reform of current urban planning and land legislation (Law of Ukraine on Amendments to Certain Laws of Ukraine Regarding Priority Measures for Reforming the Sphere of Urban Development). The implementation of public administration in the field of spatial planning at the local level is being carried out using strategic planning and forecasting tools.

A critical aspect of Ukraine's spatial planning reform that warrants attention pertains to the examination of European models of spatial planning systems. This is of paramount importance in the context of Ukraine's ongoing processes of integration with the European Union. The process of Ukraine's potential accession and gradual integration into a unified system with the EU is protracted and necessitates policy alterations; particularly in the domain of spatial planning.

A review of international best practices reveals numerous instances of the effective implementation of spatial planning systems and management processes associated with these definitions. A review of theoretical approaches to spatial planning has revealed significant discrepancies in the methodologies adopted by different countries. These variations pose challenges to identifying a coherent set of principles suitable for shaping an effective spatial planning policy for Ukraine. The role of social and economic inequalities (Maier et al., 2021), national characteristics and traditions (Nowak et al., 2023), and membership of different supranational groups at different periods of historical development (ESPON, 2019) is significant in this regard. It is also important to acknowledge the efforts to establish a set of criteria that would enable the classification of spatial planning systems, and how this would facilitate the determination of their relative rankings in terms of importance and prevalence. The set of criteria encompasses economic, political, social, cultural, and other factors. These criteria are evaluated within the policy framework for their consistency with requirements concerning environmental conditions, social and energy issues, the real estate market, development trajectories, and demographic dynamics. A thorough examination of the circumstances necessitates adherence to legal imperatives, encompassing both domestic legislation and international best practices, as well as the integration processes inherent to the context (Khvesyk et al., 2018; Komelina and Kondratyeva, 2023).

With regard to the sectoral approach, spatial planning at the local level must consider the nature, specialisation, and functioning of the territory. This approach aligns with EU practice, as outlined in a specific document (European Commission, 2000). While the document does not have direct legal force within the EU, it contains criteria by which EU member states should determine the success of their individual management policies, including the regulatory framework for spatial planning, the scale of the system, the degree to which national and regional planning is developed, and the roles of the public and private sectors. Given this, it was possible to assess the transnational differences in governance systems and how they were historically established, identify areas of convergence (e.g., compliance with hierarchy, emphasis on local characteristics, and special status for certain territories), and compile a list of recommendations for future members of the European community. The countries analyzed were divided into four categories (Fig. 1).

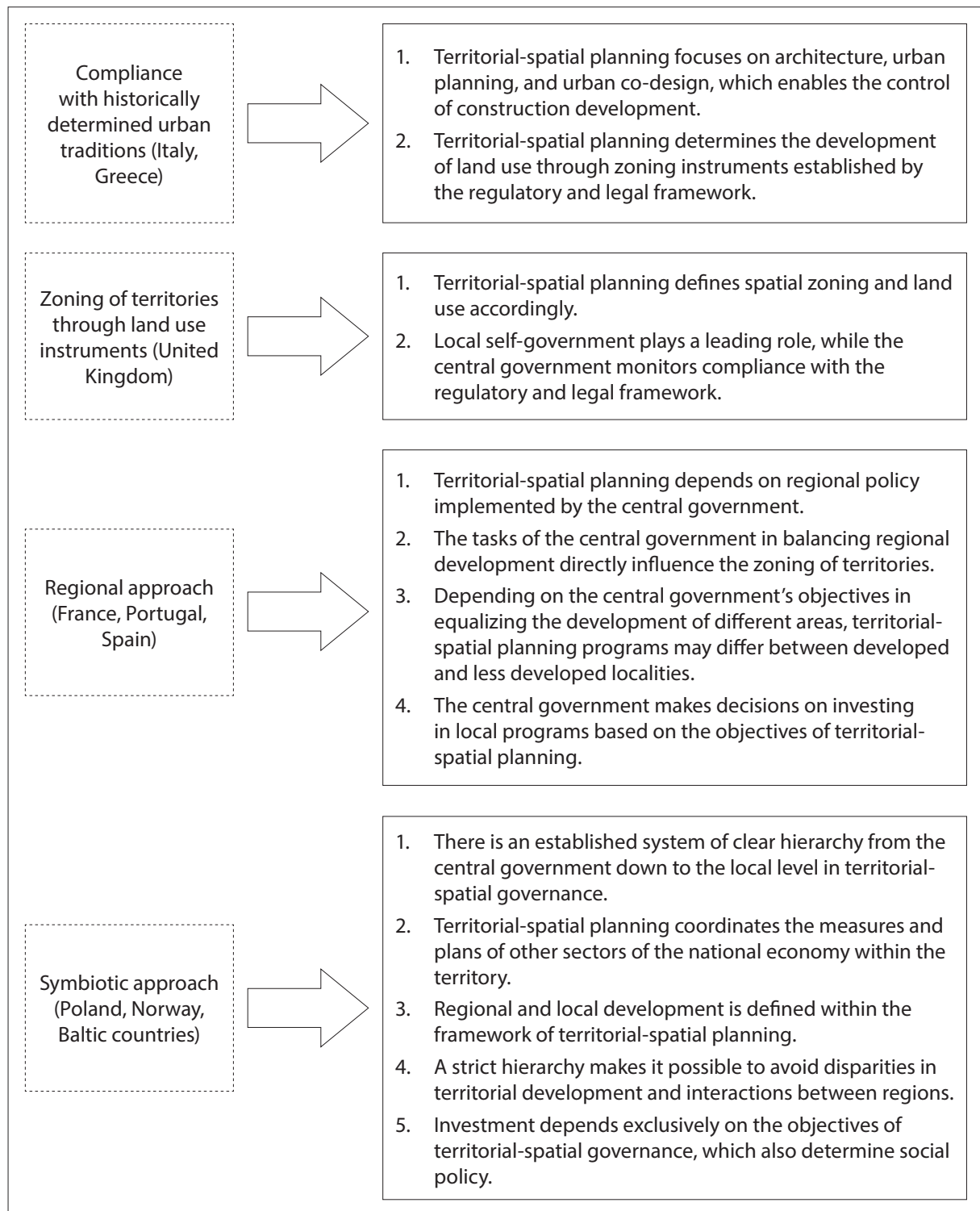


Figure 1. A comparative analysis of spatial planning models and development management systems in European countries is warranted, with particular attention to historical traditions, institutional approaches, and political and administrative structures. Source: compiled by the author based on (Zaspel-Heisters and Henger, 2015), Maier et al. (2021); ESPON (2019); European Commission DG (2000); Komelina and Kondratyeva (2023); Khvesyuk et al. (2018).

The left-hand column of this figure presents the types or models of approaches to territorial-spatial planning that are characteristic of different countries, while the right column provides their main substantive characteristics, which describe the principles of planning organisation, the role of the state and local self-government, as well as their influence on territorial development.

It is evident that most European countries have implemented well-defined management systems that have demonstrated their efficacy in promoting equal socio-economic development at the regional level within individual countries and throughout the European Union. This phenomenon has been further enabled by the European Union's cohesion policy, a pivotal policy instrument that is aimed at mitigating regional disparities. The system's flexibility, its openness to external influences, its resilience to stress, and its foundation on a unified regulatory framework across all participating nations have also contributed to the successful implementation of spatial planning mechanisms that support balanced regional development.

A critical evaluation of such systems does, however, reveal several limitations. Primarily, there is a notable deficiency in responsiveness to local initiatives, as each proposal must receive approval from the highest hierarchical level. Additionally, an excessive emphasis on local development can exert detrimental effects at the national level (OECD, 2022; ESPON, 2019; Maier et al., 2021; Zaspel-Heisters and Henger, 2015).

Notwithstanding the considerable advancement of the practical elements of spatial planning, the conceptual definition of "spatial planning" remains absent from Ukrainian legislation. In previous studies, we have concluded that spatial planning is a strategic planning activity in the public sector, and that its aim is to improve society's quality of life at state, region, and territorial community levels. This is achieved through the development and implementation of strategic documents and documentation relating to spatial planning, and the participation of industry stakeholders in the delivery of the same.

In accordance with extant legislation (the Laws of Ukraine "On the Fundamentals of Urban Development", "On Regulation of Urban Development" and "On Amendments to Certain Legislative Acts of Ukraine on Land Use Planning"), urban planning documentation is defined as an approved textual or graphic material that pertains to the regulation of planning, development, and other uses of territories. Urban planning documentation serves as the primary instrument for long-term strategic planning, and facilitates the effective development of the (given) territory. It delineates the principal directions and measures that seek to enhance the investment climate and establish conditions conducive to maintaining a healthy living environment.

The urban planning documentation in Ukraine exhibits a distinct hierarchical structure, with clear vertical progression from the highest to the lowest territorial levels (Fig. 2). In addition to the vertical links, the structure also comprises horizontal links within each existing territorial level. All urban planning documentation must be developed in accordance with the provisions set forth in the approved higher-level documentation.

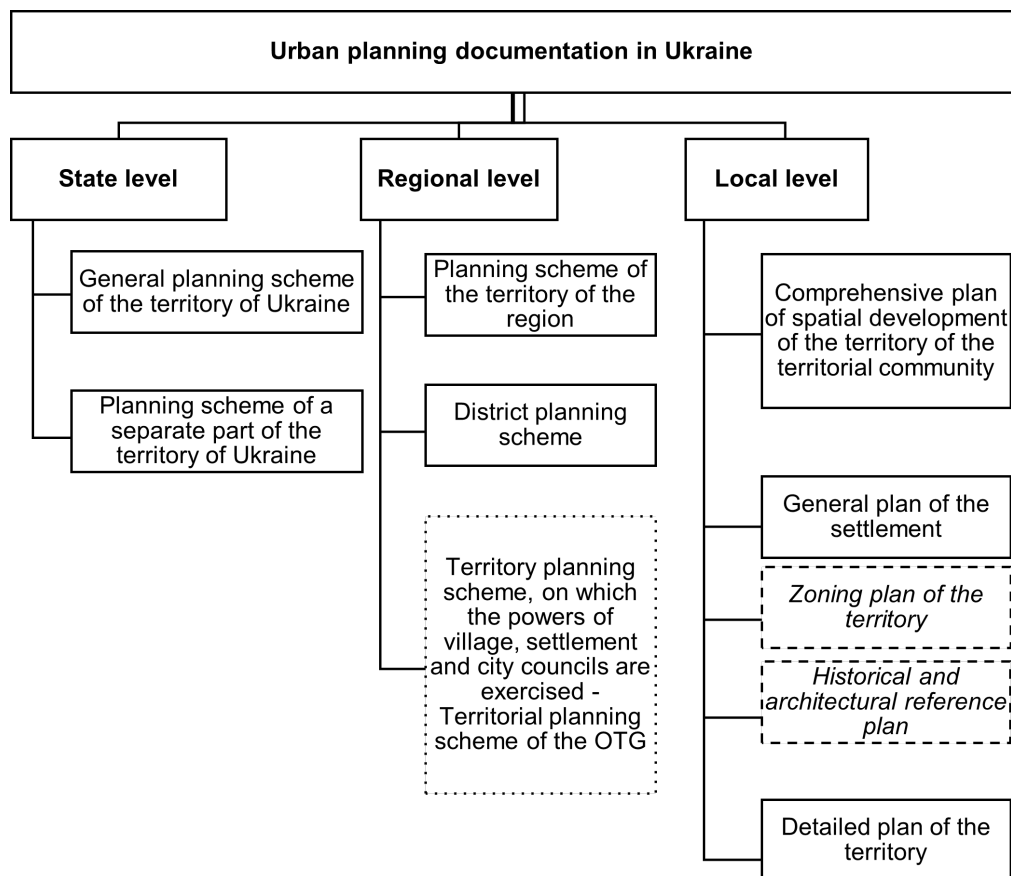
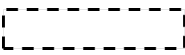
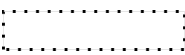


Figure 2. Hierarchical structure of urban planning documentation development in Ukraine
 Source: author's generalisation based on the Law of Ukraine "On Regulation of Urban Development".

Graphical image Description

	Type of urban planning documentation
	A type of urban planning documentation that has lost its autonomous status and is being developed as part of other urban planning documentation as a thematic section
	A type of urban planning documentation that is not currently being developed, but has an impact on documentation at the local level

Given that the basis of the legal mechanism of public administration in the field of spatial planning in Ukraine is the legislative and regulatory framework, it follows that transformations in the legal field that have significant impact on spatial planning are important. For example, after 2020 – and through the adoption of the Law of Ukraine "On Amendments to Certain Legislative Acts of Ukraine on Land Use Planning" - the main type of urban planning and land management documentation at the local level in Ukraine became comprehensive plans for the spatial development of individual territories of territorial communities.

In the context of spatial planning, a pronounced shift has occurred since the enactment of Law No. 711-IX in June 2020. At the centre of the reform agenda has been the local level of urban planning documentation development, given its key role in addressing land use and spatial organisation at the level of individual territories, with specific attention to actual land allocations (Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine, 2020). It follows that it is imperative to furnish territorial communities with contemporary and pertinent urban planning documentation. Documentation of this nature is referred to as a comprehensive spatial development plan for the territory of the territorial community. This comprehensive plan is the overarching document that guides the spatial development of the given community. For territorial communities whose territory consists of only one settlement, the development of a general plan for the settlement continues.

Despite the fact that the comprehensive plan is not a novel type of documentation, and its composition, content, procedure for development, and updating were proposed by the Resolution of the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine (2021), the state of development of comprehensive plans in territorial communities remains critically low. As of 12 October 2021, the Ministry of Communities and Territories Development of Ukraine reported that there were 1,469 territorial communities in Ukraine. Thereafter, the results of a survey of regional administrations conducted by the Ministry in April 2023 indicate that the majority of communities were in the initial stages of developing a comprehensive plan. 19.6% of communities have elected to pursue the development of a comprehensive plan; this is the inaugural declaration of intent to pursue this type of documentation. With regard to subsequent stages of the process, 4.97% of territorial communities have developed a comprehensive plan (see Fig. 3).

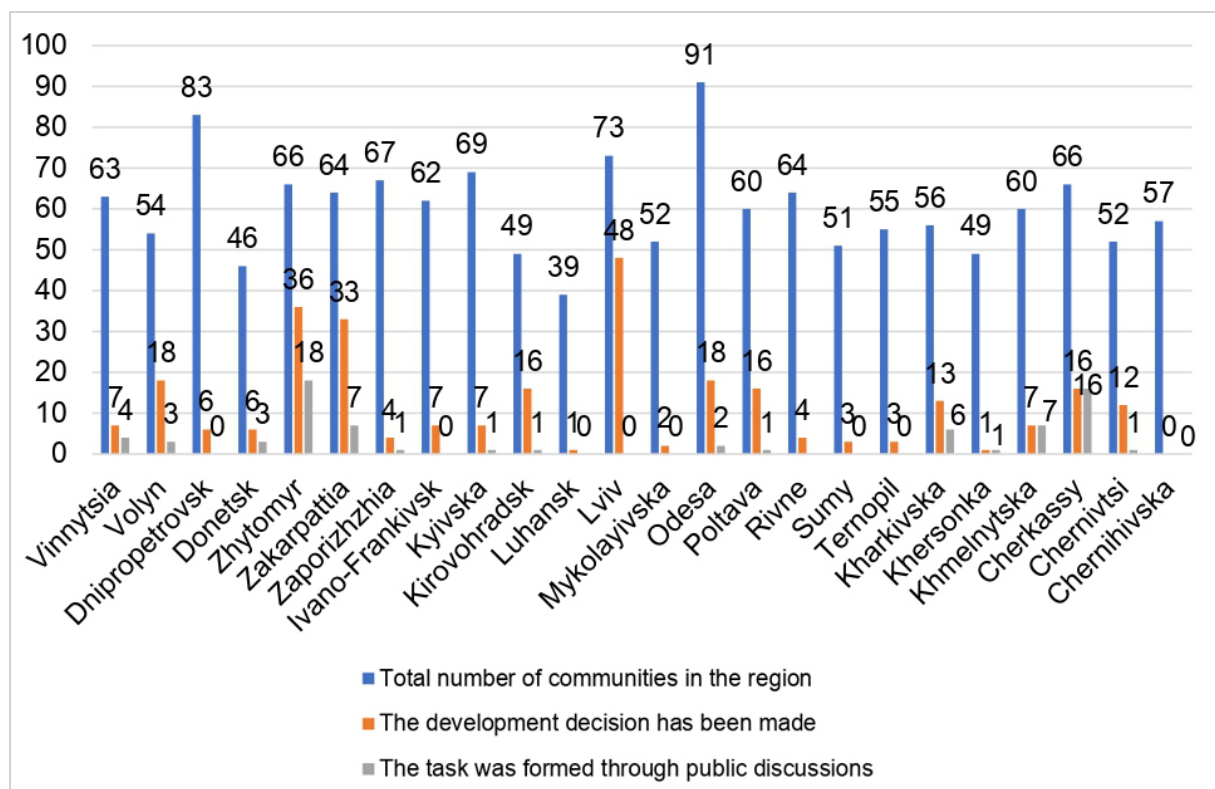


Figure 3. Number of decisions made, and tasks set for the development of comprehensive spatial development plans, by region
Source: Results of the survey of regional administrations conducted by the Ministry of Communities and Territories Development of Ukraine in April 2023.

Ukraine's Ministry of Communities, Territories and Infrastructure Development reported, in November 2023, that 345 territorial communities were then engaged in the process of developing a comprehensive plan. This figure, expressed as a percentage of the total number of territorial communities, is 23.49%. In other words, over the course of seven months, the number of communities engaged in the development process had increased by 3.89%. It follows that if that rate of development was maintained, it would take 11 years and 4 months to provide all territorial communities of Ukraine with comprehensive plans.

Given the country's legislative stipulations and prevailing circumstances, the necessity for local communities to formulate comprehensive plans is imperative. The absence of approved comprehensive plans in local communities can compromise their economic development, which is inextricably linked to its territorial development. This prompts the following question: why do local communities not provide themselves with such a document? The pivotal factor is the substantial cost associated with the work.

Notwithstanding the provisions of Ukrainian legislation which stipulate an annual subsidy from the state budget to local budgets for the development of comprehensive plans, the allocation of this subsidy has been suspended due to the imposition of martial law in Ukraine. Consequently, the financial burden of developing comprehensive plans now falls exclusively upon individual communities.

4.2. Spatial planning at the local level in Ukraine: Example of the Chernihiv region

Given the current stage of development of spatial planning at the local level, rapid changes are occurring across all regions of Ukraine. The selection of the Chernihiv region as a case study was not arbitrary. It is closely tied to the need to address the challenges and threats posed by the Russian-Ukrainian war and the subsequent recovery of the region. The level of destruction in the region is considerable. The administrative-territorial reform that took effect in 2020 resulted in the Chernihiv region being 'home' to 57 territorial communities. These include: 16 urban, 24 settlement, and 17 rural territorial communities, which are united into five districts: Koryukiv, Nizhyn, Novgorod-Siverskyi, Pryluky, and Chernihiv.

Since February 24, 2022, both Ukraine and the Chernihiv region have been confronted with a series of unprecedented challenges as a result of the full-scale invasion of the Russian Federation. All communities within the Chernihiv region were situated within the boundaries of the combat zone or under the control of occupying forces. The extent of the destruction is considerable. A considerable number of infrastructure facilities, including housing, educational buildings, healthcare, sports centre, cultural venues, administrative buildings, engineering networks, and road facilities, have been damaged or destroyed. In addition, a considerable number of businesses have ceased operations, either as a consequence of destruction or due to the disruption of access to markets and raw materials. Against this backdrop, a fundamental transformation is occurring not only in the system of inter-industry relations but also with regard the structure of the economy and the social sphere.

Despite the withdrawal of Russian forces from the Chernihiv region, the prevailing security situation remains unfavourable for the region's economic and social development. The Chernihiv region has a border that runs for in excess of 450 km with two countries with which it has hostile relationships: Russia, and its satellite, Belarus. The border communities of the region are under fire or in constant threat of the same. The ongoing crisis in Ukraine has compelled the region to pursue socio-economic development in an environment that is characterised by uncertainty.

The provision of urban planning documentation for Chernihiv Oblast represents a critical priority within the broader framework of comprehensive territorial restoration (Chernihiv Regional State Administration, 2023). It serves as a foundation for both sustainable and balanced regional development, while also delineating prospective avenues for growth and development at settlement and sub-regional levels. The availability of high-quality and up-to-date urban planning documentation in the region allows for the rational use of land resources and infrastructure, as well as facilitating control over the construction and development of social infrastructure facilities. The urban planning documentation enables the formation of a comprehensive urban planning vision for the region's development; facilitates effective spatial planning; provides a comfortable and safe environment for residents at the local level; establishes conditions for the development of the regional economy; and may ultimately attract investment based on a transparent and clear regional urban planning policy.

A survey conducted by the Chernihiv regional government at the beginning of 2023 revealed that three communities from within the region have already taken the initiative of developing comprehensive plans for the spatial development of their territorial communities. Several other communities were in the process of creating working groups to develop comprehensive plans at the same juncture in time.

It is noteworthy that the Osterska, Ivanivska, and Kiptivska rural territorial communities have initiated the formulation of comprehensive development plans. This process is being carried out in accordance with the guidelines set forth by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID).

In view of the recent changes in legislation pertaining to the hierarchical structure of urban planning documentation in Ukraine, settlements within the Chernihiv region that regard their master plans as outdated will be obliged to amend them by developing comprehensive spatial development plans for territorial communities. These plans will be integrated with master plans and/or planning decisions of master plans into comprehensive plans. This principle also applies to zoning plans; to be incorporated into either the comprehensive plans or the master plans for settlements.

The following section examines the general plans of settlements and the state of provision of this type of documentation at the local level of urban planning. This analysis considers both the situation in the Chernihiv region and broader trends across other parts of Ukraine. According to a survey conducted by the Ministry of Regional Development in April 2023, 42.32% of Ukrainian cities had approved and conditionally valid master plans. The documentation under consideration was developed after 2011, marking the beginning of a new phase in Ukraine's urban planning legislative reform. However, only a portion of localities currently operate under such updated plans. Specifically, 42.32% of Ukrainian cities have approved and conditionally current master plans developed after 2011 (Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine, 2020), while an additional 69.27% still rely on master plans adopted between 1991 and 2011. A comparable pattern is observed among settlements: 42.54% possess master plans prepared after 2011, whereas another 42.68% continue to use plans approved in the period from 1991 to 2011.

As evidenced by the findings of the aforementioned survey, a mere 16.39% of villages in Ukraine have master plans that can be deemed relevant. Additionally, the number of villages that had master plans approved prior to 1991 is also noteworthy, as this figure represents 64.39% of the total. i.e. over half of all Ukrainian villages lack current documentation. This is because the general plan, developed over 30 years ago, is no longer an effective spatial planning tool.

Post 2021, the Ministry has indicated that no locality has approved a master plan. It can be inferred that this scenario is related to the norm set forth in the Law of Ukraine "On Amendments to Certain Legislative Acts of Ukraine Regarding Land Use Planning." This norm stipulates that the development of urban planning documentation, such as a general plan of a settlement, is only permissible as part of (or detailing the provisions of) the comprehensive spatial development plan of the territory of the territorial community.

In the context of the Chernihiv region, official records indicate that, as of 2019, a total of 95 settlements had general plans either approved or still in use. Most of these plans had been developed in earlier decades, often prior to the introduction of the latest legislative reforms, and do not fully reflect current spatial development needs. This highlights the persistent reliance on outdated planning documentation at the local level.

In October and November 2023, the Department of Urban Planning and Architecture of the Chernihiv Regional State Administration conducted a survey of the region's territorial communities through the administrations of the district state as part of the collection of initial data for the preparation of the Program for the comprehensive restoration of the territory of the Chernihiv region. It was found that 464 (27.68%) of the 1,510 settlements within the region had developed general plans for their respective settlements (Fig. 4).

A significant proportion of approved master plans were developed either prior to Ukraine's independence or during preceding decades. It is evident that there is a pressing need for the updating of existing master plans, especially when one considers that the average proportion of irrelevant ones is approximately 43.75% (Fig. 5).

The majority of master plans developed for settlements in the Chernihiv region in recent years have already been integrated with territory zoning plans. In total, 102 territorial zoning plans (zonings) were approved within the region. These are distributed as follows: four in Koryukiv district, 16 in Nizhyn district, nine in Norhorod-Siver district, 42 in Prylutsky district, and 31 in Chernihiv district.

In light of the amendments to the legislation governing the hierarchical structure of urban planning documentation in Ukraine, settlements within the Chernihiv region that have identified that the general plans have a lack of relevance can implement changes through the development of comprehensive plans for the spatial development of the territories of the territorial communities. This is achieved by integrating master plans and/or planning decisions into comprehensive plans. A similar situation also exists with regard to territory zoning plans, which can be incorporated into either a comprehensive plan or a general plan of a settlement.

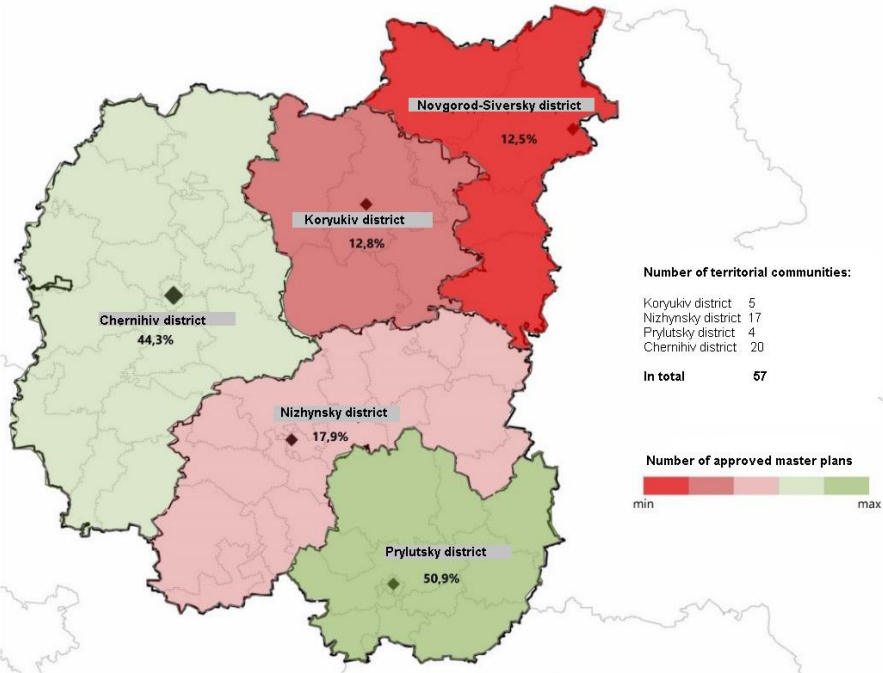


Figure 4. Number of approved master plans of settlements by rayons of the region as of October-November 2023.

Source: Compiled using QGIS open-source GIS software.

Note: The percentage reflects the share of settlements within each rayon that possess up-to-date master plans.

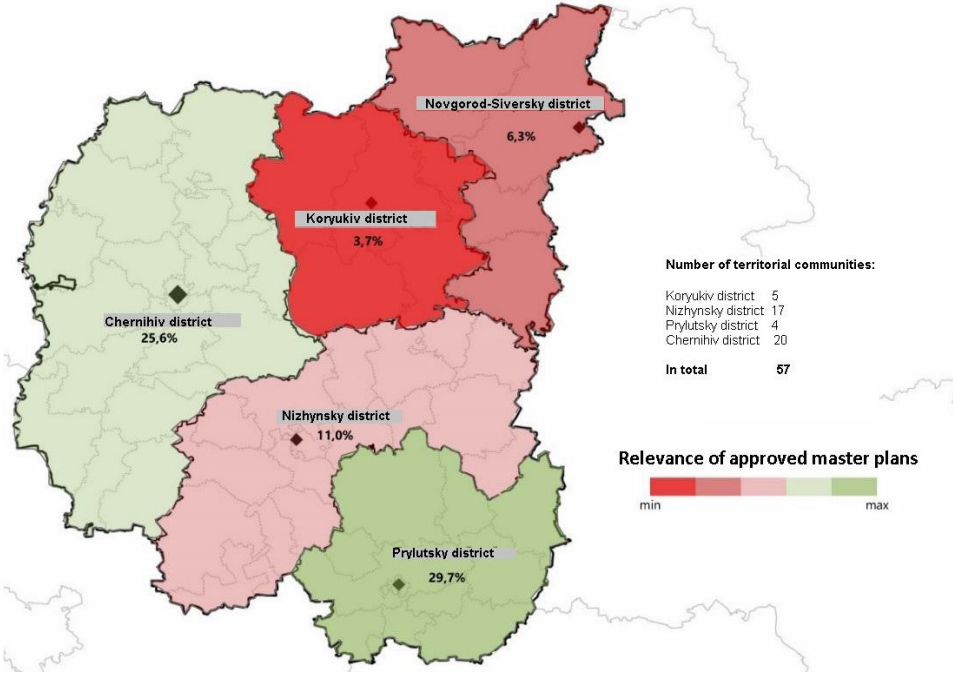


Figure 5. Relevance of approved master plans of settlements by districts of the region as of October-November 2023.

Source: Compiled using QGIS open-source GIS software.

Note: The percentage reflects the share of settlements within each rayon that possess up-to-date master plans.

5. Conclusions and their practical implementation

This study has indicated that strategic spatial planning in Ukraine is subject to considerable pressures from legal, institutional, and military sources. Despite the implementation of a contemporary regulatory framework, Law No. 711-IX, an ongoing discrepancy exists between national regulations and local practices. A review of extant literature reveals that most local communities lack the institutional, human, and financial capacity to implement comprehensive spatial development plans in a satisfactory manner.

Thus study's analysis of the Chernihiv region case study has also demonstrated that communities that have suffered extensive destruction are compelled to integrate short-term recovery needs with long-term spatial development objectives. This complicates the synchronisation of planning documents, particularly comprehensive recovery plans and programs. The dearth of adapted methodological solutions, the proliferation of technical contractors, and the paucity of citizen participation constrain the strategic potential of spatial planning.

A methodology combining regulatory analysis, institutional mapping, and empirical research has enabled this study to the the links which exist between formal instruments and actual implementation. The effectiveness of reforms has been demonstrated to be contingent not solely on the presence of legal norms but also on the existence of flexible management mechanisms, effective coordination between levels of government, and support for local capacity.

In order to reduce the gap which exists between planning regulations and practice, uniform methodological approaches should be developed for coordinating comprehensive recovery plans and programs. It would also be advisable to strengthen state support for communities that have suffered the greatest losses, through subsidies, training programs, and the establishment of regional centres of expertise. The expansion of digital tools, the enhancement of process transparency, and the engagement of the public can fortify trust and enhance the efficacy of planning decisions.

Future research should concentrate on the development of indicators for evaluating the implementation of comprehensive plans in the context of post-war recovery, and also undertake comparative analysis on the practices that exist in different regions. Such an approach would facilitate the identification of pivotal factors that contribute to the adaptability, resilience, and institutional effectiveness of spatial planning systems during periods of transformation.

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