

Title of the symposium:

Towards visionary peri-urban landscapes? Environmental governance mixes for sustainable peri-urbanization.

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Symposium abstract

Recent research highlights that peri-urbanization processes, described as well as peri-urban transformations, are massive, intensive, often taking place beyond any regulations, threatening performance of ecosystems and thus unsustainable. The main driving forces behind peri-urbanization are related to increasing commercial demand for building-up open

spaces, different kinds of newly developed infrastructures, or search for better quality of life by urban dwellers. Those transformations lead to emerging of peri-urban landscapes (PULs), which are transition territories connecting cities with their surrounding environment, where urban, forest and rural characteristics are mixed. Thus PUL is understood as a territory, which is located beyond administrative boundary of the main city, or several cities in the frame of a conurbation, and covers fully or partially several urban and non-urban municipalities. It is characterized by low settlement and inhabitants density, by a mixture of diverse land-uses, by material and energy flows, which are encouraged by dynamically emerging urban land-uses. PULs remain under continuous, or even rising urban influence, which is represented by: increasing presence of typical urban forms (e.g. continuous or discontinuous urban patches), industrial / commercial areas, diminishing of natural habitats, high ecosystem fragmentation and increasing stress factors like noise, or light smog. Under the sociological perspective, PULs are characterized by e.g. mixture of old and new residents (often urban commuters), degradation of social relations among PULs inhabitants, or a mixture of different live styles. All that make PULs to suffer from different conflicts.

Vertically and horizontally fragmented management, increasing pressure of market forces over the landscape, velocity of peri-urbanization, lack of awareness about threats of peri-urbanization are just a few different types of obstacles related to governance of PULs. Environmental governance of PULs relates to concepts such as metropolitan areas, conurbations, or functional urban areas. Thus environmental governance of PULs needs to address urban, regional and (cross-) national development goals such as air pollution reduction, integrated watershed-management, transport-management, economy, the provision and accessibility to ecosystem services. We argue that to achieve the sustainable development of PULs a governance mix tailored specifically for PULs are needed. The term governance mix is frequently used in political or management sciences and means a collection of specific for the particular context governance approaches, which allow to create and implement on site different policies. Environmental governance mix do not refers to the particular type of governance, but is rather a thoughtful mix of different policy instruments and other top-down and bottom-up governance approaches, introduced at diverse levels of administration, bringing different formal and informal outcomes, discussed and implemented by the wide range of governance actors (citizens, stakeholders and experts). The notion of governance mix is similar to “policy mix” as a “combination of different policy instruments” (p.17, Ring and Schröter-Schlaack, 2011).

We hypothesize that PULs are an emerging new type of dynamically changing landscapes, which requires visionary approaches, implemented by more innovative governance tools and instruments. Thus we encourage the session participants to think critically about possible visions for the PULs and the ways how to implement those visions in a sustainable way. Our symposium will be open for scientists, practitioners and diverse stakeholders

related to PULs. We welcome highly innovative theoretical research concerning to environmental governance mixes for PULs and examples of practical implementation of governance mixes aiming to achieve the sustainable development of diverse PULs.

How your symposia will improve landscape ecology science?

Many regions around the Globe are facing intensive peri-urbanization processes. Recent research highlights that peri-urbanization processes like soil sealing, building low density settlements or commercial objects are massive, intensive and unsustainable because they e.g. foster diminishing of natural habitats, ecosystem fragmentation, biodiversity loss (Piorr, et al., 2016). Thus those processes are gaining more and more importance in landscape studies.

At the same time research concerning to PULs, in various socio-ecological contexts, is largely unconnected to the broader stakeholder community, so that learning processes are hampered, case studies remain in niches and ways of mainstreaming of innovative environmental governance approached for PULs are hidden and unclear.

Planning and governance processes implemented in PULs are often dominated by top-down approaches and limited public participation. The awareness of local citizens about risks of massive peri-urbanization is not sufficient. Thus environmental governance of PULs seem not always effective enough to secure the sustainability of constantly emerging PULs.

Some of the existing governance mixes already implemented in e.g. Western European countries can be adjusted and transferred into other territories. Those governance mixes are more inclusive by involving many governance actors, flexible by enabling to provide necessary changes over time and focusing on the governance process as such, but not on the final planning outcome (e.g. the new housing area). The good example of such governance process is the protection of peri-urban open spaces implemented via Flemish “Operation Open Space” project (VLM et al. 2017) and “building stop strategy” (Deapartment Ruimte Vlaandern, 2017), which aims to protect peri-urban open spaces and is planned to be implement in Belgium from year 2020.

We argue that environmental governance mixes are needed to tackle the complexity of peri-urban land use decision-making, ES trade-offs and environmental conflicts. Our symposium will explore how future peri-urban development pattern should be conceived to contribute to a sustainable development and how to implement this through governance mixes. To this end, the symposium will contribute to improvement of the landscape ecology science by strengthening the research and innovation systems concerning to PULs and by opening new ways to connecting science with policy and other societal stakeholders.

-Deapartment Ruimte Vlaandern. (2017). Working together on the space of tommorow. Brochure to the White Paper on the Spatial Policy Plan for Flanders. Brussels.

-Piorr, A., Ravetz, J.,& Tosics, I. (2011). Peri-urbanisation in Europe. Towards European

Policies to Sustain Urban-Rural Futures.

-Vlaamse Milieumaatschappij (VLM), Vereniging van de Vlaamse Provincies, Vereniging van Vlaamse Steden en Gemeenten, Architecture, Architecture Workroom, KU Leuven – Architecture Department PLEN. (2017). Operation open space. Brussels

Broad thematic areas

Broad thematic areas 1st choice: Urban regions (urban landscapes, urbanization processes, urban metabolism, rural urban systems)

Broad thematic areas 2st choice: Landscape governance

Free Keywords

Peri-urban landscapes, urbanization, governance, sustainability

Outcomes of symposium

Special issue in a scientific journal (to be negotiated)

Notes

The symposium proposal is prepared in the field of IALE working group “Urban and peri-urban governance”.