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BOOK OF ABSTRACTS

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Participation in Regional Development Processes through a Gender Lens

Engaging the public in regional planning processes remains a persistent concern for planners, yet especially the strategies and topics tackled on the regional level are often too abstract for the population. Furthermore the results and added value of successful regional development strategies have effects in the long term and are in the most instances not visible for the people.

However, diversity issues in planning are manifold and should be taken into account in all participation processes. The question is how to implement the cross-sectional matter of diversity management in regional planning and decision making as there is no universal recipe for implementation. The principle of "mainstreaming", which consists of taking systematic account of the differences between the conditions, situations and society, has to be applied in all policies and actions. Examples on the regional planning level can be found in selected regions in Austria, e.g. a project manager for gender mainstreaming in the Lungau.

So why is the equal participation of men and women so important? Is it a possible tool to introduce regional topic to the public? Some aspects to legitimate the equality in regional participation are:

– Unused development potential "women": Women's contribution to the regional development is significant, but they are a minority in decision-making and planning. As the global competition for regions becomes tighter the regions need all resources for a successful development. By using the knowledge, multi-skills and workforce of women for regional development the living conditions will be improved.

– Top down versus bottom up: Poorly developed regions in Austria strongly rely on the concept of endogenous regional development, which grounds on bottom up processes. To ensure sustainability the top down strategy gender mainstreaming must be anchored in regional bottom up processes.

– Decision makers and regional politics: Public life in poorly developed regions is traditionally dominated by men like the community politic or clubs, regular's tables, festivities and many more. So still it's much easier for men to protect their interests and to participate in the decision making process even if they spent less time in the region than women. The role of women in regional politics needs to be strengthened.

Concluding the integration of diversity management in regional participation processes is no new approach in planning, but nevertheless it changed the perspective of development policies in Austria. To ensure endogenous development, planners, stakeholders and decision-makers have to observe the different needs and expectations of people to secure equality in all their concepts and policies. Maybe this is also a technique to ensure "successful" regional planning. Finally, we need to break down existing ideas of governance as the domain of privileged men – removed from the realities of ordinary people – and inspire both women and men to identify their own potential roles in bringing about a transformed, more equal society.

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Sustainable Community Development, Challenges and Gaps

A big number of rural communities in Cyprus have been abandoned by their inhabitants during the past decades. Nowadays, several planning policies and actions focus on the perspective of redeveloping and re-inhabiting these settlements. In some cases, this intention is promoted by emerging land market tensions. The aim of the paper is to investigate whether the implementation of this goal could become part of a wider sustainable strategy for the spatial structure of the Island and for the preservation of the special identity of the rural space in Cyprus. In other words, which is the price these settlements have to pay in order to shift into a development status and improve the quality of everyday life. A central issue of this essay is to outline causes and impacts of transforming these communities into satellite "ex-urbia" for the neighboring urban areas.

The paper's methodology aims to build a research argument through planning project findings. The authors were basic contributors in five "Development Plans in Communities", a new planning tool for a long term upgrading of underdeveloped rural areas. Two of these plans are taken as case studies in a comparative approach. Case study areas are considered to be in different development stage regarding their integration into their proximal urban centers. A further support of the paper's arguments is given by statistical data, geographical survey, by official planning documents, and interviews from key informants as well.

The paper concludes that there are two types of development perspective for these communities, with different feasibility and sustainability levels; (i) "urban – rural integration" that turns the community into a functional part of the urban areas of the district, less sustainable but more feasible and (ii) "community integration" that attempts to attract inhabitants willing to venture on the local potential (heritage and tradition, environment and agriculture), less feasible in a short term base but highly sustainable.

The question remaining open for exploration is which could be the planning adjustments and interventions in order to benefit "community integration". Further research could elaborate on the preconditions for smoothing "urban – rural integration" over their negative impacts on the built and physical environment and on the lost community identity as well.

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