

Regional planning and the regional plan

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1 Concept and types of regions: formal, functional, planning and administrative

A region is an area that hangs together in some way. It may share uniform features (formal), be tied to one centre by flows (functional), be drawn for preparing and carrying out a plan (planning), or follow government boundaries (administrative).

Core facts

- **Region:** an area larger than a city and smaller than a nation (usually) that has some internal unity, which marks it off from the areas around it.
- **Formal (homogeneous / uniform) region:** defined by **sameness** of one or more features, such as soil, climate, cropping pattern, physiography, language or income level.
- **Functional (nodal / polarised) region:** defined by **interaction** with a dominant centre. It is mapped from **flows**: commuting, trade, bus routes, newspaper circulation, telephone calls.
- **Functional region = nodal region.** Boudeville called it the **polarised region**.
- **Planning (programming) region:** an area chosen so that a plan can be prepared and carried out for it as one unit.
- **Administrative region:** follows government boundaries, such as a district, division or State.
- **Boudeville's three types:** **homogeneous**, **polarised**, and **planning (programme)** regions.
- **Keeble's planning region:** large enough for substantial changes in the distribution of population and employment to take place inside it, yet small enough for its planning problems to be **viewed as a whole**.
- **Under the MRTTP Act, 1966:** a "Region" is any area the State Government establishes as a Region under **s.3** (s.2(23)).

Explained

Formal and functional regions compared

Point	Formal region	Functional region
Basis	Uniformity of features	Interaction and flows
Inside the region	Similar everywhere	Centre and hinterland are different but linked
Boundary	Where the feature changes	Where the pull of the centre fades
Example	Black-soil cotton tract of Vidarbha	Daily commuting zone of Pune

- A formal region can be **single-feature** (rainfall zone) or **multi-feature** (an agro-climatic zone combining soil, rainfall and crops).
- A functional region has a **core** (city) and a **periphery** (hinterland). Its edge is drawn where flows to this centre become weaker than flows to a rival centre.

- **Delineation tools** (next note): flow analysis, breaking-point formula, gravity model, population potential, weighted indices.

Common types of planning region

Type	What drives it	Example
Metropolitan region	A large city and its commuter belt	Mumbai Metropolitan Region; National Capital Region
River valley region	A river basin, for water, power and flood control	Damodar Valley Corporation (1948); Tennessee Valley Authority (USA, 1933)
Resource / industrial region	A shared resource base	Mining and industrial belts
Problem region	Backwardness, drought, tribal or hill areas	Drought-prone or tribal area programmes
Coastal region	Coastal ecology and economy	Konkan

Why planners often use administrative regions

- **Data** (Census, district statistics) is collected by administrative units.
- **Implementing agencies** and budgets are organised by district, taluka and municipality.
- Elected bodies are accountable inside these boundaries.
- The cost: an administrative boundary may cut through a functional region. A city's commuter belt may cross two districts.

Why regional plans are needed

- To reduce **disparities** between parts of a region.
- To guide growth in the **hinterland of large cities**, beyond municipal limits.
- To plan **regional infrastructure**: highways, railways, water, power.
- To protect **natural resources**: forests, rivers, agricultural land.
- To link the State's **economic plan** (sectors and money) with **space** (where things go).

Common traps

✗ "A functional region is defined by uniformity of soil or climate." ✓ That is a **formal** region. A functional region is defined by **flows** to a centre.

✗ "Nodal region and homogeneous region mean the same." ✓ **Nodal = functional (polarised)**; homogeneous = formal.

✗ "The daily commuting zone of a city is a formal region." ✓ It is a **functional** region.

✗ "Keeble said a planning region should be small enough to plan block by block." ✓ Small enough for its problems to be **viewed as a whole**, large enough for substantial shifts of population and employment.

✗ "A Region under the MRTP Act exists wherever a district is formed." ✓ It exists only when the State Government **notifies** it under **s.3**.

Quick revision

- Formal = homogeneous = uniform features.
- Functional = nodal = polarised = flows to a centre.
- Planning region = area for preparing and implementing a plan.
- Administrative region = district, division, State; easy data, may cut functional regions.
- Boudeville: homogeneous, polarised, planning.
- Keeble: big enough for real change, small enough to view as a whole.
- River valley: DVC 1948; TVA 1933.
- MRTP: Region = area notified under s.3 (s.2(23)).