

Inter-municipal Local Urban Planning Schemes (PLUi)

Poorly organised development in cities and regions can have very harmful consequences, particularly for the most modest local governments whose resources and choices in their urban environment are limited. Their challenges may include housing that is far from employment sites and schools, difficulties accessing healthcare and essential urban services, difficulties developing the offering of public facilities and transport, spatial segregation, conditions that do not favour economic development and thus hinder job creation, damage caused by insufficient preparation for natural hazards in certain areas, etc.

Because of this, it is essential to think strategically about development conditions in conurbations and how they can be reflected in restrictive, sufficiently forward-looking city planning documents, which help organize and structure urban development and keep the city agile. Such documents can provide the tools needed to implement a political plan for a fair-trade city.

A FAVOURABLE LEGISLATIVE FRAMEWORK SINCE 2010

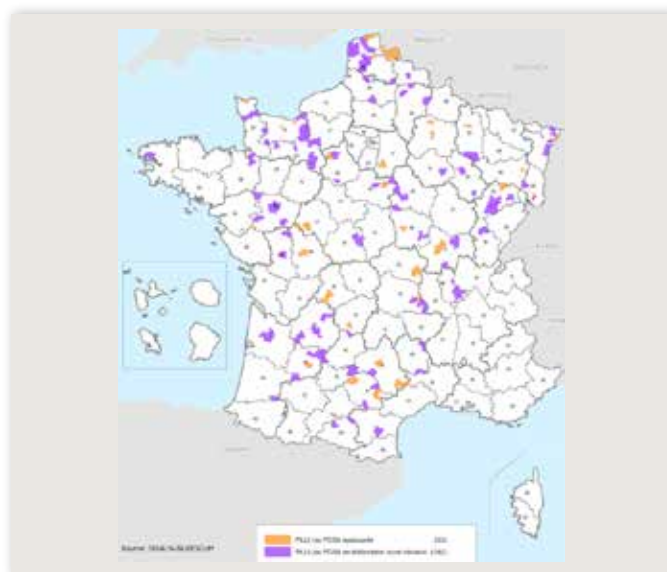
Ever since the urban planning began in France, it has been governed at the municipal level. Starting with the French law concerning the national commitment to the environment (ENE) of 12 July 2010, the French government has promoted the development of inter-municipal local urban planning schemes (PLUi) at the level of a group of municipalities, which share a global urban planning and development project. Since 2010, a PLUi has included "housing" provisions which take the place of a Local Housing Programme, as well as "transport and travel" provisions that take the place of Urban Mobility Plans. The French law on access to housing and urban renovation (ALUR, 2014), sponsored by Cécile Duflot, Minister for Territorial Equality and Housing, more specifically established the jurisdiction for developing these urban planning documents at the inter-municipal level; in the next few years, it should promote more dynamic development of these documents at this level.

As a strategic territorial planning document ultimately defines the provisions concerning land rights. Urban planning authorisations such as building permits must conform to its provisions.

The community level is the appropriate one for defining and analysing needs, and thus for developing a territorial project. Most day-to-day activities related to property, real estate, employment, public facilities, transportation, and the environment are organized at this level, and it is where appropriate solutions must be sought.

As of 1 January 2013, more than 130 inter-municipal associations (some 5% of the total number) had begun such initiatives.

In France, local governance on urban planning is currently divided between 36,000 municipalities, some of them too small to fully exercise that role (due to growing complexity and increasing standards related to environment, energy,



and transportation issues, the need to regularly update and harmonize initiatives, etc.). Over the medium term, it could instead move toward 2,500 inter-municipal associations better equipped to make their regional projects a reality.

A TOOL TO SUPPORT TERRITORIAL SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

The characteristics of the PLUi (joint development between municipalities, inter-municipal scale, enforceability on third parties) supports effective implementation of political priorities like those presented below.

1. Promoting housing construction while limiting consumption of space.

Developing a PLUi is a way to collectively define actual housing needs and combine the efforts of municipalities to reduce the total consumption of space by urbanisation. Housing solutions can be determined based on the property potential of the conurbation as a whole, rather than each municipality's availability.

2. Fighting climate change

Several features of a PLUi can help fight climate change, especially when it includes an urban mobility plan (PDU). This type of PLUi includes greenhouse gas emissions reduction goals and provisions to encourage the growth of mass transit and affordable, least polluting modes of transportation (walking and bicycling).

The location of future housing and business centres is determined by looking at the entire inter-municipal space, which means that they can be optimised for accessibility and to reduce commute times.

3. Protecting and taking advantage of biodiversity at the right level.

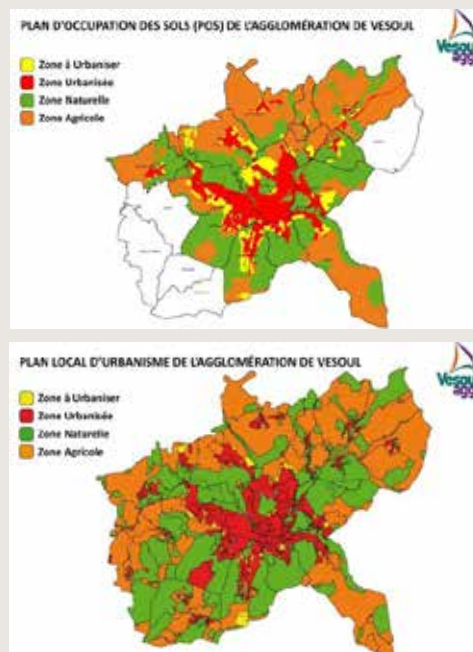
The green and blue infrastructure (TVB), which is made up of all ecological corridors, is identified in order to defend and take advantage of biodiversity, including in urban settings. Since plants and animals pay no attention to municipal boundaries, the inter-municipal level is the best place to ensure that ecological corridors are working well, and the PLUi gives municipalities the tools to prevent them from being interrupted.

The urban community of Brest Métropole Océane (with 8 municipalities and 213,000 residents) developed environmentally-focused planning guidelines devoted to the TVB, which identify sectors of interest and methods for maintaining the TVB (green frameworks, routes encouraging soft modes of transportation, etc.).

4. A tool promoting functional and social diversity

French urban planning law also allows for other types of intervention in these planning documents, particularly with the goal of ensuring good urban diversity. For example, plans can determine the local of future public facilities within a neighbourhood (reserved locations); plan for public roads or easements, especially to encourage soft modes of transportation; require a certain proportion of subsidized rental housing units in a plot or

Thanks to the PLUi, the conurbation of Vesoul (with 19 municipalities and 35,000 residents) was able to contain the urbanisation areas initially defined in the old municipal planning documents and harmonize its urbanisation projects while also expanding its territory



The conurbation of Agen (with 29 municipalities and 95,000 residents) is sponsoring a policy of creating new bicycle routes and developing a framework, within each urban or rural municipality, for routes encouraging soft modes of transportation, to be built, improved, or made safer in order to facilitate transportation between residential neighbourhoods and leisure excursions as an alternative to using motorised vehicles.



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within a sector to facilitate access to housing; promote functional diversity within a neighbourhood by adopting specific rules for different types of construction, and so on. This makes them a very malleable tool to serve local policy.

A DYNAMIC TOOL ENCOURAGING REGIONAL SOLIDARITY

1. Pooling resources to serve the smallest municipalities

The PLUi allows municipalities to pool their resources and thus to develop documents that are updated more regularly and of higher quality by working with more competent and diverse service providers (or simply a larger number of them) and by creating specific positions responsible for the PLUi within the inter-municipal association. This makes it a very beneficial solution, particularly for small municipalities that often lack expertise and engineering resources. The PLUi gives them the resources to devise and implement a political plan for their territory.

2. The national government supporting local authorities

Since 2010, the Ministry of Territorial Equality and Housing has been offering a €50,000 grant to inter-municipal associations involved in developing a PLUi.

More than one hundred such associations have received the grant and become part of the "Club PLUi." This cooperative club is a working community that strives to identify and promote best practices in order to improve the quality of documents produced and encourage other inter-municipal associations to develop their own PLUi. It provides a flexible framework for government services, elected officials, and technicians to work together.