

Spatial development in the Rheintal region: How to deal with land use conflicts and to collaborate

Alliance in the Alps Symposium, Koblach, 08.10.2025 |
Wolfgang Pfefferkorn

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Content overview

- (1) Getting to know the region
 - (2) Land use conflicts and how to deal with them
 - (3) Collaboration initiatives and instruments in the Rheintal region
 - (4) Learnings and Conclusions
 - (5) Thinking out of the Box
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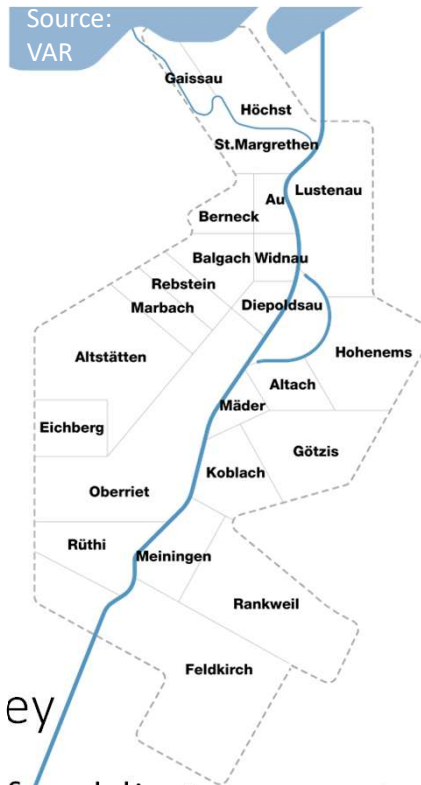
Source: Diercke Weltatlas



Source: VAR

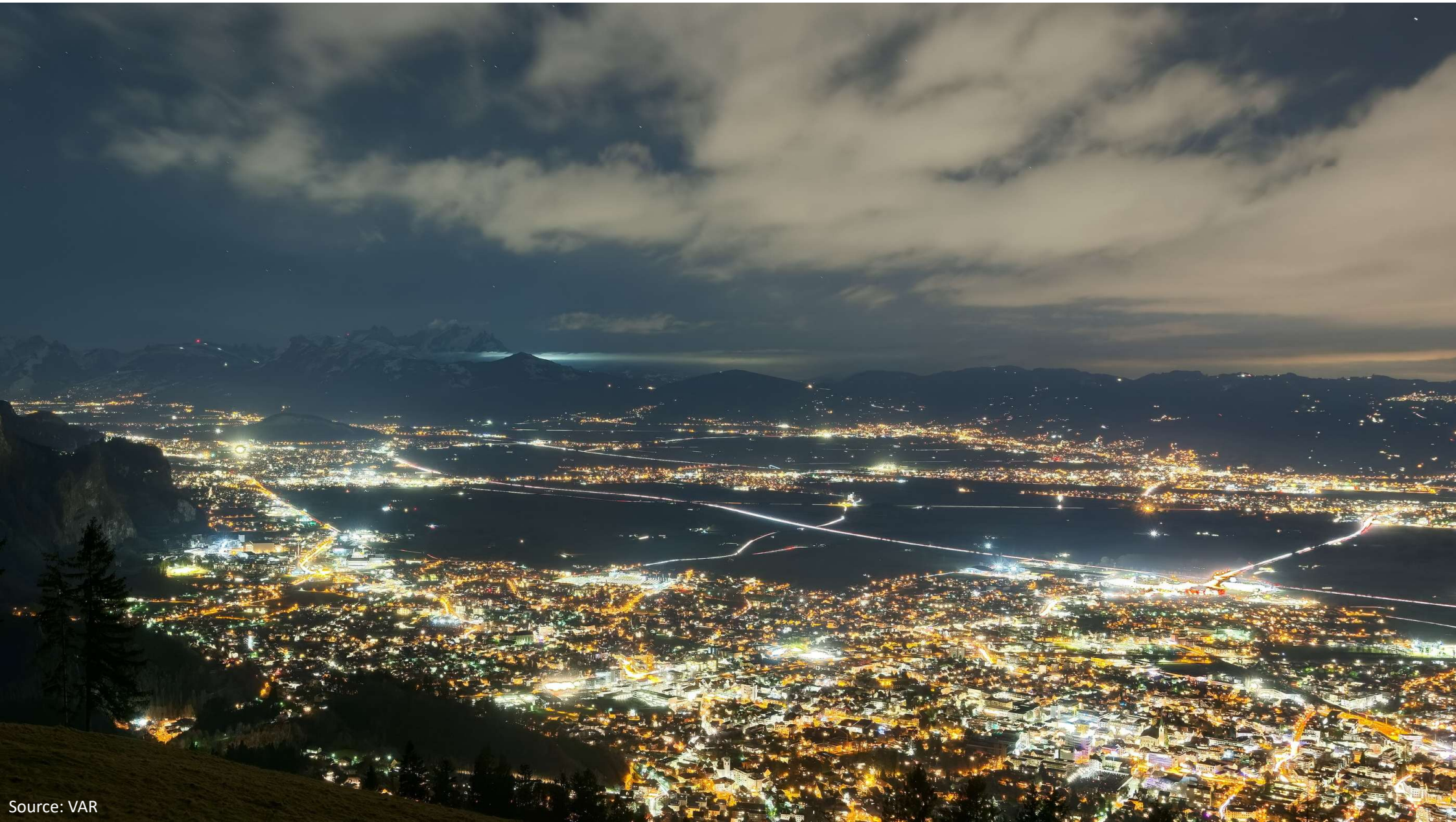
Getting to know the Rheintal region (VAR perimeter)

- Parts of Kanton St. Gallen (SG) and parts of Province of Vorarlberg (Vbg.) 340.000 inhabitants; Liechtenstein (FL): 40.000
- Working places: SG & Vbg. 150.000; FL: 46.000
- GDP/capita 2023 in €
 - Vbg: 54.600
 - SG: 88.000 (2022)
 - FL: 135.000
 - EU average: 38.000
- One of the most dynamic regions in Europe
- Rhine river, green center, majority of settlements at the edges of the valley
- Urban sprawl, commuter traffic, 2 parallel highways N-S, high standard of public transport



Getting to know the Rheintal region





Source: VAR

Raumbild Vorarlberg map to be added on this page

Spatial development challenges ...

Pictures to be added

- Urban sprawl, land take, loss of agricultural land
 - > Limitation of settlement areas (outer boundaries), densification, combination of housing projects with accessibility standards, Provincial Green Zone (Landesgrünzone)
- Lack of space for business areas, unsatisfactory use of existing business areas
 - > Stocktaking of business areas and their potentials, model projects (concepts)
- Biodiversity loss
 - > Landscape concepts, biodiversity measures at local and regional level
- Mobility
 - > Shift to sustainable transport: walking, cycling, public transport, intermodality

... and how to deal with them

Pictures to be added

- Legal instruments
 - > spatial planning law, legally binding development concepts and zoning plans (REP) at local level, Landesgrünzone,
- Non binding strategies, concepts, plans, studies
 - > Regional development concepts (regREK), Landscape concepts (LEK), mobility concepts, blue zone (provincial plan on risk management)
- Implementation projects in all sectors
- Stakeholder involvement and citizen's participation at all levels
- Mediation and conflict management for specific cases



The Swiss Agglomeration Programme

- Federal instrument for sustainable spatial and transportation development
- Supports regions in coordinating settlement, transport and landscape development to achieve harmonized and efficient (sub)-urban environments; integrated approach
- Regions submit **4-years development plans** outlining their **strategies** and proposed **projects**
- Federal government **reviews** for funding eligibility: amount depending on quality of plan
- Focus on **inward densification**, promoting **public transport, walking and cycling**, prevention against excessive new traffic, sustainable **landscape** development
- **Work across administrative boundaries**, even national borders
- Actually: 5. Generation

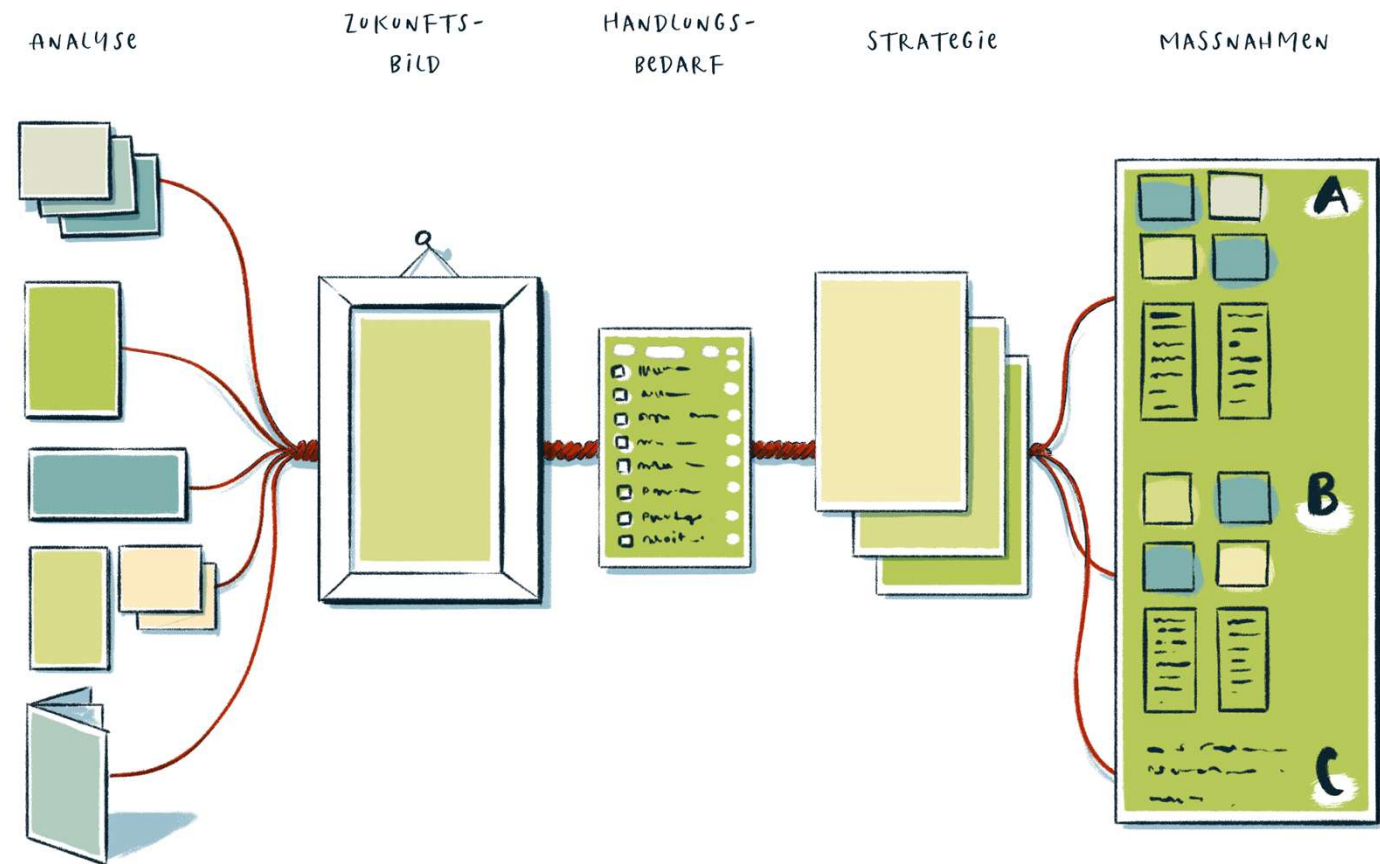
Rheintal Agglomeration Programme, Organisational Structure

- Main assembly: 23 municipalities -> final decisions
- Executive committee: 2+2 municipalities, 1+1 provincial governments -> strategic level
- Programme office (4) -> operational level, daily business



A classical participatory planning process

- (1) Analysis
- (2) Future picture
- (3) Need for action
- (4) Strategy
- (5) Measures



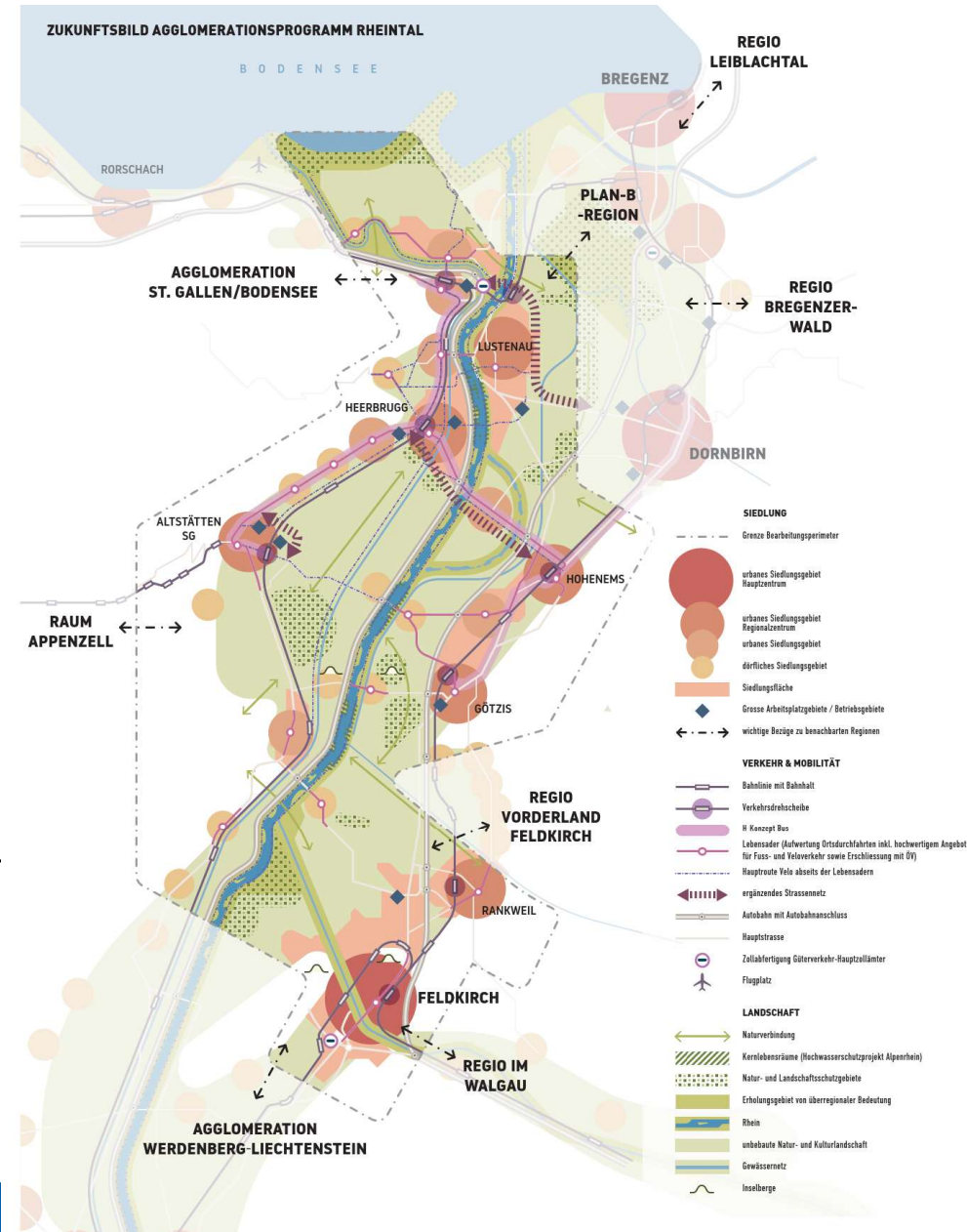
Future picture AP5

Functional areas

- Settlement areas
- Production areas
- Transport infrastructure
- Green areas

Budget

- AP4 (24-28): 79 Mio. Sfr; support: 23,6 Mio. Sfr
- AP5 (28-32): 109 Mio. Sfr; support: 52 Mio. Sfr



Source: VAR

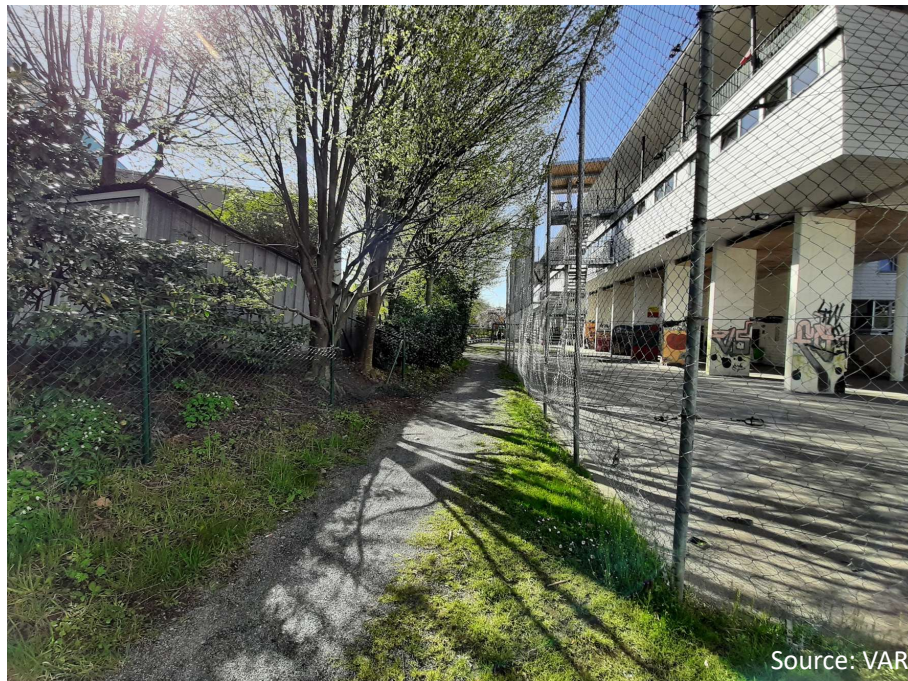
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Measures AP4

Source: VAR

Cycleway Lustenau Negrellistraße

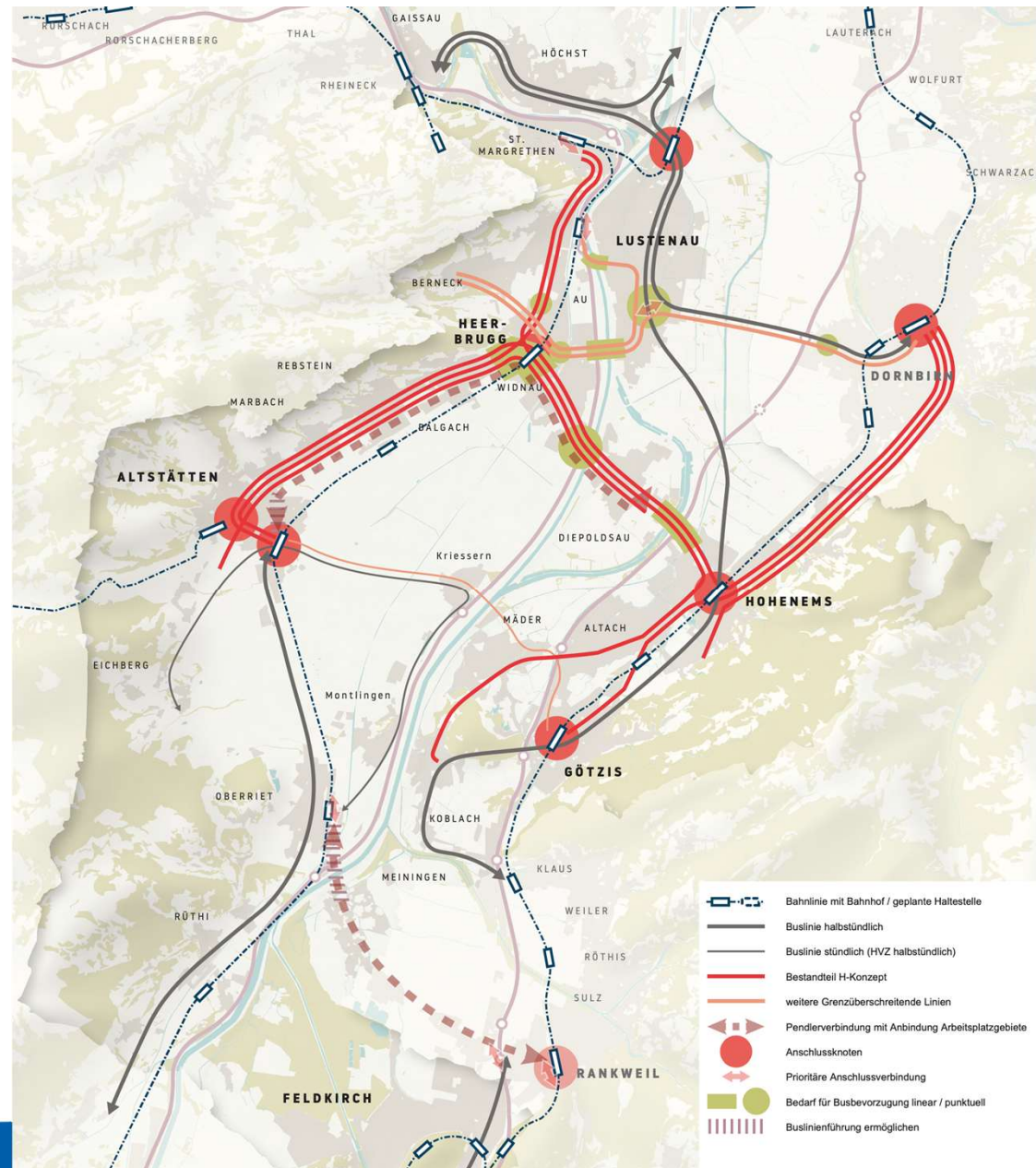
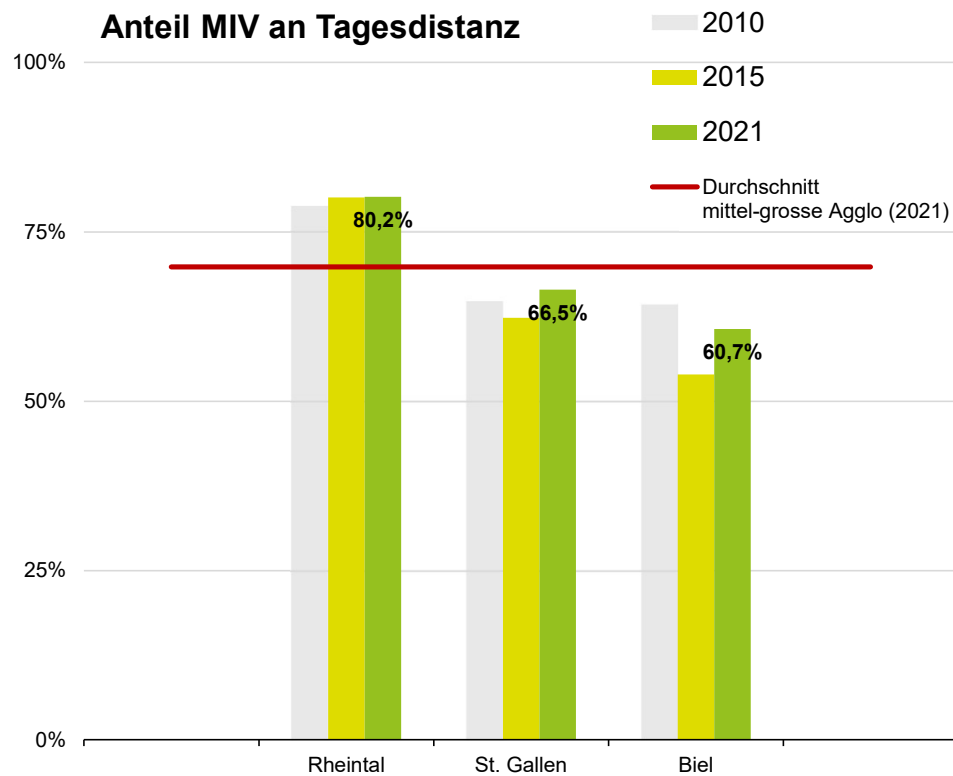
Before



after



Bus concept Rhine Valley 2025



St. Margarethen

Themenkarte: Siedlungsdichte und Entwicklungspotential

Legende:

- Siedlungsdichte:**
 - hellrosa: niedrige / moderate Dichte
 - rosa: hohe Dichte
 - rosa: Dichte nicht differenzierbar / Faktorraum Verdichtet
- Entwicklungspotential:**
 - hellbraun: niedrige / moderate Dichte
 - braun: hohe Dichte
 - braun: Dichte nicht differenzierbar / Faktorraum Verdichtet
- Wasser:**
 - blau: Gewässer

Arbeitsgebiete / Arbeitsgebiete von kommunaler Bedeutung:

St. Margarethen

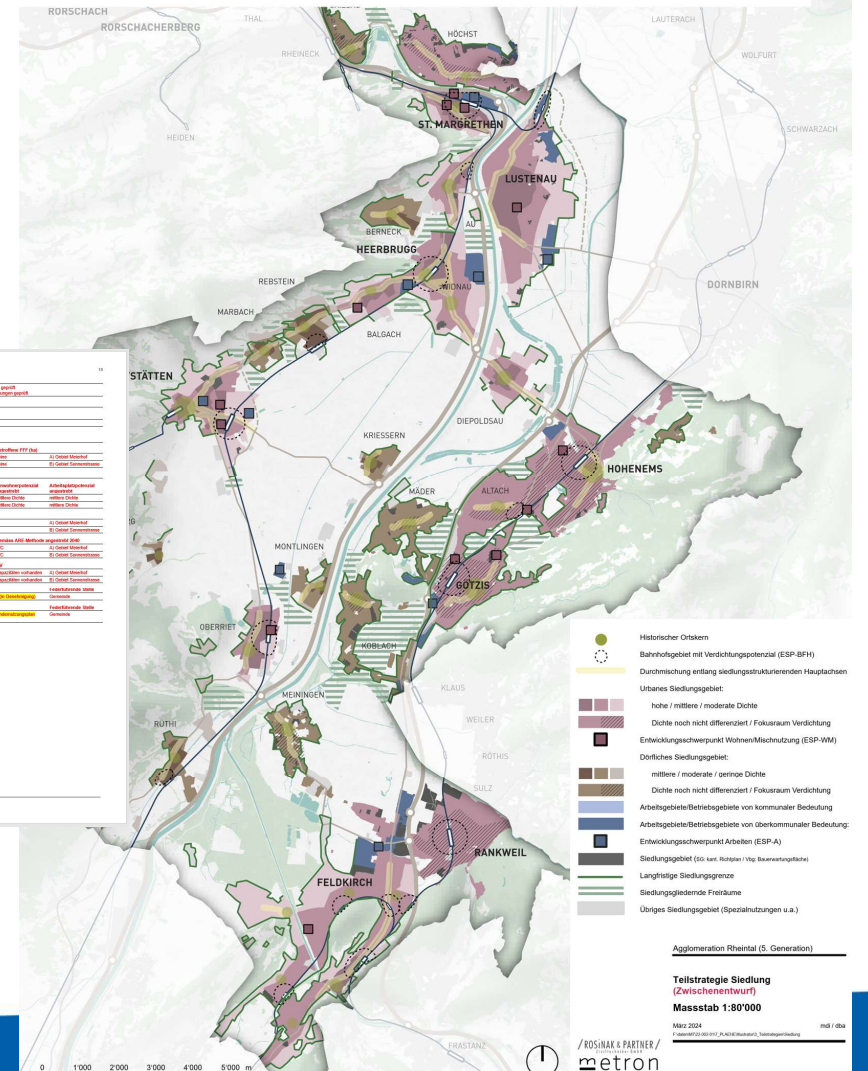
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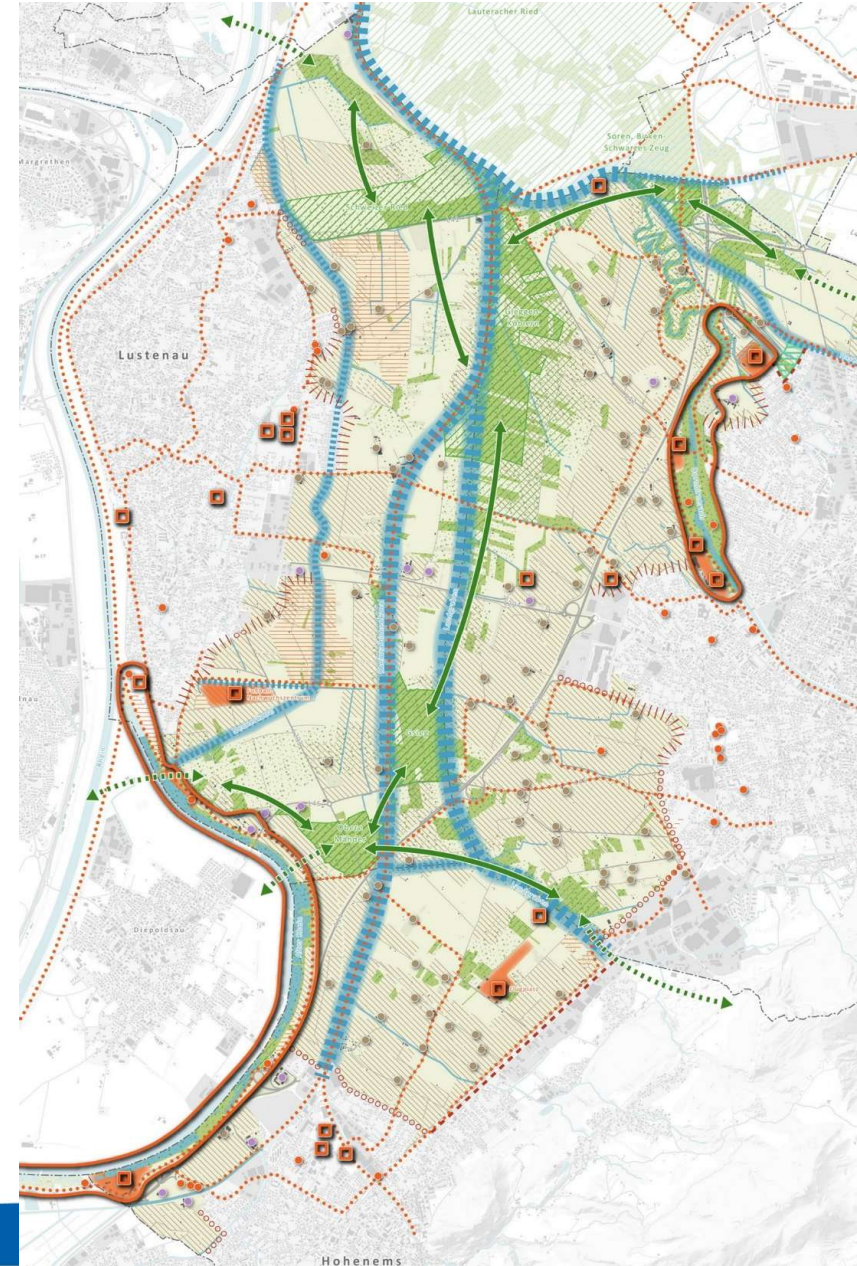
Arbeitsgebiete / Arbeitsgebiete von kommunaler Bedeutung:

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Bahnhofsgebiet mit Verdichtungspotenzial (ESP-BFH)

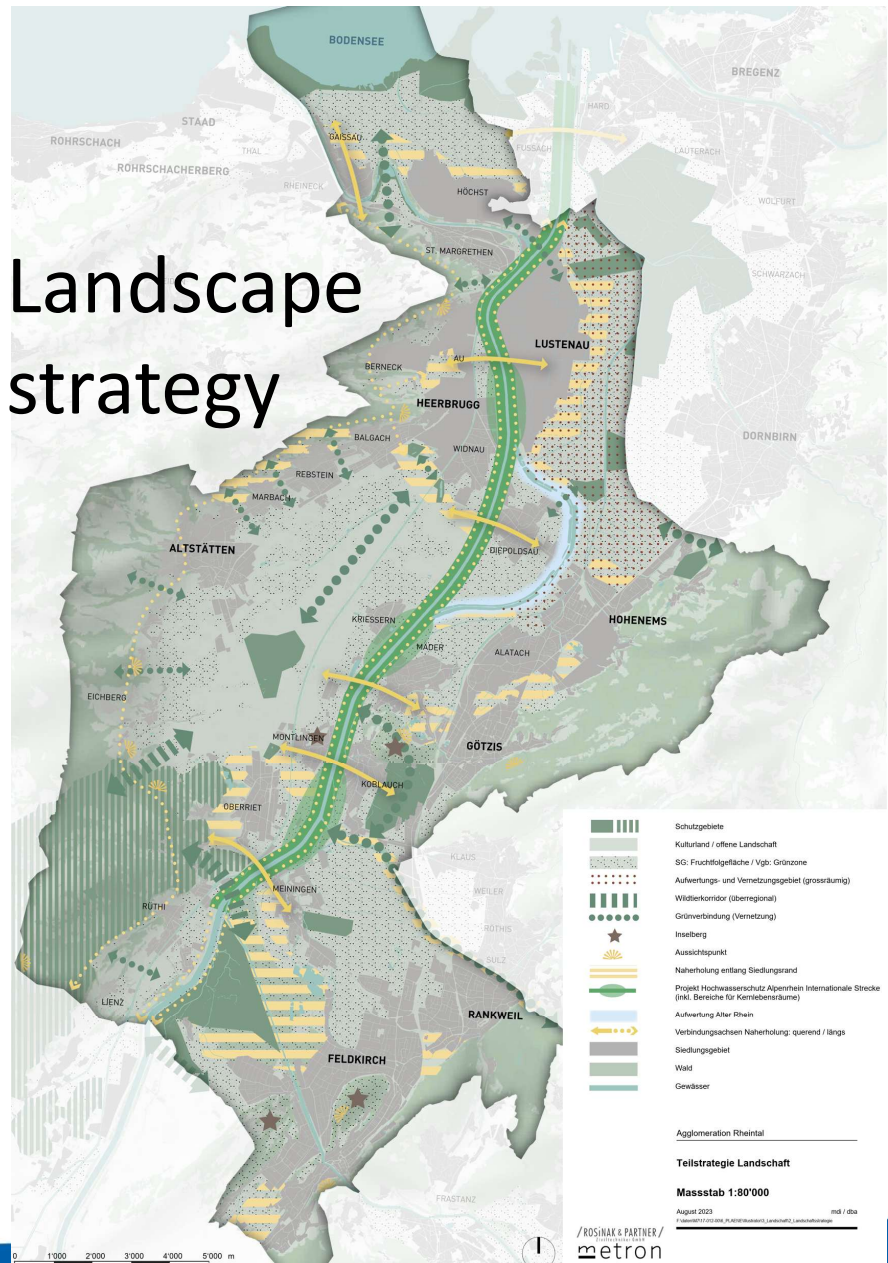


Landscape development concept “Ried”



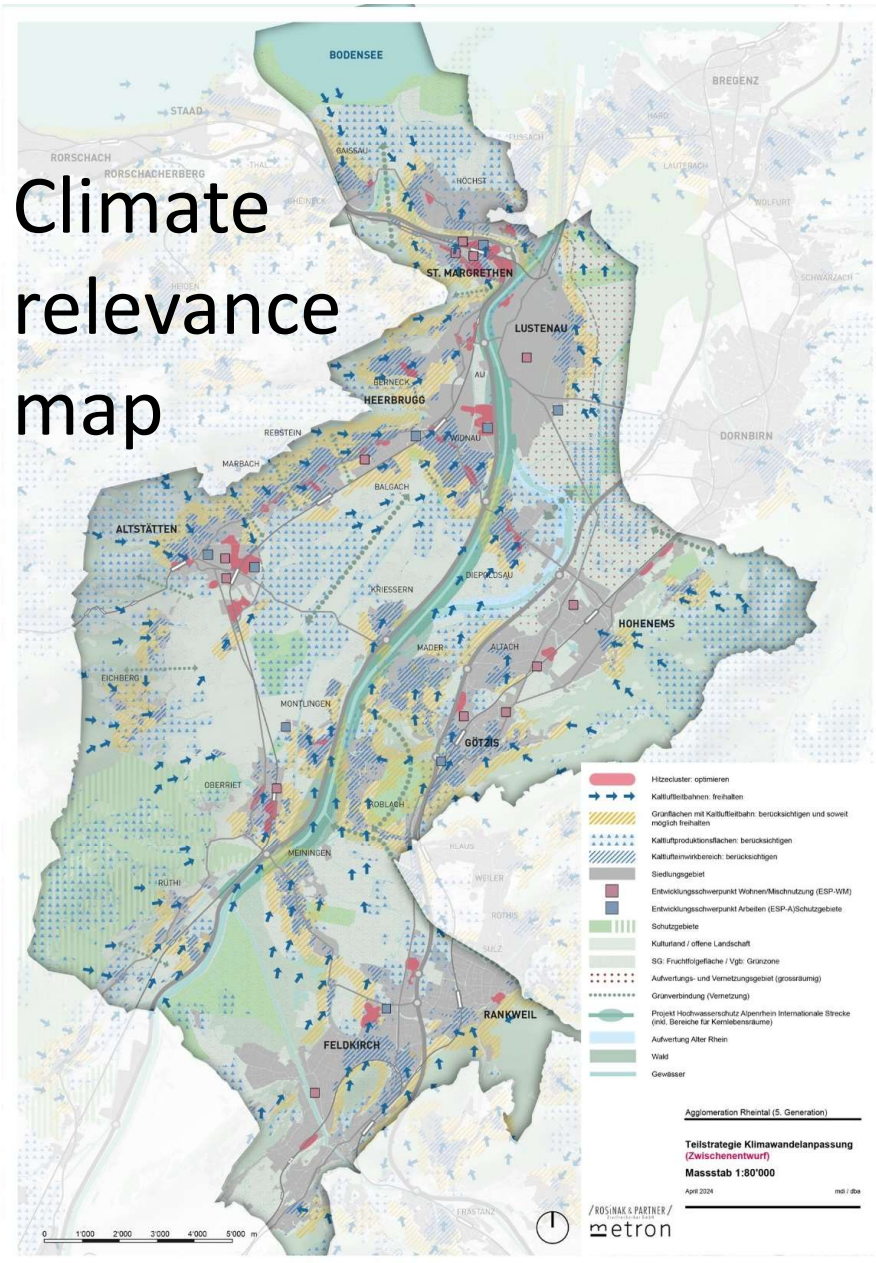


Landscape strategy

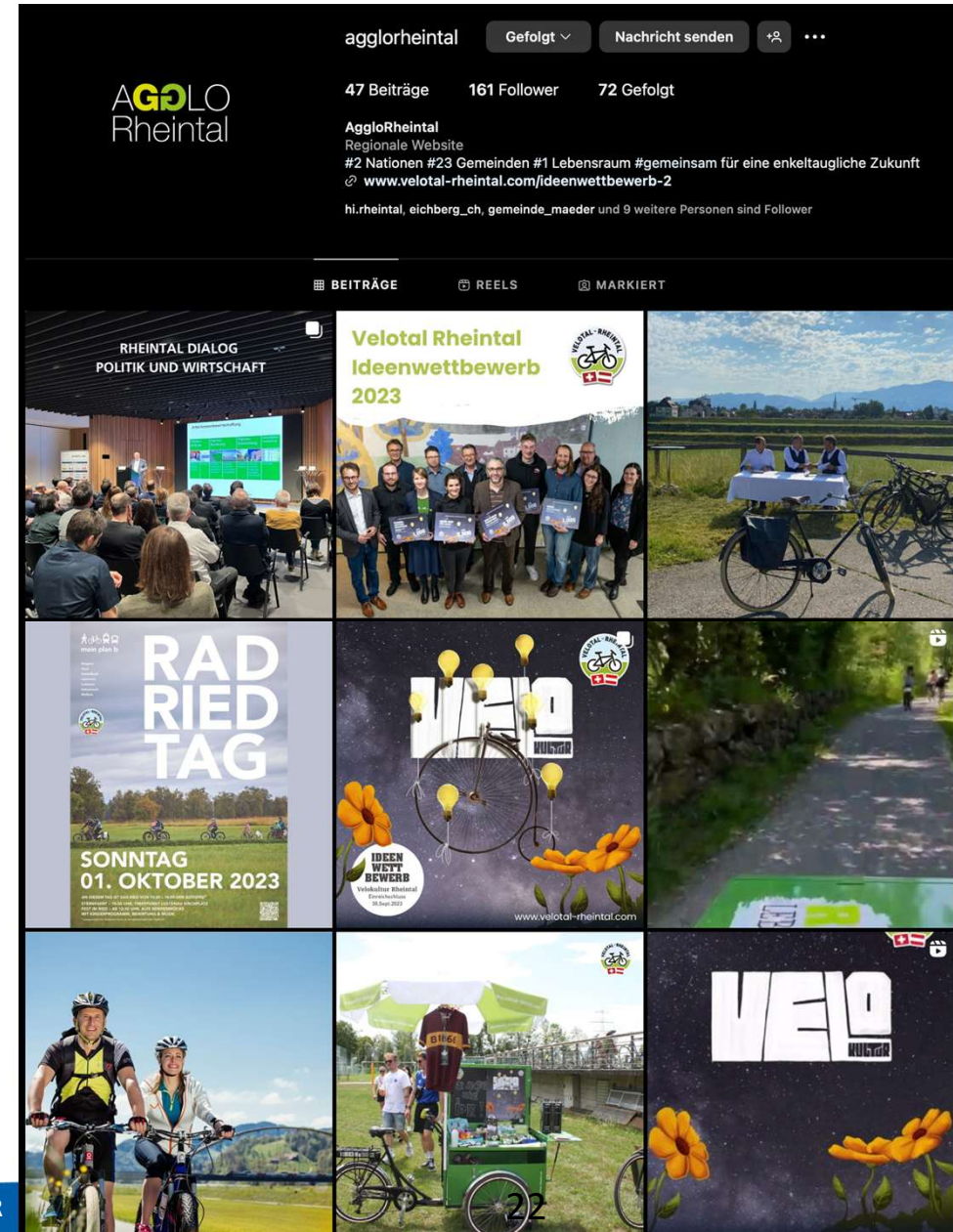


Source: VAR

Climate relevance map



Communication social media



Source: VAR

Regional Development Plan (regREK) amKumma

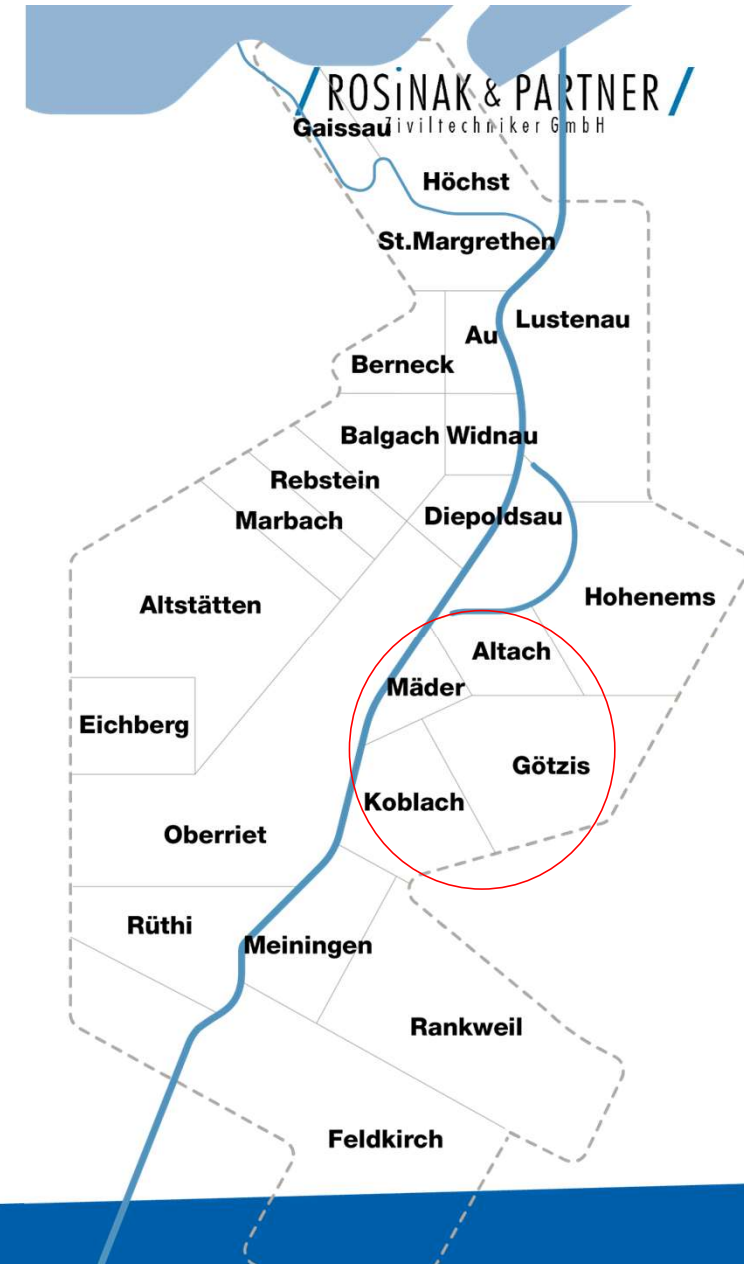


Source: vol.at

THE REGION AMKUMMA

Some facts and figures

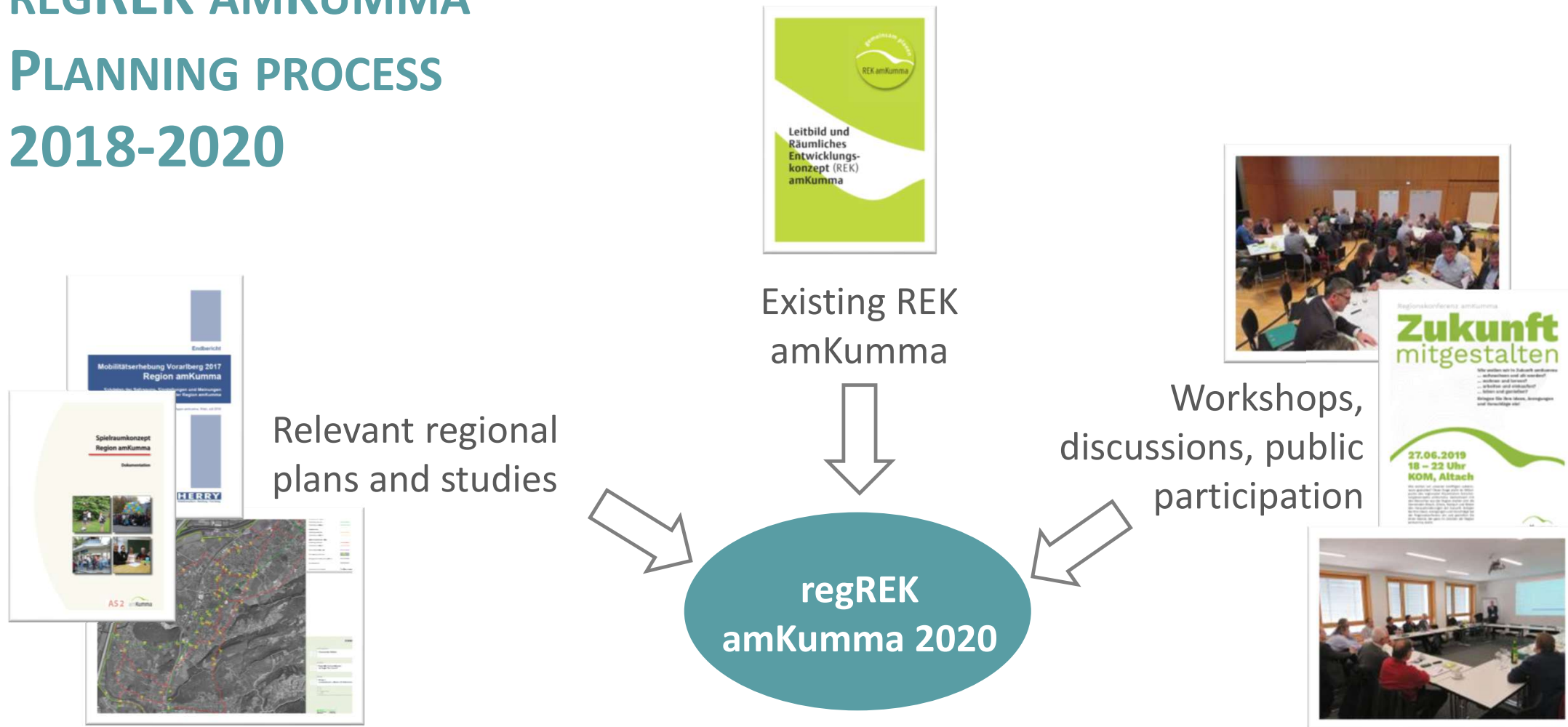
- 4 municipalities: Altach, Götzis, Koblach, Mäder; 27.000 inhabitants (2019), 7.200 employees (2018)
- Close collaboration for more than 25 years: more than 30 collaborations, many of them still ongoing
- Since 2017: small co-operation areas in the Rhine Valley, more or less formal



WHAT IS A REGREK?

- sets out **spatial development objectives for the next 10-15 years**, for the region and for the municipalities
- provides **guidance** for municipalities and the region
- takes into account **higher-level planning**, e.g., Raumbild Vorarlberg, Mobilitätskonzept Vorarlberg, etc.
- addresses the **specific characteristics** of the region and municipalities
- takes into account the different **interests of the population**
- forms the **basis for further planning at the municipal level** e.g. for zoning plans

REGREK amKUMMA PLANNING PROCESS 2018-2020



REGREK AMKUMMA CONTENT, FOCUS ON COLLABORATION

- 7 topics, 17 objectives, 49 measures
- Relevant **collaboration topics**:
 - Green and blue infrastructure: open space strategy, leisure hot spot Kummenberg, Rhine River restoration
 - Biodiversity, sustainable agriculture and forestry, climate change adaptation (KLAR region)
 - Business areas -> zoning plans
 - Mobility: bike paths, sharing-offers ...
 - Public services: education, health, care, cultural programme, social housing

REGREK AMKUMMA CONTENT, FOCUS ON COLLABORATION

- Objective 17: Strengthen the collaboration at regional level
 - Strengthen the **regional management office**: capacities and expertise, make use of subsidies of the province
 - Strengthen **communication and citizen's participation**: focus on members of the municipal councils and on young people
 - Carry out the **regional 'co-operation check'** -> evaluate, improve, close, initiate
 - **Strategy workshop** of Regio members: reflection, strategic planning

REGREK AMKUMMA

- Inter-regional collaboration: Objective 16: Strengthen the collaboration with our neighbours
 - City of Hohenems
 - Vorderland-Feldkirch Region
 - Agglomeration Programme Rhine Valley
 - RHESI: Restoration of the Rhine River

COLLABORATION HIGHLIGHTS

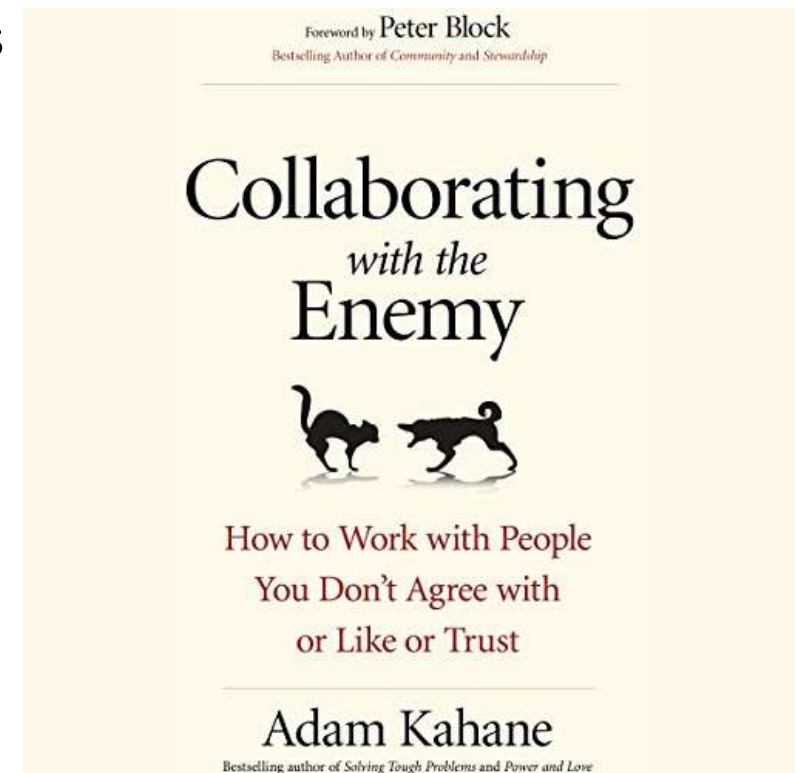
- Exchange with Dominik Heinzle? tbc

Hypotheses, Learnings, Conclusions

- Competition for land and land use conflicts will increase:
 - growth paradigm and land take versus
 - production of food and wood versus
 - renewable energy versus
 - climate change adaptation,
 - nature restoration and nature based solutions
- Present and future challenges can be solved only via
- Multilvel (from local to transnational) and multi-sectoral governance

Thinking out of the box

- Increasing complexity, shrinking power of authorities
- Enemy-fying syndrome > polarization of debates
- How to work with people you don't agree with, like or trust?
- Collaboration is not the only option ...
You have 3 alternatives



Four ways to deal with difficult situations

We CAN change the situation		We cannot change the situation	
We need others to effect the change.		We can effect this change unilaterally.	We can bear the situation as it is.
Collaborate		Force	Exit
We cannot control the change	We can control the change	Adapt	
Stretch Collab.	Conv. Collab.		

Source: Based on A. Kahane, 2017

Conventional Collaboration and Stretch Collaboration

	Conventional Collaboration	Stretch Collaboration
1. How we relate	One superior whole, harmony of the team	Multiple diverse holons, embrace conflict
2. How we advance our work	Agree on the problem and the solution (one optimum plan)	Experiment our way forward (multiple emergent possibilities)
3. How we participate in our situation	Change what other people are doing	Step into the game (multiple co-creators)

Source: Based on A. Kahane, 2017

Stretch collaboration

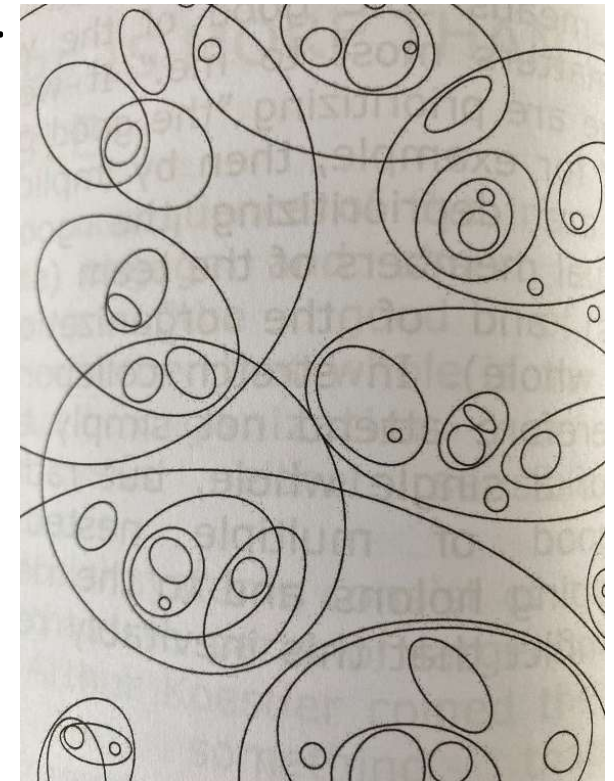
- Uncomfortable, no clear path, confusing situation
- *“We do not have to agree on what the solution is or even what the problem is ... the bar for making progress in complex situations is not as high as most people think.”* Nevertheless we can get things done together.
- *“Often we do not need to have a consensus on or even discuss principles”.*
- *“The most robust agreements are those that different actors support for different reasons”.*

(A. Kahane 2017, p.71-72)

Stretch 1: Embrace conflict and connection

- Dialogue is not enough. We have to connect more deeply ... Engaging and asserting ... unity versus self-realization ...
- There is no such thing as “the whole”, there are many wholes that are part of bigger wholes with own interests ...
- Build the social capital to deal with pluralism
- Polarisation cannot be solved, it can only be managed

(A. Kahane 2017, p.71-72)



Stretch 2: Experiment a way forward

- There is no path, the path is made by walking ... *“We cross the river by feeling for stones.” (A. Kahane 2017, p. 127)*
- ... an emergent process, where it is more important to act than to agree ...
create conditions where participants can act freely and creatively ...
prototyping: failing early is less costly ... a mistake is a success!
- Open listening is key practice to move forward.

(A. Kahane 2017, p.71-72)

Four ways of listening and talking

Downloading	Debating	Dialoguing	Presencing
The truth is ...	In my opinion ...	In my experience ...	What I am noticing here and now is ...
Experts, dictators, fundamentalists, people who are angry, arrogant or afraid	From outside, judge, right or wrong, clash of ideas, win/lose	Empathic, self-reflective, opening up	Sensing what happens in the group and being fully present individually

Source: Based on A. Kahane, 2017, Scharmer: Theory U

Thank you for your attention!

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