



PART I

MULTI-LEVEL ANALYSIS OF URBAN AND SPATIAL DEVELOPMENT IN TERMS OF POLICIES AND PROCESSES

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FOREWORD: FRAMING THE VERTICAL OF THIS SPECIAL ISSUE

1. OPENING REMARKS

‘Think globally, act locally’ – this well-known phrase has become synonymous for the sustainability move launched by the Rio Declaration in 1992. The 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) (UN 2015) and the New Urban Agenda (UN 2017) underline the crucial role of cities and communities, as

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well as sub-national stakeholders in promoting the SDGs. Therefore, it seems indispensable that a common understanding across all levels of governance shall be achieved with regards to the necessary monitoring and implementation steps. This is what is to be understood as ‘verticalisation:’ pursuing the approach of the SDGs is a question of (i) applying appropriate research methods, data and indicators, and (ii) addressing policies in the same way as integrating stakeholders and thus following adequate processes and references (Wong *et al.*, 2021; Alibašić, 2017).

Against this background, it seems indispensable, however, to leave the familiar path of ‘business as usual’ – a singular, un-networked and incompatible action format and perspective – and team the knowledge of individual actors and empirically substantial on-site studies before launching or even establishing corresponding urban and spatial observation mechanisms and systems (Zhang, 2017; BBSR, 2022). The United Nations agreed upon guiding and framing political documents in order to install permanently such cross-hierarchical or verticalised networks and monitoring environments aiming at a broad impact. Pioneering initiatives of cross-vertical cooperation embracing all hierarchies thus exist. In addition, numerous single strategies, definitions, and measuring approaches for urban development are in place for cities and communities of all sizes and geographical locations.

This special issue gathers scholars and decision-makers from different countries and geographies in order to discuss specific place-sensitive, as well as people and institution-oriented ways of cross-vertical cooperation and verticalised multi-level monitoring systems. In that respect, the editors and authors of this special issue add to the verticalising approach the multi-level approach by asking the questions: which patterns and impacts on the micro, meso and macro levels may be analysed? Which benefits does a cross-vertical cooperation create? Which solutions may be transferred to another policy regime and/or geographies? All articles of this special issue address at least one of these methodological, empirical, and policy-relevant questions of multi-level analysis.

2. CONNECTING THE VOLUME PAPERS TO THE TOPIC OF THIS SPECIAL ISSUE

This framing article by Antonia Milbert and André Mueller aims at providing readers with some guidance in experiencing this special issue and connecting its papers to the topic of multi-level analysis of urban and spatial development.

Antonia Milbert, André Mueller, Debolina Kundu and Pragya Sharma on *Verticalising the multi-level analysis of urban and spatial development across geographies* open this special issue and explore the topic on the basis of analytical work, which was conducted between 2018 and 2023 in the framework of a re-

search cooperation between the Federal Institute for Research on Building, Urban Affairs and Spatial Development (BBSR) within the Federal Office for Building and Regional Planning (BBR) in Bonn / Berlin and the National Institute of Urban Affairs (NIUA) in New Delhi. The joint analytical work aimed at taking a scientific perspective on data-based multi-level analysis of urban and spatial development and agreeing upon common indicators that are suitable for national and subnational alike, as well as regional and local levels within an international framework. Their article detects and reveals the pitfalls of verticalised monitoring of the SDGs for each geography – Germany, but also Europe, and India – and draws an overall conclusion for research and policy in terms of concrete data work.

Robert Ndugwa and Dennis Mwaniki on *A global perspective on the value of multi-level analysis as an enabler for achieving SDGs* take the second place in this volume in order to illustrate and discuss the analytical work of the Data and Analytics Session of UN HABITAT. Their daily analytical work focuses, amongst others, on the notion of ‘leave no one behind’ and measures, for example, the accessibility of Services of General Interest. In pursuing this aim, their Global Urban Observatory applies remote data transmission to measure in an exemplary mode this access for a population. Their call for respectively standardised indicators includes also the request of a common understanding of what a city, community or settlement is in terms of statistics and based, for example, on the built-up area. The SDG 11 on Sustainable Cities and Communities is thus key for their analytical work. Despite the challenges related to Big Data, they also stress the need for data that is collected on a voluntary basis. Citizens Sciences seems to be a notion familiar with the United Nations and their organisation services.

Oliver Peters and Henrik Scheller on the *Adding value by national reporting to sustainability approaches of the local-regional level* are the third in the row of articles. Their draw on their data-based experiences made in working with cities and communities of different sizes and geographical locations in Germany while developing in cooperation with the BBSR the first National Progress Report of Germany on the Implementation of the New Urban Agenda of the United Nations. This report is supposed to be a blueprint of integrating local perspectives on sustainability into national reporting mechanisms. Despite its ‘success’ the authors also indicate its limits. With regards to further research needed, they underline the necessity of combining quantitative and qualitative approaches in analysing and monitoring the development of cities, communities, and territories. An orientation towards data is thus to be accompanied by a guidance of local-regional development principles.

Marco Kellenberger on *Multi-level territorial monitoring in Switzerland as a case in federalism and multi-polarity* closes the series of articles attributed to analytical tools and monitoring systems in the broader context of a single nation, groups of nations or the globe. The author links the notion of territorial or spatial monitoring of sustainable development to the specific constitutional framework conditions of a federally organised country as Switzerland is and where cities and

communities are autonomous. The author illustrates the thereby defined roles of the institutions and their way of working in order to turn the notion of sustainable development into an endeavour of everybody. A multi-level analysis of urban and spatial development would thus become rather a multi-polar approach.

Philipp Gareis and Christian Diller on *Identifying exurbs: A multi-criteria approach for Germany* are the first ones in the second series of special issue articles dealing with the added value of multi-level analysis of urban and spatial development for the practice in research, planning, and policy. The English-American phenomenon of exurbs – areas which are neither urban nor suburban – may obviously also be identified in Germany in the sense of a multi-level analysis of urban and spatial development. If this migratory move, by applying the same multi-criteria set, is also be retraceable in Germany, what this would mean for policy and planning. The authors have thrown the first stone into the water of discussion and are looking forward to receiving feedback and resonance.

Andrea Jonas and André Mueller on the *Impact of learning city networks on multi-level urban development and transformation processes* finally draw on experiences having been made for more than a decade in hands-on urban laboratories across the Atlantic Ocean in this second series of articles and thus close the entire special issue. D4UC has become synonymous with a form of transatlantic cooperation of cities and communities that is unique. City pairs and city peers on both sides of the Atlantic Ocean, but also in other countries, support each other in the daily administrative and urban planning work. Which are these unique characteristics? Would they last for long or are they just ‘à la mode’? Is the cooperation of cities and communities of different cultural backgrounds helpful in striving for multi-level analytical and implementation approaches to sustainable urban and spatial development and attaining respective goals?

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