

Sustainable Land Use Planning: Powered by Governance or Governed by Power?

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Paper prepared for the Workshop

“Governance for Sustainable Development: Steering in Contexts of Ambivalence, Uncertainty and Distributed Control”

Social Ecological Research Programme (SÖF), Working Group on Governance and Transformation

5th-7th February 2006 in Berlin

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1 Introduction

The paper deals with sustainable land use planning to examine the role of goals, knowledge and power for governance processes. Land use planning is a policy field in which a variety of (state and non-state) actors is involved and various mechanisms of coordination (hierarchy, cooperation, competition) are effective. In order to analyse power asymmetries in detail, the example of a land use conflict in the metropolitan region of Munich is used.

The first part introduces concepts to empirically analyse governance structures and processes as well as power relations in spatial planning. *Actor-constellation* and *mode of interaction* are two essential categories of analysis based on the actor-centred institutionalism of Mayntz and Scharpf (1995) as well as on Kooiman's (2003) governance theory. To conceptualise governance in the context of spatial planning and from a regional studies perspective, *region/scale* is suggested as a third category of analysis. This is based on a relational understanding of space that regards cities and regions as socially constructed phenomena and parts of a multi-scale political system. Moreover, this third category refers to the debate about politics of scale and the re-scaling of politics, which addresses the question of the appropriate scale of governance for sustainable development. The interdependencies between these three categories of analysis can be characterised by power relations. Concepts of power help to explain how governance processes work in detail.

In the second part of the paper, power asymmetries are analysed in a specific context, using the case of land use planning in the Munich metropolitan region as an example. In this region, strategic spatial planning and land use policy changed during the 1990s in order to attain sustainability goals and meet the challenges of urban sprawl and suburbanisation. Land use conflicts – as a result of the intra-regional competition in attracting people and capital – are appropriate to identify the diversity of goals and to study power asymmetries in detail.

2 Analysing the distribution of power in regional governance processes

2.1 Regional governance

During the 1990s regional governance became a buzzword in political, social, economical and regional studies. "Regional governance" is a generic term and includes other spatially relevant terms such as metropolitan governance, rural or urban governance. The English term "regional governance" is used in German and appears appropriate to deal with the diversity, variability and complexity of regional governance structures, modes and actors and also incorporates different spatial scales. The spread of the term regional governance

relates to the discussion about new approaches and ideas in spatial planning and development, especially the search for strategies, capacities and instruments towards sustainable spatial development. Both market and government failures have led to ongoing processes of state restructuring, in order to meet the challenges of sustainability and competitiveness at the regional scale.

Generally, governance deals with the question how social relations or interactions – in companies or regions – are coordinated. Aside from this general meaning of governance as “social coordination” (Mayntz 1993, 11), governance relates to the combination of different mechanisms of coordination and network-like structures involving public and private actors. Governance obtains a normative component in that it considers democratic principles and socially desirable targets following the idea of good governance.

Although regional governance is one of the buzzwords in politics and science, there is still no common understanding of the term. Basically, two levels of the discourse can be differentiated: On meta-level regional governance expresses the changing conditions in society, economics and politics. The traditional, formal spatial planning system is extended by informal and more management orientated approaches. On a functional level regional governance is discussed as a concept of action, as a new and “better” instrument for spatial planning in the sense of good governance. German definitions of regional governance are often drafted fairly abstract and inaccurate. There is consensus that regional governance deals with the shaping, organisation, coordination and controlling of regional development processes. There is no agreement whether regional governance is a concept, theory, paradigm, strategy, process or something else (Pütz 2004).

Subject and object of regional governance can not be specified precisely. While all kinds of different public and private actors appear to be the subjects of regional governance, there is no consensus with respect to the object. For some experts the focus of regional governance is *governance* – understood as the process of regional development. Other experts see the *region* as the object of regional governance. This distinction reflects the diverse conceptualisations of space and place as well as the experts’ interdisciplinarity as an important noise in the background of the regional governance discourse.

The regional governance discourse lacks instruments for empirical analysis. Regional governance is better defined normatively than empirically (Fürst 2003). Moreover, there are no guidelines and no handbooks for doing regional governance. In order to get a grasp on regional governance three questions can be asked, representing three steps of analysis (Pütz 2004):

- (1) What is regional governance? Which criteria characterise regional governance (description)?
- (2) How does regional governance work (functional analysis)?
- (3) How can regional governance be assessed (evaluation)?

These questions can not be answered in general but rather in a concrete context – here: land use policy in the metropolitan area of Munich. While the first two questions refer to an analytical understanding of regional governance, the third question has a normative connotation. The evaluation criteria to assess regional

governance inevitably comprise normative measures of value such as balancing regional disparities, social equity or sustainability.

This paper introduces a new conceptualisation to empirically analyze regional governance (see Fig. 1). This approach suggests *actors* and *modes of interactions* as two essential categories of analysis based on the actor-centred institutionalism of Mayntz/Scharpf. This conceptualisation also refers to Kooiman’s (2003) governance theory, which regards *interaction* as its central category. Both, Mayntz and Scharpf’s as well as Kooiman’s approaches are more theoretical contributions than concepts which can be easily operationalised for empirical research.

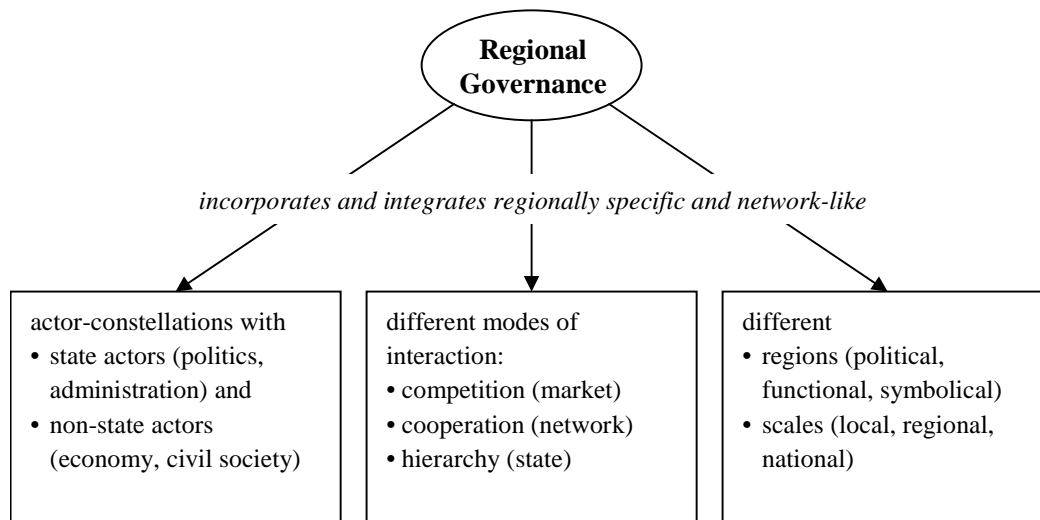


Fig. 1: Categories to study regional governance (Pütz 2004).

Region/Space is suggested as a third category of analysis in order to conceptualise regional governance as multi-scale-governance. This is based on a relational understanding of space that regards cities and regions as socially constructed phenomena and parts of a multi-scale political system. Regions could be defined by intraregional functional linkages, by specific regional problems or by projects with regional impacts. Regions can be conceived as regional spaces of (inter)action or cooperation. Regional governance is vertically embedded in a political-administrative system of multi-level-governance. Although regional governance is more frequently discussed with reference to agglomerations and city-regions, it is not limited to a certain structural type of space and is equally relevant to rural and peripheral regions.

Moreover, this third category refers to the debate about politics of scale and the re-scaling of politics, which addresses the question of the appropriate scale of governance for sustainable development. Focussing on scale stresses the missing coherence between administrative units (e.g. municipality, planning region) on the one side and the functional spaces of spatial planning issues (“problem region”) on the other. It is necessary to

conceptualise regional governance as a spatially conscious concept because of the path-dependency of spatial development. The regionally specific cultures of politics and public administration and the regionally specific situations are crucial framing conditions for the analysis of regional governance (Benz/Fürst 2003).

The interplay of the three categories can be analysed with power concepts (see next chapter). The descriptive analysis is going to be extended with functional aspects of regional governance. While goals, strategies and instruments of spatial planning have been intensively discussed, surprisingly little attention has been paid to governance modes and the distinct role of power in shaping the practice of spatial policy making.

2.2 Power

“Governance means rules, processes and behaviour that affect the way in which powers are exercised (...)” (European Commission's White book on European Governance, 2001, 10).

2.2.1 Definitions and concepts of power

Power and other sometimes synonymously understood concepts like domination or authority are complex and multi-faceted phenomena, which hardly can be quantified. Since power (*potestas*) is etymologically close to force or violence (*potentia*), some authors think about close relation of power and violence (Arendt 1970, Sofsky 1990). Because of power's several meanings and its concept's ambiguity the study of power has to accept contradictions and be done within a pluralism of theories. Starting with a simple definition, power is “the ability to achieve certain ends“ (Johnston 2000, 629). However, power does not exist per se. Power is nothing which can be possessed or strained from an identifiable centre over any distances. Power is no object or thing, which can move in space or cross places. Rather, power has to be considered as a „relational effect of social interaction“ (Allen 2003, 2). Power represents social complexity and its driving forces. The distribution of power is not stable, not fixed and not definite. Power can be assigned to different actors, and has to be negotiated in every specific situation. Power always relates to others. Power relations are constituted by social action. “Power is neither given nor exchanged. It only exists in social action” (Foucault 1980, 89). Therefore, power can be used to characterise the relations between individuals, groups or states. Foucault (1978) identifies dynamic and mobile networks of power (“dispositives”), e.g. sexuality, psychiatry, political initiatives, scientific communities and administration. These dispositives characterise everybody's identity. Therefore power does not work repressively but in a productive way. The exercise of power is a necessary condition in order to analyse power. The object of analysing power is interaction and communication. However, it is a matter of dispute whether the object of the empirical analysis of power can be actors, too (Weiss

2002a). The answer to the question whether power is without a subject depends on the underlying concept and on the understanding of power.

Basically, it is not possible to act without exercising power. In that respect power is an ambivalent concept: actors can both win and lose when taking action. Even the most powerful actor has to face competitors or is confronted by oppositions or needs to build coalitions and social capital in order to achieve his or her goals. Power also has to be characterised as a paradox concept. „When you simply have power – in potentia – nothing happens and you are powerless; when you exert power – in actu – others are performing the action and not you (...)“ (Latour 1986, 264f.). According to Hirshleifer (1991) the paradox of power means that weaker (poorer, smaller) actors can improve their position against stronger actors.

As two basically different perspectives on power, Weiss (2002a) distinguishes between a hierarchical-instrumental and a functional-strategic concept of power. The hierarchical-instrumental concept of power uses a unilinear, causal model of action, meaning that actor A influences other actors. The power relation between master and slave is asymmetric. As power has to be exercised in order to have an impact, power refers to the principal possibility of action. Power resources can be things, attributes, people or social relations – depending on the specific situation. Power can be used as both a real and a fictive means of action. This relational and instrumental concept of power with a ruling and repressed instance is referring to the everyday meaning of power.

The functional-strategic concept of power is standing in opposition to the hierarchical understanding of power. It goes beyond a simple model of power based on causalities and incorporates interdependencies, i.e. networks, where negotiations take place and coalitions are built. The definition of power is “softer” and includes compensating rewards, the conditioning by cultural standards, norms of behaviour, ideological and moral convictions. This dynamic logic of power enables changing power positions. It is important to note that functional concepts of power can be incorporated in theories of social and political steering/governance.

Two basic concepts of power are the idea of “power *over*” and “power *to*”. Power over somebody/something refers to the potential of people to enable or hinder the behaviour of other actors. The control over others lies in the centre of this understanding of power as preventive action. Power deals with the possibilities/capacities of actors to achieve their goals against resistance. Whether this power is exercised or not depends on the circumstances. This concept refers to a hierarchical, one-dimensional understanding of power. The concept of power to do or not to do something refers to two- or three-dimensional concepts of power as it contains non-decisions and socio-cultural parameters of power. That means that power is the possibility/capacity of actors to do or not to do something that he would or could not have done without power.

2.2.2 Power resources

According to Giddens (1984, 9), social action refers not to “the intentions people have in doing things but to their capability of doing things in the first place.” These capabilities can be called *power resources* and are the means by which actors succeed with their goals. The idea of power resources is going back to economics and organisation theory and was brought into the power discourse by Giddens (1984). In his structuration theory society consists – simply spoken – of a system of rules and resources. Whether actors achieve their goals depends on the specific situation, the actor constellation and the applied power resources. Power implies the control and availability of power resources. In a simple hierarchical model power resources are tied to the one with power (dominator). In more sophisticated, network-like models power resources are permanently transformed in coalitions and negotiations. Power resources can be material or ideal, a real thing or a quality of things, concrete or abstract, real or fictive (Weiss 2002b). A simple systemisation of power resources distinguishes between the actor’s individual-biographical background, his position in society and politics and his physical-material capabilities (Galbraith 1985, 58ff.). Giddens (1984) himself makes a difference between authoritative resources (referring to persons) and allocative resources (material things, money). “It is important that we analyse and recognise both the specific forms of power at issue in any particular case and the specific locations of its enabling resources” (Massey 2004, 14).

2.2.3 Power vs. discourse

The exercise of power is also always related to communication and discourse. Power on the one side and communication and discourse on the other side are complementary concepts for agency. Therefore, discourse is never free of power and power can also be exercised as a discourse. With reference to Habermas’ (1981) theory of communicative action regional governance and spatial development processes are defined by power and discourse. Accordingly, Reuter (2000, 10f.) distinguishes discourse acts and power acts as the smallest units of planning:

- Discursive acts („Diskursive Akte“) are all comments and actions with the purpose to argue or convince and justify during the planning process. These acts are valid by reason, which can be rationally accepted. Reasons can be attacked or debated any time.
- Power acts („Akte der Macht“) try to succeed with their interests by any means. Argumentation could be a part of it. However, argumentation does not serve the truth but the strategic exercise of power and cannot be considered a discursive act in the sense of Habermas anymore. Limiting the number of participants in a discourse or defining topics are already acts of power. Power acts become evident in interruptions or endings of discourse, at times when decisions have to be made. The decision made by the highest in hierarchy or by the majority or as a small compromise after struggling is just the symbolic use of a democratic ritual.

Power acts and discursive acts seem to be appropriate to model planning and decision making process. In principle, both concepts can enable collective action and take it for granted that consensus is possible. Whereas discursive acts achieve consensus by exchanging arguments, power acts see consensus as the result of instrumental and scientific conclusions. Spatial development as a political process mixes discursive and power acts. All stakeholders try to influence the planning decisions as well as their positive and negative impacts. Therefore, actors never completely represent collective interests. They rather try to achieve their goals by power acts and discursive act against resistance of others. Although both modes of action (power and discourse) are based on different rationalities, their interrelation refers to the rationality of the communicative model.

3 Case study: Power asymmetries in spatial planning in the metropolitan region of Munich

This case study is based on the assumption that governance for sustainable development is hindered or restricted by the unequal distribution of power. Empirically, the distribution of power has to be analysed in a specific context. In this paper the analysis of power relations and regional governance structures is narrowed down firstly to a specific policy field – spatial planning – and secondly to a specific region – the Munich metropolitan region in Germany. The case study is divided in two parts:

- Sketch of current trends of spatial development in the metropolitan region of Munich to present the context and agenda for land use planning issues (3.1);
- Analysis of power asymmetries considering a concrete regional land use conflict as an example (3.2).

3.1 Trends of spatial development

The metropolitan region of Munich faces two challenges: economic competitiveness and ecological sustainability. On the one hand, the metropolitan region has to compete in a globalised economy. The metropolitan region surrounding the city of Munich – with its quality of infrastructure (e.g. international airport, high-skilled labour, R&D-facilities) and its diversity of high-tech-industries – internationally acts as a ‘Greater Munich Area’ to attract people and investment. On the other hand, local and regional planning authorities have to contribute to a sustainable spatial development – the latter being the guiding principle for planning. Dealing with both challenges in land use planning means to negotiate between various actors in diverse coalitions and on different spatial scales.

In the metropolitan region of Munich, strategic spatial planning and land use policy changed during the 1990s in order to meet the challenges of urban sprawl and suburbanisation; this was triggered by a new international airport, strong economic growth and an increasing population. The following trends and structures sketch current spatial development processes and the spatial representations of changing modes of governance in the metropolitan region of Munich (Pütz 2004):

- From monocentric to regional patchwork-structures;
- Simultaneous processes of growth, stagnation and shrinking;
- Rescaling, scalar fixes and scale jumping;
- Project based governance in the “shadow of hierarchy”;
- Different regions with different territorial borders;
- Lack of congruency between “problem region” and “planning region”;
- A growing number of city-regional cooperation initiatives involving state and non-state actors supplementing the traditional system of regional planning.

3.2 Power asymmetries in land use conflicts

Land use conflicts are the result of the intra-regional competition in attracting people and capital. They are appropriate to study the effectiveness of governance processes and the involved power asymmetries in detail. Power asymmetries illustrate competing, maybe conflicting goals, interests, objectives, authorities or responsibilities.

The example of a land use conflict arising around the building of a new Ikea centre just outside the City of Munich in two neighboured communities is taken as an example for unsustainable spatial planning. In brief, this case is considered to be not sustainable because of its negative ecological and economical impacts: cutting down of protected forest, negative effects of traffic, loss of purchasing power to neighboured communities, reduction of zoned land for a technology park. In addition to the usual, prescribed steps in the planning process (re-zoning, participation, special planning procedures for large infrastructure (“Raumordnungsverfahren”)), the conflict has been accompanied by a referendum against the building of the Ikea which finally failed. The coalition of local authorities, land owner and investor managed to enforce its own interests. The traditional instruments of regional planning failed and spatial development took place at sites which are not sustainable and not preferable from a regional perspective.

On first sight, the land use conflict is a problem of poor coordination, i.e. a governance problem. On second sight, the conflict is a problem of power asymmetries. The power asymmetries explain why governance failed. The case study shows that land use planning in the metropolitan area of Munich suffers from power

asymmetries in two ways: unevenly distributed power resources refer to the relevant actors and actor-constellations on the one hand; the structural powerlessness of regional planning refers to the various scales inherent to the conflict on the other hand.

To speak of unevenly distributed power resources means to look closer at actors and the power resources they applied in concrete interactions. It is important to only account for those power resources which were applied in the actual conflict interactions. It does not matter what power resources actors generally have access to as long as these resources are not used in the specific interaction in which power is exercised. The following actors were taking action in all phases of the conflict (Pütz 2004, 141f.):

- Land owner: resident of the community of Taufkirchen, represented by a lawyer from Munich;
- Investor: Ikea Germany GmbH (located in Hofheim-Wallgau, Hessen), represented by the same lawyer as the land owner`s;
- Communities of Taufkirchen and Brunthal, represented by their mayors and commissioned by their community councils (Gemeinderat);
- Lower planning authority (Office of the district of Munich, "Landratsamt") and upper planning authority (Office of the administrative district of Oberbayern, "Regierung von Oberbayern") in charge of approval for the settlement of Ikea.

The land owner, the investor Ikea, the mayors and finally the lawyer representing both land owner and investor towards the planning authorities can be considered the key actors in the conflict. The lawyer is a former member of state parliament and thus provided with excellent relations to all levels of Bavarian administration.

Unequally distributed power resources represent the power asymmetry of planning scales. The multi-scalar spatial planning system in Germany suffers from the structural powerlessness of regional planning. Generally, the distribution of objectives and authorities is a good idea. It is part of German federalism and follows the principle of subsidiarity. The separation of authorities for planning and approval is also basically a reasonable principle of democratic societies. However, this might create a problem when planning authorities are not equally distributed. The case study shows that developments which hold advantages for single communities but disadvantages for their neighbours or the whole region can not be stopped by regional planning authorities. This also might indicate a general dilemma of multi-scale-governance.

The case study shows the following power asymmetries regarding spatial scale:

- Mismatch between real world problems (urban sprawl, suburbanisation) and administrative boundaries (regional planning association): Whereas land use issues do not have administrative boundaries and refer to functional structures, land use planning refers to territorial structures.
- Planning authorities in Bavaria:

- State planning: State Planning Law (Landesplanungsgesetz) and State Development Program (Landesentwicklungsprogramm);
 - Upper planning authority (District of Upper Bavaria, Regierung von Oberbayern);
 - Regional planning authority (Regionaler Planungsverband München e.V.);
 - Lower planning authority (District of Munich, Landratsamt München);
 - Community planning, e.g. in charge of land use planning (zoning).
- Economic competition between neighbouring communities.
 - Political competition between the “big” (City of Munich) and the “small” (surrounding cities and communities).

4 Conclusions

The example of a land use conflict arising around the building of a new Ikea centre just outside the city of Munich shows that the regional governance capacity suffers from competing goals, power asymmetries, unevenly distributed power resources and the structural powerlessness of regional planning. Basically, the regional governance capacity and the quality of land use planning depend on how efficient collective action is organised at the regional scale. The regional governance capacity is the ability and capacity of regions to work on and solve problems collectively (Healey 2002). Kooiman (2003) refers to “problem solving” and “opportunity creation” as “first-order governance”. See also similar discussions on the “organizing capacity” (e.g. van den Berg et al. 1997) and “institutional capacity” (e.g. Phelps/Tewdwr-Jones 2000). The evaluation of regional governance capacity and the selection of evaluation criteria depend on the regionally specific path dependencies and goals of development. The crucial question is how the regional governance capacity can be increased. These findings result in the conclusion that the balance of power seems to be a precondition for the building of governance capacity. In other words: Balancing power asymmetries is a strategy for sustainable development.

Balancing power asymmetries or stabilising power refers to the institutionalisation of power relations. Popitz (1992, 232ff.) identifies three general tendencies: with the growing degree of institutionalisation of power relations firstly their de-personalisation, secondly their formalisation and thirdly their integration in a higher order increases as well. Popitz (1992, 236ff.) also distinguishes five steps of the establishment and institutionalisation of power from sporadic power to centralised state power. Balanced power relations might also be a premise for conflict solving. The equivalency of power can be secured by institutionalised procedures, e.g. mutual control, self-organisation, participation, planning of small steps (principle of perspective incrementalism), special rights for minorities or the nomination of responsibilities (Reuter 2000, 13).

The case study also indicates the relevance of the “shadow of hierarchy” (Scharpf 1997) in strategic spatial planning and as another precondition for governance capacities. On the one hand, it is not surprising that the influence of “hierarchy”, i.e. state actors and institutions (e.g. planning law) is tremendous in state objectives such as spatial planning. On the other hand, the case study shows that the shadow of hierarchy is (mis-)used by private actors (land owner, investor) to succeed with their goals. Therefore, collective action towards sustainable development in spatial planning needs a shadow of hierarchy with clear goals and corresponding instruments.

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