The Metropolitan development of Vienna

Vienna’s rapid urban growth has been a key factor in the formation of its larger metropolis that covers a vast number of local authorities. The current metropolitan area of Vienna is embedded in the Stadregion+ strategy (2011). Vienna’s metropolitan area is not a formally established administrative territory. It stretches over 7 552 km² and includes Vienna, part of the surroundings of Lower Austria region and part of Burgenland region. In 2015 the area consisted of 2.75 million inhabitants with a population density of 365 inh./km². With its high territorial potential, including diverse landscapes, economic opportunities and attractiveness to new inhabitants, Vienna’s metropolitan development has a strategic importance at national and regional scale. Achieving a balanced urban growth is a key challenge as well as an opportunity for better quality of life in and around Vienna.

Metropolitan Development Area (MDA)

Map of the MDA of Vienna

- The deliberated MDA of Vienna is based on the Stadregion+ spatial concept (2011). It represents an area of 268 municipalities, located partly in the region of Lower Austria, and partly in the Burgenland region.
- The area has no formal status and is not covered by a specific administrative level. There is no consolidated body for metropolitan planning in Vienna. Organisations that support a coordinated spatial planning efforts across the area, include:
  - Planungsgemeinschaft Ost (PGO) the planning cooperation of 3 regions - Vienna, Lower Austria and Burgenland.
  - Stadt-Umland Management (SUM), which consists of 11 outer districts of Vienna and 70 neighbouring municipalities as a platform for dialogue, in implementation of common projects.
  - Since 1984 the public transportation of Vienna, Lower Austria and Burgenland is coordinated by the Verkehrs bund Ostregion (VOR) organization.
- Vienna’s spatial development is characterised by steady urbanization and densification patterns, alongside main infrastructure, and by a rapid population growth trend.

Current spatial development challenges

- The key urban trends in Vienna show increasing population growth, which may reach about 400,000 inhabitants in the next 10-20 years.
- There are increasing demands in housing and employment in the area. Ensuring affordable housing and services in a sustainable and cost-effective way, while dealing with escalating land prices is an important challenge.
- There is a need to improve the transportation infrastructure to meet current and future commuting needs of the local population, living or working in the core city and in the suburbs.
- A strategic polycentric spatial development is considered as an opportunity to allow more effective allocation of land use functions and make interlinkages between the spatial plans of a vast number of municipalities. The challenge is to achieve commitment among all municipalities for a common spatial development strategy.
- A consensus building is needed among key stakeholders, regarding the management of the urban growth in and around Vienna.
**Strategic priorities, opportunities and incentives**

- The Stadregion+ strategy needs to be upgraded with regard to the recent urban development trends and spatial patterns in order to explore new opportunities for sustainable urban growth.
- The spatial plans and strategies at local and regional level need to be based on a coordinated approach for establishing a “structured urban region” with more balanced distribution of functions and growth poles.
- A joint vision for a urban growth strategy of Vienna is an emergent priority.
- Bottom-up initiatives for metropolitan planning and current collaborative arrangements such as the PGO, SUM and VOR can be used as a trigger for a strategic metropolitan planning process, involving all municipalities in the area.

**SOEI matrix of the Metropolitan city of Vienna**

**Strategic priorities**
- To implement smart, inclusive and sustainable growth alongside the main infrastructure lines and identify potential urban development poles.
- To reduce and control urban sprawl and ensure compact spatial structure.
- To preserve the rural settlements from large urban developments.
- To protect the natural environment.
- To strengthen cooperation structures.
- To strengthen public participation.

**Emergent problems**
- Transport infrastructure shortages.
- Mobility & Accessibility problems.
- Accommodation and management of emerging population growth.
- Controlling moderate suburbanisation.
- Ensuring affordable land and housing.
- Anti-growth attitude in many smaller suburban settlements.
- Unequal distribution of services.
- Lack of recognition of the NVA.
- Need for broader actors' involvement.
- Need for multilevel collaboration.

**Opportunities**
- New major infrastructure developments (e.g. railway and motorways nodes).
- Developing zoned land reserves.
- Renovation and optimization of build up areas (housing, services etc.).
- Optimising multifunctional land use.
- Creating sub-centres, providing workplaces and services.
- Securing green spaces in urban areas.
- Developing pro-active land policy.
- Pilot projects for regional planning.
- Implementing district-level planning.

**Incentives**
- Current collaborative arrangements (VOR, PGO, SUM).
- The strategic plan Stadregion+.
- Launch of bottom-up metropolitan development initiatives on specific area or issue to generate common benefits for the metropolitan area.
- Developing planning and policy tools for managing urban growth.
- Strengthening the relations between local and regional decision makers.

**Key recommendations and relevant policy tools**

### Progress in Metropolitan Planning Approach within eight action areas

- The implementation of a Metropolitan Planning Approach in Vienna, according to the eight action areas developed by the SPIMA project (see figure above) is in its beginning.
- Currently the local and regional actors have gained better understanding about the urban development trends and about the important challenges ahead.
- More efforts are needed in building consensus between all municipalities about a future vision of the area and how the current challenges can be addressed and by whom.
- A coordinated metropolitan development requires that municipalities and regions engage in a shared governance process with input of their specific competences.
- The commitment of the local politicians, decision-makers, businesses and planners is essential for developing a common metropolitan strategy.
- The sub-urban communities need to be aware about the potential common benefits that can be achieved for the different municipalities by coordinating their spatial plans.
- Vienna's metropolitan development needs to be managed by combination of policy tools, including development of strategic plans, coordination and inter-regional collaboration:
  - Strategic planning process and upgrade of the Stadregion+ strategy, regarding recent urban growth patterns.
  - Coordination and consultation process between all municipalities for developing a joint spatial planning process for identifying common benefits in managing urban growth.
  - Demonstrating the potential of current collaborative structures such as VOR, PGO and SUM in building awareness and trust among the local authorities.
  - Increasing the coordinating capacity and accountability within the local and regional administrations.
  - Enhancing the collaboration process and initiating consensus-building between the regions (Länder).
  - Identifying bottom-up pilot projects (triggers) that may generate common benefits and a shared “problem ownership” (e.g. in transport, environment, public services, housing).
  - Building on existing relations and financial incentives with the higher levels of government (national and EU).

### References:

SPIMA final report [https://www.espon.eu/metropolitan-areas](https://www.espon.eu/metropolitan-areas)

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