Summary
OPEN SPACES & LANDSCAPE RESEARCH SPACE FOR IDEAS – SCOPE FOR PLANNING

This publication contains reports on the following two closely related ÖROK projects: "Steering Processes in Use of Multifunctional Open Spaces" and "Austrian Landscape Research – Contributions to Sustainable Spatial Development". The two projects resulted from the implementation and application of the Austrian Spatial Planning Concept 2001 (Österreichisches Raumentwicklungskonzept (ÖREK) 2001) and were the focus of researchwork at ÖROK in the area of sustainable landscape and spatial development. The first project focuses on the available options for the preservation of multifunctional open spaces and the second project resulted in a summary and analysis of the programme "Austrian Landscape Research (Kulturlandschaftsforschung, KLF)" from the perspective of spatial planning and research.

Project: "Steering Processes in the Use of Multifunctional Open Spaces"

The questions dealt with in the project were derived from ÖREK 2001 while it was a major aim of the project to initiate processes, to stimulate communication and raise awareness as well as to provide assistance for developing planning instruments.

The core element of the project was therefore an open process in the form of three workshops that had the purpose of broadening the narrower perspective of the individual specialists and groups of users by enabling them to work together and thus gain an overview of the challenges of multifunctional open spaces. Apart from the pointers gained at the workshops for future tasks, the added value of the project consisted mainly in giving the diverse participants – regional planners, representatives of ministries, "private" planners, regional managers – access to the process and in the resulting discussion and communication processes.

The Final Report is therefore designed as a working paper that relates primarily to the themes and aspects discussed at the workshops and summarized these. Any need for further research or discussion beyond these themes – insofar as recognized – has been specifically identified in the report.

Contents and Definition of Concepts

The content and objective of the project was to investigate open spaces, their developments and their interrelationships with individual actors in concrete exemplary types of spaces. Furthermore, the aims also included the presentation of options for steering developments and a catalogue of measures on how to deal with multifunctional open spaces. The entire territory of the federal state of Austria was covered by the project. As regards the contextual focus, the project concentrated on the concept of "open space", with the divergent problems and scopes of significance being taken into consideration in each of the exemplary areas investigated.

The concept of "multifunctional open space" was understood to mean undeveloped areas not covered with forests, contaminated, divided up or destroyed, having many different functions for people and nature. Important in this context was to actively recognize and define these functions.

As a means of coping with the many facets of the concept and the diverse types of problems, the investigation of "open spaces" was conducted on the basis of pre-defined exemplary types of space:

Type of Space: Urban Hinterlands

The type of space urban hinterlands has a focus on usually undeveloped agricultural land at the "edges of the city". In the area of the urban hinterlands in the settlement axis of the "in-between city", the threat to open spaces comes primarily from the rapid, suburbanisation trend that is hungrily consuming space (settlements, production sites, trades and services) as well as the growing interrelations within the suburban area.

Type of Space: Peripheral Forested Areas (Type of Problem: Forest Encroachment)

The open space type "peripheral forested areas" is understood to mean the (still) open landscape in peripheral forested regions, i.e. fields and clearings between forests – a "peripheral landscape". These are

areas in which the increasing encroachment by forests and the discontinued use of land for farming pose the "principal threat" to open spaces.

Type of Space: Extensive Agriculture – Tourism

This type of space is characterized by structured, extensive, (still) functioning agriculture with a high potential for tourism. These spaces may be, first of all, regions in which agriculture and forestry dominate the landscape, but where tourism is the principal source of income as well as farming regions in which extensive agriculture is increasingly believed to be a market opportunity for small-scale farming (e.g. national park regions). The "open space" in this context refers to the open landscape that is not built up or covered by forests.

Arriving at the Findings

The findings were arrived at within the scope of three workshops. At the first workshop, the concepts were discussed and the most important actors were filtered out by type of space and its contribution to the conservation of open spaces. At the second workshop, the participants prepared development scenarios for each type of space. A description of target scenarios was the method used to arrive at indications for the development of measures for each type of space. At the third workshop, these initially very rough indications were bundled into sets of measures.

The Most Important Actors and their Contribution to the Preservation of Open Spaces

In all types of spaces, citizens and the population (locally as persons seeking recreation) are granted having an enormous interest in preserving open spaces. Their significance and contributions for the preservation of open spaces (especially in the urban hinterlands) are assessed as very high. In the opinion of the workshop participants, the greatest contribution to the preservation of open spaces is made by agriculture, which in contrast to the contribution toward the conservation of open space of other users (citizens, tourism) hardly enjoys any (financial) benefits (especially with respect to peripheral forested areas and urban hinterlands). The contribution of tourism by contrast is assessed as very small compared to the profit it has from the preservation of open spaces. The role played by nature protection as a factor to preserve open spaces is recognized in all types of space, but it has the least weighting in the type of space of urban hinterlands. The "planning administration" (spatial development and planning) as an actor for the conservation of open spaces is assigned an only minor weighting for type of space of urban hinterlands. In the types of space (peripheral) forested areas and extensive agriculture/tourism, spatial planning was not mentioned as an actor at all. The role played by the political functionaries for the conservation of open spaces is recognized mainly for the type of space of urban hinterlands. However, politicians – with a few exceptions – are active only when citizens start to pressure them for action.

Strategies and Tasks for the Future

The first rough indications derived from the target scenarios for measures were bundled by the working team into sets of measures that were discussed, supplemented and detailed at the final workshop. At this workshop, the participants ranked the measures they viewed as promising and the most important to be specified in more detail for their work in the future on the conservation and development of open spaces.

It was not possible during the three half-days available to draft concrete measures or arrive at academically well-founded criteria. Neither was it possible to discuss in detail all of the approaches on the subject. Nonetheless, the goal of obtaining indications for the focus to be defined for conservation measures and multifunctional uses was largely achieved. Thus, indications for general strategies were ascertained – irrespective of the types of space discussed – and specific priority measures for the selected types of space were defined. The priority measures are described in the full version of the report and the general indications are given here.

Indications for General Strategies – Irrespective of Types of Space

The following were mentioned as particularly promising in addition to the consistent application of existing spatial planning instruments and a more intense use and bundling of economic measures:

- → Measures that can be described by the keywords "coordinate, communicate, cooperate",
- → Measures that comprise and encourage the active involvement of all persons and groups interacting with the open space,
- → Measures that are custom-tailored to the specific potentials and requirements of the area covered,
- → Measures that contribute to enhancing the "value" of open spaces.

The group of instruments "coordinate, communicate, cooperate" should be understood in this context as part of the strategy for the conservation of open spaces and the promotion of their multifunctional uses:
Communicate: "Inform, talk, motivate",
Cooperate: "Joint planning, assistance, implementation",
Coordinate: "Networking, gain synergies".

By collecting the possible functions, potentials and risks as well as by identifying the diverse interests in multifunctional open spaces und the development of scenarios for each type of space, this project achieved the following:

- → An overview of the status of the discussion on the conservation of open spaces and development of open spaces,
- → The stimulation of discussions and communication processes,
- → Priorities were filtered out for general measures as well as priority measures for the types of space discussed,
- → Strategic approaches and guidance for further research.

Project: "Austrian Landscape Research – Contributions to Sustainable Spatial Development"

In July 1992, the Federal Minister for Science and Research at the time issued a political mandate to develop a research priority under the heading of "sustainable development of Austria's landscapes". In the year 1995, the initial phase commenced, in 1999, a second programming phase followed and at the end of 2003, the programme was finalized with a synthesis phase. As regards the number of participating researchers, volume of funding, etc. the "Austrian Landscape Research Programme" - ARL ("Sustainable development of Austrian landscapes and regions") has been the largest and longest spatial planning research programme in Austria to date.

Therefore, it was obvious for ÖROK to become involved in this programme and discuss the contents and give access to the persons working in the field of spatial planning, spatial development and spatial research to the results of "Austrian Landscape Research Programme" - ARL. The Federal Ministry for Education, Science and Culture as well as ÖROK jointly commissioned a team of spatial planners firstly to analyse the contents of the research programme in order to rehash important contents for the new Austrian Spatial Development Concept 2001 (ÖREK 2001) and secondly to prepare a publication for the dissemination of the contents of the priorities and findings of the programme.

The selection of the topics and contributions from the programme was subjective and reflect the interests of the authors. A restriction in the selection of the ARL contributions resulted from the processing period, which made it necessary to concentrate largely on the first programming phase, because most projects of the second programming phase had not yet been completed.

In summary, the following conclusions were drawn from the study. Austrian landscape research as well as other current studies of spatial relevance confirm that the pace of change in the functions and uses of landscapes and thus in rural areas has accelerated in the past decades and is expected to continue in the future. These changes include:

- → The spread of "wilderness, forest and settlement areas" at the expense of farming land
- → Parallel process of a more intense and extensive use of land in favourable and adverse locations for farming and forestry
- → Parallel concentration and diffusion processes at plant sites and residential locations

This change in the landscape is being triggered by several mutually reinforcing developments of particular spatial relevance, which are dramatically changing the options open to society for appropriating space:

- → Land has lost significance as a scarce commodity due to higher agricultural productivity and stagnating domestic demand for food.
- → The spatial transaction costs have dropped steeply due to the reduction in trade tariff barriers, liberalization and the deregulation of markets (EU internal market, global trade).
- → Faster transport and telecommunication systems have enormously increased mobility potentials.

The self-regulation of spatial development through the scarce and valuable commodity of agricultural land, through high transaction costs (esp. customs, quotas) and restricted mobility has become less effective over the past decades.

The consequences are:

- → Greater incentives for a resource-intensive development of settlements
- → Greater burden on the agricultural household especially in favourable locations for farming and forestry
- → A decrease in biodiversity throughout the entire territory
- → A worsening in the supply of basic services for social, cultural, technical, transport and utility infrastructures in peripheral rural regio-ns and for the socially weaker members of society
- → More spatial disparities and distribution problems

Rural areas further away from the centres of tourism have lost their market power over the past thirty years. The food market has become a buyers' market, and commodities are obtained cheaper elsewhere. The scarce commodities of rural areas such as nature, biodiversity, landscape do not have a market at present and do not produce any added value and are therefore particularly at risk. At the same time, rural regions themselves to not have any buying power.

Customer-oriented services (postal services, retail, public transport) are withdrawing their supplies and are concentrating in few central locations. These consequences are viewed as contradictory to a sustainable spatial development.

The findings of Austrian landscape research are not limited to demands for more stringent regulation policy and development policy instruments or for new mechanisms for achieving a regional balance, but also view a "general mobilization" of regional forces as necessary. From this perspective, methods and instruments are called for that are currently confronted with bottlenecks in spatial planning:

- → Greater integration of the economic, environmental and social aspects in the development of spatial structures
- → Participation of local and regional actors in planning and implementation

Methods and instruments were tested in a spatial context within the framework of ARL to cope with these challenges taken from the fields of systemic organisational development as well as from development cooperation, and some were newly conceived. These instruments and methods aimed to link strategic planning, project implementation and the involvement of local and/or regional actors. These changes the requirements of the qualification profile and role played by spatial planners: In addition to being competent in their specialized fields, the elements an innovative spatial planner must master include the management of spatial development, organisational consulting and facility management for communication-oriented processes and events. However, a need for change was identified also in the organisational structure of spatial planning and spatial development, especially at the supra-regional level.

In Austria, spatial development and planning are the competence of the Länder and municipalities. In a space without borders, supra-regional spatial policy instruments are of greater importance. A weak supra-regional spatial planning competence leads to a situation in which major decisions are defined by sectoral policies. Sustainable spatial planning therefore does not only require the greater participation of citizens, but also an upgrade of supra-regional spatial planning policy in the institutional context. This is true for the European level as well as for Austria. Schemes and objectives for the development of rural areas have to be adjusted to fit into overall spatial schemes and systems of objectives. If social and territorial cohesion at the national and international level are to be sustainably secured, what is needed at the European and national levels is the possibility of negotiating and implementing supra-regional balancing mechanisms to achieve the fair distribution of opportunities and risks as well as instruments for clearly identifying true costs.

Further need for innovation has been identified for the organisation of spatial development and planning at the local and regional levels. Even though the traditional organisational structure of spatial planning may be described as hierarchically organized, taking "regional development planning" into account calls for a structure that integrates this level as a "new level of regional development".

The change processes described are more or less underway. Aiming for sustainable spatial development means that landscape research also has high expectations in the region as a driving force of innovation for spatial development. This refers not so much to the introduction of additional institutional levels, but rather to flexible, territorially organized networks for innovation, cooperation, coordination, and the equalization of finances and balancing of interests.

Regional development based on cooperation should also be part of a supra-regional policy that enables the fair development at the local and regional levels. Greater integration of sectoral planning and more competence for supra-regional spatial planning do not contradict independent regional development, but rather serve as its foundation.

The principal of sustainability is a great challenge for spatial development. However, it is also an enormous opportunity to help upgrade the significance of spatial development and planning.

Übersetzung: CAMELS - Capital Markets English LanguageServices, Edith Vanghelof