

International experts discuss the land question in Germany

The Academy of Spatial Planning and Research (ARL) facilitates an international debate on land policy with experts from academia, planning practice and policy in an explorative workshop, 29.-30. August 2019 in Mannheim

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Press Release

Municipal land management and private property rights are at the core of the land use question. For the first time for many years, the question of how to deal with land in Germany raises international academic attention.

- The shortage of affordable housing in urban areas triggers a debate about strategic land policy in Germany, although this topic was hitherto dormant in the public debate. Innovative solutions like rental price restrictions or expropriation are currently discussed in planning practice and policy.
- Whilst there is a housing shortage in the urban centres, suburban single-family house areas continue to grow in the landscape. Accordingly, the conversion of open landscapes for transport infrastructure and settlement areas is hardly slowed down – despite the goal for substantial land thrift in Germany.

These challenges are part of the land use question, that is the question of how policy in general and especially spatial planning should deal with land ownership. The problem is now so pressing in Germany that even at the national political level a debate has started. A governmental Expert Commission on the Long-term Provision of Building Land and Land Use Policy (Building Land Commission) has been established.

What can Germany learn from land policy experience in its neighbouring countries, and how can the new strategy for German land policy that has been suggested by the Building Land Commission be evaluated from an academic and international perspective? Although many of the other countries face similar challenges as Germany, many countries adopt very different approaches, including public value capture in Switzerland; the introduction of new instruments in the Czech Republic; and active land policy in the Netherlands. As part of the exploratory workshop, international experts from academia and practice will discuss the various approaches in order to reflect on German land policy and to promote evidence-based policy advice. In addition, further topics and sub-topics with relevance for land policy research and practice will be identified in order to establish a broader dialogue.

The Federal Ministry of the Interior, Building and Community shows interest in the topic. Director General Monika Thomas will attend the workshop and report on the results of the Building Land Commission.

Following the exploratory workshop, the Academy of Spatial Planning and Research (ARL) will consider the establishment of an international working group to strengthen international co-operation and visibility in this area.

The exploratory workshop is organized by Assoc. Prof. Dr. Thomas Hartmann (Wageningen University, NL) and Dr. Andreas Hengstermann (Bern University, CH). International experts from academia, planning practice and policy will present their perspectives. These include: Prof. Dr. Rachele Alterman (Technion, Haifa, IL), Prof. Janet Askew (ECTP-CEU, UK), Prof. Dr. Edwin Buitelaar (PBL & Utrecht University, NL), Prof. Dr. Sonja Guelton (Université Paris-Est Créteil, FR), Bianca Hauer (Regional Planning Authority of the region Rhein-Neckar, Mannheim, DE), Assoc. Prof. Dr. Hans Leinfelder (KU Leuven, BE), Prof. Dr. Dirk Löhr (University of Applied Science, Trier, DE), Prof. Dr. Stéphane Nahrath (Université de Lausanne, CH), Dr. Claus Peinemann (Regional Planning Authority of the region Rhein-Neckar, Mannheim, DE), Assoc. Prof. Dr. Walter Seher (University of Natural Resources and Life Sciences (BOKU), Vienna, AT), Dr. Andreas Stefansky (ARL, Hannover, DE), Director General Monika Thomas (Federal Ministry of the Interior, Building and Community, Berlin, DE), Christoph Trinemeier (Regional Planning Authority of the region Rhein-Neckar, Mannheim, DE), and Dr. Eliška Vejchodská (JEP-University, Ústí nad Labem, CZ).

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