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Research Report

Rethinking the provision of public services and equivalent living conditions: Perspectives and fields of action

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Positionspapier aus der ARL 125

RETHINKING THE PROVISION OF PUBLIC SERVICES AND EQUIVALENT LIVING CONDITIONS

Perspectives and fields of action

Positionspapier aus der ARL 125

RETHINKING THE PROVISION OF PUBLIC SERVICES AND EQUIVALENT LIVING CONDITIONS

Perspectives and fields of action

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RETHINKING THE PROVISION OF PUBLIC SERVICES AND EQUIVALENT LIVING CONDITIONS – PERSPECTIVES AND FIELDS OF ACTION

Abstract

Given the fundamental change in the framework conditions and the public sector's limited resources for action, it is appropriate to examine the issue of safeguarding equivalent living conditions and to take a position on this from the perspective of spatial science and spatial planning. The ARL – Academy for Territorial Development in the Leibniz Association sees itself as a forum in which to drive forward dialogue with all stakeholders from science, planning practice, policymakers and society. In this ARL position paper, 'Rethinking the provision of public services and equivalent living conditions – perspectives and fields of action', the authors present starting points for discussion and call for a constructive and open review of new approaches to solutions and thinking, without prior assumptions.

The main postulations are presented below.

1. Provision of public services through co-production

The provision of public services refers to the securing of basic needs and the creation of possibilities for a self-determined way of life. The comprehensive organisation of the provision of public services can only succeed through the interaction of state and municipal authorities, civil society organisations and private-sector companies ('co-production'). Development strategies only work when they involve the local population. However, there is a danger that local stakeholders may be overburdened by the increasing expectation that they will compensate for public services that are no longer provided by the state. At the same time, freedom for individual responsibility and experiments must be allowed. The public sector remains responsible for guaranteeing the provision of public services and for coordinating agreement between stakeholders.

2. Public service provision: a major challenge for all subareas

The provision of public services must be guaranteed in all subareas. This entails challenges, both in shrinking and in growing spatial categories. A polarising discussion which tries to play off problematic situations in the town and country against each other should be avoided. In subareas characterised by emigration, both in urban and in rural regions, securing the sustainability of infrastructure presents a particular challenge. However, the settlement of immigrants predominantly in peripheral areas is not a solution that can compensate for population losses.

3. Orienting public service provision more closely to the impact than to facilities

In future, standards should determine not the input but the outcome of a particular area of public service provision. This enables responsibilities to be fulfilled in various ways, including through innovative means. Because of existing spatial and social differences, the impact of public service provision measures on individuals and groups is more decisive for securing equivalent living conditions than the configuration of material infrastructure. An orientation towards outcomes should also take into account the abilities and options of different social groups. The needs of the most vulnerable groups should be considered. This orientation towards outcomes requires an adjustment phase and must be introduced gradually, and be well-organised both politically and technically.

4. Ensuring comprehensive minimum provision to implement the objective of equivalence

The definition of comprehensive minimum provision, which must be maintained even under exacerbated circumstances, can help to clarify the objective of equivalence. Such a step creates clarity and reliability for the populace as to what level of public service provision it can count on in future, and is therefore a basis for private and public investment in regions and neighbourhoods suffering from economic and demographic difficulties. Such minimum provision may include, for example, basic services in relation to fire and disaster protection, health, education, mobility, post and telecommunications. Conversely, in other areas, such as water and energy, it is possible to forego equal provision in all regions in favour of decentralised solutions.

5. Unbiased discussion on abandoning settlement units

If, in future, there are regions in which maintaining minimum provision reaches its limits (for example, in remote hamlets and isolated farmsteads), a coordinated, planned abandonment of settlements cannot be categorically ruled out. However, this procedure must be weighed up against all the considerations about social and economic consequences for the public sector, territorial authorities, companies and private households. Preliminary considerations about the dismantling of settlement units require differentiated strategies for participatory implementation and for its financing – both in terms of public funding of facilities and subsidy payments to individuals – as well as on how it would be organised. The public sector must take responsibility for this, in particular.

6. Tackling existing implementation deficits

The current instruments of urban land-use planning, federal state and regional planning are not sufficiently exploited or consistently used. Decision-makers, in particular, must be enabled to deal actively with public service provision in shrinking regions and to have the courage to use instruments and initiate developments which may be uncomfortable today but are unavoidable for the future. This means securing sufficient staffing levels and quality personnel, as well as opportunities for the exchange of knowledge.

A sociopolitical discussion about the future level of public service provision seems necessary, as does the review and further development of funding systems and of formal and informal planning instruments in a way that is spatially differentiated and addresses specific target groups. The challenges necessitate a multi-level governance strategy in the sense of strategic coordination by means of cross-departmental cooperation at the municipal, regional, state and federal level.

The objective of this report is to discuss innovative steering approaches to public service provision and to call for a review of the guiding principles. In order to flesh out these suggestions for implementation on different levels, the following recommended actions will be presented in this position paper:

Overarching recommended actions

- Clarify the current situation
- Involve all stakeholders in the provision of public services
- Try new models and approaches
- Gear efforts towards the outcome and the functional fulfilment of standards
- Improve how instruments are used in conjunction with each other
- Tackle existing implementation deficits
- Develop responsible strategies for dismantling
- Support organisation, self-organisation and the exchange of knowledge

Submit recommended actions to the Federal Government and states

- Enshrine equivalence as a national objective
- Develop an up-to-date understanding of public service provision
- Allow experimentation and support commitment
- Set up integrated funding programmes
- Use instruments of regional planning and strengthen the options available to federal state and regional planning
- Offer orientation, advice and support
- Create an expert spatial planning report for public service provision and equivalence

Recommended actions for regional planning

- Organise the central place system as a network
- Select the spatial reference based on infrastructure
- Implement strategic settlement development
- Bring about real regional and intermunicipal coordination processes

Recommended actions for local authorities

- Approach problems actively
- Strengthen intermunicipal cooperation
- Actively support stakeholders from civil society
- Prepare comprehensive strategies for dismantling

RETHINKING THE PROVISION OF PUBLIC SERVICES AND EQUIVALENT LIVING CONDITIONS – PERSPECTIVES AND FIELDS OF ACTION

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1 Introduction

Municipalities, towns and regions face great challenges due to growing social inequality and increasing spatial polarisation with regard to the provision of and demand for infrastructures. The effects of demographic change and the dwindling financial room for manoeuvre in many places – particularly from 2020 because of the ‘debt brake’ which comes into effect then – are increasingly causing problems for maintaining the facilities needed to provide public services. Rural, sparsely populated areas and disadvantaged towns and urban neighbourhoods are particularly affected. Other current developments, such as the ongoing negotiations on international free trade agreements, harbour considerable risks for public service provision, which is the responsibility of and provided by local authorities and their companies.

The various international aspects of this issue can only be indicated in this text; it is not possible to do justice to them in detail. One example is that the guiding principle of equivalent living conditions must be set in relation to the EU policy of ‘territorial cohesion’ in the international context. The EU’s guiding principle is not completely identical to the understanding of equivalent living conditions in German spatial planning and regional policy; however, many of the instruments and funding approaches of the EU are also very helpful in attaining equivalence. Another international aspect of this issue is that in the European context, particularly with regard to the Eastern European peripheries, spatial disparities are considerably more pronounced than in the Federal Republic.

A discussion of the options for securing equivalent living conditions and a positioning from the perspective of spatial science and spatial planning are appropriate, particularly as the political debate has now become even more intense (cf. Kersten/Neu/Vogel 2015a, 2015b; Berlin Institute 2015; German Federal Government’s demographic strategy [*Demografiestrategie der Bundesregierung*] (BMI [Federal Ministry of the Interior] 2012); cf. also ARL 2006, Advisory council on spatial planning [*Beirat für Raumordnung*] 2005). In this position paper, the authors

present starting points for discussion and call for a constructive and open review of new approaches to solutions and thinking, without prior assumptions. In this context, the Academy for Territorial Development (ARL) sees itself as a forum in which to promote a cross-disciplinary dialogue with all stakeholders.

The provision of public services is a much-discussed topic with considerable relevance for funding policy. For most areas of public service provision, the Basic Law (*Grundgesetz, GG*) makes rather general references in the form of fundamental constitutional standards of human dignity according to Article 1(1) of the Basic Law and the principle of the social state according to Article 20(1) of the Basic Law. In 1984, the Federal Constitutional Court (*Bundesverfassungsgericht*) declared public service provision to be a public responsibility ‘which is indispensable in order to secure a humane existence for citizens’ (Federal Constitutional Court 66, 248, 258). The essence of public service provision is thus the safeguarding of a humane existence. The Federal Spatial Planning Act (*Raumordnungsgesetz, ROG*) connects the provision of public services to the guiding principle of equivalent living conditions and provides it with a spatial dimension⁴. The public sector is obliged to ensure comprehensive provision in populated areas. However, this obligation unquestionably only extends to the most basic public service provision and must take accessibility into account.

2 Terms of reference

In the following, we firstly address the understanding of the term and concept of public service provision on which these considerations are based, as well as the areas and target groups which a discussion about equivalent living conditions should encompass.

2.1 Public service provision as the basis for a humane existence

The provision of public services refers to the public safeguarding of a range of selected goods and services which are classified as essential. These may include fire and disaster protection, healthcare, education, post and telecommunication, local services, mobility and rescue services. These should be offered comprehensively and in an acceptable minimum quality at socially acceptable prices and be accessible within a reasonable distance. Service provision may be provided both by public and commercial or civil society providers, or in co-production. The public sector has the task of guaranteeing the functionality of public service provision.

So far, this delimitation of the concept of public service provision has been based not on theory but rather on evidence. In a dynamically changing society with a democratic constitution, terms and concepts of this kind and their fulfilment in practice are always subject to discussion. For example, the understanding of a ‘supporting and demanding state’, or of the need for regulation or deregulation of public fields of activity, changes over the course of time.

One possibility of conceptualising the demand for securing a humane existence in the sense of the Federal Constitutional Court (see above) is to refer to Maslow’s ‘hierarchy of needs’ (cf. Maslow 1943), which structures human needs as follows:

1. Basic physiological needs (eating, drinking, sleeping, housing)
2. Safety needs (order, safety, health, protection from the forces of nature)
3. Social (we) needs (education, cohesion, accessibility)

¹ Section 2(2) of the Federal Spatial Planning Act formulates the following principles: ‘Balanced social, infrastructural, economic, ecological and cultural conditions should be aspired to across the entire area of the Federal Republic of Germany and its subareas. This means securing sustainable public service provision, supporting sustainable economic growth and innovation, securing development potential and sustainably protecting resources.’ [...] ‘The provision of public services and infrastructures, and in particular the accessibility of facilities and services of basic provision for all population groups, must be guaranteed in order to secure equal opportunities in the subareas in an appropriate way; this applies also, and particularly, to sparsely populated regions.’

4. Self/prestige needs (outer self) (success, appreciation, power)
5. Needs for self-fulfilment (inner self) (art, culture, aesthetics, self-satisfaction, self-fulfilment)

The understanding of public service provision on which this paper is based refers to the first three of these: there is a particularly close connection between basic physiological needs, 'survival', and welfare provided by the state, which is why state transfer payments are provided for this minimum safeguarding of basic needs in cases where there is a demonstrable need.

The next level relates to providing for each individual's need for safety to safeguard their existence. These primarily include state services which guarantee the personal safety of the individual and the safeguarding of property rights, such as the police, fire service and disaster protection, the health service, energy provision and telecommunications. The third level includes, for example, access to educational institutions or child and youth welfare measures. Equal opportunities – in the sense of each individual having options and opportunities – are essentially characterised by infrastructural framework conditions in areas such as education, health, care, culture, etc. Given the significance of subarea-specific factors for opportunities for a self-determined life, the spatial situation is both an expression and a cause of discriminatory or preferential treatment of social groups from the perspective of environment-related fairness (cf. Schlosberg 2007; Walker 2012).

In summary, it can be noted that the provision of public services means securing basic needs and therefore creating the possibilities for a self-determined way of life. The social state secures this. Public service provision is not a condition but a task which must be fulfilled by the state, the private sector and civil society, including through co-production. The role assigned to the various service principles in the triad of the market, transfer and reciprocity should be discussed in this context (Heidemann 2002, R-72; R-52; R-39). The implementation of supply principles such as constant availability, (spatial) ubiquity, the provision of services, the enabling of individuals, households or companies to take advantage of services, and the completeness of the service range must be examined.

Relating public service provision to all basic needs

The provision of public services refers to the securing of basic needs and the creation of possibilities for a self-determined way of life.

Provision of public services through co-production

The organisation of public service provision is a task of the state and municipal authorities, civil society organisations or private-sector companies, possibly through co-production.

Scrutinising existing supply principles

Existing supply principles must be scrutinised with regard to the type, quantity and quality of provision.

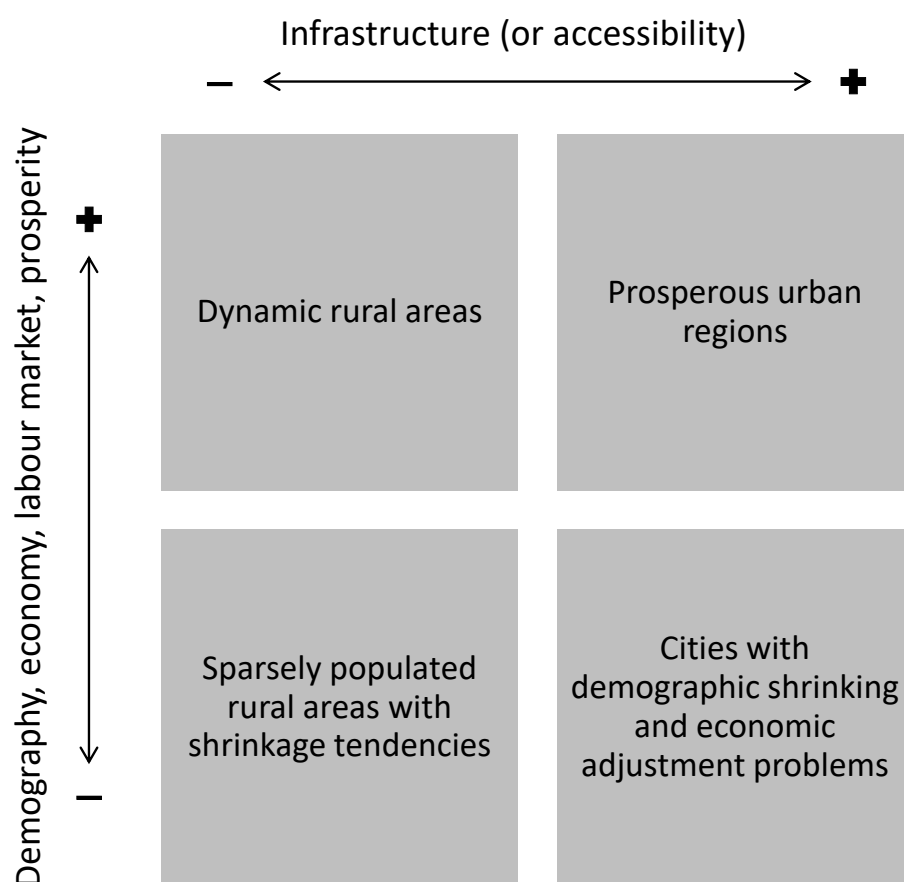
2.2 Public service provision at risk both in rural and in urban areas

Spatial development in Germany is characterised by the juxtaposition of demographically and economically growing, shrinking and stagnating areas. This applies not only when viewed on a large scale but on all spatial levels, as well as within spatial categories and within regions and municipalities. Particularly when viewed on a small scale, growth and shrinkage often occur directly next to each other, resulting in a fragmentation of the space. Traditionally, the sparsely populated (functionally) peripheral areas with shrinkage tendencies are at the centre of spatial planning in relation to public service provision and the equivalence of living conditions. In the urban context, with a relatively large population density, other strategies are necessary to

safeguard public service provision. At the same time, policymaking and planning must fundamentally attend to both spatial types. As a simplified guideline for action, four general spatial types can be distinguished with different requirements for action (cf. Danielzyk/Osterhage/Rönsch et al. 2013):

- Prosperous urban regions
- Cities with demographic shrinkage and long-term economic adjustment problems
- Dynamic rural areas
- Sparsely populated (functionally peripheral) rural areas with demographic and economic shrinkage tendencies

Fig. 1: Categorisation of spatial types



Source: the authors (modified based on Danielzyk/Osterhage/Rönsch et al. 2013)

Various problems accumulate in shrinking spaces, whether they are urban or rural. Although the following examination focuses on these areas characterised by shrinking, it should be pointed out that prosperous regions also undergo developments which lead to the violation of social fairness, e.g. due to increasing housing price trends or the under-provision of certain infrastructures for public service provision. A depiction of multifunctional local services in different spatial types (cf. Appendix 2, map C) also illustrates this.

In urban regions, the socio-economic transformation and socio-spatial differentiation processes lead to increasingly severe fragmentation. Public service provision is increasingly at risk in certain neighbourhoods in urban regions, especially where there is demographic shrinkage and economic stagnation or financial decline. At the same time, the capacity for action on the part of local authorities is increasingly structurally limited in these structurally weak urban regions (cf. Appendix 2, map E).

The sustainability of infrastructures presents a particular problem in areas which are affected by emigration and which are structurally weak, sparsely populated and functionally peripheral. As a result of the generally low overall purchasing power of the demanders, only a few service areas are sustainable in market economic terms. Transfer payments are characterised by high – and, in cases of continuous emigration, even rising – specific costs per inhabitant, per household, per use of services, and per service unit. The high service costs are based on

- large absolute and specific network distances (paths, roads, railway tracks, transport stops/stations, length of water and energy supply networks, drainage, etc.),
- the high costs of maintenance and renovation,
- the effects of previous inappropriate technological standards (e.g. central instead of decentral [networked] systems) and familiar operating forms ('public' service provision instead of civil society service provision),
- residual costs of any necessary dismantling as a result of a shrinkage in the demand for services – e.g. as a result of a decreasing population or of adjustment processes in the economic structure.

Public service provision represents a major challenge for all subareas

The provision of public services must be guaranteed in all subareas. There are challenges to this in all spatial categories. The fragmentation of spatial development leads to very different small-scale developments; growing and shrinking areas may be adjacent, even within a city. In both urban and rural regions characterised by emigration, the sustainability of infrastructures presents a particular challenge. A polarising discussion which tries to play off problematic situations in the town and country against each other should be avoided.

2.3 Taking account of socio-spatial differentiation

A description of the provision of public services by means of quantitative indicators does not reveal anything about actual life in society or, ultimately, about the social or socio-spatial cohesion in cities and municipalities and their neighbourhoods. After all, 'spaces' do not determine actions; rather, spatial development reflects social developments and living situations and responds to them at the same time. Demographic change is an expression and amplifier of multi-dimensional transformation processes such as globalisation, the trend towards a knowledge society, digitalisation, the changes in ways of life and lifestyles, the change in family structures and the role of women in society, etc. These processes result in changed preferences of individuals for particular locations and regions. Depending on their situation in life and various factors such as social status, income, migration background, etc., individuals have different possibilities in relation to being able to choose where they live.

This changed perspective brings individual needs and the resulting implications of the provision of public services more sharply into focus. It directs our attention towards the different vulnerabilities of individuals and households. Vulnerability thematises the interplay between an individual's abilities and their specific environmental situation. The same environmental situation can have different effects on different individuals and groups. Individuals are regarded as vulnerable to particular environmental influences if they are unable to cope with the deterioration of those influences in an appropriate manner (cf. Bolte/Bunge/Hornberg et al. 2012; Köckler/Hornberg 2012). This perspective has seldom been explicitly disseminated in spatial planning to date; however, there are various possibilities for including the vulnerability of individuals in planning processes and in the weighing of interests within spatial planning and municipal planning.

Spatial planning, and especially strategies for public service provision, should take into account the diversity of individuals and their different vulnerabilities. Ultimately, it is not about 'spaces' but about the individuals who live there. This focuses our attention on the specific desired outcome: good education, mobility possibilities, physical integrity, etc. Political discussions have hitherto been oriented more towards input and output than towards outcomes and impacts. The spatial planning perspective in the sense of orientation towards outcomes includes not only examining the extent of the material infrastructure (for example, the number of doctors' surgeries), but also pursuing a preventative approach (healthy housing and living conditions). Elementary gauges would therefore be healthy living and the human right to physical integrity. This orientation towards outcomes requires an adjustment phase and must be introduced gradually, and be well-organised both politically and technically.

In addition to the orientation towards outcomes, procedural fairness (in relation to the environment) is an important aspect of equivalent living conditions: vulnerability also manifests itself in individual and group-specific involvement in social decisions. This refers not only to participation in decision-making processes but also to the possibilities individuals have to contribute to public service provision.

The vulnerability of social groups and individuals can result in some individuals being more severely affected by restrictions to public service provision and doubly disadvantaged: if individual mobility is reduced, it is difficult to compensate for reductions in local provision, either by making particular journeys or by relocating. This can lead to selective developments and self-perpetuating downward spirals. A disadvantaged area thus becomes a disadvantaging area. Spatial planning and the shaping of public service provision should comprehend this interaction between spatial prerequisites and the abilities of the individual as a challenge and opportunity and should contribute to greater equality of opportunities by means of spatially and socially differentiated strategies. Spatial differentiation means that regions, municipalities, towns and neighbourhoods with different starting situations, problems and possibilities also require different strategies, planning, solutions and support approaches.

Orienting public service provision more closely to the impact than to facilities

A stronger orientation towards the result (outcome) is needed. Because of existing spatial and social differences, the impact of public service provision measures on individuals and groups is more decisive for securing equivalent living conditions than the configuration of material infrastructure. This orientation towards outcomes requires an adjustment phase and must be introduced gradually, and be well-organised both politically and technically.

Taking particular account of preventative action and vulnerable groups

An outcome-oriented provision of public services should pursue preventative strategies and measures, in the sense of healthy housing and living conditions, to a greater extent. In this process, social inequalities should be particularly taken into account with regard to achieving (environmentally related) equity. An orientation towards outcomes should also take into account the abilities and options of different social groups. The needs of the most vulnerable groups should be considered.

3 Approaches to action

There are diverse instruments and action strategies to manage public service provision in various sectoral plans, in the form of formal and informal instruments of spatial planning, as well as through financial steering approaches (taxes, incentives). Their modes of action have been repeatedly and intensely discussed in politics and science in the last few decades (cf. e.g. Advisory council on spatial planning 2005; ARL 2006; Kersten/Neu/Vogel 2015a). Existing instruments are not being sufficiently utilised by stakeholders on the relevant levels to manage public service provision. Existing instruments must therefore be used more effectively and, furthermore, the existing range of instruments continually developed. This is the only way that the above-mentioned steering effects in relation to different population groups or spatial types can be achieved in the sense of orientation towards outcomes. In the following, the limits and potential of existing individual instruments are first illustrated by example. Subsequent chapters demonstrate the potential of instruments that can be developed or enhanced, for example as a result of the Model Projects for Spatial Planning, and discuss the use of minimum standards and the unbiased examination of the possibility of dismantling individual settlement units.

3.1 Steering instruments to safeguard public service provision – an overview

In order to describe the available instruments for safeguarding public service provision, a framework will be set out which contains both existing steering instruments and those which must be newly developed. These may be of a planning, infrastructural, financial or legal nature. Changes to the range of instruments which reveal new pathways or lead to changes to the framework conditions will be referred to as context changes. In view of demographic changes, the decreasing financial room for manoeuvre of the local authorities, increasing social differentiation, etc., it should be noted that public services cannot be provided by public stakeholders alone but increasingly through an interaction between the (welfare) state, the private sector and civil society. As a result, individual approaches or instruments cannot be unambiguously designated as a given instrument type, but rather lie at the intersection of different instrument types. At the same time, the instruments take effect in a multi-level system consisting of the municipality, region, state and Federal Government. Table 1 provides an overview of various instruments.

Instrument type	Mode of action	Examples
a) Legal and binding instruments	Requirements and prohibitions, instructions	Spatial planning law, federal state and regional planning, federal state planning contracts, binding sectoral planning, universal services
b 1) Investment instruments	Financial transfers, construction and operation of infrastructures	European funding instruments (EAFRD, ERDF, ESF) ² ; joint tasks; fiscal equalisation; funding instruments for urban development promotion or sectoral programmes; taxes, duties and fees; participatory budgeting
b 2) Instruments which set financial incentives	Market steering, financial incentives	European funding instruments, funding instruments for urban development promotion for processes and supervision/support, community funds at the urban and regional level
c) Informative/persuasive instruments	Informing, persuading, opinion-forming	Demographic and spatial planning reports, (information) strategies, scenarios, networks for exchanging information about good examples
d) Process/management-oriented instruments	Open, cross-discipline shaping of processes, informal planning instruments	Informal sectoral planning, regional development strategies, participation and involvement regulations
d) Process/management-oriented instruments	Open, cross-discipline shaping of processes, informal planning instruments	Informal sectoral planning, regional development strategies, participation and involvement regulations
e) Context changes	Organisational, technical or governance-related changes with the effect of increasing or reducing options	Service provision through interaction between the state, civil society and the private sector; voluntary self-obligation; adjustment and regional differentiation of standards; dismantling of settlement units; municipal territory reforms

Table 1: Types of instrument for safeguarding public service provision

² ERDF - European Regional Development Fund, ESF - The European Social Fund, EAFRD – The European agricultural fund for rural development.

a) Legal and binding planning instruments

Existing legal foundations at the state and federal level and instruments such as spatial planning law, the definition of central places and different types of sectoral planning should basically mean that essential steps have already been taken towards equivalent living conditions. However, it has been shown that in reality, these instruments can be relativised or even bypassed – whether by local planning, political decisions or lobbyism. Perceived reasons for the lack of effectiveness of legal and binding planning instruments are that spatial planning is not sufficiently accepted or connected with other instruments in order to provide effective steering (cf. BBSR [Federal Institute for Research on Building, Urban Affairs and Spatial Development] 2012: 183 et seq.; Vallée 2012). Financial or legal instruments and sectoral planning should be more strongly connected to the specifications established by overarching (spatial) planning levels in order to make their strategies effective.

An important component in implementing the undefined legal terms ‘public service provision’ and ‘equivalent living conditions’ could be the adaptation of standards and new specifications for tasks connected with the provision of public services, as is frequently discussed in academia and practice (cf. Chapter 3.2 and 3.3). Such standards may be fixed in norms such as the respective German industrial standard (DIN) in urban design; as technical instructions, as in requirements planning for the fire brigade; or directly in laws and ordinances. The parties setting the standards and the parties that must implement or comply with them vary from case to case. The crucial factor in all cases is firstly that the party implementing/complying with the standard possesses the resources needed to maintain the standard, and secondly, that the party setting the standard is able to impose sanctions in the event that the standard is violated.

Good approaches which attempt a differentiated steering of public service provision can be seen in federal state and regional planning approaches that focus on finding new instrumental pathways. For example, Mecklenburg-Lower Pomerania introduced a new spatial category, the ‘rural planning and design regions’ (*Ländliche GestaltungsRäume, LGR*), in 2016 as part of the Federal State Development Plan (*Landesraumentwicklungsplan, LEP*) (cf. Supreme Federal State Spatial Planning Authority for Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania [*Oberste Landesplanungsbehörde Mecklenburg-Vorpommern*] 2016). The objective of this spatial category is to create a state-wide consistently differentiated regional scenario for areas which are particularly affected by demographic change. Seven nationally standardised indicators have been used to demarcate this category: population density, population development, shortage of women, percentage of senior citizens, immigration, purchasing power and employment rate. Joint solution approaches can and should be developed for these regions. A similar method has already been considered by the federal state spatial planning authorities in Saxony (cf. Scharmann 2015).

The sustainability of these solution approaches has yet to be evaluated. In some cases, it is already clear that the plans still need to be underpinned with implementation instruments, or that the political will is not strong enough to guarantee enforcement.

There is a close connection between the sustainability of public service provision and the implementation of binding specifications for the designation of settlement areas and public thoroughfares. A compact settlement development would facilitate the provision of public services. The redesignation of settlement areas should therefore be handled more strictly in terms of compactness, density and orientation towards public transport centres and axes. The existing instruments of urban land-use planning, regional and federal state spatial planning should therefore be used consistently. All local authorities are already free to set up joint preparatory land-use plans and to form municipal planning associations in accordance with section 204 et seq. of the Federal Building Code (*BauGB*). In regional planning, factual segment plans for the provision of public services or for sustainable settlement development are possible and appropriate, as shown by the approach of the factual segment plan ‘Public service provision – designation of lower-order centres in the Anhalt-Bitterfeld-Wittenberg planning region’ (cf. Regional Planning Consortium of Anhalt-Bitterfeld-Wittenberg [*Regionale Planungsgemeinschaft Anhalt-Bitterfeld-Wittenberg*] 2014).

State support for regional development should be linked to the existence of a factual segment plan for public service provision or sustainable settlement structures in accordance with section 7(1) of the Federal Spatial Planning Act, as well as to an integrated regional strategy and implementation strategy. The federal states should determine which public institution should set up and be responsible for the strategy. The integrated regional strategy and implementation strategy must be coordinated with the providers of public service provision at the regional level. Private-sector partners and social partners as well as citizens should all be involved. The integrated regional strategy and implementation strategy defines a comprehensive regional strategy on a regionally coordinated data basis, as well as the development of settlement structures and the objectives to be achieved within the next ten years. In addition, the measures which will be used to achieve these objectives are described, specifying the providers of these measures, the expenditure connected with the strategy and how it will be covered.

b 1) *Investment instruments*

Transfers can be used in the interest of active steering by setting incentives and supporting investment. The integration of different programmes and funding programmes is important here in order to avoid mutually contradictory approaches.

Reforming the financial basis by means of regulating the financial relationships between the federal and state governments is key to safeguarding equivalent living conditions (Eichel/Fink/Thiemann 2013). Above all, the fiscal equalisation between the Federal Government and the states should take greater account of the requirements. The Federal Government and the states must also bring about financial relief for the local authorities, so that the responsibility for tasks and expenditure is in the same hands. Overall, activating measures must be developed (cf. ARL 2006).

The interlinking of existing instruments only works to a certain extent. A multi-level governance strategy is needed in order to cope with the challenges in a holistic and integrated way. This entails improving cross-departmental cooperation at the municipal level, as well as at the state and federal level. An integrated action strategy at the intermunicipal level should be called for as the basis for funding decisions.

In order to strengthen the nationwide responsibility for public service provision, Kersten/Neu/Vogel (2015a: 22 et seq.) suggest a 'Joint Task for Public Service Provision at the Regional Level' and present proposals for specific steps to introduce this. In their opinion, in order to improve social, economic and territorial solidarity, it is important not only to support the safeguarding of important local services but, in particular, to promote the interconnection of infrastructures. Anchoring it in the Basic Law as a joint task for the Federal Government, states and local authorities could give public service provision at the regional level a higher value than it has had to date.

So-called regional budgets represent an innovative financing approach enabling the regions to access quick funding which is tailored to local problems. A regional budget is endowed by one or more funding approaches and allows the local regional stakeholders to support plans to safeguard public service provision in a fast, uncomplicated way – taking the prescribed framework directive into account. This enables the promotion of innovative and integrative plans for which financing is often difficult to obtain as it requires several sectoral approaches, which in turn facilitates cross-disciplinary cooperation. The adoption of an integrated action strategy for the region should be a prerequisite for supporting these measures.

The possibility of involving citizens directly, on a voluntary basis, in the usage-independent basic financing of public service provision has hitherto hardly been analysed. Crowdfunding and social investment are financing models which seem suitable for this purpose in principle (cf. Peper 2015).

b 2) Instruments which set financial incentives

Offering financial incentives to local authorities as well as to the private sector and civil society can encourage these regional stakeholders to initiate independent measures to safeguard and reform the system for providing public services; in this way, they can also be supported through shortfall funding. These instruments support innovative, cooperative approaches to service provision and placement mainly on the part of civil society. The regional budgets presented under b 1) particularly contribute to this.

c) Informative/persuasive instruments

Persuasive instruments particularly contribute to raising awareness and to the development of strategies by means of information and the stimulation of discursive processes. The capturing and succinct representation of data for public service provision is of great significance here. In addition, future development scenarios and information about existing good examples can serve as informational instruments to provide stimulus for action and for the voluntary introduction of action steps. Networks of regional and municipal institutions which enable collective learning from good examples are regarded as helpful. Information preparation and the exchange of knowledge could be achieved by ministers and regional administrations, but also by umbrella associations of local authorities. The next important step towards a deeper exploration of the subject could be a substantively focused spatial planning report on public service provision and equivalence.

Even though it would be desirable for this type of steering instrument to have a stronger effect, it seems probable on the basis of previous experience that radical changes such as intermunicipal coordination for the joint use of infrastructures only take place when the discomfort of the present situation is felt particularly strongly. In many cases, cooperation only lasts until financial demands are made or are specified by contractual relationships. Informational instruments such as regional demographic reports should be underpinned with specific action steps in order to drive activity and to boost the formation of cooperation. These should be more closely linked to funding guidelines and to the legal and binding planning instruments.

d) Process/management-oriented instruments

The shaping of planning and implementation processes is an attempt to support or steer municipal and regional developments. Such instruments also often have a planning component at the same time as a voluntary character. The local stakeholders are supported by these instruments in dealing with new challenges in terms of strategy and perspective. Such instruments could be, for example, the object of federal programmes such as the action programme for public service provision at the regional level, a master plan for public service provision or informal sectoral planning such as a sectoral healthcare plan. It is particularly important to create the structures and framework conditions and to develop approaches for transferability in dealing with challenges. For example, the 21 model regions in the action programme for public service provision at the regional level have dealt with the current and future situation of selected areas of public service provision in a moderated, cross-departmental discussion and planning process (BMVI [Federal Ministry of Transport and Digital Infrastructure] 2016). Using a standardised knowledge base of small-scale population predictions, accessibility analyses and scenarios, the working groups developed adaptation strategies, measures and new structures of cooperation and management which, in some cases, have been adopted as municipal policy. Process and management-oriented approaches must be evaluated for their effectiveness as well as their strengths and weaknesses. This applies particularly to how much and how effectively the concerns of vulnerable groups are taken into account.

Experiences from the action programme for public service provision at the regional level

Within Model Projects for Spatial Planning by the current Federal Ministry of Transport and Digital Infrastructure (*Bundesministerium für Verkehr und digitale Infrastruktur, BMVI*) and the Federal Institute for Research on Building, Urban Affairs and Spatial Development (*Bundesinstitut für Bau-, Stadt- und Raumforschung, BBSR*), regions, districts and collective municipalities are testing how a restructuring and redirection of public service provision can be conceived and implemented (cf. BMVI 2016). This has produced a methodological framework for the planning of public service provision at the regional level.⁴ In the course of the discussion and planning process, the model regions in the action programme for public service provision at the regional level have been able to develop adaptation strategies and achieve awareness, cooperation and a public and political discussion about the sensitive issue of adapting public service provision. From their experiences in the action programme, they have formulated recommendations for shaping policy for adapting and restructuring public service provision at the regional level.

Thus, the model regions from the Federal Government and states are calling for the strengthening of local self-government by means of better cross-departmental coordination, an integrated funding policy, and more room for manoeuvre for independent regional development alongside support and networking at the state and federal level. Alongside experimentation and flexibility clauses in pertinent legislative regulations and guidelines and relief in taxation and insurance law for offers of public service provision supported by voluntary commitment, this could also be achieved by a new Joint Task for 'Public Service Provision at the Regional Level' in connection with regional promotion funds. As well as investment funding, from the point of view of the regions, sufficient institutional financing is primarily needed in order to guarantee the multifaceted management, coordination and network tasks which are necessary to reorganise public service provision at the municipal and regional level.

From the viewpoint of the model regions, in many task areas, the reorganisation of public service provision at the regional level comes down to forming mixed networks of public, private and non-profit providers. This context reveals the increasing significance of self-organisation and commitment to the provision of public services, which requires a culture of recognition and secured financing. However, the model regions also see the danger that too many tasks could be transferred to voluntary and civil society organisations, thus overstraining civic commitment. This requires sound overall coordination and a consistent strategy, including on the part of the Federal Government and states. Overall, they desire more aid and orientation, e.g. in the form of advice, contact and network points to promote the issue of public service provision, to prepare the transfer of good examples or to organise the exchange of knowledge and mutual learning processes in the form of seminars, workshops or excursions.

e) Context changes

'Context changes' can be of a technical, financial, legal or social nature, for example, and may lead to a process of rethinking on the part of the controlling stakeholders. In relation to the management of public service provision, a context change occurs when several towns share central-place functions, for example.

Kersten/Neu/Vogel (2015b: 25 et seq.) propose a 'social places strategy', particularly for shrinking regions, in order to promote regional development potential. The local authorities comprise the main stakeholders here; they maintain and create locations for social life and

³ See also Chapter 3.1 point 4.

network with private-sector companies and civil society. According to the authors, categorisation should no longer be according to formal criteria such as the current central place status, but rather according to the competitive objective of social and territorial cohesion. These ideas offer the possibility of giving more detailed consideration to the living environment surrounding the safeguarding of public service provision. In addition and in contrast to the ideas of Kersten/Neu/Vogel, the authors of this position paper emphasise the necessity of connecting such bottom-up approaches with the existing, generally top-down steering approaches.

The shifting relationship between the public sector and civil society or the private sector can be understood as a fundamental context change. Increasingly, processes which serve to maintain public service provision (cf. Steinführer 2015) are initiated and carried by civil society. However, civil society is also frequently approached in cases where the organisation and, in particular, the funding of public infrastructures can no longer be covered by the local authority or state. Greater involvement of civil society is a balancing act: what is acceptable, what is achievable and what is impossible? Initiatives for local services, expansions of public transport and a well-developed good neighbour scheme are some positive examples. Such initiatives cannot be prescribed, but the aim must be to open up latitude for these initiatives and to establish incentives for them instead of restricting them by imposing high standards and requirements. A forum or process for the exchange of knowledge must be enabled for them (cf. Aring 2013). The safeguarding of public service provision therefore remains the responsibility of the state; however, the range of tasks is shifting increasingly in the direction of coordination, support of different partners, and enabling.

Likewise, the question of dismantling settlement units should be seen as an example of context change and not deliberately avoided but made the subject of open and constructive discussion (cf. Chapter 3.4).

The networking of instruments must be improved

A broad range of instruments is available to steer the provision of public services. A multi-level governance strategy, which means strategic coordination by means of cross-departmental cooperation at the municipal, regional, state and national level, is needed in order to deal with the challenges. In particular, financial or legal instruments and sectoral planning should be more strongly connected to the specifications of overarching (spatial) planning levels in order to make their strategies effective.

The instruments must be oriented to target groups

The development of instruments must address specific target groups and allow for spatial differentiation. At the same time, development strategies only work when they involve the local population. These initiatives must be given the latitude to develop, incentives must be established and a forum or platform for exchanging knowledge must be enabled for them instead of restricting them by imposing high standards and requirements. The safeguarding of public service provision remains the responsibility of the state; however, the range of tasks is shifting increasingly in the direction of coordination, support of different partners, and enabling.

3.2 Securing comprehensive minimum provision

In light of the above-mentioned challenges, the question arises as to which areas of public service provision can and should be guaranteed in which spaces, at which quality and at which price. This question cannot be answered descriptively, but only normatively. A broad social discussion is needed concerning the future level of public service provision and its funding – by means of tax revenue, user contributions (charges, fees, contributions) or voluntary contributions

independent of use (crowdfunding, sponsoring). Parts of the academic discussion go in the direction of defining regionally differentiated minimum standards, while others are in favour of minimum standards that are standardised across Germany.

Minimum standards can only be one component to an adequate response to the future challenges of the simultaneous growth and shrinkage of regions. Whereas shrinking regions face the challenge of maintaining the provision of essential public services despite declining sustainability, growing regions have to expand public service provision.

One approach discussed below is to define a minimum provision which is also maintained under exacerbated conditions and which puts the abstract concept of the equivalence of living conditions into specific terms for the area of public service provision. Minimum provision constitutes a threshold socially acceptable minimum which should by no means be equated with what is socially desirable. With a view to securing individual subsistence, society has already decided on the path of the minimum standard: the basic provision for jobseekers is intended to secure a subsistence level.

By identifying the level of public service provision which must not be undercut in populated regions, the minimum provision determines political decisions about the abandonment, retention, creation, or improvement and expansion of individual services. This creates clarity and reliability for the populace as to what level of public service provision they can expect in future, and constitutes an important prerequisite for private (and public) investment decisions. Should there be regions in future in which maintaining even the minimum provision reaches its limits (for example, in remote hamlets and isolated farmsteads), a coordinated, planned restructuring and dismantling cannot be categorically excluded. However, this should be weighed against all the social and economic consequences for public life, territorial authorities, companies and private households, designed in a participatory way and underpinned by implementation strategies (cf. Chapter 3.4). The 'areas of self-responsibility' model (Aring 2013), which strengthens local autonomy and allows for divergence from standards, is worth mentioning. This can comprise both the lowering of standards and a necessary raising of standards to compensate for the loss of facilities.⁴

The concept of minimum provision refers in the first place to public service provision in the areas of fire and disaster protection, healthcare and education. These services must be universally available in populated areas, in an acceptable quality and at affordable prices (or, in the case of schools, free). Consciously allowing quality deficits in these core areas of public service provision would violate the elementary ethical principles of human dignity (fire and disaster protection and healthcare) or justice (education). Justice in this context is more about opportunities and less about distribution. If it is ensured that disadvantaged areas will not become disadvantaging areas, greater spatial disparities can be accepted. The second step includes resident doctors, pharmacies and day-care centres. Mobility options, post and telecommunications⁵ should also be included under minimum provision, because they enable people to participate in society. These 'technologies for overcoming distance' also help to compensate for local deterioration in the quality of public service provision in other supply areas, by either facilitating physical transport or completely replacing it (Stielike 2010: 135).

In the case of access to daily necessities, the socially acceptable minimum should be equivalent to the safeguarding of telecommunications and postal prerequisites for online shopping with subsequent delivery of the goods by parcel post. However, this by no means excludes the possibility that village shops, local pick-up and delivery services and other approaches can receive public support, also because this enables synergy effects to be achieved with locations or offers of other supply areas.

⁴ Possible examples are improvements to fire-fighting equipment, enhanced first aid training or the installation of defibrillators, etc.

⁵ This recalls e.g. Article 87f(1) of the Basic Law, according to which the Federal Government guarantees comprehensive, appropriate and sufficient postal and telecommunications services. However, the gauges for 'appropriate' and 'sufficient' require (justiciable) specification.

With other services, such as water and energy, comprehensive provision can be foregone in favour of decentralised solutions.

Social discussion about the future level of public service provision

Objectives and requirements, but also principles for safeguarding public service provision are subject to various influences and must therefore be continually developed. The setting of standards must be participatory and implementation-oriented as a conscious process of social norm-setting.

In view of demographic and economic upheavals, a broad social discussion about the future level of public service provision is indicated. This must involve and take account of the needs of vulnerable groups.

Ensuring minimum provision to implement the objective of equivalence

Such a discussion can result in the definition of a minimum provision which is to be maintained even under exacerbated circumstances. Such a step creates clarity and reliability for the populace as to what level of public service provision they can count on in future, and is therefore a basis for private and public investment in regions and neighbourhoods suffering from economic and demographic difficulties. This substantiates and implements the objective of equivalence in relation to public service provision.

Such minimum provision may include, for example, basic services in relation to fire and disaster protection, health, education, mobility, post and telecommunications.

3.3 Rethinking standards

The minimum provision approach can be operationalised and normed with the aid of standards for public service provision. A tension may arise in the formulation of standards in that they must simultaneously be as specific as possible in order to bindingly prescribe a certain quality of public service provision, and as flexible as possible in order to enable openness to innovative forms of provision.

An initial solution approach for this dilemma consists of placing functions and the level of achievement of goals (outcomes) at the centre of attention instead of structures and input. From the point of view of the users of public service provision, functions rather than structures are decisive. For users, the ability to satisfy particular needs and desires is important, but not the specific form in which this occurs (cf. *BBR* [Federal Office for Building and Regional Planning] 2005: 119; *BBR* 2006: 51). For example, from the point of view of users, the security of being protected from fires should be decisive rather than the distance to the nearest fire station. This security can be guaranteed just as well or even better by smoke detectors, sprinkler systems, temperature sensors, etc. The decisive factor is not the resources invested but rather the effect achieved by them (cf. Aring 2012; Winkel 2012). The party setting the standard should therefore only stipulate the abstract aim to the party responsible for implementing/complying with the standard, not the specific path towards achieving this aim. Standards should standardise a level of availability of a function (outcome) and not the structure of service provision (input). The standards must describe the effectiveness of an area of public service provision in its entirety (and not the effectiveness of individual subsystems). An outcome standard for fire protection, for example, must standardise the level of fire protection in its entirety and not per se the time frame for aid, the fireproofing of buildings, fire alarms, etc.

Standards for outcomes will standardise probabilities in many cases. For example, standards for the outcome of fire protection and medical care may describe the probability of surviving a fire or an acute health condition without lasting damage; a standard for the outcome of education may describe the probability of achieving a particular school-leaving certificate. For this reason,

standards for outcomes raise the question of the associated basic population of users or those responsible for implementing/complying with the standard. These may be either all residents or only particular, and especially vulnerable, groups. In any case, the selection of a suitable spatial reference is decisive. If too small a spatial reference is chosen, individual cases can lead to statistical distortion. If the spatial reference is too large, there is a risk that the party implementing/complying with the standard will fulfil the stipulations by entirely abandoning the areas which are most difficult to cover and use the resources thus freed up to improve services in regions which are easy to cover. In such a case, the standard would formally be fulfilled although comprehensive access to public service provision would not be provided. For many offers of public service provision (hospitals, secondary schools, etc.), the intake area corresponds to the interactional areas of middle-order centres. It is therefore appropriate to use the interactional areas of middle-order centres as a spatial reference. In urban areas, spaces or neighbourhoods oriented towards daily life could serve as appropriate frames of references (cf. Kliemeczek 2011). However, it is also conceivable and pertinent to choose a different spatial reference according to the particular area of public service provision under consideration.

A second solution approach consists of experimentation clauses. Experimentation clauses permit a temporally or spatially limited divergence from established standards in order to try out innovative forms of provision (cf. Winkler-Kühlken/Thrun/Albrecht et al. 2014). The implementation of experimentation clauses must be evaluated in order for them to be productive. If the new form of task fulfilment proves effective, the standard can be adjusted comprehensively and permanently.

A third solution approach consists of the differentiation of standards according to subareas or levels of vulnerability. The differentiation of standards according to subareas enables different regional framework conditions to be taken into account when providing a service. Specifically, this could mean, for example, that for each area of public service provision, the minimum quality is stipulated, but a better quality is specified depending on the number of users in the neighbourhood. In sparsely populated areas, the minimum provision applies, while in densely populated regions, higher standards take effect. In the case of detailed organisational regulations, a differentiation based on subareas is unlikely to be problematic. However, in the case of differentiations which affect the function or the outcome, there should be a core which does not allow for divergence in particularly sensitive areas of public service provision (fire brigade, rescue service, hospitals and schools) due to the reasons mentioned above. In the other areas of public service provision, differences can be more easily accepted. The spatial differentiation of standards should always be based on objective criteria. Conceivable criteria are, in particular, the regional population density or the regional vulnerability of the population (operationalised by means of indicators). The classification should be updated regularly. A definitive classification of regions into groups with high and groups with low standards would be politically explosive, which renders such a concept unrealistic. Above all, however, a definitive classification would not be appropriate. The development of regions is subject to diverse transformations which cannot always be predicted. Some regions which struggled with demographic and economic difficulties in the past are now developing strongly.

Standards need not have the same validity for all members of the population; they may also apply only to groups differentiated by provision or vulnerability (e.g. schoolchildren, senior citizens or those without cars). Such a differentiation may be expedient, since local public service provision is particularly important for immobile population groups, whereas mobile population groups are more likely to accept long journeys to reach services (cf. Farrington/Farrington 2005). In an outcome-oriented view, a sub-group-specific differentiation of standards may enable a greater range of possible forms of service provision (stationary or mobile service provision, supported by information and communication technologies).

The implementation of these considerations and the identification of responsible stakeholders are easier with some areas of public service provision, such as post and telecommunications, than in healthcare or education, for example. The question of which institution would be

responsible for the definition and upholding of new standards still has to be clarified. However, the setting of standards should be participatory and implementation-orientated as a conscious process of social norm-setting; the public sector remains responsible for the process. The introduction of new standards could first be tried regionally and later extended to other regions.

The following table provides an overview of conceivable new standards in the areas of fire and disaster protection, healthcare, education, telecommunications, post, mobility and local services.

New task fulfilment	New standard
Fire and disaster protection	
Increased fire protection requirements for buildings in the form of smoke detectors, sprinkler systems, temperature sensors, etc.	Probability of surviving a critical house fire without physical damage (spatial frame of reference: interactional area of middle-order centres)
Health	
Removal of the rigid separation between outpatient and inpatient treatment; in particular, partial substitution of emergency hospitals with regional semi-inpatient health points Increased deployment of qualified 'first responders' or appropriate technical aids such as public defibrillators Increased use of rescue helicopters Telemedical connection between the rescue service and the hospital in order to be able to begin specialised diagnosis and treatment during the journey	Probability of surviving acute pathologies (such as heart attacks or polytrauma) without lasting damage (spatial frame of reference: interactional area of middle-order centres)
Education	
Boarding schools, half-board schools or tele-teaching	Probability of achieving a particular educational qualification (e.g. percentage of schoolchildren who achieve a general higher education entrance qualification) (spatial frame of reference: interactional area of middle-order centres)
Telecommunications	
New organisational forms, e.g. with civil society participation, expansion of broadband networks and services with a future-viable performance spectrum	Ability to use the full performance spectrum of online services without lags and to make phone calls

Post	
Expansion of the mobile postal service Periodic post collection and delivery Collection postboxes at transport hubs Integration of post collection and delivery into delivery journeys for other services Long term: Post collection and delivery with drones	Ability to send and receive letters and packages within one working day
Mobility	
Transition to requirement-based transport Transition from line operation to needs-based options serving specific routes, sectors or areas Citizen buses Self-driving trains and also buses in the long term Integrated mobility management Publicly organised car pools Bundling of passenger and goods transport Integration of car sharing and bicycle hire schemes into public transport Replace personal mobility with goods and service mobility (e.g. mobile local supplies) Replace personal mobility with online applications (e.g. online shopping)	Ability to access services from other areas of public service provision within one working day
Local services	
Mobile traders Pick-up and delivery services Online shopping with subsequent delivery by post	See Telecommunications and Post

Table 2: Conceivable new specifications for selected areas of public service provision

Defining public service provision as an outcome

In future, standards should determine not the input but the outcome of an area of public service provision. This enables responsibilities to be fulfilled in various ways, including through innovative means.

Municipal responsibility for involving new stakeholders

Public service provision can only be comprehensively safeguarded through the interaction of the public sector, private sector and civil society. The public sector retains responsibility, but at the same time, private sector and civil society stakeholders gain significance in providing services.

3.4 Unbiased discussion of approaches to action in areas affected by emigration

The discussion about whether (minimum) standards should be uniform or differentiated according to subareas presupposes that it is basically regarded as possible to guarantee public service provision for the resident population in the relevant subareas. However, even in the Federal Republic, there are increasing numbers of (functionally) peripheral, structurally weak and sparsely populated subareas with strong shrinkage tendencies for which the basic question of the long-term preservation of public service provision does indeed arise.

The choice to remain in these areas – even with possibly poor(er) conditions in terms of work, education, supplies, care and social contacts – is the result of individual preferences and the weighing of interests. The development trends in hamlets, municipalities or boroughs at risk of emptying are not clearly determined. A spiral intensification of structural and economic weakness as well as emigration ('downward spiral') is just as possible as the opposite process of stabilisation and strengthening ('upward spiral').

Securing the equivalence of living conditions in subareas which are structurally weak and affected by emigration presupposes transfer payments between subareas. Such spatially-based transfer payments are currently guaranteed by fiscal equalisation within social insurance, fiscal equalisation between the states, and above all fiscal equalisation at the level of local authorities, as well as development programmes such as 'Joint Tasks' and financial aid to compensate for economic, socio-structural and infrastructural deficits. These spatially related transfer payments are supplemented by numerous individual financial transfers. Ultimately, the increased costs are allocated to all users in the region through the fee structure. However, these direct and indirect transfers must be examined with regard to funding needs, efficiency and their benefits for the common good.

A scenario-based description of approaches to action makes it easier to evaluate the possibilities of securing spatial and transfer fairness. The organisation of supplies and service provision can be geared towards input-oriented standards for facilities, outcome-oriented standards (cf. Chapter 3.3), or to subject-related compensation or support.

An evaluation of conceivable approaches to action ('action scenarios') must be based on a description, audit, evaluation and weighing of the respective prerequisites, approaches to action ('input'), effects ('output') and consequences ('outcome' and 'impact').

In the process, even extreme scenarios such as the abandonment of subareas – e.g. peripheral boroughs – as settlement locations in order to strengthen the provision in other boroughs or towns ('strengthening centres') should not be excluded a priori. A discussion about potential extreme courses of development raises awareness of these risks, but also of the inherent opportunities. In special cases, this can be the basis for self-activation or for ways of living for new residents ('influx'). However, this is unlikely to ensure permanent sustainability. The earlier such a scenario is conceived and communicated, the easier it is to act in a socially acceptable manner within an appropriate timeframe and to prepare for those potential developments.

At this point, it should be pointed out that the settlement of immigrants, particularly in peripheral locations, is not seen as a solution to compensate for population losses. Settlement in the locations mentioned, such as isolated farmsteads and hamlets, is not a realistic and sustainable option in the short term, particularly with regard to the necessary public service provision and the lack of infrastructure for advice and integration.

Appendix 1 presents four action scenarios for the organisation of service provision in an ideal form. These are to be compared and checked for suitability for each subarea:

- I. Full service provision to be maintained without any additional cost burden on demanders/users/residents and local companies

- II. Full service provision to be maintained with a heavier cost burden on demanders/users/residents and local companies
- III. Transition from public funding of facilities/funding of services to subsidy payments to individuals for all service areas, making use of experimental technological and organisational solutions
- IV. Partial abandonment of settlement areas/locations (cf. 'Partial abandonment scenario' box)

The partial abandonment of settlement locations primarily affects isolated buildings, isolated farmsteads and smaller hamlets. The aim is to avoid interference in private property along the lines of expropriation, but to enable the public sector to be relieved of its obligation to maintain, renew and guarantee the safety of public infrastructure (roads, water supply, drainage, energy networks, public buildings).

Strategies, agreements and incentives must take into account the individual circumstances of the respective persons concerned. Working on strategies, considering approaches to action and their location-adapted implementation may have an activating effect on local policy, the private sector and, above all, civil society.

The question of abandoning settlement locations provokes an huge range of opinions and emotional reactions – which makes constructive discussion all the more important. The objective is to provide planning support for a necessary dismantling in areas at risk of emptying and to design this in a resource-saving and socially acceptable way, instead of consigning these settlements to passive regeneration and uncontrolled abandonment.

Higher specific costs per service unit must be examined in an overall weighing of the costs and benefits of the demand for services and of safeguarding the common good. The benefit for individuals includes remaining in their own home (and thus in their home region) and avoiding funding costs or rising rental costs incurred by relocation, as well as possibilities of self-supply for groceries. The implementation of the service principle of reciprocity within the family or village, for example by caring for children and old people or private car-sharing/transport services, is another possibility which should be more strongly integrated; the same applies to a price structure for the use of social and technical infrastructure which is differentiated according to the specific situation.

Experience of building demolition in regions within the 'Urban redevelopment in the East' could be used to develop socially acceptable processes. This requires strategic development strategies for restructuring/dismantling settlements and infrastructures. Equally necessary are incentives for local solutions by means of intra- and intermunicipal cooperation with the early and active participation of those affected. Property purchase, support and funding for relocation (removal costs, rent subsidies) require appropriate consultation, community funds and funding systems which are suitably designed.

In particular, however, this approach requires willingness, courage and acknowledgement of the necessity of accepting these challenges in the political sphere. In relation to social impact and sustainability, it is advisable to set the course early, to communicate foreseeable developments and to create appropriate incentives, as well as ensuring proper management (e.g. removal, hamlet and resettlement management) in order to render later, more expensive and much less socially acceptable necessities obsolete where possible.

'Partial abandonment' scenario

Population losses have been recorded for years in the subarea and are also plausibly expected in the medium and long term. The economic strength of the region has been diminishing for years; restructuring in the course of renewable energy production has not brought about any fundamental positive change.

The consequences include:

- a reduction in the natural population growth,
- the emigration of young people with educational qualifications – particularly women,
- a rise in flat vacancies – and increasingly also in detached and semi-detached houses,
- a foreseeable reduction in the original use of property (e.g. agriculture/feed lots or fattening farms),
- a dramatic decline in the prices of residential land and residential and commercial property,
- a budget situation in the local authorities which no longer allows adequate maintenance, and above all, the necessary renewal of municipal buildings, e.g. nurseries, schools, neighbourhood meeting places, senior citizen institutions, town hall, the fire brigade, and above all technical infrastructure such as road networks with bridges/passages, tunnels and underpasses, as well as supply and disposal networks (water supply, drainage, energy supply, telecommunications, etc.), so that outages and service restrictions increasingly occur,
- measures to safeguard the functionality and operation of transport, supply and disposal systems are necessary to an increased extent (e.g. rinsing of channels in order to avoid rotting and ensuing material destruction, rinsing of water supply channels to avoid contamination and thus danger to health, blind acceptance of district heating to maintain the functionality of the district heating networks), and strain budgets funded by fees and charges, and, ultimately, municipal budgets.

Isolated buildings in outer zones or smaller hamlets particularly suffer from knock-on effects. Very few people still live in these places – mainly older people with a strong need for support with regard to health services, grocery services, mobility, security, social contacts and possibilities for participation. There is modest, if any, agricultural activity.

Private buildings fall into disrepair. In order to guarantee public safety and traffic safety, local authorities must provide alternative measures; potholes cannot be repaired, bridges experience load class restrictions, resulting in considerable diversions for agricultural transport. The property market is exclusively a buyer's market, with the result that property often cannot be sold. The private old-age provision assumed to inhere in property ownership disappears (almost completely). Costs not covered by fees and charges increase and burden the municipal budgets. In some cases, fee increases mean demanders cease using a service, and hence does not increase profitability.

These problems can only be avoided if there is either a complete transition to decentralised solutions – which is not even possible in the transport sector, and in any case the transition requires investment by demanders, which they often cannot afford due to lack of earnings and a poor asset situation – or if appropriate, earmarked subsidy payments to individuals are set up. In the area of mobility, public transport services would have to be discontinued and the acquisition of all-terrain private vehicles subsidised.

If network infrastructures are to be abandoned and their function entirely removed, their use must also be fully abandoned. Since a corresponding reclassification under planning law represents an intervention along the lines of expropriation, this results in compensation claims. Since such claims are oriented towards the standardised market value of the original use, the dramatic decline in property prices has an impact.

Elements of a new funding policy could be the following:

- Purchasing properties at the prices of comparable properties in the associated middle-order centre, i.e. purchases by the public sector at 'inflated' prices
- Providing subsidised flats or privately financed flats with subsidised rents with the appropriate standards (size, fittings and location)

- Financing removals and adapting the furnishings to the minimum required extent (e.g. kitchen, bathrooms, cupboards)
- Managing removals and assuming all associated costs
- Setting up an advice centre, including for those who are already willing to move
- Assuming the costs of demolishing or securing the abandoned property

Removal management includes, above all, expenditure for participation management and promoting acceptance of these solutions.

Existing instruments such as promoting urban development or the Joint Task for the 'Improvement of Agricultural Structures and Coastal Protection', which is to be developed into a Joint Task for 'Public Service Provision at the Regional Level', should include such special elements.

These expenditures can only be amortised for the local authorities in the medium term if, at the same time, the network components (roads, canals, water pipelines, district heating pipelines, electricity cables, etc.) and possibly buildings providing social infrastructure are dismantled or can be withdrawn from use without follow-up costs.

Thinking about abandoning settlement units should not be ruled out

If, in future, there are regions in which maintaining minimum provision reaches its limits (for example, in remote hamlets and isolated farmsteads), a coordinated, planned abandonment of settlements cannot be categorically ruled out. However, this procedure must be weighed against all the considerations about social and economic consequences for the public sector, territorial authorities, companies and private households; it must be designed in a participative way and also be underpinned with implementation and support strategies for those affected.

Open participation is indispensable

The local communities should be shown different options for action and their individual and collective consequences in order to enable a self-determined choice. However, solutions developed through participation must be accepted by everyone, since otherwise there is the danger that such programmes will be impossible to implement.

Developing instruments for implementation management

Preliminary considerations about the dismantling of settlement units require differentiated strategies for implementation and for its financing – both in terms of public funding of facilities and subsidy payments to individuals – as well as on how it would be organised. The development of different scenarios can facilitate access to a future-viable handling of developments (whether desirable or not) and can be helpful in order to set the agenda at an early stage.

Strengthening subareas in the supra-local context

Settling the households or companies which remain in the region in central places can strengthen the demand for services in central places.

4 Spatial steering approaches for public service provision – recommended actions

With increasing urgency, demographic, economic and social changes pose the question of how the spatial planning guiding principle of equivalent living conditions can be implemented. This presupposes a clear commitment to this objective by virtue of being fixed in the Basic Law, e.g. at Article 20b; however, it must be connected with a reformulation of the understanding of equivalent living conditions in the sense of the above explanations. A sociopolitical discussion seems necessary, as does the review and further development of funding systems and of both formal and informal planning instruments. The aim of the above statements is to discuss innovative steering approaches to public service provision and to call for a review of the guiding principles. The specific problems of the declining sustainability of the facilities for public service provision in different spatial categories must not be overlooked, let alone played off against each other: the safeguarding of public service provision is not only endangered in sparsely populated, structurally weak rural regions with shrinkage tendencies, but also in some neighbourhoods within shrinking urban regions. For both spatial categories, differentiated considerations are necessary for the different dimensions of public service provision in order to identify the different types of risk and disadvantaging and to approach the problems in a way that does justice to the given region.

The members of the ad-hoc working group held intensive discussions and are aware of the political and social explosiveness of the issue. Given the significance of public service provision, a broad, open and even controversial debate is desirable.

Overarching recommended actions

1. Clarify the current situation

A realistic picture of the respective regional and local situation must be drawn up on the basis of existing, empirically secure knowledge about present and future structures and developments. Establishing acceptance of this situation among those with political responsibility is a necessary prerequisite for a successful adaptation strategy. Alternative scenarios can be helpful in order to stimulate the discussion about future developments and their consequences for public service provision. In any case, a dialogue about the future of the region and/or town should be initiated, involving relevant stakeholders but also the general public. The aim of this should be to outline the requirements and options for action in relation to public service provision.

2. Involve all stakeholders in the provision of public services

Public service provision can only be comprehensively safeguarded through the interaction of the public sector, the private commercial sector and civil society. The public sector must continue to be responsible in the sense of the self-conception of the social state; at the same time, however, the private commercial sector and civil society stakeholders are gaining significance. The differentiation of demands on public service provision, the need to cater to specific local requirements, and the constrained financial room to manoeuvre, particularly of the local authorities necessitate the participation of the local populace and the local economy in safeguarding public service provision. Management tasks which coordinate the interaction of all stakeholders in providing new forms of public service provision are becoming increasingly important. An approach which addresses local stakeholders only with the purpose of saving or shifting costs will fail.

3. Try new models and approaches

Particularly in sparsely populated, structurally weak (functionally) peripheral rural regions with shrinkage tendencies, minimum provision is only possible if standards are made more flexible, new models are tested and experiments are enabled. Here, we should also point out the approach of ‘areas of self-responsibility’ (Aring 2013), based on Scandinavian examples, which strengthens local autonomy and enables divergence from standards. The approach of target agreements between subareas and overarching levels in order to restructure infrastructures and make them more flexible, developed by the Advisory Council on Spatial Planning (2005), is also worth mentioning. Pertinent legislative regulations should contain experimentation and flexibility clauses in order to enable independent initiative to promote the development of innovative approaches at the local and regional level. Relief under taxation and insurance law for public service provision supported by voluntary commitment should also be examined for this purpose.

4. Gear efforts towards the outcome and the functional fulfilment of standards

To date, public service provision has largely been viewed from the point of view of ‘input’; this means, in particular, the existence of physical infrastructures. However, it is politically and socially desirable to fulfil standards in terms of functions and to achieve certain ‘conditions’. The abilities and possibilities of different social groups, particularly vulnerable ones, should be taken into account in the process. For this reason, standards and appropriate indicators which represent the outcome in a field of action should play a larger role in the political discussion and in planning strategies (e.g. the qualification level instead of the number of schools, the health situation instead of the number of doctors’ surgeries and hospitals). This orientation towards outcomes requires an adjustment phase and must be introduced gradually, and be well-organised both politically and technically.

5. Improve how instruments are used in conjunction with each other

The steering capacity of spatial planning is currently relatively limited on all levels of action, partly because it is largely unconnected with other (specialist political) approaches and because acceptance of it is also limited. A multi-level governance strategy is required which would enable the safeguarding of public service provision in strategic coordination and cross-departmental cooperation at the levels of the Federal Government, states, regions and municipalities. To achieve this, sectoral planning and political approaches to funding should be geared more strongly towards the objectives of spatial planning. This would enable the implementation of integrative strategies.

6. Tackle existing implementation deficits

The existing instruments and approaches are not being utilised sufficiently or consistently. In shrinking regions, there is often a lack of political willingness to conduct difficult discussions, for example about the restructuring or dismantling of infrastructures in shrinking regions. Policymakers have a leadership role here. A sense of realism is generally appreciated by the public, who experience the problems on a daily basis. This also enables the implementation of approaches which may be uncomfortable today but which will be unavoidable in the future. Implementation must be supported by controlling and evaluation measures.

7. Develop responsible strategies for dismantling

If the population level, and thus also the situation of public service provision drastically deteriorates in the medium to long term, the dismantling of infrastructures and (small) settlement units should also be considered. However, implementing this in an insidious or unthinking way should be categorically avoided. Rather, restructuring and dismantling strategies are required which involve the relevant stakeholders and the affected population. Implementation must then be supported by the public sector through moderation, management and financial support. The objective is not ‘passive regeneration’ but a politically responsible and openly organised process.

8. Support organisation, self-organisation and the exchange of knowledge

It is very important to act assertively in foreseeable difficult situations with corresponding impacts on the facilities and the outcome of public service provision. Since the people affected generally see the situation clearly, no false picture should be drawn for reasons of political opportunism. In such situations, open discussions and materially supported moderation are needed, which can actively support both the debate and the work and implementation of action strategies. The exchange of experiences of different approaches to action between local authorities and regions which are similarly affected is always helpful in this context.

Submit recommended actions to the Federal Government and states

1. Enshrine equivalence as a national objective

Until now, the creation of equivalent living conditions has only been anchored as a necessity clause in the Basic Law. There should be a clear commitment to the objective of equivalence in the social state by anchoring it in the Basic Law, for example as Article 20b, and the understanding of this objective should be reformulated with further details about minimum standards and the orientation towards outcomes.

2. Develop an up-to-date understanding of public service provision

A stronger differentiation of the very broad scope of duties associated with public service provision into voluntary tasks and obligatory tasks would clarify the responsibility for securing the provision. This includes the definition of a minimum provision which is to be maintained even under exacerbated circumstances in regions affected by shrinkage. Unlike the previous situation, these standards should determine not the input but the outcome of a given area of public service provision. This enables responsibilities to be fulfilled in various ways.

3. Allow experimentation and support commitment

Relevant legislative regulations and specifications should contain experimentation and flexibility clauses in order to enable initiatives at the local level or in municipal cooperation spaces, and to test innovative approaches for demographically suitable provision. The basis for this could be a regional or intermunicipally coordinated spatial differentiation and division of tasks which could designate 'areas of experimentation', such as mobility, or 'experimentation spaces'. In this context, flexible legal regulations should also be found for local associations and initiatives which are involved in aspects of public service provision. Particularly necessary is relief under taxation and insurance law for public service provision supported by voluntary commitment which takes effect at the interface with professional provision, such as civic mobility offers or low-threshold care and good neighbour schemes. In individual cases, a flexible application of existing regulations may already suffice.

4. Set up integrated funding programmes

Funding programmes relating to public service provision and rural development at the federal and state level should be better coordinated with each other, both within and across ministries and departments (especially GAK, GRW, StBauF, EAFRD/LEADER, ESF, ERDF)⁶. The programmes should be more clearly geared towards strategic cornerstones such as demographically appropriate public service provision, intermunicipal cooperation, multifunctional projects or the linking of professional and voluntary-based provision. Sectoral funding should be partially structured and aggregated in regional funding budgets at the level of districts and associations of local authorities for central fields of action of

⁶ GAK – Federal and state government Joint Task for the 'Improvement of Agricultural Structures and Coastal Protection'; GRW – Federal and state government Joint Task for the 'Improvement of Regional Economic Structures'; StBauF – Urban development promotion (Städtebauförderung); LEADER – Liaison entre actions de développement de l'économie rurale / 'Links between actions for the development of the rural economy'; cf. also footnote 2.

public service provision, such as basic provision and local services, basic social infrastructure and mobility. Furthermore, a newly conceived Joint Task for 'Public Service Provision at the Regional Level' should be geared towards restructuring and adapting regional and local public service provision.

5. Use instruments of regional planning and strengthen the options available to federal state and regional planning

The existing instruments of regional planning must be applied consistently. Any state support should be linked to the existence of a factual segment plan for public service provision or sustainable settlement structures in accordance with section 7(1) of the Federal Spatial Planning Act, as well as an integrated strategy development and implementation plan. The federal states should determine which public institution should set up and be responsible for the strategy.

Financial or legal instruments and sectoral planning must be more strongly connected to the stipulations of overarching (spatial) planning levels in order to make their strategies effective. In order to do justice to tasks involving systematic spatial observation, greater consideration of public service provision in the spatial development plans and the necessary comprehensive coordination tasks, particularly at the regional level, regions must be enabled and supported with regard to funding, personnel, content and methodology.

6. Offer orientation, advice and support

The regions and municipalities must be actively advised and supervised by the Federal Government and states when restructuring and adapting their public service provision. To do so, additional funding and planning instruments should be created and continually offered, such as those already existing in some federal states (demographic guideline, demographic coaching, state model plans, exchange of knowledge, data prepared for analysis and forecasting). Advice, contact and networking points should sensitise people to the issue of public service provision, prepare for the transfer of good examples and tried and tested solutions, and organise the exchange of knowledge and mutual learning processes.

7. Create an expert spatial planning report for public service provision and equivalence

In accordance with section 25(2) last sentence of the Federal Spatial Planning Act, the BBR can draw up spatial planning reports for the Federal Government which are limited to substantive and sub-regional aspects. In this sense, a substantively focused spatial planning report would be desirable, which would examine the safeguarding of the provision of public services and equivalent living conditions in view of the significance and explosiveness of this issue for spatial planning. A correspondingly focused report should be designed in such a way that it inspires discussion about approaches to action in the political and the public sphere.

Recommended actions for regional planning

1. Organise the central place system as a network

Offers of public service provision should be bundled in central places in order to generate synergy effects under shrinkage conditions and to offer functional anchor points for provision in the area. Public service provision should be increasingly understood as a spatial network task here. In regions with a low population density and a decreasing population, it may be necessary to reduce the central places to the extent necessary for comprehensive public service provision. As a result, the spatial organisation must be changed and new spatial types developed. The basis for this must be an analysis of the sustainability thresholds of central places according to the latest state of knowledge. Non-central places must be stabilised by means of formal and informal instruments and issue-based cooperation at the local level. This process can only be successful through the 'mutual feedback process', since regional stakeholders know which measures are expedient due to their local knowledge, while overarching levels can set boundaries and moderate.

2. Select the spatial reference based on infrastructure

The spatial reference must be chosen differently according to the particular area of public service provision under consideration. In the case of multiple offers of public service provision (hospitals, secondary schools), the intake area corresponds to the interactional areas of middle-order centres. It is therefore appropriate to use the interactional areas of middle-order centres as a spatial reference. But small towns are also the first port of call for residents of rural areas for important areas of basic provision, such as doctors' surgeries or local services, if these needs cannot (or can no longer) be met locally. In urban areas, an orientation to spaces geared towards daily life or neighbourhoods is appropriate.

3. Implement strategic settlement development

Regional plans are indispensable for strategic settlement development. With a current location grid geared towards the future functional requirements for the restructuring and, possibly, necessary dismantling of social infrastructure, they offer planning orientation for steering developments in these areas. At the same time, the discursive process of creating regional plans clarifies the consequences of residential location choices to the local decision-makers and the populace since sustainabilities are monitored, thus raising the awareness of problematic situations. In practice, regional plans are often neglected as an instrument and must be further developed. This would strengthen the significance and legitimization of regional plans as regionally integrated settlement development strategies.

4. Bring about real regional and intermunicipal coordination processes

Many types of infrastructure must be restructured and adapted in order to comprehensively safeguard public service provision. This is a management task and can only succeed through the interaction of the public sector, the private sector and civil society. The public sector retains responsibility, but at the same time, private sector and civil society stakeholders gain significance in providing services. What is important here is to raise awareness of the necessity for 'real' regional cooperation to safeguard public service provision beyond cooperation initiated by subsidies or incentives within funding programmes or regional reforms. Suitable instruments and partners could be, for example, (existing) regional planning associations and planning communities. Regional planning can take on a moderating function for the coordination processes. As well as campaigning for a regional plan with graphic and textual specifications, it also mobilises regional stakeholders for a demographically appropriate definition of the region in the context of informal planning processes. It is therefore a familiar and reliable partner at the regional level when it comes to organising demographically dependent change processes. One instrument which has been insufficiently used thus far to secure intermunicipal cooperation in the context of multi-level governance are federal state planning contracts.

Recommended actions for local authorities

1. Approach problems actively

Local authorities must deal in a forward-looking and assertive way with problems and solution approaches for safeguarding public service provision. In order to exploit the local capacity for innovation and forces of initiative, the early participation of all local stakeholders from civil society and the private sector is required. This can also be the basis for a broad acceptance of undesired but necessary solutions. Above all, civic engagement can also be initiated. At the same time, traditional 'egoism' can be confronted at an early stage if the given challenges and limits in dealing with demographic change and a decreasing population are discussed honestly, transparently and collectively.

2. Strengthen intermunicipal cooperation

To expand the range of solutions and possibilities for action, intermunicipal and regional cooperation is desirable. Local authorities should examine pilot projects conducted by other local authorities/regions for transferability, and should seek to exchange experience. Locations with a higher density of demand, e.g. lower- and middle-order centres, must be strengthened and secured by planning and building law resources in sparsely populated areas. This should occur in coordination and cooperation with the respective surrounding municipalities in order to prevent mutually counteractive developments. There are several possibilities for the necessary legal safeguarding of the appropriate intermunicipal cooperation, which are known but have thus far been insufficiently used. These include special purpose associations in relation to infrastructure, but also small-scale planning associations or special purpose associations for 'small' urban regions or for cities and surrounding regions. In addition, instruments such as target agreements and federal state planning contracts can also be used here, particularly for the involvement of superordinate levels.

3. Actively support stakeholders from civil society

Local authorities must provide communication and support together with civil society in order to maintain acceptable living conditions, particularly for non-mobile population groups. Support for neighbourhood structures, demographic strategies and advice centres could be helpful –this also refers to advice centres for civil society stakeholders (e.g. insurance coverage for transport; cooperation approaches). In places where this self-organisation does not succeed, the relocation of older people into centres should be promoted and supported in a targeted way with advice, aid and incentives.

4. Prepare comprehensive strategies for dismantling

A comprehensive strategy must be prepared for the abandonment of individual buildings or hamlets ('resettling'). Infrastructures can only be dismantled and obligatory services can only be abandoned if the settlement structure is adapted in the process. Such a step can bring permanent relief to local authority budgets and thus, at the same time, contribute to the (partial) refinancing of subsidy payments to individuals and the financing of support services. This should be planned in the medium and long term and be communicated openly.

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Appendix

Appendix 1: Action scenarios for the provision of services in cases of low demand

The scenarios for the structuring of service provision are characterised, assessed, weighed and presented in bullet points. At the forefront of attention are individual buildings and hamlets which have already been largely abandoned by their inhabitants and which have costly internal and external infrastructure and facilities with high operating costs as a result.

In the case of a significant decline in the population and in the resulting demand for services, particularly in financially weak municipalities and regions, specific solution pathways must be sought which, alone or in combination, are based on changed financial transfers, on strengthened user financing or on a basic dismantling of public services by the dismantling and concentration of settlements.

The following general action scenarios for service provision can be developed and discussed:

- I. Full service provision to be maintained without any additional cost burden on demanders/users/residents and local companies
- II. Full service provision to be maintained with a heavier cost burden on demanders/users/residents and local companies
- III. Transition from public funding of facilities/funding of services to subsidy payments to individuals for all service areas, making use of experimental technological and organisational solutions
- IV. Partial abandonment of settlement areas/locations

I. Full service provision to be maintained without additional cost burden

The minimum standards of the supply areas are guaranteed. This does not incur higher cost burdens for the users in the sense of 'user financing'.

This scenario is characterised by:

- State financial transfers and funding of services
- The range of services is maintained with minimum standards
- Predominantly public funding of facilities (networks, systems, system operation, equipment, etc.) and support for providers
- Inefficient and (increasingly) deficient operation
- Extremely high specific costs of service units ('inefficiency')

This scenario results in the following:

- No specific incentives for private persons (individuals, households, companies) to relocate (= move away); rather, the current situation is stabilised
- Heavy burden on local authorities and fiscal compensation systems, as well as for tax-payers and fee-payers as a whole
- Limited efficiency
- No strategic orientation towards settlement development and the safeguarding of public service provision

II. Full service provision with additional cost burden

The minimum standards of supply areas are guaranteed; tax funding is partly supplemented by user funding. This results in rising fees and charges ('second rent').

This scenario is characterised by:

- Reduced state financial transfers and funding of services
- The range of services is maintained with minimum standards
- Predominantly public funding of facilities (networks, systems, system operation, equipment, etc.)
- Increased user funding of the services with higher percentages
- Extremely high specific costs of service units ('inefficiency')
- Reinforcement of the service principle of 'reciprocity' in spatial proximity to avoid individual user costs
- Potentially some (socially differentiated) 'subsidy payments to individuals' to compensate for the socially disproportionate costs

This scenario results in the following:

- Reduced transfer payments
- Increasing incentives for users to switch to the service principle of 'reciprocity'
- Financial burden on customers and residents
- The emergence of new sponsors (private, citizen-based)
- Development of decentralised supply structures
- Partial incentives ('economic') to move away, since the costs of staying increase considerably

III. Transition from public funding of facilities/funding of services to subsidy payments to individuals

The direction of state financial transfers and service subsidies is increasingly oriented not just to facilities but also to the lives of the people affected in a socially differentiated way.

This scenario is characterised by:

- The range of services is maintained with minimum standards
- Increased 'subsidy payments to individuals' (socially differentiated), e.g. means of mobility (car, taxi), internet access, 'school money'
- Extremely high specific costs of service units ('inefficiency')
- Increasing user funding of services (market)
- Reinforcement of the service principle of 'reciprocity' in spatial proximity

This scenario results in the following:

- Problem of establishing the subsidy payments to individuals (Who? How much? What for?), 'social differentiation', 'spatial differentiation'
- Although the state is obliged to guarantee minimum standards, financial transfers are reduced
- Increase in decentralised autonomous approaches to supply
- Increased orientation towards the service principles of 'market' and 'reciprocity'
- Increased incentives for relocation ('moving')

IV. Partial abandonment of settlement areas/locations

With a view to the future, the development of instruments which create incentives for settlement abandonment in special locations must not be ruled out (cf. also Chapter 3.4).

This scenario is characterised by:

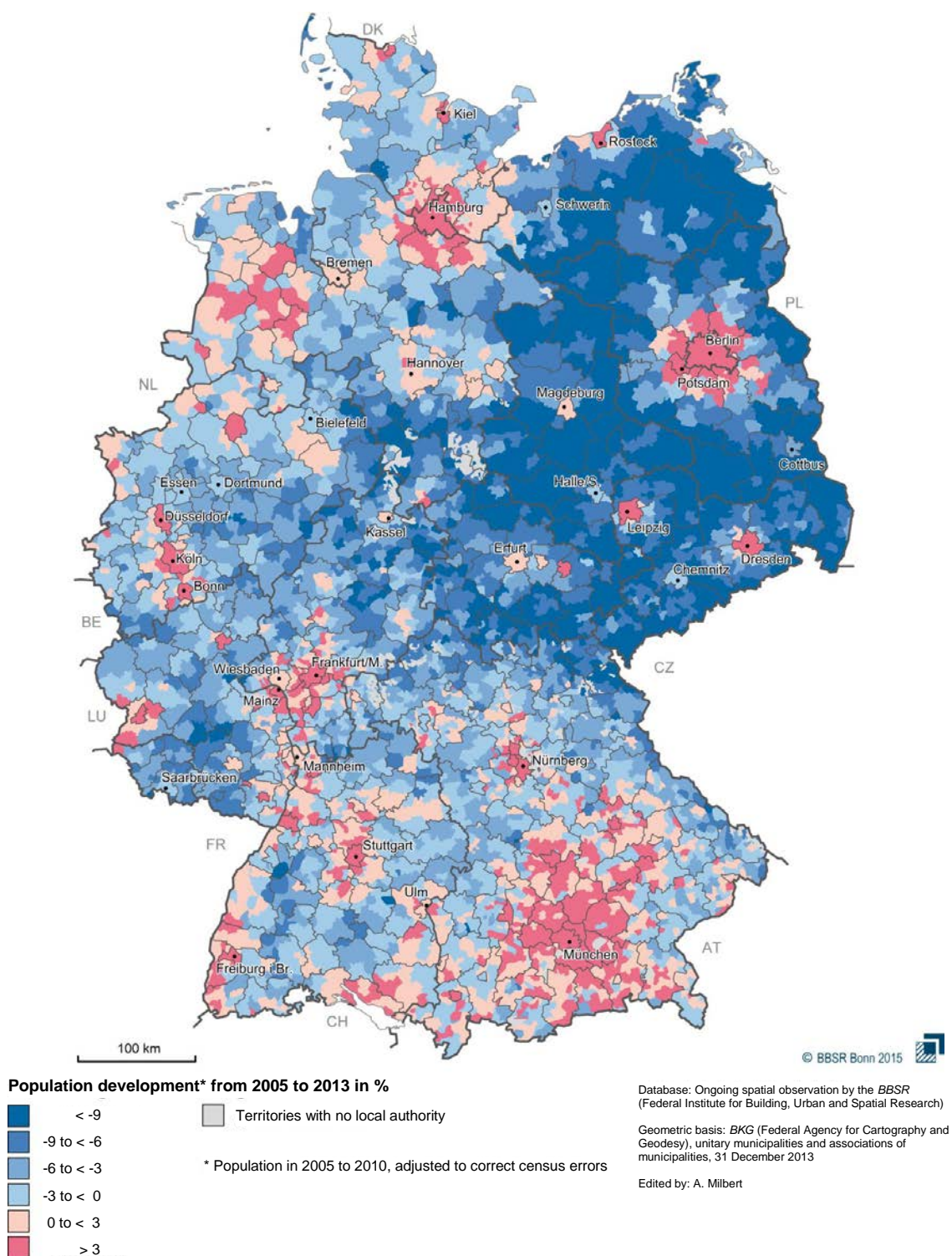
- Complete abandonment of ‘scattered locations’ (with drastically falling use/occupation and high vacancy rates), taking into account the demographic situation (ageing, residual households) and the role of the location as an economic basis of life (e.g. agriculture)
- Abandonment with the (‘qualified’) dismantling of infrastructure and private buildings
- Purchase of property and buildings by the local authorities/state/Federal Government at the market prices of the target locations of relocations in the respective region (small/middle-order centre)
- Subsidies for housing costs (analogous to long-term rental contracts)
- Obligation to abandon use
- Removal financing and management
- Financing of other transfer costs (adjustment of furnishings, household technology)

This scenario results in the following:

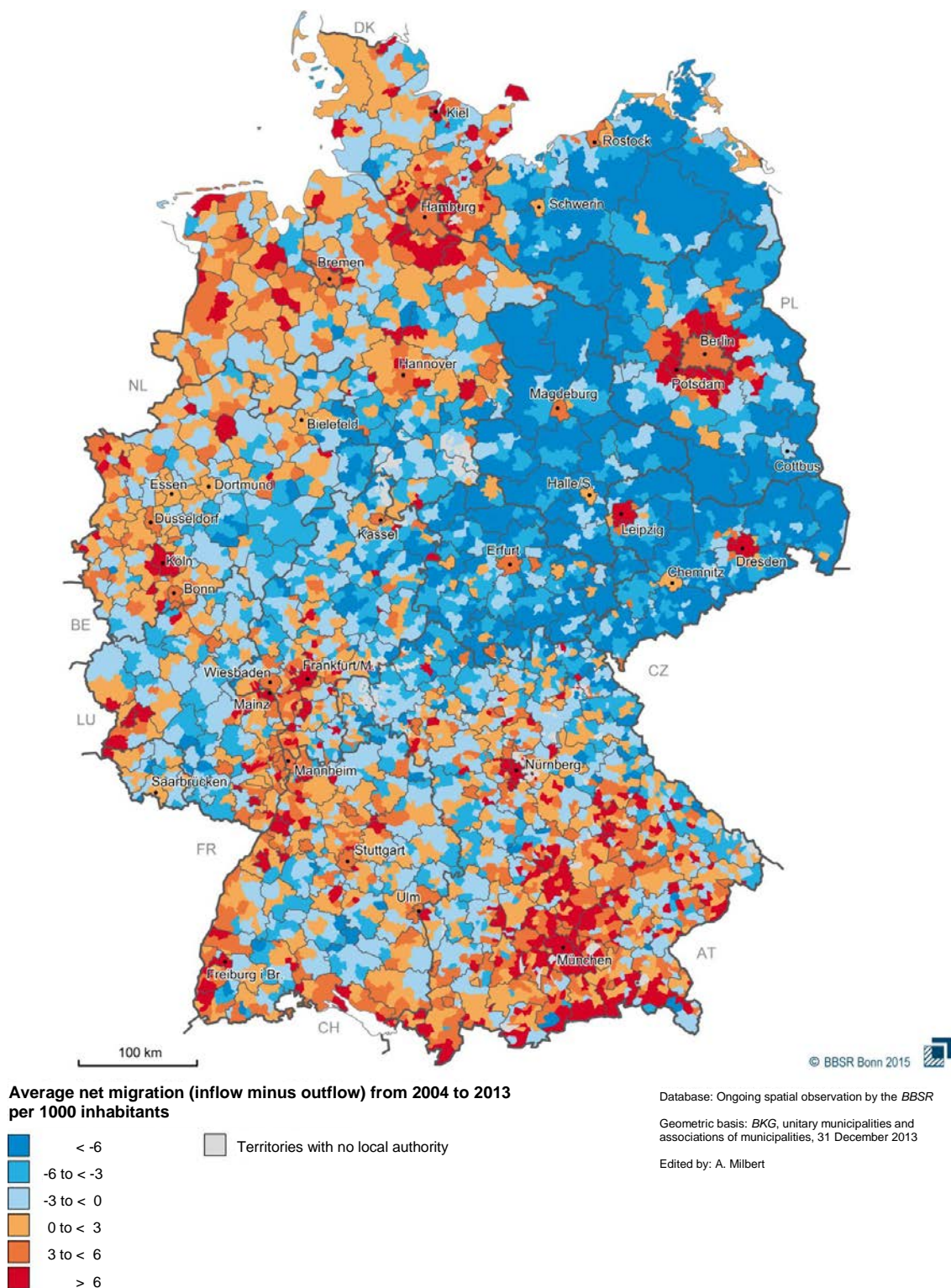
- Sectoral shifting of state expenditure to temporally selective subsidy payments to individuals
- Falling mobility costs, rising quality of provision, but rising housing costs for relocation objects (households, companies)
- Anchoring of corresponding processes (e.g. relocation agency) in subsidy programmes analogously to ‘Urban redevelopment in the East’; support for implementation
- Implementation by means of ‘contracts’ and target agreements
- Decommissioning and dismantling of buildings used for social infrastructure and of elements of networks in the technical infrastructure
- Falling maintenance, renewal and operating costs for infrastructures
- Constant or falling usage charges
- Total relocation is necessary, since otherwise there is no reduction in the infrastructure costs (project securing, maintenance, renewal)
- Partial stabilisation/strengthening of central places (middle- or lower-order centres)

Appendix 2: Cartographic representations

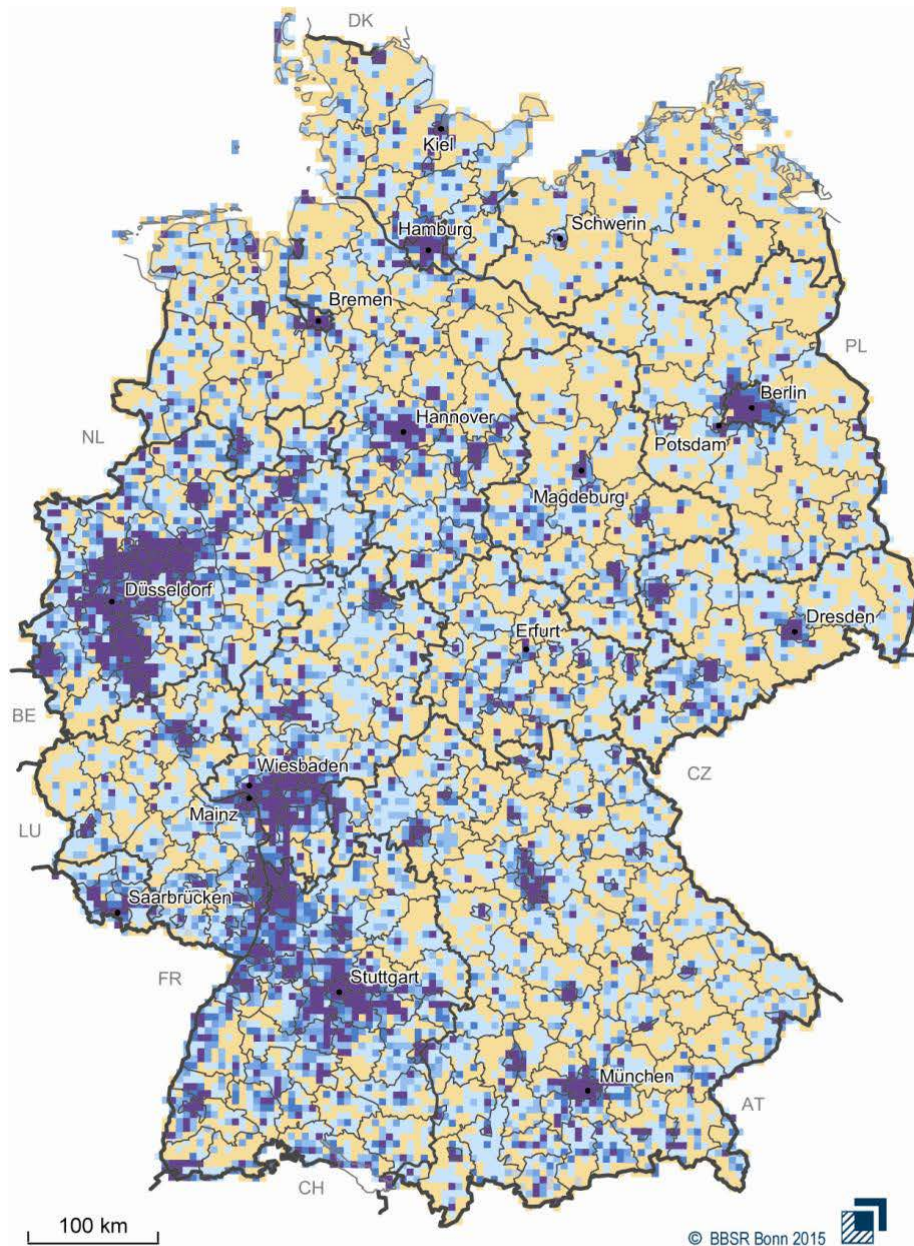
A) Population change



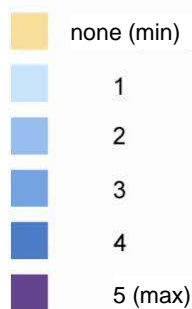
B) Average net migration



C) Multifunctional local services



Number of supply types within a maximum straight-line distance of 1 km weighted by inhabitants, 2011/2012/2013

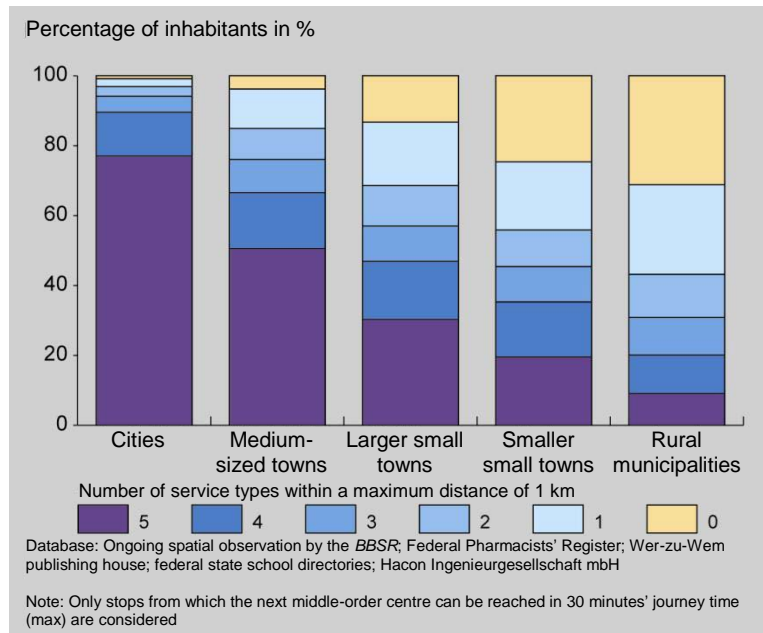


Observed supply types: Supermarkets and discount stores, doctors, pharmacies, primary schools, public transport stops with max. 30 minutes' journey time to the nearest middle-order centre

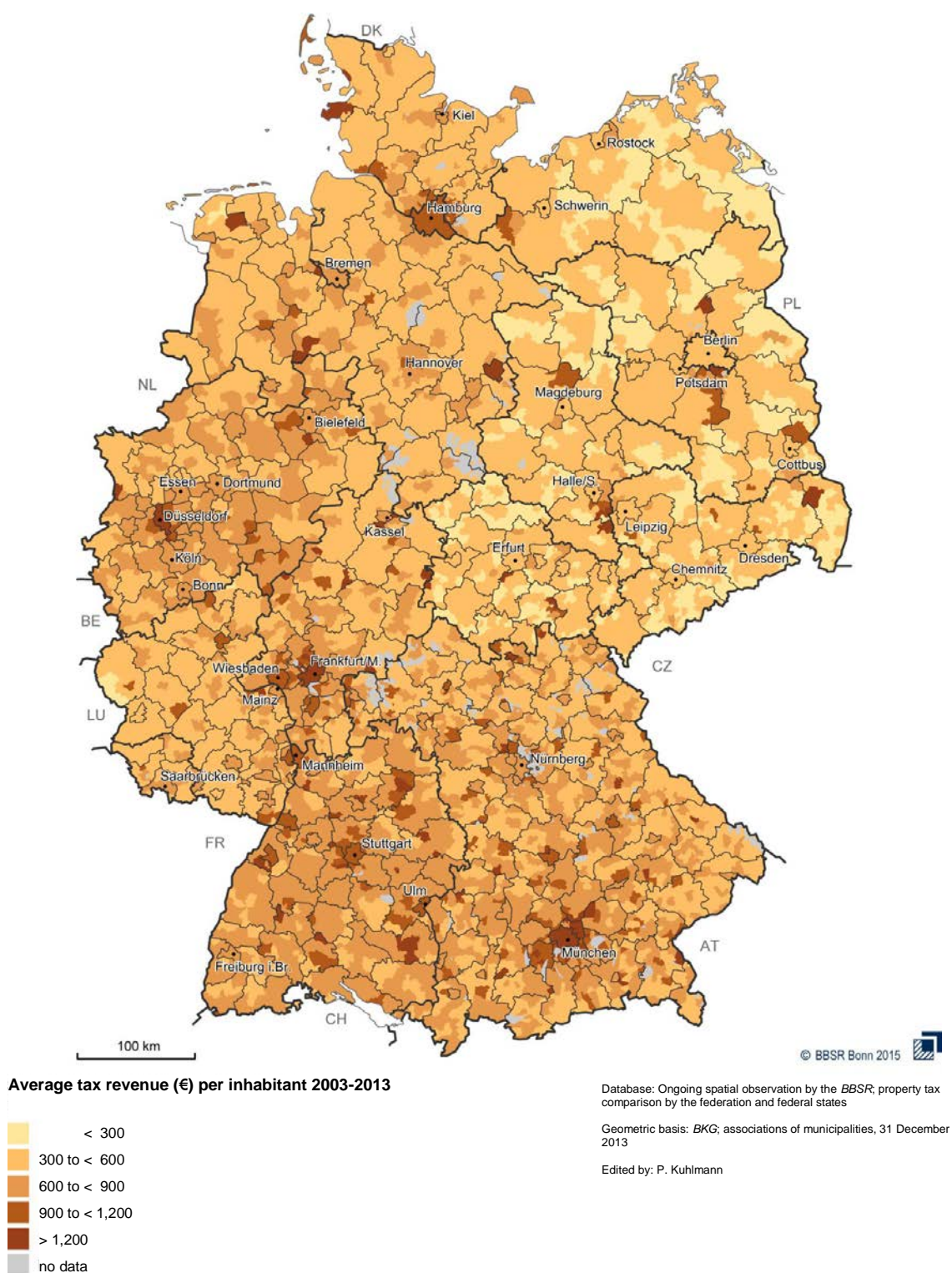
Database: Ongoing spatial observation by the BBSR; Wer-zu-Wem publishing house; Federal Pharmacists' Register; federal state school directories; Hacon Ingenieurgesellschaft mbH (engineering company)
Geometric basis: 5 x 5 km grid squares

Bodies of water from the ATKIS digital basic landscape model were taken into account as topographical barriers in the calculation.

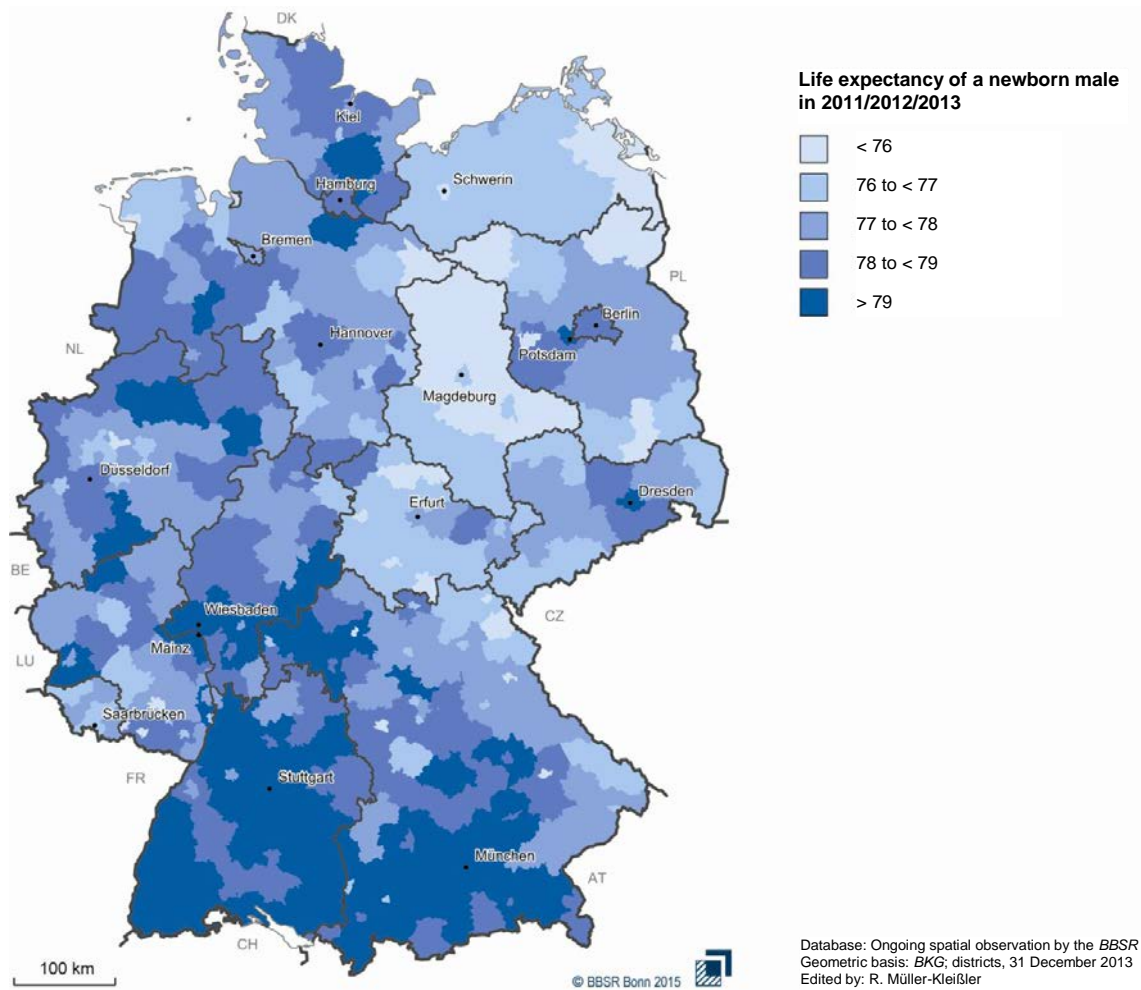
D) Accessible on foot

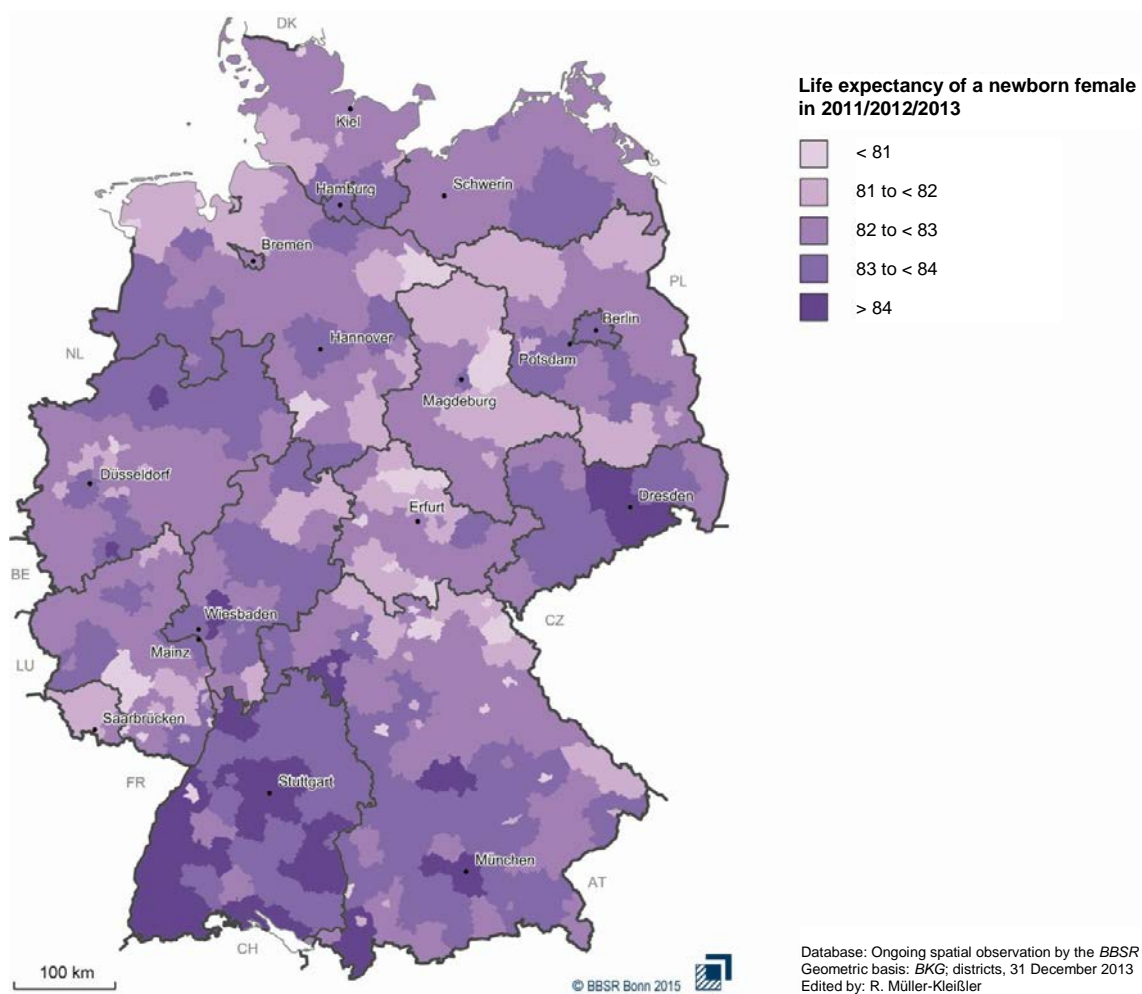


E) Local authority's steering power



F) Life expectancy of men and women





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