

Stephan Reiß-Schmidt

Inner development



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Inner development refers to both a guiding principle of spatial and urban development and to a planning strategy. The principle of ‘inner development before outer development’ is presently largely uncontested from a technical perspective due to its economic, ecological and urban benefits, even though it does entail conflicting objectives. Its implementation requires active, strategic land management.

1 The term and its genesis

Inner development describes an abstract guiding principle of spatial and urban development (▷ *Guiding principles for spatial development*; ▷ *Guiding principles for urban development*) and at the same time a specific spatial planning strategy: rather than seeking to expand an existing developed area outward from its edges by appropriating what is usually agricultural land (outer zone development), inner development focuses on the structural (re)use of unused or underused land within developed and contiguously built-up areas (▷ *Settlement/settlement structure*). This may include vacant lots in the built-up area, plots that are not being optimally used and which thus have potential for redevelopment or further densification (▷ *Density*), derelict sites which were formerly used for industrial or commercial purposes, the sites of former railway infrastructure or airports, as well as deserted military sites (▷ *Brownfield site, derelict/vacant site*). Inner development includes the change in use or reuse of existing buildings. An online survey conducted in 2013 on behalf of the Federal Institute for Research on Building, Urban Affairs and Spatial Development (*Bundesinstitut für Bauwesen und Stadtentwicklung, BBSR*) showed that approximately 120,000 to 165,000 hectares across Germany could potentially be used for inner development, of which 20% are considered to be exploitable in the short term (*BBSR 2013: 3 et seq.*).

Since the 1960s, prosperity has grown rapidly, the preferred form of housing for large groups of the population has become owning their own house and the number of one-person and two-person households has increased steadily. Based on this, the average living space per inhabitant has risen rapidly from approximately 14 m² in 1950. In 1990, the average living space was 34.8 m² (36.4 m² in the old federal territory and 28.2 m² in the new federal states and eastern Berlin) and expanded from 39.5 m² (in 2000) to 45.0 m² (in 2010) to 46.5 m² in 2014, with the difference between east and west shrinking in 2014 to just about 4 m² (*Destatis 2015: 5 et seq.*).

Criticisms that this would lead to rapid ▷ *Suburbanisation* and depopulation of the core cities, the loss of landscape, increasing motor vehicle traffic as well as concerns regarding the social consequences of land speculation and inadequate legal planning instruments to implement the common good were raised in Germany as early as the 1960s. At the Annual General Meeting of the Association of German Cities (*Deutscher Städtetag, DST*), held in 1971 in Munich under the motto '*Rettet unsere Städte jetzt!*' ('Save Our Cities Now!'), these issues were addressed at the local authority level (*DST 1971*). In the following years, budding institutionalisation and legal regulation of environmental protection focused sectoral and political attention on the disproportionate land take for settlements and public thoroughfares compared to population trends and economic growth. From the perspective of sustainable spatial development, soil and land are acknowledged to be scarce resources that must be used judiciously (▷ *Soil conservation*). In the wake of the coal and steel crisis and owing to deindustrialisation, extensive brownfield sites started to emerge in the 1970s, initially resulting from former mining and steel industry sites and towards the end of the century also from railway, military, port and other commercial sites. These brownfield sites have prompted inner development and land recycling (or closed cycle land management) to become increasingly important in planning practice as strategies for sustainable spatial development.

2 Inner development in planning law

These social and economic developments, along with expectations of reduced growth, have led to a stronger focus on environmental aspects and the use of existing sites in spatial planning. Hence, the concept of inner development has gradually found its way into ▷ *Planning law* since the 1970s. With the amendment of the then Federal Building Law (*Bundesbaugesetz, BBauG*) as notified on 18 August 1976 (*BGBI. [Federal Law Gazette] I, 2221*), urban development law now lays down the principle that ‘land used for agriculture, forestry or housing [...] should be taken and exploited only to the necessary extent for other types of use’ (section 1(6) of the Federal Building Law of 1976). At the same time, the mandatory ▷ *Realisation of plans in urban design* (in the form of demolition, building and modernisation orders, sections 39a et seq. of the Federal Building Law of 1976) in the Urban Development Promotion Law (*Städtebauförderungsgesetz, StBauFG*), which was then adopted in General Building Law, created for the first time instruments to implement inner development that intervene in ownership rights (and are therefore extremely complex in their application). The Federal Spatial Planning Act (*Raumordnungsgesetz, ROG*) of 2008 requires a reduction in the new use of open spaces ‘in particular through the preferred exploitation of the potential for the reuse of land, for further densification and for other measures for the inner development of cities and municipalities’ as principles of spatial planning (section 2(2) no. 6 of Federal Spatial Planning Act). Finally, in 2013, the inner development amendment to the Federal Building Code (*Baugesetzbuch, BauGB*) explicitly stipulates the priority of inner development (section 1(5) sentence 3 of the Federal Building Code) and subsequently provides in more detail: ‘Land and soil should be used sparingly and carefully; to this end, the local authorities’ development options for reducing the built use of land (in particular the regeneration of land for reuse, further densification and other measures of inner development) must be used and the sealing of soil must be limited to the necessary extent’ (section 1a(2) sentence 1 of the Federal Building Code). Since 2012, the Swiss Spatial Planning Act (*Raumplanungsgesetz, RPG*) has also required the federal government, cantons and local authorities to ‘steer the development of settlements toward the inner urban zone with due consideration of an appropriate quality of life’ and to ‘create compact settlements’ (Article 1(1) of the Swiss Spatial Planning Act; ▷ *Urban and spatial development in Switzerland*). In a referendum held in March 2013, this provision, which was intensely and controversially discussed in Switzerland, was confirmed by a majority of 62.9% of the votes (Schneeberger 2013). Accordingly, the building zones allocated in the cantonal structure plans (*Richtpläne*) may not exceed the expected demand for 15 years; the cantons must reduce the scope of the allocated building zones in the medium term to the extent permitted by federal law and remunerate the owners concerned if necessary.

3 Inner development in planning practice

In regional and municipal practice, the priority of inner development has become a fixture of informal strategies (▷ *Informal planning*) and formal plans since the 1980s. The urban development strategy ‘*Perspektive München*’ (‘Munich Outlook’), which was first adopted by the Munich City Council in 1998, paraphrased the priority of inner development with the slogan of ‘Compact, urban, green’, which has since been used frequently at the federal level (*LHM [State Capital*

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Munich] 1999: 25 et seq.). With the 2003 *‘Nachhaltiges Bauflächenmanagement’* (‘Sustainable building land management’) programme, the local authority of Stuttgart presented a city-wide strategy for inner development that was one of the most advanced at the time and entailed a range of different instruments for its implementation (LHS [State Capital Stuttgart] 2003).

In science and in practice, there is now a broad consensus on the diverse ecological, economic and socio-cultural benefits of inner development, such as:

- ▷ *Climate protection* through a reduction of the use of primary energy in compact settlement structures
- ▷ *Soil conservation* through the prevention of further land take
- Use of existing social and technical infrastructures; limiting building and operation costs
- Increasing real estate returns ▷ *Real estate sector*) through greater density
- Identity, high-quality building planning, design and construction, and ▷ *Urbanity* through development oriented toward existing buildings of dense and mixed urban structures in accordance with the guiding principle of the European city (▷ *European city*)
- The participation of all social groups through compact, mixed-use neighbourhoods

However, implementation frequently fails in practical terms at the regional and municipal levels due to structural and local obstructions, such as:

- Counter-incentives through a land tax system and commuting allowance
- Land owners’ unwillingness to cooperate; speculative expectations regarding land prices
- Restrictions on mixed uses through the separation principle of immission control law (▷ *Immission control*)
- Reduced ventilation and nocturnal cooling due to the infilling of gaps in the built-up area and further densification, i.e. reduced adaptability to climate change (▷ *Climate change adaptation*)
- Protracted and conflict-prone planning processes; lack of acceptance of inner development on the part of the public

Accordingly, inner development cannot be implemented at either the regional or municipal level through classic tender planning, and requires comprehensive ▷ *Land management* instead. The Ruhr property fund launched in 1979 by the federal state government of North Rhine-Westphalia as part of the Ruhr Action Programme is one of the first systematic and large-scale attempts at this. This fund served to reactivate the brownfield sites in the Ruhr area of former collieries, industrial and transport sites, spanning about 2,500 hectares at the time, for new commercial uses, parks or residential neighbourhoods; this was done through the clearing and regeneration of contaminated sites (▷ *Contaminated sites*) and new development of land (*Landesentwicklungsgesellschaft, LEG* [State Development Corporation] 2005). In view of the important objectives of reducing land take and promoting systematic closed cycle land management, municipal land reallocation and real estate policy (▷ *Land market / land policy*) has evolved since the 1990s into strategic land management. The position paper of the Association of German Cities on *‘Strategisches Flächenmanagement und Bodenwirtschaft’* (‘Strategic site and

land management'), first published in 2002 and updated in 2014, provides the following definition in this regard: 'land management is an integral and strategic action and steering approach for all sites and site types in a city to optimise the provision and distribution of sites within the meaning of ▷ *Provision of public services* and closed cycle land management. It takes into account the requirements resulting from the objectives of urban and open space development within the constraints of limited resources' (*DST* 2014: 9).

4 Outlook for inner development

In 2002, the national sustainability strategy 'Perspectives for Germany' defined the '30-ha-Ziel' (30 ha target) as a sustainability indicator, meaning on average not more than 30 hectares of 'new' land per day should be claimed for settlement and public thoroughfares by 2020 (*RNE* [Council for Sustainable Development] 2004; ▷ *Sustainability*). In 2000, the rolling four-year average (1997–2000) for 'new' land claimed for settlement and traffic purposes was still 129 hectares per day, but dropped to 74 hectares per day in 2012 (Destatis 2014).

A projection by the Federal Institute for Research on Building, Urban Affairs and Spatial Development anticipates a reduction of new land take to 45 hectares per day by 2030, which means that the 30 hectare target envisaged for 2020 clearly cannot be met (*BBSR* 2014: 3).

In the meantime, the constraints on inner development imposed by planning, immission control, the real estate sector and ecological limits have become evident, especially in already very dense core cities; frequently, such strategies also lack social acceptance by the public. The pressure from the influx of people into numerous urban regions as well as strong demand for the building of new housing (▷ *Housing market*; ▷ *Housing policy*), especially in the core cities, cannot be resolved everywhere through inner development alone. At least in the medium term, the further expansion of cities through the development of new urban neighbourhoods and infrastructure will remain on the agenda in growth areas.

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