

Food for thoughts

This is one of three essays which are also included in the CPMD focusing in detail on related topics such as the alarming outcomes of studies on land subsidence (Essay I.), international mainstream developments in coastal spatial planning (Essay II.) and the inclusion of a better tailored climate change service into planning of infrastructure (Essay III.). These are considered important topics in the near future and should find their reflection in coming planning. The essays were written by experts in their fields who are also familiar with the special conditions in the Mekong Delta.

Essay II.

Coastal Spatial Planning (CSP) in International Context

By Ron Flügel, Centre for International Migration (CIM under GIZ) and Southern Institute for Water Resource Planning (SIWRP, HCMC)

i. Coastal Spatial Planning worldwide

Worldwide, spatial and geographical characteristics of coasts are undoubtedly unique. Nonetheless, appropriate coastal spatial planning approaches are internationally widely still in its early stages. Due to the geographical encounter of two elementary forces, coasts are primarily characterized by its dynamic character. These dynamic constantly changing conditions stand in contradiction to conventional, common planning practice which mostly deals with stable and static planning areas. The geographical characteristics of coasts, but particularly also their socio-economic significance, requires a separate consideration when it comes to spatial planning practices. In addition to already existing management approaches, new planning theories, methods, and instruments are required to respond flexibly to the dynamic environment in coastal areas.

ii. Coastal Spatial Planning in Vietnam

In Vietnam, efforts have been made for quite some time to meet planning requirements along the coast, be it through targeted coastal protection measures, the consideration of new land use concepts, or specific water management solutions. One initiative is conducted under the leadership of the MONRE VASI (Ministry for Natural Resources and Environment – Vietnamese Agency for Sea and Island) and created a legal framework of coastal function zoning, integrated coastal management and coastal corridors. The later links planning of resource management in the waters below the mean tidal low water with the management of land-use. Objectives are habitat conservation, sustainable use of resources and erosion protection. In addition, Vietnams coastal region is becoming increasingly important in higher regional development concepts such as the Mekong Delta Plan for example (MDP 2013). Even initial planning- and zoning concepts for parts of the coast (coastal corridors, coastal function zoning) are already existing. Nevertheless, there are still enormous difficulties to grasp the overall scope of coastal planning which is not only a specific issue in Vietnam.

iii. General spatial planning approach

Generally, spatial planning attempts to steer, plan and arrange structural spatial demands and socio-economic spatial changes over a defined period of time. Since the 1970s, environmental protection has become an essential part of planning processes worldwide, and with the climate change debate, first innovative planning approaches for coastal regions came along. However, especially with regard to the natural dynamics, coastal and marine ecosystems are threatened by a host of stressors, including climatic changes and effects. "A number of holistic planning and management approaches and tools have been developed and implemented around the world with the goal of balancing competing or conflicting uses and values. These include methods such as integrated coastal zone management, ecosystem-based management, marine protected areas, ocean zoning, and marine spatial planning. There is much overlap amongst these approaches, and great variety in how they have been integrated into policy and practice."¹

However, it seems that particularly one of these management approaches meets with broad international consent and utilization. Widely known by now as Integrated Coastal Zone Management (ICZM), it features a horizontal, cross sectoral and integrated planning approach. But for some reason, typical planning dilemmas are inherent in most ICZM processes as well. For example, the ICZM discussion often demonstrates recurrent classical planning conflicts and issues. It usually starts with the insufficient spatial delimitation and definition of the term coast, then goes over to the difficulties of cross-sectoral planning and the appeal for better integrated planning processes, goes further with motivation and explanation difficulties regarding the involved actors, is followed by the complaint about insufficient data availability and it usually ends with the classical land use conflicts and the conflicts of interest, which are then mostly explained either by insufficient political will or administrative bottlenecks.

Integrated planning approaches are not new and with their ambitious effort to offer cross-sector solutions, they encounter equally their limits worldwide. The comprehensive approach of involving all stakeholders in the planning process and working out a common outcome is theoretically worthwhile of course. After all it holds the potential of the greatest common denominator. In practice, however, the feasibility of such approaches is usually questionable. This is mainly due to inscrutable interests of the various stakeholders, lacking mediation skills of those managing the process, financial budgetary situations and the often-informal nature of the planning process itself. The challenge is therefore to apply the instruments of spatial planning in such a way as to give the process a formal framework and hence to ensure the step from the planning process towards long-term implementation.

Generally speaking, spatial planning must be oriented towards the vertical legal framework, ranging from the national level down to the local implementation level. The ICZM, on the other hand, focuses mainly on horizontal framework conditions, seeking to pursue a cross-sectoral, integrated approach at the local level.

In order to meet the dynamic nature of coastal areas and the ever-changing spatial conditions, a flexible planning mechanism must be in place which operates both angles and that can respond as quickly as possible to changing conditions. Whether it is the rising sea level, the morphological change processes along the coast, increasing extreme weather events or changing socio-economic factors. Spatial planning has various instruments at hand to address these issues.

¹ see website cakex.org

Hence some suggestions shall be made below as to what planning mechanisms should take into account in order to react flexibly to the dynamic circumstances/conditions in coastal areas and to be able to implement a spatial significant planning.

Internationally it seems to be widely recognized that the scope of spatial plans should not stop at the coastline. (Javier 2014) Remarkable is also the thematic shift that has gained momentum in recent years in the international sustainability debate. Obviously, it has been acknowledged that the maritime problems require their own planning approaches, which is reflected not only in the 2015 formulated SDGs, but also in the worldwide stipulation of various new planning instruments for the maritime space.

Main task of Spatial Planning is to transform national, regional and local development goals, statements and mission statements into spatially significant concepts, while concurrently harmonizing the spatial impacts with the existing geographical contexts. For this purpose, it is reasonable to formulate formal structural/physical planning goals, which are reflected in binding regional plans. These spatial planning goals are supposed to make fundamental statements on the development, organization and protection of space in the respective planning area as guiding principles for subsequent weighing or discretionary decisions. The overall objective of spatial/regional planning must be therefore to stipulate and define binding requirements for these fundamental statements in form of textual and/or graphic specifications in binding spatial development plans.

In order to achieve this objective, it is reasonable if not even necessary to define corresponding plan-signs/-symbols in existing spatially significant plans that permit, exclude or combine and harmonize uses. For example, the following three categories could be used to respectively stipulate binding spatial delimitations²:

Priority Areas: Areas intended for specific, spatial-significant functions or uses that exclude other spatial-significant uses in this area, where these are incompatible with the priority functions or uses.

Reserved Areas: Areas in which specific, spatial-significant functions or uses are to be given particular weight in the consideration/weighing of contending or conflicting spatial-significant uses.

Suitability Areas: Areas in which certain spatial-significant measures or uses do not preclude other spatial-relevant concerns, whereby these measures or uses are excluded elsewhere in the planning area.

In order to meet the need for adaptation to climate change, Priority- and Reserved areas can be designated for preventive flood protection, for nature and landscape, for the protection of forests or agriculture, and for groundwater protection. The designation of corresponding areas can thus contribute to reducing the risk of damage (for example due to flooding). Areas for important resources (e.g. biodiversity, groundwater) which are in the process of changes due to climate change can be secured in the long term through this instrument. Likewise, areas for uses which may no longer be able to be practiced everywhere as a result of climate change (for example

² Not to be confused with land use planning and its stipulations of specific land uses on local scale.

agricultural use due to lack of water) or which fulfill special functions can be disclosed. Priority-, Reserved- and Suitability Areas can make important contributions to preventive adaptation to climate change.

The necessary flexibility in planning results on the one hand from the exclusion of uses that prevent flexible adaptation and on the other hand from the combination of permissible uses, which ensures a multifunctional use of space.

In order to make planning contents controllable and comprehensible for developments in the coastal area, corresponding sub-spatial development objectives or targets should be allocated to the above-mentioned Priority-, Reserved- and Suitability Areas. As a suggestion how to structure such goals they could be named and described as follows:

Reduction Targets are those goals that relate to the quantitative reduction of land use rates for housing, transport and sealing or rather their growth rates, irrespective of the question of which areas are affected by which qualities.

Protection and Conservation Targets relate to the preservation and protection of environmental functions and respectively protected goods or special characteristics of the same.

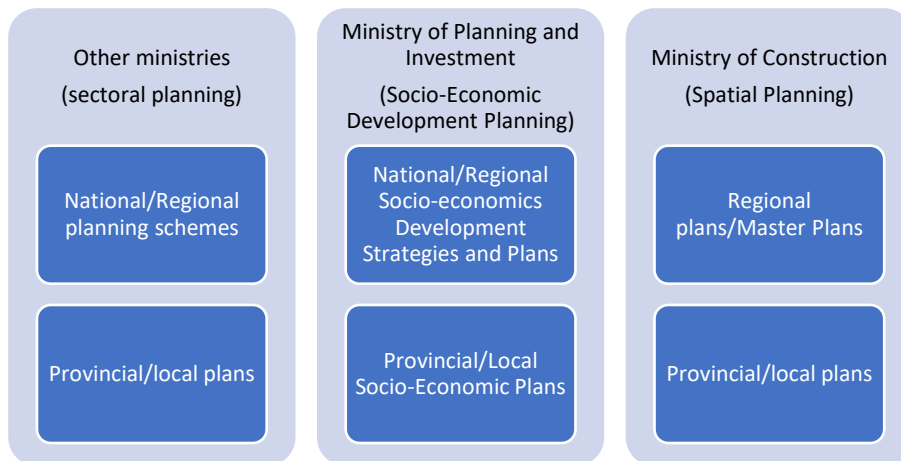
As Use-structural Targets such goals are designated, that are based on the structural characteristics of the land use pattern, meaning on the spatial location of certain types of use in context of the existing land use pattern. Unlike Reduction Targets, Use-structural Targets do not refer to the "composition" (proportion of certain land use types), but primarily to the "configuration" of a land use pattern.

Usage Efficiency Target aim to maximize economic and social benefits while minimizing land exploitation. (Siedentop et al. 2007, S. 2); (Janssen et al. 2012, S. 55f)

To sum up, there is a need to rethink common spatial planning tools and practices when applied in coastal areas. It needs new planning approaches that are able to deal with the specific distinctions and challenges and which initiate flexible, though binding specifications for the structural planning of the respective coastal area. Therefore, a proposal was made how, in a first step, coastal areas can be spatially defined and structured together on land and sea side. In a next step, the existing binding spatial plans can be formally adapted as described, whereby the coastal areas will be defined, structured and stipulated through correspondingly binding plan signs or symbols. In terms of content, the definition of new plan signs or symbols should follow separate sub-development goals that meet the dynamic conditions of the coastal area. The implementation of the spatial development goals should follow the principles of the ICZM. How to implement the initial launch of new planning symbols in existing spatial plans administratively must be adapted according to the national circumstances of the respective national planning systems.

iv. Brief side note: The Vietnamese spatial planning system

In Vietnam, there are three planning systems: (i) socio-economic development planning (ii) spatial planning under the Construction Law and Urban Planning Law, and (iii) land-use planning under the Land Law. These planning systems are managed and implemented at three levels: national, regional, and local.



The socio-economic development planning is the centrepiece of the Vietnamese planning system. The Ministry of Planning and Investment is in charge of developing 10-year socio-economic development strategy, elaborated by 5-year socio-economic development plans. MPI is responsible for coordinating with other government agencies to get their inputs into the drafts and finalizing the strategies and plans. The national plans strategies/plans are also based on inputs from provincial proposed plans submitted to MPI. The provincial plans are in turn based on inputs from proposed plans from districts and communes.

For construction planning, the Construction Law stipulates that construction planning includes 4 kinds of planning namely regional construction planning, urban planning, special functional zone planning³, and rural construction planning. Other plans are developed by sectoral agencies such as land use planning, agricultural planning, forestry planning, water resources planning, transportation planning, and industry planning.

The Southwest Steering Committee (SWSC) – part of the political mechanism in Vietnam – is limited in its mandate from taking a stronger coordination role, especially with regard to the implementation of measures and investments.

v. Conclusion

With regard to the ongoing discussions on regional coordination in the Mekong Delta and the new planning law, the question shall be raised how to propose an approach of integrating formal binding plan signs or notation symbols into binding regional development plans. So far there are regional binding plans for technical infrastructure but the question how to spatially structure a region is mainly just based on provincial land-use planning which is scaled up to regional level. The proposed regional notation symbols might differ from the systematic plan signs of common

³ The 2013 Construction Law defining Special Functional Zones as including: economic zones, industry zones, export processing zones, high-tech zones, conservation areas, tourism areas, historical-cultural areas, research areas, airport and seas ports, others.

land use plans on provincial or local government level and therefore have to be harmonized by following the principle of countervailing influence. These symbols not only describe allowed or not allowed uses but give specific suggestions how to develop certain areas/regions and how to deal with multifunctional uses and competing uses. In Germany for example these are common instruments of regional development planning. The question therefore is if such approach could also be applied in the Vietnamese planning system.

References:

Janssen, G.; Stratmann, L.; Meinel, G.; Hecht, R.; Herold, H.; Meyer, M.; Jahn, C.; Janßen, H.; Hivert, C.; Köhn, J.; Kannen, A.; Runge, K.; Kolb, D.; Meister, P.; Steingrube, W.; Scheibe, R.; Hartje, V. (2012): Umsetzung der nationalen Strategie zum Integrierten Küstenzonenmanagement: Strategien, Instrumente und Maßnahmen eines sparsamen, umweltschonenden und effizienten Umgangs mit der Ressource „Fläche“ im Küstenraum - Fallstudien in Regionen mit besonderem Handlungsbedarf. Umweltbundesamt, Dessau-Roßlau

Javier GS (2014): The Scope of Marine Spatial Planning and Integrated Coastal Zone Management: New Challenges for the Future. J Coast Dev 17: e109. doi: 10.4172/1410-5217.1000e109

Papatheochari, Dora (2008): Spatial Planning and Integrated Coastal Zone Management. Available from http://www.coastalwiki.org/wiki/Spatial_Planning_and_Integrated_Coastal_Zone_Management (accessed on 20-10-2017)

Siedentop, S., Heiland, S. & I. Lehmann (2007): Nachhaltigkeitsbarometer Fläche -Regionale Schlüsselindikatoren nachhaltiger Flächennutzung für die Fortschrittsberichte der Nationalen Nachhaltigkeitsstrategie -Flächenziele. In: Forschungen, Heft 130, Bonn.

Websites:

<http://www.klima-und-raum.org/vorrang-vorbehalts-eignungsgebiet>

<http://www.umweltbundesamt.de/sites/default/files/medien/461/publikationen/4250.pdf>

<http://www.umweltbundesamt.de/themen/nachhaltigkeit-strategien-internationales/planungsinstrumente/planung-entwicklung-der-meeres-kuestengebiete#textpart-3>

<http://www.cakex.org/dashboard/cmssp/planning-guide>