Are you working on your fringe?

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'Even so, good opportunities still exist for converting city projects into city. Easy ones ought to be tried first on the premise that this is a learning challenge, and it is good policy for all learning to start with easy cases and work up to more difficult ones. The time is coming when we will sorely need to apply this learning to suburban sprawls since it is unlikely we can continue extending them without limit. The costs in energy waste, infrastructure waste, and land waste are too high. Yet if already existing sprawls are intensified, in favor of thriftier use of resources, we need to have learned how to make the intensifications and linkages attractive, enjoyable, safe, and sustainable – for foot people as well as car people.'

Jane Jacobs, *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*. Foreword to the Modern Library Edition, 1993

The city of the future is already here

Maarten van Tuijl and Isabelle Verhaert

URBACT is a European programme that funds knowledge exchange between cities in Europe. URBACT helps cities in developing pragmatic solutions that are new and sustainable, and that combine economic, social and environmental urban themes. URBACT networks produce action plans that are made in a participatory way in every city, and promote knowledge exchange on a network level. URBACT puts cities at the head of these networks and works to enhance the capacities of civil servants.

Sub>urban. Reinventing the fringe is an action planning network in the URBACT III programme. Knowledge on a particular theme is exchanged during seven transnational meetings and four field trips, while every partner works on an Integrated Action Plan in their own city. The cities are guided by the lead expert, Maarten van Tuijl (temp.architecture, Amsterdam). This publication is the end product of our network's activities.

**Lead partner: Antwerp (Belgium)
Project partners: Baia Mare (Romania), Barcelona Metropolitan Area (Spain), Brno (Czech Republic), Casoria (Italy), Düsseldorf (Germany), Oslo (Norway), Solin (Croatia), Vienna (Austria).**

In the wake of the Second World War, many historical cities found themselves unable to cope with the demographic changes and growth occasioned by the post-war economic boom. Nearly every European city expanded rapidly and drastically, with the result that there are now many large post-war districts close to the city centre (fringe areas) in urgent need of renewal. By the same token, such areas offer a tremendous opportunity for tackling many of the major challenges facing our cities today, such as rapid growth or, conversely, depopulation. As well as tackling these quantitative demographic changes, cities will also have to find ways of dealing with qualitative demographic changes, such as ageing and migration, and their possible negative effects like social isolation and segregation. Existing buildings, infrastructure and mobility will have to become more sustainable. Cities will increasingly have to offer compact living and working environments that are attractive and affordable. All these challenges converge and, at the same time, can be solved, in the fringe. A successful transformation of these fringe areas can help stimulate the development of compact sustainable cities by offering an attractive alternative to sprawl. Following the successful renewal of the historical centres of many European cities, the fringe is the next logical place in which to locate a city of the future based on an existing one. To become future-proof, the fringe needs an update. If it is to fulfil its promise, it needs to be improved and in some instances redesigned. 'Reinventing the fringe' is a critical reconsideration of post-war urban areas on the fringe of nine European cities, viewed from the perspectives of sustainability, social cohesiveness, mobility and land use.

The dilemma of the fringe

The urban fringe area, also known as the transitional belt, is the post-war zone around the city centre, which has diverse urban functions and often a relatively low density. It appears as a fragmented car-based collage landscape made up of modernist urban areas, old village nuclei, industrial zones and recreational areas, intersected by heavy infrastructure.

Viewed at the city region level through the eyes of the planner, the often underused fringe appears to offer opportunities for densification. Its fragmented, individualized and frequently monofunctional characteristics need to be addressed. Its proximity to the centre also offers excellent opportunities for the extension of public transport and the stimulation of sustainable mobility. Dealt with in this way, fringe areas could contribute to the aim of sustainable and compact city development.

When you zoom in, however, things are more nuanced. There are already people there, the buildings and land are already owned, used and serving purposes such as logistics, production, recreation or housing. Furthermore the physical fringe sometimes also coincides with a social fringe where people experience exclusion. Zooming in on the existing situation will reveal its own needs and desires.

So how can we intervene here? Planning for the fringe is a complex process that involves making difficult choices that take account of the interests of the people who are already there as well as sustainable ambitions and goals at the scale of the entire city region. Offering housing for new residents in the fringe is more sustainable than sprawl, but might lead to gentrification or push production and jobs further out of the city. Decisions made here by the city need to be well informed. Therefore, reinventing the fringe means simultaneously thinking about the consequences of new plans and ambitions on two levels: the level of the city region and the local level of the intervention site and its [immediate] vicinity. Challenges, opportunities and consequences need to be transparently discussed, weighed and considered in relation to one another.

Fringe challenges

The fringe presents many specific challenges. The five challenges below are not all-encompassing, but are the ones that the nine cities have worked on, because they considered them to be most relevant to them.

How can we manage complex urban transformation projects with fewer resources?

Maybe the biggest challenge of all is changing the way we plan itself. Urban transformation requires a different approach than urban expansion owing to its complexity and the number and diversity of people involved. Instead of determining the outcome by design early on, focusing on the process and its dynamics is much more productive. Good communication is key, but is also very time-consuming.

How can we reverse sprawl and stimulate compact and mixed neighbourhoods in the fringe instead?

For many cities the fringe is currently an unsustainable belt of often suboptimal and monofunctional land usage close to their inner cities. Vacant and underused buildings and land, such as large, one-storey supermarkets with vast outdoor parking lots, make for inefficient land use. Part of the challenge is to offer attractive alternatives to sprawl.

How can we counter social segregation?

Socio-economic segregation in the urban fringe, with pockets of social deprivation, often coexists with high levels of unemployment and suboptimal accessibility of public facilities and care, which might cause escalations, as we saw with the Banlieue riots in Paris and other French cities in 2005, but also in the fringes of other cities in Europe. Authorities often react by demolishing entire buildings and neighbourhoods and replacing them with new-build, while leaving the root causes untouched.

How can we overcome barriers?

Fringe areas are often divided by barriers, like highways, pipelines, cables and rail tracks, mostly servicing the historical centre. Infrastructure is one example of the subordinate role of the fringe and it highlights the need to rethink its identity and relation to the centre. It also shows that the fringe and its implications do not stop at the administrative boundary of a municipality, making regional coordination between often competing municipalities a crucial challenge.

How can we transform fragmented and privately-owned places?

The fringe appears as a fragmented area and, for the most part, has fragmented ownership, in which each individual plot is self-centred. Most of the property is privately owned and often lacks the collective layer necessary for achieving improvements. This is also due to its monofunctional and spatially segregated layout. Cross-plot development and collaboration needs to be stimulated, but this implies a very intensive and complex process.

Fringe opportunities

The fringe has the potential to become the city of the future due to its size, its location close to the city centre, the specific qualities of a mixed urban-green zone, and its age.

Scale (size) Owing to the size of the fringe, its future use will have a real impact for better or for worse. There are large areas in the fringe with room for improvement and the potential to absorb more programme.

Proximity As part of the existing morphological urban area, most fringe areas are close to existing city centres. This provides opportunities for both existing and future residents and for sustainable mobility concepts.

Best of both worlds The fringe holds the promise of combining the best of both worlds, having more amenities and being closer to the city centre than the low-density suburbs, but also offering more space and greenery than the city centre.

Momentum for change The fringe areas in the nine partner cities were built after the Second World War. The buildings are often in need of renovation or repurposing. This provides an opportunity to use this momentum of change to regenerate and rethink entire areas. Private parties are often not yet interested. The time for cities to make up their minds about these areas and act, is now! ■

Transforming planning

The basis for the success of a flexible, processes-oriented approach to planning (Flexible Planning) is the competence and energy of the people working in munici-palities (city administrations). They have to be able to operate effectively in more flexible processes, to work together with private stakeholders and take up new roles. Governments need to move from a traditionally passive regulatory role, to a more active, initiating and facilitating, matchmaking role. URBACT stimulates administrations to experiment with new participatory tools by testing them during transnational meetings and in project areas. Three of the strategies used are described below.

Flexible Planning
Linear blueprint planning, where plans are set out by a small group of experts, has proven inadequate in dealing the complexity of urban regeneration. Instead of determining outcome by design early on, it is much more productive to focus on the process and its dynamics. However, flexible planning is only valuable when cities learn and try to adapt their planning approach based on the lessons learned. In addition to a strategy, time and money,

the city administration needs to be open to talking about things that have gone wrong. An interesting example of flexible planning is the way that Antwerp goes about things. It starts with careful data analysis of an area in order to be able to weigh and legitimize planning options, then develops different visions for the fringe through a research-by-design pro-cess, tests these visions in pilot schemes and finally evaluates them in publications. In so doing, they have developed a learn-ing system.

Strategic Pilots
For most city administrations it is hard to get approval to experiment. The URBACT network itself, and the accompanying external funding, proved to be a very good way of creating living labs. City administrations were allowed to do things differently because it was in the context of an expert-guided, externally funded knowledge programme. Every city that hosted an international network event implemented at least one intervention actively using the momentum of the net-work to immediately implement a change. One interesting example is the opening of Michelangelo Park on a vacant military

site in Casoria, a city lacking public space. Another example is the re-linking of the city of Solin to the sea by reopening access to Marble Beach, which had been divided from the centre by heavy lines of infrastructure. The intervention includ-ed the opening of an underpass-cum-artwork. Importantly, the URBACT pro-gramme not only resulted in discussions and plans, but also provided the opportu-nity to actually put ideas into practice.

Working on two levels
All of the partners in the URBACT network are working on two levels. They work on the level of their city's urban strategy, and they test this strategy in one or more pilot schemes. The idea is that the vision informs the schemes, and the experience of the pilot schemes in turn informs the overall city strategy. In Oslo, the Integrated Action Plan encompasses five different pilot sites in Hovinbyen, an area with a pre-existing vision on the level of the entire area. On each site a process involving a different group of stakehold-ers was initiated. This way of working created a momentum that emboldened private stakeholders to move outside their comfort zone and experiment. ∎

Step by Step lab

Casoria *Enrico Formato, Architect and PhD in Urban and Regional Planning, University of Napels*

Casoria is a town in the Naples metropolitan region, with about 80,000 inhabitants. It experienced massive demographic growth after the Second World War, due to the concentration of industries and its proximity to the main city and infrastructures.

Today, Casoria is in crisis. Several industries have relocated their factories, many shopping centres are struggling, there is a lot of vacant office space and services have been cut back. In addition, the population is in decline, unemployment stands at 30%, and citizens are generally distrustful of public policies. The urban settlements were built in a dense and illogical way; moreover, thousands of apartments and warehouses were constructed in contravention of the town planning rules. Deep political and social conflicts have so far hindered the regeneration of brownfield sites.

A new structural plan for Casoria

In 2013, the municipal administration commissioned the technical office to draft a new urban plan, in consultation with me. The plan – adopted by the city council in September of the same year – is based on a strategic framework (Structural Plan), with basic rules that can be flexibly articulated in Operational Programmes, to be drawn up when conditions and opportunities are favourable.

The first Operational Programme focuses on the abandoned, underutilized and degraded areas – the so-called 'wastescapes' – flanking the major infrastructures that cross the territory. The strategy uses wastescapes to push the urban transformation. In this case a large open park (forest, playground, additional facilities) – whose extension in 2025 will amount to a quarter of the entire municipal territory – will change the urban structure of Casoria. So, especially in the perception of inhabitants and stakeholders, the present brown-grey settlement will be progressively converted into a living green city.

Step by step strategy

Real transformation projects are essential for the success of the planned activities. That is why the strategy starts with small-scale actions: temporary public uses of abandoned lands, massive planting of trees and hedges, and steady redesign of pedestrian, cycling and ecological paths. This first steps show direct results which builds the trust of citizens in the local government. At the same time it is a learning experience for the city offices, the politicians and the participating citizens.

Gradually the step by step strategy moves forward to more complex transformations: the redevelopment of brownfields, the renewal of high-density urban areas and the restoration of historical settlements.

The process of clarifying town planning rules must take place within the framework of a transparent negotiation: it will be conducted in a 'public arena', open to citizens and associations, so that urban flexibility cannot generate corrupt processes. To start negotiations, private »

Step by step from small scale actions in public domain to renewal of entire areas

owners of the brownfield sites will be required to provide public paths open to temporary public use. This way, central public spaces can be immediately obtained and the green networks – founded in the fringe – can reach into the city core.

The first steps

The foundation of the public green network was the first transformative step, made feasible by the public ownership of many plots and by the low value of private plots located in the fringe. In 2015, thanks to this town planning strategy, Casoria was admitted by Antwerp to the city network Sub>Urban, obtaining funding for the Urbact III programme. Sub>Urban has been a good opportunity for enriching the public debate and improving technical skills; moreover, citizens and politicians have felt proud of their city's participation in the network, collaborating with cities like Oslo and Vienna. A strong cooperation (for the Urbact LAP and other initiatives) with the Department of Architecture of the University of Naples has also been established, resulting in the involvement of many students, researchers and professors in the design and implementation of the Integrated Action Plan (IAP). A wide participation process has been facilitated by a massive information campaign, conducted on social media. Thus, many citizens and local stakeholders are now involved in the co-creation and co-construction of the public Michelangelo Park (about 3.5 ha, the largest in Casoria).

Meanwhile, the local action group is intensively working on the drafting of a municipal regulation for the co-management of abandoned public areas.

The challenges of implementation

However today, the Structural Plan, approved in 2013, has actually been sidetracked. Paradoxically, while politicians have not properly supported the Structural Plan and its general strategic vision, they are financing the Integrated Action Plan: about 200,000 euros were allocated to its realization from the Municipal Budget. But implementation without an agreed vision is risky, especially when it comes to the next steps of brownfield development and transformation of the existing fabric.

The next challenge is the financing of next projects. Will the city of Casoria be able to apply the innovative methods of experimentation learned during the Urbact programme during the next steps when more funding is at stake? ∎

'The foundation of the public green network was the first transformative step, made feasible by the public ownership of many plots and by the low value of private plots located in the fringe.'

Urban activation through collective landscaping

Casoria *Miguel Georgieff / atelier Coloco interviewed by Isabelle Verhaert*

There is an old military domain in Casoria for which the municipality's structure plan envisions a future park. Instead of starting to design this park behind a desk with landscape experts, Casoria invited citizens, neighbours, schools, the University of Naples and people from all over Europe to pick up a shovel and start planting trees. This action was guided by the French atelier Coloco. Time to talk with Coloco's Miguel Georgieff in detail about what they did.

Miguel Georgieff: Casoria was a short-term project for us. Further implementation is currently in the hands of the municipality and its technical department. Our contribution was aimed at getting people to look at the space in a different way: to stop looking at the space – an abandoned site, unloved, in a complex urban configuration – as problematical and to start looking at its potential – for co-creating a park, highlighting the existing species and enriching the ecosystem, sharing places, gaming, meeting up …

The creation of a well-functioning park is possible from the moment the project becomes an optimistic vision and not a response to an existing constraint. By drawing inspiration from the adaptive and transformative capacities of plants, by imagining the possible future of this wasteland, we offer a dimension that makes it possible to envision the future differently. The challenge is to move from an 'unlikely' situation to a shared

**Urban transformation by guerrilla gardening
in the Michelangelo Park, Casoria**

desire that drives political and economic forces and citizens towards a possible and noticeable improvement in the situation in the long term.

Can you tell us something more about this method of 'joint construction'?
For landscape designers, the challenge posed by joint construction is to take on board the complexity of a group's relationship to the space in question. This approach of working together has been developed over a period of twenty years, in extremely diverse situations, by Atelier Coloco. The idea of the Commons and the spatial form it takes, are constantly redefined through collective action. There are no preliminary drawings. Understanding the dynamics of life in this place orientates the project, which evolves step by step during the actions taken and in accordance with the biological and social diversity of the place.

What would you like to change in the urban planning process today?
MG: Public urban transformation projects throughout Europe are often driven by technical criteria. It is both ecologically

and socially difficult to integrate existing resources and potential assets into these processes. The possibility of generating or nourishing social and ecological dynamics must be taken into account from the beginning, so that they can live on independently afterwards. Taking living phenomena into account is more complex than dealing with supposedly objective quantifiable economic and technical criteria. The success of and demand for our work shows that there is a growing understanding of the need to work 'with' the resources, rather than against them.

By co-designing a park with designer, users and maintenance staff on the one hand and starting from the existing ecology on the other hand, you ensure that the park will not only look good when it is finished, but that it will also have value for years to come. In Casoria funds for managing public space are limited. How does this affect your work?
The starting point of a project is the analysis of the ecological dynamics of the place. Future management will consist merely of supporting this, of guiding it in the right direction for possible uses of

the space. The management and maintenance needs are basic criteria for the implementation of the project and they inspire all concerned to make a concerted effort and so reduce costs – an important consideration in cities like Casoria.

The success of a project is dependent on the way in which a group of human beings become responsible for the care of the place and its enrichment. If we have succeeded in conveying this vision as an opportunity to improve our relationship to a space, then the best possible outcomes can be achieved and the project will therefore be successful. The shape and the image of the places are only temporary questions, certainly important, but always considered in their capacity for transformation. ■

Lab XX – creating a living lab

Antwerp *Isabelle Verhaert, urban planner for the city of Antwerp and project coordinator of sub>urban*

'The development of a new urban renewal culture takes time', says Michiel Dehaene, associate professor of urban design at Ghent University and a former Antwerp city architect. Which was why he proposed setting up a permanent living lab in Antwerp for knowledge gathering and experimenting in the fringe. Lab XX started operating in 2013.

Dehaene explains: According to general prognoses, the city was expecting a large increase in population (+ 20% in 15 years). We observed the first effects of an unmonitored population increase on children, who were unable to find a place in schools. At the same time, the departments of planning and building permits were confronted with more and more building applications for developments in the 20th-century fabric. The city's urban strategies and regulations were tailored to brownfield redevelopment and to the rigid 19th-century building blocks and older areas of central Antwerp. However, our standard solutions did not seem to be suited to the 20th-century fabric in the fringe. We didn't know how to intervene effectively in this hybrid context.

An assignment for four design teams
So, two studies were conducted within the administration. The first gathered all the available GIS data and the second analysed the historical growth of the city

Lab XX reveals the potential of an area by 'research by design', team 51N4E-CONNECT&TRANSFORM

region. With these two studies, we shared the knowledge that was already available within the city administration; the data analyst and designers who worked on the study became the first members of an expanding sounding board of experts.

At the same time, we were inspired by Bordeaux's '50,000 logements' process, directed by La CUB (Communauté Urbaine de Bordeaux/Bordeaux Métropole). In particular, the parallel research by different design teams, each with their own specific perspectives, caught our attention.

Lab XX's second step was to select four design teams. It is important to note that the teams did not have to provide a solution for the entire challenge or the entire area. The assignment procedure made it possible to select four complementary approaches. Together the teams produced a vision for the 20th-century belt made up of four different scenarios. This is what is called 'research by design': different scenarios that reveal the potential of an area are used to guide the discussion and to communicate with a wider audience.

Gradually we learned to be selective in terms of who we invited. Everyone from the city, the teams and the external experts needed to bring something to the table. We learned to use different process tools to stimulate interaction and exchange, while trying to eliminate rivalry. We learned to use the knowledge and data within the city administration to guide the teams. At the same time, the external experts taught us to look differently at the places and the assignment. The design-based research that was conducted within Lab XX is primarily a study of the area's potential. The outcome of Lab XX is not a final plan for how and where to compact the city. In fact, it mainly helps us to understand what is feasible and how densification can be linked to qualitative urban renewal.[1] Gradually the assignment changed. Instead of being treated as a bad thing, population growth was to be welcomed in the 20th-century belt as a necessary condition for qualitative and sustainable transformation. The living lab experience enabled us to reformulate our question.

Focus on places to work in the fringe
After one year of work and discussions, we produced a publication and organized

an external debate aimed at getting as much feedback as possible. We seized this moment to evaluate and decide on the next steps. A flexible plan does not mean you are in a constant state of uncertainty. It means that you have a plan that you implement and communicate, but there is also scope for periods of uncertainty during which you evaluate and adjust.

One of the criticisms was that Lab XX focused on housing and amenities, and did not give sufficient consideration to the question of growth and variety of job opportunities. So Lab XX expanded to include other topics. A new assignment was drawn up and three design teams were selected to focus on industry and jobs. They involved factory owners and included them in the design process. New techniques of participation and drawing were used to capture their interviews and discussions. Initially, we were a bit sceptical about this direct participation in a research study for developments that were not going to be physically built. However, we considerably enlarged our community of people talking and thinking about the potential of the fringe.

Growing community on the fringe
At the same time there were parallel research studies on smart densification in Ghent and the Flemish region. In Antwerp, people from mobility, social and environmental departments launched studies on the future of the 20th-century belt. Students in several architecture faculties in Flanders were also working on the fringe. The discussion expanded to the neighbouring municipalities south of Antwerp. URBACT created the opportunity to exchange knowledge with eight European cities on the topic. The community of people thinking about – and experimenting in – the post-war urban fabric is growing. Now the challenge is to gather all this knowledge together and go one step further using smart policy decisions. That is the objective of the Integrated Action plan in Antwerp.

And what happened on the ground?
Within the city administration, there is a team of six designers who are conducting 'research by design' into the complex planning processes for projects that are not amenable to assessment using standard spatial instruments, and opening up the discussion with preliminary research

and scenarios and enabling us to test the strategies proposed during Lab XX in real projects. Thus, thinking and acting are working in parallel. This immediate testing of concepts allows us to continuously discuss and fine-tune them in real-life cases and with real-life stakeholders. ▪

1   See also: Dehaene, Michiel and Kristiaan Borret, 'Towards a renewal of urban renewal'. In: *Lab XX. Opting for the Twentieth Century Belt*, p. 133.

Transforming for intensified use

'Intensifying use' means making better use of existing underused public spaces and buildings, creating mixed- and multiple-use environments and adding new construction where possible. For most city governments it is easiest to focus on the intensification of the use of the public space, since they own this land. When it comes to privately owned buildings the examples of bottom up temporary reuse especially of vacant buildings are plentiful. However, to facilitate a more long-term reuse or intensified use, and depending on market pressure, the city may have to take an active role to make a change for the better. When developing plans to add new construction or stimulate mixed- and multiple-use in an already developed urban area, the city must often confront a challenging negotiation arena due to fragmented ownership and interests.

Placemaking and temporary use as a way of activating underused space
How can heritage be used to attract people to an unappealing former industrial area in the fringe? In Oslo, the Oxer

tower has been preserved as a relic of the industrial area. Early on in the process, the developer used renderings to envision cultural and recreational activities for the tower and then programed events and temporary use to reconfigure the building to match the cultural sector's plans for the building, with the aim of putting the area on the map.

Mixed use
Mixed use can be applied to both an area and a building. One positive example of a function-neutral building is the NCC building in Oslo, which is counting on the transition of the entire area from retail-industry-office to a mixed urban area. Although constructed as an office building, it can easily be transformed into a residential building with a shared garden and apartments at the back. This kind of flexibility requires substantial upfront investment that not all investors are willing to make.

Antwerp has launched the Lab XX-work to research the densification of industrial parks and the successful mix of

work and housing in a compact neighbourhood. At the same time, Antwerp is experimenting with Lageweg in Hoboken. The intention is to keep the existing businesses and stimulate a more mixed development, including housing. This experimental project is still at the start, but it is already clear that mixing functions and combining housing with productivity based on the ideal of historical cities, though possible in theory is still very hard to achieve in practice. ■

Flexibility in rules and quality control

Vienna *Volkmar Pamer, urban planner at the city of Vienna*

The KDAG Cable and Wire Factory is a 6.3-hectare site in the transition zone between the densely inhabited core of the city and the suburbs: the fringe of Vienna. It is very well connected to the public transport system by two metro stations.

In December 1997 the abovementioned factory in Vienna's 12th municipal district, Meidling, closed its doors. Meidling, a once typical working-class district, has a population of approximately 83,000 people. The factory's shutdown not only deprived many people of their jobs, it also spelled an end to a chapter in Vienna's industrial history. There is barely any family in Meidling that was not affected by the factory's history. Thus, the process began with a local citizens' competition.

This step was essential to overcome the resistance to any planning, which arose automatically after the factory was closed. The people's reluctance was understandable; 'their' cable factory did not exist anymore, which led to concerns for the future. The citizens' competition was held to enable people to express those concerns, as well as their desires and development suggestions.

The citizens were asked who might be interested to join the citizen advisory board, to accompany the planning process and to act as a link between the planners and the citizens. Finally, three out of the 30 people interested in participating were selected. At a later stage, the plans were regularly communicated back to the neighbourhood and the cultural interim use of the site attracted more than 500,000 visitors to different events. »

FACTS AND FIGURES

- Site: brownfield area in Vienna
- Size: c. 6.3 hectares
- Owner: initially eight developers with a few smaller parts (esp. border areas) belonging to the City of Vienna. Now a single developer: Kabelwerk Bautraeger GmbH
- Architects: Mascha&Seethaler, Schwalm-Theiss Gressenbauer, Hermann&Valentiny, pool Architektur, Werkstatt Wien Spiegelfeld, Holnsteiner & Co, DI Wurnig
- Use: c. 1000 apartments, offices, geriatric unit, cultural activities, parks

The Kabelwerk area offers a lot of shared facilities like hobby rooms, a communal kitchen, a roof-top swimming pool, a gym and a sauna

A flexible plan and a continuous discussion

The next step was an architectural design competition. However, it was important not to ask for a detailed and fully designed plan. The goal was to consider new ways of urban planning, in urban structures. The competition brief accordingly asked for new concepts that would allow for flexible future urban planning. The winning proposal allowed for reflection and development: the perfect basis for the subsequent planning process.

In the cable and wire factory planning procedure, we tried to develop the site together with architects, developers and the municipality. The initial talks were quite turbulent, but after a while positions changed and the atmosphere improved. Sticking to a strict time schedule was necessary to ensure continuity in work. The group, which met every fortnight, also invited experts like landscape designers, traffic planners, etc.

Every six to eight months a report on progress in planning was presented to a so-called urban supervisory group, which consisted of the head of the architectural competition jury, Mr. Sieverts from Bonn, but also politicians, the citizen advisory board, heads of several municipal departments and the city's director of planning. The plans were discussed intensively after which the group decided which direction further planning should take. There were criticism and suggestions, rejections and recommendations.

A flexible system and the Poolhaus

This planning process generated a zoning and a development plan. The backbone of these plans was the definition of the public space. Instead of defining the objects (the buildings), we started by defining the public space. The important question was how to create quality public space. We therefore defined space-relevant parameters. The other features of the plans were firstly, the definition of the street-level spaces, which were to be reserved for public functions, and secondly, the restrictions in height and cubage in absolute numbers. Additional cubage can be used to provide extra quality in the form of, for example, more generous floor heights or roofed areas for the public.

A nice example how bonus cubage is used is the project 'poolhouse'. This consists mainly of ready-furnished flats for short-term residents. The project offers a lot of shared facilities like hobby rooms, a communal kitchen, a roof-top swimming pool, a gym and a sauna. The gym, sauna and swimming pool are open to all residents of the Kabelwork area, making this the most public building in the quarter. The entrance hall and staircases (bonus cubage) are made with such grandeur that they encourage social interaction between neighbours and permanent residents of the surrounding area, in a building with a high turnover of residents. What is most special about the Poolhaus is not the shared facilities, but the fact that they are located in the finest parts of the building. The laundry room (bonus cubage) for example is on the 6th floor with a nice view over the Southern part of Vienna.

The success of the project lies in the combination of intelligent flexible regulations, quality control (by the urban supervisory group) and a good facilitation by the municipality. ■

Converting Vulkan

Oslo *Sverre Landmark of Aspelin Ramm Property interviewd by Isabelle Verhaert*

The Vulkan Factory is a former foundry located beside the Akerselva river in Oslo. When the foundry closed in the 1960s, the site was used for storage and craft businesses, sealed off from the rest of the city. The redevelopment of the Vulkan site started in 2004 with high ambitions of sharing land and resources in a dense and multifunctional area. Vulkan is now reconnected to the river and links two neighbourhoods. The buildings there are an interesting mix of new and old, giving identity to the new neighbourhood. The result is impressive compared to other projects. Reason enough to talk to Sverre Landmark, of Aspelin Ramm property developers who built the project together with Anthon B. Nilsen. Aspelin Ramm currently have their offices in Vulkan.

The creation of a mixed use area and the preservation of an old factory building thanks to the long term commitment of the developer

Vulkan combines dwellings, two hotels, two schools, offices, a market hall with restaurants and bars, a dance stage, etc. What made you decide to aim for this ambitious mix of functions?
Sverre Landmark: The location, the topography and the people's perception of the place made us think that we needed to create a place. We took one very important decision: to set out a strategy to make a 'little city' within the city. We had a strong belief in four elements: culture, education, food and sports. Also important was our decision to be environmentally ambitious. Sharing (of energy, for instance) is easier in a mixed-use area, simply because different users may have complementary needs. Today Vulkan is virtually self-sufficient energy-wise, for both heating and cooling.

We also facilitate the sharing of services and spaces, as in the car sharing arrangement. We further encourage offices to use the lunch and dinner restaurant of the PS:hotel as a canteen. This serves to reduce the size of offices and the PS:hotel gets a larger turnover. The Dansens Hus conference spaces can be rented by the hotels.

How did you go about realizing this?
There are different kinds of developers. We have a long-term-vision and are used to staying on board for longer periods of time in our projects. We say that a project is not finished when the buildings are built. An area takes time to evolve. We therefore did not sell every space, but rented out most of the functions except for the apartments which, in accordance with normal practice in Norway, are owner-occupied. Especially for commercial functions, it is essential that there is one owner only, or alternatively several owners, but with a common management or at least common visions and goals. Note that you need to have some guidelines and strategies in place before you start building. People often forget the management structures of a building. »

FACTS AND FIGURES

- Site: rehabilitation area in Oslo
- Size: 1.6 hectares
- Property developers: Aspelin Ramm and Anthon B. Nilsen
- Architects: LPO Architects for the overall plan
- Use: 2 hotels, 144 dwellings, 2 schools, market hall, restaurants and bars, offices, dance stage

Our buildings are divided into different legal entities to provide for flexibility in the future structure of ownership. One or more offices or residential units may be sold while the developer retains ownership of the retail sections, which are accessible to the public. This gives us the flexibility to shift spaces and functions within the project.

How do buyers react?
We started early – again with the idea to create a city within the city. We were very clear on our ambitions to create a mixed urban area and to share as much as possible. We also stated that "different thinking needs alternative rooms" – we signalled that we wanted to attract those who were thinking a little differently, more creatively, with less conformity.

You showed us the Mathallen, a beautiful old building with bars and restaurants. This part is not profitable in itself, but gives a lot of added value to the entire project.
Every project is unique, but clearly the old factory building adds a lot of identity and atmosphere to the area, and every day there are people asking questions about the history of the area and the city. To utilize 'the old factory' for a public market is just like a dream! Mathallen is profitable when we add up the indirect impact on the hotels, on parking revenue and the increased demand it is creating for office space.

How did the city make the process easier?
The city eased our process by accepting a wide range of functions in the programme, which gave us the flexibility we needed. There are certainly obstacles, such as the need for separate infrastructure for retail/office versus housing, but there is little the city could do except – maybe – finding incentives. Oslo's Agency for Planning and Building Services really did a lot, not least in the way they organized their follow-up of the project.

What advice can you give to urban planners who are focusing on the redevelopment of a site in Hovinbyen in Oslo, and in urban fringe areas elsewhere in Europe?
Think differently. And be visionary. In every place – for every project – there is a need for strong visions and 'ownership' of the creative process. Make sure that the city does not invent processes that kill the visionary projects. And finally, don't jettison functions that are in place: well-functioning industries, storage facilities and workshops should be allowed to stay if at all possible, and don't make life too difficult for them. ■

'Make sure that the city does not invent processes that kill the visionary projects.'

Tackling the physical and mental barriers

Solin *Marijana Žižić, urban planner for the city of Solin*

The municipality of Solin (18 km²/pop. 24,125) is part of the Split conurbation. Split is the second largest city in Croatia. Over the past twenty years, the population of the city centre has decreased while that of the surrounding region has increased. Solin has grown rapidly and its residents are among the youngest in Croatia, due to cheaper housing and the proximity of Split.

Passing through Solin, visitors soon discover that the municipality is characterized by a massive road infrastructure near its centre. Solin is dramatically intersected by different types of infrastructure –highways, railways, industrial sites and oil pipelines – and also by a huge archaeological site in the heart of the city. Those barriers create isolated areas whose combined effect is only apparent from the air. Over the years, the multiplicity of barriers increased so much that the city lost all its connections with the coast.

Because of Solin's rapid growth, the public domain is fragmented and is generally underused. In the past few years, citizens have noticed this and expressed the need to reconnect with the waterfront. Large physical infrastructural barriers are not easily removed, however, especially not for a small municipality in Croatia. Building a large tunnel or reducing the number of lanes or the speed limit is not possible at this moment.

Instead of being paralysed by these problems, Solin focused on modest interventions. We were unable to influence the physical barrier, but we could make the mental barriers smaller. By making small,

Sub>urban opening event of wall paintings to make underpass more attractive

inexpensive and innovative interventions in the segregated urban space, we put the barriers themselves in the spotlight and treated them as an opportunity. We have realized several specific projects aimed at creating new connections and uses.

The first project is a pedestrian underpass beneath a street with heavy traffic, which children use daily on their way to and from school. To avoid the danger of making it an unattractive and dark space that ends up underused, the walls were painted with site-specific graffiti. The underpass area is larger than its primary function requires, making it more of a space and less of a passageway. There is even scope for small-scale sporting activities. Thus, the underpass has become a new public space and a new tourist attraction.

A second project concerns the refurbishment of the beach. This beach had been used for generations, but because of industrial expansion during the 20th century and regional infrastructural networks, it had become isolated and abandoned.

The decline, or downsizing, of industry presents new opportunities for the revitalization of the coastline. The city decided to adopt a participatory approach, involving the local citizens in the design process. We started with a clean-up of

the beach and seabed. Currently, we are in the process of site-development and landscape works. Even with these small improvements, citizens have started to use the beach again, reclaiming the public space. For this site, we managed to persuade nearby industrial companies and the County to provide funding.

A third project, not far from the beach, is situated at the estuary of the River Jadro. There is a bridge across the estuary which has an important industrial heritage history. This former railroad bridge is now unused and unmaintained, but because of its historical significance, it has the potential to become a symbolic link between the past and the present. To draw attention to that potential, a light installation was created on the bridge, providing night-time illumination and highlighting the industrial landmark.

A fourth project is financed through a different EU-funded project. Four artistic installations presenting the history of Solin – marsh, archaeology, port and industry – were made along the riverside. A reconstructed pathway beside the installations created an additional attraction in public space and formed a new recreational zone.

All four projects are modest in themselves, but together they function as a sys-

tem that connects pedestrian public space in Solin. The projects were constructed in a participatory way, with the result that they were immediately appropriated and used by the citizens. In the future, they will be part of a new strategy for the city.

Looking ahead, the city wants to go even further. As well as intensifying the use of the public domain by providing new connections, we are keen to tackle the large brownfield areas along the coast of Solin. In preparation for that we have organized an international student workshop. Students and professors of architecture from Ljubljana, Split and Zagreb will identify and analyse problematic hotspots and suggest solutions for further improvement. The workshop will result in a public exhibition, which promises to be very interesting.

All these interventions and studies present a new approach to dealing with Solin's problems. The collaboration and the results of these interventions have been mind-opening for the public and other stakeholders, even for the administration itself. They have shown that it is not necessary to tear down all the barriers, but instead to deal with them by means of modern and affordable measures that help to forge new connections and open up new public spaces. ■

Transforming for social inclusion

Social inclusion is primarily about the well-being of people. Public space and buildings have only a partial impact on this. More important are access to education, jobs, care, rights and membership of a social network. Düsseldorf and Barcelona were the cities that promoted this theme, since they were both working on pilot sites in social housing estates. For Düsseldorf an important challenge lies in spreading the benefits of growth and regeneration equally and in providing affordable housing, high-quality public space, jobs and facilities for all. An increasing number of other cities adopted the theme, recognizing that social inclusion is a challenge in their urban fringes as well. Even in Oslo, with its well-organized welfare system, Rodeo Architects reflected during one of our meetings: "Oslo is a city with growing pains. One indicator are the fast-rising housing prices: How to solve the tension between compact neighbourhoods and affordable housing?" Alongside affordable housing, social cohesion was one of the main topics investigated.

Social Cohesion
Involving the right stakeholders and em-

powering them is the first step in achieving social cohesion. The project 'Rath und Tat' in Düsseldorf demonstrated the importance of qualitative facilitators. The space itself (a youth theatre, a commercial street, a square and bar) is not enough, social cohesion is about linking a space to activities and gradually building up a community. This starts with the simple act of bringing people together. However, this encounter between people often needs some kind of push to break the ice and create the right setting.

The city of Vienna is a good example of a mixed city with a large stock of affordable housing spread across the entire city and with good access to public amenities. This is the result of Vienna's specific history and growth pattern, which was not achieved overnight. To transform an already segregated city into a more mixed one, is much more difficult. As we saw during a field trip to Marseilles, national programmes and funding alone are not enough. Demolishing existing large, 1970s housing estates in the north of the city, replacing them with 50% less new housing (in accordance with contemporary standards) and relocating the other 50% to other areas, might on paper

suggest the creation of a more mixed city. However, given the failure to tackle fundamental issues, such as jobs, education and care, with the same 'grand projet' attitude, it remains to be seen whether anything will really change for the people who live there now.

Affordable housing
The construction of social housing and affordable housing can be a concrete way of fighting gentrification. It differs from city to city, but in our network we have seen examples of how social housing can be a part of the project (Military hospital Antwerp: 25% social housing, 50% affordable housing). We have also focused on cooperatives in our examples, since that is a way of making housing more affordable (15% lower price in Französischer Viertel Tübingen). The precedents are there that show affordable housing is feasible, especially in larger projects. The fringe, where the land prices are still lower than in the city centre, provides good opportunities for affordable housing. It just needs to be prioritized in projects. Essentially affordable housing in the fringe is a political decision. ■

Urban development and social management

Düsseldorf *Barbara Wolf, Senior Expert Urban Renewal and Project Manager Social City at the Urban Planning Office of the City of Düsseldorf.*

Under the umbrella of the Social City programme, the national and state governments have jointly supported the stabilization and upgrading of neighbourhoods affected by multiple types of deprivation. The programme pursues a cooperative strategy, transcending policy-making in the field of construction, and pooling other available public funds in the designated areas.

The programme relies on a number of instruments and tools, such as the area-based approach, the bundling of resources, integrated development concepts, neighbourhood management, empowerment, participation, neighbourhood funds, evaluation and monitoring, and the stabilization of regeneration strategies beyond the period in which development grants are awarded.

Its action fields and strategies comprise housing, upgrading of the residential environment and public spaces, ecology, transportation, social integration, education, culture, sports and leisure, public health, local economy, public safety, image and public relations. The programme aims at developing measures and projects that consider local needs in all relevant action fields. Empowerment and participation have a much higher status than in other grant programmes, since residents in areas funded by Social City often lack the resources required for civic engagement.

Düsseldorf is, in accordance with a specific Local Action Plan, already investing in three Social City areas by means of structurally-integrative and socially-integrative measures aimed at the sustainable improvement of local living conditions.»

Junges Schauspielhaus is a theatre that engages not only a set of very talented young actors form a variety of ethnic backgrounds, but it also connects refugees with locals

Social City 'Garath 2.0 – Citizens shape change'

Located in the southern part of Düsseldorf's fringe, Garath is a typical housing project district of the 1960s and '70s. It is currently the focus of the integrated action and participatory strategy of the Garath 2.0 project. Meanwhile, a city-wide neighbourhood development concept is to be created. This will include a coordinated strategy for further development of Düsseldorf city districts, as well as a model for interdepartmental and inter-institutional cooperation. The Garath 2.0 project is a prime example of this conceptual approach.

Garath faces specific challenges: the district is home to 18,730 inhabitants, of whom 11% are unemployed, a higher proportion compared to Düsseldorf as a whole. Rents are below the city average and the living space is often not adequate for today's demands, which sometimes leads to a concentration of social problems. In addition, there are other urban deficits such as a patchy retail supply and alack of attractive green and open spaces.

A special feature of the Garath 2.0 project is the comprehensive participation of citizens, with different formats integrated into each planning step. Particularly noteworthy is Neighbourhood Branding, a project aimed at mapping a shared perception of the future of the neighbourhood. Two Integrated Action Plans have been developed with some 50 measures, two-thirds of which will be funded by the Social City programme and by 'Strong Neighbourhoods - Strong People', a joint project of the European Regional Development Fund and the European Social Fund for disadvantaged areas.

Social City in Rath

Located in the north-eastern part of Düsseldorf's fringe, Rath consists of heterogeneous housing areas. It still has affordable rents and traditional working-class districts, but it lacks public and green space, has several brownfield sites and deficits in the social structure and the educational level. In the last six years the funding provided by the Social City programme has improved living conditions by developing new housing projects, a new playground for kids, new public space anda new family centre building. This high density of social infrastructure,

initiatives and activities has generated social cohesion.

Rath has a commercial street and, like many district centres in the fringe, problems with vacancies and difficulties attracting customers. To counter these challenges, the Social City programme is financing a project called KIQ, which stands for Cooperation in the Neighbourhood. A committed architect is activating and organizing local residents to appreciate the individual residential real estate, to develop the retail real estate and to increase the attractiveness of public space. Recently, they organized a quick service to deal with illegal dumping of waste in the streets. To record and promote all the temporary activities, the architect designs beautiful, cheap and practical postcards of every event for the locals.

Social inclusion is not only about providing inclusive public space or designing mixed urban areas. It is also about people meeting oneanother. Sometimes this personal contact needs to be stimulated or framed.

Düsseldorf was one of the first cities in Germany to have a youth theatre featuring young actors and aimed at a young audience. In those days, it was tucked away in the fringe in a former bomb factory. To link all cultures, the theatre today is not merely engaging a set of very talented young actors from a variety of ethnic backgrounds, but is also actively connecting refugees with locals from the neighbourhood and the city through their 'Café Eden – Refugees are welcome!' programme. The public space in front of the café, redesigned as a Garden of Eden, is also an important meeting place in the fringe neighbourhood.

The Social City urban development assistance programme, applied in Düsseldorf-Garath and Rath, is a unique tool for implementing integrated urban development concepts at the local level. The Social City process illustrates how cooperation within the administration, with business and civil society, can be beneficial for better life chances in the district. In addition, the tailored participation formats strengthen the trust of local people in a public interest-oriented urban renewal policy. ■

Badia del Vallès, a large housing estate in the AMB fringe

AMB *Mireia Peris Ferrando, Joan Caba Roset and Isabel Tomé Prieto, Directorate of Urban Planning, Barcelona Metropolitan Area*

Ten per cent of the 3.2 million inhabitants of the Barcelona Metropolitan Area; a regional administrative body that comprises 36 municipalities are currently living in large housing estates, built in the fringe between the Second World War and the 1970s. These were originally constructed primarily to accommodate immigrant working-class families from rural areas of Spain. Social dynamics related to housing, along with spatial and social isolation, are among the challenges associated with this kind of urban fabric, not only in Barcelona, but throughout Europe. There is an urgent need to define integrated strategies aimed at regenerating these declining neighbourhoods spatially and socially. This article focuses on some of the challenges raised by the new Barcelona metropolitan masterplan (PDU), and the Integrated Action Plan (IAP) for Badia del Vallès under the URBACT program.

**Aerial photo and eye height impression
of Badia del Vallès**

Dynamics of a housing estate

The housing estates were originally 100%
geared towards affordable housing, a
type that has a low, fixed marketprice and
important restrictions on buying, selling
and renting. This tenure status has three
main consequences: first, a fossilized
population that favours the maintenance
of social dynamics (social reproduction);
second, an ageing and declining popula-
tion that is shaping the need for and type
of public facilities, upsetting the usual
supply and demand balance (Badia has
lost almost half of its original population);
and finally, a paternalistic relationship
between citizens and administration that
disempowers the former (since Badia
was developed by public bodies, there is a
collective expectation that they will keep
on solving all the problems in the city).

However, the protected affordable
housing regime will end in 2023. For the
first time it will be possible to rent out
the apartments, which are all privately
owned. In consequence, new challenges
will emerge, such as a rapid turnover of
residents through gentrification or filter-
ing processes; declining building mainte-
nance as owners rent out the apartments
and go to live elsewhere; a diminished
sense of belonging. Direct intervention by
the administration through, for example,
a preferential right to buy in any housing
purchase and/or a maintenance facilitator
to boost and lead housing refurbishment
could prove essential in tackling these
new challenges.

Plug in to the metropolitan network

The spatial challenges that Badia, like
many such housing estates, is facing on a
larger scale nowadays are threefold: how
to overcome infrastructural barriers, how
to improve public transport accessibility
and how to connect green infrastructure
to the local public spaces.

In Badia the strategy is clearly looking
to combine two scales of intervention.
First, the metropolitan level will be ad-
dressed (through the PDU) by large-scale
infrastructural interventions and by re-
defining the urban balance between built
and empty plots. Second, strategic acu-
puncture interventions like hollowing out
the ground floor level of some blocks to
enhance permeability will be implement-
ed by a step-by-step approach. In addition
to these spatial interventions there is a
process of social empowerment going »

on in the municipality of Badia, opening the door to working simultaneously on social cohesion and the future maintenance of public and private property.

A participatory approach across all scales and visions

Badia del Vallès was built in the 1970s with one landowner, one architect, one builder, two housing typologies and only a few types of future users. Forty years later, Badia is a housing estate with thousands of residents and other stakeholders with their own particularities and interests, making even more complex the spatial, social and economic challenges faced by most of the housing estates in Europe today. To overcome these difficulties, it is of utmost importance to work together with all stakeholders to define and implement the integrated strategies and actions required to regenerate these housing estates so that they can become part of a successful and liveable urban fringe. ■

Montreal is making the social mix in housing happen. But how?

Montreal *Daniel Legault, Senior Planner and Project Manager of Montreal interviewed by Isabelle Verhaert*

To gain in-depth insight into how housing departments can bring about social inclusion, it is helpful to look at what the city of Montreal is doing. Montreal is not merely studying the topic or drawing up legal plans, but is actually making social inclusion work. The numbers speak for themselves: over 115 projects (occupied, under construction or in the planning stage) since 2005. These projects represent approximately 65,000 units including some 15% social and community housing and financial contributions, and some 15% private affordable housing (mainly private ownership).

Before we go into detail, can you tell us briefly about the context in Montreal?
Daniel Legault: Montreal has a population of 1.7 million inhabitants and 780,000 households. A large proportion of those citizens, 64.2%, are tenants as opposed to owners, which helps to keep the rent relatively low compared to other Canadian cities. It is worth noting that part of the rental stock is in need of renovation: about 10% of the rental stock is in need of major repair. To characterize the various types of housing, the city employs a 'housing continuum' from 'shelter' through 'social and community housing', 'affordable rental housing' and 'affordable ownership', and ending with 'ownership' and 'private rental units'. The affordable housing strategy targets the range between social and community housing and

Community housing in Montreal

affordable ownership. Regarding housing numbers, about 7% of the total housing stock consists of social housing. The number of households on waiting lists is about three times higher than the number of available social housing units, resulting in heightened pressure on affordable rental apartments. Most 'public' housing is 100% subsidized, city-owned and reserved for low or no-income households.

The 'community housing' category has caught our attention. How does this work and who is building community houses?
Community housing in Montreal is a collective name for 'non-profit housing' and 'cooperative housing'. Both cater to a mix of clienteles, but the maintenance and upkeep of the housing is organized differently in each case. Whereas the mainte-

nance in non-profit housing is managed by an external non-profit organization, the management of cooperative housing is organized by the residents themselves. Both types of community housing are eligible for a rent supplement programme, meaning that up to 50% of the residents are partly subsidized, according to their household income, and the rest pay slightly less than the market rent. What both categories of community housing have in common, is that there is a real social mix within the projects, partly because of this rent structure. Additionally, in the co-op housing, members are required to participate in the co-op's governance.

Community housing is developed by groups of citizens with help from specialists, known as les Groupes de resources techniques (Technical Resource Groups).

GRTs are non-profit organizations that do not invest their own funds in projects. Instead, they work within the framework of the AccèsLogis Québec programme, under which development costs are shared between the provincial and municipal governments and also by the group of residents, who will contract a mortgage for the remaining portion of the budget. There are currently four non-profit developers recognized by the city of Montreal. Social and community housing is also developed by the Montreal Municipal Housing Office.

But how do the affordable units get built?
In 2005, the executive committee adopted the Strategy for the Inclusion of Affordable Housing in New Residential Projects. This strategy is not enforceable by law, but works solely on a voluntary basis. The main objectives of the strategy are to maintain a social mix by encouraging the inclusion of affordable units, and to support the production of affordable housing. The city's target is 30% affordable housing (15% social and community housing, 15% private affordable housing). The strategy is applied to every project of 100 units or more that entails changes in density, height or use. The calculation is based on the gain in gross buildable floor area. After public consultation, an agreement is reached between the developer, the city and the borough.

The most common scenario is one in which the developer sells a parcel of land on which an affordable housing project can be built with a gross buildable floor area equivalent to 15% of the gross buildable floor area of the entire project, to a cooperative, a non-profit housing group or the city, at a reduced price of 12,000 CAD/unit. For the affordable component, the developer agrees to sell or rent out 15% of the private units at or below a predetermined price. Depending on the market sector, a financial guarantee is required for each social, community and private affordable unit. ■

Transforming the relationship with the region

Spatial policies of neighbouring cities have an impact on the success of attempts to stimulate compact cities and to minimize the increasing use of land for sprawl. Furthermore, the connectivity and identity of the urban fringe needs to be re-examined on a regional scale. This often means dealing with various public authorities as the fringe crosses administrative boundaries and involves a variety of public ownership structures, making regional coordination an important task for fringe cities.

Regional coordination

In the case of Barcelona, the AMB is a metropolitan administration comprising 36 different municipalities that is currently working on a new master plan for the entire Barcelona Metropolitan Region. AMB has used the sub>urban project to work closely with one of the 36 municipalities on one specific site. This is the first time they have worked in this way and their experiences are feeding the new master plan for the entire metropolitan region.

In Casoria (IT) and Solin (HR), the vibe and interest generated by their project was used as a way to attract the attention of their bigger neighbours, the cities of Split and Naples. And they have indeed captured the attention of professionals in those cities. Given their underdog position, however, it is yet to be seen whether this changes their relationship with those cities for the better or worse, as well as whether they can forge a common goal. In Antwerp a coalition was formed of 13 municipalities south-east of Antwerp. This succeeded in no small part because of the convergence between the political coalition in Antwerp and in (most of) the surrounding municipalities. At the moment, it has entered a phase in which people are getting to know and learn from each other. A lesson well learned so far, is that despite political alliances, the pace of such a process is far more modest than initially conceived, but it is a necessary preliminary to setting up joint projects to address sprawl in the fringe and stimulate compact cities.

Connectivity

The issue of infrastructural barriers that cut through the fringe is very similar in each city in the network. Possible solutions vary greatly and are often linked to the promotion of sustainable transport. Vienna and Oslo, which have a high-quality public transport system all the way to the fringe, are thinking about measures like reducing speed, reducing lanes or cutting car infrastructure and looking to transform roads into streets. Other partners like Düsseldorf and Antwerp want to promote public transport in the fringe, but are reliant on a mental shift on the part of current or new inhabitants. Partners like Casoria and Solin are dealing with infrastructure by means of underpasses and better landscape design. In both cities there is no real alternative to the car and the idea of introducing public transport and changing the citizens' behaviour is still beyond imagination. ■

Building relationships with regional partners

Vienna *Paul Grohmann, regional development expert at the city of Vienna, interviewed by Isabelle Verhaert*

Vienna is a city that grew considerably and compactly in the 19th century. After the Second World War, with the division between East and West Europe, it lost its central position. While other cities grew rapidly and often sprawled, Vienna's growth stopped. In recent decades, however, the city reassumed its connecting role between East and West and as a result is one of the fastest growing European cities. The municipality boundaries are very tight around the historical city, leaving Vienna no choice but to work together with neighbouring communities to provide houses, amenities and jobs.

Vösendorf, a small neighbouring community of 7,000 habitants in the south-west, built large retail and shopping centres on the boundary with Vienna during the 1960s and '80s, which proved to be very profitable but put strain on its relationship with Vienna. Today, however, both municipalities need each other. A large part of the retail area in Vösendorf is decaying and in need of transformation while Vienna is actively looking for new neighbourhoods to absorb their growth in a connected and sustainable way. The two municipalities decided to work together in the URBACT network to imagine a future for a part of Vösendorf and Liesing, bordering the 23rd district of Vienna.

Working together with neighbouring municipalities is always a challenge, but in Vienna it is especially hard.
Paul Grohmann: According to Austrian constitutional law, the municipality – the lowest administrative entity – is responsible for land use planning. Each of the nine Austrian provinces has its own planning law, and the municipalities are obliged to apply it in their own spatial plans. Vienna is a province and a municipality at the same time. While our neighbouring municipality Vösendorf applies the Lower Austrian Planning law, Vienna uses its own. Thus, there is no formal authority that coordinates and regulates planning across provincial borders in a formally binding way. As there is not much likelihood of any change in the near future, we are trying to work together in a more 'informal' way. The Stadt-Umland-Management acts as an intermediary to help us manage such processes.

You used the Integrated Action Plan as a lever to get different institutions to talk to one another?
Generally, institutions act within their own competences and hierarchies. When elaborating the Integrated Action Plan, we tried to overcome this hurdle. We asked all relevant stakeholders to »

Lifting borders between Vienna and Vösendorf through project cooperation
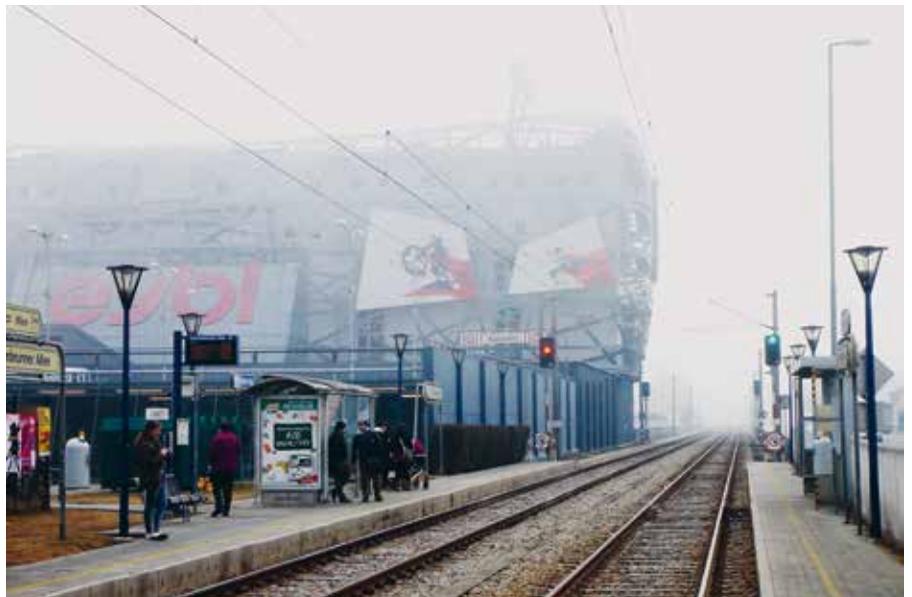
contribute to the discussion by thinking very freely about ideas for the cross-border project area. We invited them to a series of workshops, walks and bilateral talks and followed the principle that any event should take place on the spot, for example in a local discotheque. The various participants drafted a vision, which led to four scenarios: the so-called Stories from the fringe. They act as the basis for implementation projects we want to initiate. The structure provided by the sub>urban network allowed us to establish a more sustainable working routine. At the beginning of the project, we reached a formal agreement between Lower Austria, Vösendorf and Vienna on personnel and financial contributions.

What do you think are the positive steps you took in the project?

We got to know our neighbours, their perception and visions. We contributed to a better climate of trustfully working together. The project acted as a broker for cross-administrative relationships. We reached the most relevant institutions and players on an administrative and political level, and some of the landowners. As one outcome of the Integrated Action Plan we are going to tackle five implementation projects. As a second step – in line with the topic of each project – we would like to involve the people who work or live in the respective area.

What will happen when the URBACT project is finished?

The cooperation will continue. However, I think it will be challenging without the binding framework provided by URBACT.

But we received positive responses and backing from both the administrative and the political levels. We are starting to notice an increase in awareness. Cooperation between all administrative bodies in a metropolitan region seems to be essential for prosperity and a sound settlement development.

However, there are still a lot of open issues when it comes to financial themes like sharing infrastructure (e.g. hospitals, schools and commercial areas), sharing costs and tax revenues.

What would you advise other cities that are starting cross-border cooperation?

Try to develop a sustainable cooperation structure that does not depend solely on the commitment of active individuals. If certain restraints look likely to hamper cooperation, focus on themes which promise feasible; step-by-step wins. ■

Birds eye view of Moravany, neighbouring municipality of the city of Brno

‘The project acted as a broker for cross-administrative relationships.’

How to deal with population fluxes between neighbouring municipalities?

Brno *Helena Kadlesikova, Deputy Major of Moravany, interviewed by Martina Pacasova*

Different municipalities in the same region are dependent on one another. Moravany is the neighbouring municipality of Brno, which has experienced uncontrolled growth in the past. We talked with Deputy Mayor Helena Kadlečíková and reflected on her answers with Mieke Belmans, coordinator of regional cooperation between the municipalities south of Antwerp.

Neighbouring municipalities in our network often compete to attract residents. In your municipality, this is not the case. You think Brno should absorb the growing population in the first instance. Why?
Helena Kadlečíková: The boom in new family house construction in our municipality started 20 years ago. After the Velvet Revolution in 1989, people started to change their lifestyle. Many of our citizens owned land but did not want to use it for agriculture anymore and started to sell it. In this period of 'uncontrolled free-market approach', developers and land speculators bought up land from the original owners, got themselves elected in the municipal council and started to change the masterplan in favour of housing construction. That in itself would not have been such a problem if the city administrators had been willing

or able to foresee the consequences of this development and so implement the necessary accompanying measures. By the year 2000 the number of inhabitants almost tripled (there are now some 2,600 inhabitants and the average age is 33). At that time there was no kindergarten in the municipality, there was only one elementary school with a capacity of 100 pupils, two small playgrounds and one small grocery store. The newly constructed streets were just six metres wide, with no greenery and no public space. We also have a huge problem with parking and transportation in general. In the last seven years the new municipal council has been trying to deal with the consequences of previous uncontrolled growth, but there is still a lot more to do. In short, the municipality needs a 'time-out' to recover from the previous 'development shock' and to ensure that current and future inhabitants live in quality environment.

Mieke Belmans: We saw this kind of exodus from the centre of Antwerp more than 30 years ago. It creates certain challenges for the neighbouring municipalities and – if it happens on a large scale – for the city centre itself. In the Antwerp region today, we see neighbouring municipalities where a large part of the population is older than 65. It is wise of the deputy mayor to slow down the growth of the municipality, but challenging at the same time. Today the municipality of Moravany has a large percentage of young people in their 30s. Right now they need kindergartens and primary schools, but in a decade's time they will need high schools and sports facilities. A preponderance of any one age group makes it difficult to build amenities in a sustainable way. This means that you need to think in terms of flexible structures that can change their function over time, or come to some amenity-sharing arrangement with neighbouring municipalities.

Why do people from Brno want to move to your municipality?
HK: The municipality of Moravany occupies a strategic location; it is close to Brno as well as the highway to Prague, Ostrava and the connection to Vienna. That accessibility was crucial for many new residents, for example people who work in the nearby university hospital in Brno or company CEOs and managers who travel around the whole Czech Republic on »

a daily basis. The new inhabitants are mostly well paid white-collar workers and entrepreneurs looking for luxurious housing in the countryside while having the services of Brno nearby.

MB: The municipality attracted people from the upper middle class, rather than a mix of incomes. If this happens on a large scale, as it did in Antwerp in the 1980s, the city centre will suffer, becoming a place linked with poverty, decline and criminality. This will in turn only raise the pressure on land and houses in the neighbouring municipalities. Here you see more construction and a loss of their original identity as small and green municipalities. This is not yet happening on such a scale in Brno, but it shows that a mix of ages and incomes is important.

Are you unique in the Brno region or are there more municipalities that think like you?

HK: In my opinion many other municipalities surrounding Brno have learned a lesson from our 'bad practice' example. The surrounding municipalities, as well as Moravany nowadays, think and act differently when it comes to development. Although they continue to welcome new inhabitants, they have a set of conditions for them to fulfil, to ensure quality living for all citizens. They pay more attention to urban planning, something we failed to do early on. They have a clear set of rules for development, limits for building on the plot, provision of public spaces and greenery in the newly built areas, transport connections and a plan for a gradual increase in school capacities and other public amenities.

MB: In the Antwerp region, 14 municipalities have started to cooperate on planning. At this stage we are exchanging knowledge about how we negotiate with new developments. By sharing information about our conditions for building, we are not played against each other. By collating the various new developments in the region, we got a clear picture of the total stock of new housing in the region. Today there is the threat of oversupply.

Is there any regional coordination between the city of Brno and its neighbouring municipalities?

HK: Cooperation is mainly organized among smaller municipalities. The problems smaller municipalities are dealing with are often of a different kind. In Brno the processes are more complicated and bureaucratic. This discourages smaller municipalities from cooperating with Brno. I personally would welcome a platform for regular meetings between the mayors of neighbouring municipalities and the mayor of Brno. It would create a possibility to really discuss, think through and reach an agreement on a shared (collective) solution. However, it is not easy to change the current setting when everybody focuses on their own matters. ∎

From roads that divide to streets that connect

Oslo *Silje Gjertrud Hoftun, urban planner in the municipality of Oslo*

Hovinbyen is being indicated as a key development area in response to Oslo's anticipated growth incoming years. Today Hovinbyen is characterized by busy main roads, which cut through the urban fabric, and by vehicle-heavy and underutilized land for warehousing, industry and freight companies. This contributes to people's perceptions of Hovinbyen as part of the outer city, situated far away from the vibrant urban city centre in people's mental maps.

This is a misconception, because the actual physical distance from the centre of Hovinbyen to the central station of Oslo is no further than from other, attractive inner-city neighbourhoods. Yet in its current state, there is little reason to visit Hovinbyen and, if people do, they are likely to lose their way in the complex highway interchanges.

### Transforming barriers into connectivity between the urban neighbourhoods

Oslo's ambition is to transform Hovinbyen into an attractive, walkable urban area for 100,000 new residents and just as many jobs. To achieve this, we need to address the challenge of road design. Improving both the physical and mental connectivity with the city centre, as well as between the smaller neighbourhoods within Hovinbyen, is a priority.

Instead of solving the problem by hiding the roads in tunnels, we want to transform both the roads themselves as well as the built-up surrounding areas. This way, the very same structures that today separate neighbourhoods and make Hovinbyen unattractive, can become meeting places that bind the areas together. By changing the roads into streets, we can bind neighbourhoods together instead of splitting them apart.

From regional to local focus

Efficient connections with the surrounding region have been the focus of transport planning since the 1960s in fringe areas. As a result, highways

'By transforming their character and use, we believe that today's barriers hold the potential to become tomorrow's connectors binding Hovinbyen together.'
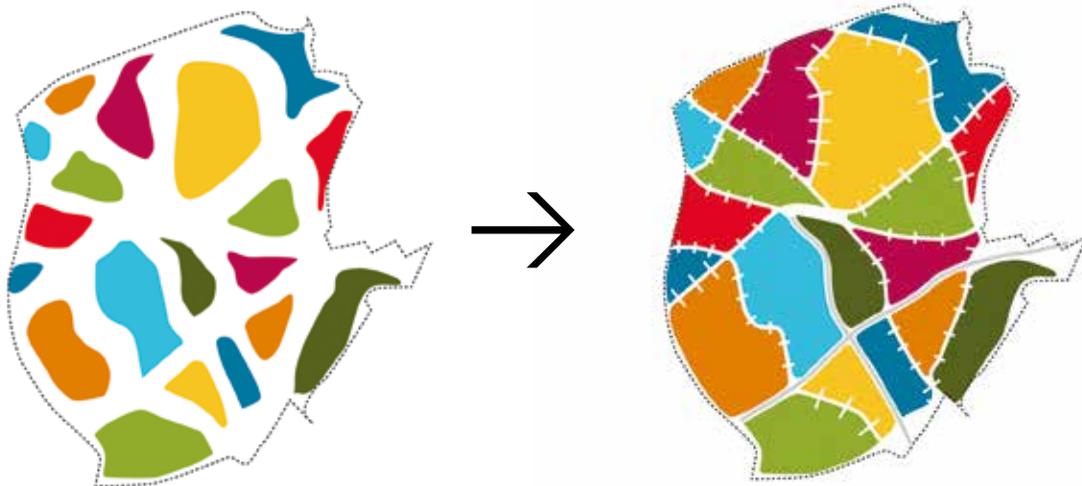
'We want to reserve as much as 50% of the streetspace for pedestrians, vegetation and public space.'

and separated crossings for pedestrians and local transport were built to avoid obstructing fast-moving traffic as it passes through the area. This has had an adverse effect on the liveability of the Hovinbyen neighbourhoods. By reducing speed limits on the highways and by introducing frequent ground-level road crossings, we will try to enhance the streets' local character and make them an integral part of the urban fabric instead of cutting through it. As urban planners we want to promote a

better balance between local and regional connectivity. Yet to implement this, we also need the national road authorities to agree. We believe that we are on the point of entering a new paradigm in the way we conceive roads and their role.

Multiple use of the street

If we are to change the car-dominated roads into vibrant streets, we need to redesign them for multiple use by providing space for pedestrians, cyclists and public transport, as well as trees, vegetation and places to hang around.

In fact, we want to reserve as much as 50% of the streetspace for pedestrians, vegetation and public space, transforming today's roads into new, attractive strings of public spaces that connect neighbourhoods. This way, more environment-friendly transport forms would complement each other, rather than competing for space as they do today.

Enhancing the transverse connections

In our view, a street is not attractive on its own if there is little to see or do along the way. Simply providing safer street-crossings will not attract more people. We believe that a key way of raising

the attractiveness of streets lies in an intelligent combination of activities and design on the ground floor of buildings. The street facades should be welcoming and lively, whether it's a block of flats or a sports arena, a café or a shop. Attractive buildings and functions can shorten the mental distance between neighbourhoods by several kilometres.

The same roads that today split neighbourhoods hold the potential to connect them, not only on either side of the street, but along it as well. Today's lack of transverse connections and little priority for public transport, make moving across Hovinbyen a hassle. By transforming these roads into streets, connecting the missing links and introducing dedicated tram lanes, we believe that we will strengthen the connectivity between the neighbourhoods. The tram moves at street level, which creates activity, and its permanence can stimulate investments and development along the street.

By transforming their character and use, we believe that today's barriers hold the potential to become tomorrow's connectors binding Hovinbyen together. ■

Transforming private space

The most difficult challenge for cities that are redeveloping their fringe areas, is the transformation of private space. Most cities own very little land or buildings in the fringe. To achieve any change there, they have to operate in a precarious and unfamiliar situation that requires taking on new roles, finding incentives and promoting collective structures in order to persuade individuals to think and act beyond their own individual interests.

Creating a collective layer
City centres have clearly defined building blocks and courtyards that provide a logical framework within which individuals can organize and identify themselves collectively. This so-called collective layer is largely missing in the fringe areas throughout Europe. Yet the collective layer is crucial as a space of mediation and for bringing together individual interests. This is the place where you meet your neighbours and where social life is played out, where sustainable and

social improvements can take place. The collective layer can be the doorstep of an apartment building or the informal space behind private gardens. But it can also be a person, like a concierge, or an owners corporation that links the different inhabitants or users together. The successful renovation of apartment buildings, for instance, is dependent on how residents are organized.

Incentives
As most municipalities do not own a lot of land and buildings, it is often imperative to negotiate agreements in the public interest. Depending on their administrative powers, municipalities can use a negative or a positive incentive, the proverbial carrot and stick, to achieve their goals. Antwerp, for example, charges a fee (the Urban Development Cost/ Burden) to developers based on the gross buildable floor space of new construction sites. The city then uses that revenue to invest in public services or public spaces.

More often than not, the city's powers are limited and private owners are able to make the final call. In that case, common sense dictates looking at the situation from the perspective of the private parties involved and considering what incentives might stimulate action in the public interest. Baia Mare for instance, allowed a developer to put an extra volume on top of an existing apartment building in return for renovating and improving the sustainability of the entire building. Other ways a council might do this is by playing an active matchmaking role or rewriting the procurement criteria. Despite the rules of procurement, with an increasing focus on cost, time and risk management, there are still ways in which cities can stimulate innovation and experimentation, for instance by trying out new roles as facilitator and matchmaker or by being open to ideas and initiatives by others and by applying certain selection criteria, such as quality, effect on public interest and sustainability. ■

Public value through co-creation

Antwerp *Veva Roesems, urban planner for the city of Antwerp*

The Lageweg project site is situated in a semi-industrial part of the Antwerp fringe. The city has no ownership of the site's 30 hectare of land, which are characterized by a hybrid environment of small and large industry, schools, houses, big apartment buildings and privately-owned green space. There is no real social connection between inhabitants and users of the place. It is in need of transformation lest it continue to deteriorate or be developed plot-wise without added public value. It was paramount that the city should break through this local status quo. How did we go about that? How did we work together with the owners, users and the neighbourhood? What worked well and what are the possible pitfalls?

The aim for the city is to create an integrated development. We set ourselves the ambitious goal of enhancing the surrounding neighbourhood by creating a mixed urban area – affordable dwellings, manufacturing, more public amenities (green space, schools, sporting facilities and community services) – and enabling the transition of the present businesses to a circular economy.

Why did we look for a new process?
In classic urban renewal projects, the authorities often own a large share of the land and can, as a result, weigh in on the project, the programme, the design, the public space, etc. In Lageweg, however, the city does not have that leverage. The land is largely privately owned, resulting in a heavily fragmented ownership structure. In a traditional 'linear' process, the authorities would begin by expropriating the owners, then tackle the decontamination and lastly team up with a property developer who would redevelop the site and put it back on the market.
The aim of the Lageweg pilot project is of an entirely different nature. The project seeks to redevelop this hybrid area, not on the basis of a blueprint the city has drawn up beforehand, nor in accordance with strict regulation and zoning plans, but

in collaboration with the owners of the plots and the established businesses. In a classic process there are often winners and losers. We, on the other hand, chose a co-creative process to make sure everybody wins. By ensuring that all stakeholders are co-responsible, the chances of one of the partners slowing down the process becomes smaller.

How did we engage the stakeholders?
Together with consultants (51N4E and Connect&Transform), we developed a set of consecutive instruments that would enable all stakeholders to work together. Starting with mind-opening dialogues and an exploratory kick-off discussion, we defined collective ambitions for the area. The first idea of a multi-plot development was born. Each owner started looking

beyond his/her own plot, enlarging the spatial opportunities.

A second step was co-creating a design plan for the area and making it more visual by using an interactive scale model. This prompted one of the private partners to ask: "What is my financial gain?" In a classic process, providing the answer to that question would delay the entire process. In the Lageweg process, however, we started to work simultaneously on the financial aspect of the multi-plot development. Working on parallel tracks speeds up the process instead of blocking and delaying it.

The financial question not only demonstrates the benefits of the process used in Lageweg, but is also a key in identifying the actual land owners. For example, at a certain point it was necessary »

PROCESS

CLASSIC	> <	LAGEWEG
dialogue following vision	> <	creating vision through dialogue
first plans then dialogue	> <	mix of planning and dialogue
tension is a positive irritant	> <	tension as a productive way of working
each moment has one purpose	> <	each moment has multiple purposes

The hybrid environment and fragmented ownership of Lageweg leads towards the idea of a multi-plot development

to have a spatial and financial calculation model drawn up by experts. When it came to signing the declaration of engagement, we discovered that some land owners had representatives. This is crucial information because it revealed the identity of the true decision makers early in the process.

Another instrument was a safari tour of the site in the form of a guided walk with all the stakeholders. The brochure made for the walk showed the soil contamination and possible future development scenarios in one, five and twenty years' time. On the one hand, this information made the owners aware that the current land use plan needed to be changed in order to realize the long-term plan. On the other hand, it became clear that soil decontamination was an issue for more than one owner. One of the owners demanded that the land use plan (RUP) be altered or he would withdraw from the co-creation project on this site. At this point, the role of the city evolved from facilitating to regulating, denying the owner's demand in order to stress the importance of a joint plan and a common urban vision.

What worked well and what are the pitfalls?

The Lageweg pilot project is a learning process, both for the city and for the owners concerned. The government has to assume the role of facilitator to get all stakeholders to support a co-creative vision and ensure that the owners make it happen. At the same time, it is necessary to guard the common interest. This balance is a continuous challenge.

Another possible pitfall is the tendency to relapse into a classic planning process, especially when there is a lot at stake and despite knowing that the classic process does not guarantee the best results. Lageweg is a pilot project, in which ideas are tested through trial and error in a contained setting. Another challenge is to capture the learning points and share the knowledge and lessons learned.

The pilot project is in that sense a search for a way authorities and citizens can work together on the future of the city. We are convinced that this will lead to a more sustainable form of urban renewal. ∎

From top to bottom: Housing estates in East Berlin, Budapest, Dobrich (Bulgaria)

Invisible mechanisms causing visible differences

Iván Tosics, program expert URBACT

These three photos were taken at roughly the same time, at the end of the 2000s, in three different post-socialist countries. The topic is the same: recent efforts to renovate 30 to 40-year-old prefabricated multi-family buildings. Yet, the outcome is quite different.

The first photo was taken in the Marzahn housing estate in EastBerlin where, after German reunification, large-scale renewal activities were launched. The building in the background was totally renovated, not only the facades but also the wet services, entrances and the public space around the building.

The second photo was taken in Budapest. The building in the middle has undergone an energy-oriented renovation, which mainly affected the facade and, to a lesser extent, some smaller energy-related parts of the building. The other two buildings on either side haven't been renovated yet.

The third photo was taken in Dobrich, Bulgaria. An energy-oriented renovation was conducted on this building as well, at least in those apartments with coloured outer walls. The rest of the building has not yet been renovated.

Yet what makes these renovation cases so different? The challenge was the same: all these prefabricated buildings were built in the 1970s, in the era of cheap oil, when there was no careful consideration of energy consumption, and heat was pouring out through the walls, the poorly insulated roof areas, windows, etc.

Although the challenge was the same, the approach to renovating was very different in the three countries, due to a factor not visible in the pictures: the own-ership and management system of the housing. The large prefabricated buildings in Germany remained in the ownership of the housing associations, which were state-controlled entities. In Hungary and Bulgaria, politicians opted for large-scale privatization for sitting tenants, thus all the buildings in the second and third pictures are owned by the families who were public tenants under the previous socialist regimes.

There were, however, important differences between the two privatizing countries: in Hungary, the Law on Condominiums (in existence since 1924) was introduced as a legal framework for privatization. This made it compulsory for the former tenants to establish a Condominium Association. Such condominiums were strictly regulated: residents had to find and elect a suitable person as condominium manager, to meet at least once a year to make decisions about the building, and pay a 'condo fee' to cover ongoing maintenance costs. In Bulgaria (and in other south-east European post-socialist countries) privatization was launched without creating any similar legal framework. Privatized buildings thus continued to exist as a form of co-ownership but without any rules mandating cooperation among the new owner families.

The consequences of the three different ownership forms and the legal and management systems are quite visible. In Germany, the housing associations are large and well-organized management companies. Within the framework of a central government programme aimed at renewing all prefabricated buildings within a decade, housing associations started large-scale renewal operations with central and federal state support. The families that lived in the renovated buildings remained public tenants and, as a consequence of the full renovation, their rents increased. This increase, however, was partly covered by the nationwide housing benefit system that ensures that no family pays more than a predetermined percentage of their income on housing-related expenditures. This complex system of political, managerial and social considerations required a strong institutional background, substantially increasing the number of housing officers.

In Hungary, each privatized building became a separate condominium. Thus, the decision on the fate of the building was given to the residents themselves who had an efficient tool for making decisions which, if passed by the required majority, became binding for all owners. There were no central policies introduced for the renovation of the privatized multi-family housing stock, just a state support system offering one-third of the cost of renovating the facade, provided the local government and condominium owners contributed the remaining two-thirds. This system sparked the interest of many families trying to reach a majority for renovation in their condominium, which in practice entailed a decision to take out a bank loan to cover the condominium's share, the repayment of which was to be added to the monthly condominimum fee. Lower income families, however, voted against the increase in their housing costs (there is no general housing benefit system in Hungary). As a result, some buildings have been renovated while others, where poorer people were in the majority, have not. This has also led to social polarization, with wealthier families moving away from buildings where a majority vote for renovation was not achievable.

Bulgarians also want to live in better insulated flats that can be more economically heated. In this country, however, it is not just a central renovation policy, central housing benefit system or large housing associations that are lacking, but also the legal framework necessary to ensure efficient decision-making at the level of the buildings. Individual action remains a last resort under such conditions, so wealthier families decide to pay for the insulation of the walls around their own flat. In Bulgaria's free-market capitalist economy, many small entreprises sprang up to perform this task, which only takes a few hours. After insulation, only colouring remains – and why not give the new walls a colour that is different from any other colour used on the building so far...

All in all: visible differences are caused by very important invisible factors, such as national policies, unified social protection systems, legal frameworks, large and socially responsible institutions, without which the outcomes on the ground may be colourful but will never reach the physical and social goals that are needed for an integrated style of development. ∎

City making in transition

Arjen Oosterman, Editor in Chief of Volume

'The Fringe' – it sounds like the title of a horror movie. You're not quite sure what to expect, but there is this eerie feel to it. If this is the indication of a location, it doesn't sound inviting. Maybe that is the main problem with urban areas summarized as 'fringe' in this report: they're not necessarily scary or creepy, but they're unloved — possibly even by those that live or work there.

Beyond a certain size, cities have fringes — areas where programs, functions and activities that didn't fit the core city have landed. And although fringe areas can be quite different in character and composition from city to city (as the inventory in this publication shows), they have some aspects in common. Fringes may legally fall within the regulatory framework of urban planning, but most of the time what you'll find there is not planned in the sense of urban design. It is more result than intention, a zone where things happened because conditions were favourable. Think of plot size, land price, or distance from the core city, or access from and infrastructural connections with the region and beyond.

The very notion of 'fringe' seems to imply a spatial city model that is basically European: the city seen as a time-space related phenomenon — the concentric or 'annual rings' growth model. In that conception of the city it is possible to identify (late) 19th-century extensions, the '20-'40 belt, the post-war 'fringe', and maybe suburban sprawl beyond. Not all cities in this report fit that image. And if we consider the urban condition in other parts of this world, it may even be far from the realities on the ground. Notions like urban tapestry, patchwork city, or urban field suggest a different relation between city fragments than the one under scrutiny here. In that respect this 're-inventing the fringe' project is a very European one. The same can be said for another aspect: its relation with governance, planning and design.

Historically, it looks like the fringe came into being as the result of a whole series of post-war interventions and was left on its own afterwards.[1] Now the fringe is 'in demand' all of a sudden, mainly for two reasons. Internally it is changing after fifty years of wear and tear — spatial demands changed, the technical requirements of buildings and infrastructures changed, and there is a lot going on. Notions like obsolete, abandoned, and degraded fit the image. To put it mildly: the fringe invites attention. At the same time, the city (the municipality) sees an opportunity to make use of the fringe in dealing with some major challenges. So 'the city' not only feels responsible for the well-being of this part of town (to repair, upgrade and change where needed), it also claims the fringe in solving some bigger issues.

'Dealing with the fringe touches upon fundamental questions about city making: who is responsible, who is in charge, who is deciding, who is taking the initiative, and what is the interaction between these aspects.'

Fair enough, but how? For the times, they are changing. And that is where this project starts. We've seen that since the late 1980s and early '90s, the tools for planning and managing the city have sometimes fallen short for the tasks at hand. The formula of a planning department making plans that are submitted to the council and subsequently translated into legal documents that regulate what can and should happen in a certain area and then being executed had, to a degree, lost its agency. It wasn't and isn't productive in the way it once was. Acceptance of local stakeholders (or the lack thereof) is one element; ownership and capital a second one. In short, the municipality has to look for other modalities 'to get things done'. It has to reinvent its own procedures and create new tools. It has to accept that wisdom is not exclusively the prerogative of the expert. An additional complicating factor is that the way to go about it may differ depending on the part of town or issue to address.

So, there is more at stake than lubricating a rusty engine and replacing some cogs. This dealing with the fringe touches upon fundamental questions about city making: who is responsible, who is in charge, who is deciding, who is taking the initiative, and what is the interaction between these aspects. And to name the elephant in the room: who are we doing this for, who is adversely or favourably affected? Important though these questions are, they can also be paralyzing. If a municipality doesn't feel at home in today's fuzzy logic interactive processes or is frustrated by disappointing results in the past, it may refrain from taking the lead. This is not without consequence, because it is unlikely that regeneration or integration will start spontaneously. The next thing is what kind of 'taking the lead' we're talking about. Today it is quite topical to advocate the wisdom of the crowd and to shift responsibility to the level of the individual and group. And yes, this is an important correction to older mechanisms, but one thing is apparent: integrating small-scale activation in larger development cannot be left to companies, homeowners or housing associations. So, the power to rule is an important one. It comes with obligations — to protect what is vulnerable and to defend what is of value — but also with justified expectations: to give direction to the future.

The interviews and reports included here make clear that there is a willingness among participating municipalities (in particular the departments involved in this project) to experiment and question 'the usual way'. It is also clear that this is a major thing, demanding a lot from those participating. And that formulas tested with good results cannot simply be repeated. The cases also show that when the larger scale is involved, complexity multiplies. The involvement of other municipalities, the county or province, sometimes even the state, produces a dynamism that comes close to the one weather forecasters are confronted with: tomorrow's weather is not a big deal, but next week's is quite a challenge. To inspire, to coordinate, to focus and select, to get things going: not easy at all. But to secure the continuity of processes that require years and sometimes decades is perhaps the most difficult hurdle to overcome.

Re-inventing the fringe, it is both a program and a call. This title suggests we're talking territory and use, what and where, but the project shows that to go anywhere the focus has to be on 're-inventing governance' first.

1   The discovery of the fringe — maybe more a condition than a locus —, as a form of urbanity of which a 'lack of identity' is its most striking aspect, probably dates back to the mid 1990s when Stefano Boeri and Gabriele Basilio conducted their famous 'Italy: Cross Sections of a Country' exploration (Zurich: Scalo, 1998), even though the term 'fringe' is not mentioned in that publication.

Towards a sustainable

Maarten van Tuijl, lead expert sub>urban URBACT

For the last two years, nine European cities have both re-thought their fringes on a city and regional scale and worked on the implementation of local action plans on pilot sites. What did we learn?
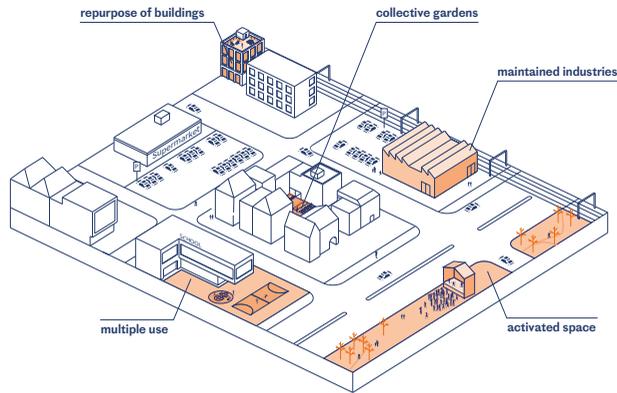
Embrace existing qualities

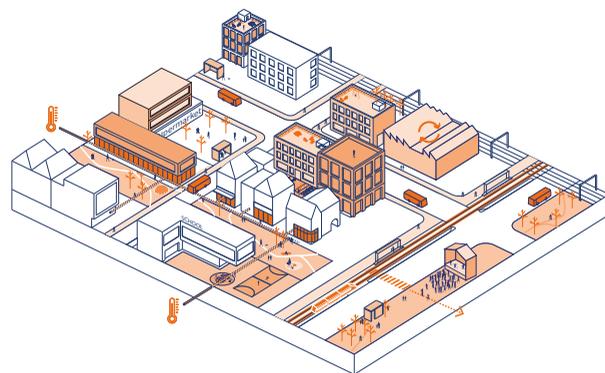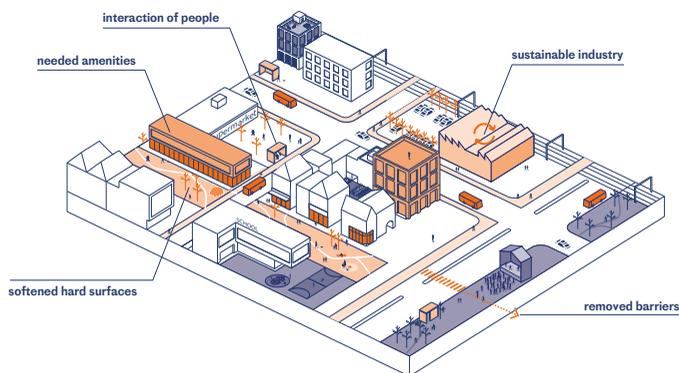Start with a careful analysis of what is already there.

Know your fringe: the buildings and the people. What are the characteristics of the present fringe? How does it function at the moment? What are its assets? Who is living and working there? Who are the owners of the land and buildings? Who should be involved (participation)? What exactly should be done for whom? These are questions that all cities must reflect on when planning for the fringe. It is not only about analysis, it is about recognizing and reinforcing these qualities. Go from tabula rasa to tabula scripta.

Adapt parts with lesser qualities

Many parts of the fringe have been neglected for too long. The buildings and public space in the fringe need to be upgraded.

Increase the sustainability of existing buildings. Stimulate more sustainable, less car-based, mobility. Improve conditions for existing communities. Make better use of underused areas and buildings. Diversify monofunctional areas. Open up fenced-off areas. Find new, interesting typologies for housing. Integrate social infrastructure, jobs and production. Turn this unloved outcast into a loved part of the city.

and inclusive fringe

interaction of people

needed amenities

sustainable industry

softened hard surfaces

removed barriers

Introduce a collective layer

The fringe is the manifestation of individualism and consumerism.

To have any impact here it is necessary to create incentives that make it appealing to go beyond individual interests. Link people and projects to one another. Deploy temporary use and placemaking as tools to create stronger communities. Stimulate private owners to work together in their own interest. Make collective spaces more attractive. Encourage multifunctional use of spaces and interaction.

Plan, implement and organize management simultaneously

Planning for the fringe can't be done from a fixed and single perspective.

Work on the level of the city´s urban strategy and test this strategy in one or more pilot projects at the same time. Complement concrete findings on the local level with the ambitions of the strategic plan, and vice versa. Integrate interaction and reflection on both levels. Work with a flexible plan and integrate learning moments. Work today on short, intermediate and long-term plans. Plan for the fringe based on the full life cycle of an area. Work with the current context, learn from it and anticipate the new operational phase by organizing management. Each step can feed the learning process and can help the strategic plan grow to achieve a more sustainable and inclusive fringe.

sub>urban conference
How to start reinventing your fringe?
26.04.2018

Many cities face the challenge of the renewal of their fringes. The fringe, in between the inner city and the suburbs, holds the promise of combining the best of both worlds, having more amenities and being closer to the city centre than the low density suburbs, but also offering more space and green than the city centre. To fullfill this promise the renewal of the fringe demands a new approach to urban planning.

For the last two and a half years 9 European cities have worked on strategies for urban redevelopment, new planning instruments, methods for stakeholders involvement and a change of governance for local authorities for the fringe.

Now, it's time to present you our results. Our conference in Barcelona on Thursday April 26th will offer you an interactive day full of inspiration, exchange and new tools. We would love to share it with you!

The conference is open to all representatives from cities and municipalities, urban planners & architects, students, political representatives and other (European) networks, moreover to everyone who's interested in the topic of 'reinventing the fringe'.

Save the date, we're sure you wouldn't want to miss it!

For further information:
www.urbact.eu/sub.urban