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## Participation



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# Participation

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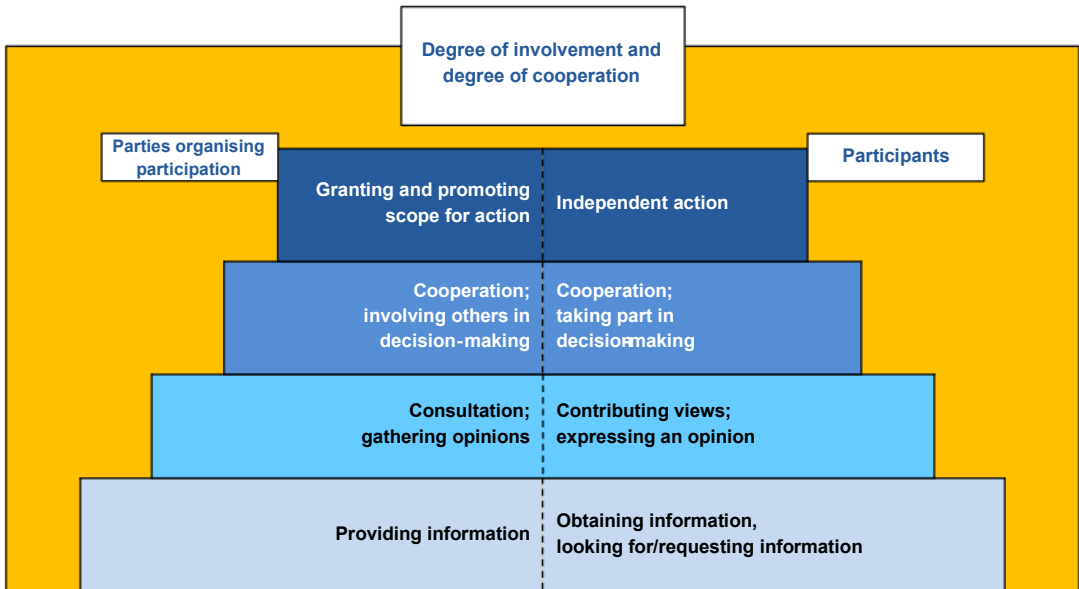
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**Participation has gained currency again. Large-scale infrastructure projects demonstrate particularly well how important it is to involve the population in planning processes at an early stage. Communication strategies that take various forms, procedures and methods into account as well as quality standards and the specific spatial issues contribute to a successful process. This entry examines participation in the context of planning theory and outlines the most recent developments.**

# 1 Clarification of the concept and theoretical context

Citizens' participation in cities, local authorities and regions has become a key issue again in recent years. 'Stuttgart 21' and other major projects, such as the expansion of Frankfurt Airport and the routing of new power lines as part of the energy transition (▷ *Network expansion planning*), have drawn considerable attention. The population demands to be heard and wants to be able to influence the ▷ *Planning* and implementation of building projects. Rucht (2010) emphasises that the existing opportunities for political participation are being used to a significant extent and that large parts of the population would like to see an expansion of these opportunities. Inhabitants are not only ready and willing to take part in public planning and development processes; their participation is now also firmly anchored in numerous laws, ordinances and public development programmes, such as ▷ *Urban development promotion*.

Figure 1: Participation pyramid



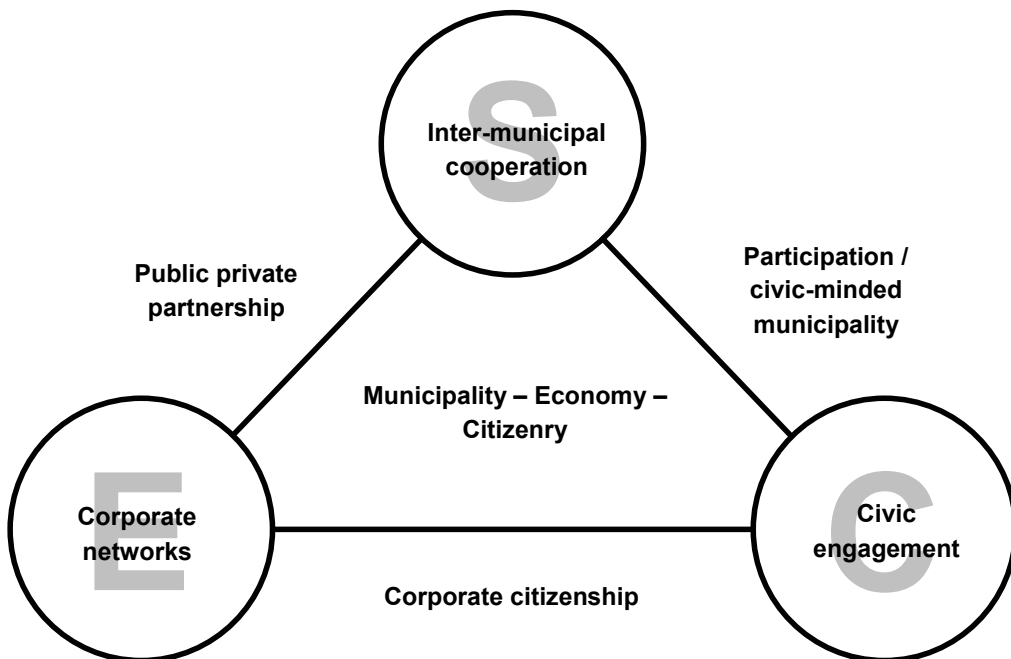
Source: Rau/Schweizer-Ries/Hildebrand 2012: 181, based on Lüttringhaus 2003; translated

What does participation in planning and development processes of ▷ *Urban planning* and ▷ *Spatial planning (Raumplanung)* mean? Participation is frequently equated with civic participation, ▷ *Public participation*, public engagement, cooperation and political involvement or similar notions. Yet, depending on the sector involved and its conception of its role and purpose, these terms reflect different viewpoints and approaches. While the concept of *participation* in a German context reflects the notion of one party involving another party in a process, the concept of *cooperation*, for example, signals that the party involved plays a more active role. According to Selle (2013: 59 et seq.), cooperation in planning processes exists to form opinions, to be able to introduce viewpoints in the weighing processes and to have an impact on the decision-making (e.g. by referendum), although in fact the latter occurs only rarely. In the following, 'participation'

can be understood as encompassing this entire spectrum, from providing information about the object of the planning, involvement in the processes of forming viewpoints, cooperation in the design of planning processes, through to influencing the decision-making process. Thus in each specific case the meaning of the term and the intensity or degree of involvement or cooperation must be differentiated (see Fig. 1). This includes both formal and informal as well as real and virtual participation (▷ *Information and communication technology*).

Participation in Germany dates back to the political movements of the late 1960s (Willy Brandt: ‘Dare more democracy’) and the democracy movement of the former GDR (‘We are the people’) (von Alemann 2011, Selle 2013). Moreover, in the course of modernising the administration in an activating state (as a body politic), which activates and engages the population in the creation of public services and benefits, citizens have been given more weight (see also Banner 1998; Bogumil/Holtkamp 2001). The guiding principle of a citizen-oriented local authority and ▷ *Region* envisages citizens as contributing designers and co-producers of ▷ *Urban development* and ▷ *Regional development*. The cities and regions have implemented this guiding principle so far to varying degrees.

**Figure 2: Forms of cooperation in the governance model (C = Citizens/civil society, S = State and local authorities, E = Economy)**



Source: Sinning 2006: 87, modified based on Bieker/Knieling/Othengrafen et al. 2004

The understanding described above is reflected in planning theory in the urban and regional governance model (see also Benz/Dose 2010; ▷ *Governance*; ▷ *Cooperative planning*). Policymakers and the public administration are thus confronted with the responsibility of engaging private stakeholders as partners in public tasks. The governance model offers various options for cooperation, depending on the constellation of stakeholders. These forms of cooperation include

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intermunicipal cooperation (▷ *Cooperation, intermunicipal and regional*), ▷ *Public private partnership*, citizen orientation/participation, civic engagement, ‘corporate citizenship’, business networks and urban-regional partnerships (as a form of cooperation between all three groups of stakeholders; see Fig. 2). In four of the forms of cooperation, citizens play an active role.

In theoretical terms (▷ *Theory of planning*), the underlying perception of the role and function of planning has been evolving since the ‘communicative turn of planning’ (Healey 1992) – from a primarily technocratic planning science into a communication-oriented discipline, where communication at all stages of planning is deemed to be indispensable. This planning approach, defined as communicative or cooperative/collaborative, was inspired by Habermas’s ‘theory of communicative action’ (1981). Habermas (1992) also speaks of a ‘deliberative public’. ‘It provides an opportunity for civic-minded parties and associations in civil society to make themselves heard and represent their concerns and interests’ (Parliamentary commission 2002: 79). Discursive processes enhance the representative state model and make diverse voices and arguments transparent. At the same time, criticism, e.g. in regard to the power blindness of the communicative model (Fainstein 2000) and the role of planning as neutral moderation, resonated in the debate on the changed approach to planning.

## 2 Stakeholders in participation

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As is apparent from the governance model (see Fig. 2), in this changed understanding of how the planning process is steered, the state and local authorities become merely one stakeholder among many. In view of the increasing complexity of social reality, the wide range of conflicting demands on space and the broad range of planning challenges, the public administration is no longer able to manage the numerous tasks by itself and must work with various stakeholders from the government and local authority, from the commercial sector and from the population/civil society. In addition, the individual groups of stakeholders, i.e. the state/local authority, the commercial sector and the population/civil society must be distinguished. A distinction must be made, for example, between the various entities within the public administration (▷ *Administration, public*), which can be specifically involved in the course of public participation (section 10(4) of the Federal Building Code (*Baugesetzbuch, BauGB*), section 10(1) of the Federal Spatial Planning Act (*Raumordnungsgesetz, ROG*). Citizens can be grouped, e.g. according to age, type of household, culture, lifestyle (▷ *Lifestyles*) or ▷ *Milieu*.

Depending on how the public is defined, the parties involved must also be differentiated in regard to whether they are directly or indirectly affected. Furthermore, clubs, associations and other organisations, which act as representatives of interests of various social or professional groups, must be taken into account as parties involved. They can be granted formal participation rights as public agencies in urban and spatial planning processes (cf. also section 4 of the Federal Building Code).

The interests of stakeholders have become an increasing focus of planning and development processes in recent years. This is because as far as planning and development in cities and regions is concerned, the users, affected parties, owners, investors, decision-makers, etc. play a particularly important role and must therefore be actively involved in the processes.

### 3 Reasons for participation and its significance for planning processes

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What reasons or motivations are there for participation in planning processes? Some essential aspects include:

- Establishing more information and co-determination rights
- Enhancing progress through the stakeholders' knowledge, approaches and evaluations
- Mobilising the engagement of the parties affected and inviting them to take action and responsibility
- Enhancing the quality of decision-making processes and increasing satisfaction with solutions
- Recognising the potential for conflict and need for action at an early stage
- Increasing the acceptance of decisions
- Mediating between conflicting interests and resolving or avoiding conflicts
- Avoiding procedural blockades or delays
- Promoting identification with the city, the urban borough and/or with the project and community concerned

Participation also offers ▷ *Legal remedies in planning* for the parties affected by the planning processes, enhances representative democracy, strengthens the legitimacy of planning acts and thus strives to improve their functionality (von Beyme 2000; Bischoff/Selle/Sinning 2005; *Senatsverwaltung für Stadtentwicklung Berlin* [the Berlin Senate's department for urban development] 2011).

### 4 Prerequisites and quality standards for participation

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The aforementioned reasons and objectives for participation can be achieved if the prerequisites for successful participation are created. Participation processes in urban and spatial planning require sufficient financial means and time, a high level of commitment from many stakeholders, as well as bipartisan support. In order to achieve the planning objectives and thus arrive at planning acts of the desired quality, the processes that underpin urban and spatial planning and development projects must be up to standard. This is because the quality of the planning and projects initially develops from the deliberations of the parties involved before it is later manifested in spatial reality. The answers to the following questions contribute to the quality of participation processes:

- How can all stakeholders that are important for the planning be involved from the outset, i.e. from the time ideas are canvassed up to the implementation and utilisation phase?
- How can the stakeholders involved access existing technical know-how?

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- Which specific forms and methods of participation are required to address all stakeholders that should be reached? What would a corresponding communication strategy look like?
- How can the stakeholders become qualified to allow for learning processes?

In recent years, numerous studies have appeared on quality criteria, success factors and evaluation indicators for participation procedures (e.g. *BMVI* [Federal Ministry of Transport and Digital Infrastructure] 2014; Ley/Weitz 2009; Nanz/Fritsche 2012; *Senatsverwaltung für Stadtentwicklung Berlin* 2011; *Stiftung Mitarbeit* [Foundation for Participation] 2008). The level of knowledge about best practice and how the effectiveness of participation can be assessed has increased significantly. However, shortcomings in the implementation of planning and development projects remain. In this regard, it must be noted that in some fields of action, such as major infrastructure projects, quality standards have not yet been established to the same extent as in other areas, e.g. in the field of ▷ *Integrated urban development*. This indicates that successful participation requires professional structures. Moreover, it emphasises the insight that training in relation to democratic processes and civic participation is an ongoing task and that learning processes are necessary for participation.

Some key quality standards for (real and virtual) participation are listed below (Hammerbacher/Stewens-Werner 2002; Linder/Vatter 1996; Oppermann/Langen 2002; Pröhl/Sinning/Nährlich 2002; Sinning 2005a, 2005b):

- Development of a culture of recognition and participation, which promotes a new, cooperative relationship between the public administration, policymakers and citizens, which is characterised by a sense of partnership and an appreciation for participation and commitment
- Interfaces between citizens, the public administration and policymakers, e.g. in regard to the transparency of potential interfaces and possibilities for cooperation in planning and decision-making processes
- A communicative overall strategy, whereby the public administration strives to develop from a service-oriented municipality to a citizens' municipality, which offers a combination of information, participation and cooperation on individual planning processes from an early phase of canvassing ideas up to implementation and utilisation
- An infrastructure for participation, e.g. in the form of meeting points, reliable consultation and coordination interfaces for committed, civic-minded local people
- Timeliness of participation with joint determination of the decision-making and procedural rules to enable expectations to be met
- Imperative of fairness
- Ensuring transparency, also in the sense of direct and comprehensible information and open resolution of conflicts
- Allowing for learning opportunities and processes; among other things, through communication competitions and planning workshops, where planners can combine expert knowledge with everyday know-how together with the persons affected or involved and jointly work on solutions, or through workshops to obtain the necessary qualifications
- Balancing of the various social strata and interests

- Involvement of external experts and their expertise on technical matters and processes
- A minimum of professional coordination and (external) neutral moderation
- Transparent and comprehensible results
- Ability to realise the project through institutional anchoring and embedding in decision-making systems
- Public relations
- User-friendliness (usability) and absence of barriers (accessibility) in the case of internet participation

## 5 Forms, procedure and methods of participation

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Three levels of communication can be distinguished in regard to the design of instruments of participation in planning and development processes, which are relevant for a communicative overall strategy in urban and spatial planning: forms and processes of participation, methods and techniques of participation and basic communication situations. For an effective use of the instruments of participation it is necessary to consider them in the context of their respective instrumental arrangement. To this end, there are five groups of instruments of spatial planning: regulatory instruments, financial aid, communication instruments, market participation and organisational development. At the same time, the communication instruments must be conceived in conjunction with the other instruments.

The spectrum of the forms and processes of communication in planning and development processes can be grouped into three categories – information, participation and cooperation – with the boundaries between the categories being somewhat fluid (see Fig. 3). The three categories describe different degrees of cooperation. In addition, a fourth category of independent action is conceivable (see Fig. 1: Participation pyramid).

*Information:* Formats for exploring interests and viewpoints serve to establish the attitudes, knowledge and behaviour of the stakeholders involved. At the start of the planning process, they contribute to the analysis of the existing situation as well as to identifying and assessing problems. The other forms primarily serve to provide information and form viewpoints, e.g. local media, circulars, posters, town hall meetings, citizens' Q&As and site inspections.

*Parties involved:* One can speak of forms and processes of cooperation and participation in relation to active participation in planning and development processes. Formally defined (defined in statutes and administratively anchored) and informal (not defined by law) forms and processes of cooperation should be distinguished. For example, in recent years, referenda have significantly increased in importance as a formal instrument of participation. With this instrument of direct democracy, the electorate can directly influence the planning decision in matters relating to municipal planning (Wickel/Zengerling 2011). The extent to which informal means of participation are used is up to the decision-making authority's discretion. In all of the forms and processes of participation mentioned here there is a clear allocation of roles. The experts in public administration determine the nature and organisation of the processes, while the citizens are involved in the public administration's planning in different ways.



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Figure 3: Overview of the forms and processes of information, participation and cooperation

Providing information	Participation	Cooperation
<p><i>Exploring interests and opinions</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Written survey</li> <li>▪ Interview</li> <li>▪ Activating survey</li> <li>▪ Complaints management</li> <li>▪ E-information</li> </ul> <p><i>Providing information, forming opinions</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Notifications, supplements, mailings</li> <li>▪ Public display</li> <li>▪ Local media</li> <li>▪ Campaign</li> <li>▪ Citizens'/residents' assembly</li> <li>▪ Residents' question time</li> <li>▪ Presentations and discussions</li> <li>▪ Study trip</li> <li>▪ On-site inspection</li> </ul>	<p><i>Formally defined instruments for participation</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Public display</li> <li>▪ Hearings, discussion</li> <li>▪ Petitions, motions from citizens</li> <li>▪ Ombudsman</li> <li>▪ Advisory board, committee</li> <li>▪ Citizens' initiative, referendum</li> </ul> <p><i>Formally defined instruments for participation</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Civic-minded consultation</li> <li>▪ 'Aktion Ortsidee' (programme to incentivise local citizenry to become engaged in local planning and other matters)</li> <li>▪ Working group</li> <li>▪ Citizen's jury</li> <li>▪ 'Planning for Real'</li> <li>▪ Workshop on the Future</li> <li>▪ Perspectives workshop</li> <li>▪ Conference on the Future</li> <li>▪ Real Time Strategy Change</li> <li>▪ Community organising</li> <li>▪ Participatory rapid appraisal</li> <li>▪ Involvement of target groups</li> <li>▪ E-participation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Advocacy planning</li> <li>▪ Workshop</li> <li>▪ Forum</li> <li>▪ Round table</li> <li>▪ Mediation</li> <li>▪ Open space</li> <li>▪ Intermediary organisation</li> <li>▪ Local partnership</li> <li>▪ E-cooperation</li> </ul>

Source: Bischoff/Selle/Sinning 2005

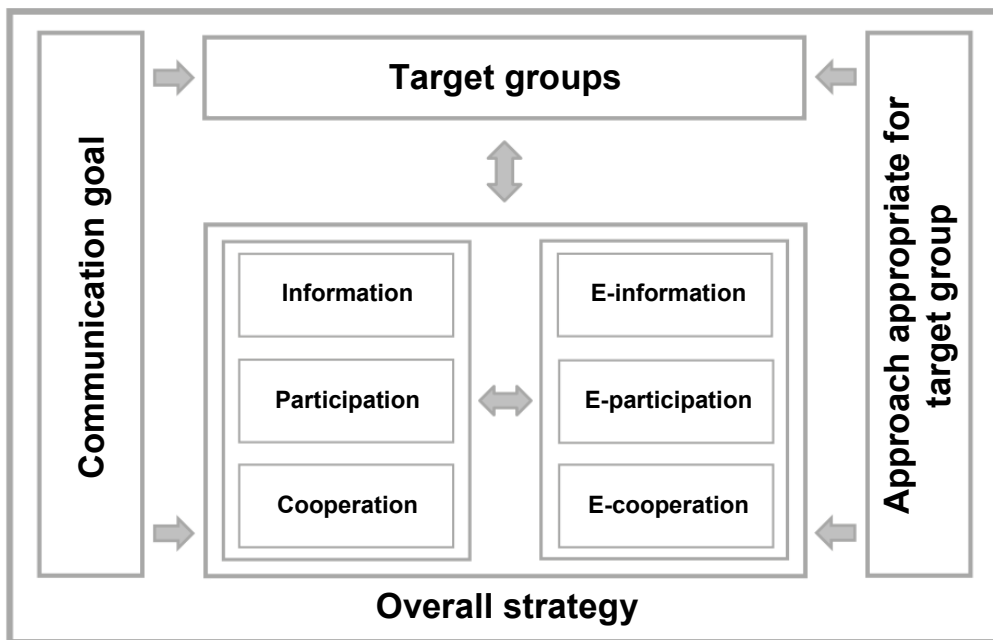
*Cooperation:* The allocation of the roles changes according to forms and processes of cooperation. This is exemplified by the round table. All parties involved gathered on an equal footing around a table and pursue the aim of jointly resolving the pending tasks.

The classification illustrated in Figure 3 serves as an orientation; the allocations cannot be strictly separated. Thus, for example, forms and processes of information and the forming of viewpoints (e.g. exhibitions) may also involve cooperative elements, such as the offer to express opinions. The individual forms and processes are frequently deployed simultaneously or as modules which build on each other (e.g. town hall meeting – working group – inspection). This interlinked method promotes effective communication. Due to growing social diversity, target

group-specific approaches to participation are also becoming more important, e.g. for children, youths, families, senior citizens, migrants or low-income sections of the population.

Since the early 1990s, virtual participation via the internet has increased. Forms of online participation can be included in the three-step schema of 'Information – Participation – Cooperation' in line with the systematics of non-virtual communication options (Bischoff/Selle/Sinning 2005; Sinning/Wiedenhöft 2003). The use of virtual communication in planning offers opportunities to supplement and optimise previous instruments for participation as well as perspectives, for instance interactive communication, which is possible without being bound to a specific place. It appears important that these individual approaches, from information to forms of participation and cooperation, are integrated into a communicative overall strategy (see Fig. 4). Virtual forms of participation must be considered as a supplemental instrument of participation (Kubicek/Lippa/Westholm 2009). In particular, in *Urban land-use planning*, participation via the internet or electronic information technologies has been established and legally anchored (section 4a of the Federal Building Code).

Figure 4: Comprehensive strategy for communication in urban and spatial planning processes



Source: Liebe/Sinning 2005: 118

## 6 Critical classification

Participation is an acknowledged and well-proven method to include the interests and concerns of stakeholders in planning and development processes. In urban and spatial planning or development, participation and communication are now part of the standard

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range of instruments. Despite all the controversies, e.g. about the efficiency of administrative actions, about the difficulties in engaging socially disadvantaged population groups, about the selectivity or the legitimacy of the results of participation processes, participation procedures in major infrastructure projects (e.g. mediation processes in connection with the Berlin Airport and Frankfurt/Main) or municipal or regional processes of elaborating guiding principles (e.g. Hamburg, Cologne, Passau), or in the participatory neighbourhood management for the urban redevelopment in the East and the West, demonstrate and emphasise the great relevance and broad acceptance of participation. This is also borne out by numerous publications, studies and case studies. Nonetheless, there is only scant insight into the actual effects of participation (Selle 2013).

Developments in virtual participation in recent years indicate that in future even further innovations in the participation instruments are to be expected. Younger generations of 'digital natives' are used to communicating virtually, which places corresponding demands on participation. However, when making use of the internet, there is the risk of a gap arising between higher-income and higher-education population groups on the one hand and less educated groups on the other hand. The design of participation procedures should therefore aim to eliminate this 'digital divide'.

Participation is not only a set of instruments in urban and spatial planning, it also contributes to developing social structures, modernising the democratic body politic and its decision-making and organisational structures as well as the close ties and interdependencies in the multi-tier political system. A study by the German Institute of Urban Affairs (*Difu*; Landua/Beckmann/Bock et al. 2013: 25) emphasises in this connection the need to further expand the culture of local participation and recognition. This means a collaborative relationship in a spirit of partnership and on an equal footing between the public administration, policymakers and citizens, in which citizen engagement is duly recognised and appreciated. This notion has been implemented in German cities and regions in various ways. It requires at the very least a changed understanding of the role of policymakers and the public administration.

In this sense, the discussion about participation can be understood as an ongoing search for new, creative and efficient forms and methods to supplement and further advance the existing range of instruments. A look at the practice of other countries, such as the Netherlands (▷ *Urban and spatial development in the Netherlands*) or Switzerland (▷ *Urban and spatial development in Switzerland*) may provide valuable insights in this regard.

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