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# INTEGRATION OF SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT INTO REGIONAL PLANNING DOCUMENTS

Case studies from Germany and Poland

by

*Joern Birkmann and Jörg Gleisenstein*

## **Abstract**

Since the signing of the Agenda 21 and the HABITAT resolutions, sustainable development has become an important principle for spatial planning in Europe. The European Minister Conference on Regional and Spatial Planning (CEMAT), for example, resolved "Guidelines for sustainable spatial planning on the European Continent" during its meeting in Hanover in 2000. Although the principle of sustainable development has gained popularity in regional planning it has not been widely implemented. With the amendment of the Legislation in Germany (Federal Regional Planning Act and the Building Code) in 1998, sustainable development has been established as a guiding principle for spatial planning in Germany. In Poland, since the change of the political and economical system in 1988/89, sustainable development has also become a main principle for the further development of the country. In 1998 the principle of sustainable development was integrated into the new Polish constitution. This paper examines the question of how sustainable spatial development has already been implemented in the legal basis and in fundamental documents of regional planning in the region (voivodship) of West Pomerania (Poland) and North-Rhine Westphalia, Germany. In this context the practical problems of integrating sectoral planning approaches will be described.

## **1. INTRODUCTION**

Sustainable development is regarded as a guiding principle for the development of countries and regions. Through the amendment of the federal regional planning act in Germany the regional planning authorities have to implement the principles of sustainable development into their programs, planning documents and projects. Similar activities exist in Poland where sustainable development is the guiding principle for all planning documents. Although there is a common consensus that a development is necessary which takes into account the needs of future generations (sustainable development), many conflicts appear when it comes to more detailed questions and planning approaches. Sustainable development encompasses the idea of an integrative perspective in terms of the recognition of social, environmental and

economic aspects. Generally, spatial planning at regional level deals with social, environmental and economic aspects, but until now it is not clear to which extent the planning documents and planning instruments focus on goals of sustainable development in these areas. Before the analysis of regional planning documents in Germany and Poland it is necessary to get an insight into regional planning in both countries. Moreover important goals and themes of a sustainable spatial planning will be described.

## 2. REGIONAL PLANNING

### 2.1 Regional Planning in Germany

The federal system of Germany is divided into three levels of governance: the Federation (Bund), the Länder (Bundesländer) and the municipalities (local level). The structure of the planning system is closely linked with the governance structure (see Turowski 2002, p. 11). In terms of spatial planning the federal level has only a framework establishing competence, that means the federal level sets general principles and defines procedures for spatial planning at the Länder-level and local level.

**Figure 1: Spatial Planning in Germany**

Structure	Legal Foundations	Planning Instruments
<b>Spatial planning at Federal level</b>	<b>Federal Spatial Planning Act</b>	- (Perspectives for spatial development)
<b>Spatial planning at Land level</b>	<b>Federal Spatial Planning Act and Land planning legislation</b>	<b>Spatial structure plan</b>
<b>Regional Planning</b>	<b>Land planning legislation</b>	<b>Regional plan</b>
<b>Municipalities – Urban land-use planning</b>	<b>Federal Building Code</b>	<b>Urban land-use plans (Preparatory land-use plan and Local development plan)</b>

Source: own presentation linked to Turowski 1999

The federal level does not have a direct planning instrument. Through the Federal Spatial Planning Act and the Federal Building Code the Federation can influence spatial planning at Länder and local level. The Länder-level in Germany implies the spatial planning at Land level and the Regional planning level. Regional planning is defined by the land planning legislation. Therefore, in Germany there are different types of regional planning in terms of scope and structure. The spatial planning at land level has a spatial structure plan to implement the aims of comprehensive spatial planning. On the sub-regional level there is the regional plan. These planning instruments are an important framework for the urban land-use plans on the local level (see Turowski 2002, p. 12). The figure below shows an overview of the structure of spatial planning in Germany. The case study from Germany is based on the Regional Planning in North-Rhine Westphalia.

In the ongoing debate about the amendment of the Federal Regional planning act and in particular in the context of the amendment of the Land planning legislation the regional planning authorities in North-Rhine Westphalia and regional councils became more powerful through new competencies and the option to implement some regional projects on their own. Main fields of competence on the regional scale are: housing, urban and residential planning, traffic, school and sport infrastructure, protection of nature and the conservation of landscape, recreation and leisure, contaminated sites, water management, waste management, culture and tourism (see Chef der Staatskanzlei NRW 2001).

## **2.2 Regional Planning in Poland**

The transformation-process in Poland after the end of Communism with its economical, social and political aspects had large influence on the territorial organization of the state and the regions. The large cities with the capital Warsaw at the first position, followed by Poznan, Krakow, Gdansk and Wroclaw, can be mentioned as winner-regions of the transformation process. These areas concentrated on foreign capitals and investments, new technologies and progressive branches of industry and services. The metropolises have developed their connections with other urban centers of Europe. On the other hand, old industrial regions, recession regions and poorly developed regions are the losers of this process. The gap between the different regions is still widening.

Already in the beginning of the 90s when the results of this process appeared in outlines, it was clear that the old system of territorial organization with its 49 voivodships was not appropriate for successful regional policy: "The Polish administrative regions had to be economically competitive, also in the international context." (Gorzela 2001: 323) So in 1999 for the first time in Polish history regional self-government on the regional level was established.

16 new voivodships are building the regional units of the state. The voivodships are covering an area between 9.400 and 35.600 km<sup>2</sup>. The population varies between 1 and 5 million inhabitants. The voivodships are furnished with strong self government, as well as their own assets and budgets. Their main tasks are stimulation of regional development and providing services on the regional level. Parallel to self governmental authorities in each voivodship is a governmental administration, led by the existing voivod, which is responsible for the implementation of state policies.

Between the municipalities and the voivodships 308 counties (plus 65 urban counties) (powiat) were established which have precise tasks, especially for social life.

It has to be mentioned, that the process of decentralization is not yet at its end and further changes are assumed. While during the 90s - as in other post-socialist countries - regional policies were subordinated to sectoral policies, regional planning was very weak and did not have much influence. But since the introduction of the new regional level regional policies of the state, they have found an appropriate regional partner (see Gorzelak 2001: 324)

### *Planning instruments*

The new regional entities were obliged by law to work out a development strategy, a voivodship land-use plan and a voivodship program. In their development strategy the voivodship mention the main guidelines of the regional development and describe the mission of the voivodships development in the different spheres of economy and society. The voivodship land-use plan sets rules of controlling the spatial structure: the main elements of settlement-structure, infrastructure, environmental protection and conservation of the cultural heritage. It contains as well plans and projects of the state. The voivodship program is a register of all activities for the realization of the goals of the regional policy.

On the county-level, special tasks of physical planning are not foreseen but the county-administrations are allowed to carry out analyses and studies concerning the spatial development. All planning documents of the state and the self-governmental entities have to be harmonized with each other. (see Niewiedomski/ Turowski 2001: 43 ff., 97; Parysek 2000: 81 ff.) Regional policy in Poland is based on "Regional Contracts". On the basis of a national development strategy the government elaborates a support program which specifies the goals of the state regional policy, the amount of money, that can be spent and its distribution of the funds among priorities and regions. The regions propose projects in their regional development strategy. The first regional contracts for 2001/2002 were signed in June 2001, but no big change in the projects that are supported can be observed. But Gorzelak says as well that "the principle looks interesting and promising" (Gorzelak 2001, 324).

Figure 2: Spatial Planning in Poland

LEVEL	PLANNING DOCUMENTS
State	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• National spatial-development policy concept</li> <li>• National development strategy</li> </ul>
Voivodship (regional level)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Voivodship land-use plan</li> <li>• Development strategy</li> <li>• Voivodship programme</li> </ul>
County	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Analyses and studies in the sphere of spatial planning</li> </ul>
Municipalities – Urban land-use planning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Study of local conditions affecting local Planning and perspectives for spatial development</li> <li>• Local land-use plan</li> </ul>

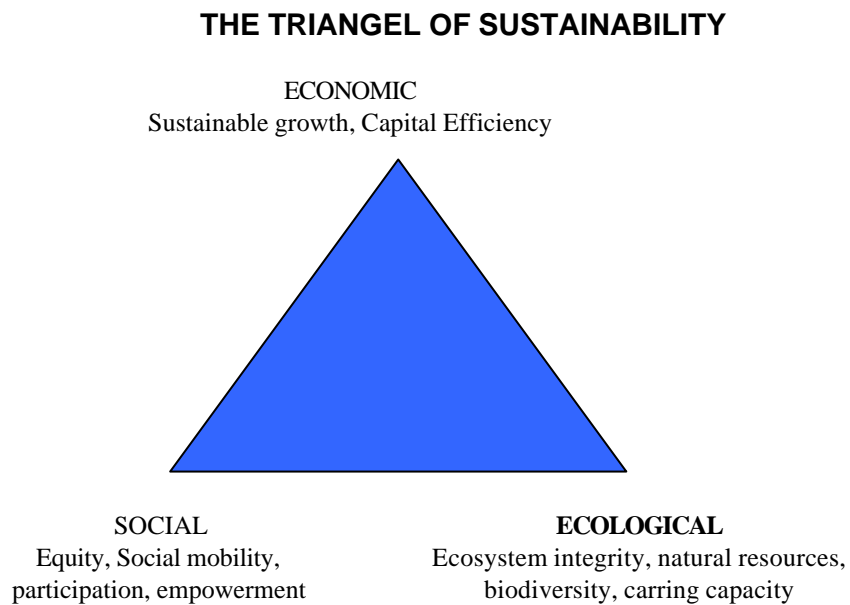
Source: own presentation linked to Wiszniewska 2002: 14

### 3. SUSTAINABLE SPATIAL DEVELOPMENT

#### 3.1 Sustainable development

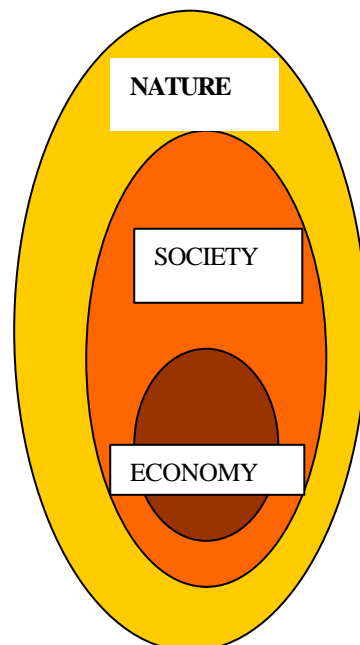
Most generally sustainable development means that natural resources should be used and managed in a manner which leaves the capacity of ecosystems available for future generations. The Brundtland report extended this principle by the definition that sustainable development implies justice between generations (recognition of the needs of future generations) and among generations (north-south). Today we do find two different models or pre-analytic visions of sustainable development, which are important if we focus on sustainable spatial development. On one hand, sustainability in its three dimensions is defined as an triangle. On the other hand sustainability is an egg (Birkmann 2000, p. 165-166). These models do have an important difference. The model of the triangle, which was mainly defined by Serageldin (1995), sets economic, social and ecological goals on three different corners, without an hierarchy between them. The model of the egg implies a closer dependence between these dimensions. Here the ecological sphere covers the social and economic sphere. The economy is defined as a subsystem of the society and the society is implemented into the wider sphere of the nature and environment (see Busch-Lüty 1995). While the triangle can lead to a very isolated definition of economic, social and environmental goals, the egg of sustainability indicates, that the goals of the society or social systems need to take the surrounding environmental sphere into account, while the economy as a subsystem of the society needs to focus an the social goals as a framework for its on objectives (see figure ).

**Figure 3: The triangle and the egg of sustainability – two pre-analytic visions**



Source: Serageldin 1995

**THE EGG OF SUSTAINABILITY**



Source: close to Busch-Lüty 1995; Presscott-Allen 1995



### **3.2 Sustainable spatial development in Germany**

Sustainable spatial development was established as a guiding principle in the Federal Regional Planning Act in 1998. In this regard the Länder needed to implement this in their planning legislation as well as in their programs and instruments. This new guiding vision points out that the challenge of regional planning is to achieve a balance between the social and economic demands made on the land, on the one hand, and its ecological functions on the other. In so doing, to establish a spatial order which is both sustainable in the long term and balanced with regard to the territory in its entirety (see Federal Regional Planning Act 1998). The definition above implies the necessity to balance social and economic demands on the land with its ecological functions. The authors came to the conclusion that the definition of sustainable spatial development in the federal regional planning act is linked to the egg of sustainability as a pre-analytic vision.

Although the federal regional planning act defines a new guiding vision there is a lack of more detailed goals in terms of what sustainable spatial development is about. To prove the integration of the principles of sustainable spatial planning in planning documents it is necessary to focus on the detailed goals related to sustainable spatial development on a regional level in Germany. The analysis of documents and literature points out the following goals as important for sustainable spatial development in Germany:

- Avoidance and reduction of resource-intensive settlement-and traffic-structures, in particular containing urban sprawl
- Avoidance of traffic while promoting mobility for all
- Protection of natural habitats
- Conservation of biological diversity
- Conservation of natural resources
- Promote environmental friendly production and consumption patterns
- Support the regional economy particularly in terms of the improvement of the employment situation
- Support all sub-regions with basic infrastructure
- Support a short distance infrastructure

Source: Agenda 21; BBR 2000; UBA 1997; BUND/Misereor 1996

### **3.3 Sustainable spatial development in Poland**

After the change of the political and economical system in Poland in 1988/89 sustainable development has been established as a main principle for the further development of the

country in different legal acts and declarations. Since 1998 the principles of sustainable development are part of the new Polish constitution. The spatial planning law expresses in its first article, that sustainable development ("ekorozwój") is the foundation for all other goals and principles of spatial planning. Besides that, it is said that inter alia the requirements of environmental protection have to be taken into consideration.

In the Polish environmental law its pointed out (in part VII Environmental protection in spatial planning and at the realization of investments) that the planning documents have to be guided by the principles of sustainable development. But we do not find in theses documents a definition of what exactly has to be understood under the term "sustainable development" and which goals are connected with it.

#### **4. SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT INTO REGIONAL PLANNING DOCUMENTS**

At first it is noticeable that the terms sustainability and sustainable development are often mentioned in the planning documents. These term include:

- Sustainable Development of the Region (open what it means exactly)
- Sustainable financial basis (available, growing)
- Sustainable protection / security of landscape (restriction)

The examples show that the terms sustainable and sustainable development in the regional planning documents are used in very different meanings. The term is often used without the meaning defined by the Brundtland report and the Rio declaration. Moreover, regional planning documents contain other goals which stand in contrast to the principles of sustainable development.

Secondly, it is obvious that the structure of many regional planning documents imply an isolated view. Objectives for the protection of natural habitats and landscape are placed in the section of nature and landscape while economic goals are mentioned in the chapter of economic development. The goals for sectoral planning fields like traffic and agriculture also have their own chapters, without focusing the interlinkages which take place on the land. This structure is problematic because the structure covers a lot of general conflicts. Important interactions between the environmental sphere and the economy are not solved. In some sense regional planning documents contain a catalog of different, and sometimes controversial goals, instead of a coherent systemat of objectives.

Furthermore, the integration of social, economic and environmental aspects is limited by the extent of coordination of comprehensive spatial planning. Strong sectoral planning approaches do not need to integrate regional planning goals because of their own instruments

like the federal highway act or the highway plan on the land level in Germany - legislation implemented by the Land parliament. These strong sectoral planning approaches can not be managed by regional planning authorities. These circumstances lead to the problem that the integrative approach of sustainable spatial development is very limited in regional planning documents.

## **5. CONCLUSIONS**

- In Germany as well as in Poland sustainable development is regarded as an important objective for regional planning. In both countries the guiding vision of sustainable development has been translated into law. Nevertheless, there exists a lack of a more detailed definition of what sustainable spatial planning is.
- Sustainable spatial development is now a guiding vision which is placed on the top of the old goals and systemat of planning documents. New challenges and topics which would indicate a more integrative perspective of environmental and socio-economic concerns made on the land have not been established.
- It has to be said that most regional planning documents we analyzed did not focus on aspects of intra- and intergenerative justice.
- Moreover, many global problems like climate change – discussed in the context of sustainable development – are also not mentioned in the planning documents.

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