

RIFS-Blogpost

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[Dachzeile]

Rethinking Public Administration for the Socio-Ecological Transformation

From adapting public spaces to climate change to rethinking mobility and decarbonising the heat supply – cities are grappling with major transformation processes as they move towards a more resilient and climate-friendly future. Researchers with the Franco-German Forum for the Future are studying cities in France and Germany that have embraced ambitious goals for change. In a recent publication, we took a closer look at the administrative processes that both guide and determine the pace of these transformations. This RIFS Study was prompted by a question that arises time again among our partners in towns and cities in France and Germany: What can be done to improve interdepartmental cooperation and accelerate processes in public administration?

1 Novel approach improves agility of public administration

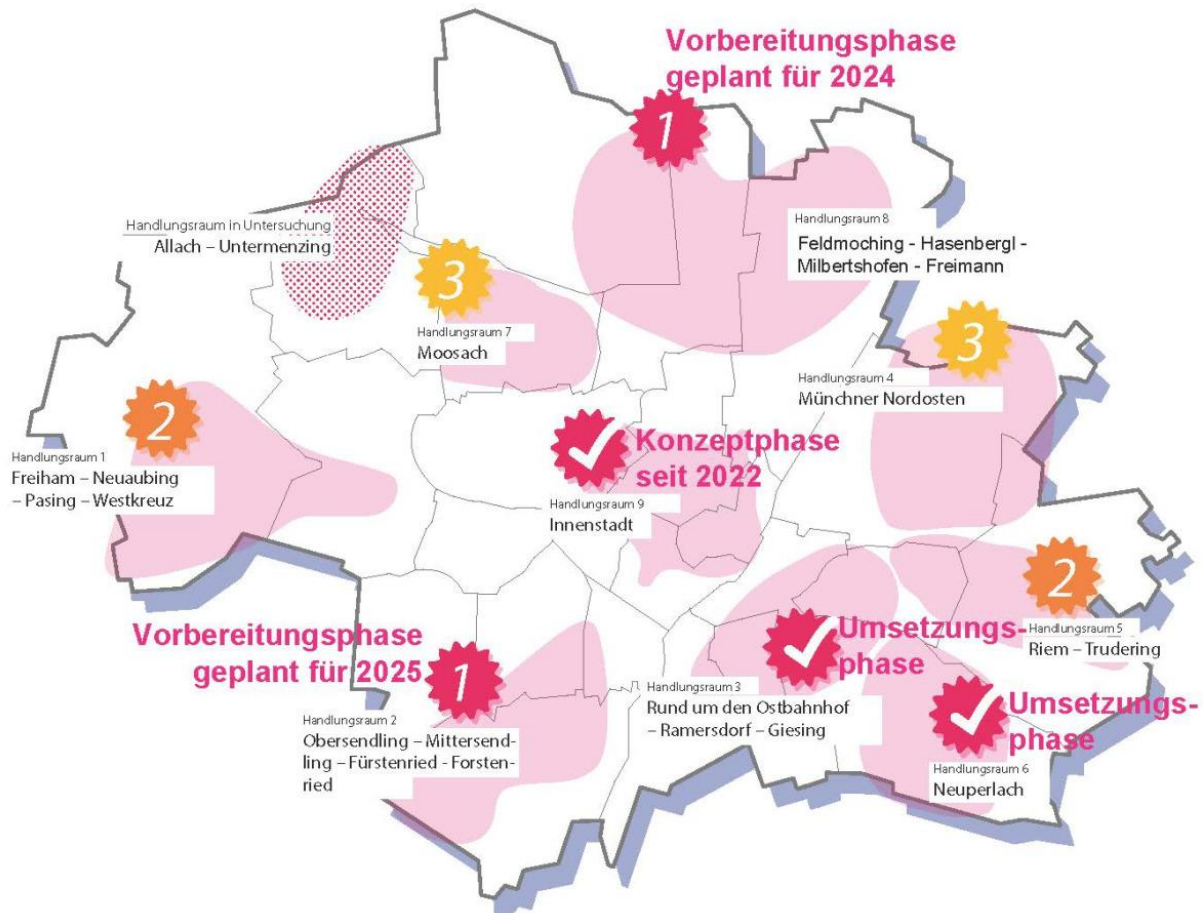
The City of Munich has developed an exciting solution to this question - the Action Areas Approach. Action areas are neighbourhoods that are undergoing dynamic change in terms of their demographics, economy, and environmental quality. There is often a need for urgent interventions by local authorities in these development hotspots. The City of Munich has trialled new forms of cooperation that overcome traditional administrative boundaries and professional hierarchies in an attempt to respond to these challenges.

! Zum Aktualisieren der Textelemente, Zitation markieren und dann F9 drücken !

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An overview of Munich's action areas highlights neighbourhoods undergoing dynamic change. Landeshauptstadt München

Local authorities in Munich have experimented with the action areas approach for over three years now. For our study, we worked with municipal experts for urban development and planning to evaluate the experiences of the first few years. We held discussions with employees in all areas of public administration as well as with civil society organizations and other local project partners. A workshop organized as part of the research process brought together employees from the city's administrative branch who already worked with the approach or were likely to do so due to their expertise. After a year of joint reflection, we can now present our results.

2 Accelerating sustainability transformations through cooperation

A closer look at individual projects reveals the strengths of this agile approach. One good example is the Grünspitz in East Munich – a triangular greenspace dotted with old chestnut trees. Municipal authorities partnered with a local association in 2014 to enable community-led temporary use projects. The association pursued a variety of outreach activities and collected ideas for the future development of the greenspace. When funding threatened to run out before planning and public consultation could be completed, the project ground to a halt. The action area manager responsible for Grünspitz Park then invited the stakeholders to a round table:

"There are still a lot of unresolved issues when it comes to the Grünspitz greenspace. And while numerous departments have a stake in its future, none of them want to take on this responsibility. Our role is to make sure that everyone plays their part and comes to the table."

At round table meetings, the city's planning units and local stakeholders reached an agreement that secured a new round of interim funding. This example highlights the capacity of the action areas

approach to facilitate cooperation between diverse stakeholders and overcome siloes and hierarchies within a complex public administration with some 40,000 employees.



The Grünspitz greenspace in East Munich. KulturVERSTRICKUNGEN e.V.

3 Learning from local experience and together with local authorities

In addition to this, we also cooperated with stakeholders from public administration to identify opportunities to improve the application of the action areas approach, for example by optimizing the use of digital tools. We also cast a critical eye over the policy and organizational environment in which the approach is deployed and considered how it could achieve a broader impact. An online dialogue with administrative staff from the cities of Siegen, Lyon and Pau in the south of France showed that agile and flexible collaboration in action areas can lend inspiration to other cities in Germany and France.

This RIFS Study exemplifies the Forum's approach to cooperation with partner municipalities, which enables us to engage with local transformation processes and facilitates mutual learning through joint research and dialogue with practitioners. In a final step, we draw on this shared learning to develop recommendations for policymakers and political actors at the national level.

Read the full RIFS Study on the action area approach here (German edition only):

https://publications.rifs-potsdam.de/pubman/item/item_6003155

Find out more about the Franco-German Forum for the Future and our recommendations here: <https://df-zukunftswerk.eu>