

Synergy in Urban Networks?

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9 Innovation of Institutional Capacity in German Regions

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Introduction

The innovation of institutional capacities on the regional scale has been regarded as a crucial point for the development of a competitive local economy in the increasing integration into global networks (Hennig 2001). Regionalism and Regional Governance have become theoretical concepts used to analyse the recent development in Germany during the last few years (Benz et al. 1999). Hanover and Stuttgart, in particular, have been internationally regarded as contributing to the overall debate of new forms of network planning and steering of regional developments. At the same time, however, other regions, in particular Frankfurt and Berlin, show little if any evidence that would support the analysis of a shift towards the more 'governance'-oriented regional theories which call functional state-led planning into question (Salet, Thornely & Kreukels 2003). It is an old tradition in policy analysis to start any kind of consideration of institutional political activity by reviewing its relevance in society, whether 'politics are mattering at all' (Dahl & Lindblom 1953). Generally speaking, the analysis of the effect of policymaking can be safeguarded in not overestimating the content side of decision-making (Jann 2004). According to recent debates on the governance of regions and new regionalism, the issue of how regional policies are constructed and how they are influencing real developments seems to be the central focus of policy analysis. If one takes the Lasswell circle of policy research, one must identify whether the new regional politics in Germany have already achieved a status of 'invocation' in which the policies have enfolded despite sanctions, and whereby the regions are established as a level of state governance. It is questionable whether one could even speak of a phase of 'application' during which policy must be realised through state bureaucracy. The issue of whether Germany is still in a phase of 'intelligence/promotion/prescription', and is preparing policy changes in the hope of creating a mental framework and consensus, and lies ahead of the other two steps in the cycle also remains open (Lasswell 1956). Such analytical considerations are hereby expelled from the narrow perspective of functional policy theories and embedded into the research on discursive and deliberative form of politics (see e.g. Barber 1984, Dryzek 1990, Elster 1998, Held 1987, Macpherson 1973), and are also assumed to innovate

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the capacities of the regions. In this regard, the process of 'regionalism' is seen in this article as a case study for analysing whether the German political system is developing a policy landscape to broaden consensual and participatory democracy. As a counter-hypothesis, this article works on the assumption that 'regional governance' is limited to the activities and power shifts of the state itself. Reflecting on the reformulation of the 1998 Federal Law on Regional Planning and more examples from state led regional networks, the recent development of regional politics in Germany will be placed in the general debate of the political geography of the German state. Regionalisation could therefore be understood as an expression of a self-developing answer to societal changes, derived from a local/regional 'need' for a regional planning basis. There are substantial arguments which question the capacity of regional self-steering (Fürst 2003a). As most considerations of regions are based on hermeneutic concepts, there is little empirical research which underlines the real importance of regional governmental institutions for broader societal development (Lagendijk 2001). With this as the point of departure, the debate on regionalism in Germany has to be re-linked to the broader observation of debates of state architecture. Regionalism could thus be seen, on the other hand, as a top-down business in a complex democracy wherein the national state initiates the reshaping of decisions and competence of areas between the state and the Länder. In this regard, regional planning remains a quasi-bargain in an asymmetric game between the two major players: the federal government and the Länder (Van Beyme 2003).

Regional governance from the top

Extensive literature, expert comments and, to some extent, regional debate have led to the introduction of the Federal State Law on Regional Planning as a major shift in the German planning landscape. In the 'Report of Spatial Planning 2000' of the Federal Government, more than 200 descriptive pages on the observed and projected spatial development are used to advocate a 'cooperative approach' in the regional planning policies (BBR 2000, 197). The new regional planning law, introduced in 1998, means the different coordinative aspects of regional planning are subsumed in the vision of 'sustainable development' and their objective to achieve 'equal living conditions in all parts of Germany'. Furthermore, innovation is seen as focusing on a more 'discursive and argument' style of steering regional planning, by means of the federal law.

The main objective of this legislative framework was to initiate the development of Planning Laws on the level of the Länder. As with every federal law, the Länder have two years to adopt the national legislation and shape it adequately within the particular situation of each Land. These Länder Spatial Laws are implemented as prerogative principles for the communities which are also autonomous in their local planning competences. The realized reform of the law on spatial planning in 1998 was overloaded with expectations, as the last reform of the spatial planning legislation dated from 1965. Although the law reform was meant to overcome the existing division into thematic aspects of spatial planning by introducing a comprehensive vision of 'sustainable development', the 1998 law indicates seven spatial and eight thematic areas of spatial planning. As the Federal Office for Spatial Planning frankly admits: "They are contradic-

tions" (*ibid.*, 200). A strengthening of regional planning is provided by § 4 ROG which dictates that the 'requirements' of spatial planning must be taken into account by all public administration bodies. This also applies to all private activities as applied planning projects. Particular attention is paid to the Regional Space Use Planning which has been made obligatory (§ 9,6). A large part of the law is devoted to introducing new instruments for spatial planning like regional development concepts, contractual agreements and others which allow, generally speaking, voluntary coalitions and networks to solve regional problems.

While these new instruments of regional planning have found a broad interest in the scientific and public audience (Fürst, Rudolph & Zimmermann 2003a; Rudolph 2003, Löb 2003 ARL 1998 and 2002), little attention has been paid to the fact that the Federal State, for the first time in German history, has defined its own role in regional planning (§ 18). As this definition is restricted to the above mentioned vision of sustainability, it can be argued that this role should be regarded as extremely weak. If one follows this perspective then the focus of numerous scholars appears to be questionable, namely in that the introduction of the new instruments is to be seen as a sign of a paradigmatic shift to a form of regional governance (Benz 2001). In particular, the fact that these instruments are often understood as steps where the established planning principles will slowly make way for a more 'paradigmatic form of regional governance' (Fürst 2003b) is critical, because the old principle of the centrality of places is not abolished or lessened in its guiding importance for the planning of infrastructural investments (Zimmermann 2003, 40).

The recent literature dealing with the effects of new regional planning law as allowing and stimulating more 'cooperation' shows how little evidence there is to really support the idea of a general 'turn' towards a governance type of regional planning. In a research study by Knieling, Fürst and Danielzyk about the actual state of affairs, the summary is aptly titled 'Why it is so difficult to advocate more cooperation and why it is so hard to realize'. On the basis of evaluation, regional planning praxis in Baden-Württemberg, Brandenburg, North-Rhine-Westphalia, and Saxony point foremost to the effects of the particular interests of regional participants and the interest generated by institutional logics (Knieling, Fürst & Danielzyk 2003). Within the German discourse on regional governance, certain examples are often quoted as supporting the idea of a general shift towards a subtle replacement of the 'hard' planning principles by introducing a wide range of new governance technologies. In this context the frequently cited example of Hanover shows that these forms of cooperation had already been developed before the new planning law was passed. Moreover, it is still not clear how substantial these forms of cooperation will be when 'hard' policy areas are addressed, and when it will be obvious that a win-win situation cannot be expected and substantial conflicts have to be solved (Geiling 2003). Hanover is on the verge of entering this stage of the so-called second phase of regional cooperation where, for example, a selection of places has to be decided as an indication of the future development of regional retailing. This leads to the fact that some communities have to refrain from the intention to offer land for potential investors (Priebes 2003). The same can be said for other regions attracting attention, such as the cooperation in Hamburg and Bremen (Baumheier & Danielzyk 2002) or for the Länder Mecklenburg-Vorpommern, Lower-Saxony, Schleswig-Holstein, and Saxony-Anhalt (Fürst,

Rudolph and Zimmermann 2003b). In many cases, it is much too early to analyse the significance of these forms of regional governance when they are presently still visions of governance and traditional forms of cooperation in amalgamation.

As a result of the discourse on the situation of metropolitan regions in Germany, the Academy for Space Research and Planning (ARL) has published a catalogue of recommendations for regional governance. The central argument can be summarized as follows: the development of the urban regions (Großstadtregion) requires a more comprehensive form of control in which 'the regional constitution should be the result of a broad regional dialogue in which the full spectrum of all societal actors should be represented' (ARL 2004, 12) As this document is based on very crucial elements of the German discourse on regional governance, the following thoughts are based on the example of Frankfurt with a view to examining and reflecting upon this form of argumentation. Frankfurt will be presented first as a 'metropolitan region' which appeals to the imagination of the global city scholar. Then thoughts on the process of regionalization will highlight the main driving forces, emphasising that this is the principal way to ensure economic functionalism. The 'regional governance' approach will be applied against the background of the description of the regional planning history of Frankfurt Rhine-Main.

Exploring Frankfurt Rhine-Main

The 'natural' demand for regional governance is often seen as a requirement of urban restructuring to cope with the challenges of the inter-urban competition caused by globalization. Frankfurt is therefore seen as the German example of where the effects of these overall changes in economy and society are expected to be most obvious. Since the early Nineties, Frankfurt has been referred to as a 'Global City' (Sassen 1994). The concentration of banks and other financial service industries shaped the image of Frankfurt as the city of international commerce. With its pronounced willingness to host global players, the city has found its position in the interurban competition. As a result, within a period of 16 years Frankfurt has raised its productivity 2.5 times. In Germany, only Munich has a slightly higher per capita productivity. The reason for this enormous increase in economic potential is the result of multiple factors. Today, more than four hundred banks from around the globe are based in Frankfurt. Two-thirds of them are of non-German origin and many have Asian backgrounds. This makes the bursary a place of high significance for international trade actions of all sorts. With the settlement of the European Central Bank and the latest decision of the newly installed presidency of the Deutsche Bank not to move their headquarters to London, the city seems to have only recently proved its importance as a key city for the global financial transactions (Keil & Ronneberger 2000).

No other place in Germany symbolizes the concentration of economic power and potential in its built environment. Within an area of only 250 square kilometres there are more than 550,000 jobs and 660,000 inhabitants. One out of every seven employees in Frankfurt works in the banking sector. The internationalisation of Frankfurt's banking sector has been enabled by the institution of the German Stock Exchange. With a daily turnover of five billion euro, Frankfurt has the largest trading volume in Continental

Europe. Moreover, other service industries have sustained the development of 'Mainhattan', as the city is called, with its much-desired association with the American skyline, as many international companies from related branches continue to move to Frankfurt. More than 200 international advertising firms and 10 of the 25 most important worldwide operating accountant bureaus have their main offices here. Enriched by a huge number of national and global insurance and consulting companies, the picture of the economic tableau of Frankfurt shows a predominance for the service sector which, to a certain extent, is unattainable for other rival German and Continental European cities (see Taylor 2003). The growth of necessities for the ever improving communication techniques has led to a booming high-tech-industry that supplies more than 100,000 people with work in more than four hundred companies.

With its important international and national role, Frankfurt International Airport employs over 50,000 people directly in the Frankfurt airport industry and more than 150,000 people in the surrounding areas work in related sectors. Tourism companies, logistic and services centres, transport providers, repair and express installation companies and many other services have created the broader periphery of a newly emerging 'Airport City', employing more people than any other German industrial area (Kauffmann 2001). Internationalisation in Frankfurt has led to more office space being traded on a global real estate market. Even at the beginning of the Nineties, more than 60 per cent of all available financial means for the acquisition of non-housing areas came from international sources (Krätke 1991, 127). Within a ten-year period, the prices for office space rose by 280 per cent, making it the most expensive area for offices in Germany. Lawyers and financial service bureaus are accepting extreme rents as long as they can be close to their potential customers. A similar pattern of concentration at such a high cost level for some bigger but mostly medium and small-sized companies is unknown in other cities in Germany (Freund 2000).

Regionalization of Frankfurt

In comparison to other global cities, Frankfurt is relatively small. It is misleading to analyse the economical and societal significance only with regard to the administrative boundaries of the city of Frankfurt. Instead, Frankfurt can only be understood as part of a greater regional polycentric urban system. It would not be correct to see the surrounding area of Frankfurt as purely suburban. Although Frankfurt might draw most attention, the Rhine-Main area should be acknowledged as a regional entity, where around 4.7 million people live and where 9 percent of the German GDP is produced (providing more than two million jobs). The existing networks between commodities, services, production lines and chains prove that the region is highly interlinked and built on mutual dependencies. This regional linkage is a product of historical and geographical interferences because it is the area in which shipping on the Rhine and the Main conjoint, and in which trading and stocking are organized within a certain area in which existing cities have been built up. Today, the lines of commuting show that the cities between both rivers are very closely connected. It is for this reason that the region has developed into the largest and most intensive regional public transport entity in Europe (RMV). The economic growth of Frankfurt has been generated by the service economy with its 460,000 employees. Most of

these workers commute from the region to the city and, as a result, the city's population doubles during the day. The same phenomenon is observable in the other regional centres (Wolf & Lengenhausen-Rohrbach 2003).

It is difficult to describe what really belongs to this region since there is no administrative understanding of the interlinked urban areas in a geographical sense in the political maps of Frankfurt and Rhine-Main. Only the Chamber of Commerce and the Rhine-Main-Research Institute have produced maps that try to show the scope of regional interferences by the economical and social networks that make up the real region (RMF 2000). The political and administrative units refuse to acknowledge these networks and are creating artificial borders. In fact, the structure of the states ('Länder') has been more or less left unchanged since 1929. Even the existing RMF maps are not accurate as they include in their definition only areas that belong to the state of Hesse. A broader perspective on the scope of the region has been avoided and the relationship of Frankfurt with the other urban centres close by, such as the Hessian capital Wiesbaden and the Rhineland-Palatinate's capital city Mainz, have not been taken into account. Adjacent and connected areas of the Bavarian local centres are also not considered, although the historical and recent linkages between all urban centres that lie between the Rhine and Main are well-known and quite commonplace. The following definition – which needs an alternative data foundation – therefore depends on the RMF vision that integrates three districts of the Chamber of Commerce classified as Frankfurt, Offenbach and Darmstadt.

Being closely connected to all possible destinations and particularly with the east-west axis of Europe by high-speed trains, motorways and airports, the region is characterized by an accelerated exchange process of goods and as a centre of distribution. It consists of a few real Global Players such as Merck, Aventis Chemistries, MAN, Degussa and the Metall Incorporation and a further 17 of the hundred most productive German firms from various sectors. In contrast to Frankfurt, the manufacturing industries are very well represented. Many high-tech companies have found their home in the region and important research centres are based here. A total of 2,300 companies of the technological and logistic branch with more than a quarter of a million employees have shaped the profile of the high tech region of Rhine-Main (UVF 1993). Their main focus is on the information and communication technologies. Eight major German PC producers and software developers have opted to establish their main headquarters in the region. Another emphasis is in the micro and optical electronic branch, which consists of more than 1,100 companies. All the high tech companies industries based in this area benefit from the close proximity of 112 universities and research centres (Krüger-Röth & Kania 1994). Small towns and villages become areas where the economic activities make up for half of the spatial use. The city of Bad Homburg, as the most prominent case, now hosts the head offices of Du Pont (Chemical Industries), Packard (Computer), and Northern Telecom. Mazda has also set up its European Research Institute in the small village of Oberursel (Brake 1991). Another prime example is Eschborn, which is home to the back offices of many Frankfurt banks.

'Regional governance'

Since the late Twenties, the region of Rhine-Main has been the focus of many debates on regional planning. Still, until today, there has been no regional body that covers the region in its functional interlinking. The fact that 'regional planning' stops at the border of the Bundesstaat Hesse remains an unsolved problem. It must also be emphasised that the debates on regional governance in political discourse are still not addressed at the level of the region covered above.

Even in view of the Hessian situation, it was not before 1962 that a regional planning association was set up through some legislative change (*Hessisches Landesplanungsgesetz*). Three years later, the planning association (Regionale Planungsgemeinschaft Untermain - RPU) for Frankfurt and the Hessian part of the region was founded. In essence, the RPU worked out a regional plan that ensured green space for the ever-expanding city of Frankfurt. The first regional plan, which was limited to geographical outreach and the economic crisis at the beginning of the Seventies, was politically accepted but was in reality not of great importance. In 1975, the 'Umlandverband Frankfurt' (UVF) replaced the RPU. Being broader in territorial scope, the UVF covered 43 units with more than 1.5 million inhabitants. This new association was dedicated to a wider political agenda. In practice, it gained its merits in the field of technical coordination tasks (Freund 2003) and many smaller projects in the leisure and landscaping planning were successfully fulfilled. The core affairs of spatial planning as transport policies, however, have not been fully integrated into this regional body. While experts and a certain public awareness of those small-scaled projects have recognized the merits of the UVF, broader political support could not be generated. By failing to remain a symbol in the everyday life of the citizens, the work of the UVF became more and more invisible.

The conservative Christian Democrat party won the 1999 Hessian election with their more popular stance on institutional reforms for regional government. In March 2001, the UVF was abolished and the 'Planungsverband Ballungsraum Frankfurt/Rhein-Main' took its place. This new association, which was accompanied by a new planning law from the state of Hesse, had even less capacity to shape regional policies. It had more or less been reduced to adopting a preparatory role for landscape and regional land-use plans. The regional land-use plan - a new approach which covers the content of the regional plan and the land-use plan - had to be accepted by two bodies, namely the newly formed 'Verbands-kammer' as leading body of the city-led Planning Association (Planungsverband) and the Regional Assembly (Regionalversammlung) which is suited by the Governmental Presidency Darmstadt, a state authority. The changes introduced were the result of a long-lasting inconvenience of mostly conservative politicians who felt that the UVF had too many competences. With the establishment of the 'Ballungsraum', Rhine-Main must be seen as a result of a political shift in the state government. After two legacies of social-democratic and green coalitions, the conservative and liberal parties used their increased popularity to assign more autonomy in planning affairs to the region's small and medium-sized centres. It is no coincidence that the new prime minister of Hesse won his election district, situated in one of the boom-towns of the Frankfurt periphery, with slogans which alluded to more local self-governance. Nevertheless, the introduction of the Regional Land Use Planning as a central innovation caused by the

new institutional frameworks in the 1998 Spatial Planning Law had ambivalent consequences. First of all, the scope of the regional planning was enlarged and extended from 43 to 75 local communities. In the case of the newly integrated communities, the responsibilities for planning the use of land shifted partially from the local authorities to those responsible for regional planning. However, the example of Regional Land Use Planning shows the influence of the 'governance' approach in a political power conflict. The inclusion of more external actors into the regional planning activities was interpreted by the states of Hesse as including the 'Governmental Presidencies' (Regierungspräsidenten) in the formulation of Regional Land Use Planning. As these institutions are directly steered by the government of the Land, or state, the intended opening up for the 'external world' to take part in regional governance turns out to be an open door through which to strengthen the influence of the Land so that it can make decisions in regional and local affairs. Moreover, Hesse has used the 1998 laws to reduce the importance of regional planning. An obvious case in the Hessian law is the requirement for a detailed prescription of the planning scale on spatial planning. While it is generally assumed to be necessary to have a scale of 1:10 000 to develop maps that clearly trace different blocks in housing areas, most of the Länder have not included any description of the map scaling in their laws and in other cases (such as Berlin) the common scale of 1:10 000 has been suggested. In Hesse, however, the introduction of a scale of 1: 50 000 into the Planning Law has not been made obligatory because this would make Regional Land Use Planning more or less useless as the maps would no longer identify single housing estates and would therefore not be taken into consideration when giving applicants a juridical prescription of land use in communities of the region.

In accordance with the newly adopted 'Ballungsraum' law, the 'Council of the Region' is another new institution. It is more or less a discussion body with little authority. It addresses problems in which common policymaking could be of mutual gain. However, the obvious weakness of both organs introduced by the new law seriously questions the ability to contribute to a region in search for its own identity and the optimal way of networking. The criticism is that the new Ballungsraum law means 'the region will not be able to act politically' (Scheller & Wolf 2001, 23). In fact, the law suggests a more flexible form of cooperation between cities where they feel that it would be appropriate. As this might appear to foster a wider range of activities, it is foreseen that the state government can also enforce this kind of cooperation if it considers them to be necessary. In the summer of 2004, the Hessian government declared its right to order, in accordance with the Law of the Ballungsraum, the ability to establish marketing planning and planning for the 'regional park' as the priority of the regional planning. Further debates were initiated to ascertain whether the establishment of a Regional Cultural Foundation should be declared a priority as well. After these decisions are made by the Land, the communities have one year to find a form of organisation which can tackle the issues concerned in a decisive way. If the communities are not able to organize themselves voluntarily within this given period of time, the Land can use its power to order the communities to build up a organization of common interest (Zweckverband). Especially this last point has raised concerns on the autonomy of the regions and had caused an

attempted appeal against this law before the State Court.

Regional governance is reduced to a few aspects of physical planning within the 'Planungsverband Ballungsraum Frankfurt' and to key actors in the region, while the new 'Ballungsraum' law can be interpreted as a system that enables 'soft' policies to be planned for regional politics. These new institutions now face governance problems and challenges which are more or less typical for many regions in Germany but are most prevalent in Frankfurt Rhine-Main. There is no regional definition that crosses the borders of the state of Hesse, although certain economic actors demand such an approach. Furthermore, regional planning is only partly integrated into the local planning in Hesse (in contrast to other Länder like Lower Saxony) while, in general, the planning authority in Germany is anchored more at local levels than at regional ones.

Reviewing the history of regional planning (see Scheller 1998), there are reasons for these identified weaknesses. The structure of the federal state hinders a cross-state regional governance institution. The state of Hesse fears the loss of influence and therefore does not give adequate legal and financial support to the regional bodies. The counties in the region also fear the loss of influence and therefore support a policy of creating multiple, weak regional institutions, coordinated and controlled politically by a few conservative leaders. Regionalism can thus be seen as NIMBYism on a regional scale (Rich region, poor Frankfurt). Since the Nineties, the discussions about regional governance in Germany have had an ideological character. Christian Democrats and liberals have supposed that the more flexible forms of organisations will replace the powerful UVF, although the cooperation has never reached the level that could have been achieved with the UVF as an instrument of regional governance. On the other hand, ad hoc- and single-issue associations have not managed to address the regional problems mentioned above.

The region is not handled as a unified entity but rather as a 'battle field' of particular interests, which are expressed by social and political networks that do not follow the logics of 'governance' but rather use coalitions in the institutional setting. Party politics still remain important and are seen as a serious blockage strategy in all forms of the regional institutions. The Land, ruled by an absolute majority of conservatives, plays a major role in regional planning. The chamber of the regions is led by social-democratic leaders and the *bonum communis* is in danger of being sacrificed to political antagonism. Moreover, the analysis of regional planning in Frankfurt am Main is incomplete without a closer look on the influential role of certain actors. Finally, the 'real game' that is played to develop regional policies is played by only a small group of decision-makers from both political parties. These actors have developed a sophisticated system to use their potential power before and after the introduction of 'regional governance'. First and foremost, these actors are searching for an accumulation of official roles to guarantee their say in regional policies. In some cases, these actors can exercise up to forty official functions in regional and local institutions. The analysis of the regional policies might thus be completed within a theoretical framework which takes a closer look on the use of the 'governance' within these conflicting constellations.

Governance by government

The word governance has many different meanings and is not part of the legislative vocabulary in the German political system. Therefore, the discussion in Germany on regional governance is either oriented towards some specific, often normative, stance of certain political actors, or it is led by a more theoretical argument. In both cases, the reference to 'governance' is not based on a political paradigm that is expressed in any policy paper. The term has been recognized in the field of political science (Benz 2004). It is assumed that, in general, the term is used to express the strategy of a political system to adapt to external constraints, so that the role of politics in its work can be reshaped (Pierre 2000). Being derived from an American economical theory, governance was first used to explain the manoeuvres firms undertake to coordinate means of increasing their efficiency (Williamson 1995). In the following debates on governance within the particular framing of 'politics', a theoretical approach has evolved which included the sociology of organisations and law. A crucial point of debate has been that the state (and the city) is judged by its capacity to regulate processes in society. During the Nineties, the position of Mayntz, mainly that there is growing inability to enforce regulations, was a widely used answer in political science to the refusal of some groups to recognize its legitimacy, its poor appreciation of the relationship between means and ends, and the absence of competence or the abandoned instrument of government (Mayntz 1993). As a consequence, the scope of what has to be considered the 'area of politics' and which should be covered by the term 'governance' has been enlarged, so that the analysis does not restrict the view on the institution of government. In this way, we can understand governance as:

'all these interactive arrangements in which public as well as private actors participate with the aim being to solve societal problems or create societal opportunities, attend to the institutions within which these governance activities take place and stimulate normative debates on the principles underlying all governance activities.'

(Kooiman 2000)

The horizontal aspect of political processes is central to this definition. While this broad perspective summarizes forms of political arrangement that are overseen in the classical analysis of political science, it is the result of dealing with aspects which are crucial for an understanding of the development of urban politics. Governance has not replaced government and networks have not abolished decision-making processes (Le Galès 2001). A contemporary review of the governance discourse should recognise that a 'blind eye' has been turned towards certain aspects of political reality based on two major facts. First of all, the governance perspective assumes a society of problems and challenges that can be generally planned and steered. While certain political theories have already acknowledged this fact, namely that the state or the political system as such has become less influential to societal processes in general (in light of globalization, demographic changes etc.), the governance theories are not taking much note of this de-linking processes between society and state (Burth & Görtitz 2001). Secondly, the theories on governance seem to miss the concept that political processes are often not a matter of planning

but rather of conflict and power relations (Mayntz 2004, 74).

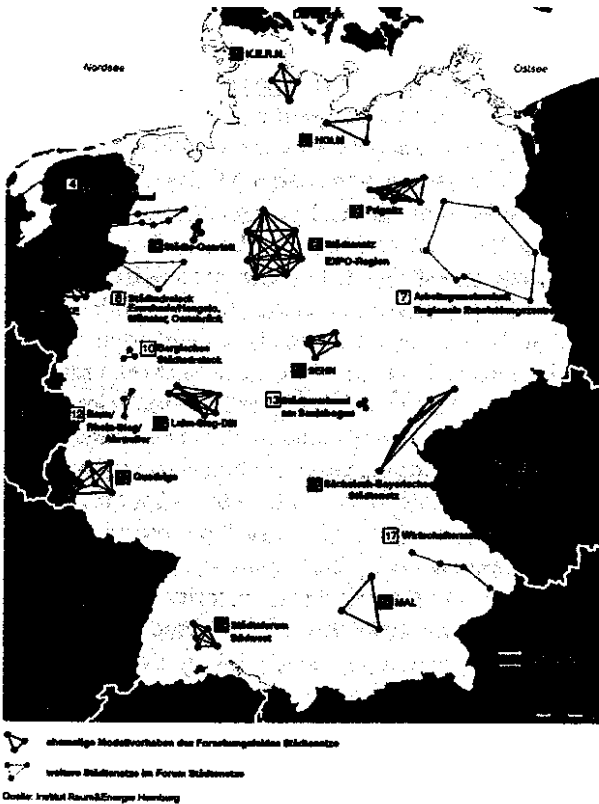
While the complex field of regionalized spatial planning seemingly depends on the goodwill of the Land, the federal government has undertaken significant efforts to initiate, foster or establish regionalized forms of governance. The following section details five examples of initiatives undertaken on the federal level of the German state and examines the governance debate in more detail by looking at the rationales which they work with and the ways the forms of regional networks are implemented.

'City networks'

The project on 'city networks' was started as long ago as during the long term of the Christian Democratic government, as part of the so-called 'experimental research' for the Federal Office of Spatial Order (BBR). Before this four-year project began in 1994, the Federal and the Länder representatives had agreed on the necessity of a new spatial approach two years before. The idea of city networks had been integrated into the common 'Spatial Framework of Orientation' as an innovative concept which had to address the perceived need for intensive cooperation between cities (BBR 1999). While there had already been supportive analyses from a wide range of experts and planning researchers, the project was created for the purpose of gathering more detailed information and was therefore not considered a political strategy in spatial politics but rather a subject of research. It started with eleven and ended with twelve model regions which joined the project to help formulate the abstract idea of city networks. A striking feature was the ignoring of networks that were already regarded as being in existence and of being a major influence on economical developments in all parts of the state. Whereas prominent analyses have pointed out that these cities were already networked in the significant, functional areas – like the cities of the blue banana – the project only examined those urban networks that were already politically 'organized'. The main intention of this project was to find out how 'city networks' can add value to already existing spatial visions and instruments. The city networks are not regarded as an answer to any social, economic, or cultural needs, but are regarded instead as a 'side note' to fostering the established forms of planning. City networks were organized to develop projects and processes than can be realized within the framework of urban planning and politics. After the first 'city networks' period, the cooperation between the majority of the 50 partner cities continued in another form. The 'Forum city networks' was set up and supported for five years as part of the 'model of spatial planning' programme (MORO; see below). Existing and new city networks had to be organized in more or less the same fashion as they had been in the first period. The reasoning behind their further existence was based on questions like: by using city networks, how can cities react in a flexible way to the rising demands on their planning capacities? Furthermore, the networks had to show how political responsibilities can be kept up and complex projects realized while minimizing conflicts in a procedural way. In more general terms, the networks are legitimized by the intention to improve the competitiveness of the participating regions. Even after the first phase it was acknowledged that 'despite the successes', the city networks had only achieved weak forms of cooperation. The final report stated that 'The work results have been enabled by the guidance of the planning authorities of the Land

and by the external supervision and moderation which have given important stimuli. Here, the results can only be retained if the Länder see this as their responsibility as well.' (Final Report ExWoSt Städtenetze, BBR 1998). In the second phase, the repeating of the first experiences was obvious. However, the tide has turned and the idea of city networks has died. In 1998, the red-green coalition still had the majority of the Länder's votes in the Ministerial Conference on Spatial Planning (MRKO – an institution for all Länder ministers on spatial planning) to continue with the project, and by 2003 the voters had experienced many different Länder governments. Now the majority is conservative and reluctant to accept this kind of institutionalism that generally does not develop alongside the existing institutional framework.

Figure 9.1 Network Cities. Source: Institute for Space and Energy, Hamburg

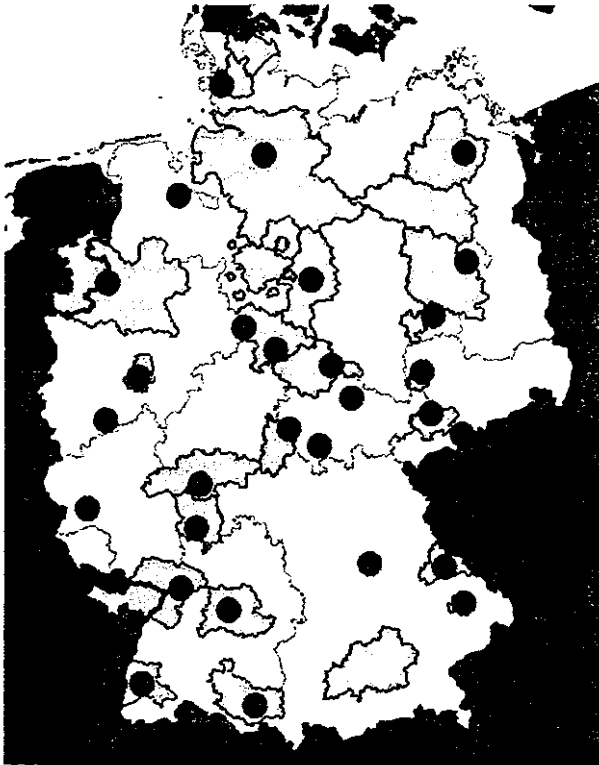


'Regions of the future'

The 'Regions of the future' network established the political intentions of the UN Summit in Rio de Janeiro aimed at creating a starting point in realizing projects at local and regional level. The network was established in a competitive procedure in which the criteria of sustainable development were realised according to Local Agenda 21. New projects were stimulated and initiated within the network. The concept of networking was more or less motivated by the concept of 'lesson drawing' and learning at an 'inter-regional' level. Projects were to be executed with longer lasting strategies to ensure the continuation of the networks after the initial support. Strategies in these regions were aimed at a governance mechanism which was to enlarge the regional planning so that not only the local authorities but also other state actors could play a role. Notably, the 'state' here was the foremost relevant federal ministry which supported the entire 'Regions of the future' network. With regard to innovation, the network approach was intended for research institutions and practitioners to be considered integral participants of the strategies. The philosophy of this interregional network is based on the idea that certain 'models' of regions can be convincingly presented to have a stimulating effect for other regions. In not using the term 'good governance', the network focuses on those networks which are seen as particularly influential to the sub-national level of realizing the Rio process. The reason behind interregional networking is therefore a very optimistic one. The regions that are ahead in their attempt to foster sustainable development are encouraged to join each other to ensure that networking will continue after the end of the official term of finance issued by the ministry.

The 25 regions that were selected during the conference 'Urban 21' in Berlin are regarded as the 'nucleus of crystallization' for a much broader network on the issue of sustainable development. In this respect, the responsible coordinators assume that there is a societal movement in which both the issue of sustainability is widely accepted and that the region already functions as a relatively spatial entity. The major opportunity that this network provides is the exchange of experiences. A wide range of communicative means has been established to support the interaction between the regions and their actors. The dialogue via the Internet is regarded as a crucial asset. The qualification of regional actors via meetings with thematic experts is also considered to be an important feature of this network.

Figure 9.2 Regions of the Future. Source: BBR

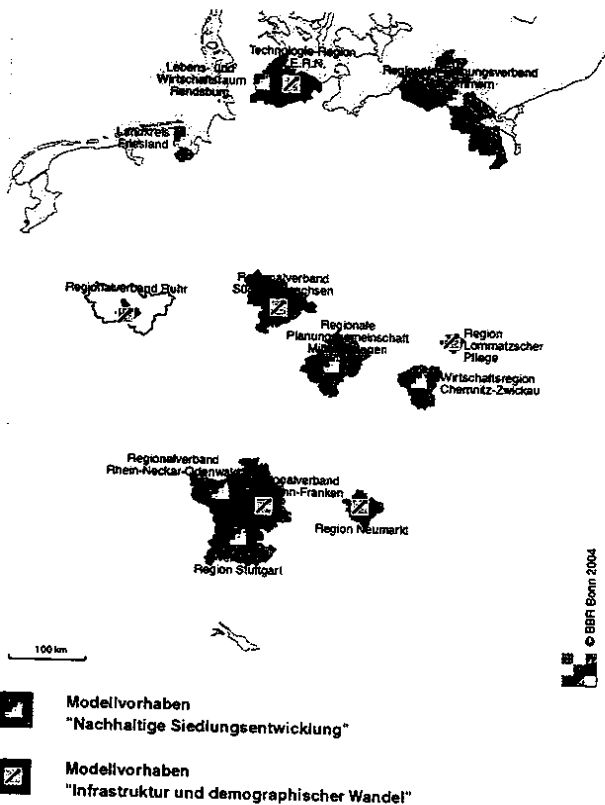


'Model projects in spatial planning'

With the same terminology of 'model' and a similar philosophy behind the approach, the 'model projects in spatial planning' were established as a 'Programme of action'. A budget of one million per annum provides support for exemplary projects and studies in spatial planning. The intention was to 'allow the federal state to actively support a spatial planning policy which is oriented to activities and projects.' Starting in 1996 and lasting until 2000, the MORO programme focused on 'sustainable regional development by regional cooperation' and trans-national cooperation. The region is seen as a 'level of realisation' of policy objectives in the field of sustainable development. Besides the above-mentioned 'regions of the future', and urban networks, regional conferences, concepts of regional management in lesser favoured regions, regional strategies for areas of development and revitalization were implemented in order to realize MORO. Activities within the field of 'international cooperation' were realized within the framework of the European spatial planning process. Especially after 2001, the programme was used to realize the 1999 decisions taken by the EU spatial planning ministers. MORO actively contributed to the spatial vision of the CADSES area (VASAB 2010+) and supported projects in the accessing countries (CEMAT). In 2003, however, the main activities of this

programme were re-focused on Germany. The thematic direction had by then narrowed to sustainable settlement development, infrastructure and demographic change. The general objective of the redirection of MORO was to fine tune the model solution with regard to its aging and process of cultural diversification in connection with its spatial consequences. The adaptation of spatial planning to these overall developments in society is not merely seen as a passive process but also as a 'means' of avoiding further negative impacts of the demographic changes. The intention is more or less embedded into the debate on the perspective of the 'shrinking cities'. In the last few years, these terms were established to justify huge urban restructuring processes aimed at reducing large sections of the housing stock in East Germany. It has been agreed that the future selection of 'model projects' should be guided more by the principle of competitiveness with alternative projects being taken into consideration as well. Furthermore, a lesson learned during the first MORO period was that the relationship between the supported projects and thematic planning should be given more priority.

Figure 9.3 MORO regions. Source: BBR.



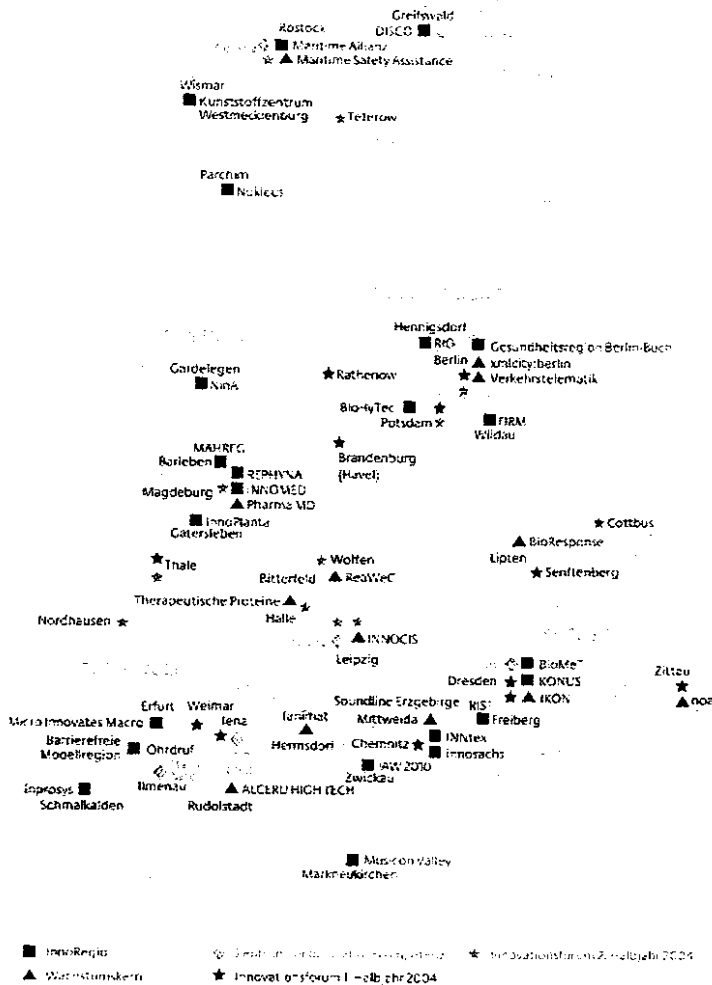
'Enterprise Region'

The main reason for this initiative was derived from a larger debate on the inabilities of the East German transformation process. After 15 years of German reunification, a feeling of inconvenience due to the lack of results in former East Germany spread to the broader public. The basis of this argument, expressed articulately by the German president in 2004, is that the fact that the East is lagging behind is not realistically seen as a short-term problem. In other words, the imbalance between regions that are better off and those requiring long-term support is a social reality which must be accepted by the state as a given fact. Against the background of criticism about the ineffectiveness of the activities and support policies for the East German transformation process, the newly established policy of the Federal Ministry for Research (BMBF) focuses on the production of incentives for innovation. The reasoning behind the 'Enterprise Region' starts with the assumption that the competence for innovation is a crucial factor for the economical development of regions and that East Germany is lacking in capacity. The BMBF has supported a series of research projects in the past few years that aim to develop innovative frameworks in East Germany. 'Enterprise Region' combines four different and formerly separate programmes ('InnoRegio', 'Innovative regional nuclei', 'centre for innovation competences', 'interregional alliances for the markets of tomorrow') together under one heading. The ministry wants the programme to be used to develop a competitive profile for the economy and sciences in the regions. It aims to support, in a selective way, start-ups which are likely to produce innovations. The programme is supposed to halt the exodus of young and well-educated employees. The BMBF wants to create attractive personal career opportunities for talented, scientific, early-stage researchers.

The BMBF has openly declared that it wants to influence and support regions directly. The level of regions has been linked to federal research policy in which the BMBF interacts to foster regional cooperative agencies to find and develop the strengths and potentials of their regions. The philosophy of this program is described using the term 'cluster of competences'. This theoretical legitimacy is observed without any reference to the discourses in space related science, where the linkage between region and innovation is explored in more detail. Instead, it is obvious here that the idea of clusters is primarily understood to be solely dependent on flagship enterprises and projects. With regard to this significant regional science consideration on how to include 'soft sectors' that comprise a significant aspect of the debate on the necessary preconditions for innovations, only the 'InnoRegio' networks can be regarded as fulfilling the needs for innovation to be embedded in a regional framework.

The financial support of the BMBF is meant to be limited to the initiative phase of investments, and is to be granted in accordance with market feasibility criteria. The 'InnoRegio' partners are regional networks in which actors from different parts of society (the economy, scientific institutions, public administration and politics) cooperate. The focus of the networks is meant to be defined by the partners themselves. Nevertheless, the BMBF expects regional traditions to be taken into consideration and clear strategies to be devised for innovation in the development of new, competitive products and services.

Figure 9.4 'InnoRegions'. Source: BMBF



'BioRegions'

After catching up with international circles in the Nineties, German enterprises in the biotechnological branch have gained ground and are now situated at the top of the global competition tree. Nevertheless, from the financial point of view, many start-ups have yet to develop a longer research strategy which would sustain their first success. The Federal

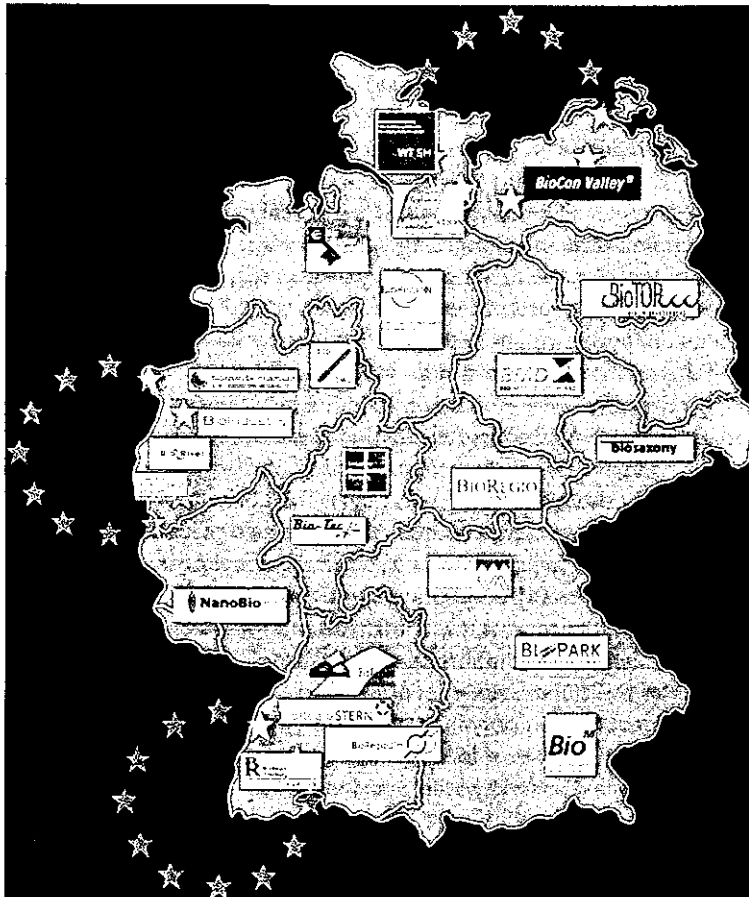
Ministry for Research has developed some strategies to support those enterprises with initiatives like 'BioProfile', 'BioProfile' and 'BioRegio'. The enacting of the new law on genetics in 1993 removed the barriers to a pro-active policy in this field and led to substantial support for the bio sectors. In 1995, the BMBF enacted the competition for financial support according to a concept of regions that cannot be classified by administrative definitions. The rationale for the BioRegio competition was based on the fact that the cooperation within the Biotechnology branches is organised according to its own criteria. The selected regions were established, in some cases, only to fulfil the criteria for support which seems to be essential in speeding up decision-making procedures for the innovation of products and procedures in bio-technological enterprises. A major feature of this competition was the development of a strategy that includes a highly scientific profile and entrepreneurial skills. Seventeen model regions were originally to be integrated into this elite network. The BioRegions 'Rheinland', 'München', 'Heidelberg' and 'Jena' were given special conditions which gave them privileged access to project support by the BMBF from 1997 to 2002. Funding based on private and public sponsorship has been raised in addition to the 90 million euro that have been pumped into these regions. In November 1999, the 'BioProfile' competition was included as part of the BMBF's special 'Biotechnology 2000' programme based on the development of the experiences gained the first programme. BioProfile is also aimed at those regions that are subject to special conditions for the further research and the development of biotechnological know-how, new products and services. The slogan 'Strengthening the Strongest' was coined and special attention was paid to the medical sector, farming technologies and food engineering. Thirty regions applied for the first phase of the competition. An independent jury selected just three regions to be awarded 50 million euro each, namely Potsdam/Berlin, based on the profile 'Food depending diseases (Nutrigenomik)', the region of Braunschweig/Göttingen/Hannover whose focus was on 'functional genomanalysis' and the region of Stuttgart/Neckar-Alb (BioRegion STERN) whose focus was on 'regenerators' biology'. The installation of the BioRegions is also meant to create European networks of cooperation like the German-French-Switzerland 'BioValley Oberrhein' and the German-Swedish-Danish 'Bioconvalley'.

The responsible BMBF actors regard the competitive procedure as a stimulus for the whole German research landscape. The 'success story' refers to an increase in the number of firms in the technology branches from 70 in 1995 to 500 in 2004. Although the ministry does not deny the fact that this number does not indicate individual competitiveness, there is no consideration of other factors that could have led to the rise in numbers of bio-tech firms. Instead, the BMBF argues that the policy shift in the mid-Nineties led to a general boom in biotechnologies which profits from the massive support that the ministry gives to public research in this field. Already one third of the federal spending on research, carried out by the German Scientific Foundation or the Max Planck Foundation, is earmarked for bio-technological research.

The activities of the BMBF in the field of biotechnology are believed to have effects on the overall development of BioRegions. According to the evaluation of the BioRegions in Heidelberg and München, the spill-over is estimated to have received 'one thousand percent' follow-up financing after the initial stimulus from the BMBF.

The example of the BioRegions has been very influential in the general concept used by the red-green government to design their research policies. The experiences made here are discussed and analysed to deliver a guiding principle for the future policies for other new technologies, like the information and communication sector. Since these economical branches are regarded as having the greatest potential for regional and local (labour) markets, and thus for the prosperity of the region as a whole, the spatial consequences of this policy have to be taken into critical account. There has been no debate on what this policy will mean for the economical, social and political landscape if only the most promising regions are sponsored nor on what role the 'non-awarded' regions must then adopt to strengthen their local economies.

Figure 9.5 BioRegions and administrative coordination offices in the Länder for the Biotechnology 2000 strategy (source: BMBF)



Discussion

Given the argumentation presented in this short article, the very concept of the region has to be evaluated against the background of other important developments in German politics. It is obvious that the weakness of the analysis of the new regional cooperation, networks, and 'governance' forms has to do with the neglect of the power struggle between the federal state and the Länder. It is difficult for the red-green government to find politicians who stick to their promise to 'not make everything different, but some things better' (SPD-slogan 1998). The room to manoeuvre is limited due either to the directives or regulations coming from the European Union or due to being blocked by the CDU majority of the Länder. The relatively weak and unspectacular field of spatial planning seems to be a fairly well-respected playground for introducing certain forms of networks and for thereby spreading ideas about more participatory and sustainable forms of planning. Party politics and the strong dualism between the Christian and Social Democrats still plays an important role in Germany's political landscape. Although the spatial bounding via milieus is not as strong as it was during the period of the Fordist industrial society of mass production, the newly emerging political geography with its NIMBY philosophies does not favour the idea of a collective consciousness within the regions. Only in cases where a significant 'other' can be mobilized, does the construction of regional identities seem to work. This is especially true at the level of the Länder, or at least in some cases like Bavaria or Saxony. Using regionalism as a political strategy to maintain long-term support for electorates is mostly (successfully) if used by conservative parties. In this way, the reluctance of their key politicians to support a stronger autonomy of regional political bodies and planning authorities can be understood in a conceptual framework where the focus on 'power' might still lead to more conclusions than by a 'network'. The analysis of the relationships between the region and other state levels leads to an understanding of 'governance' which is embedded in a wider change in the political state's architecture and geography. Regionalisation is part of a 'governance among governments' (Wolf 2002), where a re-conceptualization of the principles of the national space is at stake. Within the redefined geography of the German 'New state spaces' (Brenner 2004), statehood is rescaling towards the region as a place to which to steer economical and societal developments. By doing so principal arrangements of the Fordist Federal Republic of (West) Germany are relinquished. As shown by the examples of regionalisation introduced from the federal level of the German state, the key concept of the German constitution, which is the equilibrium of living conditions, no longer plays the role of guiding principle for the elaboration of spatial policies. It is important to regard these changes as a consequence of ongoing political debates and as a product of a wide open discourse where the acceptance of inequality between regions, especially between the East and the West, has been a key idea. For the official legitimacy of the regionalisation policy, embodied by the initiatives described above, the attitude of the High Conventional Court (Bundesverfassungsgericht) regards the article of the convention. The down-grading of Articles 72, 2; 104a, 4 and 106, 8 can be seen as stimulating signs towards the political decision-making actors to allow more disparities between the regions and to prefer other principles in the constitution which underlie the rights of the

state to foster economic development as such (Hennig 2004).

Does politics matter in the German process of regionalization? For the time being, a double answer might be given. Governance as a means of steering and allowing the regions to foster their position in the interregional global competition has been introduced as a guiding principle. The argumentative change in the expert's discourse (where the term 'governance' becomes the leading concept) accompanies this change. However, the power relations present in the architecture of the federalist German state are a key variable when it comes to establishing whether this policy is 'applied' in the sense of Lasswells' circle of policies. A clear indication has been given that the federal state wants to bypass the Länder by introducing new relationships at regional level. In this way, regional governance becomes a bargaining tool for the redefinition of power balances between the federal and Länder states.

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Internet resources:

<http://www.bioregio.com/einf.htm>
www.innoregio.de/
www.bbr.bund.de/moro/
www.zukunftsregionen.de/