

SUSTAINABLE BALANCE BETWEEN ECONOMIC GROWTH AND A SOCIAL AND ENVIRONMENTAL SOUND DEVELOPMENT (PLANNING SECTOR)



WHAT'S THE PROBLEM?

One of the key problems in “holistic planning situations” relates to being able to provide an even development between economic growth and social and environmental friendly development. The continuous reduction of open space, increase in traffic and loss of living quality of the remaining spaces for people are some of the consequences that might occur.

Holistic planning requires complex decision making skills in order to consider different thematic topics and efforts to provide information of different kinds and contents. Additionally, it seems important to widen discussion with many interest groups and consideration of different sectoral interests as well as their programmes and policies. This complexity poses a challenging task for the responsible persons to find a manageable way to regard all involved issues. A solution in such a context needs a balance and compromise, a tuning between the overall topics environment, economy and social equilibrium.

Various urban developments might bear different effects for the social and environmental situation, while consequences may have varying time and spatial scales. Several case studies showed successful approaches from projects which refer to smaller scales, which seem to produce more efficient results in both decision making and planning. Therefore, processes in decision making and planning as well as new forms of participation gain importance in this respect and need to be adopted to the different scales, such as the neighbourhood, district or the urban area overall. Such an approach might require more time efforts in the first place but would lead to avoid retardation at a larger stage of the project.

As indicated in the graph below, early considerations about sustainable development and integration of stakeholder groups are beneficial to achieve positive results.

TIME AND SPACE SCALES' CHARACTERISTICS?

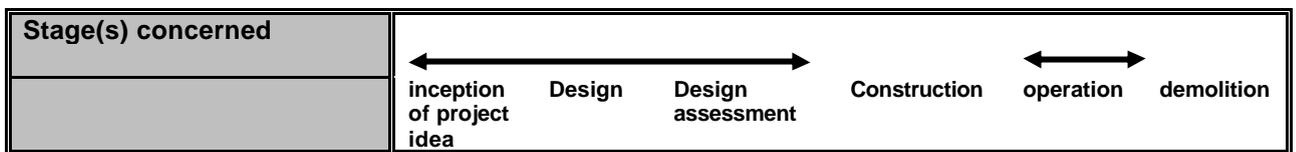
Time scales are important in different respects, as for example to avoid delays of the project work or to satisfy the concern of administration and technical personnel. In addition, time expenditure gains importance with respect to monitoring issues, both in terms of how long and in what intervals a monitoring should be considered or implemented. Another relevant aspect is the time reserved for evaluation procedures within a project. Availability of information and data is important for all these issues.

There are different options to define space/spatial scales in this context. Integration of the various stakeholder groups (such as citizens, developers, economy) are essential in this context. As already mentioned above, smaller scales might be chosen in favour of practicability and keeping track of procedural moves:

Different spatial scales – from buildings and building blocks/neighbourhood scale to the urban area as a whole:

Land use plans provide the backbone of the overall urban plan with all its sectoral issues included. It provides both information and the basis for decision making for urban policies and future developments in the urban context. For that purpose programmes and the plans need to be updated regularly to adopt to changing situations.

Another spatial scale is described by development or lay-out plans which are the basis for development projects. They are permanently updated and need therefore a permanent evaluation and monitoring of the land use changes in the urban context.



Scale investigated	Component	Building	Neighbourhood	City	Region
		X	X	X	

CONFLICTING AREAS?

Any changes and alternative approaches to planning pose a very sensitive subject, which needs some consideration in the forefront:

First, most planners feel confident about their work but they probably do not have the means (personnel, technical equipment) to react on changes, what concerns changing attitudes of people or the environment at all. So, the way of planning and decision making is crucial and subject to changes. Consequently, the awareness of new planning forms and tools needs some extra efforts and time from the decision makers.

CASE STUDIE(S) LINKED TO THIS ISSUE?

Exemplary case studies are the Capacity 21 programme in Velingrad (Bulgaria), Dogme 2000 (Denmark), DPL2 housing development in Den Helder (The Netherlands), Spatial planning - a holistic approach (Austria), Angelina Street housing regeneration scheme. (UK), New Tredegar Regeneration Scheme (UK).

WHAT COULD BE ENHANCED TO IMPROVE SUSTAINABILITY?

The above mentioned issues on balanced urban developments remains a recurring situation, moreover holistic planning includes other sector's issues as well. Although some "success or good practice examples" are there, it seems that there is still a prevalent hesitation to try something new and change traditional ways of planning.

Positive outcomes were an increasing awareness among the actors involved, even though there are still improvements needed to increase efficiency of both for the tool and people who are using it. To introduce tools that support a more holistic approach and thinking among the involved people and increased transparency in the planning and assessment process.

Moreover, authorities are more likely disposed to contact people and discuss their concerns. In return authorities receive a very positive feedback to their efforts and make them more confident in their "new" efforts and policies.

Improvements:

- To learn from present examples, where tools and procedures have been used successfully
- Highlight the advantages by virtue of stakeholder involvement
- Include sustainability issues in strategic (early) planning