

Strategic planning, regional governance and regional identity building in Prešov region

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Strategic Planning, Regional Governance and Regional Identity Building in Prešov Region. This article describes how four strategic planning initiatives in Prešov region relate to regional identity building and regional governance, and to the vertical integration of strategic planning at national, regional, sub-regional and local scales. The plans are read as records of an institutionalising process, the product of which is the creation of a lasting collaborative relationship between actors. The importance of strategic planning as a governance tool was accentuated by the conjuncture of the advent of regional self-government and the accession of Slovakia to the EU, which prompted a reform (and a partial decentralisation) of regional policy. The case studies indicate that a bottom-up, endogenous approach to local and regional strategic planning has predominated, but there is little will to harmonise local and regional development perspectives. The coordinating function which regional authorities are supposed to assume has been a difficult challenge for them, as they confront a crisis of legitimacy. Alternative regionalisations and regionalisms thus coexist in the same or overlapping spaces. This could be interpreted positively, as a sign of regional identity building and adaptability, but only if a greater degree of connectivity were present could Prešov become a 'learning region'. *Sociológia* 2006, Vol. 38 (No. 6: 483-506)

Keywords: *strategic planning; governance; regionalisation; regionalism; institutional region; social learning; endogenous development*

Introduction: the potential of strategic planning in a new European Union member state

This article is based on an analysis of four strategic planning processes in Prešov region between 1999 and 2005. The aim is to assess the degree to which they have impacted upon regional governance procedures and capacities in the region and its sub-regions, and the quality of vertical integration between regional and sub-regional planning. The context for the analysis is the institutionalisation of regional self-government in Slovakia after 2001. This in turn generates a hypothesis, grounded in experience from other European countries, that strategic planning takes on a legitimacy-seeking function in newly-established regions (Amdam, R., 2003). There has been a general trend in European territorial (regional and spatial) strategic planning towards planning as a communicative social process aimed at building strategic capacities, generating informational resources, and formulating strategic visions with persuasive power, capable of mobilising and coordinating a broad range of actors in a relationship of mutual

dependency and commitment (Faludi, A. – Korthals Altes, W., 1994; Albrechts, L. – Healey, P. – Kunzmann, K., 2003; Wiechmann, T., 2003). Strategic planning is thus understood here as the formulation and application of comprehensive and sustainable development plans and the establishment of accompanying governance arrangements that are effective and legitimate.

Four conjunctural factors accentuate the importance of strategic planning activities in Slovakia:

- the social and economic restructuring of the post-communist era (which foregrounds a strategic choice between change and continuity for territorial communities);
- civic and municipal entrepreneurialism (the formation of various types of association with direct or indirect relevance to region-building);
- public service reform and administrative decentralisation in the early 2000s (the transfer of competences for a range of public services from the national state and its agencies to elected local and regional government, which was in part intended to stimulate a 'rationalisation' of service delivery using novel contractual arrangements, especially public-private partnership and the pooling of services at a supra-municipal scale²);
- the 2004 accession of Slovakia to the European Union (which creates important financial incentives to partnership working and strategic planning, subjects Slovak actors to the policy framework of the Structural Funds, and also has a more indirect influence, insofar as Slovakia is more affected by Europe-wide trends in planning discourses, including the 'communicative shift' referred to above).

It is important to acknowledge at the outset the presence in Slovak public discourse of various alternative regionalising projects, contested by political interests since the early 1990s. In common with most political contests of that era, at stake were different interpretations of the role of the state in society. The legacy of that battle is apparent from the first sub-heading under 'Public service reform' on the website of the government commissioner for public service decentralisation, which simply states that "Public service reform is changing the character of the state."³ Transposed spatially, the struggle was and is between the polarities of centralisation and decentralisation. The triumph of the 8-region model in 2001 meant that certain elements of the centralised administration established in 1996 by the Mečiar government survive even after the transfer of

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² According to the 2001 Conception for the decentralisation and modernisation of public services, "Among the benefits of a decentralised system of public services are: ... the opportunity for the local coordination of services and investments in joint problem-solving between the public, private and non-governmental sectors" (Nižňanský, V., 2001). The document later gives a typology of partnerships that the reform process is designed to encourage.

³ www.vlada.gov.sk/decentralizacia/reforma.php, accessed 19/4/05

self-governing powers⁴. This interpretation is justified because of the regions' weakness and dependency in fiscal and competence terms, and because of a mismatch between historical, functional or associational regions on the one hand, and administrative units on the other.

This problem is common to much of Central Europe. The Danube Space Study, a spatial planning document covering seven countries, criticises the fact that "some ... territorial units by no means reflect interregional functional relations". Yet it adds: "this is especially true for the NUTS III regions of the Slovak Republic" (EC DG: Regional Policy, 2000, p. 32). The area where natural regions are least respected is eastern Slovakia, above all the border between Košice and Prešov regions, which cuts across two natural regions (Zemplín and Spiš); as a result large areas of eastern Slovakia are a long way away from any administrative centre (Sloboda, D. – Dostál, O., 2005)⁵, while several important functional urban areas straddle an administrative boundary, including the three most important agglomerations in eastern Slovakia according to the Slovak Spatial Development Perspective (MŽP SR 2001, p. 43). The eight regions were demarcated (in 1996) for the needs of the civil service, with scant regard for criteria such as economic functionality or the 'genius loci' of a region (Tej, J., 2002, p. 122). It is difficult for territories to function as self-governing units without these qualities: in particular, the potential to mobilise social capital associated with 'bottom-up' regionalisation (through various actor networks) is compromised within the new administrative system. The record low turnout for the second set of elections to regional parliaments in November and December 2005 suggests that Slovak regions have yet to establish themselves in public opinion as democratically legitimate political communities.

One of the responsibilities of Slovak regional authorities is regional planning, in the interests of which they are required to "produce, approve and regularly evaluate the application of a regional economic and social development programme" as a medium-term programming document (Zákon č. 503 z 18. októbra 2001 o podpore regionálneho rozvoja.). This is in addition to any Regional Operational Programme (ROP) required for participation in the EU Structural Funds: these relate to a higher geographical scale, since the Slovak

regional authorities cover areas equivalent to Eurostat's NUTS III level, whereas ROPs are produced for NUTS II regions. The same law also defines social and economic development programmes as a self-governing power of local authorities "for the all round development of their territory and satisfaction of the needs of inhabitants".

Selection of case studies and research methods⁶

Partly in order to minimise the distorting effects of the above aspects of Slovak regionalisation, the case studies examined here are from a 'natural' region (Šariš⁷) that forms the core of the Prešov administrative region. This sub-region is characterised by a high level of historical, cultural and functional integration and contains the regional capital and largest urban centre. In addition to the regional economic and social development programme, three sub-regional strategies from Šariš are analysed, all from territorial communities within the former Sabinov district (a district strategy and those of the two main towns, Sabinov and Lipany). The development strategies of the other district towns of Prešov region are also briefly summarised for comparative purposes. Data was gathered via a mixture of documentary retrieval and analysis, some limited participant observation⁸ and interviews with representatives of the key organisations in each planning context. A list of interviews conducted is given below.

The 'institutional region'

An international study of 'spatial peripherality' implicates governance⁹ as a factor of growing importance in the reproduction of core-periphery relations between regions (the assumption is that spatial factors may be as or more important than traditional locational factors in explaining regional economic performance). One particular hypothesis advanced was that

successful regional governance requires common vision and collective sense in order to attain appropriate goals that have been discussed and collectively defined in

⁴ 'Decentralisers', including civic activists, territorial and minority interests (notably eastern regions and ethnic Hungarians) and political liberals have generally favoured a larger number, such as the 16-region model elaborated by Minarovič et al for the City Mayors' Club of Slovakia (1993) or the 12-region model proposed by Viktor Nižňanský (the government commissioner for public service reform) and approved by the government in 2001. This was outvoted in parliament when two parties of the coalition broke ranks (Nižňanský, V., 2001). The main arguments in favour of a larger number relate to the greater functional and historical integrity of the regions proposed.

⁵ Especially problematic, according to the commissioner for public service reform, is "the lack of a regional centre between Žilina and Prešov – that region [Spiš] needs a degree of administrative autonomy" ('Viktor Nižňanský: Spišská župa má svoje opodstatnenie' *Korzar* 11/3/05).

⁶ The fieldwork for this research was undertaken thanks to a small research grant from the British Academy (SG-36275).

⁷ Šariš roughly coincides with the territory of Prešov, Sabinov, Bardejov, Stropkov and Svidník districts.

⁸ It was not possible to gain access to working group meetings, but it was useful to spend several mornings or afternoons in the Regional Development offices at Prešov regional authority and Sabinov town council, and in the 'multi-agency' office space that serves as a local network hub in Lipany (see below).

⁹ Governance is usually defined in relation to government. The growth in popularity of the term reflects a sense that contemporary transformations (fragmentations) of the state, markets and society have changed the nature of many governing processes, blurring the boundaries between and within public, private and non-governmental / non-profit sectors and necessitating the formation of more or less 'diffuse' coalitions and partnerships in order to govern, where previously this was achieved through the directive power of 'central' authorities (see Stoker, G., 1998).

fragmented and peripheral environments. The coherence of various actors leads to [the] formation of [an] 'institutional region' (Lakso, T. – Kahila, P., 2003, p. 13).

The paper thus takes an institutionalist approach to theorising regional development, according to which the production of regional development programmes is not primarily about the programming of specific actions, but about the creation and maintenance of a tool to enhance the reflexivity of the regional system via a cyclical process of agreement on a joint vision, initiation and organisation of collective action, and monitoring and evaluation of a programme's application (Blažek, J. – Uhlíř, D., 2002, pp. 163, 173). Planning *performs* institutionalisation both from the top down and from the bottom up, where the former is primarily about regionalisation¹⁰ and the latter is about regionalism¹¹. The chances of spatially peripheral regions such as Prešov overcoming 'traditional' developmental disadvantages, given by infrastructural disparities and the poor sectoral coordination of state regional policy (Falt'an & Pašiak (eds.) 2004), are improved if the region develops aspatial developmental capital such as a strong (self-) governance capacity, and one means of achieving this is through strategic planning.

The following sections analyse the range of actors involved in each planning process, their geographical scope, the way in which regional problems and potentials are identified and (prospectively) the way each plan is likely to be applied, as a measure of how effectively, and within what boundaries, regions are actually being institutionalised. Reading strategic planning as a regionalising process in turn enables some initial comments to be made on the type of governance regime prevailing or emerging in each 'institutional region'.

1. The economic and social development programme of the Prešov regional government (PHSR PSK)

Strategic plans define institutional regions via the partnership arrangements for plan *production*, via their *acknowledgement* of the contributions of a particular set of actors to regional development (usually in the analytical part of the document), via their *recognition* of certain actors' projects or broad project goals as worthy of support (usually in the implementation section or a project appendix), and

¹⁰ Regionalisation is usually understood as a classificatory act on the part the state or a sub-national authority, whereby a supra-local territory is delimited as an administrative region. In structuration theory, however, regionalisation involves "the clustering of contexts in time-space" such that competing regionalisations (geographical, political, historical-cultural, etc.) tend to coexist, disrupting precisely defined boundaries (Giddens, A., 1984). Plans, because they necessarily involve some form of spatial classification, add new layers to this 'clustering'.

¹¹ Regionalism can refer to a regional movement emanating from a grass-roots social or cultural identity or to the expression of a regional identity through a planning process that may be initiated by the state. Common to all regionalisms, however, is a desire for autonomy and local power, often based on mistrust of a seemingly remote and interventionist state (Smith, G., 1988).

sometimes via their *incorporation* of certain actors as guarantors for the implementation of one or more measures. The selection of non-public sector actors for mention in the analytical and implementational sections of a document such as PHSR PSK can thus reveal a lot about how its authors wish to delimit the region as an actor network, which may correspond more or less closely with the region as geographical space. In fact the analytical sections of PHSR PSK are essentially quantitative descriptions of the region, from the perspective of Prešov region as a unified actor composed of thirteen notionally coherent sub-actors (the former districts). They are more of a statistical summary than an exercise in mapping the assets and potentials of regional *actors*.

The production of PHSR PSK was the direct result of the establishment of regional government in 2001 and the assumption of responsibility for regional strategic planning by the new authorities according to the Law on Regional Development Support. The process complied with the formal criteria for partnership defined in this law, insofar as representatives of municipalities, district offices and other state agencies, social partners, universities and NGOs were consulted at various stages during the document's compilation (PSK, 2003, p. 2). In the course of three separate interviews with the author, heads of the Department of Regional Development and Tourism (which was responsible for drawing up the plan, including the coordination of working groups, public meetings and publicity) were keen to stress that the regional authority appreciates the importance of partnership. Because the programme is legally binding only for the authority itself and its subsidiary organisations (notably secondary schools, museums and galleries, some hospitals and many social care facilities), it will have limited impact on regional development unless it carries sufficient moral force to persuade other actors to take account of it in their own decision-making. With only a small budget, the regional authority distinguishes between three implementation channels (PSK, 2003, p. 3):

- areas where it can take decisions based on its own competence,
- areas where it can expect to wield influence via direct support for regional development,
- areas in which the authority is a socio-economic partner of other actors, upon whose action the implementation of the programme will rest.

In the indicative list of measures attached to the programme, most fall into the second and third areas. Thus the key capacity of the regional authority for the purposes of implementation is as coordinator of a cross-sectoral partnership within which commitment to the vision and subsidiary goals of the programme must be continually renegotiated in a communicative process. At one level the programme is a call for projects from third parties (including institutions in the ownership of PSK), where each measure comes with a list of target groups and a set of criteria

for project selection. Although PSK will not, in most cases, be the principal financier for projects, it is seeking to encourage projects that support a set of agreed regional development priorities and to champion suitable projects to a range of external funders.

Such a role is in keeping with the immaturity of regional self-government in the Slovak Republic. This renders a legitimacy-seeking character to the business of strategic planning, and partners' willingness to participate in the process is a measure of the legitimacy they accord to the new democratic institution (see Amdam, R., 2003 for a discussion of the legitimacy-seeking function of planning in Norway following the establishment of a new regional tier of government there). In addition to and compounding its low electoral legitimacy, PSK has experienced continuing difficulties in winning the trust of business representatives, and major companies in particular, which seemed to prefer a 'wait-and-see' approach during the ongoing political struggles over public service decentralisation. Some NGOs, on the other hand, elicited a distrust towards the authority not because they questioned its importance, but because they saw it as a personification of state power (many officers had previously worked in district offices) and did not feel that they would be treated as equal partners (interview with director of Prešov Civic Forum). As a result, the production of PHSR PSK was in fact largely the work of officers at the regional authority, with little active participation from solicited partners or from the public at large. The formulation process allowed for some limited consultation opportunities, but no systematic surveys were carried out either of public opinion, of the business community, or of local authorities (the chief sources for the analytical sections are Statistical Office datasets and information from institutions belonging to PSK).

The authority is hopeful that a more effective and balanced partnership can be established during the process of implementation, monitoring and revision. There are some signs that this is occurring as calls are made for projects for the EU Structural Funds: applicants, such as municipalities and private firms, need to obtain approval from the regional authority that their projects are in accordance with the strategic programme, which has generated more intensive interaction, both with the Department of Regional Development and Tourism and with PSK's in-house Regional Development Agency, for technical and administrative support during project preparation. Thus a joint commitment to the vision of the strategic programme may gradually emerge as all parties get used to working together on specific projects. In preparing the programme PSK has taken some steps to encourage this process, but could have done more. For example, the project selection criteria for many measures prioritise joint working practices and co-financing; however there are few if any capacity-building measures targeted specifically at the voluntary sector with a view to raising the capacity of civil

society organisations to develop the necessary skills, awareness and confidence to invest scarce resources in the preparation of projects with no guarantee of success. There are no selective incentives targeted at specific constituencies or types of organisation. A further weakness is the non-existence of a cross-sectoral monitoring committee, similar to that which would exist by law at the NUTS II level for Regional Operational Programmes. Monitoring of PHSR PSK is carried out instead by the Commission for Regional Development and Tourism of the regional assembly (PSK, 2003, p. 166), only three of whose thirteen members were not regional MPs during the first electoral cycle¹². Such a situation is incongruous with the fact that so little of the programme's implementation is in the hands of the authority alone, and so much rests on the action of actors whom it can only influence through effective communication and by creating fora for co-decision-making.

As already mentioned, the indicative project database appended to PHSR PSK (structured according to the Structural Funds and EC Initiatives which are expected to provide the lion's share of funding for regional development) sees the regional authority usually appearing in the role of 'socio-economic partner' rather than 'final recipient'/project initiator. Occasionally, the other likely partners for a given measure are named, but without exception these are public-sector agencies (Slovak Railways, the Slovak Highway Administration, the National Agency for the Development of SMEs, the Slovak Agency for Tourism, the regional water companies). The result is an institutional region which remains lop-sided in favour of the public sector, inflexible with respect to strategic goals of other sectors (or sub-regional interests), and which needs to be applied and revised in an open communicative process if it is to develop into a vision that reflects the substantive needs and goals of a committed, mutually dependent network of actors, who accept the regional authority as their legitimate coordinator.

2. The Sabinov district regional operational plan

A cross-sectoral voluntary partnership with a modest fund for small project grants lay behind the Sabinov district Regional Operational Plan in 1999. Building on the outcomes of a series of workshops originally oriented towards the environment, the following partners agreed there was a need for a 'complex regional development strategy' for the neighbouring districts of Sabinov and Levoča: Sabinov District Office, Levoča District Office, the Association of Towns and Villages of Upper Torysa (a regional branch of the national umbrella organisation for municipalities), Sabinov and Levoča town councils, the Prešov branch of the

¹² www.vucpo.sk, accessed 1/1/06.

Slovak Chamber of Industry and Commerce, and two environmentally-oriented NGOs, ETP Slovakia and People and Water (based in Košice). Working groups were then formed for each district with parity of representation from the state administration, local government, the private sector and civic associations. ETP Slovakia facilitated workshop meetings in Levoča, People and Water in Sabinov. The Sabinov working group met (often weekly) for almost two years to produce the strategic plan, and this was then followed by the production of sectoral operational plans for five sectors identified as development priorities (the local economy, agriculture and forestry, tourism and agro-tourism, minorities (the Roma), and the environment). By this time, sectoral working groups had the support of the Sabinov Institute for Sustainable Development (SITUR), an RDA-type institution founded after about 18 months' work by the district working group "due to the need to build an institutional capacity, a team of professional experts capable of sustaining the regional development programme"¹³ (*Modrá alternatíva* 1/2002, p. 12).

Sabinov District ROP stands out among our case studies due to its voluntary, bottom-up production, its unusually long gestation, the technical and financial support of a foreign (Dutch) partner, and because the need for a complex development strategy was agreed among partners in an informal alliance, whereas the need for the other three strategies was a matter of legal or instrumental requirements connected with public sector reform and the reform of regional policy to reflect EU principles¹⁴. It is therefore slightly paradoxical that it is the least applicable of the strategies, and has largely been ignored by statutory bodies such as local and regional government. It is unclear to what extent it merely enabled the realisation of existing projects or to what extent it generated new community-based projects via a grant programme co-funded by the Dutch government (in partnership with People and Water). Institutional innovations often amounted to the fulfilment of small opportunities for 'insiders' to the planning process: for example, the foundation of a small business support centre (CPK – Centrum prvého kontaktu) in Sabinov was called for in the ROP to address a perceived deficit of informational resources in the district ('We are lacking a regional information centre') (*Modrá alternatíva* 1/2002, p. 38). Shortly afterwards the head of the Regional Development Department at the District Office, who had led the Sabinov ROP working group successfully submitted a project to the National Agency for the Development of SMEs. He now cites on the

¹³ SITUR has received funding from a diversity of sources including the EU, the Dutch Matra programme, the Open Society Foundation, the Carpathian Euroregion, as well as the town council in Lipany. Partly due to this fundraising success, it was regarded as a highly sustainable organisation in an interim report for the Dutch sponsors (ECEAT, 2004). Unlike RDAs incorporated into the national 'integrated network of RDAs', it does not receive government funding.

¹⁴ It is the only strategy which did not take its lead from the Law on Regional Development Support.

CPK website¹⁵ his own experience in helping produce the ROP as evidence of competence in regional planning, and community planning in particular. This is a good example of how personal¹⁶ and organisational goals can often merge with the goals of a regional planning process to the extent that it is difficult to discern which came first. It also fits Lagendijk's observations on non-core regions stressing the relevance of a "modernization and learning perspective", according to which networking activities such as regional workshops can play a role in "the unlocking of unused knowledge" already present in a region (Lagendijk, A., 1999).

The key outcome of the planning process was a social learning episode that brought together a wide range of actors in an intensive working relationship, imparted valuable knowledge and experience about communicative planning, routinised partners' interaction, and institutionalised a knowledge-based resource for regional development in the shape of SITUR (and to a lesser degree CPK). However the regional policy framework defined by local, regional and national government programming has not provided many outlets for the visions or capacities generated, essentially because the planning process only performed a horizontal integration of actors, but this network remained peripheral to the vertically-integrated hierarchy of regional policy defined by legislation and Structural Funds programming. Those who participated thus tend to have mixed feelings about the experience: on the one hand, they appreciate that they and their organisations have gained something intangible but important which we can equate with Stone's concept of social learning¹⁷; on the other hand it seems in retrospect like a lot of time and effort expended for very few concrete outcomes. Feelings about the process tend to be more positive in Lipany and the villages of the Upper Torysa valley than in Sabinov. This is not only because most of the successful projects were from the northern part of the district. It also reflects the differing attitudes of the two town councils¹⁸ and the location of SITUR in Lipany, where it shares office space with the Regional Development Office of the Joint Bureau and a Community Foundation (Blue Torysa). The offices also function as a base for the manager of the Roma Community Centre in Lipany, and

¹⁵ www.cpk.sk/sabinov/PONUKA.doc, accessed 7/5/06.

¹⁶ The person in question would have been looking for new opportunities for career development, given that these events occurred shortly before District Offices were abolished in the territorial structure of the civil service. Another former District Office employee was recruited by SITUR.

¹⁷ "An extensive understanding [of regional problems] accompanied by a disposition to act on that understanding" (Stone, C., 1989, p. 212). There is a partial contradiction between these two elements, because a wider capacity to learn is associated with coalitions that are inclusive but perhaps not highly cohesive. Stone ultimately prioritises inclusiveness, without which problems cannot be recognised and solved, even if the coordination of action may thus become more difficult.

¹⁸ The mayor of Lipany was an enthusiastic and vocal supporter of the planning process, chairing one of the working groups, whereas the mayor of Sabinov did not cooperate personally, leaving it to the regional development officer. (ECEAT, 2004)

for students working as research assistants on a number of regional development and tourism projects for the local authority. As a result, the 'institutional region' associated with Sabinov District ROP is defined to a large extent by the everyday interactions of the above-named organisations and the volunteers they have organised and co-opted.

The ROP itself reads like a mixture of brainstorming about problems and theorising about endogenous approaches to development solutions. It has the briefest of analytical sections, drawn from District Office statistics, and avoids naming existing organisations, either as part of an asset-mapping exercise or in allocating responsibility for proposed measures. Contrary to the hopes of its authors¹⁹, the goals are mostly too general to mobilise organisations via specific selective incentives and opportunities. This is in spite of the inclusion of numerous capacity-building measures designed to stimulate networking and a regional knowledge infrastructure (examples include proposals for regional business networks, annual conferences or agricultural shows, service databases and even an educational institute for project preparation). In reality SITUR was the only outcome that met some of these goals. In retrospect, the exercise is seen by one of its authors as ahead of its time – useful “inspiration”, but limited by the lack of “executive power” behind it²⁰. It is a record of a self-educational process, through which participants acquired competences in regional and organisational planning and action research²¹. Their future application in regional development work, and the widening of the network to incorporate other actors, depends to a large extent on the maintenance of an active and open network around these collaborating institutions. A potential threat is that their routinised interaction is dependent on continued support from Lipany town hall (and thus on the outcome of future elections).

3. *The Lipany strategic plan of economic and social development (PHSR Lipany)*

Strategic planning in Lipany was set in motion in mid-2003 when the town council approved a resolution proposed by the mayor, which justified the need for

¹⁹ The introduction to the ROP declares: “We do not want to produce a lengthy unusable conceptual document for the region, but a genuine regional strategy, of use to the specialist and the non-specialist public, where everyone who has an interest in the growth, prosperity and sustainable development of our region will find something for them... We anticipate the mobilisation of citizens, their identification with and acceptance of responsibility for the proposed solutions we have generated and for the individual activities, as well as for further suggestions for the sustainable development of Sabinov district.”

²⁰ Seman, P. (SITUR): e-mail correspondence with the author, 15/3/05.

²¹ In action research all participants are co-researchers and an explicit commitment to learning (the generation of new knowledge) is an essential element (Martin, A., 2001). The ROP Sabinov planning process would arguably not, however, meet a more exacting definition of action research, according to which the process should carry enough influence with decision-makers such that “the ability of the involved community ... to control their own destinies more effectively” is increased (Greenwood, D. – Levin, M., 1998, p. 6).

a strategy with reference to the 2001 Law on Regional Development Support, citing not just the passages that refer to municipal programmes, but also those that deal with joint planning by several municipalities within a micro-region (Zápisnica MsZ 26.6.03)²². Each section of PHSR Lipany was produced by a committee of the town council, except the sections on public safety and education, which were produced by the town police and the town education council. Most committees invited other actors to participate as well: for example, the section on social issues was produced “by the social committee in cooperation with the mothers’ centre Danká a Janka, the homeless people’s centre in Sabinov, the civic association ‘For a more Beautiful Lipany’, the old people’s home in Lipany, the Department of Social Care of the Joint Bureau²³, the Pensioners’ Club and the Information Committee” (PHSR Lipany, working version, 2003). A number of actors mentioned above in connection with the Sabinov district ROP also worked on the Lipany strategic plan: SITUR was on the working groups for the Roma community and for employment, the Blue Torysa Community Foundation (which runs the town’s small grant programme) was on the working groups for employment and for health, and the Sabinov-based small business support agency CPK was also on the working group for employment. The only external actors directly involved were CPK and one or two social and health service providers based in Sabinov (and CPK has better relations with Lipany and Horná Torysa than with Sabinov, which terminated its shareholding in the organisation at the end of 2005). For some reason a decision was taken to drop all credits of co-authorship from the final version of the programme, which thus appears as an anonymous document. The intention may have been to present it as the collective vision and strategy of all the people of Lipany, but in doing so an opportunity was missed to reinforce the commitment of partners by acknowledging their contribution explicitly.

PHSR Lipany does not contain an analytical section that makes use of any general statistical data, and no surveys were conducted. Instead problems and development potentials were identified and described in working group meetings in what amounted to an asset-mapping process, limited by the knowledge and interests of the actors who took part, but given that working groups were relatively open and inclusive it is reasonable to assume that such a process could capture the essential characteristics of a town of only 6,300 people. The SWOT analysis is closely focused on the assets and problems of the town itself, but there is sector-

²² Minutes of all council meetings in Lipany from December 2002 are available on the website: www.mestolipany.sk

²³ Municipal authorities are able to delegate a considerable range of competences to a ‘joint bureau’ (spoločný obecný úrad) typically located in a central town or large village. This option existed from the time of the 1990 Law on Municipal self-government, but the provisions were not widely used until the transfer of significant competences from the state to local government after 2002.

specific coordination across a wider geographical area, where there are obvious development opportunities or common interests. Thus the section on tourism, for example, adopts a micro-regional perspective – citing the emergence of regional associations as development opportunities to build on, and proposing the establishment of Tourist Information Centres in individual villages (MsÚ Lipany 2004: 40). Such a perspective reflects the direct involvement of other municipalities in the working group on tourism (PHSR Lipany, working version, 2003) and the coordination of work by the regional development officer, whose post was established and financed from 2002 as a service to the Joint Bureau rather than the town itself. The sections on culture and sport make less consistent gestures towards a broader spatial perspective: for example, Lipany is portrayed as “the cultural centre of the region”, albeit that only the longer-term measures include any direct attempt to strengthen its regional function (networking between libraries).

The planning process has been able to mobilise, and could lead to the further institutionalisation of quite dense organisational networks on a local, and in selected areas a micro-regional scale. Significantly, the evaluation and revision of the strategic plan in January 2005 was carried out in cooperation with the micro-regional association: few new measures were added (it was essentially just a progress update) but the involvement of village mayors could mean that future substantial revisions alter the perspective of the strategy to include more regional concerns.

The SWOT analyses, however, make clear that the town’s (and micro-region’s) development chances frequently hinge on improved coordination with external partners as well. Yet the strategy is largely silent on how to capitalise on these ties. The reason may be partly that strategic planning, in its infancy, is running parallel to the ‘normal’ (more informal) channels of decision-making, endorsing decisions, but doing little to improve the quality of *future* decision-making²⁴.

One of the areas where external dependency is most apparent is health. Sabinov district has no proper hospital: just seven beds are available at Sabinov clinic, the lowest level of provision of any district in Prešov region, lower than in several much smaller (but more peripheral) districts such as Medzilaborce (50 beds), Stropkov (35 beds), Svidník (245 beds) and Levoča (403 beds) (PSK 2003: 99). Most planned treatment, and all childbirths, therefore require transportation to

Prešov, 30km away from Lipany. Furthermore, the health facilities run until recently as an outpost of a Sabinov-based clinic in Lipany were “managed without any clear conception” (MsÚ Lipany, 2004, p. 30). Local authorities, however, have few competences in the sphere of health: following public service decentralisation, responsibility for health services lies with regional self-government. The proposed solutions centred on transferring control of the clinic from the region to the local authority, as well as creating an effective emergency service and promoting health awareness and healthy living among the population (MsÚ Lipany, 2004, p. 7). During 2004 this transfer was completed, and the town then signed an agreement with two private companies to run the services based at the facility, for which it did not charge rent²⁵. These new ownership arrangements did not improve the quality of local health services: indeed the town soon found itself powerless to enforce citizens’ constitutional rights when the private doctors refused to provide a round-the-clock emergency service²⁶. Given that it can accomplish little acting alone, strategic planning is in effect handicapped by a lack of trust, communication and mutual dependency between partners, and a justifiable cautiousness about raising public expectations²⁷.

This has fostered a sense of powerlessness. According to the plan, national health policy is largely a hindrance to local development (‘poor legislation, poor financial conception’), whereas the provisions made in the region’s development strategy are not referred to. This is surprising, as they do seem to support a case for more resources for Lipany: one of the activities related to the ‘health’ measure in the regional strategy is “optimisation of the network of health facilities ... to achieve a good level of territorial accessibility and promote the development of mobile treatment services” (PSK, 2003, p. 106). Here is an opportunity for coordinated multi-level planning, given the local authority’s preparedness to take more responsibility for some health services. However no such coordination is evident either at the strategic level or in the form of joint projects. The greater reluctance appears to be on the part of the regional body, which failed to respond to three requests for a meeting about local health services made by Lipany’s mayor in 2005 (Zápisnica MsZ 29/9/05).

The overall tone of PHSR Lipany is one of self-reliance. Cross-sectoral partnerships are being cultivated at the local level, with more opportunities and responsibilities for the voluntary sector. A good deal of self-criticism about the

²⁴ The strategy received very little discussion at council meetings during 2004, and parts of it were quickly overtaken by decisions or investments already contained in the 2004 budget, which the strategy did no more than record. Even these entries were selective: some important project applications made in early 2004 were not mentioned in the plan (for example, an enterprise promotion project worth 64,000 EUROS, ‘Dvere dokorán pre podnikanie pod Levočskými vrchmi’, or the renovation of St. Martin’s Church (Zápisnica MsZ 26.2.04)). However during 2005 references to the strategy during council meetings were increasingly frequent and routine, largely because it constitutes a point of departure for multi-annual budgeting, which begins in 2006.

²⁵ Zápisnica MsZ 27/5/04.

²⁶ ‘V Lipanoch nefunguje pohotovosť’ *Korzar* 15/4/05.

²⁷ According to the mayor, the public overestimates the role of the town in health provision: instead of holding the service providers, the health insurance companies or the regional authority (which issues licences to practise) responsible for the “inadequate state”, people blame the council (‘Mesta bez lekárskej pohotovosti’ *Novinky* 22/4/05, available at: www.hornatorysa.com).

current state of inter-organisational cooperation could therefore signal positive initial experience and an attempt to map un-tapped local assets (this is most notable in the social sphere, where the number of self-critical comments probably reflects the high number of partners from the voluntary sector on the working group (MsÚ Lipany, 2004, p. 31)). However the general preference for endogenous solutions (in Lipany's case – tentatively – at a micro-regional scale) can mean that geographically wider interdependencies are seen only in negative terms, thus limiting the possibility of synergies and knowledge transfer between levels.

4. The Sabinov economic and social development programme (PHSR Sabinov)

Notwithstanding the fact that both municipal strategies were prompted by the Law on Regional Development Support, PHSR Sabinov provides a contrast with the Lipany strategy in terms of structure, methodology and data collection. Whereas the Lipany document was produced by working groups based loosely around council committees, the Sabinov strategy is principally the work of the Regional Development officers²⁸. Uniquely among these four plans the local public was surveyed before the strategy was written. This took the form of a questionnaire distributed to every accessible household in the town²⁹, and approximately 10% of the population responded (MsÚ Sabinov, 2004, section 5). It is claimed that the results of the survey determined the ordering of priorities, but since the structure of the document was pre-determined (it was adapted from the regional development strategy, with the merging and later exclusion of the agriculture theme) the openness of the process was limited. A small number of further actors were incorporated into the process via consultation on a draft version, with comments received from just nine organisations (alongside three political parties and three schools these were two private enterprises and one NGO). The poor response reflects poorly on other subjects' preparedness for partnership, since all enterprises, schools, clubs and voluntary organisations were approached by the regional development officer. However the structure of accountability for managing (controlling, monitoring, evaluating and revising) the programme places the elected members centre-stage: "the final act of the programme is its public debate and approval by the organs of local government" (MsÚ Sabinov, 2004, section 2). Control of the programme's fulfilment is carried out at the end of each year by a committee composed of local authority officials and members.

²⁸ During the period of production of the PHSR there was a change of post-holder.

²⁹ Not all households in the Roma settlements received questionnaires, either because some households may not be formally registered, or because council workers tasked with delivering the questionnaires were afraid to go into certain areas.

The analytical part is largely based on statistical information, much of which is the same data used in the Sabinov district ROP, yet it also acknowledges a number of important partnerships, indicating that the assets of other actors are valued and are viewed as mobilisable for a collective project of local development. Partnership also plays a significant role in the very detailed implementation plan for the immediate future: in other words, not all the measures listed there are to be performed by the authority itself. However, if we weight projects according to their financial costs, the majority of partnerships proposed involve other public sector actors with which the authority already has some kind of contractual relationship. Relatively few measures, and only smaller ones, amount to the institutionalisation of partnership across sectoral boundaries or with non-statutory partners, so the opportunity structure for local organisations from the private and voluntary sectors is unlikely to be significantly wider following this planning process than before. Voluntary sector resources are expected to be mobilised above all at the national level (especially from sports associations), but it is unclear whether these constitute active partnerships. By far the largest share of private finance is anticipated from firms with a Europe-wide scale of operation (LIDL, Márius Pedersen), but this is largely coincidental, as the firms in question are already operating in Sabinov (Márius Pedersen) or systematically expanding their business throughout Slovakia (LIDL). The regional scale accounts for a healthy share of external resources, but it is the scale at which the public sector is most dominant (94.6% of resources): partners cited include the chamber of commerce (SOPK), CPK (technically a civic sector organisation, but established by the National Agency for the Development of SMEs), utilities companies and the regional authority. Clearly Sabinov anticipates its future development depending substantially upon institutionalised interaction at the regional level with a newly establishing set of actors. Indeed it has recently developed a good working relationship with PSK's regional development agency³⁰.

Table 1: *Sabinov PHSR: Partners involved in future projects by total predicted costs (1 000Sk)* (for comparison, the local authority budget for 2006 is 169 million Sk)

Scale/Sector	Local	Regional	National	European	Total	Total (%)
MsÚ alone	139519	-	-	-	139519	39.1
Public partners	22730	53098	55993	5000	136821	38.3
Private partners	6240	3000	1950	49518	60708	17.0
3 rd sector parts.	860	15	19000	0	19875	5.6
Total (excl. MsÚ)	29830	56113	76943	54518	356923	100.0
Total (%)	13.7	25.8	35.3	25.1		

Source: own analysis based on MsÚ Sabinov 2004.

³⁰ *Actualy* 22.3.06, available at: www.sabinov.sk.

Overall, Sabinov's approach to development is based on self-reliance and municipal initiative. Most of the measures proposed are realistically modest and depend only on sensible budgeting by the town itself. The few that depend on external partners, notably plans for an industrial zone, are liable to postponement (MsÚ Sabinov, 2005). The local authority is not averse to collaborative working but believes in its own responsibility to drive forward local development. Sabinov's strategy can be likened to municipal entrepreneurialism, favouring independent, pre-emptive action on the part of a territorial community seen as poorly served by national (and to some extent regional) decision-makers³¹. The institutional region which maps onto the development strategy is geographically narrow and local authority-led, with just a few other partners (amounting to the core of the local regime) legitimising a simplified, directive structure of decision-making³², viewed as appropriate to an endogenous development strategy.

Vertical integration of strategic plans in Prešov region

It would be logical to expect to find references to PHSR PSK in municipal development plans, since strategic planning competences were instituted for both levels together in the 2001 Law on Regional Development Support. More recently guidance notes issued by the Ministry of Construction and Regional Development stress the importance of vertical consistency: "the National Development Plan, its Operational Programmes, regional and municipal development programmes [should] create a single closed and hierarchically structured set of documents for regional development support... It is essential that the method of production of programming documents from the national level down to the municipal level is consistent". (MVRR SR, 2004a, p. 33) Likewise, the analytical sections of both documents, together with the national programming documents, are supposed to add up to "a coherent hierarchically-arranged analysis" (MVRR SR, 2004a, p. 15), and before analysing local conditions, municipalities are advised "to map out those fundamental connections with a decisive influence on local economic and social development at the scale of the relevant region", the basis for which "could be the analyses conducted during preparation of the regional economic and social development programme" (MVRR SR, 2004a, p. 35). In terms of strategy as well, municipal development programmes should be "in harmony with the goals and priority needs of the relevant regional development programme" (MVRR SR, 2004a, p. 33).

³¹ Sabinov is the only municipality in the district to run an old people's home (two others are run by the regional authority and a church organisation), whose construction it also financed (partly through a bank loan). This enables the council to prioritise the town's inhabitants in allocating places (*Aktuality* 22.11.04 and 22.3.06, available at www.sabinov.sk).

³² PHSR Sabinov devotes far less space to information or communication strategies with respect to the local public than PHSR Lipany.

Yet out of the thirteen district capitals in the region, only three (Svidník, Kežmarok and Bardejov) cite PHSR PSK in their own development strategies. In the first two cases the citations are general claims to be 'in harmony with' or to 'build upon' the goals of the regional programme, but there is no follow-through to explain or justify individual goals or measures in the local programmes, and there is little formal consistency in the analytical sections. The same applies in the third case, which lacks even a claim of harmonisation: the regional programme is cited only in relation to tourism, because Bardejov is presented as an internationally significant tourist (spa) destination (PSK, 2003, pp. 37, 153), thereby justifying the local programme's concentration on this area. It is claimed that in all other respects PHSR PSK only relates to the Bardejov sub-region in a general sense³³ (MsÚ Bardejov, et al, 2004, p. 34). Of the other capitals three (Medzilaborce, Stará Ľubovňa and Stropkov) did not have an official development strategy by 2005, while Humenné and Prešov produced their strategies before work on PHSR PSK began. Both these cities, as well as Bardejov and Levoča, have strategies produced with the aid of external consultants (Berman Group in the first three cases, MESA 10 in the latter), and accordingly they adopt an 'in-house' format that apparently precludes harmonisation with the regional programme. Berman Group's approach is oriented towards practical action plans based on business workshops and surveys, which do not amount to a comprehensive strategy: hence most references to other documents in Bardejov's programme are to Operational Programmes as potential sources of funding.

Snina's 'Local Development and Action Plan' was approved in March 2005 and is the product of a PHARE project that also supported the establishment of an information system for citizens, including a website. Although it assumes that the bulk of the finances for the goals it contains will come from successful applications to the Structural Funds, its structure does not copy the Operational Programmes, and seemingly reflects key problems identified by the extensive public consultation exercise that was part of the PHARE project. Minutes from project team meetings cite the ministerial guidance notes on several occasions, yet the only recommendations taken on board are those regarding the structure of the strategy itself – the logical division between global goals (though these are not broken down into specific goals as recommended), priorities and measures. Otherwise even the title of Snina's strategy is distinctive, and the recommendations on vertical consistency are not adhered to in any strict sense. In

³³ This is not in fact the case: for example, the section of PHSR PSK identifying industrial development axes ranks Bardejov (along with Stropkov and Medzilaborce) as a "centre beyond the principal axes" (PSK, 2003, p. 153). This amounts to a downgrading in comparison with the national spatial planning perspective (MŽP, 2001, p. 48), where the Prešov-Bardejov corridor is ranked as a second-order development axis – i.e. on a par with the Baltic tran-European network route through Svidník.

fact there are no references to other strategic documents, even though minutes from the first working group meeting record that council representatives stressed how the plan ought to build on the regional programme as well as the National Development Plan if it was to be of assistance to potential grant applicants³⁴. Nevertheless the regional authority is often mentioned as a partner, or even as the guarantor of certain actions (the construction of a bypass, the establishment of public information points).

Vranov nad Topľou's strategy was compiled from the deliberations of four sectoral working groups, and was adopted by the council in September 2004: it has a sector-based, problem-oriented structure similar to Lipany's (and different from the regional plan), lacking much analytical detail. It does not contain references to any other documents and, in common with most of the other plans, the analytical and strategic parts rarely mention wider territorial connections, even though it is clear from the implementation section that realisation of many goals depends on the actions and investments of external partners.

Poprad is an interesting case. The city is presented as a strong regional centre in its own right, and one goal includes the task of bringing "regional institutions" into the city. The regional authority itself is referred to only once in the SWOT analysis, and then in relation to a weakness: "the eccentric location of the city in relation to the administrative centres of Prešov and Bratislava" (MsÚ Poprad, 2003). Since Poprad continues to lobby for an alternative administrative division of Slovakia, it is unsurprising that its development strategy does not take its lead from the regional one.

As far as the three plans examined in detail above are concerned, PHSR PSK is not directly mentioned in either PHSR Sabinov or PHSR Lipany, whilst the Sabinov district ROP was produced before the regional strategy. However, regional development officers in Sabinov maintained it was the most relevant higher-order development plan for the town, and they more or less mirrored its structure, whereas the other two documents have structures indicative of bottom-up, problem-generating approaches.

There is no cross-referencing in the other direction, either: the regional strategy does not cite any local or micro-regional strategies, although having been made available to the Council of Town and Village Mayors in Prešov region for comments prior to approval (during September and October 2002) there should have been ample opportunity for consultation and coordination³⁵. The mayor of Lipany, as a regional MP, attempted to influence the production of the regional

development strategy to take into account the district ROP (ECEAT, 2004), but there are no obvious examples of goals or priorities transferred from one plan to the other. Subsequently, he was quoted describing the regional development strategy as a "well-written analytical document", but expressed frustration at the absence of structures and rules to promote coordinated action between regional and local government³⁶. Present arrangements do not herald the emergence of the "new forms of territorial governance" across broad urban regions identified as an urgent priority in the Danube Space Study³⁷ (EC DG: Regional Policy, 2000, p. 205).

In sum, the overall level of coordination in strategic planning between the regional authority and the main towns of the region is very poor. The programmes do not cross-reference one another, they are differently structured and adopt different timescales, they were produced according by different methods, used different sources of analytical data and employed different consultation strategies. This is most easily demonstrated by the timescales they adopt. The ministerial guidance notes give an unambiguous recommendation that visions and measures should be pegged to the 7-year EU programming cycle, meaning the key milestones for current programmes should be 2006 and 2013. Yet of the ten district capitals in Prešov region with development programmes, only Svidník (as well as Lipany) adopts 2006 as an initial milestone, and not one plan uses 2013 to set more distant targets (Sabinov and Snina come closest, referring to 2014, though this was simply because it is 10 years after the date of the plans' adoption or conception). Most common is a single outlook date of 2009 or 10, whilst the three Berman Group-commissioned plans are conceived as ongoing programmes for continuous (at least annual) revision. Even the regional programme diverges from the official recommendation in its long-term outlook, which is to 2015, not 2013, and 2015 is also the only date attached to the Vranov plan³⁸.

Conclusions

A sceptic might pose the question as to the purpose of all the regional and local strategic plans that have recently been produced in Slovakia (and elsewhere). The answer depends on whose perspective we adopt. For national authorities, the purpose is the creation of an internally-consistent, hierarchically-organised

³⁴ Zápis z pracovného rokovania zameraného na tvorbu MRaAP mesta Snina uskutočneného dňa 18.8.2004. Available at: www.snina.sk/extras.asp?id=299&part=0299_01_00000007sk

³⁵ Zápisnica z 7. zasadnutia Zastupiteľstva PSK, 24/9/02: k bodu 7. Available at: www.vucpo.sk

³⁶ *Magazín PSK* no. 1, 2006 (regional television broadcast). Available at: www.vucpo.sk

³⁷ Similar calls were voiced by the two main Slovak local government umbrella organisations, the Union of Towns of Slovakia (ÚMS) and the Association of Towns and Villages of Slovakia (ZMOS) during 2005 (*Verejná správa* no. 7, 2005, *Obecné noviny* no. 19, 2005). ZMOS then signed an agreement with the eight regional governments that commits both parties "to help create partnerships at the regional level aimed ... in particular at the coordinated preparation of programmes of local and regional development" (*Obecné noviny* no. 22).

³⁸ Uznesenia mestského zastupiteľstva 46/2004. Available at: www.vranov.sk/samosprv/index.htm

framework for managing the public support of local and regional development projects in general, and for managing the inflow of European Structural Funds in particular. Strategic planning thus becomes a tight and thematically concentrated framework for project planning – as elaborated in the official guidance notes issued by the Ministry of Construction and Regional Development in 2004 (MVRR SR 2004a, and 2004b)³⁹. However none of the regional and principal municipal development programmes in Prešov region conform to this model.

These discrepancies are the result of the endogenous character of strategic development planning in Slovak regions and towns – be that the legitimacy-seeking partnership-building of Prešov region's development strategy, the grassroots planning approach of the Sabinov district ROP, the (micro)region-building project of Lipany, or the municipal entrepreneurialism of Sabinov. According to Buček, endogeneity⁴⁰ is only to be expected in most peripheral regions of Slovakia (Buček, M., 1998). Indeed one survey of regional development activity concluded that “the level of preparedness of the Slovak countryside for endogenous development is far greater than national and regional instruments allow for” (Falt'an, L. – Pašiak, J. (eds.), 2004, p. 69). The bottom-up planning that has occurred in most cases has tended both to produce locally-specific idiosyncrasies and to broaden the conceptual framework of plans beyond mere schemata for project planning and access to EU funds. For all their flaws, the local and regional plans examined here tend to be both more practical and more comprehensive than the national programming documents from which they are expected to take their lead⁴¹. Their applicability is relatively high, if only because they are generally modest in ambition, and do not aspire to a fundamental shift in development trajectory. On the other hand their application rests largely in the hands of local and regional government, with a noticeable lack of capacity-building measures to support other local and regional actors. The exception to this rule – the Sabinov district regional operational plan – is ironically the least applicable of the four programmes, because although it was full of proposals to enhance the ‘absorption capacity’ of local communities by establishing supporting organisations and a regional knowledge infrastructure, it had very little influence on public spending.

³⁹ In EU structural policy the principle of concentration means achieving critical mass in and between projects/programmes, to avoiding spreading development resources too thinly. This dictates that operational programmes are supposed to focus on the most important problems or opportunities facing a region/sector, not to provide a comprehensive development strategy. Programming for Structural Funds purposes and regional strategic planning (as discussed here) thus have quite distinct purposes.

⁴⁰ The key measures of endogeneity are the degree of local control over resources and the degree of choice in how and when to deploy them within a ‘development repertoire’. An endogenous development strategy strives to increase autonomy in this sense. (Ray, C., 1999)

⁴¹ In this respect they conform more closely to the ‘alternative’ guidelines for strategic planning (stressing participation and advising local authorities against copying the structure of national programming documents) issued by an NGO that acts as a consultant in regional development planning (Zamkovský, J., 2004).

The fragmented institutional region(s) described here make the coordination of multi-level programming more arduous, but are nevertheless a sign that strategic planning has been, in part, about establishing a local/regional identity and building endogenous social capital, which could be regarded as an important and necessary phase in the democratisation of society. It is also a sign that region building is not only about (top-down) *regionalisation*, but equally about the expression of *regionalisms* at various scales. Just as the regionalisations performed by national strategic documents are contested by regional authorities partly by mobilising regional identity, so the regionalisations performed by PHSR PSK are contested by local visions and strategies which are the expression of alternative regionalisms. If the effective institutional region is also a ‘learning region’ (Cooke, P. – Morgan, K., 1998) in which “knowledge flows intersect at different spatial levels” (Lagendijk, A., 1999), then the coexistence of different perspectives on the development of the same space (or overlapping spaces) *can* result in a productive tension that increases the adaptability of a regional economic system by continually generating new interpretations, whereas a seemingly more ‘efficient’ planning system which eliminated ‘redundancy’ might have a lower problem-solving capability (Grabher, G., 1993). Yet we would be justified in describing the above planning processes and their institutional frameworks in terms of ‘redundant’ capacities and transferable knowledge only if Prešov region could develop a degree of connectivity between actor networks and a degree of openness to ‘social learning’ which are not yet present.

List of interviews

Prešov Regional Government – Department of Regional Development and Tourism:

Július Takáč (head of department), 29 October 2002 and 2 August 2004

František Havrilla (head of department), 26 August 2003

Sabinov town council – Department of Construction, Regional Development Section:

Igor Lazorík (regional development officer), 25 August 2003

Tomáš Jadviš (regional development officer), 28 July 2004

Lipany town council / Association of Municipalities of Upper Torysa:

Jana Želinská (regional development officer & manager of micro-region), 27 August 2003

Michal Višňovský (regional development officer & manager of micro-region), 30 July 2004

SITUR, Lipany

Peter Seman (executive director) and Anna Sekeráková, 27 August 2003

Blue Torysa Community Foundation, Lipany

Soňa Šuhajová (executive director), 27 August 2003 and 30 July 2004

Prešov Civic Forum, Prešov

Luděk Mlčoch (director), 29 October 2002

Simon Smith, research fellow at the Institute for Social, Cultural and Policy Research, University of Salford. BA in Geography from St Catharine's College, Cambridge (1992), MA in East European Studies from the University of Bradford (1994), PhD from the University of Bradford (1998) for thesis entitled 'Beneath, Behind and Between Normality: independent cultural spaces in Czechoslovakia during the 1970s and 1980s'. Author, co-author and editor of: *Local Communities and Post-Communist Transformation. Czechoslovakia, the Czech Republic and Slovakia (edited volume)*, London & New York: RoutledgeCurzon, 2003. 'Regional Development and Post-Communist Politics in a Czech Region' (with Martin Myant), *Europe-Asia Studies* 58(2), 2006.

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