

ROLE OF SPATIAL PLANNING TOOLS AT MESO-LEVEL IN THE MANAGEMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES IN AFRICA, LESSONS LEARNT FROM AFRICAN COUNTRIES.

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Abstract

The increasing deterioration of natural resources across resource-rich Africa has posed many policy and governance challenges. Although the role of spatial planning tools in natural resource management is globally acknowledged, the importance, strengths and weaknesses of applying these tools in African countries has yet to be explored in the scientific literature. Furthermore, although the literature highlights national and local level analysis, there is very little work at meso level, which is the intermediate level between the national and the local practice levels on the administrative scale, and can, for example, be translated as the scale of the river catchment etc. Against this background, this paper tries to combine these two gaps in knowledge by addressing the question: How can spatial tools be used at meso level to enhance multi-level governance? Tools for spatial planning can be used in a comprehensive planning process to analyze and/or evaluate data to support decision-making and make decisions for the use of natural resources which are more transparent for stakeholders and the public, and facilitate communication and negotiation between different actors. They can include maps, indicators, geographic information system (GIS), decision support system (DSS), monitoring, models, multi-criteria analysis (MCA), trade-off analysis or strengths-weaknesses-opportunities-threats (SWOT) analysis. These tools can help increase the understanding of multi-sector and multi-level processes and trade-offs between policy objectives of different sectors and between different scales.

The initial review of the case studies (the head waters of Blue Nile in Ethiopia, Inner Niger Delta in Mali, Rwenzori Mountains/Albertine Rift in Uganda, Oum Zesser Watershed in Tunisia, and Drakensberg in South Africa) reveals that there are limited information available on the role of spatial planning tools in natural resources management. The main challenge in nature resource management in the case studies is the conflicting interests of different sectors and at the same time the absence or lack of implementation of spatial plans. For instance in the case of South Africa, spatial plans does exist but the implementation remains a challenges. In other cases the meso-scale is skipped in planning and only spatial plans at national and local levels are available. The application of spatial planning tools for the natural resources, particularly at the meso scale can possibly address issues of sectoral integration, avoidance of conflict and resource overuse, etc.

Biography

Masoom Hamdard, the presenter is currently working at UNESCO-IHE, Institute for Water Education, Beside teaching environmental planning and policy subjects, Mr. Hamdard is also involved in a number of research projects. Amongst others AFROMAISON a European funded project for the management of natural resources in Africa is one of the ongoing research projects which is also linked to his PhD. Prior to commencing his job at UNESCO-IHE, Hamdard was working on environmental management matters in Afghanistan for the World Bank. Mr. Hamdard has visited several countries for project and research mainly in Africa, Asia and Europe.