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**Governance for
sustainable spatial development
– a comparative study of Luxembourg and Switzerland
(Summary)**

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FOREWORD

SUSTAIN_GOV aims at investigating sustainable spatial development policies in the context of governance, both with respect to Luxembourg and, by way of comparison, to Switzerland – a country often considered being at the cutting edge of innovative approaches in spatial planning policies in Europe. Responding to the objectives 4.2.5 of the 2012 CORE Programme Description within the thematic research domain Sustainable Resource Management in Luxembourg, the project builds on the foundations established by the SUSTAINLUX (CO9/SR/01) project that has shown that the Grand Duchy's policy, planning practices, and institutions of governance remain underdeveloped particularly in the domain of participation.

The object of SUSTAINLUX was to examine the discourse of integrated sustainable spatial development in Luxembourg, and to determine consequences that might result from existing and emerging policies trends. Among the significant findings were the barriers in place that inhibit the implementation of sustainability policies (Carr 2013). The characteristics, circumstances, and conditions of the Luxembourg field of policy and planning render implementation very difficult, if not also costly. One of the outstanding challenges, then, for Luxembourg in particular and sustainable development policy in general, is to examine ways in which these hindrances in governance can be improved. The primary objective of SUSTAIN_GOV is to advance our understanding of this problem.

SUSTAIN_GOV aims to pursue a deeper and more nuanced evaluation of existing planning, policy and governance patterns with respect to spatial development in the Grand Duchy. The results aim to provide an assessment on the strengths and weaknesses of current decision-making structures in Luxembourg, in the Swiss planning system, and in the *Glattal-Stadt*. Both national contexts reveal commonalities and differences. Both have experienced a high degree of economic success, internationalisation, and dynamic patterns of urbanisation. The Swiss model of spatial planning, however, rests on the commitment to balance and harmonize interests and search for consensus among as many social actors as possible, and is grounded in the legal and political context of direct democracy. Exploring the advantages and disadvantages of this political form can provide insights and reflection onto modes of participation and horizontal consensus building that Luxembourg aims to achieve.

The SUSTAIN_GOV researchers welcome a strong team of Non-Contracting Partners (NCP) from the ETH, from VLP-ASPAN, and from the IBA Basel 2020 who played a critical role in getting the project off the ground, and who have kindly agreed to act as advisors to the project, by drawing on their vast analytical, conceptual, and practical experience. SUSTAIN_GOV has also benefitted greatly by the assistance of Jan-Tobias Doerr from the Masters Programme of the Institute of Geography and Spatial Planning.

AIMS AND APPROACH

Luxembourg is struggling under intense urbanization pressure that is manifesting itself through strong strains on land resources, as inadequate infrastructure, and tensioned political capacities to manage corresponding changes and conflicts. In this respect, policy, planning and governance practices are evidently lagging behind contemporary policy standards and requirements, particularly concerning decision-making processes and citizens' involvement. As pressure on already scarce

land resources will only increase in the near future, new constellations of stakeholder co-operation and participation are becoming more and more urgent.

The SUSTAIN_GOV research team aims at investigating sustainable spatial development policies in the context of governance, both with respect to both Luxembourg and, by way of comparison, Switzerland, a country often considered at the cutting edge of innovative approaches in spatial planning policies in Europe, similar to Lux in terms of economic success, a high degree of internationalisation, and patterns of urbanization, and with a model of spatial planning grounded in the legal and political context of direct democracy that can provide insights into modes of participation and horizontal consensus building in Luxembourg. Particular focus is placed on the so called *Glattal-Stadt* in the area of Zurich Nord.

SUSTAIN_GOV aims at a nuanced scientific understanding of participation, governance, and integrated sustainable spatial development, and is informed by contemporary literature in urban and regional studies. It sits at the nexus of four streams of scholarly discourse.

1. Sustainable Spatial Development

Over the past 14 years, in Luxembourg has developed a wide variety of policy mechanisms, planning practices, and even government Ministries, in an effort to address sustainable spatial development (Carr 2011). While, in their entirety, these objectives are ambitious and broad in their scope, there are major weaknesses.

In Switzerland, sustainable development policies are also both omnipresent and contested. The Swiss Federal Office for Spatial Development (ARE), holds “sustainable development” of paramount importance, and aims to achieve it through cross-jurisdictional co-operation for the betterment of mobility, settlement structure, integration, energy, and security (Ray 2012). However, the challenges for Switzerland to find a balance of vertical and

horizontal perspectives, and maintain standards of living across (see Diener et al. 2001) clearly remain on the agenda, and there is pressing need to coordinate further urbanization. Organizations such as VLP-ASPAN, IBA Basel2020, and researchers at the ETH, are challenged with finding ways to network stakeholders and find solutions to related conflicts.

Thus, there is an outstanding research imperative if integrated sustainable spatial development in Luxembourg shall be addressed inclusively and effectively. SUSTAIN_GOV aims to examine this through a comparative investigation of governance practices while underscoring the important issues of scale and re-scaling.

2. Urban Planning and Governance

It is widely discussed in the academic literature that there has been a shift in policy-making in recent decades, which has led to the governance approach as an analytical framework for examining policy-making.

As seen in SUSTAINLUX, Luxembourg’s spatial policy and urban planning setting is a case for governance, as it embodies multi-actor, cross-sector, and multi-level processes (Affolderbach and Carr, in review). Further, spatial planning and policy-making is situated in a fragmented and complex environment, characterised by small municipalities with limited public planning capabilities, and a young tradition of higher-level planning and regulation.

In Switzerland, Thierstein et. al. (2006) identified similar changes. The *Glattal-Stadt* - the primary object of study of SUSTAIN_GOV -- is an undefined area in the north of the City of Zurich that is transforming under various formal and informal planning instruments: and hence the conclusion that the area represents an “multi-level ongoing task” (*vielschichtige Daueraufgabe*) (Thierstein, Held, and Gabi 2005: 327). These processes, which include the construction of infrastructure (such as the Glattal Tram), demand vertical (Federal, Canton, Municipal) as well as

horizontal (inter-municipal, inter-Cantonal, and inter-institutional) co-operation, and furthermore a degree of civic consensus generated through public referendums. Furthermore, themes that surface in this process are reminiscent of the situation of Luxembourg: downtown versus periphery, emerging *Zwischenstadt* typologies, exorbitant land prices, and conflicts of urban versus rural interests that are not unrelated to the nation's feudal past and tertiary industrial present.

It is thus of interest to examine consensus generating practices operating across a complex arena of urban transformation.

3. Rescaling and Transformation

The multi-layered character of governance also responds to changing conditions of globalization (see Hall 1984; Friedman 1986; Marcuse and Kempen 2000; Smith 2000; Amin and Thrift 2002; Taylor et al. 2006). In this regard, the complex scalar setting – that is, the densely interwoven macro- and meso-scales -- can be conceived of in the context of rescaling (Brenner 2004).

The City of Luxembourg represents an ideal type in this respect, as it is simultaneously a quasi- or Beta-Metropolis as well as a local place, both of which are embedded in a context where the global financial and service industries are generally recognized as the drivers of the economy and the country's wealth (Schulz and Walther 2009). Attempts to manage change have revealed conflicting rationales or logics of development, and planning at different scales.

The shifting geography of social spaces in Switzerland has received much attention in conceptual urban research (see Diener et al. 2001). Observations of functional changes over time have revealed the Swiss experience of rescaling. The *Glattal-Stadt* has no specifically bordered area. It spans roughly across the 11th and 12th Districts of the City of Zurich, spreads northeast towards the Zurich Airport, and encompasses nine neighbouring munici-

palities. It is thus perceived as a collection of colliding as well as overlapping spaces of negotiation, and engulfing a complex set of institutions, who have varying sets of responsibility and jurisdictional arrangements (Thierstein et al. 2005: 327). Finally, its emergence was a response to the regionalization of Zurich's finance and service oriented economy (Diener et al. 2001: 620).

SUSTAIN_GOV will observe the *Glattal-Stadt* and how this space is negotiated at the various changing scales of horizontal and vertical influence.

4. Comparative Urban Studies

SUSTAIN_GOV is a comparative study. However, scholarly literature reveals a number of caveats in comparative urban research. According to Reimer and Blotevogel (2012: 10-11) three of those are that: a) they often compare structural administrative planning bodies embedded in national systems, "Planning systems then appear as relatively inflexible, deterministic structures, which are bound by their historical context,"; b) the focus on national planning systems overlooks the diversity within any one country; and, c) it is doubtful whether national classification of planning systems really provides answers to larger and deeper questions concerning planning style, context, reflexivity.

SUSTAIN_GOV will develop a comparative and contextual analysis of governance that maps onto research approaches that rest on relational comparison (see Robinson 2011). This work strives to transcend boundaries and divides that have been thrown up by modernist notions of cities as distinct, particular, and incommensurate. This approach understands urban spaces as constitutive of and by their relations with each other (ibid.), and challenges researchers to reconfigure concurrent imaginations about cities and urban spaces.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Our research questions are as follows:

- To explore the contents, strategies, and challenges of 'integrated' sustainable development planning, in the Swiss planning system;
- To understand policy-making at both the state and local levels in the two countries;
- To understand the social, institutional, and political arrangements in the *Glat-tal-Stadt*;
- To understand the practices of participation and related conflicts in the *Glat-tal-Stadt*;
- To cross-reference the results with Luxembourg's system of planning practices, policies, and governance;
- To address the comparative dimensions conceptually.

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