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GLOBALISATION, SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT AND COMPETENCIES OF LANDSCAPE CHANGE IN A EUROPEAN PERSPECTIVE

During the last 10 years the collective goals connected with the agenda of sustainable development has been challenged by the globalisation agenda furthering a global liberalised market with the individual producer and consumer in focus. Only in the local planning and management of the concrete landscape the two agendas seems to meet. In a European perspective the European Landscape Convention has been promoted as a common frame for the promotion of landscape aspect of the sustainability agenda. The paper analyses the EU proposal for a European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD) from the perspectives of a globalisation vs. sustainability agenda, focusing on the support for different geographical competences for landscape change devoted to different population groups in the rural community. It is concluded that support for a local sustainable landscape development is depending heavily on the ability and strength of local authorities to unite for such goals, and that detailed analyses of the power balance between different geographical competences in the rural community is necessary to evaluate the possibilities for a sustainable landscape development in rural areas under the conditions of a liberalized globalisation.

The challenges from globalisation towards the agenda for a sustainable development

The growing interest in Landscape planning and management is closely related to the environmental movement and the rise of sustainable development as an agenda for the common future.

However, during the last decade the agenda on sustainable development has obviously been challenged by the agenda of globalization, closely related to the demand on an open market pushed forward by the World Trade Organization. These two agendas are now running their own individual life almost independently from each other. The globalization agenda is driven by technological and economic renewal, dominated by traditional economic power. In comparison the agenda on sustainable development is more defensive and with less influence on the present rapid landscape changes. The agendas also differ in the fact that globalization is oriented towards and open market with the individual producer and consumer in focus, whereas the agenda of sustainable development is oriented towards collective goals, such as nature protection, pollution, common land use, social justice etc.

The division is deep - and even deepening these years: On my way to the conference "Landscape Planning in the Enlarged European Union" I read an article in a Danish business newspaper - Borsen (the Stock Exchange), on the use of environmental arguments in advertising. An economic consultant criticized the request for a more binding use of sustainability in advertising, and expressed the opinion that

"The concept (sustainability) is a politically adopted high ideal (Rio - Gro Halem Brundtland) that humanity fulfilled in the hunting society, but that we probably never again will obtain. It belongs - with respect - as a guiding stern, for instance in the treaty of the European Union"
(Gronvaldt 2005).

However, the title of the article was: "The environment can be used as an argument for sale".

This is a very common opinion not just among businessmen, but also in growing part of the population in general, reflecting the immediate insistence on short-termed profitability, dominating the neo-liberal influence on globalisation.

Even in the general discussion on landscape planning the two agendas cannot be properly paralleled, since the globalization agenda at the political level is accomplished almost without any spatial or geographical dimension, whereas the sustainability agenda is closely related to the handling of the differentiation in the material environment apprehended at different spatial scales.

This scale-dependent concretization of the landscape aspects of the sustainability agenda has been one of the most remarkable features of international politics within the last twenty years, from the global climate and biodiversity conventions to the Agenda 21-document with its promotion of landscape ecological planning as an important integrated tool.

The European concretisation of the sustainability agenda

At the European level the European Landscape Convention from 2000 (Council of Europe 2000) can be seen as a concretization of the global sustainability agenda, focusing on the need of changing the historically developed landscape perspective from a more or less narrow specialist or artist issue to an integrated part of the local and regional democracy. The convention also develops a frame for a nationally and regionally differentiated handling of landscape questions in the different parts of Europe, by prescribing the signing national authorities to identify their own landscapes throughout the national territory, to



analyze their characteristics and the forces and pressures transforming them, and to take note of changes, as well as to define quality objectives for the identified landscapes (Art. 6). In the explanatory report enclosing the European Landscape Convention it is explicated as an important aim that *'Landscape must become a mainstream political concern, since it plays an important role in the well being of Europeans who are no longer prepared to tolerate the alteration of their surroundings by technical and economic developments in which they have had no say. Landscape is the concern of all and lends itself to democratic treatment, particularly at local and regional level'* (par. 23 of the Explanatory Report (Council of Europe 2000)). Integrated research projects carried out in several European countries during the 1990ties lead the foundation for this process, too, with emphasis on local studies of landscape and sustainable development.

Also the globalization agenda is carried out at different spatial levels from the global to the local, working primarily with deregulation, market orientation, product differentiation and reduction of distribution costs, attended by a considerable centralization of business power. However, where the globalization agenda is centrally regulated especially through international politics, the sustainable development agenda is mainly formulated and concretized at a lower often regional and local level. As a consequence, policy formulated at the local landscape level is forced to handle economic decisions and rules most often made at a higher level.

In general, only at the local level the two agendas are integrated, and only here the landscape consequences of globalization come to the surface.

The EU Rural Development policy: A tool for globalisation or sustainable development?

The European Landscape Convention is a pan-European convention expressing common ideal goals on the future, but with no concrete binding treaty obligations and with only very limited financial resources.

Quite different is the proposal for a European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD) to be realized from 2007 to 2013 through the allocation of 88,75 bill. Euro (Commission of the European Communities 2004).

There is indeed power behind this impressive initiative. Certainly we have to present the simple question: Is it a part of the globalization agenda or the agenda for a conversion towards a sustainable development?

In the mission statement (Art. 3) it is stated, that 'The Fund contributes to the promotion of sustainable rural development throughout the Community in a complementary manner to the market and income support policies of the Common Agricultural Policy, to Cohesion policy and to the Common Fisheries Policy'.

This general statement is concretised in § 11 of the preamble of the proposal, where it is specified that 'To ensure the sustainable development of rural areas it is necessary to focus on a limited number of core priority objectives at Community level relating to agricultural and forestry competitiveness, land management and environment, and quality of life and diversification of activities in those areas'.

The landscape is assigned a role already in the preamble by emphasizing that 'Support for specific methods of land management should contribute to sustainable development by encouraging farmers and forest holders in particular to employ methods of land use compatible with the need to preserve the natural environment and landscape and protect and improve natural resources' (§30 of the preamble), and the related necessary training enhanced by stating that the 'evolution and specialisation of agriculture and forestry require an appropriate level of technical and economic training, including new information technologies, as well as adequate awareness in the fields of product quality, results of research and sustainable management of natural resources, including cross-compliance requirements and the application of production practices compatible with the maintenance and enhancement of the landscape and the protection of the environment' (§ 15 of the preamble).

However, these promising but general formulations seems to be somewhat blurred, looking at the resulting three priority axes forming the main structure of the program and the implementation of the LEADER approach as integrating principle. Through the wording of the proposal it is not that easy to see the priority of globalization versus sustainable development. In fact they are merged together in a way that obviously leaves it to the concrete context which of the two trends that will win the local battle.

The three 'priority axes':

Priority axis 1: Improving the competitiveness of the agricultural and forestry sector

Priority axis 2: Land management

Priority axis 3: Diversification of the rural economy and the quality of life in rural areas,

constitutes the main structure of the proposal (with a main section of the proposal dedicated to each of these axis), to be appropriately balanced and integrated mainly through the so-called LEADER-approach that in short can be characterised as area-based multi-sector bottom-up approached innovative and cooperative programmes based on networking within public-private 'Local Action Groups'. (Fig. 1)

The LEADER approach (European Community Measures - Agricultural Policy and Rural Development 2000) has developed within the European Union over a period to support local initiatives in the development of disadvantaged rural areas of the union (LEADER I (1990-1994), LEADER II (1994-2000) and LEADER+ (2000-2006).



Fig. 1.

Main organisational structure of the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD) 2007-2013.

Geographical competences for landscape management and landscape changes

However, a critical evaluation of the possible united landscape effects of the priorities and the integrating LEADER approach force you to put some very basic questions: In the end, who have really the competence to change the landscape? Who decides, who makes the actions, and what influences their decisions and actions?

For the elucidation of these questions, it is useful to introduce a distinction between different forms of practical geographical competence existing to put forward changes in a landscape, set up by the late Swedish geographer Torsten Hägerstrand:

In a paper on the political geography of environmental management he emphasizes that all human management of the environment is in general based on a clear partition of competence to given geographical domains (Hägerstrand 1995). The lowest primary domain is the unit of property, within which the owner have the free right to change the landscape, within some general rules set up by society. The owner or user is the only one that can do physical changes within his or her domain, and this right receive strong protection in almost all societies today. Fixed rules must be followed when they are transferred from one owner or user to the next, and boundaries tend to be very stable over time. Hägerstrand calls this exceptional right to manage and change the primary domain the right to exercise territorial competence - this to be seen in contradiction to the much more limited spatial competence of all power holders of domains at higher levels - that is municipalities, regions, nation, EU, typically represented by politicians and the public service related to these domains.

They certainly have competence within their strict defined domains, but only the competence to set up general conditions on what should or could be done within the domain or to designate sub-domains, and set up special conditions for these areas.

But if they want to change the landscape physically, also designated areas, they have to make an agreement with the owner or to buy up the land, meaning acquiring the territorial competence of the domain at the lowest level. The only exception to this rule seems to be within the infrastructural sector.

The power holders of higher order domains will often be split up in two different strata: Beside the integrating bodies with spatial competence, specialized bodies, such as a ministry of agriculture, forestry or environment, will exercise functional competence, uniting the specialisations within the geographical domain. The functional competence might have a certain extended spatial influence, setting up conditions also at the lower levels of domains, but still the power holders of functional competence cannot in general directly make any changes at the lowest level.

All the power holders of higher order domains can only take care of symbolic transactions: political deliberations, rule setting, control, tax collection, subsidy provision etc.. Symbolic transactions at the social level are vital for the transformation of society and for its ability to unite for common future goals. But we should have no illusions concerning their power in a direct transformation of the rural communities. Hägerstrand characterises the difficulties facing a transformation towards a sustainable use of our landscapes through symbolic transactions in this way:

"The social realm of symbolic transactions has a surface part which is mobile and where only lack of imagination sets limits to the content of desire-pictures about the future. But deeper down this highly visible canopy is held in place by the rather stiff stems of social institutions. Their task is in most cases to resist rapid change. On the landscape itself, for quite different reasons, there is also inertia. It takes almost a century for a coniferous forest to mature. Big cities persist for millennia. So, when a new thought such as the large-scale management of the biosphere emerges among the desire-pictures, every form of real practical action pointing in a new direction meets a world in which social institutions and physical arrangements are plaited together in an intimate grip and with few exceptions organized for exploitation of nature rather than caretaking and rejuvenation"

(Hägerstrand 1995).

It's a basic conclusion that symbolic transactions have first of all to be formulated and developed in accordance with or at least not against the interests of the power holders of the primary domains. These - as well as the traditionally strong functional competence of especially the agricultural ministries and organizations - are more and



	Group of population	Influence on local policy of sustainability	Power of territorial competence	Power of spatial competence	Power of functional competence
1	Housing – settlers	+	÷	+	÷
2	Small enterprises	+	÷	+	(+)
3	Industrial enterprises	(÷)	(÷)	(+)	+
4	Organic farmers	+	(+)	÷	(÷)
5	Multifunctional land owners	+	(+)	÷	÷
6	Specialised industrial farmers	(÷)	+	(÷)	+
7	Productivist forest owners	÷	+	÷	+
8	Multifunctional forest owners	+	+	÷	(+)
9	Owned reserves	+	+	÷	÷
10	Designated reserves	+	÷	+	+

Table 1.

Influence of different population groups on local policy of sustainability, as a function of their relations to territorial, spatial and functional competences in the landscape. A population group has compared to other groups a considerable [+], a neglectable [÷] or an uncertain [(+) or (÷)] influence on the different types of competence. After (Brandt 2004).

more forced to operate within the globalization agenda, unless other profitable opportunities are established. The rural development programme can also be seen in that perspective.

At the sub-regional and the local landscape, this certainly must result in tensions as shown in table 1.

Table 1 shows how different groups of actors - that might also be beneficiaries, in the sense of the rural development programme - can exercise very different geographical competences in relation to landscape changes.

The big landowners have the territorial competence - the right to make physical landscape changes. Through the regional or local democracy small settlers, enterprises and ordinary people without land have a certain spatial competence. Interest organizations of different kinds - often in practice important beneficiaries, working through local offices - will have a considerable functional competence, mostly, but not necessarily, biased towards globalization. They are only indicated indirectly through their support for different groups of population.

Finally, the resulting influence in regional or local landscape sustainability is indicated as a mixture or sum of the influence from the different kinds of competences.

Will the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development promote a sustainable landscape development?

From a landscape sustainability point of view the LEADER principle is interesting because it focus on the local integration of the different axes in a spatial context - which is crucial. But does Local Action Groups really balance the activation of the local democracy for sustainability with the activation of local actors in the globalization process?

According to the LEADER programme: 'These "Local Action Groups" must consist of a balanced and representative selection of partners drawn from the different socio-economic sectors in the territory concerned. At the decision-making level, not more than 50% of a local partnership may be made up of government officials and elected office-holders'. (European Community Measures - Agricultural Policy and Rural Development 2000)

The usage sounds like a basic democracy. But in fact it limits the influence of the spatial competence - the local democracy - in proportion to the territorial and functional competences, with the two last often supporting each other, e.g. as land owners and their organizations.

It will be an important future task for landscape planners to evaluate how different combinations of territorial, spatial and functional competences, related to different historically developed cultural landscapes, constitute opportunities and obstacles to a local landscape planning. Such a planning has to keep up with the rapid spontaneous landscape changes forced through by a globalization that might also - and should also - be strongly supported by the European Rural Development Programme, especially outside the special designated areas. However, here a basic conflict seems to separate the globalisation and the sustainability agendas: The segregation concept of protected A-landscapes combined with non-protected production B-landscapes, is a part of the non-reflexive globalization agenda. The sustainability agenda has to insist on a high degree of integration at all spatial levels.

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