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**Major Cities and Their Peripheries:
Frankfurt and the Frankfurt Region**

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This paper is one of six case studies prepared by a „Group of Specialists on Major cities and their Peripheries“ convened by The Council of Europe, Secretariat General, in 1995.

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Major Cities and their Peripheries: Frankfurt and the Frankfurt Region

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I. General setting

1. The Place of Local Authorities in the Administrative Structure

As the name suggests, the Federal Republic of Germany is a federal state comprising sixteen states or *Länder* (singular *Land*). Eleven 'old' *Länder* in West Germany (including Berlin) and five 'new' *Länder* on the territory of the former German Democratic Republic (East Germany), which was united with the FRG on 3rd October 1990. Three of the old *Länder* - Berlin, Hamburg, and Bremen - have the status of city-states, meaning that they are both *Länder* of the Federation and urban municipalities.

The distribution of powers (legislative, executive, and judicial) between the Federation and the *Länder* is laid down by the Basic Law (designed originally as a transitional substitute for a federal constitution). The Federation is the prime focus of legislative power. Federal legislative competence is either exclusive, concurrent, or for framework legislation. By far the greatest part of executive powers are vested in the *Länder*. The relatively weak legislative powers of the *Länder* are offset by the *Bundesrat* or Federal Council, composed of representatives of the sixteen state governments, which participates in Federal legislation as the second chamber to the *Bundestag*, the Federal parliamentary assembly. (1)

Article 28 of the Basic Law places responsibility for 'all local community matters' in the hands of local government administrative units, namely *Gemeinden* (2), *Städte* (towns/cities) and *Kreise* (administrative counties). In keeping with the German administrative tradition, these units are hence the most important bodies entrusted with the performance of administrative functions. The structure and internal organization of local government units are the responsibility of the *Länder*, so that there are great differences from state to state. However, the matters to be dealt with at the local government level are essentially the same, since they are predominantly determined by Federal law. Important local functions are the provision of the technical infrastructure, the creation and maintenance of social infrastructural,

cultural and leisure facilities, as well as local economic development and environmental protection.

The organizational form laid down by Hesse local government law for the larger local authorities in Hesse, including Frankfurt, is the so-called *unechte Magistratsverfassung* or modified collegiate council constitution. The representative body for the community is 'an assembly of city representatives headed by a chairman elected from among the representatives, and which has the power of decision on all important matters'. (3) Day-to-day administration is entrusted to a collegiate executive, the *Gemeindevorstand*, referred to in urban communities as the *Magistrat*. This council is composed of a full-time chief executive official, the *Bürgermeister* and full-time salaried as well as honorary deputies (*Beigeordnete*; *Stadträte*).

2. Local Authority Finance

The financial system of the Federation and the *Länder* is organized as a compound or integrated system. The distribution of competence in respect of financial autonomy, legislative powers and tax revenues is laid down by articles 104 ff. of the Basic Law. The Basic Law distinguishes between taxes the revenue of which goes exclusively to either the Federation or the *Länder*, and so-called 'shared taxes' apportioned between the Federation and the *Länder*: income tax, corporation income tax, and turnover tax. These taxes provide the greatest part of the tax revenue accruing to the *Länder*.

The tax pool formed by the Federation and the *Länder* and the related sharing out of revenues from taxes and other charges is referred to as 'vertical financial equalization'. The Basic Law also provides for horizontal financial equalization among *Länder* of the Federation that differ in financial strength.

Local authority finances are integrated in the financial system of the Federation and the *Länder*, and are a complex conglomerate of taxes, levies, grants, and charges. The most important taxes for the *Gemeinden* are the impersonal taxes (real property and business taxes), firstly because of the volume involved and secondly 'because the local authorities can determine the level of these taxes autonomously by means of so-called *Hebesätze* [municipal percentages of the basic rate]' (4). In addition, they receive the revenue from local 'nuisance' taxes, namely excise and expenditure tax, the levying of which is, however at the discretion of the local authorities concerned.

Since 1969 the *Gemeinden* have also been receiving a portion (at present 15 per cent) of the revenue from the wages and income tax. These funds are distributed to local authorities on a fixed allocation base in terms of the respective income tax proceeds. To compensate this income tax allocation, local authorities have to pay a proportion of their business tax revenues - also calculated to a fixed formula - to the

Federation and the *Länder*.

Government allocations can be categorized as either general or specific:

General allocations are financial equalization payments within the system of revenue sharing among Federation, *Länder*, and local authorities, coming in the first place from the Land share in total proceeds from shared taxes (obligatory, since laid down by the Basic Law) and second from Land tax revenues (facultative, since at the discretion of the *Länder*). These allocations, calculated in accordance with a complicated apportionment formula that varies from state to state, are intended to equalize local authority finances on a Land-wide basis to the benefit of financially weak local authorities.

Specific grants are made to local authorities by *Land* governments mainly for the purpose of financing particular projects - mostly in the social and technical infrastructure fields.

Charges are a further source of local authority income (in 1988 more the 20 per cent). (5) They are taken in payment for the use of public facilities (user charges) or of administrative services (administrative fees).

3. Regional Planning in the National Planning System

The spatial planning system in the Federal Republic of Germany reflects the federal constitutional structure, with planning taking place at four levels: the Federal level (national interregional programme, regional policy guidelines); the *Land* level (state regional policy programmes, state development plans); regional planning (regional policy plans); and local planning (town and country planning; outline and detailed development plans).

(Sub)regional planning in this system is a function of Land planning, and responsible for 'comprehensive, supralocal, and suprasectoral territorial planning'. (6) From the legal point of view, it is to be considered a governmental function. The general legal basis is provided by the Federal Regional Planning Act (*Bundesraumordnungsgesetz*). It is given concrete form by Land planning acts and the pertinent implementing regulations. In all *Länder*, however, the local authorities have a privileged right to participate.

As the link between *Land* planning and local authority town and country planning, regional and regional planning is under pressure from a variety of demands and interests. Which of these interests prevails in practice, and whether planning comes to be regarded more strongly as (governmental) regulative planning or as (territorial) development planning depends very much on its institutional entrenchment.

According to the Hesse State Planning Act as amended to 15th

October 1980, Regional planning in Hesse forms part of an integrated, multiphase Land planning system. The most global component is the State Regional Policy Programme (*Landesraumordnungsprogramm [LROP]*), which sets the general objectives and defines the regional policy principles for the *Land*. (7)

The State Development Plan (*Landesentwicklungsplan [LEP]*), which is adopted by the Land government, is a sort of 'basic plan' for coordinating state sectoral and investment planning with regional plans. The Regional Policy Plans (*Regionale Raumordnungspläne [RROP]*) are the most concrete phase in the Hesse planning system, updated every five to seven years for the individual planning regions, and lay down guidelines for local authority land-use plans. Since the amendment of the Hesse State Planning Act, Hesse has been subdivided into three planning regions coinciding with the catchment area units (*Regierungsbezirke* (8)) of the regional administrative authorities (*Regierungspräsidenten*): Darmstadt, Gießen, and Kassel. The preparation and updating of the *RROP* is the responsibility of these second-tier *Land* authorities (in their capacity as supreme Land planning authorities) and of the standing regional planning conferences set up by the authorities, which bring together delegates from the representative assemblies of non-county *Gemeinden* with a population of 50,000 or more, from the *Landkreise*, (9) and from the county boroughs (*kreisfreie Städte*) in the individual planning regions - and in South Hesse also from the Frankfurt Regional Administrative Union (*Umlandverband Frankfurt [UVF]*). (10)

4. Regional Cooperation in Agglomerations

In some agglomerations in the Federal Republic of Germany, specific forms of inter-local organization and cooperation have developed, which do not seek to supersede the common administrative structures and planning system but to complement them. Existing jurisdictional boundaries have not been adjusted, nor administrative territories enlarged. 'Intercommunal cooperation seeks appropriate modes of problem-solving in conformity with the principle of local authority autonomy.' (11)

The main reasons for these approaches to cooperation have been,

the ever-widening gap between the real areas of interlinkage in local functions and problem areas (12) on the one hand, and existing local authority boundaries on the other;

and the resulting increased need for coordination and cooperation between local authorities.

In local authority practice, several modes of cooperation can be distinguished that are rather difficult to assemble into a typology, and which tend to vary depending on the *Land* concerned: (13)

Nachbarschaftsverbände, 'neighbourhood associations' joining six larger cities and their respective spheres of influence in Baden-Württemberg. Their main function is the preparation of joint land-use plans and landscape plans.

The Stuttgart Regional Union (*Regionalverband Stuttgart*) set up in 1994 represents a more advanced development in keeping with current needs. Replacing the *Nachbarschaftsverband Stuttgart*, it has taken over the mandatory functions of settlement development, regional transportation, waste disposal (certain sectors), economic development, and tourism marketing. ([14](#))

Statutory special-purpose joint authorities for Greater Hanover and Brunswick (Lower Saxony); these bodies are responsible for public transportation planning and regional planning within the authority territory. Both bodies are successor organizations to more comprehensive multi-purpose associations that had already been abolished by legislative act in 1980, the Greater Hanover and Greater Brunswick Local Authority Unions (*Kommunalverband Großraum Hannover / Braunschweig*).

The Saarbrücken Municipal Union (*Stadtverband Saarbrücken*) as legal successor to the Saarbrücken *Landkreis*. This authority, institutionalized in 1974, exercises all the functions of a Saarland *Landkreis*. It is also responsible for preparing the land-use plan for its territory and for development planning over a wide area.

Central place-umland arrangements in Hesse. Included here are the Kassel Regional Special-Purpose Association (*Zweckverband Raum Kassel*) and the Frankfurt Regional Union (*Umlandverband Frankfurt*) established in 1974 for the Frankfurt region, which is regarded as 'probably the most advanced arrangement between a central city and its sphere of influence in the Federal Republic' ([15](#)) (see section III).

The Ruhr District Local Authority Union (*Kommunalverband Ruhrgebiet* [KVR]) in North Rhine-Westphalia. This is, however, not a link between a central city and its tributary region in the narrower sense, but 'an exceptional special-purpose authority for a polycentric agglomeration'. ([16](#)) This joint authority, with prime functions in environmental protection and landscape conservation, is the successor to the Ruhr Regional Planning Authority (*Siedlungsverband Ruhrkohlenbezirk* [SVR]), abolished in 1979, which had far a broader jurisdiction.

- 1 See Hinrich Lehmann-Grube, Die Verwaltung der Verdichtungsräume, Baden-Baden 1983, 15.
- 2 The basic unit of local government in Germany, referring to both rural and urban authorities.
- 3 Model/Creifelds, Staatsbürgertaschenbuch, Munich 1977, 175 f.
- 4 Henrik Uterwedde, Kommunen in Frankreich und Deutschland, Bonn 1991, 94.
- 5 Deutsche Bundesbank, Monatsberichte, November 1989.
- 6 See for details: Akademie für Raumforschung und Landesplanung (eds.), Zukunftsaufgabe Regionalplanung: Anforderungen - Analysen - Empfehlungen, Hannover 1995, 1 ff.
- 7 See Das Hessische Planungssystem, unpublished manuscript, Wiesbaden 1976, 2 ff.
- 8 Administrative units within a Land acting as lower supervisory authorities and covering a number of counties (*Kreise*) and county boroughs (*kreisfreie Städte*).
- 9 *Landkreise* are administrative county type authorities, grouping together a number of *Gemeinden* and possessing the right of self-government.
- 10 [See section III.](#)
- 11 Roland Rapior, Interkommunale Zusammenarbeit, Beiträge zur Kommunalwissenschaft 15/Munich 1984, 18.
- 12 The main areas concerned are public transport, water and waste management, economic development, land reserves, and land-use planning.
- 13 Frido Wagener, Stadt-Umland-Verbände, in: Günter Püttner (eds.), Handbuch der kommunalen Wissenschaft und Praxis, vol.2, Berlin 1982, 422 ff.
- 14 Heinz Münzenrieder, Stadt-Umland-Verbände als kommunale Regelinstitutionen, in: BayVBl. 1995, No. 2, 44.
- 15 Ibid., 43.
- 16 Frido Wagener, l.c.

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II. The Rhine-Main Region

1. Multicentre Agglomerations / City Regions with Heavy Burdens

According to the Federal Government Regional Planning Guidelines, the larger German city regions/agglomerations are 'regional motors for growth for the regional development of the Federal Republic as a whole. However, their efficaciousness is increasingly hampered by the heavy burdens they have to bear'. ([17](#)) The main problems are the constant growth in private transport, harmful environmental impacts, difficulties with public utility services, 'pronounced housing shortages, scarce building land, and generally rising prices'. ([18](#))

Among the most badly affected agglomerations are Berlin, Hamburg, the Ruhr District, the Cologne/Düsseldorf region, and Greater Munich, Greater Stuttgart, and Greater Frankfurt.

A package of measures has been proposed to alleviate these burdens and to ensure the continued feasibility of these regions. If such measures are to be successful, however, two essential conditions must be met: first there must be an amelioration in regional coordination and cooperation, and second existing local authority financial equalization systems that are necessary must be further developed in accordance with this purpose.

2. Definitory Difficulties in Delimiting the Rhine-Main Area

The Rhine-Main Basin situated at the centre of the Federal Republic of Germany is the third largest German agglomeration after the Rhine-Ruhr district and Berlin, and is regarded by many as the economic heart of the Federal Republic. In 1992 an EC study ranked it first in Europe in respect of economic power. ([19](#))

'From the functional space point of view, [the Rhine-Main area] is a unit, but administratively it is distributed over a number of jurisdictions,

namely three *Länder* (Rhineland-Palatinate, Hesse, and Bavaria), thus falling under three regional policy regimes,' (20) although the greater part of the area lies within the South Hesse planning region (see section 1.3). There is no common administrative organization for the area as a whole. Its spatial extension is not clearly defined.

'*Ballungsgebiet Rhein-Main*', '*Verdichtungsraum Rhein-Main*', '*Region Frankfurt*', '*Stadtregion Frankfurt-Offenbach*' or '*Aktionsraum Frankfurt*' (21): each of these terms refers to a differently defined territory with different dimensions, population figures etc.

More recent definitions describe the Rhine-Main area as a region with high functional interdependence located between the cities of Darmstadt (to the South), Friedberg (to the North), Aschaffenburg (to the East), and Mainz (to the West), with Frankfurt at the geographical centre.

It is more and more difficult to give a precise, objectively well-founded delimitation of the region, or of most other agglomerations for that matter. Every relevant functional area or sphere of responsibility, from the labour and housing markets, to cultural and leisure infrastructure, mass transit, and sewage and refuse disposal covers a different territory. And each of these territories is subject to relatively rapid change.

3. Structural characteristics and Development Trends

The Rhine-Main Basin is characterized by its geographically central position in transportation networks within the Federal Republic of Germany. It is the place where the supraregional axes of German and European rail and motorway networks cross, not to mention the Rhine and the Main waterways triangle. (22) The Rhine-Main Airport, situated to the Southwest of Frankfurt, links the region to all relevant international centres, being the second largest passenger airport in Europe after London Heathrow.

Unlike the monocentrically structured regions of Hamburg, Munich or Berlin, the Rhine-Main area, with its more than three million inhabitants and approximately 1.6 million persons in employment (23) exhibits a polycentric structure, in which, however, the city of Frankfurt is clearly predominant thanks to its outstanding economic clout as well as its size (pop. in mid-1994: 664,000).

Other higher order centres in the region are the two *Land* capitals of Mainz (pop. 184,000, Rhineland-Palatinate) and Wiesbaden (pop. 268,000, Hesse), as well as Darmstadt (pop. 140,000) and Offenbach (pop. 117,000). (24) Hanau and Rüsselsheim should also be mentioned, which, although not large cities, are nevertheless important regional employment centres.

According to the 1992 Regional Planning Report, (25) the population of the cities and *Gemeinden* in the region has, after a

period of decline, been increasing again since 1987 due to substantial in-migration. The number of people in employment has also been rising, especially in the services sector. This urbanization in the residential and employment fields is continuing. Communities close to and further away from central cities are becoming increasingly attractive as places to live. At the same time, there is a 'relocation of manufacturing jobs, but also of logistical, distribution, and administrative functions to *Gemeinden* outside the central cities, accompanied by rising concentration of 'high-quality' tertiary white-collar jobs in the higher order centres'. (26) The consequences of these developments are growing commuter flows, a continuous growth in road and traffic density, and a persisting demand for land for settlement purposes.

4. The Economic Metropolis Frankfurt

With somewhat more than 660,000 inhabitants and an area of 250 km², Frankfurt is a relatively small city by international standards. However, its economic clout, based on specific historical preconditions, on the consequences of World War II, on its central position, and on its excellent transport and communications infrastructure, has lent the city a position of importance transcending the boundaries of Germany and Europe.

Characteristic of Frankfurt's economy is 'its strong orientation on the world market, the high degree of international interlinkage ... , an increasing concentration of top decision-makers (head offices, umbrella organizations etc.), the high share (more than 70 per cent) of the service sector, and (in comparison to other cities) the impressive degree of economic diversification'. (27) According to the 1987 census (VZ 1987) more than 600,000 gainfully employed persons (in a population then of some 620,000) earned just under DM 50 billion, the highest GDP per capita of all Federal German cities.

The central economic factor in Frankfurt is the finance sector, which has decisively influenced the spatial structure and form of the city (high-rise development). More than 400 banks are represented in the city, of which over 60 per cent are foreign. The airport is considered to be almost as important, with more than 27 million passengers (1989) and 1.1 million tonnes of air freight turnover. Third in importance are the more than twenty trade fairs - for the most part international events - that are staged each year, and the more than 6,500 wholesale and retail firms established in the city, many of regional and supraregional importance.

From as early as the seventies, persisting economic growth, a clear preference on the part of the most productive and hence solvent uses for the central city with resulting rises in rents and real property prices were accompanied by profound functional segregation processes - and in view of the narrow city boundaries - by growing functional interlinkage of the city with surrounding *Gemeinden*. Observers

believe that Frankfurt is becoming more and more the centre of a 'regional city' absorbing all the communities in its sphere of influence, which, although it does not exist on the political and administrative books, is nevertheless a reality.

5. Frankfurt and its Sphere of Influence - Socio-Economic Development

Although Frankfurt is the central city of the Rhine-Main region, the entire area cannot be considered as belonging to the Frankfurt sphere of influence because of the many regional centres, each of which has its own catchment area. (28) Representatives of the Frankfurt Planning Office regard the six *Landkreise* contiguous to the city and the county borough of Offenbach as falling within the Frankfurt tributary region. Every fifth employee from these *Kreise* works in Frankfurt; 82 per cent of all Hesse commuters come from these immediate environs.

However, the relocation of businesses (out of the central city) and firm expansions as well as new establishments (under more favourable conditions as regards prices than in Frankfurt) have caused Frankfurt's share in the employment figures, increasing for the overall immediate region, to decline - from 67 per cent in 1960 to 61 per cent in 1987. 'While the central function of Frankfurt continues to grow ... an increasingly significant proportion of company business is being done at locations in the umland.' (29)

Whilst in the sixties and especially in the seventies the population of Frankfurt declined steadily (to far below 600,000), since the second half of the eighties it has been growing markedly as has also been the case in the surrounding communities. However, there are pronounced differences between population structures in the central city and its umland, with increasing indications of extensive social segregation:

- Every second household in Frankfurt is now a single-adult household; the average size of households in Frankfurt is 1.87; whilst the average size of households in the umland is 2.37. (30) Less than a quarter of all households contain three or more persons, whereas outside the city the figure is over 40 per cent.

- More than 20 per cent of all Frankfurt inhabitants are foreigners - with persisting rates of in-migration; in surrounding *Gemeinden* the figure is just under 10 per cent.

- The proportion of social welfare recipients is about twice as high in Frankfurt as in the umland - with the rate of increase also markedly higher in the central city.

6. Frankfurt and its Umland - Growing Financial Imbalance

Since the eighties, local government finances have developed in opposing directions in Frankfurt and the surrounding *Gemeinden*. Whilst in Frankfurt the gap between income and expenditure has widened continuously and local government indebtedness has risen drastically, the debt position of many authorities in the environs has improved or deteriorated only slightly.

The reasons given for the tight budgetary situation of the central city are, in addition to the Federal Government's policy of passing on expenditure, the recession, and the decline in revenues from business tax, as well as the costs of German unification, the functions and outlays that result from Frankfurt's special position as central city, and from which the entire tributary region benefits. These include:

- The construction, maintenance and management of numerous facilities in the cultural and leisure sectors, from opera and theatre to museums and libraries, the zoo and the Palm Garden. Although these facilities are used by the surrounding *Gemeinden* - every fourth visitor to a Frankfurt museum comes from the Rhine-Main area -, they are financed by the city alone. 'Every theatre ticket that an inhabitant of a neighbouring town bought during the 1986/87 season in the Frankfurt municipal theatres was subsidized by the City of Frankfurt to the tune of DM 208 in the form of an operating costs grant.' (31)

- Expansion of mass transit systems, especially tramways and the underground railway system.

- Construction of park and ride facilities in the umland.

- The development of social welfare housing in surrounding communities.

- And finally the constantly rising welfare costs - also due to the special attractiveness of the large city for social outcasts and marginalized groups.

The financial costs of Frankfurt's central-city function are at present borne alone by the city. At the same time, the distribution of tax revenues is shifting more and more from the central city to the umland. 'Frankfurt's net income from taxes rose by 52 per cent between 1979 and 1988, while that of surrounding *Kreise* grew by 68 per cent'. (32) This negative development in income can be attributed to two major factors:

Changes in social structures in the city and its umland, and the consequent differentials in revenues from population-related wages and income tax. Whilst the umland *Gemeinden* benefit from the in-migration of well-paid middle class residents (working in Frankfurt, living in the environs) the concentration of low-income strata in Frankfurt lies heavy on the central-city purse. Already by 1983, the average taxable income per taxpayer in Frankfurt had been overtaken by that in surrounding *Gemeinden*. The figure for Frankfurt was about DM 39,700, for the umland DM 41,000, and for the 'wealthy' Hochtaunus *Kreis* over DM 51,000. (33) In umland *Gemeinden* in 1987, 30 per cent of the administrative budget came from the local authority share of wages and income tax, whereas in Frankfurt the figure was slightly over 11 per cent.

Unfavourable developments in the city's principal source of income - employment-related business tax - consequent on the recession and economic structural change, and on business policy disadvantageous to the city and the city budget. This includes tax-reducing investment in East Germany and decisions to relocate business activities beyond the city limits. Such locational decisions in favour of umland *Gemeinden* benefit firms in several ways. The locational credit and image value of the big city are retained while the burden of rent and real property prices and business tax (owing to lower local tax rates) is reduced.

The local authority financial equalization arrangements of Hesse that disadvantage Frankfurt. In 1992 Frankfurt received DM 124 per inhabitant, whereas cities like Wiesbaden and Kassel reaped between three and a half and four and a half as much. Even the well-off Hochtaunus *Kreis* received twice as much.

'Whether, especially in the agglomerations, there are increasing disparities in local authority finance between the centres and their environs that are far from being compensated by local authority financial equalization payments' (34) is an issue that is continually tabled but has yet to find a satisfactory solution.

- 17 Raumordnungspolitischer Orientierungsrahmen. Leitbilder für die räumliche Entwicklung der Bundesrepublik Deutschland, Bundesministerium für Raumordnung, Bauwesen und Städtebau, Bonn 1993, 6.
- 18 Ibid.
- 19 See Jörg Jordan, Eine Region, die auf Platz 1 in Europa gesetzt wurde, in: Frankfurter Rundschau, 9 May 1992.
- 20 Albert Speer und Partner GmbH (eds.), Zielvorstellungen für die Gestaltung des engeren Verdichtungsraumes Rhein-Main bis zum Jahr 2000 und Handlungsstrategien zur Umsetzung, Frankfurt am Main 1990, Zusammenfassung, 1.
- 21 See Jochen Schulz zur Wiesch, Regionalplanung in Hessen, Stuttgart 1977, 76.
- 22 See Regierungspräsident Darmstadt (eds.), Raumordnungsbericht 1989, Teil II. Planungsregion Südhessen, Darmstadt 1989, 1.
- 23 See Bernd Hausmann, Frankfurt am Main und sein Umland, Strukturunterschiede der Region, manuscript, Frankfurt 1980, 1. The figures given by Hausmann are not taken by other authors because of other territorial definitions. Figures on population range from 2.5 million to 3.1 million, and on jobs from 1.2 to 1.6 million.
- 24 All figures from Statistisches Jahrbuch Deutscher Gemeinden, 82 (1995).
- 25 Regierungspräsidium Darmstadt (eds.), Raumordnungsgutachten, Planungsregion Südhessen, Darmstadt 1992, 4 f.
- 26 Ibid.
- 27 Werner Heinz, Stadtentwicklung und Strukturwandel, Stuttgart 1990, 123.
- 28 Bernd Hausmann, l.c., 1.
- 29 Lorenz Rautenstrauch, Perspektiven für die Verwaltungsorganisation im Stadt-Umlandbereich, Beispiel Rhein-Main, manuscript, Frankfurt 1990, 5.
- 30 All data from Bernd Hausmann, l.c. 2 ff.
- 31 Bernd Hausmann, Keine Stadt hat so viele Schulden wie Frankfurt, in: Frankfurter Rundschau, 12 June 1992.
- 32 Ibid.
- 33 Bernd Hausmann, Frankfurt am Main und sein Umland, l.c., 5.
- 34 Wendelin Gertz, Finanzkraft der hessischen Gemeinden 1988 bis 1992. Ein Beitrag zur Stadt-Umland-Diskussion, Wiesbaden 1993, 19.

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III. Approaches to Cooperation Between Frankfurt and its Umland

1. Regional planning - the *Umlandverband Frankfurt (UVF)* Frankfurt Regional Administrative Union

1.1 Background

From the early seventies, the strong interdependence between Frankfurt and its environs and the growing need for coordination, together with the local authority territorial reorganization envisaged for Hesse (*kommunale Gebietsreform*), induced individual local politicians and sections of the political parties to table a series of proposals on the administrative restructuring of the Frankfurt region. The debate focused on three approaches: ([35](#))

The *Regionalstadt* or 'regional city' model of the then *Oberbürgermeister* Möller, which envisaged abolishing the City of Frankfurt and forming a large-space municipality to include large sections of the umland, with a population of almost 1.4 million. Its political administrative structure should follow the models of Hamburg and Berlin: on the one hand central regional administration and parliament, and on the other decentralized district administrations and parliaments.

The *Stadtkreis* or 'county borough' model of the Christian Democratic Union (CDU). In analogy to *Landkreise*, Frankfurt and its sphere of influence was to be brought together in a large-space *Kreis* or county, comprising a total of 15 municipal units. Both levels were to be provided with their own political representative bodies and administrations (*Magistrat*).

The *Stadtverband* or 'municipal union' favoured by the *Landräte* (36) and the Hesse *Gemeindetag*, the Local Authorities Conference, which envisaged the voluntary union of cities and *Gemeinden* in the Frankfurt region, which should nevertheless retain their existing form.

The only possible compromise solution proved to be a local authority association on the model of the mandatory multi-purpose joint authority (*Mehrzweckpflichtverband*). (37) The key component of this compromise was the guarantee of local autonomy for cities, *Gemeinden*, and *Kreise* accompanied by the closest possible cooperation in problem-solving. However, the broad range of opinions and the differing interests of the actors concerned turned decision-making on this question into a protracted and controversial process, where the matters in dispute were primarily the functional structure of and electoral procedure in the new organizational unit.

Finally, the *Land* government and the Hesse state parliament opted for a mandatory multi-purpose joint authority, which was called into being at the beginning of 1975 by the 'Act on the Frankfurt Regional Union' (38) adopted on 11 September 1974.

1.2 Functions and Organization of the *Umlandverband Frankfurt*.

The Frankfurt Regional Union covers an area of approximately 1400 km², 7 per cent of the territory of Hesse or one quarter of the Rhine-Main area, and with 1.5 million inhabitants, which is 25 per cent of the Hesse population or just under half that of the Rhine-Main area.

The members of the Union are the county boroughs (*kreisfreie Städte*) of Frankfurt and Offenbach and 41 non-county municipalities and *Gemeinden* plus '6 *Landkreise*, of which three belong fully to the Union, while only parts of the others do so'. (39)

The decisive reasons for this territorial extent, which also deviates markedly from the boundaries of the Frankfurt region, excluding important north-eastern sections, were 'questions of political expediency rather than regional and *Land* planning criteria'. (40)

The constitution of the Union is based on the modified *Magistrat* constitution (*unechte Magistratsverfassung*) (providing for a collegiate executive) under the Hesse local government ([see section I.1](#)) and *Landkreis* statutes. The institutions provided and the names given them clearly indicate that the legislator had no intention of setting up a traditional joint authority (*Zweckverband*), but took as a model the organization of local authorities as bodies corporate. Since 1977, the directly elected representative body is the *Verbandstag* or Union Assembly. It is composed of 105 deputies elected for four years. The number of deputies is proportionate to the distribution of population in the five constituencies. Almost half the deputies accordingly come from Frankfurt and Offenbach.

The administrative authority of the *Verband*, equivalent to the *Magistrat* in larger Hesse cities is the *Verbandsausschuß* or Union Committee. It is elected by the *Verbandstag* and deals with day-to-day administrative business in conformity with the decisions of the *Verbandstag* and the *Gemeindekammer* (Chamber of Local Authorities). The setting up of the third institution, the *Gemeindekammer*, was necessary for constitutional reasons. Since the *Umlandverband* is responsible for land-use planning, a function guaranteed to local self-government by the Basic Law, and the *Gemeinden* were not represented as institutions in the *Verbandstag*, a body was created in which the municipalities and *Gemeinden* belonging to the *Verband* are directly represented - regardless of size - by one representative and one vote each. (41)

According to section 1 of the 'Act on the Frankfurt Regional Union', the primary purpose of the *UVF* is to 'promote and secure the orderly development of the Union territory'. A number of functions have been transferred to the Union to achieve this purpose. Primary among these - in keeping with the reasons for setting up the Union - are supralocal planning functions such as establishing land-use plans, general transportation plans, and landscape plans. These so-called 'substantial' powers also concern land reserves, water supplies, supralocal water disposal and the operation of waste disposal facilities, abattoirs, and leisure and recreation centres. Besides these substantial powers, the Union has also been assigned a series of cooperative, coordinative, and consultative functions: cooperation in mass transit planning, coordinating energy supply interests, and supralocal functions in environmental protection, locational consulting and publicity in the field of business promotion, and coordinating the interests of communal hospital authorities. (42)

The *UVF* has no competence in the fields of urban/local development planning and regional planning. Regional planning was

initially left in the hands of the Lower Main Standing Conference of Local Planning Authorities (*Regionale Planungsgemeinschaft Untermain [RPU]*), established for this purpose by the Hesse state government with responsibility for approximately the same area, one of six such bodies in Hesse. With the amendment of the Hesse State Planning Act in 1980, the pertinent powers were transferred to the second tier authority *Regierungspräsident* ([see section I.3](#)). Regardless of this transfer of competence, the regional planning goals relevant for the Frankfurt area have been strongly influenced by the *UVF*.

The *UVF* is financed not only by charges (from 1990) and contributions but especially by means of the Union levy (*Verbandsumlage*) raised from municipalities and *Gemeinden* belonging to the Union - but not from *Kreise*. It is set in proportion to both the population and the economic strength of the given *Gemeinde*. The City of Frankfurt must accordingly contribute almost half of the Union budget - although this does not correspond to its population. ([43](#))

Since the establishment of the Union in 1975, the Union levy has grown steadily. It was initially DM 0.50 per inhabitant, but by 1988 it had already risen to DM 13.85.

2 Mass Transit - the *Rhein-Main-Verkehrsverbund (RMV)* Rhine-Main Integrated Transport System

2.1 Background

2.1.1 The predecessor *FVV (Frankfurter Verkehrs- und Tarifverbund)* Frankfurt Transport and Tariff Association

Already from the fifties, the dynamic economic development and growing functional interdependence between Frankfurt and its region led to - still persisting- growth in intraregional transport (between 1960 and 1993 by more than 100 per cent). In order to handle this traffic, road construction was initially given 'clear priority'; ([44](#)) however, in the course of the sixties it became increasingly evident that if the viability and efficiency of the central place and the region were to be ensured, it was necessary both markedly to improve public transport facilities and to coordinate and harmonize the various modes of transport and their administration at the regional level.

In mid-1973, after comprehensive preparations and on the basis of a contract under public-law concluded between the Federal Republic of Germany, the State of Hesse and the City of Frankfurt, the City of Frankfurt am Main - Municipal Utilities - and German Rail founded the Frankfurt Transport and Tariff Association (*FVV*) as a limited

liability company. In May 1987, the *Frankfurter-Königssteiner Eisenbahn AG* became third shareholder in the company. The decision-making bodies of the *FVV* were the Council (with the City of Frankfurt, the State of Hesse, and the Federation as representatives), the general shareholders' meeting, standing committee, and a board of management, as well as an advisory board composed of leading public figures. (45)

The *FVV* started operations in May 1974, over a territory of 2200 km². coinciding more or less with the so-called Rhine-Main area (see section II.2). The system's transport network had developed in the course of history. In the following years it was therefore necessary to take comprehensive expansion and complementation measures to meet demand and operational requirements, especially in the underground and suburban railway systems (*U-Bahn*, *S-Bahn*), with the aim of establishing an integrated rapid transit system. In a 1992 study of the choice of modes of transport in the *FVV* area, a clear gap became evident: *FVV* services were used most often within the central city (public transport [more than 40 per cent] and passenger cars [50 per cent] were almost on a level), but were the least used mode of transport for journeys within the region (just under 12 per cent).

2.1.2 The Regionalization of Public Transport

With the aim of improving and optimizing German state railway services, and against the background of pertinent EC Commission requirements (especially the EC Regulation 1893/91), the German *Bundestag* adopted 'a fundamental railway structural reform consisting of a package of new statutes and amendments'. (46) An essential part of this reform is the regionalization of the public transport system. 'The Federation as proprietor of state railways' relinquishes 'responsibility for the public transport services offered by the *Deutsche Bahn AG*' (47), transferring these to the *Länder* under the 'Regionalization Act'. The *Länder* were required to make the necessary detailed arrangements by the beginning of 1996.

In Hesse this had already been done by the end of 1993 with the adoption of the Act on the Further Development of Public Transport in Hesse. (48) The authorities given responsibility for the planning, organization, and implementation of mass transit are 'the *Landkreise*, the county boroughs, and the *Gemeinden* with a population of 50,000 or more'. (49) For the purpose of performing the above-mentioned functions, these local authorities may set up integrated transport systems covering certain regions within Hesse. One such region is the Rhine-Main area.

In mid-1994, following comprehensive preparations and a differentiated feasibility study, the Rhine-Main Transport Association (*Rhein-Main-Verkehrsverbund [RMV]*) was founded, based largely on a concept of the *UVF*. In late May 1995 the *RMV* started operations -

so to speak as a 'large-scale experiment in railway transport regionalization', (50) thus taking up the succession to the 20-year-old FVV.

2.2 The Functions and Organization of the RMV

Covering an area of 14,000 km² with a population of over 4 million, the RMV is the largest integrated transport system in Europe. It extends far beyond the limits of the Frankfurt Regional Union (UVF) and the FVV, including not only the Rhine-Main area but also large parts of central Hesse. The boundaries of the RMV were determined by, among other things, the terminal points of existing railway or bus routes.

Like the FVV, the RMV was given the legal status of a limited liability company (*Gesellschaft mit beschränkter Haftung -GmbH*). But in contrast to the FVV, the RMV is an association of local authorities. The shareholders are not only the State of Hesse and the City of Frankfurt but also 10 county boroughs and 15 *Landkreise*. Because EC law requires the strict separation of 'clients' (local authorities) and service providers (local transport undertakings), the latter are precluded from membership in the RMV.

The supreme decision-making body in the RMV is the shareholders' meeting; day-to-day business is entrusted to the management. A supervisory board has been established to make necessary short-term decisions and to ensure regular monitoring of management activities. Moreover, the creation of advisory boards is provided for 'in the interests of the greatest possible cooperation with transportation experts, socially relevant groups, customers, and transport undertakings,' (51) and to advise the supervisory board and management.

Unlike the FVV, the RMV has a decentralized structure. Regionally important functions are at the management/administration level; the shareholders 'continue to be responsible' 'for their local services'. (52) A further structural principle is the separation of policy, management, and operations. Fundamental decisions are to be made and policy parameters set at the political level (*Land* and local authorities). The RMV, as the management level, is responsible for network and service planning, marketing and public relations, procurement of transport services, supervision of performance, as well as accounting and financing. The provision of local public transport services are the responsibility of (communal) transport undertakings (at present 115) on the basis of contracts with the RMV.

The principal objective of the RMV is the 'intensified development of mass transit in the agglomerations and the region in order to provide the people living there with qualitatively and quantitatively adequate transportation services'. (53) The target is to raise the share of bus and rail services in total transportation in the system

area from the present 16 per cent to 25 per cent. It is hoped to recoup at least 50 per cent of costs from income.

Whereas the fare system of the *FVV* was monocentrically oriented on the City of Frankfurt, the *RMV* with its different and greater territory operates with an area tariff system. The *RMV* motto is 'One Timetable, One Tariff One Ticket'.

The planned range of services are to be financed by 'fare and compensation revenue, transfer payments from the Federation and grants from the *Länder* and from local authorities'. () The Federal government continues to furnish the basic funding and facilities hitherto provided by German Rail; improvements in services with regard to transportation modes and traffic routes, on the other hand, have to be paid for proportionately by the local authorities and *Kreise* concerned. As an incentive for local 'clients' to improve their mass transit services, the State of Hesse subsidizes *Gemeinde* and *Kreis* outlays in this field to the amount of 45 per cent.

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- 35 On these approaches see, *int. al.* Michael Borchmann, Der Umlandverband Frankfurt, in: Archiv für Kommunalwissenschaften I/1977, 24 ff.
- 36 The *Landrat* in Hesse is the full-time salaried chief executive officer of a *Landkreis*.
- 37 Dietrich Fürst et al., Regionalverbände im Vergleich. Entwicklungssteuerung in Verdichtungsräumen, Baden-Baden 1990, 37.
- 38 Gesetz über den Umlandverband Frankfurt.
- 39 Günter Seele, Verwaltungsorganisation in Großstadregionen, in: Hinrich Lehmann-Grube, Günter Seele, Die Verwaltung der Verdichtungsräume, Baden-Baden 1983, 100.
- 40 Ibid.
- 41 Dietrich Fürst et al., l.c., 35.
- 42 Ibid., and Gesetz über den Umlandverband Frankfurt of 11 September 1974, subsection 3(1).
- 43 Dietrich Fürst et al., 39
- 44 Frankfurter Verkehrs- und Tarifverbund GmbH (eds.), FVV - Die ersten Schritte auf einem weiten Weg, Frankfurt&bsp;s.a., 4.
- 45 Ibid., 4 f.
- 46 Rhein-Main-Verkehrsverbund GmbH (eds.), Regionalisierung des Nahverkehrs, Modellprojekt Rhein-Main-Verkehrsverbund, RMV No. 3, Hofheim 1994, 5.
- 47 Ibid., 11.
- 48 Gesetz zur Weiterentwicklung des Öffentlichen Personennahverkehrs in Hessen (ÖPNV-Gesetz) vom 21. Dezember 1993.
- 49 ÖPNV-Gesetz, subsection 3(1).
- 50 Jochen Paulus, Netz kontra Auto, in: Die Zeit 23/1995, 27.
- 51 Rhein-Main-Verkehrsverbund GmbH (eds.), l.c., 20.
- 52 Volker Sparmann, Organisatorische und planerische Fragen der Umsetzung der Regionalisierung, manuscript, Hofheim 1993, 11.
- 53 Rhein-Main-Verkehrsverbund (eds.), l.c. 15.
- 54 Volker Sparmann, l.c., 18.
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Major Cities and their Peripheries: Frankfurt and the Frankfurt Region

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IV. Approaches to Cooperation - Results and Changes in the General Setting

1. Spatial Planning

1.1 Limited Possibilities for the UVF

The Frankfurt Regional Union, which - according to a leading member of staff - is a compromise solution with certain inadequacies, has now been in existence for more than twenty years. Numerous reports are available on the work and achievements of this authority set up under the specific economic, social, and political conditions prevailing in the seventies to 'promote and secure the orderly development of the Union territory'. Most of these studies ([55](#)) agree on a number of points:

The focus of *UVF* activities is on the planning functions assigned to it (establishment of the land-use plan, landscape plan, general transport plan). It has become a recognized authority in planning matters. 'As far as planning methods are concerned, the *UVF* is the most highly developed planning association.' (56)

The Union has also acquired powers in the environmental sector. However, here the focus is also on investigation and research.

The consultancy and mediation functions of the *UVF* are also considered successful. 'The Union (hence sees itself increasingly) as a consultancy institute.' (57)

Unlike in planning and investigative matters, the *UVF* has little potential for implementation or enforcement, since narrow limits are set by established local interests. This is particularly evident in relation to the provision of public services (supralocal water supplies, sewage disposal). Despite its statutory mandate, the Union is unable to act, because the *Gemeinden* refuse to transfer these duties to it and it has no means of penalizing this behaviour.

The *UFV* has little clout because it has no resources and hence no bargaining counters (such as finance, land, and licensing rights) at its disposition.

The Union can engage in no active spatial development policy; in this field, too, it lacks the necessary (control) powers and means.

For a long time the *UVF* was also unable to undertake effective regional economic development due to lack of support from the large cities.

Finally, the spatial extent of the Union territory has been a frequently criticized issue. Determined by the particular conditions prevailing at the period when the *UVF* was founded, it takes increasingly less account of current intra-regional relations and interlinkage.

In the planning field - the special purpose association aspect of the Union - observers conclude that the *UVF* has acquired considerable competence and authority. In almost all other areas - where the Union operates as a territorial authority (*Gebietskörperschaft*) - it has remained a 'toothless tiger'. 'Its activities are (always) looked on suspiciously from the perspective of a zero-sum game: what the Union gains in scope for action is lost by the *Gemeinden* and *Kreise*.' (58)

1.2. Changed Conditions in City-Umland Relations

From the second half of the seventies, and thus more or less since the founding of the *UVF*, new trends have become apparent in the

relationship between the central city and its umland, involving a gradual shift in weight in favour of the umland ([59](#)). The one-sided functionalization of the surrounding communities as residential suburbs of the central city (suburbanization) is being superseded by successive urbanization in the course of which the umland *Gemeinden* gain in centrality. Small and larger towns are developing with a wide range of functions: upmarket shopping, higher education, leisure and cultural services etc.

In employment, too, the umland is experiencing a positive development. Its share in regional employment is growing continuously, accompanied by improved job quality. Jobs in this area are considered to be of higher quality and more secure, and are increasingly white-collar rather than blue-collar. High local business tax rates (550 points in Frankfurt in comparison to an average 330 in the environs - [see section I.2](#)) and high rents and real property prices in Frankfurt are inducing a growing number of firms that do not absolutely have to have an address in the central city to locate beyond the city limits. Downtown Frankfurt is still close by and the transportation advantages of the location are also retained. The type of businesses concerned are primarily data processing firms, insurance companies, branch establishments of foreign consumer goods producers, and administrative headquarters.

Until 1987, demographic developments also favoured the umland; the umland population grew, while in Frankfurt it declined. Since then, however, Frankfurt and other centres in the region have been registering a renewed rise in population figures. Developments nevertheless continue to favour the surrounding *Gemeinden* - namely with respect to the composition of the population. The share of higher income earners and larger households with children is rising there, whereas in Frankfurt the trend is in the opposite direction ([see also section II.5](#)).

As a consequence of all these developments, many umland *Gemeinden* receive higher proceeds from income and business taxes, thus markedly improving their financial position. Whilst 'per capita indebtedness in Frankfurt grew by 275 per cent between 1981 and 1993, it has dropped by 4 per cent in the umland'. ([60](#))

Growth in economic and fiscal strength is attended by greater self-confidence and political clout in surrounding *Gemeinden* and among local politicians. But this is not accompanied by an increasing proclivity for cooperation across municipal boundaries - in the direction of safeguarding regional attractiveness and strength; especially not since the bigger cities in the region, including Frankfurt since 1993, have found themselves in increasing financial difficulties due to the recession, the costs of unification, economic structural change, and last but not least to their own spending decisions. Now 'a withdrawal to within one's own administrative boundaries and purview is becoming apparent.' ([61](#)) The reasons given by the mayor of a small, wealthy *Gemeinde* to the north of Frankfurt for his lack of interest in *UVF* membership seem symptomatic: 'We're proud of our

autonomy. It's the precondition for people identifying with our town.' (62)

1.3. Changes in External Challenges

Since the founding of the *UVF* in 1975, the external challenges for Frankfurt and its region have changed substantially. Technological innovations, structural change, the formation of large economic actors operating on a transnational basis as well as progressive Europeanization in the wake of EC policy and the liberalized common market have internationalized markets and consequently intensified crossborder competition not only among cities but also among regions. The regional level gains additional salience from the corresponding public development policies of the EU (in the context of the structural funds for the regions) or of individual *Länder*.

Frankfurt and its region play an important role in this competition. A highly developed regional economic structure with a high proportion of forward-looking industries, services, an infrastructure favourable to industry, and the 'centrality leap (by Frankfurt) to metropolis status', (63) which has been brought about principally by the continuing concentration of global finance service providers and consultancy firms in the city, have meant that Frankfurt and the Frankfurt region are in competition not only with the agglomerations of Hamburg, Berlin, and Munich, but increasingly with the economically potent regions around London, Amsterdam, Paris, and Milan.

However, to ensure that the region remains competitive in the long term, but also that development is in the interest of efficiency and viability, the 'general ... parish pump politics' (64) should be abandoned and regional cooperation extended to policy areas that go far beyond the limits of present *UVF* responsibilities (waste management and regional spatial planning). Especially worth mentioning in this connection are regional economic development and supralocal infrastructural functions, as well as regional cultural and leisure policy.

2. Public Transport - First Experience with the *Rhein-Main-Verkehrsverbund (RMV)*

The *RMV*, set up in mid-1994 and operational since the end of May 1995, is the proof for many local actors that, regardless of all differences of opinion and problems, the cities and *Gemeinden* of the region are capable of solving problems together.

After only a brief period of operation, however, it appears that the 'highly divergent commitment hitherto shown by local authorities to public transport' (65) has hardly changed with advent of the *RMV*. Frankfurt and the municipalities of Offenbach, Hanau and

Rüsselsheim, as well as some *Landkreise* contiguous to Frankfurt have further improved already good services. Other member communities of the Union, many especially from central Hesse, have failed to expand their public transport services - pleading their tight financial situation - and have not called up the *Land* funds earmarked for this purpose. So far no cross-connections in transport lines have been made in the region. Like the *FVV*, the *RMV* - despite contrary objectives - is still largely monocentric in structure.

The refusal of many *RMV* shareholders to finance more than status-quo services has postponed realization of the goal 'to introduce a region-wide integral basic interval timetable' to an uncertain future date. Nor can the goal of a uniform fare be attained for the moment, due to divergent local conditions and interests and the fact that the local authorities can set fares independently for their own territory.

Notwithstanding these problems and the provisional shelving of plans, the organizational achievements of the *RMV* have earned widespread recognition.

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- 55 See in particular Rembert Behrendt, Erfahrungen mit der Organisationsstruktur von Zweck- und Umlandverbänden, in: das rathaus 9/1990, 462 ff.; Dietrich Fürst et al., Regionalverbände im Vergleich, I.c., 33 ff.; Leo van den Berg et al., Governing Metropolitan Regions ... , 41 ff.
 - 56 Dietrich Fürst et al., I.c., 75.
 - 57 Lorenz Rautenstrauch, Region Rhein-Main: Frankfurt und sein Umland, Planung, Politik, Perspektiven im Bereich des Umlandverbandes Frankfurt, Frankfurt 1988, 41.
 - 58 Dietrich Fürst et al., I.c., 71.
 - 59 The following observations are taken mainly from Lorenz Rautenstrauch, Funktionsverteilung zwischen Stadt und Umland - Planung der räumlichen Ordnung, in: das bauzentrum 3/1995, 15 ff.
 - 60 Ibid., 21.
 - 61 Rembert Behrendt, Zur aktuellen regionalpolitischen Diskussion in der Region Rhein-Main, I.c., 1.
 - 62 Peter Gwiasda, Manche Gemeinde will partout nicht dem UVF beitreten, in: Frankfurter Rundschau, 30 Jan. 1995.
 - 63 Lorenz Rautenstrauch, Funktionsverteilung ... , I.c., 21.
 - 64 Frank Niethammer, Das Rhein-Main-Gebiet braucht mehr Zusammenarbeit, in: Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung, 6 March 1995.
 - 65 Volker Sparmann, I.c., 11.
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V. Initiatives and Proposals for New Approaches to Regional Cooperation

Since the beginning of the nineties, progressive Europeanization and changing competitive conditions, growing problems for Frankfurt, the central city of the region, and the frequently criticized shortcomings of the *UVF* have provoked an ongoing discussion about possible reforms and solutions for regional cooperation. The initiators of this debate have been the regional chambers of industry and commerce, the *UVF*, and the *Oberbürgermeister* of the larger municipalities in the region, as well as the leading dailies *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* (FAZ) and the *Frankfurter Rundschau*.

The parting shot was given in mid-1991 by the chambers of industry and commerce of the Rhine-Main area with the staging of the so-called Rhine-Main Forums. The aim of these events was to permit an exchange of opinion among leading figures from industry, influential politicians, and the *UVF* on necessary joint measures and efforts (especially in the field of economic development) to safeguard and strengthen the position of the Rhine-Main area in the intensifying competition among regions.

A further initiative to improve regional cooperation was also launched in 1991 by the *Oberbürgermeister* of Frankfurt, Offenbach, Darmstadt, Mainz, and Wiesbaden and the *UVF*. With the adoption of the 'Rhine-Main Declaration', in which commitment was expressed to 'solidary collaboration among all local authorities' and - with the establishment of working groups - to relevant regional functional areas such as transport planning, economic development, and the provision of housing.

In mid-1994, after the financial problems confronting the City of Frankfurt had become increasingly evident and the search for solutions more and more urgent, a new round of events was initiated. A start was made with the Rhine-Main Conference called by the State of Hesse in collaboration with the *Länder* of Bavaria and Rhineland-Palatinate. Whilst the focus of this event was on large-space regional development issues, the subsequent initiatives

staged by the large daily newspapers (the FAZ 'Rhine-Main Economic Talks' in 1994; the Frankfurter Rundschau 'Umland Debate' in 1995) were primarily concerned with concrete intra-regional problems and how to solve them. Of the various proposals and demands put forward at these discussions, the following dominated the debate:

As a 'short-term' solution, the improvement of local authority financial equalization to favour the City of Frankfurt ([see section I.2](#)). Frankfurt addressed its demand to the government of Hesse, pointing to the high costs of the central-place facilities provided by the city. Leading Frankfurt actors were already considering entering a constitutional complaint.

A second demand also made by Frankfurt for regional financial equalization triggered a broad debate on the objective definition of 'central-place facilities' or 'joint functions', which in Frankfurt's opinion ought not to be financed by one city alone but by the regional community. However, representatives of the *umland Gemeinden* were united in their opinion that, if facilities were to be jointly financed, the parties involved should be entitled to a say in their conception.

A study is to be conducted by the *UVF* to find out whether and to what extent the imbalance often complained about in the distribution of burdens and benefits between Frankfurt and the surrounding *Gemeinden* really exists, and 'how finance really flows'.

A return of regional planning to the local level, demanded by leading local representatives of the Social Democrats and Christian Democrats. They proposed that responsibility for regional planning should be retransferred from the state level of the *Regierungspräsident* to the *Kreise* and *Gemeinden*, in whose responsibility it had normally been until 1980. It was suggested that the *Planungsgemeinschaften*, regional planning associations, which had been abolished in 1980, should be revived, but covering different territories and vested with different powers.

The introduction of a Rhine-Main *Kreis* suggested by a member of the Frankfurt City Planning Authority, ([66](#)) to comprise the present cities and *Landkreise* of the Rhine-Main area. This *Kreis* would fit into the existing administrative structures, and its institutions would be the same as those of the other *Kreise*. In addition to the 'classical functions' of a *Kreis*, the Rhine-Main *Kreis* would take over the task of land-use planning for its territory after abolition of the *UVF*.

The replacement of the *UVF* by a new regional union taking account of the actual interaction area of the region and provided with more comprehensive powers. This concept is favoured by many of the affected parties, including leading *UVF* representatives, but with differences of opinion on its concrete form. There is, however, general agreement that such an authority should be given regional planning powers for its territory. In the view of former *UVF* director

Behrendt, a regional local authority association should also have responsibility for waste management, sewage supervision, supralocal sporting and leisure facilities, and economic development, and should cover the entire economic region from Mainz to Aschaffenburg and from Friedberg to Darmstadt ([see section II.2](#)). Unlike the *UVF*, an authority with such dimensions should have the possibility of putting its planning ideas into practice, and - through local government financial equalization - should have its own financial resources. (67)

The most radical concept for this regional *Verband* model has been advanced by the present director of the *UVF*, Alfons Faust, who would like to see the setting up of regional unions accompanied by the abolition of existing *Landkreise* and *Regierungspräsidien*, with their functions being transferred to *Gemeinden*, the region, and the *Land*. This would once again provide 'a clear, three-tier governmental structure'. (68) This restructuring would also be the task of *Land* legislation.

The Land registers such comprehensive new approaches with scepticism. Like their predecessors in the early seventies ([see section III.1.1](#)), it is believed that these initiatives will 'get stranded in the crossfire of local political interests'. (69) 'Sectoral developments' and 'individual projects' are therefore preferred. There thus appears to be no immediate prospect for any organizational restructuring of the Rhine-Main area going beyond the stage of mental constructs.

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- 66 Bernd Hausmann, Szenarien zur Entwicklung Frankfurts: Eine Analyse und zwei unterschiedliche Wege aus der Frankfurter Finanzkrise, manuscript, Hofheim 1994, 9ff.; *idem*, Leere Kassen in Frankfurt - Speckgürtel in der Region, in: Frankfurter Rundschau, 21 July 1993.
 - 67 Regionalverband mit Rechten, in: FAZ, 12 Feb. 1994.
 - 68 Alfons Faust, 'Speckgürtel' als Unwort des Jahres, interview in: Frankfurter Rundschau, 28 Jan. 1995.
 - 69 Jörg Jordan, former Hesse state planning minister, quoted in the Frankfurter Rundschau, 18 Feb. 1995.
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Major Cities and their Peripheries: Frankfurt and the Frankfurt Region

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According to the forecasts of most studies and research, the Rhine-Main region will continue to experience growth and investment pressure. Existing locational advantages ([see section II.3](#)) `offer favourable conditions for staying up front even under the conditions of intensified locational competition in a "Europe of the Regions". □

However, the positive economic development forecast also presents a danger of existing problems and burdens intensified still further as long as this development is not under control. The future of the region thus also depends essentially on how regional actors and the *Land* (Hesse) deal with the predicted development pressure: both organizationally and by development strategy means.

It is still not clear which of the organizational forms now being discussed will win the day, what territory will be allocated, and what range of functions will be assigned to a future authority. An important role will also be played by the fact that every potential functional area claims a different territorial extent, so that it is hardly possible to find objective criteria for defining a common territory for a number of functional areas. It is also a moot question whether it is possible to push through an adequate new regional organizational form on a purely voluntary basis. Will the so often lauded `regional consciousness' and the resulting common action materialize, or will - as many suspect - the *Land* government have to impose a solution?

However, organizational issues are not the sole important factors in the further development of the Rhine-Main region. Development strategy considerations are also significant:

Should the goal of 'maintaining and strengthening the competitiveness of the region' be given priority, thus largely giving in to pressure for economic growth? The likely consequences would be the 'continued concentration of service industries and jobs in the favoured locations at the core of the agglomeration, further rises in property prices and rents, a persisting shift in the job-inhabitant ratio in favour of jobs; displacement of the residential function and lower-quality commercial uses; further selective relocation of settlement and population towards the rural parts of the region distant from the place of work ... , swelling commuters flows across regional boundaries due to inadequate housing supplies ... , an increase in the volume of motorized private passenger transport, ... and the burdens this brings ... etc.'□

Or should the goal of 'disburdening the agglomeration' be pursued, and an attempt be made to distribute part of the development pressure to neighbouring regions, such as central Hesse? Potential consequences in the agglomeration - such as a slow-down in growth processes, a reduction in commuting volumes, and an improvement in the ecological situation - would bring the overspill region of central Hesse corresponding economic enhancement, growing attractiveness for new business establishments, and a rising number of jobs.

However, any such strategy to counter further spatial polarization trends is beyond the ambit of regional planning. Active intervention at the *Land* and the Federal levels would be needed, using means to both limit and promote growth.

It remains to be seen which development strategy will be adopted - whether one of those mentioned or an intermediate variant.

70 Regierungspräsidium Darmstadt (eds.), Raumordnungsgutachten, I.c., 5

71 Ibid., 7.