

Editorial

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Dear readers,

We offer you a new English issue of Envigogika which thematically focuses on case studies of regional sustainable development where social actors play specific roles in communication processes – it documents both the promotion of positive changes at regional level and/or also provide evidence to illuminate seemingly unresolvable conflicts. The concept of social learning from an educational point of view frames this thematic edition – as with any other learning process, stakeholder dialogue has a transformative aspect, the opportunity to confront and possibly change opinions and act on the basis of agreed emergent standpoints. In particular, this collection of case studies specifically tries to illuminate role of science and education in regional development, and attempts to introduce methods of analysis of diverse social relationships as well as practical ways of facilitation of communication processes.

In this issue of Envigogika two types of case studies are presented – regional development and regional conflicts. Progress in both is highly dependent on the involvement of actors who shape discussions and consequently frame the issue. Analysis of social aspects is hence highly desirable and first steps undertaken here show some interesting results.

The first area of interest (development issues) is a traditional focus of Actor Analysis (AA) and this method is widely used abroad in the envisioning stage and helps to facilitate negotiation processes. In the Czech context however, deliberation processes take place rather spontaneously and without a proper analytical stage, and reflections on negotiations in specific cases illustrates exactly this. A hypothesis about the need for continuous cultivation of democratic conditions in the Czech Republic, (with help of sound scientific analytical methods) specifically concerning deliberation processes, was posed as a result of a collaborative research process. This hypothesis was explored in different ways by our invited authors.

To provide a brief overview of the issue:

Simon Burandt, Fabienne Gralla, Beatrice John in their article [Actor Analysis in Case Studies for \(regional\) Sustainable Development](#) introduce the Actor Analysis analytical tool used to reflect regional (sustainable) development challenges throughout several articles in this issue. This method can be used with the aim not only of studying social capital, but also to have an impact on decision making and community choices. Its role in describing

social players and their interactions, to assist in understanding regional development processes and potential conflicts, and to provide information for strategy development is demonstrated through a specific case (the Ore Mountains). The steps of an actor analysis described in the article can be read as guideline for implementing this analysis and an analytical perspective on this process is provided by this article.

An outstanding Czech sustainability oriented local economy project is presented in an article by Jan Labohý, Yvonna Gaillyová and Radim Machů: [A sustainability assessment of the Hostětín cider house project](#). The authors assess the sustainability of the project in relation to different kinds of capital using complex indicators that uncover different aspects of the production process and its local cultural characteristics; moreover, effects to the local economy are measured using the local multiplier effect indicator. From this assessment it is clear that the cider house project meets the primary goals of regional sustainable development in a long term perspective.

Another – opposite, negative – case is described by Jan Skalík in the analyses the [Debate about the Šumava National Park in the Czech Chamber of Deputies](#). The article demonstrates persisting conflict and its roots with help of the text analysis method applied to the transcripts of parliamentary debates about National Park Šumava (ŠNP) in the Chamber of Deputies between 1990 and 2013. The relationship between politicians and local people within decision-making process, which is depicted as a consequence of this conflict, is then discussed. Interesting conclusions concern the plurality of dialogue and roles of the actors within it; the influence of scientists on the solutions; and the inflammatory and emotional characteristics of recent debate.

As a contrast, which serves as a counterargument to show the power of civic society, Vendula Zahumenská refers to a case in Hradec Králové where environmentalists and local developers have been in conflict concerning the development and commercial use of the [Na Plachtě natural monument](#). This case study shows the role of public participation in environmental protection and describes the specific opportunities for influencing environmental decision-making.

But there are cases in CR where declared economic interests are so strong that they eliminate dialogue with civic society – for example, as a result of brown coal mining and its associated industrial development, 106 towns and villages were obliterated in North Bohemia and its population was resettled to newly built prefabricated housing estates. A *Case study* analysing biographic interviews with [the displaced people of Tuchomyšl](#) is presented by Ivana Hermová. The author shows that the former Tuchomyšlers continue to identify strongly with the social space of the obliterated village, and discovers how they reflect on their forced eviction 35 years after the physical destruction of the village.

That these conclusions concerning the involvement of social actors might be reflected (and used) in the practice of school education, is described by Alois Hynek, Břetislav Svozil, Jakub Trojan and Jan Trávníček. In a [reflection on the Deblínsko landscape project](#) these authors refer to the roles of stakeholders including a university, primary school and kindergarten, and also owners, users, decision-makers, shareholders and stakeholders within public administration. The project is driven by Masaryk University which applies sustainability/security concepts in practice while closely relating these activities with research and teaching. This experience shows that social learning processes can start early among children/pupils/students.

A brief analytical overview of cases in this special issue, as well as an overview of information and experiences from a [database of case studies from different regions of the Czech Republic](#) and from abroad (compiled by authors beyond the scope of this issue), is provided in an article [Potential for social learning in sustainable regional development: analysis of stakeholder interaction ...](#) by Jana Dlouhá and Martin Zahradník. The conditions for the success or failure of environmental or sustainable development strategies from a social point of view have been analysed here with a focus on the roles of actors in a dialogue about regional sustainability issues within cooperative or conflict situations and concern for the communication processes among actors, scientists included. As a result of this analysis, interesting hypotheses were formulated, related to the role of future visioning as a ground for discussion, communication frameworks which involve all concerned actors, and the (non)existence of facilitation practices. These findings highlight the importance of reflecting on development issues' social aspects to help understand and promote democratic decision making processes at regional level.

The case studies which follow the research section of the issue take the opportunity to provide a colourful depiction of local sustainable development conditions. The [Description of old industrial regions in Europe](#) and potential for their transformation is described by Joern Harfst and David Osebik who stress social learning as an important transformative factor. In particular the involvement of research partners may support joint learning effects and knowledge transfer between all actors. Establishment of trusting working relationships may be crucial to overcome certain reservations on all sides before innovative approaches can be pursued successfully.

The [Vulkanland case study](#) case written by Michael Ober traces the first glimpses of a sustainable development vision for a border region with little hope for economic prosperity to the successful development of a new identity which has reinforced local peoples' self-confidence. The initiators of the project first imagined a future built on different standards than the past and consequently managed to substantially transform this region within a period of 15 years. The 'Steirisches Vulkanland' region now includes 79 municipalities which together promote local, green, self-sustaining businesses and continue to be ambitious about their future visions including achieving energy independence.

As part of the theme illustrated in this Special issue and mentioned also within the analysis of the cases is a text [Discovery of a supposed extinct settlement species made at Königsmühle in the Ore Mountains](#) (published previously in [Envigogika 9/1](#) last year but worth republishing in English in the context of this thematic issue). Author Petr Mikšíček pays attention to footprints left in the landscape by bygone generations of inhabitants (and also to present-day footprints left by our generation) and struggles to retain this memory for future generations. Clashes with the interests of some of the actors (land owners in this case) are necessary to preserve the footprints that are on the brink of being wiped out.

A brief introduction to the new publication [Analysis and support for participatory decision-making processes aimed at regional sustainable development strategies through the use of actor analysis methodology](#) which is available fully online here is presented in the Information section of the Issue.

From this overview, some general conclusions can be derived:

Conflict situations described in this issue emerged when traditional concepts were enforced by strong actors (without joint envisioning and planning with the others); these

circumstances usually do not allow for balanced discussions about the future. However the important role of minor actors such as scientists was also revealed. Experiences with their involvement provided a chance to highlight the role of scientists in policy-making.

Based on the findings of this and other related research, the role of scientists can be framed not only as providers of the (rather technical) expertise to reach the goals that were set within the environment or SD oriented decision-making, but also as entering policy negotiations providing an insight into the processes they undergo. If invited at an early stage of decision-making, they can have a considerable impact on its results (then their involvement can be described as an action research). This finding might be used in planning of similar practical and scientific projects.

As we can see, several interesting ideas resulted from a comparative meta-analysis of the case studies and were outlined in this issue of Envigogika. In general, it is a social point of view that provides an insight into the nature of the examples presented from the Czech Republic and the good practices from abroad. A scientific method of description is used here to reflect policy mechanisms as well as to indicate a way forward for integrating decision making practice into very sensitive, local or regional sustainability contexts. We sincerely hope that this will precipitate a broad process of public dialogue among experts as well as other actors – beyond the realm of academic discussions only, but nevertheless with substantial academic input.

We wish you an enjoyable read and a pleasant and relaxing summer!

On behalf of the Envigogika editorial team

Jana and Jiří Dlouhý

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