A Contribution to a Sustainable Development of Rural Areas by Implementation of New Planning Instruments and Local Government Reorganisation

XXIV FIG International Conference Sydney
April 11th – 16th 2010

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Agenda

- Motivation
- Germany’s state structure
- Local government reorganisation
- Example: Odenwaldkreis
- Conclusion
Motivation

- Public debt due to
  - high social and personal costs
  - the investment-related measures and the resulting interest
  - decreasing tax revenue

- Demographic change
  - Shrinking population and remaining duty to perform tasks
  → Increasing costs per capita

Rural areas

- Rural areas are affected by the demographic change in particular
  - Declining growth
  - Aging population and
  - Smaller cohort of youths

→ Less available jobs
→ Decrease in services offered by schools, stores and cultural opportunities accompany the decline in population
Land “consumption“

- Land “consumption” for settlement and traffic in spite of the decreasing population
- High costs for settlement expansion and maintaining the existing infrastructure
- Vacancy of buildings

→ Find new ways to affect the settlement

Understanding of the state

- The public tasks, their financing and organization are changing: fewer citizens face higher costs for social benefits and maintenance of infrastructure

- Understanding of state
  - Ensuring state, formerly welfare state
  - Plenty tasks of general interest
  - Particular tasks of the municipalities

→ Possibility to reduce costs due to administration
Structure of the German state

- Different levels of the Federal State

- Each level of the State
  - Parliament
  - Administration supporting the politicians

- Aim: Reduction of staff

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Changing the structure

Parliament → Administration → District → Municipalities → New authority

Example: Odenwaldkreis

Germany

Hesse

Odenwaldkreis

Frankfurt am Main

Heidelberg
Savings: Politics

- Currently: 15 councilors, two heads of the district authority
- Salaries together: about 96,000 € per month

- One single authority would have to pay two councilors with at all about 16,000 € per month
  → about 88,000 € savings per month possible

Savings: Politics

- Currently: 315 members of parliaments, the costs average about 12,500 € per head and year
  → In total 3.9 Mio. € per year

- The new authority: 45 representative with about 560,000 € per year
  → About 3.3 Mio. € savings per year possible
Staff Savings

- Employees today: 1,110

- No modified or additional tasks of the new authority

- A town with a comparable tasks and number of citizens (Darmstadt) has 695 employees

Development of settlement

- External development (at the outskirts of town) and occurrences of brownfields inside the town
  → Settlement is neither compact nor attractive
  → Expenditure for new infrastructure increases enormously

- However: New zoning of residential areas could eventually have more advantages than preservation
Counterbalance of new buildings

- New housing estates might be offset against existing land-use areas with a high vacancy rate.
- The counterbalance has to include the evaluation of
  - the quality of the existing streets or areas with a high vacancy rate (market value)
  - the expected costs for maintenance, repair and operations of the buildings and the infrastructure
  - the values of the ensembles or single buildings for identification in terms of landmarks for example.
- Likely effects by the new building area have to be pointed out and assessed

Advantages of one single authority

- More reasonable development: regional development
- Flexibility in measures: split of function
- Flexibility in time: Opportunity to implement measures if and where they have to be performed
  - Clearing as counterbalance for any impact at a later date
Conclusion

- Benefits: Savings and implementation of new instruments including
  - a development and planning on behalf of the whole region
  - an authority able to compensate the local differences in function, demographic change etc.
  - avoidance of redundancies (plans, work etc.)
  - efficiency due to specialisation of the staff.

Conclusion

- Alternatives have to be considered (principle of proportionality)
- Experiences gained by former territorial reforms shows furthermore the need of collaboration to solve conflicts
- Services which have to be offered at every borough of the new authority could be performed by a “mobile administration”
- Way forward: The balancing has to be standardised
Thank You!

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