



Rural-Urban Outlooks: Unlocking Synergies (ROBUST)

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Rural-Urban Governance Arrangements and Planning Instruments

Regional Land Use Plan

Frankfurt/Rhein-Main Region

1. Overview

The Regional Land Use Plan is a tailor-made modification of the standard instrument of German spatial planning. The responsibility for land use planning (*Flächennutzungsplanung*), as defined as the upper tier of the German *Bauleitplanung* in the *Baugesetzbuch* (the Federal Law on Building), has been taken away from 75 individual towns and cities and given to the *Regionalverband* (Regional Authority). The 75 towns and cities form the core of the metropolitan region and represent a continuum from urban to rural with the majority being peri-urban. This is the core of the area dominated by Frankfurt am Main; the boundary reflects various functional geographies regardless of municipal or *Kreis* (district) boundaries, or NUTS entities.

2. Main Challenges

A Peri-Urban Region

Most of the area covered by the Plan is neither urban nor rural but combines features of both. This is against the cliché conception of a metropolitan region; many urban features (e.g., headquarters of international companies, high tech industry, research and administration, like German Air Traffic Control) are located in areas that might be perceived as rural at first sight.

This specific spatial structure needs specific instruments to coordinate territorial development, especially to limit land take. Accordingly, the core legal instrument has been modified here to account for that: Individual municipalities are no longer free to determine the future use of land in their territories because their Local Plans (the standard legal requirement for planning permissions) have to follow the Regional Land Use Plan, which is no longer their own business but that of the Regional Authority.

Technically, the Regional Land Use Plan is drafted by officers of the Regional Authority's planning department. In an iterative dialogue with their municipal counterparts,

they seek a common approach and negotiate agreements. Legally, there is a formal procedure laid out in the law, where the public, representatives of public interest and the municipalities are heard. Eventually, the formal decision is taken by the *Regionalverband's* legislative body, where all municipalities are represented, by majority vote. There is a similar procedure for amendments to the plan. These are often initiated by the municipalities; mayors need to seek a political majority for their intentions.

Regional Identity, Regional Development

The Regional Land Use Plan fills the void between NUTS levels 2 and 3. Accounting for various functional geographies, it gives life to the abstract concept of 'region'. Commuter relations, labour and housing markets etc. aren't confined to NUTS3 boundaries; the NUTS2 entity's outline in turn is somewhat artificial, in many respects with too large an area.

Accordingly, the *Regionalverband*, which is the body responsible for the plan, fills that same void. It adopts a broad view of spatial planning by making use of the data base, the know-how and the networks, as well as the parliamentary chamber that represents the 75 municipalities. The common goal is to foster sustainable regional development. The standard model of 75 individual Land Use Plans would provoke unnecessary rivalries with the risk of fierce competition and land take to attract investors.

3. Main Insights

3.1. Insights related to the broad area of "network governance"

The Law establishing the Regional Land Use Plan also includes the mechanisms that make it operational: All local government authorities within the agglomeration are encouraged to form networks to jointly tackle specific tasks. As a result, currently more than 20 groupings, associations or agencies are active.

All of these groupings are members of a network, the *Arbeitsgemeinschaft der Geschäftsführer der Regionalen Gesellschaften, Vereine und Netzwerke* (Working committee of the managers of regional companies, societies and networks), which is facilitated by the *Regionalverband*. The *Arbeitsgemeinschaft* covers a broad portfolio of interests from public transport to pharmacy, from culture to universities, and includes private companies and the chambers of industry and commerce.

The *Regionalverband's* governing body, the *Regionalvorstand* (Regional Board), has some 30 members, some of them with an advisory role or guest status, representing civil society (trade union, chamber of crafts, chamber of industry and commerce, etc.) and the wider region.

In other words: The formal responsibility for a key instrument of *formal* spatial planning (government) opens the door for the other levels of spatial planning – construction of facilities, adjustment of organisations and influence of behaviour (governance).

3.2. Insights related to mechanisms of cross-sectoral coordination and cooperation

The mechanisms to produce, amend and implement the Regional Land Use Plan, both on the technical (officers in the administrations) and the political (majors and parliaments or councils) levels, require cross-sectoral coordination and cooperation. The Law demands that *“Land-use plans shall safeguard sustainable urban development and a socially equitable utilisation of land for the general good of a community; and shall contribute to securing a more human environment and to protecting and developing the basic conditions for natural life.”* (Baugesetzbuch § 1 (5)).

This need to coordinate and cooperate is perceived as an opportunity, and is implemented through the working committee described in 3.1, through regular meetings of the heads of the planning departments of the 75 towns and cities, or through joint projects to foster regional cycling.

Another prominent example is the *Europabüro der Metropolregion FrankfurtRheinMain* (Frankfurt Region European Office). It is the interface between the EU, member states and the Region and is financed mainly by the *Regionalverband* and the City of Frankfurt. This is based on the provisions explained above (3.1) but within the direct responsibility of the *Regionalverband*. A permanent representation of the *Europabüro* in Brussels monitors and, where possible, influences EU activities, especially pertaining to broad spatial planning issues, like regional policy, transport, environment, and agriculture and rural development. The responsibility for a formal legal instrument that can be used in our region serves as the background and legitimacy for the related European activities.

3.3. Insights related to the role of (actual, potential) social, organizational, institutional innovations

As our instrument is a prominent exception to the rule and used in one of Germany's leading prosperous metropolitan areas, we do have the ambition to make the new edition of the Regional Land Use Plan a role model for the modern application of a long-standing instrument of spatial planning.¹

¹ We can concentrate on an enhanced application of this tailor-made instrument and there is no need to discuss the spatial layout; it is 'absolute space' and widely accepted.

4. Effectiveness Indicators

The Regional Land Use Plan system has been applied in this region since the 1970s. It has undergone minor changes but is widely accepted, both amongst planners and within the political world.

The region is one of the most prosperous in Europe and has a viable polycentric structure with a high quality of life, no urban sprawl, and lots of quality open space.

The system is efficient because there is one plan instead of 75 individual ones. The plan has high standards because a dedicated authority can provide joint resources that the individual municipalities couldn't afford.

The Regional Land Use Plan system also has more impetus because a regional authority representing 2.3 million inhabitants has more power than a town of 10,000 people. It fills the gap between the municipal (LAU2, ex NUTS5) and the regional (NUTS 2) levels. The system requires municipal politicians to communicate across municipal borders. They are forced to do so legally, but, in fact, they use the system voluntarily as a forum to foster regional prosperity.

5. Illustration and further information

The Regional Land Use Plan is a rather complex document for the sheer size of the region alone (2458.3 km²) but, of course, also for its contents. Details about the Regional Land Use Plan are available on the [Regionalverband's website](#) (German).

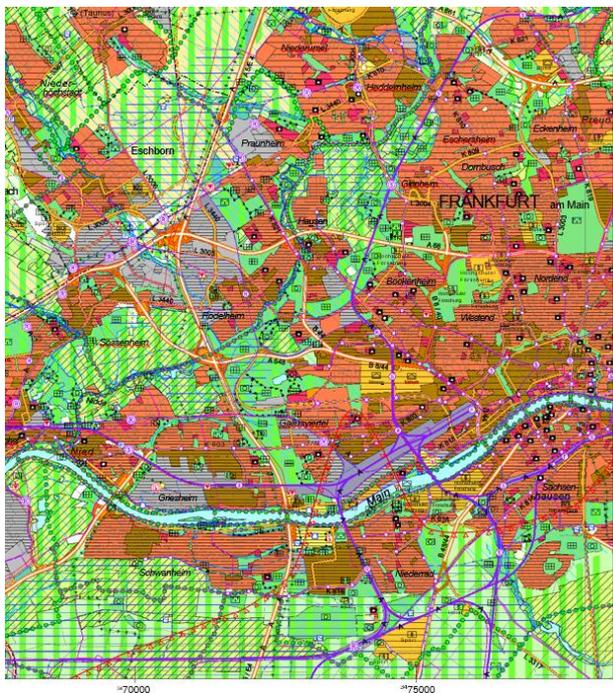


Fig. 1:
*Regionalplan/Regionaler
Flächennutzungsplan 2010*

FrankfurtRheinMain,
Hauptkarte, Blatt 3;
1:50.000

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