

**Ideas to emulate –**

## **Sustainable urban development planning in Germany**

Study tour to Germany by the Department of Urban Planning and Planning Permission of Greater Amman Municipality, Jordan, in August 2022

## 1 Why a trip to Germany?

Since 2019, the team from the Urban Planning Department of Greater Amman Municipality in Jordan has been taking part in an international dialogue process on sustainable urban planning, facilitated by Connective Cities. This has involved sharing ideas with other urban planners from around the world, and obtaining external expertise from the network for the planning of a new neighbourhood. In August 2022, an 11-member delegation travelled to Germany to conclude this process. The delegation collected numerous ideas on how to improve urban planning in Amman. Their itinerary included stops in Münster, Dortmund, Cologne and Frankfurt am Main.

The team from the Urban Planning Department was particularly interested in tips and lessons learned when drafting the German building code. This was because they were in the process of drafting such national regulations themselves. Their code, which is intended to give all parties involved – from landowners to the municipal planning departments – more legal certainty in urban and spatial planning. The Jordanian Parliament is expected to vote on the draft in 2023.

As early as 2021, the team, together with German experts, had analysed the relevant Jordanian and German legislation. They also discussed various recommendations, including how local government can simplify dealings with landowners.

### What is Connective Cities?

Operating on behalf of Germany's Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ), Connective Cities promotes the global exchange of local government expertise. Through its services, it also supports joint learning and peer consulting between German and international urban practitioners, as well as the development of joint projects. It aims to network urban actors from the realms of administration, politics, business, science and civil society at a high professional level. [www.connective-cities.net/en/](http://www.connective-cities.net/en/)

## 2 How is urban development planning set up in Amman?

Greater Amman is facing major urban planning challenges. The population is growing rapidly – from just under two million people in 2005, to an estimated 6.4 million people in 2025. The city is thus expanding, and the need for affordable housing in particular is increasing sharply.

The first urban development plans for Amman from 1938, 1954/55 and 1987 lacked local ownership and received little attention. With the establishment of Greater Amman in 2006, the capital adopted a comprehensive [master plan](#) for urban development. The plan received much attention and was among the finalists for the 2007 World Leadership Award for Town Planning. It was prepared by the Greater Amman Urban Planning Department together with Canadian experts. The next edition, planned for 2025, will be based on a new ordinance and will focus more on key sustainability issues such as climate change and mobility.

### Principles of urban planning in Greater Amman:

- Promotion of
  - mixed use for residential and commercial purposes, etc.
  - public transport and pedestrian traffic
- Protection of agricultural land to promote food security
- Densification and expansion
- Development that the city and its citizens can afford
- Planning of individual corridors (e.g. Airport Road).



So far, Jordan lacks a binding legal ordinance to regulate building law and urban planning. Currently, existing plans are not being consistently implemented, and property owners often challenge individual decisions on building applications in court. Furthermore, corruption is widespread, and it used to push through personal building and planning interests. In principle, landowners in Jordan have the right to build on their land, unlike in Germany.

So far, citizens have not been involved in planning processes to any great extent. In many cases, they are also not used to the municipality planning the development of the city and individual areas in detail. This is because to date, urban development has primarily been driven by investors.

### 3 Stops during the expert fact-finding mission

#### **Stop 1: Münster's York quarter**

##### How do you plan a new neighbourhood in a city?

Münster is an attractive university city, with a growing population. At the same time, housing is scarce and expensive. Therefore, the city is planning five new quarters – the Münster Model Quarters. The plans follow some key principles:

- Linking residential life, work, research and development
- Mix of uses at all levels: in the neighbourhood, in the block, in the building
- Ground floors livened up e.g. with restaurants, cultural and social community facilities, crafts and creative industries
- New forms of housing with inclusive offerings, subsidised housing, opportunities for building groups and cooperatives, student housing
- The most diverse population and age groups living together
- Appropriate densities, usually with four- and five-storey basic building modules that make economical use of land

- Communal spaces in buildings and in the neighbourhood
- Public and communal open spaces that are inviting
- Sustainable mobility and car-free living in sub-neighbourhoods
- Carbon-neutral neighbourhood development and sensitive water management, including fresh-air corridors
- Participatory processes and quality agreements.



Stephan Aumann (KonvOY) presenting the plans for the future York quarter, © Mathias Rethmann

Furthermore, Münster is currently building a new city quarter with an area of 50 hectares on the site of the former British York barracks, 30 hectares of which will be used for residential and commercial space. The plans provide for 1,800 residential units, about 130,000 square metres of green space and about 70,000 square metres of traffic areas. Münster is pursuing an integrated urban planning approach. Here, traffic, the environment, housing needs and social aspects are considered together.

The city has founded the municipal company KonvOY for the development, which either builds itself or sells plots to investors. The city issues concrete specifications, with the city council acting as the central decision-making body on fundamental issues.

#### Guidelines for the development of the York quarter:

'We will conduct [...] qualifying award procedures for sub-quarters and building sites. There is a clear quality principle for the process of further realising and marketing the quarter: Alongside the key points of the urban development designs and the development plan, we will also define and specify the design guidelines for the public areas and neighbourhood transition areas. The bids will then be evaluated based on these specifications. This will enable us to develop the neighbourhood as a whole in close coordination with the investors, leading to the implementation of value-creating projects and ideas plus a diversified housing supply for all income levels.'

#### Find out more:

[-> Münster Model Quarters](#)

[-> Münster's York quarter](#)

Contact:

Matthias Herding, Personal Assistant to the City Planning Officer of the City of Münster

Stephan Aumann, Managing Director of KonvOY GmbH



## Stop 2: Hansa coking plant, Dortmund

How can a former coal site become a sustainable infrastructure and a tourism project?

In 2027, the International Garden Exhibition (IGA) will take place in the Ruhr metropolitan region, i.e. in the cities of Dortmund, Gelsenkirchen and Duisburg, among other places. One of five *Gardens for the Future* is being built in Dortmund on the banks of the rewilded Emscher River. The gardens raise the question: 'How do we want to live tomorrow?' To seek answers to this question, they offer numerous presentation areas and laboratory spaces. The gardens will contribute to the green infrastructure, aim to promote climate resilience, offer opportunities for local recreation and boost tourism in the region.

At the centre of the roughly 44-hectare Dortmund Garden for the Future will be the former Hansa coking plant. This will represent the structural change

*'It used to be dark and dirty around the coking plant because of the coal dust. Many people are then surprised to see how green it is here today. We want to make this historical change visible at the garden show.'*

*Gisela Nürnberg, City of Dortmund*



of the region, which until the end of the 1980s was dominated by coal mining. Up to 3,500 miners used to work in the coking plant. In the future it is to become part of the urban economy again, but this time as a tourist and cultural attraction.

#### How do you plan a large-scale project like the *Gardens for the Future*?



The former Hansa coking plant,  
© Stadt Dortmund/Roland Goreck

A small interdisciplinary project group in the Dortmund city administration is responsible for planning the Garden for the Future. The group comprises geographers, spatial planners and communication experts, among others. It coordinates the contributions made by the city administration's various departments, such as finance or urban planning, as well as the services of external companies. The key decisions, such as the overall budget, are made by the Dortmund City Council.

With such a large-scale project, it is important to involve the public in planning and decision-making at an early stage. After all, citizens should also benefit from the projects in the long term after the garden show.

#### In demand – Garden exhibitions in times of climate change

Exhibitions with temporary flower beds that require a lot of watering are no longer appropriate for garden shows. They are unsustainable simply because they require a lot of water. Instead, many shade-giving trees will be planted on the grounds of the Garden for the Future in Dortmund. This will help keeping the water on the soil surface, cool the air and not seep into the ground.

#### Read more:

[-> International Garden Show Ruhr Metropolitan Region 2027: Dortmund Garden for the Future](#)

Contact: Gisela Nürnberg, Team Leader of IGA 2027 Project Group, Office for Urban Renewal, City of Dortmund



#### Stop 3: TU Dortmund University

##### How can land sealing be reduced as part of sustainable urban planning?

In Germany, too much land continues to be paved. The plan is to reduce land use from the current 60 hectares per day to 30 hectares. The main focus of urban planning is therefore on redensification and urban redevelopment, and raising the quality of the urban living environment. The guiding principles set out in urban planning law for this are:

- Inward development before development in agricultural lands
- Preservation of viable urban structures and historic buildings
- Brownfield redevelopment and structural adaptation
- Mix of uses with local accessibility
- Compact development in harmony with green and open spaces
- Open and accessible urban spaces
- Creation and preservation of natural spaces
- Functional upgrading of central urban spaces.

#### Use of brownfield sites

Brownfields have great potential for urban development, because using them can reduce urban sprawl. In the process, they can either be revitalised as residential or commercial land, or rewilded for climate regulation and as part of the urban ecosystem. In the latter case, they can also be used as spaces for leisure and recreation.

In Germany, many stakeholder groups are involved in planning how urban land should be reused. On the one hand, this often makes the processes difficult. On the other hand, it ensures that all relevant stakeholders are taken into account.

German municipalities can make use of urban development funding programmes offered by the federal and state governments. The municipalities draw up legally binding development plans, based on land use plans approved at the regional level.



#### Development of former brownfield sites in Dortmund

For a long time, Dortmund was characterised by mining. In the late 1980s, the last coal mine in the city closed, and many former mining areas became vacant. With *Hafencity*, one of the largest development projects in Europe was created, partly on what was then the contaminated area of today's Lake PHOENIX. To develop the area around the new lake, the city founded a development company under private law as a wholly owned subsidiary of the city.



Lake PHOENIX in Dortmund

To develop the land, first of all a master plan was drawn up. This was followed by a framework plan, on the basis of which competitions were held for smaller areas. Infrastructure and design were then determined. Decisions on which designs won the competitions were made by the city administration. However, the public as well as experts such as scientists were able to contribute their views at meetings.

#### Find out more:

-> [Research Group for Urban and Regional Planning, TU Dortmund University](#)

-> [Lake PHOENIX, Dortmund](#)

Contact: Prof. Dr. Ing. Frank Othengrafen, Head of Research Group for Urban and Regional Planning, TU Dortmund University

## How do the federal and state governments in Germany participate in urban development and planning?

The German Basic Law guarantees cities and municipalities the right to manage their local community affairs autonomously, within the framework of the law. This includes, among other things, autonomy with regard to organisation, planning, local law, and taxes and fees. Nonetheless, there are various political initiatives and guidelines for the integrated development of cities and municipalities at European and national level:

- The [Leipzig Charter for the sustainable European city](#), published in 2007, is the key document for integrated urban development in the European Union. It contains common principles and strategies for urban development policy.
- The [Urban Agenda for the EU](#) helps to implement the principles of the Leipzig Charter in Europe. It introduced 14 thematic partnerships in which the European Commission, member states, regions, cities and associations work together on topics such as housing or adaptation to climate change, and develop action plans.
- Germany's [National Urban Development Policy](#) is a joint initiative by the federal, state and local governments. But it is also designed for non-governmental stakeholder groups. It is the first point of contact for questions on integrated urban development, and aims to implement the Leipzig Charter in Germany.

### Urban development funding

Through [urban development funding](#), Germany's federal and state governments support cities and municipalities as business and residential locations, and help to permanently remedy shortfalls and other problems. Among other things, they promote the reuse of derelict land, housing construction, and construction methods that are both environmentally friendly and cost- and land-saving. The funding also supports urban development measures to remedy social problems. On average, one euro of urban development funding attracts seven euros of private investment. The federal government, the federal states and the municipalities each contribute one third to the financing of projects.

Once a year, the [Day of Urban Development](#) takes place across Germany. Here, more than 450 municipalities present their urban development projects to the public. The day usually guarantees them greater media attention than marketing campaigns on their own.

### The Association of German Cities – voice of the cities

The Association of German Cities (Deutscher Städtetag) is an association of the autonomous cities and most of the district-affiliated cities in Germany. It represents the interests of these 4,300 cities vis-à-vis the Federal Government, the Bundestag and the European Union, among others. Mayors are involved in the work of the various bodies of this local government association, including its executive committee and expert committees. Its head office has a staff of around 130.

The Association of German Cities publishes numerous [publications on urban development and urban planning](#). These include examples of planning practice in German cities, as well as guidelines on climate change and participation in planning processes.

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*'Cities are at the forefront of addressing global challenges. At the end of the day, it is always municipalities that have to find local solutions to challenges like climate change, the COVID-19 pandemic and the local impact of the war in Ukraine.'*

*Lina Furch, Director, Europe and International Affairs Division, Association of German Cities*

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### Find out more:

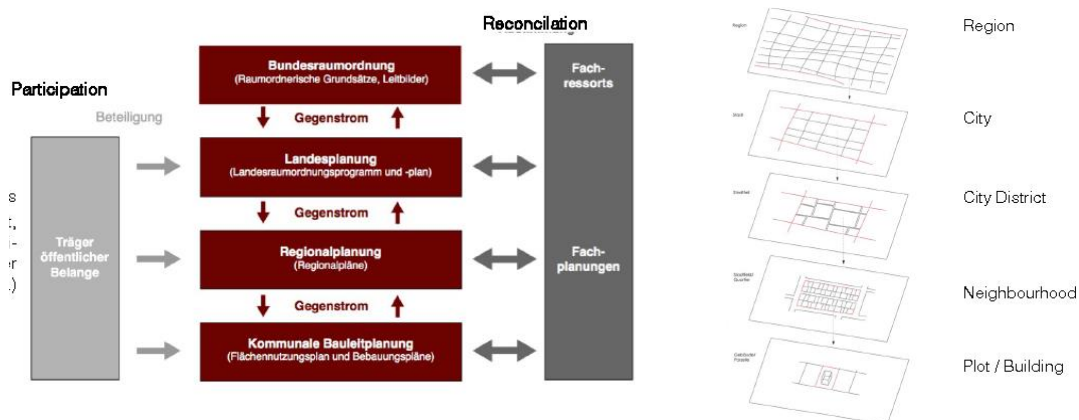
[-> Association of German Cities](#)

Contact: Dr Timo Munzinger, Officer for Spatial Planning, State and Regional Planning, Integrated Urban Development, Urban Development and Urban Planning, Architecture and Building Culture, Association

## How do planning systems and planning processes work in Germany?

In Germany, urban planning is governed at different levels. At the national level, there are the [Building Code](#) and the [Federal Spatial Planning Act](#), which contains spatial planning principles. At the state level, there is state planning with land-use plans as well as regional planning and municipal land-use planning. The latter determines land-use plans as well as development plans. Institutions such as the fire brigade, chambers of commerce and telecommunications companies are involved in the planning processes, and contribute their expertise.

In the planning system, the so-called “counter current principle” applies: The different levels influence each other reciprocally, both top-down and bottom-up. Different needs and interests need to be optimally balanced in a democratic process. One example is environmental protection versus the infrastructure needs of the local industry.



### Drawing up land-use and development plans

First of all, a city or a municipal council decides to draw up a plan. This is followed by the involvement of authorities and the public at an early stage, on the basis of which a draft is prepared. Comments are then obtained from the authorities, and citizens have the opportunity to give their opinion. If necessary, the plans are adapted accordingly before they are submitted to the city or municipal council for a final decision. Then the plans are binding for everyone. Investors often commission private planning offices to draw up designs for their projects. But these too always have to be voted on by the city or municipal councils.

When it comes to citizen participation, an interesting phenomenon can be observed time and time again – the participation paradox: During the early planning phase, when there is still plenty of opportunity to influence the process, public interest is still low. When, on the other hand, the scope for influencing the process is reduced (for example when the political decision is being taken or shortly before the implementation of a measure), interest increases significantly.

### Find out more

Contact: Holger Hoffschroer, Managing Partner of REICHER HAASE ASSOZIIERTE GmbH



## Excursion: Via Culturalis



The [Via Culturalis](#) is an approximately 800-metre-long path through Cologne, along which visitors can experience more than 2,000 years of urban, building and architectural history. It is one element of the urban development master plan for Cologne's city centre. It enables visitors to see and recognise the traces of two millennia of urban and cultural history in public spaces, above and below ground level.

## 📍 Stop 5: The City Surveyor's Office and 'Frankfurter Bogen', Frankfurt am Main

### How can the redistribution of land be managed?

When the City of Frankfurt plans new building areas, the dimensions of the existing plots rarely match the planned building plots. Consequently, the city uses reallocation procedures to reorganise developed and undeveloped plots of land such that plots are created which are suitable for construction or other forms of use based on their location, shape and size. At the same time, the city provides transport and green spaces, as well as land for social infrastructure such as schools and day-care centres. The framework for the reallocation procedures is laid down in the Building Code. The principle is that land is exchanged according to its value or size.

The reallocation procedure was also used in the 'Frankfurter Bogen' neighbourhood in the north of Frankfurt. Covering an area of 72 hectares, the neighbourhood has been developed since 1999 on agricultural land, green spaces, private gardens and allotment gardens. It was developed in three sections. Before the reallocation, the area comprised more than 1,000 parcels with over 300 owners. The process took a long time – from the first decision on land readjustment in 1992 to the final realisation in 2016. On the positive side, there were no court cases at any point during the process.

Today, some 5,500 people live in 2,200 residential units at Frankfurter Bogen. Buildings make up one third of the area, while another third comprises green spaces and traffic areas, as well as areas for nature conservation and noise protection. During planning, strong emphasis was placed on recreational opportunities. As a result, sports areas cover more than six hectares. The municipality thus created a new neighbourhood with numerous public spaces and a high quality of life.

#### Key features of the reallocation procedures

- No expropriation, no compulsory purchase
- Preservation of property
- Land swap
- Reallocation according to relative value
- Reallocation according to relative size
- Value guarantee.

→ Landowners still own land, but not in the same place and possibly not of the same size, BUT always of the same value.



*The Frankfurter Bogen neighbourhood in 1999    Aerial view of Frankfurter Bogen in 2021*



1 Frankfurt's new old town  
(c) Holger Ullmann

#### Excursion: [Frankfurt's new old town](#)

Frankfurt's old town was destroyed in a bombing raid in 1944. Seventy-five years later, a new old town was created with 35 houses, 15 of which were faithfully reconstructed and 20 newly built. In some cases, preserved parts of the original houses were used. The new old town, with its mix of flats, shops, cafés, restaurants and museums, is a popular meeting place. It is also home to an archaeological garden with excavations from the Roman period.

#### Find out more:

-> [Land readjustment of the City of Frankfurt am Main](#)

**Contact:** Benedikt Post, Head of the City Surveyor's Office, Frankfurt am Main

## 4 What the delegates from Greater Amman Municipality took away with them

### Ideas for creating a building code



Many suggestions that the delegation received during the trip will be incorporated into the building regulations being developed by the Greater Amman Urban Planning Department. These include planning procedures such as the apportionment procedure for reallocating plots on building land. The World Bank will support Greater Amman with external expertise in drafting the plan, which will be submitted to the Jordanian Parliament for a vote in 2023.

The discussions with experts in Germany showed how complex a good planning structure is. According to the Amman Urban Planning Department, the building code should cover as many areas as possible, in order to ensure more legal certainty on all these issues. Having said that, implementing a complex planning structure requires a large number of staff. The Urban Planning Department team, however, is currently very small and is already overstretched by its workload. Citizen

participation will also be accorded high priority in the building code.

*At the end of the trip, the delegation summed up their key findings (c) Dirk Beichert*

The members of the delegation said they would like to discuss the draft of the building code together with German experts, and obtain their expertise.

### Takeaways from the trip

The Jordanian delegation learned a lot about urban planning laws, procedures and processes in Germany during their five-day trip. Many things are strikingly different from the situation in Jordan. These were some aspects that particularly struck the team from the Amman Urban Planning Department:

- ⇒ **The time factor:** In Germany, national and regional spatial planning is very time-consuming.
- ⇒ **Municipal associations:** The concept of municipal umbrella organisations is not established in

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*'Good planning takes time, but the good results justify the greater amount of time invested.'*

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Jordan. Creating a joint voice for municipalities vis-à-vis the government and other actors is a very interesting approach.

- ⇒ **Responsibilities and finances:** Urban development funding in Germany relieves the burden on municipalities, and enables them to implement projects that they cannot manage on their own.
- ⇒ **Urban and construction planning**
  - In Germany, competitions are held for projects, whereas in Amman the Urban Planning Department creates designs itself. The advantage of competitions is that different ideas and designs compete with each other, and the best ones can be selected.
  - German municipalities can oblige property owners to plant trees or shrubs, but such a climate-friendly approach is not possible in Amman.
  - Reallocation procedures are complex, and require time and human resources.

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*'Reallocation procedures would enable us to create more public spaces.'*

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- ⇒ **Sustainable urban development**
  - Many new neighbourhoods in Germany focus on climate-friendly mobility. They promote bicycle and pedestrian traffic, and contain many public spaces and green areas.
  - To reduce land consumption, redensification and wasteland regeneration are suitable options.
  - Brownfields can also be used for purposes other than building. When rewilded they contribute to a good climate and biodiversity, among other things.
  - There is little free space available in Amman. Creating green spaces is difficult due to the hot and dry climate.

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*'We have to convince the public that green spaces are important and worth protecting.'*

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- ⇒ **Participation**
  - Citizens should always be involved in planning, to ensure that their needs are met.
  - Municipalities must be prepared to change their plans in accordance with the needs of citizens and the opinions of institutions.
- ⇒ **Expertise:** At the University of Dortmund alone there are 12 chairs for urban planning. This enables the university to train many highly qualified professionals who can subsequently work in urban planning.
- ⇒ **Appreciation of historical buildings:** The German cities visited place great value on their heritage. This ranges from the remains of Roman buildings in Cologne, to mining infrastructure in Dortmund, to the former British military presence in Münster and the combination of historical buildings and high-rise buildings in Frankfurt's city centre.

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