

Gemeinsam wachsen, gemeinsam handeln?

Urban-regional cooperation potentials with regard to inter-municipal focus areas and actor constellations.

A research project on behalf of Municipal Department 50, Vienna Housing Research.

Executive Summary



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PROJECT AIM

The research project „Gemeinsam wachsen, gemeinsam handeln?“ („Grow together, act jointly?“) is in line with several studies on behalf of the Municipal Department 50, Vienna Housing Research, that are dealing with the highly relevant research question of how Vienna and its urban region can manage the increasing settlement dynamics and the resulting planning challenges in a sustainable way.

The project seeks to deepen this research question as well as the aspects, which have been underrepresented in the planning and policy debate so far: which municipalities are most closely linked with Vienna and how did this functional relations change over the last years? Which cooperation networks can be identified within the urban region of Vienna? Are there institutional and economic cooperation partners, besides cities and municipalities that cooperate successfully across administrative borders in the urban region of Vienna? Can we learn from these cooperations how to improve planning collaboration and knowledge exchange beyond municipal and provincial borders?

Derived from the results of this research project, the study finally offers some policy recommendations. It concludes that it needs a two-step strategy in order to jointly coordinate urban-rural challenges of settlement development and housing in the urban region of Vienna. First, the study argues for a step-by-step strategy that is based on existing cooperation structures and focuses on clearly defined sub-regions. Second, it recommends establishing an integrative development strategy, which defines the guiding principles of further development for the entire urban region of Vienna.

The research project in detail

Background

The „Stadtregion+“, which comprises the city of Vienna and 227 small-sized cities and municipalities in the provinces of Lower Austria and the Burgenland, has experienced a continuous population growth in the last decade. Today, it is the residence for almost 2.9 million people. Between the years 2013 and 2018 the population has in sum increased by +7.25%. Although, the dynamics has been getting a bit slower recently, further population growth is predicted for the future. However, the population growth is spatially unevenly distributed across the urban region of Vienna. While the municipalities in the urban region of Vienna have been growing by 47.493 inhabitants between the years 2013 and 2018, the 21st and the 22nd district of Vienna recorded itself an almost similar number in the same period (+37.000). Overall, the city of Vienna has been growing by 147.530 people in this period. Thus, managing the growth seems to be the key task for the city of Vienna and its urban region.

The research project „Gemeinsam wachsen, gemeinsam handeln?“ on behalf of the Municipal Department 50, Vienna Housing Research takes account of these planning and policy challenges. As the available amount of land has almost reached its limitations in the urban area of Vienna, city development also takes place at the fringes: huge urban development projects, like the “Seestadt Aspern” or the “Gaswerk Leopoldau”, are located at the urban fringes of Vienna and thus close to the border of Lower Austria. As the adjacent

municipalities of Lower Austria experience also a rapid population growth, the question raises how the settlement development can be jointly coordinated in the Stadregion+ in a socially, economically and ecologically sustainable and resource-efficient manner.

Based on this outlined regional background and the related questions, the research project „Gemeinsam wachsen, gemeinsam handeln?“ aims to scrutinize, which inter-municipal and inter-provincial cooperation and planning strategies can support a further expansion of existing structures and willingness to cooperate. The central policy recommendation, which is offered as a conclusion of the project, argues for an approach, which combines an overarching and integrated development strategy of the urban region of Vienna with a step-by-step development strategy.

The project draws up on three guiding hypothesis:

1. The strong population growth of the Stadregion+ cannot be stopped. The existing growth demands for a planning and policy guided management.
2. Besides the well-known good-practice regions and models, the urban region of Vienna provides further case study areas that should be explored in more detail.
3. In the last 20 years, there has been an enormous accumulation of knowledge and potential strategies for the Stadregion+. Thus, researchers should draw upon these existent data and further develop the available knowledge.

In this context, the study focuses on the analysis of aspects that have been overlooked in the research on the Stadregion+ so far. It seeks for a synthesis of existing studies and basic research about Vienna and its urban region. The aim is to develop a basis for new planning and policy strategies, which can contribute to the management of the further growth of the Stadregion+. Therefore, different quantitative and qualitative spatial analysis methods were used and interviews with a various number of experts and stakeholders that are relevant in the context of cooperation structures were conducted. The interview partners range from politicians to stakeholders of social housing cooperatives and representatives of infrastructure services (e.g. Wien Energie, Wiener Linien and Wiener Wasser).

ANALYSIS 1: THE INDEX OF INTERDEPENDENCY

The Stadregion+ comprises the city of Vienna as well as 272 cities and municipalities in 2 federal states. The first methodological approach focusses on the functional interdependencies and intensities between Vienna and the municipalities in the urban region. Therefore, the index of interdependency was developed, which combines different indicators that reflect the functional relations between Vienna and a municipality of the urban region (migration and commuting flows). The analysis aims to identify the areas of interdependency that show the closest functional relations. The results serve as the basis for further analysis. The analysis reveals that the **functional relation between the city of Vienna and the adjacent municipalities is characterised by spatial and temporal dynamics and intensities**. These dynamics of migration and commuting do not only cause rapid developments of single municipalities, but also of larger regions of the urban region. By aiming at new, flexible and place-specific inter-municipal and inter-provincial planning approaches, these results are crucial for further considerations and conceptualizations.

ANALYSIS 2: NETWORK ANALYSIS

What are the fields and the intensity of cooperation between the municipalities of the urban region and between the city of Vienna and the municipalities? In order to answer this question about planning culture and cooperation structures, based on an online survey a quantitative network analysis was conducted. The online survey addressed approximately 50 municipalities of Lower Austria and the districts of Vienna that are located at the fringe of the city. The participating authorities were asked if and how they cooperate with other municipalities or districts, in order to handle municipal tasks in an inter-municipal way. In sum, the analysis can draw upon 29 cases, as 27 municipalities and 2 Viennese districts took part in the survey. There are two central results. First, cooperation culture is on the one hand, primarily established in the technical and infrastructural field (primarily based on cooperation associations); even though, cooperations can increasingly be observed in the field of planning. Second, cooperations between the city of Vienna and the municipalities of the urban region can barely be found. The few existing cooperations that could have been revealed mostly tend to be in an informal way. On the contrary, the municipalities emphasize a variety of potential fields of cooperation for which they desire a more intensive cooperation between Vienna and the municipalities (e.g. transport planning, settlement development, technical infrastructure). However, the current situation leads to an **“Interdependency-Cooperation-Paradox”**: the functional relations and interdependencies (regarding to migration and commuting flows) are especially pronounced among the municipalities of the urban region and the city of Vienna, while the identified cooperation networks reveal a spatial and functional separation of Vienna and its urban region.

ANALYSIS 3: INTERVIEWS WITH EXPERTS

The selection of enterprises, organisation and authorities for the interviews had a twofold goal. First, the interviews with selected stakeholders of districts, municipalities, inter-provincial operating organisations, and social housing cooperatives should offer new insights about settlement development, regional planning challenges and potentials for future cooperations. Second, the interviews should reveal existing cooperations of the Municipal Departments and enterprises of the city of Vienna or the “Stadtwerke” (Wien Energie, Wiener Linien), as experiences from urban regions in Germany show that some of the present intensive and strong institutionalized cooperations (e.g. in the region of Hannover) have their origin in inter-provincial monothematic cooperations (like waste disposal). The results of the interviews point out to a variety of topics and challenges that require a more intensive inter-municipal cooperation. However, it becomes also evident, that different political and institutional restrictions need to be overcome to promote further cooperation in the Stadregion+. In particular, on the informal level, there are established exchange relations, which have developed during the last decades.

CONSEQUENCES FOR PLANNING: URBAN-REGIONAL FOCUS AREAS

The spatial analysis shows that interdependencies between municipalities and Vienna change over time. Due to these developments, it is necessary, to react strategically and to introduce and establish flexible areas for planning. Based on the concept of flexible regionalization, the study proposes to establish “urban-regional focus areas”. These focus areas should be similar in structure, show functional relations and have planning tasks that could be met better by cooperative planning approaches. These focus areas do not have to be spatially adjacent to Vienna. In this context, the „Regionalen Leitplanungen“ that have been established in some regions of Lower Austria in the last decade are a good example for an inter-municipal planning approach that could serve as an orientation for the implementation of focus areas. The report of this project also offers a method to identify

such urban-regional focus areas (based on a combination of interdependency index and settlement potential of each municipality).

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS FOR CROSS-BORDER URBAN-REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT STRATEGIES

In the last decade in the Stadregion+ a cooperation culture and structures of exchange have been established, which are strongly based on informal activities and personal relationships. However, in the context of concrete planning challenges, the legal dimension hampers the implementation. Additionally, a successful realization also requires a “partnership of equals” between the metropolitan city of Vienna and the small-sized cities and municipalities of the urban region. Nevertheless, the development and the population growth requires a coordinated planning approach. The research project recommends an urban-regional strategy that is based on 2 conceptual pillars . On the one hand a step-by step strategy in order to establish a partnership of equals and on the other hand, a common elaboration of an integrative development strategy for the Stadregion+, which serves as the textual, conceptual and strategically guiding principle.

1. Pillar: Urban-regional step-by-step strategy

- Step-by-step development of a partnership of equals (“Regionale Leitplanungen” of municipalities in the urban region of Vienna and selected focus areas)
- Unit of orientation and implementation (continuous implementation of concrete, inter-municipal and inter-provincial projects)
- Development of planning instruments (Coordination of settlement development within clearly defined urban-regional focus areas with similar challenges of planning)

2. Pillar: Integrated Development Strategy for the Stadregion+

- Integrated approach for the urban area (Commonly developed, integrated and informal urban-rural development concepts)
- Flexible Regionalization (continuous identification of inter-municipal and inter-provincial focus areas that serve as a basis for an appropriate urban-regional planning)
- Development of planning instruments (medium- to long-term: step-by-step institutionalisation and formal implementation of urban-regional spatial planning instruments)

The central policy recommendation proposes the institutionalisation of the cooperation culture, which has been established in the last decades in the Stadregion+. Although, the existing cooperation structures are rather informal and there has been too little coordination of these approaches, one can rely on the existing structures. By arranging and pooling the accumulated knowledge, the established actor networks and inter-municipal cooperations, the title of this research project can become the leitmotif of the Stadregion+ in the near future: Grow together, act jointly!