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**Title:** Impact of planning mandates on local plans: a multi-method assessment.

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**Abstract:** An increasing number of subnational government bodies mandate municipalities to establish a vision for their future development with a local plan. Outside the U.S., few studies have assessed whether these mandates succeed at increasing formal quality, policy focus and implementation of local plans. In addition, the reasons that prompt governments to impose mandates remain unclear. To tackle these issues, we used a multi-method approach combining interviews, plan content analysis and questionnaires to compare mandated and voluntary planning in Switzerland. Our analysis reveals that mandates only have limited impact on local plans. In particular, they do not produce higher quality plans than voluntary planning and do not improve implementation of policies. Our results

may imply that (a) planning mandates from subnational governments are ineffective in general or (b) Swiss mandates in particular entail too few requirements and enforcement mechanisms to show a clear effect. Further studies could explore this issue empirically by comparing the characteristics of different planning mandates and assessing their effect on the quality and implementation of local plans. Alternatively, future research efforts could also examine how to find a compromise between mandated and voluntary planning in order to increase local commitment towards plan making. [ABSTRACT FROM AUTHOR]

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