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Preface

There has been a resurgence of regionalism and of regional development strategies in European countries to support rural development in recent years. FAO has always identified rural development as one of the priorities in fulfilling its mandate to raise levels of nutrition, improve agricultural productivity, better the lives of rural populations and contribute to the growth of the world economy. Policy-makers and strategic planners are rediscovering the region as an important spatial planning unit between local and national levels that links local stakeholders with national and trans-national policy and networks, and can enable effective mobilization of resources when decentralization is either weak or still in the making. This debate has been stimulated further by new assessments of the functions of regions in a globalizing world.

Planning at the micro-regional level can be an effective instrument in efforts to promote rural and regional development in Central and Eastern Europe. Integrated rural development projects and programmes are needed to tackle the problems of deteriorating conditions in the rural areas of the sub-region. Their success will depend to a large extent on how they implement effective planning at the micro-regional level and address the problems of severe fragmentation of farmland.

This paper serves as a practical introduction on how planning at the micro-regional level may be effectively tackled. It is intended as a briefing for field people involved in micro-regional planning processes in the rural areas, many of whom are drawn from different technical and professional backgrounds. Some may be local stakeholders themselves; others may be facilitators in a planning exercise. A paper of this nature can, however, only provide general guidance. The approaches presented should be assessed and applied in ways that are appropriate to specific micro-regional circumstances. Each region and country in Central and Eastern Europe will have to find solutions that address its own particular conditions; its social, cultural, economic, legal, administrative and political environment; and the financial and other resources that it is able to mobilise.

Readers of this paper will also be interested in FAO’s recently published guidelines on The design of land consolidation pilot projects in Central and Eastern Europe (FAO Land Tenure Studies Number 6) and its companion volume, Operations manual for land consolidation pilot projects in Central and Eastern Europe. Given the critical importance of fragmentation of land holdings in constraining local level rural development in these countries, tackling land consolidation issues is likely to be a crucial stage in supporting effective and integrated rural development. The guidelines and manual provide practical advice on what countries can do to start a land consolidation pilot project, giving arguments as to why land consolidation is important, describing briefly what land consolidation is, and identifying key decisions that should be made and key actions that should be undertaken before a land consolidation pilot project can begin. The operations manual in particular provides guidance to project managers and others on the
management of a pilot land consolidation project once it has begun. Copies of these publications are available from FAO’s offices below or, in the case of the guidelines, via the web at:


The present paper is based on work undertaken in the Eastern Europe sub-region under the technical direction of FAO’s Land Tenure Service together with its partners over several years. It reflects the Service’s, and its partners’ concern to ensure that territorial planning should be undertaken on a holistic basis, and it forms a part of the Service’s normative output in this area. The paper is, more specifically, a response to a request that was first voiced by professionals and local leaders who were part of the Micro-Regional Planning Project in Buják in Hungary, a process which was supported under FAO’s Technical Cooperation Programme (TCP). This request was taken up by the late Mr Fritz Rembold, then Land Tenure and Rural Development Officer in FAO’s Sub-regional Office for Central and Eastern Europe and the writing of this paper was commissioned.

We look forward to continuing collaboration with practitioners throughout the region to share knowledge gained in planning at the micro-regional level.

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1. Initiating rural development

Rural areas all over the world are faced with manifold problems: outdated production techniques in agriculture, scarcity of grazing land, lack of access to drinking water, inadequate education options and poor health care, lack of land titles, legal uncertainty, low participation in decision making - a list that is by no means exhaustive. In most cases there are clear-cut disparities between the big cities and the rural areas. Rural development has been on the agenda for many years, and numerous approaches have been pursued to come to terms with the urban-rural divide.

Many books have been written on rural development. This little brochure has a much simpler purpose. The problems of rural regions are much too complex to allow for a simple patent remedy. But rural development needs to get started somehow, and must be initiated by somebody. This brochure introduces a useful tool to get the process of rural development started: Micro-regional planning.

In most rural areas there are many individuals who can play a meaningful role in improving the economic and social well being of their area or to uplift rural livelihoods. There are technical specialists who have been posted to a remote part of their country by their government like foresters, irrigation engineers, agricultural extension agents and many others. There are local politicians, activists of non-government organisations, members of farmers' associations and other civil society groups, there are business people and ordinary citizens. All of them may be interested in bringing about improvements for the area.

But unfortunately sector experts tend to look at rural problems with a bias towards their specific field of interest. Foresters tend to be more interested in forests than anything else, irrigation engineers tend to look mostly at irrigation canals, teachers are more concerned with the education of the young population than with the well being of the elderly. Politicians and the representatives of civil society organisations have their own bias.

But sectoral approaches are not enough to resolve the multi-faceted problems of the rural population in a holistic manner. Sectoral approaches only perceive the rural population in a specific role: i.e. the farmers as...
food producers, the passengers of a minibus as road users, the sick as patients or beneficiaries of a health care station. In reality, though, the aim should be to view people holistically in all their contexts and with all their needs. Rural dwellers, wherever they may live in the world, have many different needs and usually face a series of different problems. Thus, the people and their problems are the starting point. If all their problems are taken seriously, it does not take long before the multi-sectoral approach is found to redress the situation. Micro-regional planning is such a holistic approach that goes far beyond conventional service delivery by sector agencies.

This brochure is meant for field people in the rural areas who have a sound professional background in their respective field but have little or no experience with rural development as a multi-sectoral task. The brochure has primarily been written for field people, not for professional regional planners. It is intended as a very practical introduction.

Micro-regional planning has been practised in many different parts of the world, in countries as diverse as Germany, Ghana, Malawi, Indonesia, Hungary and many others. It has a longer tradition in countries like Holland, Germany, Switzerland and Austria. But there are also some very good experiences from Latin American, Asian and African countries. When an outside observer witnesses a planning workshop in a country like Tanzania or Guatemala, it is sometimes amazing to see that the way the villagers talk about their future is not all that different from group discussions in villages back home, say in North-Western Germany. This brochure deliberately makes references to experiences from many different parts of the world. For those who want to bring about improvements in a small rural area it is always useful to share experiences with others in a similar situation.

Over the last decade or so regional development and micro-regional planning have also reached Central and Eastern Europe. In these countries planning has a negative connotation for many people. Planning reminds them of the central planning machinery that was in place during socialist times. On the following pages we will explain a planning process that is deeply rooted in democracy and participation by the ordinary people.
2. Why micro-regional planning?

We have already explained that rural development should be multi-sectoral and holistic in character. A region is a complicated and complex fabric with a large number of inter-related problems that can only be solved by an integrated approach.

There is another reason for micro-regional planning, and this has to do with global trends.

Everywhere in the world global networks are shaping the development opportunities of rural people. But these networks tend to be hierarchical in character. International/global cities are linked to one another at a world-wide scale. They are also linked to the respective national capitals; the national capitals establish links to the lower tiers in the hierarchy of central places like secondary and tertiary centres (small towns). And the villages as the smallest settlements are linked in terms of trade and communication to the nearest small town and, to a much lesser extent, to the neighbouring village.

In contrast, horizontal networks can develop within small regions and help improve living conditions for the people in the rural areas. This could be a network of localised trade links between neighbouring villages, exchange of commodities, information and innovation.

A small region is much stronger than villages in remote areas that try to develop on their own. One village has assets that another one does not have. Villages may complement each other with all their potentials.
3. What is micro-regional planning?

Let us first define the term "micro-region". Obviously the more commonly used term is the "region". The term regional rural development has been in use for the last 25 years. This term refers to a coherent spatial unit, which is located between the local and the national level. The "micro-region" is usually much smaller than conventional planning regions.

"Micro-region" and "region"

A micro-region is a distinct territorial unit with clearly marked boundaries below the regional level, but above the village level.

In terms of population it varies between a few villages with a few thousand people and a larger area comprising many villages, small towns and possibly a few hundred thousand people. In-fact, it usually encompasses both rural and urban settlements.

The micro-region may be

- an existing territorial unit
- a formal planning unit gazetted under the planning law of the country
- the living space of a particular ethnic group or an area with a common history
- defined by physical features like water catchment areas
- defined by functional inter-relationships like market-hinterland relations
- defined by the resource base of a particular territorial unit.

In a modern definition, a micro-region can also be understood as a network of different actors from government, local government, the private sector and civil society within a particular territorial unit.
In other words: In some cases the micro-region exists as a planning unit within the planning and decision-making system of the country and with a set of delegated responsibilities stipulated by law. But in many other cases micro-regional planning may also be based on an ad-hoc decision of the local population to do something together. In some cases there is the common interest to jointly develop the tourism potential of a small region, to market the local wine or some other typical local product, and there are also cases where people get together to start land consolidation in an area that extends beyond village boundaries.

The definition and the final delineation of the target region may also be part of the planning process.

**Planning** for one’s own future, setting goals for the future and deciding on the steps that help to attain these goals is part of our daily life. Individuals plan, families plan, businesses make plans and government departments plan their activities.

**Micro-regional planning** attempts to coordinate the planning activities of all the numerous actors within a limited territorial unit.
It deals with
- the economy, social and cultural life
- infrastructure
- housing and the settlement pattern
- rural organisations and institutions
- and the natural environment

within the micro-region.

But above all micro-regional planning is about the **people** who live in the area. People as individuals, as households, people in enterprises and in organisations and institutions. And these people have a past, a present and a future in their area. The people have their dreams, their aspirations, their values and their goals.

There was a time when some regional planners wanted to develop planning into an exact science. They had the hope that eventually a computer model would be available which had the capacity to simulate the intentional and unintentional activities of everybody within a region and which would also depict the different goal systems of all the actors in the region. This was a technocratic dream. There will never be such a model. Regional planning and micro-regional planning are not exact sciences. It is probably much more important to listen carefully to the people in the region to come up with a good plan. Planning is a **practical craft**.

Obviously in the course of a planning process not every actor or stakeholder can attain his individual goals to the fullest. There are differences of interest, sometimes clashes, and there is a need for compromise. Very often planners have to mediate between the interests of different actors, they have to find a good compromise, which serves the interests of a number of different groups.

Good planning will always look for win-win situations, i.e. solutions that enable more than one interest group to attain the respective goals.
4. **Some characteristics of good micro-regional planning**

Good planning

- is **bottom up**, i.e. it is initiated by the local people or their representatives. If a government body like a planning board or a land consolidation agency starts it, there must be a mandate by the local people.  

- is **participatory**, i.e. all important actors or stakeholders within the area have a say in the elaboration of the plan and are continuously consulted. (This may include local government representatives, central government line agencies, chambers of commerce, farmers' associations, local entrepreneurs, trade unions and NGO representatives etc.).

- is **action-oriented**, i.e. there must be a close link between planning and implementation, and there must be a step by step approach to complex development, there must be a package of projects which can be implemented immediately.

In Chapter 7 we describe the typical stages of the micro-regional planning process. Each micro-region has its own individual set of problems and potentials. Every single planning process is different. There can be no standard procedures, no patent remedies. Interventions and projects have to be geared towards the specific needs of the people of the region and must respond to their most immediate problems. But good planning will always be bottom-up, participatory and action-oriented - or else it will be doomed to failure.

In addition, there should be a broad national development framework, within which the micro-plan can fit, in order to receive policy and other support from all levels of government.
5. Some more elements of the conceptual orientation

Bottom-up, target group participation and action-orientation are an absolute must in terms of process management. Three more important elements of the conceptual orientation of micro-regional planning deserve to be mentioned:

- the development of endogenous potentials
- the orientation towards sustainability
- linking land use planning and land management.

**Developing endogenous potentials**

Developing local potentials requires the identification of the specific trends particular to the micro-region under consideration. An endogenous strategy must take into consideration the strength of regional cultures that include, inter alia, regional economic trends, the unique characteristics of the regional culture, the specific networks of interaction and communication within the region, the preservation of the region's cultural heritage as well as its natural resources. Every intervention geared towards improving the productive factors must take into account the condition of the natural resources in the area. This safeguards the sustainability of a region's endogenous potentials.

**Orientation towards sustainability**

Since the Rio Summit sustainable development has become the buzzword of government departments, NGOs and civil society organisations throughout the world. If properly understood in all its dimensions (sustainable use of natural resources, sustainable economic development and sustainable social and institutional practices) it is an important conceptual orientation of any spatial development. This holds true of course also for micro-regional planning. Planning practice today is increasingly a conflict between economics and ecology - a conflict that seldom offers satisfactory resolutions. Only a long-term reorientation of production matters which promotes the conservation of natural resources beyond our own generation, and as such towards sustainable development, can help to successfully resolve the conflict between economics and ecology.

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1 for example the specific natural resources, typical local skills or cultural practices within the micro-region.
2 the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED), as it was officially known, which was held in Rio de Janeiro in 1992
**Linking land use planning and land management**

There can be no doubt that land use planning is the prime instrument of micro-regional planning because it provides the essential link with natural resource management and thus paves the way for sustainable development. Conventional land use planning worked on the assumption that by optimising the planning instruments an optimal land use distribution could be found.

Though good technical tools for land use planning have their merits, in recent years the focus has shifted towards generating a social basis for resolving problems and conflicts. Land use planning thus becomes a political process in which the power constellations are of decisive importance for the end result. Mechanisms allowing conflicts to be worked through or a consensus to be found are major influencing factors. Land use planning should make use of modern technologies, such as geographic information systems. But at the same time the process of conflict mediation must come into play.
6. **What is the role of professional planners in the process?**

Professionals can play an important role in starting the process of micro-regional planning. "Professional" in this context refers to any technical specialist who plays a mobilising role and pursues a multi-sectoral approach. He must not necessarily hold a degree in urban or regional planning.

Three points are noteworthy:

- Professional planners may play a useful role, but they are not the owners of the process.
- Planners may act as catalysts that set the planning process in motion.
- In addition they ensure continuous communication between the planning team, decision-makers and the target group.

![Village workshop](image)
7. **Typical phases of the planning process**

Micro-regional planning is usually organised in a typical sequence of distinct phases and practical steps. The figure on the following page graphically depicts the ideal lapse of a micro-regional planning process. The stages and practical steps form a logical sequence that proceeds in the same chronological order. The main phases are:

- Analysis phase
- Scenario writing
- Elaboration of development strategy/sector strategies
- Elaboration of project profiles

The planning process as such is followed by the implementation stage and monitoring and continuous revision of the micro-regional plan.

The planning practice necessitates feedback among the stages and steps or a review of the work accomplished in the previous steps. In the process new information may arise which requires modification of goals that were set at the beginning. Or later phases (for example reformulation of a mid-term development strategy) may require that additional inventory of the current situation be conducted.

It is of utmost importance that the local stakeholders be involved in all phases of the planning process.

Obviously there are different ways of involving the local people. One way is to hold planning workshops at regular intervals, as shown in the figure on the following page.
Four phases of the planning process

Phase 1: Analysis Phase
- Analysis of existing conditions
  - Land Use
  - Infrastructure
  - Demography
  - Social conditions
  - Economy
    - Agriculture
    - Forest
    - Crafts
    - Manufacturing
    - Tourism
- Summary of potentials and constraints

Phase 2: Scenario Writing
- Trend Scenario
- Scenario A
- Scenario B
- Scenario C
- Selection of the preferred Scenario
- Elaboration of sector strategies

Phase 3: Sector Strategy
- Human Resources
- Manufacturing/Markets
- Forest
- Agriculture
- Tourism
- Elaboration of project profiles

Phase 4: Project Profiles
1 2 3 4 5 .......... 31
- Selection of projects for immediate implementation

1st planning workshop
2nd planning workshop
3rd planning workshop
4th planning workshop
5th planning workshop
8. The analysis phase

In order to be able to plan for the future development of a small region the point of departure is obviously a good grasp of the current situation, its problems, its potentials and its opportunities. But the diagnostic phase of a micro-regional planning study is not a geographical handbook of the area. The analysis of the current situation does not need to be conducted with encyclopaedic goals in mind. Do not collect data that will most likely just be discarded in the end. The data, which is not necessary for the planning process, needs neither to be collected nor analysed. The inventory of the current situation should focus from the start on the most pressing problems and needs of the local people. Therefore it can be very helpful to hold a workshop at the beginning that serves to familiarise the planning team with the local population's and local decision-makers' definition and perception of the problem. Such a workshop with decision-makers and representatives from the important interest groups should be held even before the planning team has launched its own field investigations.

There are several didactic methods that can be considered for this workshop. In any case the "metaplan" method is helpful. Participants name problems and write them on cards and staple them to a board. Each participant is then required to introduce and explain his or her problem perceptions. At the conclusion it is easy to determine from the general opinions the weight given to each of the problems named (see Annex "A note on consultative workshops" at the end of this brochure).

The facilitator should be careful that solutions and remedial actions are not already implicitly included in the statement of the problem (for example, a statement of the problem should read "poor health status of the population" and not "poor staffing and limited resources of the health centre").

Complementary to the problem analysis the workshop should also make a first attempt at identifying potentials and opportunities.
The results of this first workshop can be taken as a guide for the field investigation in the various sectors. If a multi-disciplinary team of sector specialists can be assigned to the jobs, then each sector expert will do the fieldwork in his area of competence. The specialists naturally employ the methodological tools particular to their discipline.

Usually the most important sectors for which an analysis needs to be done are:

- demography and social conditions
- the economy, broken down into agriculture, forestry, manufacturing, tourism, trade and commerce
- infrastructure
- land use

In each case existing information relevant to the study needs to be collected and collated first. This will then be complemented by original field investigations. Quantitative and qualitative fieldwork should not be regarded as conflicting approaches. Instead, advantage should be taken of the complementary nature of the two approaches. Case studies and participatory rural appraisals (PRA) are particularly well suited to obtain a good grasp of the situation in a micro-region.

Case studies give a precise and detailed picture of the way a rural community is functioning and changing. It reveals the behaviour of economic agents and their part in the transformation experienced by the society.

Participatory rural appraisals are a particularly useful tool in obtaining a holistic view of the micro-region, based on the rural people’s own perceptions.

Participatory Rural Appraisal near Kasalinsk in Kazakhstan
Participatory rural appraisal (PRA) is essentially a mix of different fieldwork methods. A small team of planners or field workers normally applies it over a very short period of time (sometimes only a day, more often a few days or a week).

The basic principles are:
- to learn from the rural people, directly, on the site, and face to face
- triangulating, meaning using a range of methods, types of information to cross-check the information obtained.

Typical methods of PRA are:
- key informant interviews
- semi-structured interviews
- group discussions
- participatory mapping and modelling (i.e. people draw farm maps, social demographic health diagrams etc.)
- informative walks (systematically walking with informants through the area while observing, asking, listening, discussing)
- brainstorming by villagers and outsiders together.

(Many introductions into PRA are available, a small brochure by Robert Chambers is particularly useful: "Rural Appraisal: Rapid, Relaxed and Participatory", Institute of Development Studies, Brighton 1992).

In addition to the factual information gathered the spatial distribution of the described phenomena is especially important for micro-regional planning. The sector analyses should be complemented with thematic maps. When the technical and financial resources are available geographical information systems (GIS) can assist in the production and creation of thematic maps, including overlays.

When writing up the results of the inventory of the current situation care should be taken to go beyond a purely descriptive presentation and to analyse the particular features of the region, for example, to make comparisons with neighbouring regions or with the national averages. The report should present the reader with a clear picture of the particular strengths and weaknesses of the region.
The last step of the analysis phase involves the synthesis of the inventory of the current situation. The individual sector analysis reveals the important potentials and constraints. This is the most important step of the analysis phase and it forms the basis for all future development.

The planning team must decide which are the most important potentials and problems of the region. This can be done in a very simple form by writing the important points on a flip chart. Once this has been done another workshop should be held with the local stakeholders. At this workshop the findings of the sector specialists will be compared with the people's own views. In the end the main findings should be jointly summarised in a list of major potentials and constraints.

A region's potentials and problems must also be presented in terms of its spatial dimensions, i.e. in map form. The geographical information system (GIS) allows the overlay of variables within the map. Thereby the cumulation of the various favourable and unfavourable sectors at a particular place becomes clearer. For example the favourable and unfavourable areas for cultivation are marked in the maps.
Opportunity versus problem orientation

"The literature of management is frequently concerned with problem solving and problem-solving capability. The path to development seems to lead through identifying problems and their causes and then through seeking solutions..., but it is possible to present the existence of underdeveloped land in an area as a problem when it might more normally have been regarded as an opportunity.

There are two disadvantages in a problem orientation for rural management. The first is its negative connotation. Problems present themselves; opportunities, however, have to be thought out. The solution of problems is liable to maintain a static situation rather than to promote a developmental one...

The second disadvantage is that problem solving may lead to mis-allocation of resources... The opportunity orientation, by contrast, would direct attention to seeking out new possibilities rather than concentrating on what was already not working..."

9. Scenario writing

This phase deals with projections, with forecasting from the existing situation into the future. A particularly useful approach that we recommend here is the scenario method, which is a qualitative and holistic method of forecasting.

But before actually embarking on the forecast or before writing the scenario the question of the appropriate time horizon arises. The time frames for the projections and for planning should be identical. In the past most regional planning studies set a planning time frame of 20 years. In recent years the emphasis has shifted to shorter-term programs and implementable project packages. As a result a planning time frame of five years (for short-term action plans) or ten years (medium-term) is usually advocated. This may be justified for a short-term action plan. However, micro-regional planning should not completely ignore the longer-term view. Especially scenario planning requires a clear and recognisable difference between the current situation and the end state depicted in the scenario. A time horizon of 20 years is recommended for scenario planning.

Long-term forecasts are an essential stage of any planning process. Before proceeding to describe the details of development strategies and to identify individual project interventions it is essential to take a glance into the future, to depict a longer-term view of the study region. A fundamental function of this stage is to create an understanding among decision-makers and the regional population that the future continuously offers new imaginable alternative ways. There is more than one option open. Therefore it is so important to work out contrasting scenarios.

The scenario method is a qualitative forecasting attempt in which the emphasis is placed on describing the interdependence between individual phenomena and sectors. It describes a complex end state, that is, the imaginable conditions in the target year (e.g. 20 years from today). Scenarios have a basis in reality (they are not science-fiction!). They must be based on a clear analysis of the potentials and constraints of the current situation. The conditions described in the scenarios must be attainable with the known technical and organisational tools and with the potential of the land of the micro-region.
Goal scenarios have a direct relationship to goals; they are written with regards to a previously defined system of goals or a development vision ("Leitbild"). They describe a situation in which the goals that constitute the development vision should be partially or completely attained.

Trend scenarios describe an end state that will occur if prevailing trends are allowed to continue.

Scenarios are qualitative in nature, but they may be supported by quantitative forecasts, for example, a population projection.

It is always recommended to develop more than one scenario.

The different scenarios should be based on distinctly different sets of goals or development visions ("Leitbild"), for example

- transformation of the micro-region towards organic farming
- basic needs orientation
- sustainable utilisation of regional resources
- maximum integration of the micro-region into the national economy

In addition it is useful to contrast the goal scenarios with a trend scenario.

It is not easy to write good scenarios. This work step requires an integrative view of the region, a lot of imagination, and at the same time a good knowledge of the potential that can be mobilised in the various sectors. Sometimes it is useful that one person in a team writes a draft. But it should never remain the task of one person alone; other team members must contribute to the scenario and check it for consistency. There is no patent recipe for writing scenarios. Some people start with a checklist of key questions so as to make sure that the scenarios are consistent and can be compared with one another. One can also do it in the form of a role-play by simulating interviews with local people who describe the situation of the area in the target year. On the following pages a few examples which may serve as an inspiration are presented: an abstract for a district development plan for Ghana and another one for the rural development plan for Buják Region in Hungary.

Techniques of scenario writing
South Kwahu in Ghana in ten years' time

As part of the South Kwahu District Development Plan three scenarios were elaborated, which were oriented towards three different development visions, namely

Scenario A: Agricultural surplus production
Scenario B: Basic needs satisfied and
Scenario C: Surplus production and basic needs satisfied - dual objective achieved.

In the following we give extracts from Scenario C:

Scenario C: Surplus production and basic needs satisfied - dual objective achieved.

What a difference! It was only ten years ago. Then when driving from Kwahu town down to the lake shore settlements of Amate and Mpan one would have wondered whether one was driving on a road. The surrounding hills were bare. Gullies of erosion would cross the roads and make them impassable at many points. Now only ten years later the difference is glaring. See, the hilltops are covered with trees. This once seasonal impassable road has been upgraded into an all-weather road. Trucks, buses and automobiles are shuttling back and forth. The same change could be observed along the Hweehwee - Nkawkaw, Abetifi - Abene Dedeso - Mpraeso route.

Where did the money come from? Has the district grown any richer? Richer, yes! But not only that. South Kwahu has grown more organized too. You have the women's associations - channelling all family planning education, literacy and anything that has to do with women's welfare. You have the Youth Brigades and the Friends of Trees Association in cities that lined all the inner-town roads with trees. You have the marketing cooperatives. You have the road maintenance brigades all involving farmers. You have the community forest project - the forestry department being the lead agency. The farmers are well represented in the District Council. The District Council has been able to generate more revenue. The tax collection system has improved and evasions minimized, since citizens have been able to see that the money thus raised is ultimately put to their own use. The roads, clinics, the efficient agricultural extension services, the water facilities, the diverse market outlets, the fuel-wood plantations - all are testimonials to this. The majority of
rural dwellers participate not only in financial and labour contributions (to build or maintain roads, to build clinics) but also in the benefits of such programmes. The economy of the district has improved significantly. An indirect indicator of this is the fact that the tax yield has been continuously increasing for the last ten years. A number of agro-based industries have been established - the oil mill at Nkawkaw, the soap industry at Mpraeso, the tomato canning at Kwahu-Tafo are the most striking examples. Now entrepreneurs are increasingly appearing on the economic scene. There is a net in-migration and investors from other regions are exploring ventures in the district. The investment promotion committee has done a commendable job by having issued its annual publications pointing out new opportunities for investment. Agricultural production has increased substantially and almost all crop yields have increased by between 80-100 per cent. The district is a net food exporter now. The agriculture extension services have done a good job by combining the provision of improved seeds with adoption of improved, labour intensive cultural practices. The agro-forestry's success is due to the Forestry Department and especially the people of Abetifi and Abene who pioneered the scheme.

The District Council has had the foresight to moderate the euphoria of increasing production. Its investment budget allocation for the last ten years testifies to this. During the first five years the ratio between "productive" and "social infrastructure" investment was seven to three. In the next five years the ratio was four to six i.e. in favour of social investment. Consequently access to health facility of one or another level is within a radius of maximum 5 kilometres, to schools within one, to water facilities within two kilometres.

There is still disparity in income distribution. However the trend has shown a decline during the last ten years. In 1988 the Gini-coefficient for income distribution was 70%. Now in 1998 this has been reduced to 55%.

In summary South Kwahu has achieved and is achieving accelerated economic growth and the provision of basic needs and a more or less equitable distribution of income.

Source: University of Science and Technology Kumasi, Kwahu District Study, 1992
Rural Development Plan for Buják Region in Hungary
Scenario B

The study team for the Buják Rural Development Plan in Hungary sketched one trend scenario and three goal scenarios. The trend scenarios were written with regard to a previously defined “development vision”.

The study team defined three alternative development visions for the Buják region:

- Development initiated and implemented by external investors (A)
- Development implemented by a small group of local entrepreneurs, the highest priority being on returns for the individual entrepreneur (B)
- Integrated development based on the cooperation of the participants in the local social and economic life (local governments, entrepreneurs, NGOs) (C).

Along these lines the four scenarios were then elaborated, which formed the basis for a subsequent planning workshop with the mayors and other important decision makers.

In the following extracts from Scenario B are given:

Summary of Scenario "B" and its impact

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Demography</td>
<td>The decrease and decline of population lessens, and by the end of the plan period there would be 4,500 inhabitants. Local employment and the increase of incomes have a stabilizing effect, and the social tension eases. However, the social and economic gap between the active entrepreneurs and the majority of the population widens. The Romany population can play only a minor role in the labour force needs of the development investments.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Human resources</td>
<td>The ability to attract resources and establish connections strengthens, as the local entrepreneurs need external resources.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NGOs</td>
<td>NGOs may join the development processes initiated by local investors and entrepreneurs. This is mainly true if they can draw in extra resources. Local entrepreneurs occasionally support the local civil (cultural, sports and art) organizations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Infrastructure</td>
<td>The infrastructure development depends on the accessible state and EU resources. The interests of the local entrepreneurs are dominant, and the local governments organize most of the development in line with the demands of these local entrepreneurs.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Economy | A small number of local entrepreneurs utilize the local economic and natural-cultural resources, and mainly the quickly refundable, resource-wasting projects gain prominence. The unique natural and scenic assets of the region could become endangered. The local governments should face substantial pressure to develop local infrastructure, but this is somewhat counteracted by the increase of the local revenues.

Family small holdings and crafting | Besides profit orientation, provincialism serves the family smallholdings, too. Some of the products might obtain a prominent position, and people start to specialize in products and services. Crafting necessitates training and the development of other human resources.

Marketing | The local entrepreneurs sell their products on a limited market. They do not conduct significant marketing activities - and they do not even think it is necessary. Due to the lack of competition and coordination, the participants do not aim at creating a regional image and marketing.

Credits, subsidies | The strengthened local enterprises acutely need accessible credits and subsidies. Some are able to attract considerable enterprise-support, but these only help their isolated development schemes. The local governments get local revenues, but in return they have to serve the needs of the entrepreneurs.

Forest management, game management and non-wood forest products | The services related to hunting are controlled by the local enterprises. Private forests are managed professionally. Forest tourism, which requires only a modest investment, is linked to village tourism. An open-air school is created. A higher level of wood processing is achieved by drawing in local enterprises. Local enterprises utilize and process venison.

Water management and fishing | Concerning water management and breeding fish, the profit-oriented development of internal enterprises lacks the proper background.

Agriculture | A few major farmers dominate the agricultural sector. The size of pastures and forests increases. Small-scale producers are repressed. Farmers mainly grow fodder, fruit, vegetables and herbs. Organic farming appears, but it spreads quite slowly. Animal husbandry is confined to some of the bigger farms. Horse breeding develops substantially, and profitable milk and cheese processing develops in the region.

Tourism | Local entrepreneurs recognize the potentials of tourism, and diversified developments are launched to found it. They make use of state subsidies, and market participants attain a long-term advantage. There is serious competition between the local entrepreneurs, but it is still possible for them to cooperate against the external competitors.

Scenarios should also be formulated in their spatial dimension. Each scenario relates to a certain land use concept, a certain distribution of settlements, central place and infrastructure. If possible, a map should accompany each scenario (see the examples from Papenburg Region in Northern Germany on page 30).

At the end of this phase a decision must be taken on the preferred scenario. This is a very important juncture as it gives legitimacy to all subsequent steps in the development process.

When the scenarios are described, implicitly alternative paths from the current situation to a vision of a possible end situation are determined. Then a decision as to which path the micro-region will take to reach the future is necessary. The decision that must be made at this point is strongly influenced by subjective values. In this step of the planning process a workshop should take place, which includes representatives of all stakeholders. In this workshop the planning team presents alternative scenarios verbally and with visual aids. In these presentations the implications of the alternative scenarios for different target groups as well as the spatial implications must be made clear. It is usually helpful if the planning team presents the scenarios as drafts and requires from the workshop participants to form working groups and further develop these drafts and attempt to make them more concrete. Such creative participation on the part of decision-makers and representatives from the different target groups requires of course a great deal of didactic talent.

How can the preference decision itself be organised? How can the workshop participants reach a decision as to which alternative should become the basis for the micro-regional plan? A simple poll with a majority decision at the end of the local discussion is certainly not the best possibility. The difficulty lies on the one hand in enabling the participants to comprehend the extent to which a planning alternative relates to their own system of goals, and on the other hand to make the participants aware of the variety of possible implications which each scenario carries with it. One method, which helps the process of dissecting complex decisions and recomposing them, is the utility analysis. A simplified utility analysis can be integrated in the planning workshop and can be employed for the final evaluation of the alternative scenarios.
As a first step the participants assign weights to the most important development goals, e.g.

- improvement of living conditions
- generating more income in the micro-region
- decrease of unemployment
- protection of the environment
- protection of the cultural heritage.

In other words: Each participant assigns the weight according to his or her individual preferences.

In the second step the presented scenarios are assessed with regard to the attainment of goals. By this method, each workshop participant evaluates each alternative according to his or her goal preference system and decides for himself or herself, which variant has the highest value. This decision taking at a workshop provides a clear mandate to the planning team for all consequent steps of a micro-regional planning process.

Basically the sector strategies elaborated after the workshops comprise the description of the detailed paths from the current situation to the one described in the preferred scenario.

The Buják planning team used a simple form of utility analysis to facilitate the choice of the preferred scenario.
Scenario maps from Papenburg Region (Germany)

Scenario A: Strengthening of regional economic circuits

Scenario B: Economic development through nature conservation

Scenario C: Conservation of peat-bog and nature-based tourism

The areas shown in different shades of orange indicate the various categories of protected areas.
10. Elaboration of a development strategy

This phase describes the route that must be taken to reach the end state outlined in the preferred scenario. The strategy must name the required specific measures, their temporal sequence and the respective actors (that is the persons who are responsible for certain measures).

On the other hand there is usually more than one route to the same goal or the same desired end state. Therefore it may be appropriate to describe even several alternative development strategies. This should be done at least in a rough form.

It is recommended to break down the development strategy into sector-specific strategies for the main sectors of development such as

- agriculture
- agro-processing
- manufacture
- crafts
- social development
- infrastructure
- ...
- ...

Each sector strategy first defines the respective development goals (in line with the selected preference scenario) and sets overall priorities for the sector. Based on these priorities, sub-programmes with a set of more detailed activities or measures are identified. Care must be taken to select project activities that are expected to help in the attainment of the goals set for each sector.

Indicators will evaluate the results and impacts of planned development. The result indicators refer to the output of project implementation; the impact indicators refer to the wider and more complex effects of development on the social, economic and natural environment.
Typical structure of a sector strategy:

- Strategic goals
- Priority areas for intervention
- Sub-programmes
- Measures
- Result indicators
- Impact indicators

When the sector strategies have been completed, a synthesis in the form of an overall micro-regional development strategy should be attempted. This can best be done in the form of a map with an explanatory text. In essence, it is nothing more than a concrete and detailed elaboration of the preferred scenario.

The fundamental elements of the spatial development strategy are: the land use, the settlement pattern, important corridors of infrastructure, population distribution and distribution of manufacturing jobs. An example is the map of future land uses from the rural development plan for Buják region in Hungary.
Formulating a good development programme is not easy since micro-regional development is the sum of innumerable actors' actions. The decisions of government officials are part of it as well as the numerous daily activities of the individuals who live and work in the area – beginning with the decision of where to live, through the choice of transportation, all the way down to the question in which market, should a rural dweller buy or sell his or her goods. Ideally all these actions need to be forecast in a development strategy. In reality, the planner has to concentrate on the main elements. At the end the planner should cross-check whether the proposed development path strikes a balance between short-term and long-term goals and the interests of the most important actors within the micro-region. The so-called "triple win approach" may help in this cross-check.

**The "Triple Win Approach**

The triple win approach links three development objectives: (1) economy, (2) positive environmental impact, and (3) sound institutions. The triple win approach no longer aims for the maximum, but for the optimum. Triple win means compromising among these three objectives.

**Economy:**
- The main focus is on short-term economic interests (food security, regular income, efficient use of resources, etc.). Access to inputs (material, information, skill development) and to a market is a major component.

**Environmental impact:**
- Environmental impact focuses on long-term effects: e.g. sustainable use of natural resources, environmental protection, and agro biodiversity.

**Sound institutions:**
- These are characterised by keywords such as empowerment, social equity, responsibility, self-organisation, subsidiarity, private sector and public sector. Human and institutional development (HID) and strengthening crucial links in the institutional network are prominent development activities in this area.

11. Elaboration of project profiles and an action plan

This phase of the process is especially important since it bridges planning and implementation activities. In order to get rural development started, the long-term scenario and the medium-term strategy need to be broken down into implementable projects. The project profiles are the points of leverage to bring about development. At a later stage, some of the project profiles may be presented to potential funding agencies, either outside donors or national government agencies. Others may be passed to private investors (e.g. key projects in the tourism industry). Locally based NGOs or local associations may also implement some of the projects.

The elaboration of sector strategies may result in a long list of up to 50 or 100, in some cases even 200 individual projects, which are considered essential to ultimately fulfil a development vision and to attain the preference scenario. But at this stage it is important to select projects which:

- can be easily and quickly implemented
- yield short-term benefits
- are sustainable
- mobilise the target group.

A short list of not more than 30 projects should be selected at this stage. Sometimes it is also useful to make a distinction between short-term projects, which will show an immediate impact within one year, and key projects, which can be considered the main points of leverage.

All project profiles must be presented in the same structure. Usually the most important parameters for this format are:

- project title
- background/justification
- project goal
- expected results
- beneficiaries
- project description
- people responsible for the project/executing agency
- expected budget
- project resources
- schedule.

(For physical infrastructure projects a section on operation and maintenance should be included!)
And, of course, there are linkages and possible synergies between different projects. For example a carefully designed package of business promotion, training and improved transportation may lead to an overall impact, which is more than the arithmetic sum of individual project impacts. This must be considered in the final selection of a particular project package.

Obviously the choice of individual projects for a short-term plan of action is not a technical matter that the planning team can undertake by itself. Again, the active contributions of local decision-makers and target groups are extremely important. At the end of the phase, which deals with the elaboration of sector strategies, another workshop should be held with local stakeholders. Apart from presenting the sector strategy, this workshop can also be used to select and prioritise the list of project profiles to be elaborated.

Access to funding for development is a key issue for most rural areas in Central and Eastern Europe (just as in other parts of the world). Some local level projects do not require substantial funding, but rather the commitment of various local stakeholders. Others require considerable amounts of outside funding, either from central government agencies or donor funding. Professional planners may assist the micro-region in this regard. When elaborating the project profiles, great care must be taken to use realistic cost estimates. The data contained in such a project profile should enable the stakeholders in the micro-region to submit funding applications to national agencies or donors.
12. Follow-up and concluding remarks

What we have presented in this brochure is an innovative, flexible approach to micro-regional planning, whereby planning is understood as a communicative process involving many stakeholders and representatives of all actors. A key stage is the joint identification of potentials and development bottlenecks within the region. This analysis serves as the starting point for joint works on alternative development scenarios. By closely coordinating their activities, the actors are also able to develop short- and medium-term packages of measures that can help achieve jointly identified regional development targets.

In recent years considerable experience has been gained with this approach in Western Europe and in other parts of the world. But it is by no means the standard approach in all settings. There is a prevalent culture of top-down planning in many countries, particularly in Central and Eastern Europe. And sector ministries all over the world have the tendency to follow their own agenda, rather than aligning their priorities with a regional development vision.

Once a micro-region has gone through the entire planning process, more pertinent questions arise: What follows after the planning process? Who is in charge of implementation and continuous follow-up? Who co-ordinates the activities of the various stakeholders? Will there be some form of micro-regional governance?

More often than not framework conditions are not really commensurate with the real requirements of rural regional development. Ideally, a micro-regional development plan should be enacted as a legally binding document, which guides the priorities of all sector agencies. This would ensure smooth implementation of what has been conceived as the preferred scenario by the stakeholders in the micro-region. In addition, there should be some kind of micro-regional management as the co-ordinating agency for the implementation. But sadly enough, in most settings this does not exist.

But even where this legal framework does not exist, micro-regional planning has its place and can help bring about development.

There is a very simple justification for this: One has to start somewhere.
A process of micro-regional planning can be initiated by the ad-hoc decision of a group of local stakeholders to do something together. In many cases there is the common interest to jointly develop a specific potential of a small region, e.g. to develop the tourism potential, to market the local wine or some other typical local product. In other cases people get together to start land consolidation in an area that extends beyond the boundaries of an individual village. Getting started is important in rural regional development. More facets will be added to the process of joint planning at a later stage, and eventually the entire complexity of micro-regional planning may unfold.

This is equally true of the institutional context. If there is no micro-regional governance in charge of the planning area, some ad-hoc committee or an association of municipalities of the micro-region can be formed as a first step. This might even be one of the projects of the priority package. Over time a genuine form of micro-regional governance may evolve.

Towards micro-regional governance
Annex: A note on consultative workshops

We have stated time and again that participation of the target group is a must for good micro-regional planning. Different participatory methods may be applied. We have recommended methods from the PRA tool kit (Participatory Rural Appraisal) for the analysis phase. But participation of the target group must be a continuous process.

We recommend holding consultative workshops with the most important stakeholders at regular intervals (see the flowchart in chapter 7 of this introduction). But neither local politicians nor representatives of the rural population want to spend hours and days on end sitting in workshops, which do not yield any tangible results. Workshops must be well prepared, well facilitated and straight to the point. The methods used should also be participatory.

There should be dialogue, joint learning, no lectures or lengthy presentations by professionals and specialists. Interactive methods are always better than sector presentations. The good old blackboard has its clear disadvantages as a learning aid. It helps to visualise things, but once the text is wiped out, the information may be lost and cannot be revisited in the process. But even highly sophisticated methods, like showing GIS-based maps on a beamer (pc projector) are not any better per se. Presentation by beamer tends to enhance the one-way flow of information and sometimes even jeopardises the active involvement of participants. Sometimes it may be better to produce a scenario map as a rough sketch on a big sheet of paper, fix it with pins on a soft board and invite participants to use felt pens to improve and amend the scenario.

"Mobile visualisation" is the appropriate method for consultative workshops in micro-regional planning. Visualisation is important. We know that we can learn better, or remember things better if we do not only hear something, but if we also see it, either in written form or as a picture.

Speaking, hearing and seeing must be complemented, as much as possible, by acting. Normally, one remembers best if one has done something. Use should be made of all the senses and of all the talents of the participants. This is not always easy in the case
of micro-regional planning because a synthesis of sector strategies into an overall medium-term development strategy is something fairly abstract. And yet, local people can and must participate. By handing felt-tip pens to the local participants, by asking them to mark on a map their preferred locations for important infrastructure, the local people are made part of the process.

The interactive method, which is recommended for consultative workshops, is usually called "Mobile Visualisation" or "Metaplan".

The basic principle is that all essential information transmitted in the course of the workshop must be visualised in writing or graphic symbols or any kind of pictures which should be easily legible for the whole group. This approach can be used with groups of up to 30 members.

Workshop in Uzbekistan

The necessary materials are:

- flipchart paper
- felt pens (different colours)
- cardboard cards in different sizes and colours
- soft boards
- pins
- brown paper to cover the soft boards
- masking tape, scissors, adhesive dots
In the course of a workshop all important ideas will be either written on cardboard cards or on the flipchart. During the discussion, the cards are fixed by pins to permit a mobile visualisation, making necessary changes of arrangement easier. At the end of the round of discussion, the boards are completed and then the cards are glued onto the brown paper in order to transport and to preserve the visualised comments.

The advantage over the blackboard is that charts may be kept until the end of the event and that one can always return to the preceding subject.

Visualisation, as some authors have put it, constitutes an external memory in which all the ideas, questions and answers dealt with during the event are stored. It offers an overview of the entire discussion.

- Visualisation should be legible and visible for all participants.
- Visualisation does not speak for itself; it only supports the oral expression.
- In order to increase the effectiveness of a two-way communication, it is essential to have small groups. Therefore, discussion should take place for the main part in working groups. Whenever the number of workshop participants is above 20 or 30 alternation between plenary and group session is recommended.