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## Guiding principles for spatial development



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# Guiding principles for spatial development

## Contents

- 1 Classification and limitation
- 2 Perspectives
- 3 Three generations of guiding principles
- 4 Meeting the need for orientation

References

The term guiding principle is multifaceted. Yet it can be said that when guiding principles are spoken of, the focus is essentially on orientation and on communicating notions of development. Against this background, this article focuses on guiding principles in spatial planning [Raumordnung in German, in the sense of normative concepts for the supra-local and superordinate regulation and planning of space and its related processes and institutions – Translator’s note] with a particular look at the Federal Republic of Germany. In addition to pinning down the term and its historical development, the article addresses the so far identified three generations of guiding principles: the Spatial Planning Policy Guidelines of 1993 as well as the Guiding Principles for Spatial Development of 2006 and 2016.

# 1 Classification and limitation

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For some time now, the terms *spatial planning* (*Raumordnung*) and *spatial development* (*Raumentwicklung*) have been used synonymously in Germany at the federal level, yet ▷ *Spatial development* sounds more everyday, dynamic and focused on action than ▷ *Spatial planning* (*Raumordnung*). At the same time, nobody would seriously think of using spatial planning (*Raumordnung*) as a synonym for spatial development, because spatial development comprises a much broader field, encompassing numerous spatially-relevant policy areas (e.g. ▷ *Urban planning*, transport policy, agricultural policy, etc.). In this broad field, the present article focuses on guiding principles in spatial planning (*Raumordnung*) in the Federal Republic of Germany. In this sense, it must be read as supplementary to the other articles in the handbook on guiding principles in spatial development (Dehne 2005, Jessen 2005, Becker 2010).

## 2 Perspectives

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### 2.1 Historical perspective

The term *guiding principle* appeared in the Federal Spatial Planning Act (*Raumordnungsgesetz, ROG*) in 1997. After the experiences with the Spatial Planning Policy Guidelines (*BMBau* [Federal Ministry of Spatial Planning, Construction and Urban Design] 1993), an elaboration jointly supported by the federation and the federal states of ‘Guiding principles for spatial development of the federal territory as the basis for the coordination of spatially-relevant planning and measures of the federation and the European Community’ was enshrined in law in 1997 with the amendment of the Federal Spatial Planning Act (section 18(1) of the Federal Spatial Planning Act as notified on 18 August 1997). As part of the Federalism Reform (▷ *Federalism*), the instrument of guiding principles was retained in the amendment of 2008/2009 and merely rephrased in a discretionary provision. The passage now reads: ‘The federation and the federal states may develop guiding principles for the spatial development of the federal territory or of territories extending beyond individual federal states within the Conference of Ministers for Spatial Planning (*Ministerkonferenz für Raumordnung*)’ (section 26(2) of the Federal Spatial Planning Act).

Up to the 1990s, the federation and the federal states had for decades made do without substantively elaborated guiding principles for the federal territory. This initially seems unsurprising, because spatial planning (*Raumordnung*) was (and is) primarily the responsibility of the federal states via the federal state development plans and above all the regional plans (▷ *Federal state spatial planning, federal state development*). A spatial guiding principle for the federal territory, which would have exceeded the sum total of the federal states’ spatial planning processes, would swiftly have been challenged as a transgression of powers.

While this type of reasoning on the part of the federal states is plausible and reflects the negotiation processes between different interests in the Conference of Ministers for Spatial Planning (*Ministerkonferenz für Raumordnung, MKRO*), it falls well short of representing a complete and sufficient response. A retrospective look at the *Grundriss der Raumordnung* [a compendium on spatial planning] published in 1982 by the Academy for Spatial Research and Planning (ARL)

provides interesting insights. Therein, Storbeck (1982: 11 et seq.) analyses the guiding principle for spatial planning and takes a deep dive into the history of spatial planning (*Raumordnung*) and federal state spatial planning in the Federal Republic of Germany. Accordingly, the concept and term *guiding principle* entered the spatial planning debate back in 1953 and became a central topic of debate in the following years. According to Storbeck, a guiding principle was necessary in view of the indeterminate nature of the objectives (in current terminology also referred to as ‘principles’) of spatial planning (*Raumordnung*) through a connection with the overarching social objectives of creating ‘a framework for orientation for the individual objectives of the various subareas’ (Storbeck 1982: 211). Thus a guiding principle would be shown to be an ‘epochal, specific characterisation of the overarching objective’ (Storbeck 1982: 212). Even if ‘epochal’ is not synonymous with ‘timeless’, it does indicate an extremely solid and durable superstructure. The idea of viewing a guiding principle as a tool with which temporal and spatial priorities could be identified for a manageable period was not yet discernible.

The Federal Spatial Planning Act of 1965 did not refer to the term *guiding principle* even though the notion of spatial planning (*Raumordnung*) after 1965 was initially associated with the idea of a far-reaching claim to power that could have been supported through spatial guiding principles. In the real world of politics with strong ministries, comprehensive control through spatial planning (*Raumordnung*) was never going to be feasible. Thus, the Federal Spatial Planning Programme (*Bundesraumordnungsprogramm, BRÖP*) adopted by the Conference of Ministers for Spatial Planning in 1975 likewise remained inconsequential and ineffective.

For spatial planning (*Raumordnung*), this meant the start of a phase of coordination through information, which was represented in particular by the then Federal Research Institute for Regional Studies and Spatial Planning (*Bundesforschungsanstalt für Landeskunde und Raumordnung, BfLR*), which generated know-how through spatial planning reports (▷ *Reports on urban and spatial development*), the specialist journal *Informationen zur Raumentwicklung (Information on Spatial Development)* and diverse studies and analyses; this know-how then permeated the political arena. The knowledge base for the guiding principles was always available at that time but the step towards guiding principles that would set priorities and thus reflect spatial planning policy in the true sense was consciously avoided.

From the end of the 1970s, spatial planning (*Raumordnung*) at the federal level provided rather scientific support for spatial development processes, while it was primarily implemented as ▷ *Regional planning* at the level of the federal states. The diverse and partly contradictory principles embedded in the Federal Spatial Planning Act were not supplemented by a guiding principle, neither as an epochal characterisation of overarching objectives nor as policy guidelines and framework for action setting temporal and spatial priorities. They were rather characterised by the situational, spatial planning actions in the federal states and regions, for which the diverse principles of spatial planning formed an immediate reference level which was open to discussion.

Yet it seemed that guiding principles in the sense of ‘superordinate, central maxims for action, interpretation and application’ (Turowski/Lehmkühler 1999: 158) with a substantive core and an orientation for action were not entirely dispensable. The mandate of ▷ *Equivalence of living conditions* and later the principle of ▷ *Sustainability* provided support and orientation for spatial planning (*Raumordnung*). But these guiding principles did not result in a guiding principle for the spatial development of the federal territory, which was underscored by illustrative maps of Germany.

## Guiding principles for spatial development

This was achieved only from the 1990s, initially in 1992/93 – still without relying on the term *guiding principle* – as ‘Spatial Planning Policy Guidelines’ (BMBau 1993). These first guiding principles of spatial planning (*Raumordnung*) in Germany, which were also recorded in maps, stemmed from the realm of practice, which had to respond to German Reunification and the ensuing need for action. The Spatial Planning Policy Guidelines were elaborated and drawn up in 1992/93 in a relatively short period of time as a joint task between the responsible federal ministry and the then *BfLR* without reference to the term *guiding principle*. The differences between the West and the East, the arising pressure resulting from the demand for space in cities and urban regions (▷ *City, town*; ▷ *Urban region*) and the foreseeable, large-scale shifts associated with these gave rise in the early 1990s to a need for action, for which an extension of the scope of the Federal Spatial Planning Act to the ‘new’ federal states and a gradual development of federal state and regional planning in line with the Western German model proved insufficient. Speed and a practical orientation were required. Thus, the special situation of German Reunification created a window of opportunity for innovation in spatial planning (*Raumordnung*), which was used by the responsible stakeholders not only to outline a spatial planning strategy for the new federal states, but also to provide an impetus for spatial planning in Germany as a whole (▷ *Innovation, innovation policy*).

The Policy Guidelines and their elaboration in the somewhat later Framework for Action were evidently so persuasive that spatial guiding principles were embedded in the Federal Spatial Planning Act for the entire federal territory in 1997. The elaboration of the ‘Concepts and Strategies for Spatial Development in Germany’ (MKRO 2006) and their subsequent renewal and expansion (MKRO 2016) tied in with the experiences and resolutions of the 1990s.

## 2.2 Terminological perspective

In the recasting of the Federal Spatial Planning Act of 1997, the concept and term *guiding principle* was not defined in more detail, although the recast law did define a number of key terms and concepts (e.g. ▷ *Objectives, principles and other requirements of spatial planning [Raumordnung]*) for the first time in detail. If a concept or term is newly introduced and there is no pressure to define it, it does not appear to require an explanation as it is securely entrenched in the general language. Or a conscious decision was made to refrain from defining it, as the lack of precision itself would leave discretion for interpretation and design and would prevent conflicts between the federation and the federal states.

Of course, the bodies responsible for spatial planning and for federal state and regional planning were familiar with the notion of guiding principles when the term was included in the Federal Spatial Planning Act. The concept and term *guiding principle* had already figured in the spatial planning discussions in the 1950s and 1960s. The term is also relevant in the strictly technical environment of ▷ *Spatial planning (Raumplanung)* [i.e. spatial planning in the sense of the intersectoral, integrative coordination of demands for the use of space – Translator’s note]. ▷ *Urban development*, for example, likes to use guiding principles to describe ‘complex objectives more concretely through images’, whereby these objectives lie somewhere between concept and master plan (cf. Jessen 2005: 602). Dehne describes a guiding principle in spatial development as ‘a descriptive, superordinate, clearly defined objective for a space, which is to be supported by the majority of the people and institutions in question in order to guide the spatially relevant actions of individuals and thus to steer spatial development’ (Dehne 2005: 608).

Notwithstanding various attempts at a definition (Jessen 2005, Dehne 2005, Becker 2010), the following conclusions remain valid: The notion of a guiding principle is multi-faceted in spatial planning (*Raumordnung*), too. It can be used in different contexts, and its meaning depends on the purpose for which it is invoked. In her PhD thesis on the notion of the guiding principle in social sciences, Giesel (2007) states: ‘There is no consensus on what guiding principles are, how they emerge, what function they have, how they have an impact, and how they should be dealt with – whether within individual disciplines or between them.’ Yet ‘a superordinate common denominator can be identified: wherever guiding principles are discussed, the debate focuses on orientation problems, in particular in regard to the future, which is increasingly perceived as open and something that can be actively shaped’ (Giesel 2007: 14).

### 3 Three generations of guiding principles

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#### 3.1 Policy Guidelines and Framework for Action 1992-1993

In the initial guiding principles for spatial planning after German Reunification, the need for orientation resonated in the ‘Spatial Planning Policy Guidelines’. In the preface, the responsible federal minister Irmgard Schwaetzer and then chairman of the Conference of Ministers for Spatial Planning, Klaus Matthiesen, emphasised: ‘Against the backdrop of German Reunification and with a view to the advancing European unification process, the Policy Guidelines draft guiding visions for balanced, decentralised spatial development and for creating equivalent living conditions in all parts of the federal territory. It also makes a contribution to securing the locational competitiveness of Germany within international competition’ (*BMBau* 1993: I).

The Policy Guidelines formulate five guiding principles: (1) *Settlement structure*, (2) *Environment and spatial use*, (3) *Transport*, (4) *Europe*, (5) *Order and development* (cf. *BMBau* 1993). For these themes, the Policy Guidelines offer an outlook for a balanced and sustainable spatial development across the entire federal territory. Four of the five guiding principles were supplemented with a map, which is without formal significance but nonetheless has some impact. The maps explicitly do not amount to planning stipulations, but they were acknowledged by the representatives of the federal states as sound spatial depictions upon adoption by the Conference of Ministers for Spatial Planning.

The argument focuses on issues that cannot be regulated through binding provisions, but instead through consensus and have to be advanced through voluntary implementation at the various levels of action. To ensure that the Policy Guidelines do not slacken to the point of becoming ineffectual, they were supplemented soon afterwards by the adoption of a Framework for Action, which was designed as a medium-term work and action programme for spatial planning (*BMBau* 1995). Research projects and Model Projects for Spatial Planning (*Modellvorhaben der Raumordnung*) evolved over the years from the Policy Guidelines.

The Policy Guidelines in conjunction with the Framework for Action impacted spatial planning (*Raumordnung*) and federal state spatial planning from within. The Policy Guidelines triggered discussions and research projects, e.g. on the possibility of steering the demand for land in the sense of a decentralised concentration, and developed new formats of spatial

## Guiding principles for spatial development

planning (*Raumordnung*) by linking research and practice. Thus Experimental Housing and Urban Development (*Experimenteller Wohnungs- und Städtebau, ExWoSt*) method known from ▷ *Urban research* was transferred into spatial planning and a programme on city networks was established. Conceptual and practical spatial planning were brought together and flanked by supporting research and ▷ *Evaluation, audit*. From this basis, a new spatial planning practice for Model Projects for Spatial Planning evolved, which became established over time as a self-evident approach for trying out and disseminating new impetuses for spatial planning.

The Policy Guidelines feature a remarkable map with the straightforward title ‘The existing situation in terms of settlement structures’ (*BMBau* 1993: 5). It precedes the nominal guiding principles and apparently provides an analytical introduction. However, this map in fact contained a far-reaching, innovative impulse – one might even say dynamite – which remains effective today. The image of the map is constituted around agglomerations with an international or large-scale impact (▷ *Agglomeration, agglomeration area*). The similarities with the metropolitan region debate (▷ *Metropolitan region*) and with the guiding principle of growth and innovation adopted in 2006 are evident. It is interesting to note that this map is designed as an analysis and thus as a hypothesis or question, because a corresponding guiding principle would not have achieved consensus within the Conference of Ministers for Spatial Planning at the time.

Nevertheless, spatial planning (*Raumordnung*) gradually opened up to a post-industrial, globalisation-driven notion of space, where metropolises become drivers of economic and social development, and the proximity or distance of a ▷ *Region* to a powerful metropole becomes an important development parameter (▷ *Metropolis/Global City*). In this way, spatial planning (*Raumordnung*) signalled at an early stage a new spatial development trend in the guiding principles of 1992/93, which was gradually reflected in the feeling, thinking and actions of stakeholders in metropolises, smaller-sized large cities, metropolitan regions and peripheries (▷ *Periphery/peripheralisation*).

### 3.2 Guiding principles for spatial development 2004–2006

After a decade or so, the impulses from the Policy Guidelines and the Framework for Action were deemed to have been exhausted and the activities triggered by the latter completed. At the same time, the general conditions for spatial development had changed and had, above all, shifted the perception of what was deemed to be relevant. Thus, globalisation, with its far-reaching impact on spatial development, gradually entered the broader public discussion. The process was by no means new, but was initially marginalised on a political level in the face of the intense preoccupation with German Reunification. This includes in particular the impulses for metropolises, metropolitan regions and new peripheries. In addition, the focus was on the insights of demographic change with its ageing and depopulation processes (▷ *Demographic change; ▷ Shrinking cities*). Sustainable spatial development was seen as a third major challenge. Even though sustainability had continuously been on the spatial planning (*Raumordnung*) agenda since the 1990s, this seemed to require a new approach with new impulses for action. Finally, the embedding of Germany in the European space and its cross-border spatial links to neighbouring countries should receive more attention.



In contrast to the Policy Guidelines of 1992/93, which were elaborated within a short time span by experts at the *BfLR* and the responsible federal ministry, the process of elaborating guiding principles in 2004–2006 was designed to be more comprehensive and discursive. In so doing, several sub-processes were interlinked. The Federal Office for Building and Regional Planning (*Bundesamt für Bauwesen und Raumordnung, BBR*) prepared a new spatial planning report during the discussion on the guiding principles, taking up questions from the discourse and introducing data and analyses from the draft of the spatial planning report back into the discourse. The task of organising the discussion of the guiding principles was allocated as an external project and processed in close coordination with the *BBR* and the responsible federal ministry (Aring/Sinz 2006a, 2006b).

In addition, stimuli were taken up from neighbouring countries, where the process of elaborating guiding principles of spatial planning had already been initiated. From a German perspective, the guiding principles in Switzerland and the Netherlands were of particular interest, because there, as in Germany, the processes of globalisation and internationalisation formed a starting point for the elaboration of guiding principles. This placed a particular focus on both metropolitan regions and metropolisation processes and on the related changes in the ▷ *City system* and in the peripheralisation processes in particular.

Finally, in the course of 2005, the contours of new guiding principles crystallised, and were subsequently translated by the *BBR* into spatial concept maps. The results of the process of elaborating guiding principles and a draft of the guiding principles were then discussed at a major conference of experts. Afterwards, the drafts and suggestions on the guiding principles, the spatial planning report as well as the additional materials were forwarded to the Conference of Ministers for Spatial Planning, where they were discussed again. In 2006, three guiding principles were adopted under the ‘Concepts and Strategies for Spatial Development in Germany’ (cf. *MKRO* 2006):

- In the guiding principle of *Growth and Innovation*, the spatial development policy of the federation and the federal states adopted the objective to provide greater support for impulses for economic growth, innovation and the development towards a ▷ *Knowledge society*. A special focus was placed on metropolises and metropolitan regions, but the view was also directed to growth regions outside the metropolitan regions, to stabilisation spaces and large-scale urban-rural partnerships. A key notion was to view the metropolitan areas as cores of growth alliances and communities of shared responsibility to support, on the one hand, the potential of metropolisation and, on the other hand, to counter the polarisation between metropolisation and peripheralisation.
- In connection with the guiding principle of *Ensuring the provision of public services*, the task of spatial planning (*Raumordnung*) and of establishing socially compatible and just standards for the ▷ *Provision of public services* was addressed. This revealed a tension between empirical trends of spatial polarisation and the mandate of equivalent living conditions which characterises spatial planning (*Raumordnung*). As this contradiction was not resolved, the approaches to action were designed to be process-oriented and rather communicative, investigative and experimental. In this way, confrontations about the proper approach to spatial planning (*Raumordnung*) could thus be avoided in relation to this issue.



## Guiding principles for spatial development

- The guiding principle of *Conservation of resources, shaping of cultural landscapes* aims to strengthen the competence and assertiveness of spatial planning (*Raumordnung*) in the cross-sectoral and supra-local agreement and coordination of the various planning processes. Integrated perspectives are characteristic of spatial planning (*Raumordnung*), as they are inherent to the definition of ▷ *Landscape*. In this way, spatial planning (*Raumordnung*) adds an expansive accent to one-dimensional sectoral planning. Specific approaches in guiding principles are river landscapes, urban and rural cultural landscapes (▷ *Cultural landscape*) as well as maritime landscapes, which must in each case be identified and shaped in their multiple dimensions.

The guiding principles of 2006 as well as the upstream elaboration process had an impact both within spatial planning (*Raumplanung*) and on an external level, in particular due to the clear contouring of the guiding principles and the then ambition to address current challenges and put the spotlight on spatial planning and federal state spatial planning. In later years, Priebis offered this retrospective insight: ‘Among professionals, the guiding principles largely met with a positive response due to their broad thematic range, their political currency and the wholly innovative combination of textual and pictorial descriptions within the maps. Their clear orientation towards growth, in particular that of the first guiding principle, was critically discussed by policymakers and the public’ (Priebis 2014: 12). In any case, there was a discussion about the pros and cons, which proved to be invigorating for spatial development discourse and practice.

In particular, the guiding principle of *Growth and innovation* was adopted thoroughly and comprehensively due to its emphasis of the role of metropolitan regions as agents of growth alliances and communities of shared responsibility. On the one hand, it was perceived as an innovation in spatial planning circles and taken up by numerous municipal stakeholders. On the other, it was perceived by part of the spatial planning scene as neoliberal excess and emphatically opposed by the lobbyists for ▷ *Rural areas* because they feared a change in the funding programme. Beyond this polarisation, in practical terms the guiding principle helped to change the perception of the role of the large cities in a post-industrial and globalised economy in some respects and to specifically reflect on municipal and regional approaches, which could serve to support the current dynamics of metropolitan spatial development.

### 3.3 Revision and expansion of the guiding principles 2013–2016

A new process of elaborating guiding principles was initiated as of 2013, in which the guiding principles of 2006 were revised, updated and expanded. The initiative in this most recent process was provided by the Conference of Ministers for Spatial Planning, which had observed the impact of the guiding principles of 2006 and adopted several resolutions on further developing them based on those observations. The aim was to update the guiding principles of 2006 and in this way to address previous criticism, close obvious gaps and to accommodate the changed general conditions. The concept of metropolises, for example, was supplemented by cross-border metropolitan regions and regiopolises. At the same time, it provided the opportunity to contain a polarising approach to spatial development, which was perceived to be neoliberal.

The lead responsibility was assigned to the Federal Ministry of Transport, Construction and Urban Development (*Bundesministerium für Verkehr, Bau und Stadtentwicklung*), which organised a consultation process. In a small group of the Conference of Ministers for Spatial Planning, a draft was discussed and agreed and made available to the expert public to comment on their

acceptance, suggestions and concerns. A process opened up in this manner addresses many individuals and institutions and is, moreover, transparent – yet it is not terribly dynamic. While criticism can condense and intensify in formal discussions between experts, written comments rather tend towards a balanced consideration with the acknowledgement of many positive aspects, which are then followed by suggestions for improvement. And it remains unclear why individual suggestions are implemented, while others are discarded.

The most visible effect of the consultation process consisted of the inclusion of a fourth guiding principle of *shaping climate change and the energy transition*. In relation to climate change (▷ *Climate, climate change*), the insights on ▷ *Flood protection*, coastal protection, endangered mountain areas, the consequences of heat, water shortages, etc., which had been examined in various ways in the past decade, were addressed. Even more current is the chapter on ‘Steering the development of renewable energy and of networks’ (▷ *Renewable energies*). In this regard, spatial planning (*Raumordnung*) cautiously moves into a conflict-prone policy area, where the main stakeholders are, however, mostly to be found in the ministries of the environment and economic affairs (energy policy, expansion of power lines). However, in view of the local spatial conflicts associated with ▷ *Energy policy*, there is also a demand for spatial planning given its competence in procedural and participatory matters. Ultimately, the energy issue was not cross-linked with guiding principle 1 *Enhancing competitiveness*, which would have been possible in view of the decentralisation potential of the energy transition. Doing so could have led to a similarly heated debate as in 2006 in regard to the metropolises approach. The Conference of Ministers for Spatial Planning of 2016 avoided this risk.

In the drafting and consultation phase, the guiding principle was criticised from various perspectives as being somewhat timid. This is exemplified in the responses of the Advisory Board for Spatial Development (*Beirat für Raumentwicklung*) (Advisory Board 2013 and 2015) and of the ARL’s Ad hoc Working Group (ARL 2013). Both commentaries expressed their views on the updates gracefully and appreciatively, but remained critical on various points. They stated that while the guiding principles addressed important issues, they fell short in relation to some of the insights gained in the discussions with experts from the guiding principles of 2006. At the Conference of German Regional Planning of 2014, too, there was a critical discussion of both the process and the impact of the guiding principle as expressed in the draft that was available at that point (Gustedt 2014: 32). Irrespective of this criticism expressed during the consultation process, insufficient time has elapsed since the adoption of the guiding principles to evaluate their effectiveness.

## 4 Meeting the need for orientation

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The term *guiding principle* is imprecise and can therefore be used in many different contexts. Yet therein lies its very usefulness for fields of action which are as politically charged as spatial planning (*Raumplanung*) and federal state spatial planning. This is because wherever guiding principles become the subject of discussion, the focus is essentially on orientation and the communication of different notions of development. The use of guiding principles of whatever nature can contribute to decision-making processes and at the same time leave ample discretion for future action.

## Guiding principles for spatial development

An important question remains whether the guiding principles of spatial planning are to be designed as a superstructure of general applicability or rather as a temporally limited setting of priorities. The thinking on this issue has varied over the long history of spatial planning. In Germany, this has led to three generations of the guiding principles of spatial planning, which were linked to action strategies and thus formed a medium-term work and action programme for spatial planning. They thus in principle established temporal and spatial priorities, which were defined in practice to varying degrees of precision.

The setting of priorities may, however, come into conflict with the immutable principles inherent in spatial planning (*Raumordnung*) and with fundamental tenets such as equivalence or sustainability. As a result, guiding principles may be extremely controversial because they question the timeless correctness of customary spatial planning actions and demand more flexibility from spatial planning (*Raumordnung*). But it may also lead to the irrelevance of the guiding principles when they remain descriptive and analytical. Hence, an ongoing effort must be made to ensure that the guiding principles for spatial development meet the need for orientation.

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