

ENGLISH ABSTRACTS

SPECIAL SECTION: Regionalism in the Strategic Spatial Plan 2050 –
Alternative Approaches to Creating Affinity Areas in Regional Planning

Regional Plans in Israel: From Strategic Vision to Planning in Practice

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ABSTRACT

The importance of planning at the regional scale has become increasingly evident in recent years in the Israeli planning field, as an additional tier in the existing statutory hierarchy, between the district and local levels. Regional planning is regarded in research and practice as an effective tool that can help foster cooperation among different authorities and stakeholders; formulate a shared vision and regional agenda; reduce commuting and improve access to services; narrow disparities; and strengthen the comparative advantages of each region.

Accordingly, the *Spatial Strategic Plan for Israel*, published by the Planning Administration in August 2024, identifies regionalism as one of seven core themes for long-term strategic planning. The Spatial Strategic Plan defines 28 functional regions, based on a methodology that places residents and their everyday lives at the center, taking both present and future perspectives into account. In doing so, it provides the foundation for the coordinated and synchronized advancement of regional plans, which are currently at various stages of preparation under the leadership of the Ministry of Housing, the Israel Land Authority, and the Planning Administration.

The article details the advantages of planning at the regional scale—including its role as a basis for cooperation, its holistic perspective, and its function as a connecting link between the local and national levels—and discusses the process of developing a new field of practical knowledge in Israel. It also examines the methodology used to delineate regional boundaries and the framework for preparing a regional-spatial plan; insights emerging from the work undertaken to date; key challenges, including coordination among adjoining plans, flexibility versus uniformity, and vertical and horizontal cooperation; and, finally, gaps in knowledge that still need to be addressed.

Keywords: regionalism, regional-spatial plan, functional regions, strategic planning.

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