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

SUSTAIN_GOV - Working Paper 1

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GOVERNANCE FOR SUSTAINABLE SPATIAL DEVELOPMENT – A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF LUXEMBOURG AND SWITZERLAND

SUSTAIN_GOV First Working Paper

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ABSTRACT

The project, SUSTAIN_GOV, aims at investigating sustainable spatial development policies in the context of governance, both with respect to Luxembourg and, as a comparative approach, to the Swiss planning system and urban transformation processes in the *Glattal-Stadt*. SUSTAIN_GOV builds directly from the strong conceptual and empirical foundations established by the “SUSTAINLUX Project” (CO9/SR/01) that has thus far shown that despite the intense urbanization pressure, the strong strains on land resources and infrastructure, and the political dilemmas these issues raise, policy, planning and governance practices in the Grand Duchy remain underdeveloped, particularly in the domain citizen involvement in public decision-making. SUSTAIN_GOV brings into sharper focus a more nuanced scientific understanding of participation, governance, and integrated sustainable spatial development, and an in-depth evaluation of existing spatial planning, policy, and governance patterns in the Grand Duchy. The proposed research is informed by a robust and contemporary set of conceptual approach, that shape current urban and regional literatures. The research design follows a qualitative methodological approach.

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FOREWORD

Responding to the objectives named by the *Fonds National de la Recherche* (FNR) in 4.2.5 of the 2012 CORE Programme Description within the thematic research domain Sustainable Resource Management in Luxembourg, 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.

SUSTAIN_GOV was conceived as a 2-year extension to the SUSTAINLUX (CO9/SR/01), adding a comparative dimension to the research. SUSTAINLUX revealed a number of barriers in place that inhibit the implementation of sustainability objectives. 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.

The SUSTAIN_GOV researchers welcome a strong team of Non-Contracting Partners (NCP) from the ETH Zurich, from VLP-ASPAN, and from the IBA Basel 2020 who played a critical role in the conception of the project, and who have kindly agreed to act as advisors to the project, by drawing on their vast analytical, conceptual, and practical experience. Prof. Dr. Bernd Scholl, Reto Nebel, Prof. Dr. Christian Schmid, Rahel Nüssli (ETH), Lukas Bühlmann (VLP-ASPAN), Dirk Lohaus, and Dr. Martin Jann (IBA) deserve first mentions.

This document constitutes the first working paper from a series of more to come. They will function as continuous progress reports evolving from research of the SUSTAIN_GOV project. It is based largely on the internationally peer-reviewed research proposal that was final-

ly accepted by the FNR at the end of 2012. We thank both the FNR and the reviewers for their high praise. On-going reports and updates can be read at the SUSTSIN_GOV blog, *Sustainability Currents*, at sustaingov.blogspot.com.

INTRODUCTION

SUSTAIN_GOV is a 2-year research project that builds on the foundations of its predecessor, the FNR-CORE funded project SUSTAINLUX. The overall objective of this forerunning project was to examine the discourses 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; Affolderbach and Carr forthcoming). 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. SUSTAIN_GOV aims to bring into sharper focus a more nuanced scientific understanding of participation, governance, and integrated sustainable spatial development, and an in-depth evaluation of existing spatial planning, policy, and governance patterns in the Grand Duchy.

Switzerland was chosen for comparative study as it is a country often considered being at the cutting edge of innovative approaches in spatial planning policies in Europe. It is broadly similar to Luxembourg in terms of economic success, a high degree of internationalisation, and

patterns of urbanization. However, the Swiss model of spatial planning rests on the commitment to balance and harmonize interests and search for consensus among as many social actors as possible, being 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. Particular focus is placed on the so called *Glattal-Stadt* in the area of Zurich Nord.

This first working paper explains the aims and the approach of the research, as well as the methodology and organization of the project.

AIMS AND APPROACH

SUSTAIN_GOV is informed by contemporary literature in urban and regional studies. It sits as the nexus of four streams of scholarly discourse: sustainable spatial development, urban planning and governance, rescaling and transformation, and comparative urban studies. These are explained in detail below.

1. Sustainable Spatial Development

The Brundtland-Report (United Nations 1987, 54) was most essential for placing sustainable development policy agendas worldwide because it marked the convergence of social and environmental concerns with economic production under a single moniker (Parra and Moulaert 2011). Over the years, the concept of sustainable development has evolved from a big idea about the relationship between humans and the environment to a set of thoughtful actions that codify a wide variety of policy documents, research reports, and other literature (Baker 2005; Meadowcroft 2007; OECD 2001; OECD 2002). Of these, sustainable development has clearly spread throughout European urban planning circles (e.g. ICLEI-Local Governments for Sustainability and City of Aalborg 2004; Europäischer Rat Göteborg 2001; Leipzig Charter of Sustainable European Cities

2007). Now an increasing number of cities have adopted these goals, and joined numerous networks of knowledge sharing towards implementation (see the overview by Berke 2008).

Over the past 13 years, in Luxembourg too, a wide variety of policy mechanisms, planning practices, and even government Ministries, have emerged in an effort to address sustainable spatial development (Carr 2011). The Planning Law of 1999 (Service Central de Législation 1999) was born, as were the Ministry of the Environment and the Office of Spatial Planning (DATer), shortly later. Further milestone documents included the National Plan for Sustainable Development (PNDD) (Ministerium für Nachhaltige Entwicklung und Infrastrukturen (MDDI) and Spangenberg 2011), the Directive Plan for Urban and Regional Development (PDAT) and the respective Sector Plans (Ministère de l'Intérieur 2003), and the Integrated Transport and Spatial Development Concept for Luxembourg (IVL) (Innenministerium et al. 2004). In addition, the government provides subsidies to municipalities (e.g. the "Housing Pact" (Ministère du Logement (2008)), and closes legal agreements called, 'Convention Areas' (Bentz 2011) to foster informal horizontal and vertical collaborations.

While, in their entirety, Luxembourg's sustainable spatial development objectives are ambitious and broad in their scope, the SUSTAINLUX research identified major weaknesses in the policy context:

First, they do not effectively address fragmentation and disintegration in the territory, given the factual dynamics of spatial development. This is seen in the South-Western suburbs of the Capital City (covered by the DICI-Convention), where ample office space is provided, but housing or public transit are falling short. It is also seen in major problems concerning housing, mobility, and cross-border labour in the Greater Region (Becker 2010; Hesse and Carr 2013; Schulz 2009; Wille 2012).

Second, the young system of spatial planning is not yet fully deployed and fully accepted (in political terms) that a real power of action and agenda setting can be assumed (Carr 2013). This applies to both levels of horizontal and vertical co-ordination. While a variety of plans and ordinances (such as the IVL, PNDD, and PDAT) list problems and possible solutions, they do not provide guidance for the negotiation of competing interests or indicate how to realize change effectively. Also, the goals of state actors pursuing sustainability in spatial regards are often compromised by internal, discrete, and thus post-political negotiation processes of the state government (Carr 2011: 32-35; Hesse forthcoming).

Third, the idea that sustainability is an overarching socio-economic and societal framework whose implementation requires a strong sense of (public) politics and policy, is fairly underestimated by the professional communities in the Grand Duchy (Eser and Scholtes 2008). This dimension was absent even from the critical update of the PNDD that focussed on quality of living (Ministerium für Nachhaltige Entwicklung und Infrastrukturen, MDDI & Spangenberg 2011). Yet, the importance of public participation, stakeholder engagement, and citizen involvement is slowly unfolding in Luxembourg public debates. As the former Chair of the Conseil supérieur pour un développement durable (CSDD), Weber (2010), pointed out, there is an urgent call for establishing a new culture of debate, more representation, more political education, and the creation of think tanks towards the realization of sustainability. (Grubwinkler 2011: 237) argued also for increased participation, in order to achieve wider acceptance of plans, to speed up administrative procedures, and to capitalize on local competences.

While results of previous studies may be cause for pause, they are not uncom-

mon. Walser (2011), for example, has encountered similar problems in Vorarlberg, Austria. A study by Freytag and Mössner (2012) in Freiburg, Germany, show the social unrest that can come as a response to implementation of sustainability measures. In Switzerland, sustainable development policies are also both omnipresent and contested. At the website of the Swiss Federal Office for Spatial Development (ARE), “sustainable development” is defined as of paramount importance and it is achieved through cross-jurisdictional co-operation for the betterment of mobility, settlement structure, integration, energy, and security (Ray 2012). The ARE also recently published the “Sustainable Development Strategy 2012-2015,” which identifies the key relationships of sustainable development as: 1) aligning sustainable development with legislative planning; 2) looking ahead to 2025; 3) participation in the Rio+20 conference; and 4) fostering the ‘Green Economy’ and ‘Green Growth’ (Swiss Federal Office for Spatial Development (ARE) 2012: 5-11). However, the challenges for Switzerland to find a balance of vertical and horizontal perspectives and pressures and maintain standards of living across an urban landscape (see Diener et al. 2001) clearly remain on the agenda and there is pressing need to coordinate further urbanization. Organizations such as VLP-ASPAN, the IBA Basel 2020, and researchers at the ETH are challenged with finding ways to network stakeholders and find solutions to related conflicts.

Integrated sustainable development remains an overarching aim of Luxembourg’s relatively new spatial planning system. However, it has grappled with rapid population and economic growth, which has unfolded across the specific framework of a country with two levels of government, and a complex governance setting (see also Chilla and Schulz 2011). Further, structural encumbrances in governance and contradictions in existing policy instruments impede implementation of sustainability goals, and render urbanization transformation processes socially,

ecologically, and financially costly (Carr 2012). As a result, there exists a gap between the plans for, and the reality of, sustainability across the built environment. The conflicts associated with the implementation of sustainable development policies in Luxembourg have led to significant delays in terms of official approvals of plans and programmes, as well as the release of legally binding policy schemes. Thus, there is an outstanding research imperative that must be considered if integrated sustainable spatial development in Luxembourg shall be addressed inclusively, participatively, and effectively. *SUSTAIN_GOV* will place more research emphasis on social, political, and institutional dimensions of sustainability in spatial regards – with respect to observations of real challenges (see Brownhill and Parker 2010).

2. Urban Planning and Governance

It is widely discussed in the academic literature of various disciplines - most notably political science, but also human geography, spatial planning and environmental policy – that there is has been a shift in policy-making in recent decades. This shift has turned the emphasis from political steering, which was primarily considered under the authority of the state, towards the co-ordination of policy measures in a complex setting of different actors and competing interests at various spatial scales (cf. Stoker 1998; Treib, Bähr, and Falkner 2007). This has led to a new analytical framework, the governance approach, for examining policy-making. The governance approach has unfolded in highly variegated forms: as a theoretical, conceptual, or normative way to conceive of political systems and decision-making processes. Recent debates oscillate on how the shift from government action towards networked societal steering – and the assumed flexible instead of rigid practices of policy implementation – can be explored. This has led to the emergence of certain ‘models’ (Pierre 1999), ‘modalities’ (Jessop 2002) or ‘modes’ (Treib, Bähr, and Falkner 2007) of governance. Kooiman

(2003) introduced the distinction between first, second, and third order governance, and forms of self-governance.

Besides broad appreciation, some also addressed some key assumptions in the governance discourse. Mayntz (1993) discussed governance failures. Others have examined the remaining power of state agents, such as Brenner (2004) who extensively discussed European state restructuring and re-territorialisation. Nuissl and Heinrichs (2011) also recently asked whether there is anything new within the concept of governance that could bring planning theory and planning practice forward. In analytical rather than normative terms, they see a certain added value for applying the governance approach to planning, as it allows for a more comprehensive and more systematic exploration. Based on more nuanced reflections of power relations among different actors, Pierre's (1999) models of governance provide a framework to analyse the relationship between public and private agents against different ideological backgrounds, with pro-growth and market orientation on the one hand, and welfare state and corporatist policy models on the other hand – just to name the most distinctive policy patterns deployed. His model thus reveals the role of key institutions or actors who are predominant in terms of framing the subject, defining the problem, and determining potential avenues for action.

Overall, Luxembourg's spatial policy and urban planning setting can be conceived of as a case of governance, as it embodies multi-actor, cross-sector, and multi-level properties. Spatial planning is situated in a fragmented, intricate environment of policy-making, characterised by small towns and municipalities with limited public planning capabilities, and a young tradition – and thus limited acceptance – of higher-level planning and regulation. The programmatic credo and common denominator of major framework plans (such as the IVL or the PNDD) is ‘integrative sustainable development’. These guidelines envisage a balanced

spatial development by means of a decentralised concentration of settlements and economic dynamics networked through smart transport (Carr 2011). Yet, implementation of these strategies also demand consensus across a variety of actors at different governmental levels, and jurisdictions. They demand networks of decision-making bodies beyond the existing governmental structures.

While to date, little success has been seen in the implementation of Sector Plans, or the realization of infrastructure along the IVL, it must be acknowledged that policy-makers had introduced these new integrative planning strategies into a governing system that: (a) had no history of cross-sector, cross-disciplinary planning; (b) had land-use steering mechanisms in place that supported only very localised and compartmentalised development strategies (Convention Agreements), grounded in a high degree of municipal autonomy and individual private property rights; and (c) operates with an apparent circular decision-making structure where one third of the Chamber of Deputies fulfil a simultaneous second function as members of Municipal Councils (Carr 2012). To compound difficulty, a recent publication from the Chamber of Commerce (Chambre de Commerce 2012), Luxembourg, has revealed an emerging social stratification where the senior citizen weighs over the working age citizen (in terms of voting capacity), where citizens have more participation rights than landed-immigrants who constitute almost half of the population, and where landed immigrants have access to more benefits and amenities than cross-border commuters. As a result, the political fields of Luxembourg are becoming increasingly polarized, rendering implementation still more difficult.

Again, Luxembourg is not alone with these problems. In Switzerland, Thierstein et. al. (2006) identified similar changes in the social economic and spatial organization in the area known as the 'European Metropolitan Region North Switzerland'.

They observed that this area is increasingly orienting around a new set of economic processes that are integrally connected to an increasingly cohesive web of European metropolitan regions as well as wider global processes (Thierstein, Kruse, and Glanzman 2006). These processes were generating new forms of urban arrangements (e.g. "Metropolitan region Zurich-Basel", *ibid.*), and the authors questioned whether pre-existing state structures including multi-level participation and direct democracy were sufficiently equipped to manage these new formations. The *Glattal-Stadt*, which the research team of SUSTAIN_GOV has selected as an object of analysis, 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 characteristic for the situation in Luxembourg as well: downtown versus periphery, emerging *Zwischenstadt* typologies, exorbitant land prices, and conflicts of town versus rural interests, which are not unrelated to the nation's feudal past and tertiary industrial present. It would thus be 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 is also a dynamic and reflexive process, which responds to changing circumstances in spatial development under 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, with its densely interwoven macro- and meso-scales that embeds late modern agglomerations can be conceived of as rescaling (Brenner 2004). It sets a major framework condition for late modern urban and regional development, and thus renders simple politics of place far too simple and one-dimensional. Developments at one locale are highly dependent on what occurs at more remote places, making the development trajectories of cities and regions increasingly subject to international influence, or 'metropolization' (see Schulz 2008; Hesse 2010; Sohn 2012).

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 of limited spatial reach, embedded in a context where the global financial and the associated service industries are generally recognized as the drivers of economic growth and the country's wealth (Schulz and Walther 2009). As the problems associated with transnational commuting, the extremely awkward ratio of jobs and residents in many municipalities, or the separations of the different socio-cultural milieux reveal, different dynamics collide, and simultaneously extend into, shape, and structure the region and nation as a whole. At the macro-scale, urban webs have received significant attention recently in urban research, as is represented by European transnational projects such as POLYNET (INTERREG B) or the ESPON-Initiative. At the meso-scale, the Capital City, the Southern 'Minette'-region around Esch-sur-Alzette, and potentially also the rather rural 'Nordstad' are developing into city-regions: urban agglomerations, which are growing across municipal borders, bringing about problems of policy and planning co-ordination well known from the broad literature on suburbanization, city regions and alike (see e.g. Parr 2004; Rodriguez-Pose 2008). Different, however, from other usual cases of city-regional evolution, are: a) the high velocity of transformation that has occurred over the last decade in Luxembourg, which was primarily driven by economic growth, a rapid expansion of the labour market, and

an associated demand for planning and building; and, b) the high pressure of development that could not be compensated by appropriate means of regulation, because either they were not yet established (to, for example, sufficiently cope with horizontal amalgamation of settlements) or they were based on conflicting vertical logics of development and interests. This latter aspect was exacerbated by the unusually powerful national state and the – partly in response to this – rather myopic oriented municipalities.

Attempts to manage these changes have revealed conflicting rationales or logics of development and planning at different levels of scale. For example, the IVL (Innenministerium et al. 2004) determines three major growth poles in the three nodal meso-areas named above. At the more local scale, a sort of 'sustainable urbanism' is asserted, primarily by concentrating development and increasing building densities. However, the dynamics on these two different scales are conflictive. What seems to be reasonable on the regional scale – decentralised concentration – thus leads to problems at the local scale, due to the exaggerated building densities of large-scale urban projects, which are hard to integrate locally. In this example, the mere call for 'integration' is at best unrealistic, if not fundamentally contradictory. Co-ordination of IVL objectives is also caught between fixity and flows: The desired 'integration' of land use and mobility is blocked by the ongoing pressure of economic growth on land needed for development, as well as the powerful road planning administration of the central government. Thus, the overall spatial planning perspective falls into conflict with local interests. The same can be said for solutions at the city level that do not speak to the regional level. Conflicts of interest, identity, and opportunity are ubiquitous. Although, strong economic imperatives may limit such attempts significantly (cf. Purcell 2009), innovative forms and strategies towards improved participation is essential.

Problems of scale, rescaling and associated responses are also significant in the Swiss policy and planning trajectory. The shifting geography of social spaces has received much attention in conceptual urban research in Switzerland (see Diener et al. 2001). Premised on the *mille-feuille* metaphor of urban social space put forward by Lefebvre in 1974 (English edition, 1991: 86), Diener et al. (2001) compiled hundreds of maps of Switzerland, each depicting a different arrangement of connections across the landscape. Their result was an empirically verified representation of the *thousand leaves* metaphor for Switzerland, where each corner is profoundly integrated with larger network systems; thus, all of Switzerland can be conceived of as part of one urban fabric. Observing functional changes over time of particular units – conceived here in their broadest sense – reveals the Swiss experience of rescaling, where fixing scales of inclusion and flows of activity is a consequence of political choice, and steering change is the product of governance. The *Glattal-Stadt* – one of the urban typologies emerging on this urban fabric – while not a homogenous area with specific borders, can be geographically located as spanning roughly across the 11th and 12th Districts of the City of Zurich, northeast towards the Zurich Airport, and encompassing the neighbouring municipalities of Rümlang, Kloten, Opfikon, Wallisellen, Dietlikon, Bassersdorf, Dübendorf, and Wangen-Brüttisellen. The *Glattal-Stadt* is thus perceived as a collection of colliding as well as overlapping spaces of negotiation, and engulfing a complex set of institutions, with varying sets of responsibility and jurisdiction (Thierstein et al. 2005: 327), whose emergence was a response to the regionalization of Zurich's finance and service oriented economy (Diener et al. 2001: 620). SUSTAIN_GOV will observe how this space is negotiated at the various changing scales of horizontal and vertical influence.

4. Comparative Urban Studies

The plea for comparative urban studies was already formulated by Emile Durkheim with his dictum that 'science begins with comparison' (quote from Kantor and Savitch 2005). However, until recently, 'urbanists have been surprisingly slow in using comparison as a research strategy,' (Pierre 2005: 446). Meanwhile, the interest in doing comparative studies has risen significantly, for various reasons: a) globalization and the emergence of policy transfer and policy mobility have contributed to an increasing activity in establishing comparisons (Robinson 2011: 2); b) the European Union has triggered the emergence of a transnational research community that shares and compares experiences and practices (Becker 2010); c) the rise of competition not only in business and economics, but also in urban and regional development has brought about a broad range of 'rankings' of cities and regions (Ward and Jonas 2004); and d) as spatial planning systems in many countries have come under pressure of 'reform' since the 1990s, there is a natural interest in learning more about related consequences and outcomes (Nadin 2012).

Though lacking precise characteristics in terms of definition and methodology, the interregional and international study of urban and metropolitan development has definitely gained momentum. Comparative case studies (see e.g. Abu-Lughod 1999; Savitch and Kantor 2002) have contributed to widen the horizon of urban planning and research. Yet, at the same time, the difficulties that arise in methodological terms also became evident (Kantor and Savitch 2005; McFarlane 2010). This applies not only to the practicability and eligibility of comparisons in general, but also to pragmatic issues such as statistical definitions and nationally diverging databases and datasets. Such limitations may also apply to the study of spatial planning and governance. As Reimer and Blotevogel (2012) pointed out:

“There can be no doubt that familiarity with the diversity of the underlying legal and administrative structures is a central and vital prerequisite to understanding planning in varying contexts. However, these primarily structuralist explanations of spatial planning come up against their limitations when comparative research into planning aspires to go beyond merely producing a systematic description of basic structures and to comment on the practice of planning action [...] Only with an integrative approach and analysis of formal and informal institutional arrangements, and the interaction between them, reproduced repeatedly through action, it is possible to arrive at a profound and realistic understanding of the practice of spatial planning,” (Reimer and Blotevogel 2012: 7).

The primary caveats of much comparative urban research are, according to Reimer and Blotevogel (2012: 10-11) as follows: 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; c) it is doubtful whether national classification of planning systems really provides answers to larger and deeper questions concerning planning style, context, reflexivity. The authors suggest a broadened conceptual approach that addresses a dialectic of “planning culture” and “planning system.”

Building off this research, SUSTAIN_GOV will develop a comparative and contextual analysis of governance that maps onto research approaches resting 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. Rather than conceiving cities as discrete entities and physical phenomena, this ap-

proach aims at ways of understanding urban spaces as constitutive of and by their relations with each other (ibid.). It challenges researchers to reconfigure concurrent imaginations about cities and urban spaces and forges new insights into how the immense diversity of cities and/or urban and regional spaces are interlinked. In this context, we consider the comparative approach not only as a methodology or research tool, but a mode of thought and strategy for international urban studies:

“Comparative thinking can be a strategy firstly for revealing the assumptions, limits and distinctiveness of particular theoretical or empirical claims, and secondly for formulating new lines of inquiry and more situated accounts. As a strategy of critique and alterity, comparativism depends, in part, on a continuous process of criticism and self-criticism,” (McFarlane 2010: 726).

The comparative approach that the SUSTAIN_GOV research team will pursue will thus not only learn about the Swiss planning systems and experiences of governance and transformation in the *Glattal-stadt* from a practical standpoint, but also gain insight through relational reflection about how Luxembourg can be reimagined and recomposed.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

At the nexus of these debates thus unfolds an argument for: a) an examination of participatory processes towards integrated sustainable development; b) an investigation on building consensus across multi-level governance structures; c) an observation of how complex fields of urban transformation are negotiated at various changing scales of horizontal and vertical influence; and, d) a comparative approach that will not only generate practical knowledge about the Swiss planning systems and the *Glattal-Stadt*, but will also produce insight on how the complex configuration of policy-making in the Grand

Duchy can be reconfigured. The research inquiry was structured across the overlapping categories that guided our literature review. Our research objectives and related research questions are outlined in Box 1 (below).

METHODS

Qualitative Methods in Urban Governance Research

To address the questions (Box 1), the research team pursue a qualitative methodological approach that reconstructs the discursive, contextual, and insitutionalist aspects of the subject, and then sets these within a comparative frame.

Following DiGaetano and Strom (2003), urban governance is a dynamic process with different scales and factors – such as structural context, culture, and political actors – influencing the institutional milieu. To assess the role of agents in shaping institutions for, or against, sustainable development, the qualitative approach looks at and emphasize the rationale, background conditions, and justifications which drive agents to behave in a given way. In particular, we seek to understand how informal institutions are created through the process of policy implementation, and how those institutions mediate the goals developed through the policy formulation process.

In this context, we will examine two institutional forms: 1) at the formal policy level (policies envisaged and drafted by actors in the formal political process); and, 2) informal relations and agreements among actors and organizations that implement these policies. We will also examine the emergent ideas, relationships, and common understandings created by actors engaged in the implementation process. The goal, then, is: 1) to clearly capture the role of agents and institutions in shaping solutions in the service of, or against, sustainable development; 2) to uncover the relations in and across governance structures; 3) to understand how individuals and social worlds construct policy objec-

tives; and, 4) to expose the factors that drive policy development, different policy models will be analysed following an 'interpretative institutionalist' approach (Krueger and Gibbs 2012).

The SUSTAIN_GOV comparative approach is informed by relational comparison (Robinson 2011) and variation-finding (Pierre 2005), and produces insight into how the complex field of policy-making in the Grand Duchy might be imagined, re-composed, and reconfigured. A comparative approach enables the exploration of possible dramatic differences in both policy and institutional design, between different forms and modes. It renders clear the effect that the nuances of contextual and individual actions can have on participatory processes in urban and regional planning.

Among the different perspectives of comparative study once developed by Tilly (1984) (see also the extensive review by Brenner 2001), the project will apply the 'variation finding' approach to address the comparative dimensions conceptually. This approach is suitable because it allows for the detection of systematic variation in the practices of urban governance in a broadly comparable context, and also the differentiation of external influences that affect urban processes at various spatial scales (Pierre 2005; Robinson 2011). This approach was also used by Savitch and Kantor (2002) in their study on international strategic behaviour of cities. The same authors (Kantor and Savitch 2005) also noted certain methodological issues that need to be taken into account once it comes to comparison, e.g. contextual meanings, the question of scope versus depth, and last but not least, concerning data.

Box 1: Research Objectives and Questions

Research Objective 1: SUSTAINABILITY

To explore the contents, strategies, and challenges of 'integrated' sustainable development planning, in the Swiss planning system.

- What was the starting point for directing spatial planning policies towards the goal of sustainable development? Who is/was responsible for framing the issue?
- How are or how were these goals incorporated into the process (if at all) and who voices their concerns? Are the related visions and their operationalisations consistent, contradictory, or contested?

Research Objective 2: OVERALL GOVERNANCE SETTING

To understand policy-making at both the state and local levels in the two countries.

- How can the logic of governance in Luxembourg and Switzerland be best described?
- What are the intricate forms of policy-making between state and local levels?
- How does the policy regime direct development?
- To what degree is governance subject to processes of re-scaling?

Research Objective 3: THE REGIONAL GOVERNANCE SETTING

To understand the social, institutional, and political arrangements in the local-regional example of the *Glattal-Stadt*.

- Who are the key actors? How do they define integrated sustainable development?
- What are the discursive arenas? How do policy institutions establish norms?
- What are the relevant policy measures and their impact?
- How do these institutions cope with problems of horizontal or vertical co-ordination?
- How are informal institutional relations shaped by other actors such as developers, government agencies, and NGOs?

Research Objective 4: PARTICIPATION IN SPATIAL PLANNING

To reconstruct and understand the practices of participation, their connections with the material environment and related conflicts in smaller agglomerations such as the *Glattal-Stadt*.

- How is the planning related participation and direct democracy experience being assessed in Switzerland in general, and in *Glattal-Stadt* in particular?
- How do planning institutions cope with the difficulties and contradictions of scale, i.e. once it comes to participation?
- What is the relationship between state and non-state actors (stakeholders)?

Research Objective 5: COMPARISON I

To cross-reference the results with Luxembourg's system of planning and governance.

- How does the Swiss system compare to Luxembourg's planning practices?
- How do implementation processes compare with Luxembourg, i.e. participation?
- What are the pros and cons of the Swiss planning system and of direct democracy?

Research Objective 6: COMPARISON II

To address the comparative dimensions conceptually, particularly reflecting issues of policy mobility, policy transfer, and networked urbanism.

- How are Switzerland and Luxembourg relationally connected?
- What are the common problems? How do conditions vary?
- How can the decision-making processes in both countries be improved, particularly in terms of citizen and civil societal participation?

Organization

Box 2: Summary of Work Packages

Work Package 1 – the first phase will concentrate on the refinement of the research methodology. This may unfold in consultation with the Swiss research associates.

Work Package 2 - The second phase is dedicated towards establishing a solid foundation of the written discourse. This phase includes the screening and archiving of relevant documents, and analysing the text corpus. Exploratory expert interviews with 3-5 key actors are also foreseen.

Work Packages 3 - 5 – The third through fifth phases will focus on the collection of empirical data. Problem-centred, semi-directed interviews shall be conducted. During the interview process, we will also engage in participatory observation. Afterwards, the interviews will be transcribed initial patterns governance structures and associated discourses can also be drawn. Through feedback rounds with Swiss associations, further methodological feedback, but also issues of participation, as well as the possibilities and limitations of policy and practice transferability can be discussed.

Work Package 6 - Deeper interpretation and validation of findings shall occur in the end phase of the project. This involves systematic analyses of textual datasets, which are derived from transcribed and coded interviews using MAXQDA. Conceptual implications will begin to arise. This phase will also involve initial write-ups of evaluations.

In specific procedural terms, this theoretically informed approach translates into a document survey, participant observation, and interview guide. The latter will be designed to encourage participants to talk about how they have perceived change in the region with respect to spatial structure, but also with respect to evolving im/balances of power, to discuss their experience with horizontal (inter-municipal, intuitional) co-operation/conflict, as well as their experiences of the vertical decision-making procedures (Municipality, Canton, and Federal). Members of the State structures can speak of their professional experience, while further stakeholders can discuss their perceptions of the State. Generally, the research is designed to explore the caveats in the, “consensus [...] direct-democratic [...] pragmatic planning,” (Keller, Koch, and Selle 1996, 50) involved in integrated sustainable spatial development in Switzerland. This part of the proposed research is inspired by the ‘interpretative

institutionalism’ framework (Bevir and Rhodes 2006; Bevir and Rhodes 2004; Krueger and Gibbs 2012), which seeks to decipher the norms and beliefs that determine the attitudes of professionals toward their problems, their understanding of possible solutions, and how they interpret the dilemmas of implementation. This helps the researcher to understand the contextual nuances specific to Swiss Planning system and the *Glattal-Stadt*.

In general, we foresee the completion of 30-35 conversational interviews with practitioners in the Swiss planning system. As each Canton possesses its own constitution, and by extension, its own planning laws, special focus will be placed on the Canton of Zurich and stakeholders in the *Glattal-Stadt*. The data collection is not, however, confined to Switzerland. The datasets of SUSTAINLUX will also be further expanded in SUSTAIN_GOV to include 5-10 interviews with key actors in

Luxembourg on the specific topic of participation. In both countries, key events concerning the issue of collaborative, communicative and, most notably, participative planning will be observed and assessed as well.

SUSTAIN_GOV is designed as a 2-year study structured across a series of Work Packages, designed to structure the research process from orientation through to dissemination of results. Key points are summarized in Box 2.

OUTLOOK

The research aims for a four-fold impact. First, the research examines ways to overcome hindrances in policy implementation processes that are a product of governance structures. These are problems that concern the multi-level character of state governments, the contradictions therein, as well as the interaction between state and private concerns. There are a number of similarities between the agglomeration of Luxembourg City and that of Zurich North and the Glattal area. One of these is that they are both economically driven by the financial industry. Another is that they are small states. These set the two areas distinctly apart from other urban spaces. An important aspect of the SUSTAIN_GOV research then is finding out how the various interests at the various levels assert themselves in this context. SUSTAINLUX research has already shown the difficulties in the Luxembourg system (Affolderbach and Carr, in review; Carr 2013; Hesse and Carr 2013). SUSTAIN_GOV shall uncover how similar governing structures (Municipal Autonomy umbrellaed by Cantonal autonomy) cope under similar mitigating circumstances.

This leads to the second impact: The comparative analysis will reveal the advantages and disadvantages of the Swiss political model as well as reflection on models of participation and horizontal consensus building that Luxembourg aims to achieve. The Swiss model is often heralded as the triumph of the grass-roots bot-

tom-up democracy. Yet, it remains a mystery as to how such territorially bounded democracies manage international flows and stakes. Clearly, Luxembourg is highly international (Wille 2012; Becker 2010; Becker and Hesse 2010; Bousch et al. 2009). It will be curious to see the limits of the Swiss democracy.

This leads then to the third impact: The results will provide a critical assessment on the strengths and weaknesses of current public participation structures in Luxembourg, and thus reveal new approaches to creating, implementing, and governing sustainable spatial development. What can be learned from the Swiss model? What is or is not desirable? What, and in which context, can be transferred?

Fourth, the research will contribute to scholarly discourses concerning policy, planning, and spatial and urban development in the international academic community through publication of peer-reviewed articles and conferences. At the same time, the project shall result in policy recommendations towards participative and integrative sustainable development, through involvement of local debates in policy and planning in Luxembourg.

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See also:
<http://sustaingov.blogspot.com>

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