



## NEWSLETTER OP-ACT ISSUE III/2011

### Project News



URBACT-Workshop in Eberswalde

### OP-ACT Workshop in Eberswalde What are Site Advantages?

(by Hanns-Uve Schwedler, Lead Expert of the OP-ACT project)

The city of Eberswalde hosted the 4th Op-Act workshop. The meeting took place from 26 to 28 September this year. During the meeting, topics in work packages 4 (living conditions) and 5 (site advantages; cp. also methodology section of this newsletter) were discussed.

As Op-Act partner, the University of Applied Science in Eberswalde is work package leader of WWP 4 while Dabrowa Gornicza is leading WWP 5. The university is closely cooperating with the city administration.

#### The host city

Eberswalde - situated approximately 35 kilometres north-east of Berlin - is the centre of the Barnim area. Prior to and during the GDR era, Eberswalde was known as an important industrial city. This development was principally made possible by constructing the Finow Canal. After reunification in Germany, Eberswalde experienced economic decline due to structural changes. Derelict and abandoned industrial sites along the

Finow Canal bear witness to this. In the city centre too, there are a number of derelict and barely-used plots of land. The reason for this is, however, not to be found so much in economic problems. In 1945, the city centre in Eberswalde was almost totally destroyed by German bombs; during the GDR years this 'wound' was only partially healed. One of the major town planning challenges since 1990 has been dealing with derelict and unused sites.

Nearly all of the former industrial sites and buildings along the canal are protected by the German cultural or industrial heritage law. In common with these sites, the waterway itself is not used anymore - at least not for freight traffic. Dealing with these derelict sites and the canal is one of the most challenging tasks for urban policy and planning in Eberswalde. At the same time, these are probably the most promising site advantages. As a matter of fact, Eberswalde's local action plan will deal with questions of how the canal can be better integrated into the urban fabric, and of valorising the waterway for tourism and leisure.



Most derelict industrial sites and buildings in Eberswalde are protected by the German cultural or industrial heritage law

### What are site advantages?

Site advantages are unused or under-used resources or potentials of a city. In some cases they have not even been recognised yet. In some Op-Act partner cities, for instance, the industrial 'heritage' of these cities, their self-perception that people are still living in an industrial city and are trying to retain this, is in fact blocking their perception or vision of new opportunities.

Whereas hard and soft location factors have certainly been defined both in academic and practical terms, the same is not true for site advantages. In the latter case, it is much more clearly pronounced a question of local situations, facilities and features. Thus it is only possible to mention one or two examples from Op-Act partner cities:

- landscape (waterfront - mountains)
- unique city centre (medieval - modern architecture)
- unique urban quarters and buildings (often cultural heritage sites)
- higher educational institutions

### Just two examples of valorising site advantages

Altena: 'edu-tainment' elevator to the Castle

The Castle above the city is certainly the landmark of the city of Altena. The museums alone, located in the Castle area, are currently registering about 60 000 visitors per annum. However, at the same time, tourists leave the city 'lying beneath their feet'. Tourism has thus to date scarcely been an important topic for the economy or businesses in the municipality. An 'edu-tainment' elevator has therefore been planned to move people from the shopping street in the city up to the Castle. In this way, Altena is intending to bring additional tourists - and purchasing power - into the municipality. This project has been elaborated with intensive public participation and is being funded as part of a structure promotion programme operated by the regional authority (Land) for particularly innovative projects. It is estimated to be completed in 2013. The project is being paralleled by a series of other measures – such as, for instance, townscape enhancement in the riverbank promenade in the city centre.

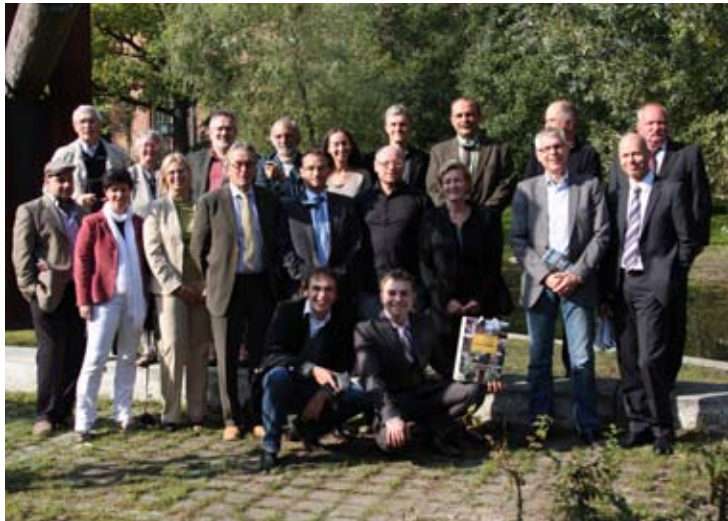
Dabrowa Gornicza: Pogoria recreation area

Due to renaturation of former open-cast mines there is great potential for recreational functions for the whole Katowice agglomeration and possibly tourism, too. Dabrowa Gornicza is at the moment developing the lake-side / waterfront at Pogoria IV and III (2 out of 4 lakes). In addition, cycle paths around the lake area have been constructed. An as yet unsolved problem is the lack of hotel capacity in the city and lake area.

### Some lessons learnt

Besides some very specific, issue related lessons learnt, the following overall recommendations can be drawn from these and other examples and from discussions on site advantages during the workshop:

- ensure political will and support: this is essential, because, generally speaking, in initiating 'site advantage' projects you are entering 'virgin land' (territory),
- 'site advantage' projects should be part of an overall strategy: this makes it easier to overcome barriers and to include the projects into the urban policy making process,
- implement 'site advantage' projects - if possible - as key projects for lack of action in implementing an overall existing strategy,
- ensure sufficient and sustainable resources,
- consider the 'costs' of doing nothing.



### OP-ACT Workshop in Eberswalde Project Insights

(by René Tettenborn, Project Coordinator Eberswalde)

In September 2011 the OP-ACT workshop took place in Eberswalde, Germany. During three days, the participants discussed issues concerning the work packages IV 'living conditions' and V 'site advantages'. Additionally they were given the chance to get to know the city of Eberswalde and its surroundings.

A status quo analysis of each city was drawn to serve as a basis for further discussions. For WP 4 the analysis showed that ideas to fight some main problems of the cities, like empty houses or brown fields, exist. But their implementation often fails due to administrative difficulties or missing strategies. The future challenge will be to find solutions for such barriers. One main aim

of smaller towns to keep the living conditions attractive for citizens as for new inhabitants is to maintain a vivid city centre. These districts shall therefore receive for example more financial support than other neighbourhoods in order to enhance their development. The discussions to WP 5 identified the unique selling points of the participating cities. The main potential can be found in the sector tourism. Legazpi for example sees itself as the valley of iron while the advantage of Eberswalde consists in the combination of its cultural heritage and the surrounding natural landscape. Medias too wants to use its cultural patrimony as an economic driving power to create jobs and to attract people to the city. Leoben however sees its university as a chance to support urban development. A main aim is to keep the knowledge in town and to form co-operations between the university and the creative economy. The local focus of the workshop lied on the Finowkanal, a former industrial channel. As Eberswalde was part of the industrial region of northeast Germany, this channel was an important transportation way, but lost its function when industry around Eberswalde declined and the bigger Oder-Havel-Channel was built. Therefore the Finowkanal needs today a new image, a new character. The intention is to develop the channel into a recreational and touristic facility, including the cultural and industrial heritages which are lined up along the channel.

The participants explored the channel by bike accompanied by several information stops on the most interesting sites. Final destination was the old Watertower in Finow. Its top gives a magnificent view over Eberswalde, its surrounding forests and the Finowkanal.



OP-ACT partner workshop in Eberswalde

The SWOT analysis pointed out, that one of the main strengths of the channel is the natural landscape nearby. The short distance to Berlin makes it attractive for tourists who come from the capital and are looking for holidays in nature. But to develop this potential further on, a certain standard of touristic infrastructure, like cafés, restaurants or sanitation has to be established along the channel.

The working processes were eased by changing seminar locations and refreshing regional and organic snacks. One highlight was the Spanferkel (suckling pig) dinner which took place in the glasshouse of the Eberswalder Botanical Garden and which was accompanied by the musical performance of several workshop members. An event that likely will be remembered by all participants.

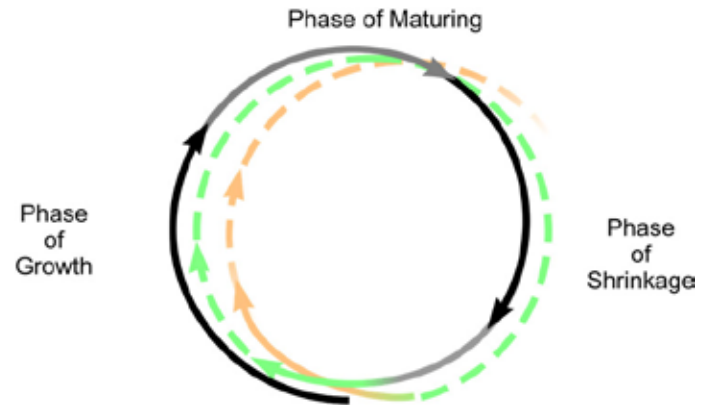
## “Shrinkage”

An analysis of Mr. Gerlind Weber, University of Natural Resources and Life Sciences, Vienna

(by Alexandra Janze, Communication Officer OP-Act project)

“To accomplish the steering of shrinkage is considerably more complicated and politically more challenging than the steering of growth.” (Müller, 2003)

Leoben invited a key note speaker from the University of Natural Resources and Life Sciences Vienna, Ms. Gerlind Weber. According to the viewpoint of spatial sciences, decreasing numbers in population and jobs are not a new phenomenon because for decades these figures have determined in particular the development of many rural areas in Europe. But in her point of view, the current developments and forecast require a re-evaluation of the phenomenon “shrinkage”. The causes of shrinkage are simple and known like demographic change, economic structural changes as deindustrialisation and economic crisis and last but not least globalisation. Albeit shrinkage and growth are naturally recurring because according to Oswald et al. (2000) “growth is designed as a temporal process of transformation” and infinite growth is impossible. The focus is always set on growth strategies and if the targets of growth are not reached “stabilization” or “organized withdrawal” are not taken into account because shrinkage is associated with “failure”. Nowadays, no arrangements exist for further declining trends therefore a toolbox for guiding shrinking processes is necessary”, says Ms. Gerlind Weber. But what does that mean? It means that both, growth and shrinkage, is to be kept under control, shrinkage too is to be designed, the focus should not be set on insufficiency but on new creative solutions of handling shrinkage and spatial planning has to work on processes of growth and shrinkage in parallel. Instead, it is essential to change planning goals and promote the acceptance of shrinkage by new ways of communicating shrinkage and focusing on the advantages. Small and medium sized cities should not try to compete with neighbouring growing metropolitan areas but think of new strategies on how to promote the positive aspects of small towns and their quality of life.



Evolutionary Cognitive Science I (R. Riedl)

## METHODOLOGY

### Diamonds are a city's best friend

Added value from site advantages through integrated projects and policies

(by Hanns-Uve Schwedler, Lead Expert of the OP-ACT project)



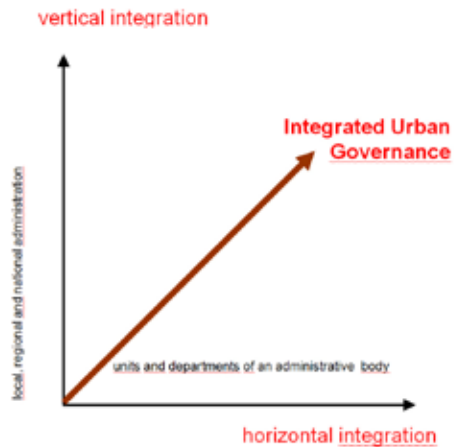
Public participation is a core element in integrated planning and policy making)

Most OP-Act partner cities have been (and in some cases still are) facing severe economic structural changes over the past two decades. The economic basis of several of these cities, for instance, was metalworking or chemical industries. The industries developed in these cities mainly because of certain location factors and advantages - presence of water or raw materials, for example. These traditional location factors, however, have only little or no importance at all for investors from the ‘modern’ industrial or service sector. New types of competitive factors - site advantages - have therefore gained in importance.

In actual fact, all the Op-Act cities possess site advantages – whether these are historical parts of the city or buildings, universities, lakes, rivers or wonderful natural landscape in the environs. What these site advantages all have in common is that up to the present time they have played hardly any or no part at all in urban development and in city marketing. Their potential advantages were barely perceived by political representatives and the general public. What is therefore at issue is to discover these rough diamonds and

to make them usable, i.e. to polish them up. In other words: Site advantages need increasingly to be deployed in urban development and city marketing, in order to address the repercussions of economic structural change.

Obtaining added value from site advantages is, however, probably one of the most challenging tasks. If these site advantages had been positioned in the ‚mainstream‘ of earlier planning ideas and development – i.e. if their advantages had been as it were accessible automatically – then they would have already been used. In many instances it appears, furthermore, that resistance within the local population or within the political hierarchy as well with regard to valorisation may well play a part which should not be underestimated. As an illustration of this, one only needs to mention the fact that some of the partner cities are still finding it difficult to free themselves from their industrial past and from the image which is associated with this. Although the secondary sector no longer plays an important role in the economy of many cities, yet political or policy, also individual personal decisions (for example, concerning professional training and choice of profession) are still being taken as if the municipality in question were an industrial city. Image, self-perception, planning and policies need to be modified in order to be in a position to respond to structural change.



To an even greater degree than many other municipal field of action, valorisation of site advantages therefore requires an integrated planning approach and inclusion of a variety of stakeholder groups and of local inhabitants.

Integrated planning and governance is a management approach in its core. It concerns management of cross-cutting issues in policy making that transcend the boundaries of established policy fields. It also includes management of policy responsibility within a single organisation or sector. Integrated governance refers to both horizontal integration between policy sectors (different departments) and vertical inter-governmental integration (between different tiers of government), as well as beyond administrative boundaries. The latter is true in the double sense: In many cases, integrated policy making and planning requires cooperation between a city and municipalities in the vicinity; in all cases it requires cooperation with civil society. Public participation is in fact a core element in integrated planning and policy making.

Answering the following questions can help to plan and to implement an integrated project, to incorporate the right skills, departments and stakeholders into a ‚site advantage‘ project:

#### **Horizontal dimension (departments within a municipality, for instance):**

- Which other departments and disciplines are affected by potential measures?
- Which other departments and disciplines can potentially contribute to the project?
- Which policies, which political/policy commissions, committees or councils are affected?

#### **Vertical dimension (other tiers of government, regional government, for instance):**

- Is a government / an administrative body at a different level (region or district for instance) affected?  
Which departments at this level are affected?
- Can other government levels potentially contribute to a project?
- Are there legal regulations or mutual agreements requiring other levels to be involved?

#### **Beyond administrative boundaries (other municipalities; private and business sector, civil society and social and community sector):**

- Are other municipalities affected or can they potentially contribute to a project?
- What stakeholders and stakeholder groups / representatives outside the public sector are affected?
- What stakeholders and stakeholder groups / representatives outside the public sector can contribute to a project?

## **BEST PRACTICE EXAMPLES**

### **Altena: Reconstruction of the riverside road finished**

(by Roland Balkenhol, Town Planner of Altena)



In Altena the reconstruction of the riverside road has been finished in the first days of November. The originally road had been built in 1980 only for the purpose of driving and parking cars with very few space for pedestrians and not any access to the river. The result of reconstruction is a pleasant promenade of about 5 m width which is very much liked by inhabitants and tourists.

The redesign has been realized in three stages since 2009, finally with the building of two new terraces to the river Lenne. There you can sit on steps leading down to the water which before reconstruction couldn't be reached anywhere in the centre of the town. In the river the two terraces are connected by a row of big stones which allow walking over if the water is low enough. According to the extraordinary fine weather many people – especially children – enjoyed this new opportunity. The completion of the terraces was celebrated in the darkness with enlightened canoes on the river and a spectacular show of fire dancers on the banks. More than 4,000 visitors watched this event called „Feuertaufe“ (baptism of fire), Nobody had expected so many people. Now, everybody looks forward to the next summer when this new attractive location intends to offer drinks and snacks.



### 800 million people in one place

Right, we need quality content. But why should we be present on social networks? Because these networks are channels through which we can get our (valuable and entertaining) content to our target groups with speed and efficiency never seen before! The number of people using these networks on a daily basis is ever increasing. (Yes your city's inhabitants, especially the younger people are there; in fact, I'm almost certain you are there, too!). Facebook has 800 million users, and still growing; it certainly doesn't hurt if the content we provide is where people are hanging out anyway.

### Wrapping up

If you haven't started to redesign your marketing communication yet, do not wait - start today! It is never too late, but those earlier in the game will clearly have an advantage.

And if you need some arguments to gain the support of your superiors, here are the key messages once more:

- Inbound marketing and the use of social networks are here to stay; in fact, they represent the new rules of marketing and communication!
- The use of social networks is not a goal; these networks are efficient channels to reach our target groups!
- Content is king! To gain the trust and commitment of our target groups, we have to provide valuable and / or entertaining content!

## OPEN SPACE

### Leoben wants to know: How creative are you?

(by Alexandra Janze, Communication Officer OP-ACT project)



In the course of the OP-ACT project, Leoben made an analysis of its citizens' age pyramid. Statistics show that more than 40 % of the inhabitants in Leoben are over the age of 50, whereas the number of young people is declining steadily. Experts say that there will be a "war of talents" on the labour market in the upcoming years. Companies will compete for qualified workforce. Especially small and medium sized cities like Leoben will suffer from this negative trend because young talented people tend to move to close by metropolitan areas. As a first step to improve this situation Leoben tries to give its young inhabitants new perspectives. In a project called "Kreativwerkstatt Leoben" the city will organize in co-operation with a local school a so called OPEN SPACE event. The OPEN SPACE technology was

created by Harrison Owen and is a meeting concept where no agenda is distributed and the structure and content is very open. Young people are invited to work in groups and share their ideas. The results should provide information which creative fields have to be supported and promoted.

Municipalities themselves cannot create more jobs or offer education but they can provide the framework and build the necessary networks and co-operations with companies, institutions or experts in order to promote the creative sector. The municipality of Leoben and its partners will offer workshops, internships, trainings and company insight tours for youngsters to give them an idea what it takes to be successful in a creative job or just to reveille their creativity. On the long run the development of co-working spaces and business competence centres should help young freelancers and entrepreneurs to gain ground and to learn essential business-management know how to be successful in their careers.