

## REGIONAL PLANNING WITHIN THE GERMAN INSTITUTIONAL PLANNING FRAMEWORK - INSTRUMENTS AND EFFECTIVENESS

La Planificación Regional en el  
marco de la planificación institucional  
alemana - instrumentos y eficacia

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## RESUMEN

Las primeras aproximaciones de la planificación regional en Alemania datan de los años de entreguerras, pero solo hasta la década de los años 1960 el "Plan Regional" se constituye en uno de los medios fundamentales y en instrumento jurídicamente vinculante para ejecutar las directrices y objetivos generales de la planificación territorial en el nivel espacial de la planificación de las regiones.

Aunque la organización de la planificación regional difiere entre los estados federados, es un vínculo importante entre la planificación municipal muy detallada y las disposiciones de planificación más generales de los estados federales.

**PALABRAS CLAVE:** *Ordenamiento territorial, Planificación regional, Planificación municipal, estipulaciones federales para la planificación.*

## ABSTRACT

*First approaches in German regional planning date from the interwar years, but not until the 1960s the legally binding instrument "Regional Plan" is one of the central means to execute the general guidelines and objectives in territorial planning on the spatial level of planning regions. Even though the organisation of regional planning differs between the Federal states, it is an important link between the very detailed municipal planning and the more general Federal states' planning stipulations.*

**KEYWORDS:** *Country Planning, Regional Planning, Municipal Planning, Federal Planning Stipulations.*

## **INTRODUCTION: WHAT DOES TERRITORIAL PLANNING MEAN?**

Any use of space – by individuals or by groups – features specific structures, affected by political, administrative, cultural, religious, social or economic parameters. The necessity of well-planned spatial structuring results from increasing social evolution, especially from increasing population density. This leads towards increasing extension of built-up area and to land use demands and/or conflicts. In this context we have to consider, that ideal land use does not exist. The functional needs on land use are permanently changing, hence new planning objectives and concepts have to be incorporated.

In territorial planning, a society's ethical norms play a decisive role. They cause the general planning guidelines and are reflected in a society's principles. This includes egalitarianism, equal conditions of life for everyone, sustainability, public participation in planning etc.

The challenge of planning is the identification and coordination of private and public demands for space as well as the implementation of proposals or alternative planning solutions. These decisions are taken by a political board, the implementation is on the responsibility of political-administrative institutions. They are – at the same time – the supervisory body concerning the abidance by the planning laws, which is very important at municipal level.

Generally, territorial planning is based upon long-term development concepts. It contains the systematic and rational prearrangement (following the laws and norms) of measures to create new spatial structures and land use patterns (Fürst, 2001; Langahgen-Rohrbach, 2005).

## **THE ORGANISATIONAL FRAMEWORK OF TERRITORIAL PLANNING IN GERMANY - A GENERAL OVERVIEW**

Today, German territorial planning bases on the treatments of the Agenda 21, passed in 1992 at Rio de Janeiro. This political strategy includes the spatial objective of sustainability, which means

the balance of economic, social and ecological strategies to enhance cohesion and planning under the aspect of careful use of resources. Agenda 21 obliges all nations to ecological planning under consideration of public participation, too.

In 1998, Germany integrated these objectives in its legal treatments for territorial planning (Federal Regional Planning Act = “Bundesraumordnungsgesetz” = ROG). This means, that sustainability is now – beside elder objectives as “equal quality of life for all German people” or “avoidance of increasing social inequality” one of the main goals of German territorial planning. At the same time, the Federal Regional Planning Act is not the only body of laws which includes principles of human and territorial development. Basic rights of the human being, as “gender equality”, “property rights” or “freedom of settlement”, are even codified in the German Constitution.

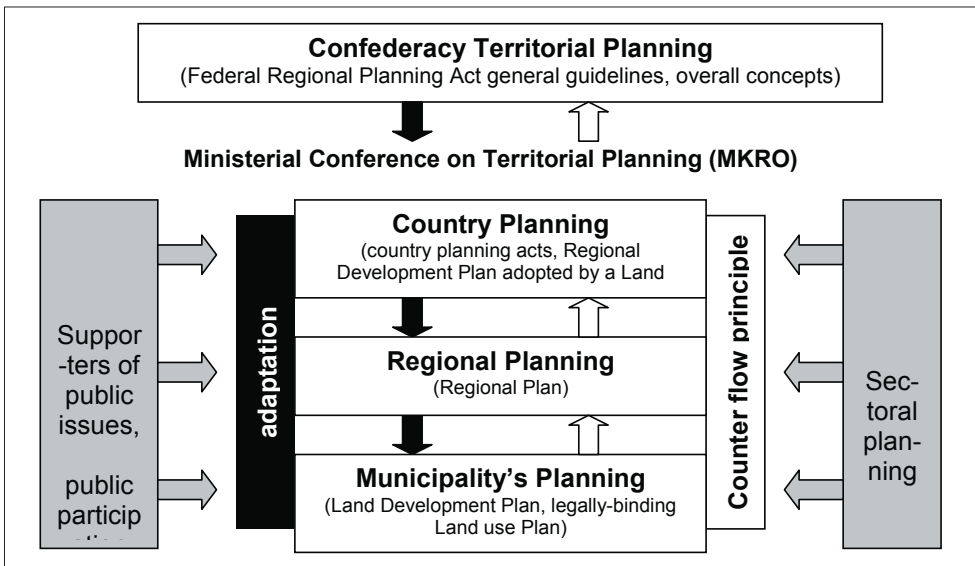
The principles of territorial planning, as they are legally stipulated in the Federal Regional Planning Act, are consciously worded in general and do not include direct spatial references. The reason for this gap is the political system of federalism, where the implementation of territorial planning principles is not in the competence of the national government, but in the responsibility of the administrative units called “Länder” (German Federal States/Lands).

This means, that the national government only defines the overall concepts (= “Leitbilder”) as well as the legal framework (e.g. the Federal Regional Planning Act). At the same time these law providing guidelines are only binding for the subordinated administrative units and institutions, but not for individuals. Within this legal framework the national government is obligated to give leeway to the German Federal States to ensure their scopes of action concerning territorial planning. At the same time, the German Basic Constitutional Law grants the municipalities planning authority within their territories.

National territorial planning has framework competency and defines general objectives as well as the legal framework, which

are binding for all lower administrative authorities (Langhagen-Rohrbach, 2005: 31). This leads to the question about the detailed organisational structure of territorial planning and the different instruments (figure 1).

As mentioned above, concrete territorial planning in Germany is in the responsibility of the German Federal States (“Länder”). They are committed to shape the general guidelines with concrete objectives and planning steps. The connecting institution between the national government and the Federal States is the Ministerial Conference on Territorial Planning (= Ministerkonferenz für Raumordnung = MKRO), composed by all responsible ministers, which has the task of information and coordination concerning all questions and positions in territorial planning (BBR, 2005).



Source: BBR 2000.

**Figure 1.** Organisation and instruments of territorial planning in Germany.

The “Länder” create their own legal frameworks, including internal organisational instructions on the regional planning system. The main instrument for territorial planning on the level of the “Länder” is the so-called “Landesentwicklungsplan” (“Regional Development Plan adopted by a Land”). It contains one or several maps as well as supplementary explanations within a accompanying text to recess the general guidelines. Such a plan is adopted for the whole territory of a Federal State, comprising the main topics “development”, “organisation of area to be left clear” and “safeguard of the territory” (Langhagen-Rohrbach, 2005, p. 42).

The “Regional Development Plan adopted by a Land” refers to the present economic, social, infrastructural and environmental situation as well as to the future aspired development. It focuses on land use patterns, on free space and on the main alignments of infrastructure. Concerning land use patterns the German planners are still dealing with Christallers Theory of Central Places to enhance the evenly distribution of services all over the territory - independent to the fact, that during the last decades this system often has been criticised because its static approach. Due to the importance of the concept on a balanced hierarchy of service centres, already the Regional Development Plan adopted by a Land (“Landesentwicklungsplan”) contains commitments about the ranking of service centres and the position of the main urban areas in the supply hierarchy.

The guidelines of the Federal States are legally binding for all other administrative units (regions and municipalities), but not for individuals. If German planners speak about “adaptation” within the hierarchical progression of the Federal States, regions and municipalities (see figure 1), they mean the commitment that every subordinated institutional planning level has to integrate the higher-ranking parameters into its own planning instruments.

But the German territorial planning is not only structured within a top-down-organisation. At the same time, the “counter flow principle” ensures that no measure of the superior instances can be undertaken without consultation of the inferior planning

levels. This means that organisation and development of spatial units have to correspond with the general objectives of the federal territory as well as the federal planning has to consider the demands of the sub-authorities.

Planning on the level of planning regions is executed on different ways, but is in the responsibility of the regions themselves. They are subordinated to the legal frameworks of the Federal States, but are executing their own instrument, the Regional Plan. He is created for the whole region and states more precisely the framework of the “Regional Development Plan adopted by a Land” (see chapter 4).

The first-line planning level concerns the municipalities. They represent the smallest statistical and administrative units and feature extensive authorization and competence in planning. Their competences are fixed in a special body of laws, the so-called German Federal Building Code (“Baugesetzbuch”). It defines the most important planning instruments for municipalities and concerns the urban land use planning and its execution under the consideration of nature protection.

The municipalities’ planning competence includes two planning levels. The “land development plan” (“Flächennutzungsplan”) might be understood as the preparing instrument and includes information about main land use (habitation, industrial use, mixed land use, special zones) for the whole municipality within a period of maximal 15 years. The second instrument, the so-called “legally-binding land use plan” (“Bebauungsplan”), applies only parts of the municipality’s area and is binding for each person. It informs about council building regulations and has to be implemented for every development area. In most of the legally-binding land use plans regulations on the protection of nature and environment are integrated, too (figure 2).

Territorial unit	Instrument	Contents	Reference surface	Scale
Federal Government	Federal Regional Planning Act	Text of the law	nation-wide	-
	Federal Planning Programme	Publication (text) on the main spatial development of the federal territory	nation-wide	-
Country/Federal State/Land	Regional Development Plan adopted by a Land	Map(s) and explanations (text) concerning the main settlement structure, infrastructure and other important land use types	Land (area-wide)	1:200.000
Region	Regional Plan	Map(s) and explanations (text) with detailed statements on development axes, urban development etc.	Region (area-wide)	from 1:100.000 to 1:50.000 (depends on the size of the unit)
Municipality	Land development Plan	Map(s) and explanations (text) on main land use categories	Municipality (area-wide)	1:10.000
	legally-binding Land use Plan	Map (s) and explanations (text) on detailed building regulations	Parts of the municipality	from 1:1.000 to 1:500

Source: author's own design.

Figure 2. Planning levels and instruments in Germany - an overview.



Public participation is deep seated in the German planning system. All planning proceedings comprise the participation of persons/inhabitants concerned by future planning measures. Especially concerning large-scale projects (e.g. the extension of airports or the construction of highways) they are incorporated just from the beginning to avoid misunderstandings and to integrate even the worriers in the process of discussion.

At the same time, public authorities, organisations and non-profit associations –the so-called “supporters on public issues” (“Träger der öffentlichen Belange”)– are involved in planning already at a very early stage of discussion to give advice within their duties.

The transversal competence of planning on the level of countries, regions and municipalities is also supported by sectoral planning. This means all planning divisions which are specialised in several tasks, e.g. landscape planning, plot alignment, transport planning, water supply and distribution etc. They are regulated by special laws and compile concepts and plans which have to be incorporated by the administrative planning units. Sectoral planning contributes planning on the level of the “Länder” as well as regional and municipal instruments.

In 2001, Germany integrated the European Union’s Guideline 2001/42/EG in the Federal Regional Planning Act. This guideline means a systematic audit procedure, called strategic environmental audit (“Strategische Umweltprüfung”) to check environmental aspects in strategic planning instruments. Typical applications are regional plans, land development plans, traffic concepts, programmes for development in tourism etc. The main objective means identification and verification of environmental impacts in planning and politics just from the beginning of discussion.

## **GERMAN TERRITORIAL PLANNING IN COMPARISON WITH OTHER EUROPEAN PLANNING SYSTEMS**

In context with the different European political systems, we may distinguish different planning systems, too. They have their seeds

in different political structures of the states as well as in varying history of law. In this regard, planning law always has to be seen as a part of the whole structure of the (democratic) state (LANGHAGEN-ROHRBACH, 2005, p. 96). European nations vary in administrative structures; therefore it is not surprising that competences in planning differ, too.

German territorial planning might be seen in the tradition of Roman law as well as under influence of the French “Code civil”. As in Austria and in Switzerland, administrative structures are strongly influenced by federalism, which is characterised by three levels of competences: the national level, the federal land (or canton level in Switzerland) and the municipal level.

Like in Germany, the Austrian and the Swiss planning system are based on national planning acts, which have to be understood as a framework of planning or as guidelines for the Federal States (Austria) or the cantons (Switzerland). As both nations are dominated by the Alps, careful use of areas for permanent settlement plays an important role in planning.

Probably the topographic structure causes the fact, that in both states regional planning, as we know it from Germany, is missing. If Austrian politicians and planners speak about regions, they refer to the spatial units of NUTS, used by the European Commission for regional subsidies. Even for urban agglomeration areas, where common planning strategies against increasing land use would be necessary, co-operation between the core city and the surrounding suburban communities only concerns specific problems (traffic, waste management), but does neither include an administrative regional planning level nor regional planning instruments.

French planning tradition is based on the Napoleonic Code civil from 1804, which influenced the whole European history of law. France has a strong tradition of centralistic administration, which has been mainly opened no more than in 1981, when the process of regional strengthening was initiated by the French president Mitterrand (Robert, 1996).

Today, the French planning system is divided into four levels. Beside national and communal planning, regions and departments are also democratically legitimatised and perceive planning tasks, too. The main guidelines are developed by national planning institutions (eg. DATAR = Délégation à l'Aménagement Territoire et à l'Action Régionale) as well as national administration is responsible for co-ordination and adoption of all planning levels. The regions are responsible for the Regional Development Plans, which only give information about public investments within a period of five years and do not correspond to the connector function of the German instrument "Regional Plan". Though the departments do not feature own planning instruments, they are authorised to define guidelines for communal development. As mentioned above, French municipalities dispose of powerful authority to develop their own plans on municipal land use (Plan d'Occupation du Sol), which is comparable to the German Land Development Plan.

In contrast to the French and German planning systems, in Great Britain the level of regional planning is completely missing. We have to assume that only the Federal German System deals with such a strong instrument, which represents the connection between the Federal States on the one hand and the communities on the other hand.

## **THE DEVELOPMENT OF REGIONAL PLANNING UNTIL THE SECOND WORLD WAR**

The beginning of regional planning dates already from the years before the First World War. Uncoordinated and rapid extensions of built-up area –especially in urban agglomeration areas– are caused in urban development and technical-infrastructure deficiencies during the period of industrialisation as well as in insufficient urban planning. These gaps produced the demand on supra-communal concepts and planning.

Two planning organisations mark the commencement of this request (v. Hinuber/Okonnek, 1999):

a) *“Zweckverband Groß Berlin” (Special Purpose Association Greater Berlin)*

Between 1871 and 1910, the German capital Berlin extended from 0,9 to 3,7 million inhabitants. Increasing population meant a lot of structural problems and led to competition in planning concerning the restructuring of the whole area of Greater Berlin. In 1912, the results conducted mainly led to the formation of the municipal Special Purpose Association of Greater Berlin. The main objective was the implementation of integrative structures concerning traffic, water supply and return system, common areas, green spaces and garden cities. In 1920, this first planning association was –in the course of communal incorporations– replaced by the new administrative unit of the large-scale community Berlin, which overstrained all duties mentioned above.

b) *Siedlungsverband Ruhrkohlenbezirk (SVR) (Communal Association Ruhr Coal District)*

At the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the Ruhr District was one of the most populous and industrialised regions in Europe. In 1910 a Working Committee for proposals on harmonized development of green space and traffic was founded, but in 1912 they also presented a general settlement model. After the First World War political and structural troubles led in 1920 to the voluntary association of 17 towns and 11 counties to the SVR. One of its tasks was the designation of future built-up area, safeguarding green areas and the extension of the public transport system. For years the SVR had a pioneering role in regional planning. For political reasons the SVR lost its planning competence in 1975 in favour of three administrative districts.

During the Weimar Republic 30 other planning associations had been founded, mainly based on the voluntary amalgamation

of communities or administrative districts. Today – according to the actual comprehension - most of them might be called “regional planning federations”. In the 1930s they had been converted by the newly founded “Reichsstelle für Raumordnung” (RfR) into regional planning associations (“Landesplanungsstellen”). The RfR acted as a central national instance with extensive discretionary power. Objectives and contents of planning were politically determinate and strongly subordinated to national socialist ideology. Because of the Second World War most of the planning concepts, created until 1944, received no structural consequences.

## REGIONAL PLANNING IN GERMANY

After the end of the Second World War, especially in the strongly destroyed urban areas, many planning associations had been funded, mainly during the 1950s (e.g. the Communal Working Group Rhine-Neckar, including the surroundings of Stuttgart; in 1951; the Regional Planning Association Frankfurt/Main in 1962). They modelled themselves voluntarily on the interwar period’s planning associations, as well as a reactivation of most of the 1920s’ planning associations took place.

### Region - planning region - regional planning

The term “region” is transdisciplinary used in different ways and in different senses as well as in varied spatial dimensions. A generally binding definition does not exist.

In connection with territorial planning a “region” has to be understood as a spatial unit, different in size, and as a reference surface for regional plans.

The general acceptance of regional planning’s necessity resulted –after long and partly controversial discussions– in 1965 in the Federal Regional Planning Act and in binding implementation of planning on the scale of regions. Although the competence of regional planning is in the responsibility of the Federal States,

who provide the basis for “their” regional planning. This leads to huge disparities concerning scale, delimitation and organisation of planning regions as well as to the fact, that the planning regions feature different stages of development concerning the compilation of regional plans (figure 3).

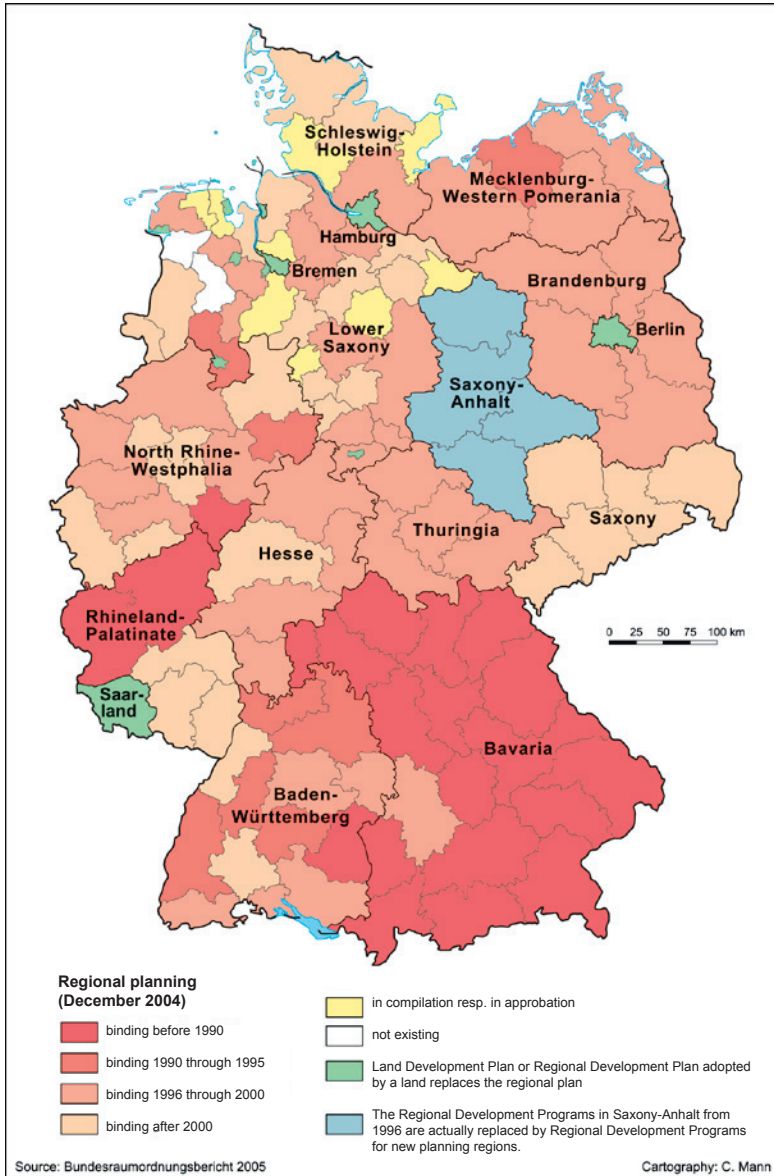


Figure 3. State of regional planning in Germany, December 2004.

## Position, challenge and organisation of regional planning

Within the system of German territorial planning regional planning has to be seen as the regional level of country planning (Schmitz, 2005). This means the role of mediator between planning on the small scale level of the Federal States and the large scale communal planning (figure 2). Except this intermediation regional planning has following challenges:

- Coordination between the Federal States and the communities (counter flow principle).
- Coordination concerning the location of future residential and industrial areas between neighbouring communities. In this context, transport lines, environmental aspects, ranking in the system of central places, future functions of the communities within the regional and interregional context, priorities in land use, tourism, nature conservation etc. play an important role.
- Integration of sectoral planning (e.g. national highways, landscape planning) in the regional plans under consideration of different interests between sectoral planning and communal politics and inhabitants (e.g. ring roads, garbage disposal).

This means that regional planning is committed to work out a supra-local and supra-sectoral plan for medium-term development period to develop the spatial structure of a region (Heinrichs, 1999). This plan has to be checked permanently to adapt its objectives to the recent development.

The Federal Regional Planning Act only regulates, that for all Federal States, which include several central places in the higher ranges, an implementation of a Regional Plans has to take place. At the same time urban agglomerations, which extend to the boundaries of two Federal States should have common regional planning.

Apart from that regional planning is in the sole competence of the Federal States. This causes:

- Remarkable differences in territorial extension and population in the 114 German planning regions: almost 50% of them have less than 0,5 million, 32% between 0,5 and 1 million and 19% more than 1 million inhabitants;
- Different terms for the plans: regional plan, regional territorial plan, territorial development plan etc. and
- Different forms of organisation and local ownership (Raumordnungsbericht, 2005).

Within the municipal organisation model, regional planning is executed by regional planning associations, which represent the voluntarily federation of administrative districts (“Kreise”), towns independent of a Kreis and municipalities (e.g. in Bavaria, Baden-Württemberg, Thuringia, Brandenburg, Saxony). In Lower Saxony, regional planning is directly executed by the administrative districts, which means a very strong municipal participation. At the same time, the lower-saxonian towns independent from a Kreis (e.g. Hanover, Brunswick, Osnabrück, Göttingen) perform their own regional planning; in these cases the Land Development Plan replaces the Regional Plan. In a similar way proceed the city states Berlin, Hamburg and Bremen. In very small Federal States, like Saarland, a very detailed Regional Development Plan adopted by a Land replaces the Regional Plan.

North Rhine-Westphalia and Hesse deal with regional planning associations, which are formed by municipal representatives, while the compilation of the Regional Plans is prepared by governmental units within the administrative districts of these “Länder”.

### **The instrument “Regional Plan”**

The most important instrument of regional planning is the Regional Plan (Raumordnungsbericht, 2005, p. 276). Its main objec-

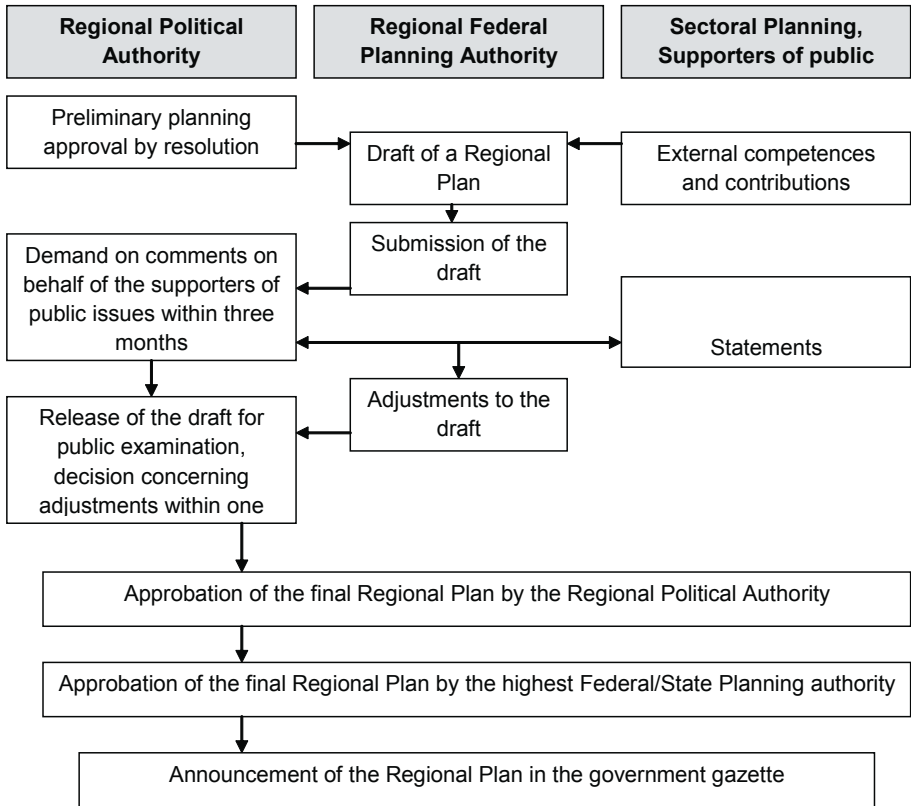


tive is the exertion of influence concerning the structure of urban development and economic structure within a planning region. This process of development is mainly defined by predetermined factors, e.g. physio-geographical parameters, location conditions, infrastructure, structure of population, economic force and almost a lot of decisions taken by enterprises, social groups/institutions (political parties, labour unions, chamber of commerce, action groups, nature conservation organisations etc.) and by individuals.

Within a Federal State the composition and structure of regional plans are similar, but between the “Länder” we may observe considerable differences. Only the main contents as well as the basic structure are comparable due to the guidelines given in the ROG (§7). These rules reflect the consensus between the “Länder” concerning the minimum content of regional plans. Therefore every regional plan includes commitments on land use patterns (areas for residential and industrial use), green areas (forest, agriculture, tourism, protection of water resources et.) and infrastructure (traffic, treatment and handling of waste, wind energy converter etc.).

As well as regional plans include the parameters of the Regional Development Plan adopted by a country, they integrate the presetting on sectoral planning like national highways, railroad lines, national parks etc. on the other hand, long-term municipal development interest have to be integrated. This means the –as already mentioned– act of mediation between the Federal States and the communities (see chapter 5.2). This role is mainly supported by comprehensive hearings and disclosure within the procedure of the plan’s draft (figure 4).

All regional plans include maps and explanations within a text component, which include all legal binding commitments for other public institutions. The plans refer to the present situation as well as to future land use, as it is approvable on the level of regional planning. The preparation of regional plans –as shown in figure 3– also refers to further updates. The regional plan gets its legal force and bindingness by publication in the government gazette of the concerned Federal State.



Source: author's own design.

**Figure 4.** A Regional Plan's preparation procedure

### Main subjects of regional plans

Main subjects of regional planning are commitments concerning the structure of urban development, infrastructure and green spaces (chapter 5.2; Raumordnungsbericht, 2005; Schmitz, 2005). To safeguard and to develop urban land use patterns, regional planning makes use of the following instruments:

- Definition of central places of lower centrality (centres on the two lowest levels). This definition has become

one of the most important organisation instruments and distribution keys. Not all municipalities within a region are similar adapted for further industrial development or extension of residential area. Urban growth depends on adequate connection to the transport system as well as on potential of area applicable for settlement. Municipalities with these conditions are foreseen as potential centres of development, hence they are allowed to extend their built-up areas for residential and industrial use. In contrast, spatial extension of municipalities without any centrality is restricted and concerns only “internal development”. If these principles are retained for several planning periods, a broad spatial differentiation between intra-regional growing, stagnating and shrinking zones takes place. Especially the shrinking zones might be foreseen for other common duties, e.g. as recreation areas or as nature protection zones.

- Definition of small scaled development axes. They are used as an instrument to handle small scaled building land specification. As communities along these axes are strengthened, demand on building land away from the axes is restricted.
- Precise identification of future settlement zones to restrict communal land use (in the Federal States Baden-Württemberg, Hessen, Niedersachsen, Nordrhein-Westfalen).

Within the regulations concerning green spaces, regional planning is distinguishing between a) multi-functional regulations (e.g. regional green corridors) and b) mono-functional regulations (e.g. safeguarding of ground-water, agriculture, nature protection, leisure, flood prevention). These zones are in the legal state of reserved areas with priority over other utilisations.

Regarding decisions about infrastructural traces or locations (wastewater treatment plant, garbage dumps, floodwater detention basins, high-voltage lines, etc.), the demands of the Regional De-

velopment Plan adopted by a country as well as those from sectoral planning are borrowed.

### **The role of landscape planning and environment protection**

The principles of territorial planning to ensure the functional capability of the ecosystem (§1 and §2 ROG) get mainly advanced and stated more precisely within the Federal Land Nature Conservation Laws. Their manifestation can be found in the so-called “Landschaftsprogramm” (landscape programme) and the regional “Landschaftsrahmenplan” (landscape framework plan).

The landscape framework plans base on a detailed inventory and evaluation of the ecological fundamentals and actual uses of areas with importance for the protection of nature. It describes existing impairments of nature or landscape and suggests requested protective measures. But we have to consider that the integration of landscape framework plans into the regional plans varies from one Federal State to the other, e.g.:

- the landscape framework plan is part of the regional plan and therefore has bindingness (Bavaria),
- the applicable parts of the landscape framework plan is to be integrated in the Regional Plan; the parts, which have been integrated, get bindingness (Baden-Württemberg, Saxony),
- the landscape framework plan is created by the authorities responsible for nature conservation, but has no binding force (Lower Saxony),
- the municipal landscape plans are directly deduced from the (small-scaled) landscape program, the regional level of landscape framework planning has been disestablished (Hesse).

These examples refer to the unsatisfying integration of nature protection within regional planning. But on the other hand,

landscape framework planning plays an important role in context with the identification of landscape and nature conservation areas.

Recently, environmental protection on regional level has obtained a new, preventative component: the environmental audit. This instrument documents imposingly the influence of EU-guidelines on national planning law. The guideline 2001/42/EG from 27<sup>th</sup> of June 2001 (see chapter 2) concerns the examination of consequences, which might take place for environmental development, if specific planning measures are foreseen. 2004 these guidelines have been integrated in German law, which means, that also regional plans have to take an environmental audit.

### New instruments for regional planning

During the last decades, regions have become more important for economic development promotion – in a national context as well as on an international level. In this process new planning instruments have mainly contributed to a more flexible and target-oriented regional development promotion. These instruments support main objectives as

- the advanced coordination of territorial planning and sectoral planning in urban agglomerations;
- the preparation/compilation of regional development concepts for future strategies and measures as well as for stronger application-oriented conception of regional plans;
- the support by regional management and marketing to enhance the implementation of the conceptual objectives and
- the initiation resp. the improvement of collaboration between the municipalities within a region or between two neighboured regions by regional conferences or communal networking.

The supporters of regional planning more and more incorporate main public and socio-economic actors (public organisations and associations, enterprises, action groups) into the planning process. The main objective of this integration is the improvement of decision's legitimation to facilitate the realisation of planning.

### **The Regional Land Development Plan**

The legal basis for the compilation of common land development plans in neighboured municipalities has been established in 1998 (§ 9, ROG). It opens the chance for communities, which are part of an urban agglomeration area, to create a common planning instrument for effective land use.

This common "Regional Land Development Plan" replaces the individual land development plans of these communities and includes common sectoral planning, e.g. for garbage disposal and water management, as well as common use of these equipments. The coordination of planning and implementation duties might be seen as a contribution to a more sustainable land use and saving of expenses.

### **The Regional Development Concept**

Since the early 1990s there has been an increasing demand on the support of regional planning by regional initiatives and action programmes. Since 1998, the most important approaches, the Regional Development Concepts ("Regionales Entwicklungskonzept" = REK) and the urban networks (Chapter 5.4.4), are part of the Federal Regional Planning Act. Especially the REKs have become very popular, although they have no legally bindingness. Independent from the regional characteristics, they feature some common attributes:

- the main objective is to influence regional development by administrative/political measures and cooperation,

- the concepts concern mostly parts of a region,
- the measures are balanced concerning their priorities and financial options.

Due to the enhancement of regional collaboration the often criticised implementation deficit might be minimized. Often the REKs lead to a regional consensus concerning the extrapolation of regional plans.

### **Regional management and regional marketing**

In this context regional management is not defined as microeconomic management but includes mainly challenges as

- coordination of different regional actors to implement regional development concepts;
- recruitment of enterprises, generation of projects and of financial support (Federal State, Federal Republic of Germany, European Union);
- (successful) positioning of the planning region within the competition between regions and
- support of a regional “collective sense”.

Supporting the regional development is the central activity of regional management. It is based on the Regional Development Concepts and includes public relations as well as the support of the corporate identity, collection, documentation and intermediation of experiences and strategies. In collaboration with private enterprises, regional management is often involved in the implementation of foundation centres, in innovation transfer or in tourism.

Interactions and functions of regional marketing and regional management often are overlapped. Generally regional marketing is stronger focussed in supporting regional identification, specific regional qualification and economically oriented regional presentation in context with regional competitiveness.

Today, most of the planning regions dispose of a regional management office, but this has to be seen as an informal instrument, not yet integrated in legal binding territorial planning.

### **Regional conferences and urban networks**

Since the 1990s, both instruments are supported by the action programme “Exemplary Projects in Territorial Planning”, supported by the Federal Ministry for Traffic, Construction and Housing. Within this programme, it is intended to ameliorate the regional and interregional cooperation as well as the support of development concepts (Raumordnungsbericht, 2000).

The informal instrument “Regional conferences” bases on the regional cooperation between public institutions (e.g. municipalities, confederations, universities) and local private stakeholders (enterprises). Within the meetings, working groups discuss proposals for regional development, attend the regional marketing measures or initiate activities in external communication.

Urban networks might be understood as forms of cooperation between cities or neighboured regions. The members of such a network act as partners to handle specific duties. Generally, experiences in urban networking need to be seen in a nuanced light. Till this day, they mainly did not exceed the level of meetings and information exchange. Within the location competition, urban agglomeration grant priority to the support of their own local attractiveness instead of disregarding their interests. The only exception are urban networks created by the regulatory measures of the Federal States.

### **AND THE OUTCOME OF REGIONAL PLANNING?**

German regional planning –as an institutional binding instrument on the scale of planning regions and as a link between Federal States and the municipalities– is unique within the Western European planning systems. It represents an important connector



between the general planning parameters, given by the Regional Development Plan adopted by a country, and the individual and precise conceptions of the municipalities. As long as the main municipal sources of income are created by tax revenues (trade tax, income tax), the communities are interested in increasing preparation of land for residential and industrial building. This is contradictory to the Federal State's objective to economise land use and to avoid undamped extension of built-up area. In this context regional planning plays a central role. Although the legal binding decisions concerning land use are taken by the communities, they need – in context with their individual interests – regimentation. Regional planning adopts the role of moderation between municipal demands and general land use guidelines. The Regional Plans therefore include a harmonized development concept for settlement and green space.

But at the same time, regional planning is criticised for several reasons. Representatives of an ecological planning concept claim for stronger land use requirements and therefore call regional planning “ineffective”. On the other hand, interventionists ask for more deregulation, claiming, that in the worst case of regulation and increasing complexity planning instruments loose their effectiveness.

In practice, political and economic interests often have been stronger than planning principles, especially concerning employment and location demands of international enterprises in urban agglomerations. Such necessities even concern regional planning objectives, which might be sometimes overruled. (3)

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