Ladies and gentlemen, dear colleagues, thank you for the invitation to your conference, I am glad to be back in Coruna to discuss regional and intermunicipal planning tools. I have brought along some experiences from an Austrian project: the vision Rheintal. Vision rheintal is a participation process for regional development and regional cooperation of the Rhine Valley in Vorarlberg / Austria. The project goes back to the year 2001. At that time conferences had been held regarding the regional challenges in the region, e.g.  
- the plans for a supra national highway connecting Germany and Switzerland and crossing a nature protected area of European importance
- projects of high-rise buildings
- the project of a golf-course in an area with high quality soil
- industrial development and shopping centers especially at the fringe of the towns
- and urban sprawl in general.
Some municipalities had started to update their spatial plans and it was more and more clear, that many problems could not be solved on the local level but needed intermunicipal / intercommunal perspectives. In 2003 stakeholder interviews were held. The results were presented in public meetings and published in a report. The message was: We want to have a vision, an over-all concept for the Rhine Valley.
I got the opportunity to direct the first phase of vision rheintal which lasted from the year 2004 to 2006. The project-claim / the motto we chose for the project is: „Raum kommunizieren planen“, which is in English „To communicate planning space“. Regional planning is not only a technical job, but communication between decision-makers, stake-holders, experts and citizens: politicians (mayors, deputies, governmental officials), representatives of the civil society like interest groups and NGOs, business men and women, opinion makers (media), experts (from the public administration staff, scientific institutes and private consultants) and citizens as local daily life experts.
There were also artists – poets, painters, composers – taking part in „vision rheintal“ and last but not least student groups from universities and colleges.
Before telling about the main steps of the planning process let me invite you to the rhine valley and give you some impressions on the landscape, towns and lifestyle.
Slide 2:

This is a map children used to learn geography in primary school in the 19sixties. You see several villages and towns scattered in a mountain valley. In the middle of the valley there is the River Rhine, which flows into the Bodensee, the Lake Constance. The River Rhine is the border between Austria and Switzerland, so it is the external frontier of the European Community. The biggest city – better to say town than city - was Bregenz, the provincial capital on the banks of the lake. It had about 20,000 inhabitants.

Two urban basiac patterns have been realized in only 40 years from 1960 to 2000, two urban models became reality, undesigned / unplanned and unscheduled: a „strip / ribbon city“ along the Austrian side of the valley and a „ring city“ in the north, close to Lake Constance.
The satellite image shows the dynamic development and the intensity of land-use. 10 Austrian and 5 Swiss municipalities became spatially fusioned to a ring, they have merged / flown together. In this „Ring City“ live about 150.000 inhabitants.

The Austrian Rhine Valley has about 240.000 inhabitants, there are about 12.000 enterprises, mainly in the service sector / tertiary sector, but the crafts and industries are still very important. They produce about 30 % of the economical added value.

Summarising the Swiss and Austrian area of the Rhine Valley there are about 450.000 inhabitants.

Let’s go back to the formation of the „Ring City“. The „Ring City“ has a green heart, in our local dialect called „Riad“.
Slide 4:

„Riad“ is a dialect word, for which we do not have an adequate term in the german language. It means something like „open land“, landscape, meadow. It looks like a big landscape garden or a park, but it is an agricultural area getting more and more important for recreation and leisure and for the ecological balance of the Rhine Valley. This „Central Park“ of the Rhine Valley should not be used for residential and industrial developments any further, it should not be intersected by roads, railway lines or other infrastructures.

The green spaces are very important for the quality of life of the citizens but also for commercial success in businesses. The „green infrastructure“ is a so-called „soft location factor“, motivating high quality enterprises and professionals to stay in the region or to move into the region.
Another important soft-factor is culture. Today we find international important events, performances and places for art and culture.

Highlights are:

- The Bregenz Festival every summer, where the main attraction is the opera performance on a stage in the lake. Last year we had Tosca and if you have not been there, you may have some impressions in the next James Bond movie. Some scenes were taken in the Rhine Valley during the festival season last summer.
- The „Schubertiade“ – the great Schubert festival, which attracts people from all over the world.
- The Feldkirch Festival with a very interesting spectrum of new and old music.
- The KUB (Kunsthaus Bregenz – „House of Arts“) with exhibitions of modern art. The building was designed by the famous Swiss architect Peter Zumthor.

You can find also small, but very special festivals and events, museums, cellar theaters, cabarets and jazzclubs.

When I left my home province for studying in Vienna in the late Seventies I was happy to leave that old fashioned place, boring for young people. Since that time things have changed a lot. When I come home it is always hard to decide which concert, action, performance or exhibition to attend, because there is not enough time for all of them.
Slide 6:

The Rhine Valley has become a region for young people. There are many places to go out, chilly and hot spots.
Slide 7:

You will find modern public transport:
City bus systems linked with regional busses.
Slide 8:

Rapid trains every 30 minutes, in a modern and comfortable design. A bike & train system is being set up: you may take your bike on the train or park it at the bike garage of the train station.
Slide 9:

Lively city centers with pedestrian areas and markets.
Meeting places and public open space.
Slide 11:

There are some factors that make the rhine valley a top region:

• There is room for urban lifestyle.
• Nature and recreation areas are just around the corner.
• There is a high level in services like public transport
• and there is a tradition of polycentrism.

That means that the centers of administration, culture, education and economy are not concentrated in the capital, but allocated in different municipalities. In a polycentric region you do not have the problems typically for monocentric regions, e.g.

• overcharging, capacity problems and congestion of the one and only center
• undersupply in the fringe areas
• long distances
• and social problems in the suburbs.
On the other hand the dynamical development of the region results into pressure on open-space.

Since the year 1960
- population has increased + 60%
- the number of apartments +160%
- the floorspace per person +260%
- the areas for building sites +700%
- the number of cars +1200%
- the buying power +600%
- and leisure time has doubled.

This all means an increase in quality of life but also in consumption of land and natural resources.

The map shows the extent of the towns in the 19sixties (red colour), the areas marked in yellow show the extentions up till today.
Slide 13:

The areal photo shows the problems of urban sprawl.
Slide 14:

Contemporary life style in the western industrial world have typical attributes in space:

- shopping centers
- leisure and event centers like multiplex cinemas

You find these new centers on the outskirts of the cities. The centers are car-oriented, they offer many parking lots and therefore produce very much traffic, noise and pollution.
Especially for smaller municipalities and communities it is not easy to preserve a local identity in periods of accelerated growth. Local communities merge to a pulp or mash of houses.

In the picture we see the merging of three villages
- in the front houses of Altach
- in the middle the village center of Mäder
- and in the back the fringe area of Koblach.

Every day life has been crossing community borders more and more within the last decades.

The citizens of Mäder work in different communities, many inhabitants of other communities vice versa in Mäder, you go shopping in one of the regional shopping centers, than you meet your friends in a city center lounge or cafe, in the evening young people go to a discotheque between industrial sites. For recreational purposes you may be a golfer, biker or nordic walker. Place of residence, recreation, work, school or business are not identical any more.

„My community shall be preserved as a village“ many local development concepts claimed in the 1990s.

Many people longed for familiar and traditional townshapes, clear and manageable structures, green between the houses, you know your neighbour and you communicate on a first-name basis.

The municipalities built new community centers.
Most of the new community centers show an extraordinary and remarkable modern architecture.
Some others were established in historical buildings, which were revitalised.
Local clubs and societies have been encouraged. In the Rhine Valley there are more voluntary fire brigades than communities. And every fire brigade has its own fire station and equipment. The slide shows the artist's view on this special and expensive custom. Lisa Althaus mapped the fire stations and named the collage „masculine houses“. The new fire stations are similar to churches.
The living space Rhine Valley forms many networks. Economical and social activities cross community borders. These interrelations show e.g. the maps

- „Favourite places of young people (left)“ – a favourite place of a young boy or girl is in average 8.7 kilometers away from his/her home
- „Daily commuters“ (people working in another municipality than their residential one).

The Rhine Valley is an addition of 29 communities. Everyday life uses the whole valley. There is no „region“ on the political and administrative level. There are just 29 communities belonging to the province, the land Vorarlberg with 92 communities. But in reality the region Rhine Valley is already existing.

The planning process vis!on rheintal has been promoting the Rhine Valley as a whole with its internal connections and to understand it as a common living space and planning area and the need of strategies and structures for cooperation.
When we started vis!on rheintal the mental maps looked much different from the real maps. The mental maps were fragmentated into a puzzle of 29 communities, all acting in regard to their own local benifits.
Slide 20:

These fragmentated mental maps were exactly the point where visión rheintal tied in.

A process of participation started to elaborate a vision and general concepts for the future development.

More than 1000 people were involved permanently, governmental and non-governmental organisations.
We established seven expert groups.

We worked in very different settings
• public fora and meetings
• expert groups
• and think-tanks

We produced
• exhibitions
• media reports
• published documents
• and the web site www.vision-rheintal.at
Slide 21:

We started by drawing common images of the Rhine Valley.

„What are our imaginations, our images and associations to the Rhine Valley?“
120 people asked themselves and the other participants in a planning workshop.
Slide 22:

And they drew and exchanged their mental maps.

A businesswomen, a representative of industries, a provincial governor, a farmer, a teacher, an architect worked out a map on the topic „Dynamic spaces and areas“.
Slide 23:

... a social worker, a major, a journalist, an expert in agriculture, en ecologist and others composed a map on the events and activities that influenced or coined spatial development.
Slide 24:

... a finance expert, an entrepreneur, an instrucure, an expert in environment discussed a difficult question: Where are „non-spaces“ and „non-areas“?
Slide 25:

... here a vice-major, an architect and a social scientist think about the spaces for women and girls.
Slide 26:

Than the participants changed the working tables and contributed to another topic. Here e.g. the discussion goes about „well-being places“.
Slide 27:

The results were 16 maps on very different topics.

The images are
  - spontaneous
  - colourful
  - spirited
  - and vital.

They look very different from our usual expert maps showing spatial analyses.

The mental maps were an important input and a tool for reflection in the expert teams later on. They opened new perceptions.
Slide 28:

It was important to take in perceptions from outside the region. Here you see e.g. Thomas Sieverts, the German urbanist and theorist on spatial development with the local expert group, undertaking a field trip.
Slide 29:

We took majors and deputies on an excursion to collect Swiss experience on intercommunal cooperation. In Switzerland several communities fused voluntarily within the last year.
We offered workshops to design visions of the future.
Slide 31:

Here the participants write stories of an imaginary future.
Slide 32:

The results got more and more precise.
Here local deputies discuss the guiding principles for regional development.
Slide 33:

Young people mapped their favorite places.
Slide 34:

The interventions of artists were very inspiring and quite uncommon in a process of regional planning. Painters, sculpturers and video artists made an exhibition, which was documented with a catalogue. There was a theater and music composition and performance on visión rheintal, students from Zurich University presented the invention of a generator of idyll. With a click people could change their your future environment.
Slide 35:

The first book published about vis!on rheintal was not a planning report, but a story book of the Rhine Valley, written and done by poets, essayists, cartoonists and photographers.
Slide 36:

A picture taken in one of the interdisciplinary expert meetings.
Slide 37:

In this workshop the public relation mandataries analysed the “channels of communication”.
Slide 38:

Advisors of different youth organisation concretise the map of meeting points for young people.
Slide 39:

The political level has been integrated from the beginning.

On one hand we had to take care for settings in smaller groups, where there is enough time and confidence to discuss controversially – e.g. in groups up to ten people, consisting of majors and vice majors.
Slide 40:

As a main level for the political debate the „Rhine Valley Conference“ was set up and tested in the first phase of the process. The members are:

• the majors of the 29 communities
• the members of the provincial government
• and the deputies coming from the Rhine Valley area.
Slide 41:

The organisational structure shows the boards and panels of the participation process.
Slide 42:

The results of the planning process were presented and published in a book.

It contains analyses, guidelines, concepts and projects for regional development and cooperation.

The topics are

- building activities and mobility
- landscape and open space
- industrial and business location
- public services
- regional cooperation and communication
- social and cultural development
Slide 43:

The next slides pick up some of the results.

The concept of polycentrism was confirmed in comparing other models like monocentrism, regional axes, hierarchies of centers or spatial dispersion. The reorganisation and framing of urban fragments like agglomerations of shopping centers is an urgent challenge.
There are three priority fields for intercommunal cooperation in allocating companies.
The main transport lines are

- the regional railway lines on both sides of the River Rhine, going through the most densely populated areas – it is the back-bone of the transport system;
- and highways at the boundary of the built-up areas.

Both systems shall have urban transport as a primary function and international interconnectivity only as a secondary function.
Red de espacios verdes

Una red de espacios verdes asegura un lugar para la naturaleza, el tiempo libre y el recreo.

Slide 46:

The map shows the vision of a green network for recreation, ecology and agricultural production close to the consumers.
Vacaciones de Verano /
Una tarde de domingo en el año 2021
en las orillas del río Rhin

Más espacio para el agua

Slide 47:

Water and prevention from flooding is one of the major challenges. visoin rheintal shows how to revitalise channelised rivers. We need more space for water. The ambition is to create synergies between different functions of rivers: ecology, groundwater preservation, flood prevention and recreation.
Slide 48:

Regarding to social services the Rhine Valley has the same problems as many other europeen regions:
- an increase of inhabitants (13% till 2030), but not as strong as in the last decades
- the number of elderly persons will be doubled
- families are getting smaller, so the number of households is increasing (+ 30 %)
- 1-person households are increasing much more (+ 64 %)

Under these conditions it might be difficult to maintain the quality of life at a high quality level.
The services have to be adapted.
The services have to be organised more efficiently on the intercommunal level.
Desde la cooperación a pequeña escala “un poquito de cooperación” hacia un proceso de planificación activo y colaborativo global.

Slide 49:

Cooperation has to be cultivated and extended from a level of selected points only up to a regional level.
We already have some intercommunal cooperations, but we still have mental barriers.
All communities and the provincial government have approved vision rheintal. They have signed a regional contract in the year 2007. The contract says:

1. The province Vorarlberg and the communities proceed in vision rheintal.

2. The overall concept is the guideline for acting.

3. In regard to spatial development und intercommunal cooperation the Rhine Valley is a learning region.

4. The province and the communities intend open processes, which do not exclude participation.

5. The Rhine Valley conference forces the cooperation. The rules are developed jointly.
Slide 51:

**vision rheintal is in the 4th phase now.**

**Phase 0:** The phase of preparation and orientation goes back to the year 2001.

**Phase 1:** Communicating the region resulted in guidelines for spatial development and cooperation.

**Phase 2:** Developing and organising the framework and structures for cooperation.

**Phase 3 is now ongoing as a learning region – concretising and implementing the vision.**
Already at the end of the second phase a regional project could be realised. It is called television rheintal, because it opens new fields of visions. Metal boards are installed at 34 spots in the Rhine Valley. A short text explains what you see. The window opens visions of values, ideas, problems and possible solutions. The Rhine Valley is visualised as a cross border living space.
¡Gracias por su atención!

Sibylla Zech
www.stadtland.at

Slide 53:
Thank you for your attention.
We hope to welcome you in the Rhine Valley soon.