

Spatial planning and health (Ruhr area cities, North Rhine-Westphalia, D) – not a trivial relationship

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Context

As underlined by authoritative sources (e.g. WHO CSDH 2008), spatial planning offers unique gateways to health protection and promotion. Spatial planning could evolve into a major, and universally accepted, approach to health protection and promotion.

The opportunities seem so obvious that the question arises why reality is such a far cry from this vision („**utilization gap**“).



www.staedteregion-ruhr-2030.de/cms/regionaler_flachennutzungsplan.html

Methods, data

Using the example of joint spatial planning of 6 cities in the Ruhr area (Bochum, Essen, Gelsenkirchen, Herne, Mülheim/Ruhr, Oberhausen; pop 1.81 M), formerly characterized by heavy industry, the poster details some key features of this planning process.

Methods include: document analysis, process participation, and expert judgement.

Results

Starting out with a R&D project in 2000, a number of **cities in the Ruhr area** contractually agreed to formally coordinate their spatial planning (**Box 1**). Arguably the most important strand of this refers to the „**Joint regional land utilization plan Ruhr**“ (*Regionaler Flächennutzungsplan Ruhr, RFNP*). After two waves of public and stakeholder involvement, the City Councils of the 6 RFNP cities gave final approval of the RFNP.

Outputs of the planning procedure include a large set of materials; incl. those related to Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) (**Box 2**). **Health issues** discussed in the process include physical exposures (pollutants etc.), hazardous incidents, waste disposal, green spaces, etc. The **LIGA contribution** refers to a variety of substantive and procedural themes (**Box 3**).

Box 1 Ruhr area cities coordinating their spatial planning - selected chronology

2000

Project “City 2030” (*Stadt 2030*) funded by Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF); Technical U Dortmund coordinates **project “Region of Ruhr Cities 2030”** (*Städte-region Ruhr 2030*), with motto “Cooperation and self-will” (*Kooperation und Eigensinn*)

2003

“**City-regional contract**” (*Stadt-regionaler Kontrakt*):

- 8 cities form project consortium (*Projektverbund*) to develop “**Joint regional land utilization plan Ruhr**” (*Regionaler Flächennutzungsplan Ruhr, RFNP*)
- Master plan (*Masterplan*) Ruhr
- Joint initiative “Ruhr valley” (*Gemeinschaftsinitiative “das ruhrtal”*)

2005

6 cities establish **planning consortium** (*Planungsgemeinschaft*) to develop RFNP

2006

Draft Master plan Ruhr

2007

- 3 more cities join the City-regional contract
- Scoping for the **Environmental Report** (*Umweltbericht*) on RFNP
- The City Councils of the 6 RFNP cities resolve upon the **preliminary draft** (*Vorentwurf*) of RFNP
- **Early involvement of public and stakeholders** (*Frühzeitige Öffentlichkeits- und Trägerbeteiligung*), Nov.2007–Febr.2008, **19 public meetings**, **c. 6.000 suggestions** received; **256 agencies and institutions** (*Träger öffentlicher Belange, TÖB*) involved, producing **115 state-ments with c. 590 suggestions**

2008

- Master plan Ruhr
- **Formal involvement** of public and stakeholders (*Förmliche Öffentlichkeits- und Trägerbeteiligung*), with **public display and debate** (*Auslegung, Erörterung*) of draft RFNP, Environmental Report, and responses, Oct.–Dec.2008
- **Evaluation** of RFNP

2009

- May-June: The City Councils of the 6 RFNP cities give **final approval** of the RFNP
- August: RFNP submitted to Ministry of Economics, Small- and Medium-sized Businesses, and Energy (MWME) for **approval** (*Genehmigung*)
- Once approved and officially published, the RFNP will replace existing land utilization plans and sections of the regional development plans

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Links and references: on reverse side of handout; and available from the authors.

Box 2 Materials reflecting the RFNP planning procedure

RFNP draft of 2008: Proposed resolution (*Beschlussvorlage*), map (*Plankarte*), rationale (*Begründung*) with 10 additional maps (*Erläuterungskarten*), Environmental report (*Umweltbericht*) (required by SEA) with 12 thematic maps (*Themenkarten*), 7 summaries of characteristics (*Steckbriefe*), several further summaries, listings, overviews and synopses (**45 items**)

RFNP of 2009: Corresponding set of documents (**43 items**)

Box 3 Main issues raised by LIGA.NRW, 2008

1. Include a **section on “health”** in the statement of justification for the RFNP
2. Prepare a separate **technical paper on “health”**
3. Include the topics “**physical activity**” as well as **gender issues** and **diversity** in more detail
4. Integrate existing **health statistics** and **health reports** into the RFNP, espec. usage of local health reports
5. Amendments to Environmental report, concerning **exposures** and related health effects, **recreation and green spaces**, etc.
6. Add to concise texts for planning (*Steckbriefe zu planerischen Einzelflächen*): strengthening the **weight of health concerns** for fair balancing

Conclusions

- „Spatial planning“ processes – especially in densely populated such as Ruhr area – involve large numbers of institutions, comprehensive public involvement, and considerable numbers of statements and suggestions
- For those testifying on health it is a challenge to adequately understand the ramifications of the planning process and to cover the health issues at stake, espec. in the absence of standard procedures and tools
- For those managing the planning process, it is likewise challenging to evaluate and integrate the multitude of suggestions received
- From this perspective, the “utilization gap” is not surprising and may require significant efforts to be overcome, e.g. development of dedicated local/regional “health plans”
- Curricula of urban planning and management as well as of public health should be adjusted to include „spatial planning and health“.