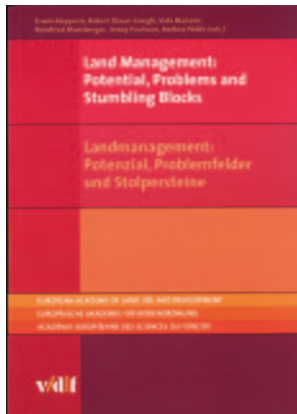


Hepperle, Erwin; Dixon-Gough, Robert; Maliene, Vida; Mansberger, Reinfried; Paulsson, Jenny; Pödör, Andrea (eds.) (2013): Land Management: Potential, Problems and Stumbling Blocks

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The book “Land Management: Potential, Problems and Stumbling Blocks” represents a collection of papers prepared by land management experts from 14 different European countries, mostly presented during scientific events organised by the European Academy of Land Use and Development in 2010 and 2011. The team of six editors, under the leadership of Erwin Hepperle, offer an overview of land management issues from a multinational and multidisciplinary perspective and attempt to provide a comprehensive picture of the current state of land use and the challenges it is facing.

Achieving this aim presents a considerable challenge, as land use management in Europe is determined by the existence of different planning cultures, legal frameworks,

historical developments and social and geographical conditions. The layout of the book, in the form of a collection of presented papers rather than systematically built up chapters, creates the platform for a much more mosaic picture than a comprehensive view based on interlinked analyses of relevant aspects. The differing professional backgrounds and the varied thematic focus of the authors create an excellent basis for addressing the many different aspects of the topic of land use management, encompassing the functional use of land, land consolidation and ownership, the economy, physical structures, the eco-systematic view and sustainability, as well as the social, legal and institutional aspects. The mosaic character of the book is underlined by the fact, that there are four papers in German and 20 papers in English, as well as the fact that the structure and content of the papers are not formally coordinated—some of them include a summary in English whereas some do not.

The international composition of the authors of several papers (Robert Dixon-Gough and Józef Hernik; Robert Dixon-Gough, Józef Hernik, Krzysztof Gawronski and Jarosław Taszakowski; Laura Poggio, Alessandro Gimona, Iain Brown, Marie Castellazzi and Inge Aalders) would seem to promise an interesting comparison of different approaches and experience, but this has not always been achieved, at least not in a methodologically clear manner. This makes it difficult for the reader to follow the logical links between the analytical part and the data included in the papers and the conclusions, especially if the formulations are not precise. The paper by Laura Poggio, Alessandro Gimona, Iain Brown, Marie Castellazzi and Inge Aalders provides a very instructive description of experience with one possible method for the assessment of the direct and indirect impact of climate change on the chosen ecosystem services in the model area,

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North-East Scotland, and it is a pity that the paper does not offer any discussion of the method itself or any comparison with other available methods.

Some of the papers are of special value as they provide comprehensive information about particular topics in land use management such as green spaces, green networks, rings and belts, sustainability indicators for rural settlements, urban ecology and theories about common pool resources (Inge Aalders and Jane Morrice; Laura Poggio, Alessandro Gimona, Iain Brown, Marie Castellazzi and Inge Aalders; Alexandra Weitkamp; Gerlind Weber and Hermine Mitter; Hans-Gert Braun; Erwin Hepperle; Andrea Pödör and Judit Mizseiné Nyiri). The content and composition of these papers leave the impression that their authors have great potential to develop available knowledge beyond the published papers. The paper by Gerlind Weber and Hermine Mitter attracts special attention with its very well structured and concise analysis of the potential of green belts as soil protection instruments in the context of land use planning concepts and land use executive management.

Recent discussion of the land use planning approaches used in different countries is reflected in the papers written by Thomas Kalbro and August E. Rosnes; Nikolai Volovich and Evgeniya Nikitina; Maruška Šubic Kovač; Andreas Hedricks. The question of public planning monopoly raised by Thomas Kalbo and August E. Rosnes opens a very interesting new field for discussion—limits to the “objectivity” of the monopolistic power of public planning authorities in the context of a planning paradigm shift. The problematic nature of this question is very well demonstrated in the example from two Nordic countries, Norway and Sweden; the question is provocative and should attract broader attention from professionals and academics in Europe. The potential benefits of land use planning know-how transfer at the national level, as well as its limitations, can be seen in the background to the paper by Maruška Šubic Kovač, which deals with the assessment of land development potential in Slovenia. The paper by Nikolai Volovich and Evgeniya Nikitina shows the need for a broader common platform for the internationalisation of these discussions, in order to overcome the limitations caused by “inside” perspectives that predetermine responses to identified problems. This especially concerns the discussion in countries which are undergoing dynamic transition processes across all spheres of social life, including the education of land use management professionals.

Several papers deal with the topic of housing from different perspectives (e.g. Robert Dixon-Gough and Jozef Hernik; Emma Mulliner and Vida Maliene) which is relevant for international discussion especially in the context

of recent demographic developments in the majority of the EU member states, as well as the effects of the continuing economic crisis on the property market and the numerous imbalances between the various interests pursuing social, environmental or economic goals. The paper by Robert Dixon-Gough and Jozef Hernik is much more a demonstration of such tensions than the comparison of the situation in Poland and the UK. The paper on affordable housing policy and practice in England by Emma Mulliner and Vida Maliene deepens the picture of the contradictions between the availability and quality of housing properties on the market and the demand created by the current social situation and demographic structure. Although the links between housing and land use management is obvious, the consistency of the book would be enhanced by closer focus on land use management aspects in housing policies. Housing problems are closely related to the topic of demographic development expounded in the paper written by Hans Joachim Linke, providing a clearly structured view of the situation in rural settlements in Germany facing the challenges of demographic decline and an ageing population.

Some papers provide geographically specific pictures (John Kiousopoulos and Demetris Stathakis; Kema Chupova; Hsiao-Lan Liu; Rusen Keles), ranging from urban land evolution in medium-sized Hellenic cities and land taxation in the Russian Federation to land use in rural areas of Taiwan and ending with urban sprawl in Turkey. The common denominator is the attempt of the authors to see specific problems in the context of dynamic, global changes which makes the paper interesting for a broader spectrum of readers.

This valuable publication concludes with the paper by Erwin Hepperle which underlines the need for integrative sustainable land management. This overall topic is transparently demonstrated in the Swiss example, where a long tradition and high level of land use management, in combination with high public awareness, creates a positive framework for such integrative approaches and a shift from formal declarations of sustainability as a goal in land use management to practical implementation in decision-making and executive land use management. At the same time Erwin Hepperle formulates crucial questions, which should provide a focus for spatial sciences in the near future.

This book aspires to address both professionals and academics and challenges them to develop a deeper discussion of and more systematic research into the international dimension; it can be recommended to a broad spectrum of those who represent multidisciplinary approaches to land management.