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Résumé and Outlook

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RÉSUMÉ AND OUTLOOK

The preceding chapters have clearly shown the starting points and lines of development of cities and urban systems in Germany and France in their thematic spectrum. Under consideration of different types of cities and different planning systems, the socio-economic and demographic backgrounds as well as the political conditions of the current structural and functional transformation in both countries have been demonstrated. Common as well as divergent aspects of urban change and future challenges for spatial planning and urban and regional development have been made clear. In particular, the importance of the German-French border regions for harmonised spatial development in both countries and, indeed, for the entire Central European region has been underlined.

In spite of different theoretical concepts, guiding objectives and the distinctive institutional design of the planning and spatial development systems in France and Germany, a paradigm shift towards a more governance-oriented, i.e. participatory and democratic, understanding of planning has occurred in the planning cultures of both countries in recent years. The pace and specific characteristics of this shift differed between the two countries and, in retrospect, it is clear that this development is undoubtedly more established in Germany than in France.

More than in the past, urban and regional development policy is understood as requiring cooperation between the public and private actors involved. At the same time, it is a task that can only be fulfilled through goal-oriented cooperation between different planning and decision-making levels in the form of integrated planning processes. Increasingly, urban development requires thinking and acting in changing regional and urban functional areas. However, the different ideas of planning that have developed over time have given rise to differences in the traditional planning systems and the socio-political values associated with them. This manifests itself in differences both in classical approaches to planning and in current trends in the development processes in both countries, e.g. with regard to the decentralisation of decision-making levels or the overcoming of sectoral planning frameworks.

In France, the development of the urban system is based on a commitment to the balanced development of the country's sub-regions, while in Germany the emphasis is on ensuring the 'equivalence of living conditions'. These commitments are linked to social megatrends that impact both sides of the Rhine: digitalisation, new mobility, the changing worlds of work and lifestyles. They are reflected in urban development and create new perspectives involving needs-oriented urban qualities and urban-regional functional spaces. Both cities and rural areas are affected by changing values. Demographic change, above all migration, and climate change, loss of biodiversity and many other factors are creating challenges that both countries have to face. In addition, the COVID-19 pandemic has affected the development of cities and urban systems in hitherto unknown ways. Indeed, the pandemic has confronted some metropolitan residents with the difficult experience of living and working in sometimes

cramped housing, while cultural amenities, large urban parks or gatherings have been out of reach (Brajon 2020). Conversely, those who had previously commuted daily to the main employment centres of metropolitan areas have experienced a more equal balance between personal and professional life as a result of the pandemic. The hypothesis – put forward particularly during the pandemic by the media – that a higher quality of life will henceforth be possible not only in big cities but also in small and medium-sized towns, has been largely confirmed. In both France and Germany it is especially the medium-sized cities that show remarkable demographic growth. The changes in the world of employment and the organisation of public services brought about by the pandemic may have implications that could be crucial for future urban and regional development, e.g. for land management, building use and neighbourhood revitalisation. New strategies thus need to be found to effectively tackle these trends and challenges.

Metropolises and large cities have long since ceased to be the sole drivers of regional development. Medium-sized towns and cities (in Germany also small towns) are increasingly proving to be places of innovation and economic stability. In both countries – despite divergent approaches to definition in Germany and France –, they also have an impact on the development of rural areas. Currently, in German as well as in French spatial planning, urban-rural regions beyond the metropolises are also attracting attention. At the same time, they are increasingly understood as cooperation areas with their own specific characteristics. In both countries, it is becoming clear that decision making takes place here in a different way than in metropolitan areas. Academic debates in France and Germany have included consideration of suitable forms of organisation that provide efficient management and decision making, and discussion about suitable institutional frameworks for urban-regional cooperation areas. In the future there will continue to be virulent questions about the limits of the democratic legitimacy of decision making that is undertaken outside established administrative structures in such cooperation arenas. Particularly in view of the different planning systems in Germany and France, exchanges of experience across the borders can help to find local answers and solutions that are adapted to the problem at hand within the framework of future governance.

Last but not least, EU and international policy – with the New Leipzig Charter (EU 2020, see BBSR 2021a), the New Urban Agenda (UN 2016, see BBSR 2017), the New Territorial Agenda 2030 (EU 2020) and the International Urban Agenda (UN 2016) – have set programmatic frameworks for urban and regional development and urban planning. All these documents and agreements formulate clear mandates for national urban and territorial policies to concretise and implement the agreed guiding principles in terms of content, process and organisation. The EU's 'Green Deal' (Europäische Kommission 2020) with its climate protection and adaptation targets for the EU area goes beyond this and once again reveals the breadth of the policy field in which urban development will take place in the future, in both Germany and France, and indeed, throughout Europe.

In recent years, Germany and France have already responded to many of these demands in different ways and with different emphases. Thus, despite a federal (Germany) or still strongly centralised (France) state structure, approaches to

balancing territorial development can be identified in both countries. The focus is not only on the development of large metropolitan areas, but also on the development of medium-sized and small towns (the latter mainly in Germany) as locations for public services and the economy. The guiding goals of the ‘New European Leipzig Charter’ (BBSR 2021a) are reflected in current funding programmes for urban development and building culture, including in Germany, for example, the programme *Städtebauförderung* (urban development promotion) (BMI 2021) and in France, for example, the programmes *Action coeur de ville* (Heart of Town – City Centre Action) and *Petites villes de demain* (Small Towns of Tomorrow) (Ministère de cohésion des territoires et des relations avec des collectivités territoriales 2019 a; b). The *Modellvorhaben der Raumordnung* (MORO – Model Project of Spatial Planning) ‘Strengthening cross-border components in spatial development and spatial plans: two Franco-German planning games’ (BBSR 2021b), which was launched under German leadership at the end of 2020, takes up the special role of harmonised cross-border development from the perspective of optimising planning processes, cooperation and decision-making structures. Last but not least, the focus is on strengthening the border regions in their special role for European cohesion. The cross-border spatial observation established between France and Germany in 2019 is also committed to the same goal (CGET/Ministère de Cohésion des Territoires et des Relations avec des Collectivités territoriales/BMI 2019).

The approach of establishing comparative urban monitoring and making urban development measurable in terms of sustainability (BBSR 2021c) not only follows the goals of the UN’s New Urban Agenda but is also an expression of the efforts of both countries to coordinate spatial observation and monitoring more closely than before. This should provide a basis for future spatial development, for the future design of national funding instruments, for closer coordination of content and a continuous exchange of experience.

In view of the transformations and tendencies discussed, both countries are faced with the central, mega-challenge of introducing paradigms of ‘post-growth’ into future spatial development, a challenge that subsumes many requirements and demands. In addition to sustainability objectives, the goal of comprehensive resilience is becoming increasingly important. To further urban resilience, in the future it will be more important than ever to develop strategies from social, economic and ecological points of view and to include factors related to cooperation and networking. Only so will urban systems be able to develop the capacities that are necessary to effectively tackle increasingly complex and dynamic transformations, i.e. to develop adaptive and innovative capabilities. This concerns both the urban systems with their sub-regional interconnections and central-place functions, and urban development issues such as a far-sighted approach to the problems of growing development pressure and land take, building culture, the design of public spaces, the provision of affordable housing, integration, social mixing, civic engagement and public participation. The multi-dimensionality of the task of strategic and integrated urban development becomes clear here. Digitalisation undoubtedly brings technical innovations to this field of activity and can contribute to the goal-oriented management of planning and development processes. However, this must be flanked by measures to promote acceptance and competence.

Joint spatial and planning research can lead to knowledge gains and findings relevant to practice beyond spatial observation. The research funding of both countries can secure the path to exchanging experience and transferring results also in the future. The primary task is now to pursue and extend this ‘future proofing’ in the outlined approaches to action. The answers to the questions discussed above also have a key function for European cohesion. In the European core area, the joint bilateral agreements and exchange relations between France and Germany, achieved in the years dating from the post-war period to the present day, provide a unique basis. They can be used to make national spatial developments, and similarly those of the cities and metropolises, the subject of bilateral cooperation, exchange and learning processes in the future, to an even greater extent than was hitherto the case. With the transfer of knowledge to the European level, there is an opportunity to strengthen the political weight of both states for European cohesion and territorial cohesion. However, an indispensable prerequisite for this, in France as in Germany, is to continue to promote understanding of the politics and society of the other country in education and further training, to impart knowledge about the other planning culture and its respective characteristics, and to overcome the language barriers that so often continue to exist.

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