Methods to imply people in sustainable regional spatial development

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The need to imply people

Planning of spatial development is no more a magisterial task of experts (Fürst 1996). The concept of planning for the people has changed to become planning with the people, or sometimes even planning by the people. This has to do with ongoing democratisation and the decentralisation of power to the lowest possible level. The implication of civil society in determining the path to future grew both on the grass-root level of city quarters (reconstruction) since the early 1970s (cf. Selle 1996, Fürst 1996) and on the global level since the World Conferences after the Rio Summit. In particular, the UN conferences have been events that were firstly accompanied by unofficial parallel meetings of Non-Governmental Organisations (NGO). Perceiving that NGO didn’t aim at thwarting the official reunions, the organisers of the UN agreed to involve NGOs more and more into the negotiations about the ways that lead humanity into future. Beginning with the HABITAT II conference at Istanbul 1996, NGO, representatives of city deputies, sectoral and communal associations, trade unions, scientists, and the private sector could exchange their forum findings with those of the official forums, and lobbying in common committees was admitted. A similar collaboration between UN officials and NGOs took place at the ‘Rio plus 5’ conference at New York (1997). This ‘new and equal partnership’ led to an emancipation of the civil society and to the consciousness of joint responsibility (Keiner 1998).

Since that, public participation in planning has increased on all levels. The most prominent example is Local Agenda 21 (Greif 2000). Recently, regional Agenda 21 has come into fashion (Adam and Wiechmann 1999). Here, a broad range of new methods to imply people is tested out (see below). A popular instrument for participative planning that developed during the past years on both local and regional level, are ‘landscape development concepts’ (cf. Winter 2000). All those approaches aim at achieving sustainable development of a community or a region. Sustainable development is not a meas-
ure or a means, but a process that requires the participation of all groups of society. Therefore, sustainable development passes through a broad discussion of needs and potentials, the elaboration of common targets and the repartition of responsibilities. In other words: sustainable development cannot be ordered, and without the implication of people, it won’t begin.

How and to what extent are people involved in planning decisions until today? The procedures in Switzerland, Germany and Austria are alike. On the communal level, during the approval of the plan, the public has the opportunity to study the plans and to give comments within some weeks. On the regional level, institutions of public concern must be addressed and heard, and associations and sectoral organisations have the right of action.

**How to imply people in regional development?**

The closer decisions are related to the living space, the higher is the identification with the concerned area of planning. The region has been identified as the key level for sustainable development. Fürst (1996) shows the shift from the co-operative to the enabling state and the problem of legitimating of negotiating on the regional level: regional cooperation do not exist beforehand, but must be put on by either regional planning bodies or regional interest groups, requiring good moderation (Stachowitz 1995, Krüger 1996). Moderation must balance interests, since it has been argued that stakeholder participation in this process has always remained questionable as experts dominate the scene (Leitmann 1999).

Thus, sustainable spatial development requires not only more effective plans, but also social innovations for better participation, codetermination and self-organisation, equity between sexes and direct democracy (Spangenberg 2001). Participatory sustainable development should obtain broad representation of key grass-roots, professional, technical and social groups, including youth, women, and indigenous people to ensure recognition of diverse and changing values, and should ensure the participation of decision-makers to secure a firm link to adopted policies and resulting action (Hardi and Zdan 1997).

Sawicki and Flynn (1996) and Leitmann (1999) argue that indicators must be capable of affecting citizen action and public policy making, and hence must be formulated through a broad-based partnership approach involving all levels of decision-making and all stakeholders.

A proven strategy to cope with the difficulty to distinguish between the influence of internal (desired objectives of plans) and external factors (what has not been initiated by planning) is the use of indicator-based participative
methods (Kern 1999). Those allow to find sufficient information for significant decisions in time and to provoke learning processes for the involved persons.

Methods for participation of people

In general terms, DEZA (2000) proposes the following approach for an impact monitoring of sustainability-related projects:

• Identification of responsible and stakeholders

• Critical analysis of the context and definition of objects or domains of observation

• Elaboration and selection of impact hypotheses and/or of key questions

• Identification and selection of methods for monitoring (inclusive an estimation of expenses and required resources in comparison to the expected expressiveness of the data).

Data analysis and evaluation is often done in Workshops or round tables in order to comprehend the whole range of a project or the interlinked impact of several measures of a plan. The participation of all stakeholders in a workshop allows an integration of different perceptions and point of views. Thus, consensus for the definition of objectives, indicators, targets or measures can be created. Examples are the Local Agenda 21 (cf. Verein Lokale Agenda 21 2000) and Landscape Development Concepts (cf. Winter 2000).

Other institutional framework for the participation of people may vary depending from the potentials and the needs of the regions: networks, co-operations, regional conferences, etc.

Accordingly, various tools are used. These tools stem mainly from development co-operation but may similarly be applied for spatial planning in developed countries.

Participatory and Reflective Analytical Mapping (PRAM)

PRAM is an integrated method of assessing and planning sustainability that can be used at the project, institutional, or system level, and for any spatial region - from a village to a continent. PRAM helps the implied persons to look at the whole monitoring and evaluation system and not just one specific methodology. PRAM allows several steps to be introduced that force project evaluators to look at a general situation and all of its components.

The method of evaluation, as conceived by PRAM, includes four central elements:

• Identification of both problems and solutions through the participation of interested parties in a questioning approach;
• Institutional structures and procedures to encourage reflection on the results of monitoring and evaluation;
• Analysis of both the ecosystem and society in terms of indicative issues which could identify relevant variables and, consequently, suggest indicators;
• Identification of the geographic scale and mapping to place the data and analysis in context.

System Analysis and Planning
This is a method of assessing human and ecosystem well-being and institutional strengths and limitations. It includes identification of priorities and options, design of development strategies and action plans, and the development of an implementation and monitoring framework. A supplementary method, ‘Strategic Negotiation for Community Action’ is used to develop a consensus on the priorities and actions among communities and other key stakeholders involved.

Development of Reflective Capacity
This method is designed to help an organization or community develop a capacity for reflection by clarifying its mission, analyzing its capacity for self-criticism, and engaging in the appropriate restructuring. Fundamental questions are addressed, including: How do we know what is happening around us? (system assessment); How do we know what to do about it? (mission, goal, actions); How do we track progress and learn from our actions? (reflection)

Systematic Analysis of Experience (SANE)
SANE provides a framework to recover institutional memory and learning through a process of retrieval, analysis, and documentation of past experience of organizations and projects.

Institutional Implementation Capacity Assessment
This method helps organizations evaluate their capacity to carry out their mission and projects. The method contrasts the demands on the organization generated by its mission and objectives with its capacity to supply them.

Logical Framework Analysis (LFA)-based Project Assessment
The LFA-based Project Assessment provides a way for reflective organizations to monitor and evaluate projects. Implementing this procedure begins with organizing an internal monitoring and evaluation (M&E) unit. Second, an internal system for information collection and dissemination must be set up. Third, meetings and other forums must be established to encourage participatory and reflective monitoring and evaluation.
Experiences from Austria

Other strategic tools to imply people in sustainability-oriented spatial planning have been developed or adapted mostly in Austria (cf. Kanatschnig and Weber 1998).

Internet-based participation

The revision work for the ÖREK 2001 was organised with the objective of making the process as open as possible and to enable the broad participation of all partners (federal government, Laender, municipalities, social and economic partners) as well as all interested experts. An internet-based forum was offered, and anybody could leave comments, questions and other inputs.

Mediation

Mediation is an extra juridical procedure that is used mainly for familiar problems in the United States and Great Britain as alternative before making an appeal to court. It is an institutionalised approach to resolve conflicts as amicable arrangement. This requires voluntary participation and a neutral third person (the mediator). The participants balance their interests instead of asking for a decision. In very difficult situations, mediation, due to its 'cooling down mechanism', appears to be the sole way to resolve problems as the implied persons co-operate.

In the beginning of the 1990ies, the mediation method has been transferred from criminal law to planning, first of all for environmental issues (cf. Jeglitza and Hoyer 1998, ÖGUT 1999, Zieher 2001). Recently, the mediation method has been introduced in spatial development (Adam 2001, Frey and Kronenberg 1999, Mastronardi and Hafner 2001).

Zech (2001) argues that planning should not and cannot entirely be replaced by communication between planning partners. Mediation, if not applied precisely, leads to chatting. Planning and discussion is needed. However, the inclusion of as much public as possible and manageable may lead to a 'mental map' of common understanding, legitimating of planning at an early stage, and to better motivation in the implementation of the plans.

References


