BioValue

Fundamental Understandings in BioValue

POLICY NOTE ON THE GENERIC SPATIAL PLANNING PROCESS AND INTEGRATION OF INSTRUMENTAL PERSPETIVES

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Date 2024.07.26

Funded by the European Union

1. Technical references

Project Acronym	BIOVALUE
Project Title	Biodiversity Value in Spatial Policy and Planning: Leveraging Multi-level Transformative Change
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Project Duration	July 2022 – June 2025 (36 months)

Deliverable No.	n.a.
Dissemination level*	Public
Work Package	WP6
Task	T6.2 – Scientific Coordination
Lead beneficiary	IST-ID
Contributing beneficiary/ies	n.a
Due date of deliverable	n.a.
Actual submission date	26 july 2024

* PU = Public

PP = Restricted to other programme participants (including the Commission Services)

RE = Restricted to a group specified by the consortium (including the Commission Services)

CO = Confidential, only for members of the consortium (including the Commission Services)

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1. Introduction

The purpose of this policy note in BioValue is to help partners, and respective teams, to have a common understanding regarding what is expected to be achieved in BioValue. Moving towards the end of the project, it is important to have everyone on the same page for a successful achievement of BioValue objectives and expected outcomes. Let's remind:

BioValue main goal: to safeguard and enhance biodiversity through transformative change in spatial policymaking, planning practices and infrastructures development, upscaling opportunities for valuing biodiversity (DoA).

BioValue approach: adopt three complementary instrumental perspectives relevant to spatial planning processes (Spatial Planning and Management Instruments (SP&MI), Environmental Assessment Instruments (EAI) and Economic and Financing Instruments (E&FI)), individually and in combined action, as lens to investigate how biodiversity is being considered in spatial planning decision-making processes across different levels and how this can be improved (DoA).

BioValue outcomes: accelerate change in spatial policy and planning that has a positive impact on biodiversity (DoA).

Focus of BioValue: spatial planning, policies and activities.

Two main aspects are highlighted in this document:

1- The definition of a generic spatial planning process that enables all partners, in all geographies and levels, or scales, of action, to have a background process to support their analysis, whether when working with any of the instrumental perspectives, or when working in arenas for transformation.
2- The elaboration on the expected role of each of the three instruments used in BioValue, both in relation to its individual role and in relation to its integrated action in the spatial planning process.

2. The generic cyclical spatial planning process

2.1. Spatial Planning Process

Despite the existence of some generic theoretical schemes in planning books published in the 20th century, there is no single scheme to describe a universal spatial planning process in practice. Territories, and communities, to which spatial planning applies, have their specificities, as well as development and decision cultures, and even legal and governance systems, which establish different requirements. However, in a simplified way, it is possible to identify the key stages and activities that illustrate what a spatial planning process entails, with perhaps variable terminologies.

The spatial planning process (Figure 1) is within the competence of public or private administrations/governments at multiple levels and describes a sequence of various stages where pertinent spatial planning activities take place. The sequence can be interrupted by feed-backs where circumstances require a re-analysis or jumps forward where changes in one stage may require implementation or evaluation for example. The process should be continuous in time and cyclical, with variable time scales and interconnections across different stages of the process. Depending on each case, the spatial planning process will have different feed-back loops across the cycle.

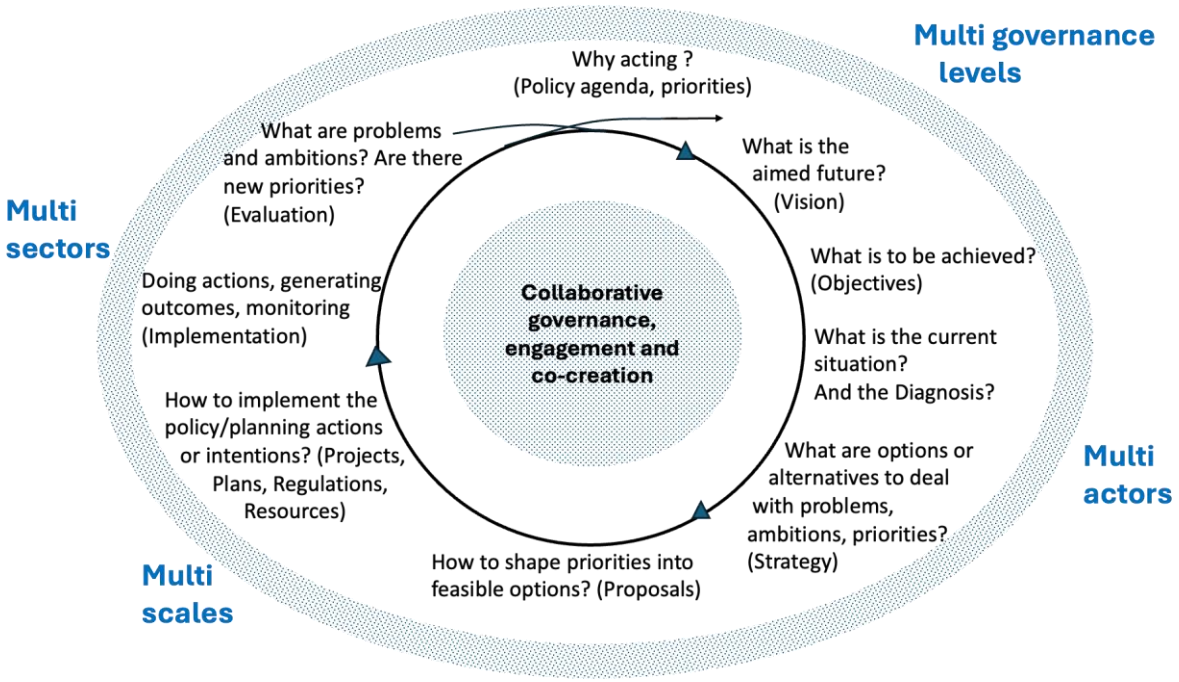

Figure 2.A generic representation of the cyclical spatial planning process

Collaborative governance, engagement and co-creation – this dimension is central in the spatial planning process. The complexity inherent to spatial planning results from multiple perspectives represented by multi-actors and multi-sectors, their interests, ambitions and priorities, as well as their different perception about what is, and what is not a problem. This dimension often tends to be rejected or minimized in spatial planning processes because it is either very politicized, or it is a threat to the exercise of hierarchical power. It is often seen as inefficient (time-consuming to establish agreements and go through several processes of negotiation) and requiring skills to establish collaborative processes. However increasingly communities and stakeholders recognize the right to participate and defend their values and their interests. It is also increasingly recognized that in complex systems collaborative processes, and the enablement of co-creation, can help to deal with complexity.

Policy agenda - Ideally a spatial planning process should be triggered by the recognition of a strategic, ample defined problem. The problem may be identified from past events that were evaluated in the previous planning cycle in that same territory, but usually it needs to be also anchored in environmental, social or sectoral policy agendas and priorities that have been broadly set or defined specifically for the same territory. The problem may also arise due to the perception of upcoming challenges or the need to change current policies or planning instruments. The spatial planning process should then establish its own policy agenda, and priorities, to drive future development.

Vision - Good practice suggests that a vision on what is aimed in the future be collectively established. Such vision acts as the referential of what is intended so that the spatial planning objectives, priorities and activities be established to meet that vision in the future – could be a 10 to 50 years long term vision, very rarely is longer than that. Uncertainty is part of the equation and therefore the construction of the vision can involve very different approaches and methodologies, and the construction of scenarios of various types. The vision should be seriously defined and eventually be taken across the cycles of planning, adapted to what are evolving priorities.

Objectives - The objectives of spatial planning set what is to be achieved. The objectives need to be consistent with the policy agenda and with the vision, as established. As a matter of fact, these three stages – policy agenda, vision, objectives - can be developed simultaneously to ensure coherence. It is crucial however to ensure their identity, that their different roles in the spatial planning processes are recognized, as they are complementary to each other and not redundant. Their clear statement is very important to drive subsequent stages and to inform the spatial plan-making processes of different types of plans and geographical scales.

Current situation and diagnosis – the characterization of a current situation, and its diagnosis, is the spatial planning activity that sets the baseline for subsequent spatial planning activities. Following the adoption of the generic spatial planning objectives, the characterization of the current situation is an important starting point in the process of making the spatial plan. The purpose is to collect data and develop an analysis of different territorial parameters and variables to understand what the current situation is, what was the evolution across a given time scale, how much did it change from previous baselines, and how did we get there. The characterization and analysis are important to build a diagnosis which will provide the explanations concerning the

nature and causes of the existing situation and the appropriate identification of territorial problems, which often have a high level of complexity and interdependence. So, more than a description of the existing situation that we can get with a characterization, it is fundamental to understand the why that situation exists by identifying the causes of problems. An active monitoring function can enable greater efficiency at this stage. This is crucial to support the subsequent planning proposals and actions.

Strategy – Given the characterization and analysis conducted on the current situation, and the achieved diagnosis, time is needed to question about the options and alternatives to deal with the identified problems, ambitions and priorities that we identified in the policy agenda, vision and objectives. This stage is fundamental as a moment of collective reflection on the problems identified, its causes, and discussion about what possible ways can be explored to resolve what is not well, but also allow ambitions to be planned for, and priorities to move towards. The strategy provides a direction towards the achievements of the established vision and objectives. It aims to provide a first technical-policy mix response to the problems identified in the diagnosis. The definition of a strategy should be done before concrete solutions are proposed so that the strategy results from a reflection process and not from biased intentions that will foreclose other possible options. The common practice is that strategies, often confused with planning streamlined actions, are built based on concrete ideas and sometimes projects, which limits opportunities to find solutions that could have less costs or be more sustainable. That is why often land use and land change are inappropriate, such as when land take leads to loss of biodiversity, as the needed reflection about what is intended in the future has been absent of the spatial planning process.

Proposals – Building on the strategic pathways defined, it is time to shape priorities into feasible options. Such options of development should be discussed within an assessment or evaluation process to better decide on which options to follow, well informed by possible consequences. In real life this is often where spatial planning begins. It often starts by making planning instruments, as the need for changes in planning often result from the need to create planning space to make intended projects viable. And for that purpose, planning instruments are needed to formalize development proposals. If previous stages (policy agenda, vision, objectives and strategy) have been successful than there will be sufficient critical mass to lead to proposals that can address the problems and priorities identified. And which can be strategic for the achievement of spatial planning and development objectives. But real life shows that spatial planning processes are often triggered by projects that are very close to completion but need the planning context to be approved and proceed to implementation.
The formalization of plans and projects is an essential activity of the planning process, bearing in mind their approval (notably political approval within local, regional or central administrations, corporations, other private entities) and their public disclosure for reasons of transparency in the governance process. There are also informal planning activities that may involve other types of actions or instruments. Spatial planning instruments allow the implementation of spatial development proposals for the territory, which aim to solve previously identified problems, to establish commitments between the various levels of decision-making, and to regulate and guide the action of private entities and landowners. There are several types of spatial planning instruments, including regulatory (e.g., plans, projects, environmental assessments), financial (e.g., permits, procurement, taxes) or soft planning instruments (e.g., agreements, platforms,

competition). All these planning instruments contribute to integrating knowledge and giving coherence to proposals.

Implementation – Proposals in a spatial planning process can be implemented through those previously identified planning instruments. Implementation also needs resources, both technical and financial resources. This stage is crucial to identify the forms of implementation and seek the conditions for implementation to happen. Also, in real life very often the forms of implementation can be identified at earlier stages in the spatial planning process, such as during the setting of the policy agenda and objectives. There are multiple activities at this stage: doing actions, generating outcomes, feed-back to previous stages, monitoring of the spatial planning process. The monitoring function is crucial to adapt the plan to the evolving reality, to correct the course of action (trajectory) and to make the necessary adaptations to the process and its instruments. It implies systematic and regular collection of data/information and its evaluation, considering reference data and benchmarks, and above all, the spatial planning objectives.
It is perhaps the stage with the largest time duration during the spatial planning process. It is also the stage where more feed-backs and interconnections are established with other spatial planning stages. The starting point of this stage is the approval of the plan, as spatial planning and management instrument, to be made effective for implementation.

Evaluation – This stage takes stock on the implementation stage and evaluates what are identified problems and ambitions, dissecting the priorities to be considered in a subsequent spatial planning cycle. The ongoing monitoring and evaluation process that has been put in place is crucial to inform this post-evaluation stage that can also act as ex-ante evaluation for the next cycle. Concrete instruments that report on this evaluation are very useful to stand as sources of information and data for the subsequent cycles and to justify the need to start a new cycle, extensively review existing planning instruments or develop new ones.

2.2. Multi-dimensions in spatial planning

The spatial planning process takes place in a multiple dimensional context, illustrated in figure 2. There are multiple decision levels that embrace multiple governance systems, with vertical and with horizontal organizational structures. The vertical structures invoke local, regional, national and supra-national levels of decision-making where different organizations display different competences, responsibilities and instruments that operate in an interconnected, and often hierarchical, way. The horizontal structures also invoke various organizations, public or private, but in a same level of decision-making, with hierarchical or non-hierarchical connections.

The spatial planning process is also described as operating in a multi-actor (different types of social groups and individuals representing various interests) and multi-sector (usually different economic and administrative sectors of activity) contexts, that require the definition of physical and time boundaries and different scales upon which the operationalization of spatial planning, and its outcomes, can be expressed (Figure 2).

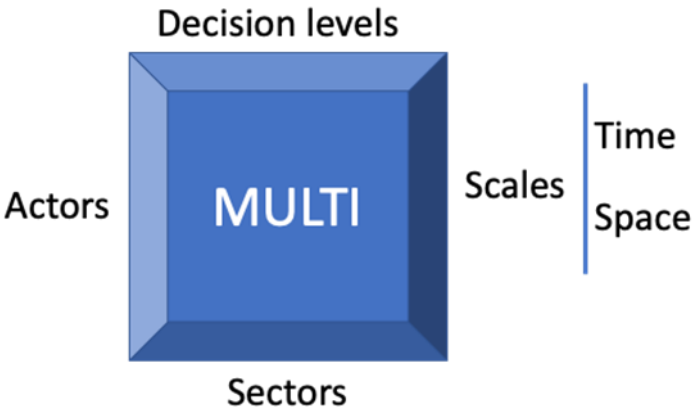

Figure 3.Multi-dimensional context in spatial planning

3. Three instrumental perspectives to be used in spatial planning to enhance biodiversity value

This section elaborates on the role of each instrument individually and in a collective way.

A very important starting point is to recognize that **BioValue main focus is spatial planning**, its policies, decisions and activities in upscaling opportunities for valuing biodiversity. Therefore, the focus of BioValue is not biodiversity, and how to measure biodiversity gains or losses, but instead biodiversity must be seen as the consequent beneficiary of BioValue action and outcomes.

Reports from the OECD and IPBES have highlighted the significant **impact of land use and cover change on biodiversity loss**. Land use and cover change are normally foreseen in spatial plans, formulated during the spatial planning process, and in the plan-making process. The last century revealed the dominant role of spatial planning in opening space for urbanization. It was only after the 1970's that spatial planning seriously adopts a biophysical dimension to value natural assets, but the trend has been slow when compared to the change in land cover as a result of the urbanization trend. The biophysical component in spatial planning is currently still a complement, land take being dominated by the urbanization mentality. But spatial planning is also often a consequence of the incompetent way in which spatial plans manage land use dynamics, or even spatial plans may be absent in such land use and cover change decisions.

BioValue aims to **strategically address the causes of the impact** of land use and cover change on biodiversity loss, not the consequences. That means addressing the paradigms, goals and values that shape current spatial dynamics, by a mix of sectoral, implicit or explicit, policies that determine the priorities of future land uses. As such in BioValue we take as causes of biodiversity loss not the actions resulting from land use change per se, but instead the policies, the assumptions, the philosophy that assist the practice of spatial planning and which determine the nature and type of decisions and activities (the indirect drivers identified by IPBES, and one of the prerequisites for focus in the call within which BioValue is funded, the cluster of Transformative Change for Biodiversity).

The outcomes of spatial planning over the past decades have been significant land use change with consequences for biodiversity linked to fragmentation and land take, transforming natural settings into modified, artificial settings. We need to change this outcome **by changing the mentality of policy and decision-makers, and the way decisions are taken**.

The second point to highlight is that the approach adopted by BioValue is quite unique among the 11 Horizon European-funded projects in the cluster on *Transformative Change and Biodiversity*. BioValue chose to **address transformative change in spatial planning**, using three complementary instrumental perspectives. That means the need to explore the transformative potential of spatial planning, but also of each of the three instruments selected when used in the

context of spatial planning. And established that these instruments could operate individually and in combined action.

That said it results that BioValue needs to investigate (DoA):

- The potential for transformative change in spatial planning and management instruments within spatial planning
- The potential for transformative change in environmental assessment instruments within spatial planning
- The potential for transformative change in economic and financial instruments within spatial planning
- How each of the instruments individually, and in combined action, can lead spatial planning to have a transformative change potential towards upscaling opportunities for valuing biodiversity

In the earlier days of BioValue we investigated how **each of the three instrumental perspectives** were being used in spatial planning in relation to enhance biodiversity:

In WP1 the European spatial planning landscape was revised, and policy directions in spatial planning benchmarked. WP1 further explored innovative spatial planning and policy tools for mainstreaming biodiversity and explored ecosystem services to mainstream biodiversity value in spatial planning, considering the mitigation hierarchy process based on the "no-net loss concept".

WP2 benchmarked and systematized best practices in contributing to biodiversity in spatial planning with EIA and SEA as main EA instruments. WP2 builds a causal-map tool of cause-effect relations and biodiversity mitigation hierarchy connected to SP&MI. WP2 further explored the causal mechanisms in spatial policy and planning, used in EIA and SEA, to understand how these might be improved to enhance its role in generating transformative actions in spatial planning for biodiversity.

WP3 screened which economic and financial instruments can best be applied within spatial planning processes along the mitigation hierarchy on biodiversity, and their impact, or capacity to enhance processes that valorise biodiversity. WP3 further analysed the EU sustainable finance strategy from the perspective of the spatial policy and planning.

It is expected that the outcomes of these tasks will be providing the **arenas for transformation** with the necessary tools to allow experimenting how influential each of the instruments can be in valuing biodiversity in the spatial planning processes in Mafra, in Trento and in the Meck-Pomm in terms of their individual action, in other words, exploring the transformative potential capacity of each instrument to create transformative change in spatial planning. That means using each instrument to:

- ensure that the ecosystems services approach, and other possible mechanisms, are used as tools in **SP&MI** to integrate biodiversity as a trigger of a new form of spatial planning; that means use spatial planning to be the driver of land use change by identifying where to change, why (the focus

on the indirect drivers) and how much to change, and even where past changes can be reverted to allow new types of land use where benefits can be accrued from existing biodiversity values;
- allow **EAI** to assist spatial planning in exploring different spatial planning options, in terms of types of land uses, and land cover changes that enhance opportunities for biodiversity, adjusting where to make land cover changes, where to revert to natural systems, where to consider the intensity of change, based on contextual realities, exploring different possibilities that result in improved outcomes for biodiversity;
- expand existing, or formulate new, **E&FI** that can provide incentives and disincentives, to motivate new values and behavioural changes of various actors towards enhancing biodiversity in their land use planning, programming or project decisions.

Once the transforming capacities of each individual instruments are recognized and tested, **their collective action** is an integrated consequence of their fluidity with transformative objectives. SP&MI initiates the formulation of innovative land use proposals which are shared with EAI to consider the benefits for biodiversity values, fine tuning in an iterative and collaborative way to find the options that best serve the transformative objectives. E&FI supports this process in two ways: 1) by integrating the financial programme in the SP&MI, creating incentives for spatial planning biodiversity driven actions and desincentives to solutions that lead to biodiversity loss; and 2) by assisting the dialogue between the SP&MI and EAI in creating positive solutions to enhance biodiversity and help to demonstrate the increased value for investors in the medium to long-term.

BioValue could expect to reveal such process in the outcomes of the arenas for transformation, which concurrently should also reveal what are **bottlenecks and impediments to such streamlined process** (see revised D4.2), and which conditions need to be put in place to allow this process to be successful. And this is to be included in the final deliverable of WP1, WP2 and WP3.

4. Conclusions

As we approach the end of the project, please consider this document as a reference to harmonize core elements in BioValue. In the months ahead there will be a more intensive interaction with the arenas for transformation to explore how the arenas have been using the three instrumental perspectives, in their spatial planning, to enhance biodiversity values.

We want to understand what has been the current role played by each of the three instruments (SP&MI, EAI and E&FI), and if they are being used individually or in some form of combination, whether complementary or in an integrated way. And we also want to learn how they can be better used in the future, preferably in an integrated way to boost each individual instruments capacities to meet the objectives of transformative change.

The work approaching will be crucial for the preparation of the final deliverables that need to be ready by month 30.

I hope that this policy note in BioValue will clarify and help to accelerate the work ahead.