



Regional Planning in Germany

Germany

Mr. Hans J. Cassens

www.shahrsazionline.com

Regional Planning in Germany

Some key aspects and experiences

Background

Regional planning in Germany follows the federal system of the country. While the federal government has set frame conditions in form of a skeleton law with principles and guidelines, it is under the authority of the federal states to set up specific laws regulating regional planning within their jurisdictions. Therefore there is a wide variety of the organisation of regional planning.

Each state of the Federal Republic of Germany has its own state spatial plan, based on their respective planning laws, setting the frame conditions for the regional plans.

Most states have transferred a major role in regional planning to local governments. The state government through the respective ministry is exercising supervisory power and is the approving authority.

Organisation

There are two main differences in how to organise the regional planning system: Smaller states have decided to formulate regional plans through the state authority of spatial development. In most states however, regional planning associations, formed by local governments, are responsible for the formulation of regional plans. Through this mechanism local governments are participating actively in the formulation of regional plans and take ownership in its objectives and resource allocation. The planning associations are equipped with technical staff and chaired by its members, the participating local authorities.

However, through the state spatial plan, the state governments have formulated binding objectives (area specific) and principles, which also serve as a framework for the regional plans.

Contents of Regional Planning

Generally spoken, the structure of state spatial plans and regional plan follow the same categories. While the state spatial plan is dealing with the allocation of resources that need statewide coordination, the regional plans specify these allocations and add those that are of regional importance respective which are of supra-local significance.

In recent years there has been a wide discussion on the contribution of regional planning to sustainable development through effective allocation of natural and financial resources within a region.

The major contents of regional plans are:

- ❑ The urban hierarchy and development axes as a major skeleton on urban development in the regional planning area
- ❑ The allocation of such infrastructure that is of regional importance
- ❑ Industrial development areas of regional importance
- ❑ Certain types of predominant land uses, e.g. for nature conservation, agriculture, tourism and recreation, mining etc.

Some key aspects and experiences

The main function of regional planning is coordination of different sector plans of state agencies as well as of (preparatory) land use plans of local governments.

Therefore regional planning can not be done in closed-door sessions of planners but it needs a very effective mechanism of bringing the different ideas and objectives on spatial development from various agencies together.

To use regional plans as guiding documents on spatial development, they need to have the backing of the respective government authorities. Beside good horizontal coordination among sector agencies and a strong approving body there need to be a well defined system on approval procedures ensuring the participation of the respective sectors.

The strong role of local governments in formulating regional plans has proved appropriate to achieve ownership and therefore compatibility with locally prepared land use plans. Regional planning associations in form of a joint organisation of local governments are a form of inter-local cooperation that can be very effective since it can influence decision-making on resource allocations at a rather early stage of planning.

The German Constitution guarantees autonomy for local governments in matters that are purely of local nature. This is a principle highly sensitive to any supra-local planning. Therefore it is important to carefully consider how much of land development needs regional coordination and what matters can be left to local governments. The attempt to regulate too much on a regional planning level can easily lead to the rejection of the whole system.

Taking into account the difficult task of finding appropriate compromises among different stakeholders within the planning region there is the serious danger that the planning process takes too long to make regional planning a realistic tool of more effective regional resource allocation. Planning processes tend to stretch over several years when sector issues have changed and once found compromises have to be "negotiated" again.

Therefore a sufficient flexibility is an important factor to efficient regional planning.

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From a German Experience:

Regional Planning is more coordination than planning; facilitation of a dialog among different stakeholders and reaching compromises towards sustainable development is the main work

There is no implementing agency for regional plans, but an agency pattern agreeing on common objectives for their respective action

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Some data about Germany

Population: 82,260,000 in the year 2000
(increase of 0.1% from 1999)

Land area: 357,020 sq. km (Pop. Density of 230 per sq. km)
with:

Urban area, transportation:	42,050 sq. km or 11.8 %
Agriculture:	193,140 sq. km or 54.1 %
Forest areas:	104,900 sq. km or 29.4 %

Source: Federal Statistic Office, Population data of 2000, spatial date of 1997

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Germany mapped

The Federal Structure with 16 States sets the frame for Regional Planning

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Types of Cross-Sector Spatial Plans

- Spatial development plans for the states
- Spatial development plans for regions within a state
- For city states, the preparatory land use plan serves as regional plan
- Land Use Plan, preparatory - for the whole city/municipal area, binding - for selected parts

➔ There are further joint regional planning activities to coordinate spatial development between city states and their neighboring states as well as between adjacent regions of neighboring countries

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Legal Frame Conditions for Regional Planning

- Federal Structure of the Country, Skeleton Law on Spatial Development on the federal level
- State Laws on Spatial Development
- Local Autonomy as stated in the Constitution, Art. 28



Regional Planning is under the authority of the states

The Federal Government has formulated principles (binding) and guidelines (high priority) for the regional development

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Political and Administrative Levels in Germany relevant to Regional Planning

- Federal Government: Ministry of Transport, Building and Housing
- State Governments: 16 states, responsible ministry varies from state to state
- Administrative Districts (Regierungsbezirke, not in all states established)
- Districts with an elected political leadership (Landkreise)
- Cities and other Municipalities, in most cases act in behalf of the states to formulate regional plans through associations

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Organisation of Regional Planning

- The organisation of regional planning is under the authority of the states
- Two basically different models are established:
 - ➡ The state is exercising regional planning
 - ➡ Local governments have formed regional planning associations which are exercising regional planning on behalf of the state

(The second option gives spaces for many varieties e.g. the role of the districts etc.)

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Federal - State - Local Context

Federal Ministry of Transport,
Building and Housing

Minister - Conference on Spatial
Development, comprising of all 16
state ministers responsible for spatial
planning

State Ministry responsible for spatial
planning - this varies from state to
state

Planning assembly of the members of
the Regional Planning Association

Federal framework
and visions

Inter-state
coordination

State Spatial
Plans

Regional Plans

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Example of Regional Planning Regions



The Federal Republic of
Germany



The four Planning
Regions in the state of
Mecklenburg
-Vorpommern

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Role and Core Tasks of Regional Planning

- ➔ Coordination of spatially relevant developments and land uses in a regional context:

 - Minimisation of conflicts of incompatible development

 - Optimisation of synergies of resource allocations

- ➔ Spatial specification of regionally important frame conditions for local government's land use planning

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Main Subjects of Regional Planning

- Urban hierarchy, urban functions and major development axes
- Infrastructure of regional importance
- Industrial development of regional importance
- Areas of regional importance for selected uses like
 - Groundwater resources and surface water
 - Specific Uses, e.g. Wind Energy Parks
 - Nature Conservation
 - Recreation and tourism
 - Forestry, Agriculture
 - Mining

Area allocations
mostly follow a
two-level system of
priority

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Regional Planning, Input - Output, exemplified

Federal Skeleton Law on Spatial Development
 State Law on Spatial Planning / Development
 State Spatial Development Plan

Various sector plans,
 e.g.:

- Transportation →
- Water Management →
- Natural Resources →
- Education →
- Energy →
- Local Land Use Plans →



The Output is not a new design of a region but a coordination of different land demands and resource allocations

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Core Actors on Regional Planning, exemplified

Supervision, approval:

State ministry on spatial development:
 Setting frame conditions,
 Approving state institution for regional plans

Authors:

Regional Planning Association:
 Mandated authors of regional plans

Inputs, participation, implementation:

- Districts and district-independent cities, municipalities
- Municipal associations
- All concerned sector planning agencies
- Neighboring regional planning associations
- Other concerned public agencies:
 Mandated to participate in the planning process

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Some selected Key Aspects and Experiences

The main function of Regional Plans is the coordination of different sector plans of various agencies as well as of locally formulated land use plans. This needs a very well defined and effective mechanism of coordination

Sufficient support of the concerned agencies for the approved Regional Plan is a precondition for its implementation. Approval procedures need to ensure the participation of all major concerned agencies

A strong role of local governments in formulating regional plans has proved appropriate to achieve ownership and therefore compatibility with local land use plans

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Within a decentralised system of planning, sufficient space needs to be allocated to local governments to decide about land development within their boundaries. Therefore Regional Plans need to be strictly limited to those issues which are of regional importance

Coordinating multi-level and multi-sectoral affairs is a time consuming task. However, timeliness is a crucial factor also with the regional planning system. Therefore there need to be sufficient flexibility to absorb small changes in land development without questioning the whole plan

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Spatial impact assessment

- A complementary instrument for a preparatory assessment of regionally relevant projects.
- In its core a moderation process to find the most acceptable solution for a regional relevant project
- It does not substitute the formal approval procedure but aims to check in an early stage the spatial impact. This however could lead to a rejection of a project.