

Cooperation between federal states in land use management – a successful framework for sustainable metropolitan development in Germany?

0. Preface

In accordance with the RIO-Agenda of 1992 sustainable land use management is again on the political agenda worldwide. In Europe various activities can be noticed since decades. Up to now the effectiveness of strategies and instruments seems to be low in metropolitan regions as well as in rural peripheries (EEA 2007, p. 116). In consequence urban sprawl is a common phenomenon.

To reach the targets of sustainability new ways of dealing with land use pressures are to be established. In general public cooperation or public-private-cooperation is an overall accepted way for solving problems in spatial development and land use. The aim of this paper is to analyse current forms of cooperation in land use management between federal states and to discuss options for enhancing cooperation to target sustainable metropolitan development.

Main questions to answer are what types of cooperation currently exist, how successful these cooperation are and in which way governance structures and instruments could be evolved. The findings base on results of two projects dealing with land use management, realised by the author, financed by the German Ministry of Education and Research and several Federal State Authorities (Länder).

1. Land use planning in Germany

Since the beginning of industrialisation in Europe – and in Germany as well – specific instruments for land use policy have been elaborated and are in use. Especially spatial planning activities have been cultivated in a bottom-up process in high industrialised regions, e.g. in Berlin-Brandenburg or the Ruhr Area.

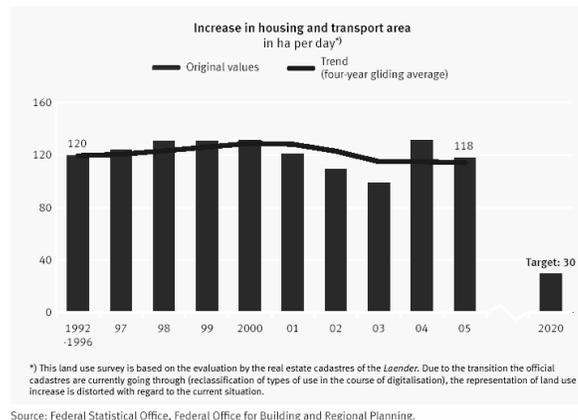
Whereas in the anglo-american planning tradition national and local political decisions in combination with informal regional strategies are characteristic (see Cullingworth/Nadin 2006, p.1ff), in Germany (as well as in France) formalised planning is a typical mark (Hinüber/Okonek 1999, p.7ff.). This system, strongly based on public administration activities, was re-established after the Second World War in the western part of Germany (Federal Republic of Germany) and evolved to a sophisticated planning system, including aspects of environmental planning and formal co-ordination with sectoral planning. Main instruments for influencing land use are plans and programmes on federal state level, regional / subregional level and local level.

During the last few years on subregional level additional informational, cooperative and network based activities have been established (Fürst/Knieling 2002) to realise so called “regional governance”. But on federal state level (Länder) only horizontal two-way information exchange and formal coordination of spatial planning activities still dominates, accompanied by low coordination with regional policy and sectoral development activities.

2. Problems in German land use policy

Up to now the use of all applied instruments influencing land use was not really successful to reduce the growth of areas for settlement and infrastructure substantially. Although a high amount of derelict land is available, open green spaces are utilised primarily (Einig 2003, Federal Statistical Office of Germany 2006).

Figure 1: Growth of built-up and traffic areas in Germany (Federal Statistical Office of Germany 2006)



Also the shift towards new instruments of information and coordination, new strategic ways as well as the discussion of economic instruments has not led to decreased demand of greenfields. Intensified redevelopment activities on local and subregional level or transnational cooperation (Grimski 2006) have only slowed down the growth of settlement areas. In consequence the growth of built-up areas is one major deficit in the efforts towards sustainability (see figure 2).

Figure 2: Use of environment for economic purposes in Germany (source: <http://www.destatis.de/jetspeed/portal/cms/Sites/destatis/Internet/EN/Navigation/Statistics/Environment/EnvironmentalEconomicAccounting/EnvironmentalEconomicAccounting.psm1>; 30.6.2008)

Use of the environment for economic purposes

Change in 2005 compared to 1995 in %



¹ Recent year 2006.

² Recent year 2004.

³ Change in 2005 as against 1996.

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3. New ways of cooperation since the 1990s

Since the 1990s in Germany cooperation has been highlighted as an effective strategy in spatial development on regional and subregional scale (Knieling/Fürst/Danielzyk 2003). Nowadays cooperation is an overall accepted way for solving problems in spatial development and land use. By definition cooperation means collaboration in a complex way by developing and implementing common visions, targets, projects and establishing information and participation networks.

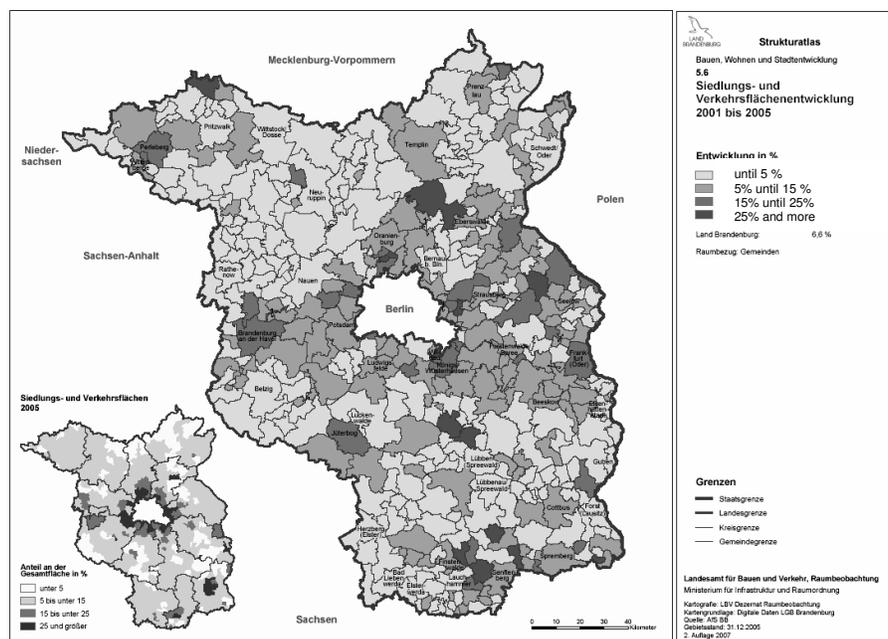
Whereas in Germany in spatial development and land use on local and subregional level various forms of cooperation exist, at Federal States level (Länder) – apart from simple information about plans and projects – cooperation is primarily realised in spatial planning and in working groups focussed on specific administrative responsibilities.

Besides the general coordination of Federal States policies in a specific committee (MKRO, Conference of the Ministers for Spatial Planning), *in spatial planning* two types of cooperation between federal planning authorities are to be differentiated in general. One type is a strongly formalised form of cooperation, e.g. in Berlin-Brandenburg, where one common authority is responsible for spatial planning in two Federal States. The other type is much more flexible and uses primarily informal cooperation like the metropolitan region Hamburg. *Administrative working groups* exist in accordance to specific administrative necessities, like soil protection (Landesarbeitsgemeinschaft Boden LABO), water protection (Landesarbeitsgemeinschaft Wasser LAWA), nature conservation (Landesarbeitsgemeinschaft Naturschutz LANA) or integrated coastal zone management (IKZM).

At first sight all these forms of cooperation are successful solutions, because the administrative units established fruitfully cooperation in an institutionalised form, minimising transaction costs. They are able to deal with different types of challenges in their region. Especially the formalised comprehensive spatial planning in the Berlin-Brandenburg region is seen as a model of success for metropolitan regions (SenSUT / MUNR 1998), reducing the negative impacts of competition between urban, suburban and peripheral areas (race to the bottom in environmental standards, negative effects of bargaining etc.).

But on closer inspection these forms of cooperation could not stop further growth of settlement and infrastructure areas by defining framework conditions or realising specific measures. Especially in cooperation areas growth of settlement is not significant under average.

Figure 2: Growth of built-up and traffic area in Berlin-Brandenburg (source: www.lbv.brandenburg.de/753.htm, 30.6.2008)



4. A new way of cooperation between federal states

Reflecting these deficits, a new way of debating political and administrative strategies and interacting in networks has been established during the last two years. A new national research programme (REFINA; www.refina-info.de) for supporting new projects and discussing new ways of sustainable land use has been started. Taking the advantage of this supportive political environment, a new working group was founded by four federal states (Bavaria, Thuringia, Saxony and Brandenburg) named “land use management in regions of transition” to debate strategies in influencing land use for organising innovation. The activities are explicitly embedded in a new research network where discussion processes about adequate targets, projects and networks take place. The working group uses knowledge and experience of the whole REFINA research network for organising workshops, reflecting the specific challenges of regions in transition.

Figure 3: Federal States of Bavaria, Thuringia, Saxony and Brandenburg in Germany (own source)



In difference to existing cooperative activities and structures the working group is problem-oriented and focus on specific instruments. Although a core group of participants exists, they are not fixed on specific administrative units for cooperation. Using information management as a starting point, currently former informal cooperation is more and more institutionalised and constitutes a basis to start further activities for coordinating federal state policies.

The working group is an example for an adequate reflection of multi-level-governance in Europe and in Germany as well (in general Benz/Scharpf/Zintl 1992), combining several

strategic views (planning, entrepreneurial, learning, environmental, configurative; cp. Mitzberg et al. 1998, p.5) and realising strategic alliances (Bea/Haas 2001, p.425).

In practice the mismatch between functional areas / networks and administrative units (problem of fit) will be reduced, because more effective regional solutions can be elaborated adequately. One main instrument of the working group is to organise learning from good practice by workshops and in this way to support innovation diffusion. One additional effect of such activities is a higher acceptance of new ways in land use policy (internal and external) and a greater public awareness of the problem of settlement growth.

In theory (see ILS 2002) the next steps of the working group would be to enlarge cooperation structures and to find ways for solving problems of higher complexity. In reality the working group even started more difficult projects and pushes ahead the institutionalisation and the definition of common framework conditions.

Currently the activities are focussed on the high complex land use situations in declining regions or metropolitan regions in stagnation (Berlin-Brandenburg) where win-win-situations in land use are an exception. Focussing the work on growing metropolitan regions to transfer knowledge and steps towards innovation will be the next challenge for the working group and the embedding research network.

5. Outlook

During the last few years several activities for improving land use management in metropolitan regions have been discussed or realised. Whereas on local and regional level new forms to influence settlement and infrastructure development have to be stated and new ways of "regional governance" are in discussion, the cooperation between Federal States (Länder) was affected by conventional interaction. The new established working group "land use management in regions of transition" opens the opportunity for a more effective way reducing urban sprawl and settlement development especially in metropolitan regions. This problem-based approach could also support innovation in administrative structures preparing the involved actors to solve new complex problems like adaptation to climate change.

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