



Sustainable
URBAN FRINGES
SURF



Toolkit Sustainable Urban Fringes

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Foreword

This toolkit is one of the main deliverables of the Sustainable Urban Fringes (SURF) Project, part of the Interreg IVB North Sea Region Programme. The project brought together partners and experts from across the North Sea Region to exchange information and develop a common approach towards the sustainability of urban fringe areas. The following partners have been engaged in the project:

- Aberdeen City Council
- School of the Built Environment at Leeds Metropolitan University
- City of Bradford (Airedale Partnership)
- Norfolk County Council
- City of Enschede
- Centre for Urban and Environmental Development at Saxion University of Applied Sciences
- City of Almelo
- City of Hengelo
- Province of East Flanders
- Province of West Flanders
- City of Hamburg
- Municipality of Harryda
- Province of Antwerp

The toolkit brings together the tools that the partners have employed during the SURF project. It is not meant to be complete but offers a hopefully inspiring collection of promising and effective tools to stimulate sustainable development in urban fringe areas. The toolkit itself consists of three parts. After an introduction in which the approach that SURF took is explained, the main part is formed by descriptions of the tools. After that a brief reflection can be found.

Acknowledgements

The toolkit is the result of the work of many people. Next to the authors all partners in the SURF project contributed to the toolkit and commented on draft versions. Without their input this toolkit would not have been realised.

Feedback

The toolkit describes the tools and the lessons learned as it is in 2012, after three years of work within the SURF project. Many of the partner projects are just in the start of the realisation phase, which implies that a lot more will be learned in the next couple of years, about the effectiveness of the tools in charge. Also in other places authorities work on sustainability in urban fringes and learn in this respect. All people having experiences that can contribute to a more complete and elaborated toolkit 2.0 are more than welcome to share their ideas and experiences. You can use the contact information below to share your ideas, or join the linkedin group on Sustainable Urban Fringes.

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Part I: Introduction

Urban fringes are getting more and more into the centre of attention given the transformational changes in both urban and rural areas plus the fact that both are increasingly getting interwoven. A main driver for the increased attention for the urban fringe is the demographic change that many European countries are, and will be, experiencing in the coming decades. For a long time the urban fringe was a temporary zone waiting for the next wave of urban expansion. In many cases it is no longer to be expected that this ongoing process of expansion will continue much longer. This gives the urban fringe a much more permanent character and calls for specific attention. In practice, this proves to be a salient task, not only because of substantive issues but first and foremost given the often fragmented governance structures for the urban fringe.

Through the SURF project we have learned of the diversity of government and governance structures. Sometimes the urban fringe is governed by a major city with suburbs, sometimes a few comparable cities form a region that addresses the urban fringes, while in other situations a province is in the lead. In all situations, though, local and regional governments have to collaborate with other government layers, NGOs, citizens and the private sector.

Creating synergies

The urban fringe area is the zone between urban and rural areas, where urban and rural functions and qualities meet and interact. This interaction between urban and rural functions and qualities can have both positive results (synergy between the functions and qualities, added quality) or negative results (negative interference, loss of quality because of the interaction between different functions). An example of synergy is the presence of an attractive agricultural landscape that combines functions like recreation, biodiversity conservation, water management and employment creation. An example of negative interference is the presence of a polluting industrial site in the urban fringe zone, leading to depreciation and deprivation of neighbouring housing areas and farm lands and resulting in a negative spiral. Local and regional governments are looking for a balanced mix of functions and qualities for the urban fringe, jointly with other governments, citizens and private organisations. This toolkit provides some examples of the tools they use in this respect.

The toolkit: aims and audience

Urban fringes present complex challenges to governments. As memorized above, next to the substantive issues to be tackled, often, urban fringes are prime examples of the complex patterns of overlapping governance and fuzzy boundaries, with diffuse roles of both public and private actors. Within the context of the SURF project we have learned how regional and local authorities are dealing with the complex challenges in urban fringes. This toolkit brings together the most promising tools and approaches they have employed successfully.

The toolkit is not meant to be complete, nor does it address every possible local situation. It offers examples of sometimes innovative uses of tools and as such it is meant to give inspiration to local and regional authorities dealing with the complex challenges in their urban fringes. Included are descriptions of a tool, the context in which it is used, success and fail factors and contact information to learn more in-depth from a tool.

Most of the SURF projects had a long period of preparation, before activities 'on the ground' could be realised. This long preparation period is inherent to complex spatial projects with many functions and many stakeholders. The long period of preparation implies that the period after the delivering of the project results is in many cases relatively short. There is no opportunity yet for extensive evaluations among stakeholders regarding their appreciation of the changes, or extensive studies on long term output and outcome of the projects. This is something to work on in the coming years. Then the SURF projects can be used to identify more in detail the common ingredients that contributed towards the success as well as identify the barriers that hindered full potential.

Urban fringe areas

Within this toolkit, we do not consider the urban fringe area as an area with a very clear delineation. It starts in the urban area, where housing densities decrease and rural functions like food production and water management pop up. It ends in the rural area, where urban influences like housing and industry are no longer visible in the landscape. It should not be considered as a line, but as a zone with both rural and urban influences and a discussion about exact borders will not be fruitful in most situations. Sometimes it can start and end kilometres from the border between the urban and rural areas.

Throughout Europe, the urban fringe area can be considered as a very important area from the perspective of public policy. The specific situation in urban fringe area differs from city to city, and from country to country. Here below we describe some features that can be distinguished in these areas, and some challenges urban fringes are dealing with:

- *Differences and fluctuations in (expected) property value:* land awaiting urban development raises prices, but in some regions a shrinking or stabilising population in combination with the financial crisis leads to a decrease in the amount of land needed for urban expansion, which in turn leads to lower land prizes .
- *Lack of coherence in planning policy and regulations;* potentially leading to decrease in spatial quality and loss of attractiveness of the area.
- Nevertheless in many places *an attractive place to live*, because of the vicinity of both green space and urban facilities and functions; often offering spacious dwellings, estates, endowed with cultural heritage.
- But in contrast to that, sometimes a *lack of identity:* not rural, not urban, lack of specific cultural or regional identity, as a result of the lack of coherent planning and the diversity of functions
- *The zone where space consuming urban facilities are concentrated:* infrastructure nodes, wholesale facilities, industrial estates, city dumps, water purification plants.
- *A zone where specific social and recreational facilities are concentrated:* allotment gardens, public parks and green areas, sport facilities, riding-schools, trails and footpaths.
- In contrast to that, it is also often perceived as a zone with a *limited connectivity between the urban and rural area;* this is in many of the SURF partner areas the case for slow means of transport: walking and cycling. This limits the opportunities to access the urban fringe and to use it for recreation or economic functions.
- *A change of functions as a result of both local, regional, national and international developments:* agricultural property becomes available for other functions; mono -functional world market agriculture is shifting towards multifunctional urban agriculture with more attention for the local market. Farming is more and more combined with other functions like social and health care and recreation. Open areas for water retention are developed as a part of climate change mitigation policies.
- *An area with specific environmental risks and opportunities:* ‘urban’ water is contaminating clean rural water, landscape cluttering, risk of decrease in biodiversity in situations of deterioration. On the other hand specific opportunities for landscape and environmental quality and biodiversity and for innovative applications in the field of environmental management are offered. This refers, amongst others, to functions like water retention and innovative sewage treatment technologies that produce energy and recover the nutrients. The urban fringe area can also play a crucial role in providing renewable forms of energy production, like wind, photovoltaics or biomass.

Sustainable Urban Fringes

SURF was specifically focused on creating *sustainable* urban fringes. The tools in this toolkit (partly) reflect that focus. Within SURF sustainability has been defined as a process through which integral, future-oriented quality is delivered. Below we highlight the main elements of this approach.

In our approach we, naturally, follow the concept as it has been defined by the Commission Brundtland (1987): Sustainable Development stands for meeting the needs of present generations without jeopardizing the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. In other words, a better quality of life for everyone, now and for generations to come. It offers a vision of progress that integrates immediate and longer-term objectives, local and global action, and regards social, economic and environmental issues as inseparable and interdependent components of human progress. Within the context of the urban fringe it is about integrating different qualities, taking into account both the dimensions of time and space

The key element in sustainable development, therefore, is the understanding that quality is a broad concept, combining different perspectives: environmental quality, spatial quality, social quality and economic quality. Developing and implementing this vision happens in a participative process, with all stakeholders involved. Not only the present and local situation is taken into account, but also the expected impact that choices in the Urban Fringe areas have on other areas, nearby or far away, and the expected impact in the future. This is, in short, our description of a sustainable urban fringe. The figure below represents our perspective on sustainable development:



Figure 1: Sustainable development (De Bruijn 2004)

The challenge in the design of products and buildings and in the planning of areas is to add quality, to create added value, preferably in different dimensions. For example: a well-designed housing or business site in the urban fringe can *produce* energy instead of using less energy than the standards, e.g. by having enough photovoltaics or use geothermy . It can *improve* the water quality instead of polluting less than allowed, e.g. by having a green roof or water purification in constructed wetlands. It can *add* biodiversity instead of destroying biodiversity less

than formally allowed, when intensive grassland or corn cropland is replaced by a well landscaped green business site or public green space.

The development should not only add environmental quality, but also quality with respect to the other dimensions of sustainability, and to create synergy where possible. The search for *synergy* usually leads to more creative and unexpected solutions, compared with the search for *balance*, as a result of a different mind-set.

Apart from synergy between the dimensions of sustainability, planners and developers should also look for synergy between the different areas and between the different stakeholders: synergy between the city, the urban fringe area and the rural area; and synergy between the authorities, civilians and private investors.

The opportunities for mutual benefit increase substantially as a result of technological innovation: technology for sustainable energy becomes cheaper and more convenient to use, also by lay people; facilities for water storage and purification can also add to spatial quality and biodiversity opportunities in an area, etcetera.

The search for synergy might also lead to situations where interests are still conflicting – or where stakeholders have the perception of conflicting interests. Of course it is important to keep an open eye for these situations when they appear and to look for technical or financial means to take away existing conflicts of interest, or to improve communication to take away existing misperceptions about conflicting interests.

A few examples may clarify this approach to sustainability: Water retention, in order to cope with more extreme weather conditions, is becoming a prime function in many urban fringes. This creates good opportunities for nature development and recreational functions. Another example is the development of new estates that often combine a housing function, some economic functions (recreation, agriculture or otherwise) and the restoration of landscapes. A last example is the redevelopment of former farms into broadened business concepts in which regional food production is combined with farmers markets, or social care farms where farming activities are offered as day programme for small children, or for socially or for mentally deprived persons.

Tools for sustainable urban fringes

Departing from the perspective that urban fringes present a complex challenge for local and regional governments, both substantive and with regard to the visioning and planning process, the tools presented in this toolbox are attempts to deal with this complexity. In particular, the tools help governments in building relationships with other parties, governmental, private and non-governmental. They also help in coping with the complexity of an integral perspective on quality.

The tools are not meant to be copied-and-pasted into other situations. Every situation is unique, with its own physical background, political and legal context and stakeholder arena. Nevertheless, we think that the tools can serve as a source of inspiration for those dealing with comparable challenges. We also hope to be able to follow the projects for a longer period, in order to obtain more evidence about the effectiveness of the tools used.

Part 2: The tools used within SURF

This section describes the tools used within SURF that helped or can help in realising sustainable development in urban fringe areas. The list of tools is not by any means intended to be exhaustive, nor does it intend to address all possible situations. Rather, the function of this toolbox is to inspire by showcasing promising tools that are actually already being used and have shown to produce intended results.

The tools are divided into two different categories, with a clear link to the vision on sustainable development previously explained:

- Building networks between stakeholders in the urban fringe area
- Creating synergy between different qualities in the area

Each of the tools is described in some detail to understand the specifics of the tool. In this description the use of the tool in the urban fringe gets special attention. To this end, a short characterisation of the area and context is included, next to the goals that the governmental agency sets and the results it produced. Of all tools, an indication of the success factors is included as well as elements that could be strengthened. Contact details are included in order to get more in-depth information.

The tool description is based upon information provided by the SURF project partners, in face to face interviews, e-mail communication and telephone calls. All the descriptions of the tools are checked and confirmed by the project partners. The reflection on the results obtained and the strengths and weaknesses of the tools ('why did it work', 'what could be improved?') is also mainly based upon the perception of the SURF project partners.

This approach implies that the description of the SURF tools should not be considered as firm scientific evidence for the quality of the tool or the opportunities to apply the tool elsewhere. It should be considered as a source of inspiration for new approaches to involve stakeholders and realise synergy between qualities in urban fringe areas, based upon three years of practical experience of the project partners involved.

Here below, you can find an explanation of the two categories of tools with a summary of the tools presented, and a more detailed fact sheet type of description of all the tools.

Each tool has one or more of the characteristics briefly described here below:

- *Communication*: all forms of communication, both interpersonal and through mass media, in all kinds: awareness raising, education, stakeholder participation
- *Regulation and legal conditions*: all where specific formal and legal procedures are developed or applied, like zoning plans, building permits etcetera.
- *Planning and design*: all tools where physical planning and urban design play an important role: the distribution of functions and activities in an area, and the design of areas, structures and buildings.
- *Financial tools*: all tools where financial incentives are used to stimulate the desired behaviour of stakeholders: subsidies, taxes, investment opportunities etcetera.
- *Digital and on line tools*: specific communication and participation tools, where digital media play a crucial role: on line feedback opportunities for stakeholders, social media etcetera.

Tool category: Building Networks

Introduction

Sustainable development in urban fringe areas can only be realised if all stakeholders are involved. Public authorities traditionally had the leading role in land use planning, but in many situations this is changing rapidly. Real estate developers, land owners and other private investors have a substantial influence on developments, and the existing practice of top down decision making by public authorities is gradually shifting towards a more governance - bottom up - oriented approach. This development makes it necessary to develop tools for building networks and organising stakeholder engagement, in different stages of the decision making and planning process and on different levels of scale. In urban fringe areas, this task can be extra challenging because of differences in culture and tradition between 'urban' and 'rural' networks and stakeholders, and because of complexity of responsibilities of the different levels of authorities in the urban fringe.

The tools in this section focus on this process of network building and stakeholder engagement. The province of Antwerp uses *stakeholder participation to determine landscape quality objectives in their project area*, the Laarse Beek (Laarse River). The *Open Space Audit* in Aberdeen involves both civil servants from many different sectors and inhabitants and other stakeholders in the process of area assessment, leading to awareness and involvement of many stakeholders and to a common knowledge base for future activities in the area. The *Virtual Flythrough*, developed in Norfolk, England, is a digital tool that provides new opportunities for engaging with different audiences by making geographical data more easily accessible. The *communication strategy* of Norfolk shows how the authorities combine the use of traditional communication methods and new methods (online, social media), for an integrated communication strategy for awareness raising and network building. The *neighbourhood forum in the Hamburg region* is an informal platform where different area authorities work together and exchange information on planning issues in the urban fringe. The region of Twente developed a *regional vision* for the urban fringes of five neighbouring municipalities, and elaborated a project agenda based on this vision. Within the *Green knowledge portal*, local and regional authorities work together with educational institutes on different level, from schools for vocational training to universities of applied science and universities. This is also applied in West Flanders. The *Weusthag Foundation* is a citizen initiative to set up a foundation with stakeholders that feel connected to the Weusthag park area work together. The municipality of Hengelo has a strategic alliance with this foundation. The *Provincial Quality Chamber* in East Flanders is a group of experts in architecture, urban design and spatial planning, that has an advisory role in private development projects, in order to guarantee spatial quality on different levels of scale. The *Design Review Panel* in Aberdeen has more or less a comparable role.

- (1) Stakeholder participation to determine landscape quality objectives (Province of Antwerp, Belgium)
- (2) Open space audit (Aberdeen, Scotland)
- (3) Virtual Flythrough, Google Earth (Norfolk, England)
- (4) Neighbourhood forum (Free and Hanseatic City of Hamburg, Germany)
- (5) Regional vision development (Region of Twente, the Netherlands)
- (6) Green knowledge portal (Region of Twente, the Netherlands)
- (7) Cooperation between authorities and higher education (Province of West Flanders, Belgium)
- (8) Weusthag Foundation (Hengelo, the Netherlands)
- (9) Provincial quality chamber (Province of East Flanders, Belgium)

Stakeholder participation in determining landscape quality objectives (province of Antwerp, Belgium)

The tool

Short description of the tool

The Province of Antwerp works on the improvement of the quality of the urban fringe in the northeast of the city of Antwerp, especially around the small watercourse the Laarse beek. In order to create more awareness of the plans and get a better impression of the views of inhabitants and visitors, the Province of Antwerp created different tools for stakeholder engagement in the assessment of the present qualities of the area and in identifying opportunities for improvement of the area.

Relevant tool characteristics

- Communication
- Stakeholder engagement?

The context

Area and context:

The urban fringe in the northeast of the city of Antwerp is considered as an area where green space is important on a local and regional level. Although the area is relatively forest-rich/ dense, the urbanisation degree is 35%. The urban fringe contains a complex network of watercourses, with the stream Laarse beek flowing centrally. The area is characterised by a high degree of private ownership and transport networks to and from Antwerp and its port. This creates several problems:

- Limited amount of area suffering from a very high recreational pressure.
- Large distances between local concentrated living areas and accessible green spaces.
- Open space close to concentrated living areas strongly influenced by the inhabitants of these areas -gardens, space for horses etc.
- Pressure on the biodiversity of the urban fringe
- Negative perception of parts of the area.

The complex government structure and the multifunctional character of the urban fringe area further increase the complexity. The steering committee of the Water Board Het *Schijn*, the wider area to which the watercourse Laarse beek belongs, has officially expressed the will to execute an integrated project in the valley system of the Laarse beek. This Water Board consists of delegates of the province of Antwerp, local authorities and water managers.

Project Objective:

The project as a whole aims to improve the quality and accessibility of the urban fringe in the northeast of the city of Antwerp, in a process of close cooperation with all authorities, stakeholders and inhabitants concerned, to create sustainable, long-term results.

The combined use of the questionnaire, interactive SWOT analysis and online communication tool has the aim to give the province a good overview of how the inhabitants and visitors of the Laarse Beek area experience the area, which problems they encounter and how they see the future of the Urban Fringe.

Activities:

Questionnaire:

The main feature was a questionnaire, available online and as hard copy on public places in the Laarse beek area. It was also distributed during a big event in the area. The questions ask for the perception of the Laarse beek area by the respondents, the way they use the area, and their suggestions for improvement.

A poster on A0 size accompanies the hardcopy questionnaires and informs possible respondents about the Laarse beek project and about the questionnaire. Also other supporting communication is used to reach possible respondents. A selection of the respondents received a present after they left their e-mail address.

SWOT analysis:

The interactive SWOT analysis aimed at the different stakeholders in the area. The information for the SWOT analysis was gathered during an evening where different stakeholders were invited. These groups included, amongst others, environmental associations, socio-cultural associations, agricultural associations, employers' associations, employee associations, schools,... By creating a mix of different interests from the different municipalities a broad variety of ideas could come up. The evening was moderated by an external discussion leader to create a neutral atmosphere. Three themes were discussed: tourism & recreation, accessibility and nature & water.

Online communication tool:

Because of the large number of local inhabitants, a web based animated interactive tool was created that allows people to 'read' the landscape and give an opinion on future objectives and services. The online communication tool combines a desktop and mobile website, with 360° views, lots of information and different ways to question the visitors about their preferences for the landscape. Visitors to the area that are looking for information will thus be easier reached and the dynamic environment of a website will also attract a broader audience to give their opinion on the urban fringe. Being dynamic has the advantage that when the quality of the open space in the urban fringe changes, other questions can be asked to the visitors.

Public event

To bring people back into connection with the Laarse beek and the green spaces in its vicinity, a public event was organised together with local stakeholders. The purpose of the event was twofold: 1) informing visitors and inhabitants about the urban fringe and the on-going and planned processes in the area and 2) questioning people regarding how they experience the urban fringe, suggestions they might have,... The reason for this twofold approach is that a participative process is more likely to give a better return when the participants are informed.

The results of the questionnaire, SWOT analysis and online communication tool were used to determine landscape quality objectives for the area. These were collected in a document that will give inspiration for future projects and developments in the area.

Results:

In the first half of 2012, about 50 people filled in the questionnaire and 25 people participated in the SWOT-analysis. The most important things the project partners learned were amongst others that the area lacks an own identity, that there is a need to improve accessibility along the watercourse and between existing green spaces, that nature is valued highly and that more information should be given to the inhabitants of the area regarding certain topics as regulations along watercourses. These findings lead to a higher awareness among policy makers regarding the perception of the urban fringe and its potentials as seen by the inhabitants and users of the area. Their ideas can be used as an inspiration for the future development of the area. By informing people and giving them a voice through the questionnaire, SWOT and online tool, networks were built with stakeholders and awareness and involvement of people in the neighbourhood were created.

Reflection

Why did it work?

The most important success factor was that the urban fringe was put to the attention of the users and visitors of the area, which has enhanced awareness and local involvement. A combination of different media was used to obtain this, both modern and online media and classic media like posters, exhibitions and events. This helped to attract and reach different groups of stakeholders. Because of this 'stakeholder democracy' people feel more connected to the area and the processes that are taking place.

What could be improved?

More people could be encouraged to fill in the questionnaire at public places when someone is present on the spot, actively informing potential respondents about the project and stimulating them to fill in the questionnaire. However, this implies a higher amount of staff costs. One should also be aware that when an area clearly lacks an own identity, people might not feel engaged yet to give their opinion. Furthermore, if it is clear to the respondents what will happen with the results, they might feel more engaged. .

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Open Space Audit (Aberdeen, Scotland)

A. The tool

Short description of the tool

The Open Space Audit is a participative, integrated inventory of the quantity, quality and distribution of different types of open spaces within the City of Aberdeen. The methodology assesses the quality of the open space from different perspectives and with the involvement of different categories of stakeholders: experts, users, decision makers, and city staff. This approach allows experts to acquire a broad understanding of the quality and appreciation of open space, creates awareness among citizens and allows them to participate in the process of green space improvement.

Relevant tool characteristics

- Regulation and legal conditions
- Communicative instruments
- Planning and design
- Digital and on-line tools.

B. The context

The Open Space Audit is required by Scottish Planning Policy. Cities are required to provide an overview of the quantity, quality, accessibility and community value of publicly and privately owned open spaces.

The audit and assessment for Aberdeen was used to inform and support policies in the Local Development Plan and also to inform the preparation of the Open Space Strategy, which seeks to achieve a network of attractive, appealing, well connected community places. The Open Space Strategy provides a framework for the management and development of Aberdeen's open space which enables the whole community - residents, businesses, community organisations, voluntary and statutory agencies - to work in partnership towards achieving the maximum benefit from our open spaces.

Area and context

Aberdeen is a compact city of approximately 189 sq kilometres. It is flanked by 2 major waterways which originate out with the city –

The River Dee to the South of the City which is a Special Area of Conservation and through its Catchment Management Plan is a good example of collaborative working to improve the urban fringes which are influenced by the River Dee. In the city there is access along most of the River Dee for salmon fishing, walking and other forms of recreation, including water sports. The urban fringe in this area of the city is well used and is famed for its beauty.

The River Don lies to the north of the city and is known for trout fishing. The River Don cuts through areas of industry and some deprived communities. Whilst the river is an important area to the city, access to the river around the old industrial areas for city residents is poor. There are also areas of cultural and historic importance such as the Brig o Balgownie and Seaton Park.

Through SURF, the community, landowners and stakeholder groups are brought together in order to improve the city's urban fringes. In addition to this, Aberdeen completed an Open Space Audit providing information for citizens to understand the quality of the city's public and private open spaces.

Project Objective:

The project aims to:

- Develop a clear and robust understanding of open space in Aberdeen;
 - See whether Aberdeen's communities have enough open space, or enough of the right types of open space;

- Gather information on the quality of Aberdeen's open space;
- Support a strategic approach to improving Aberdeen's open spaces;
 - Supporting development and delivery of an Open Space Strategy for Aberdeen;
 - Supporting the Local Development Plan to deliver more sustainable development by providing information and standards to guide developers.

Activities:

This Open Space Audit has been carried out according to national best practice guidance from Greenspace Scotland and the Scottish Government. It combines the information collected by earlier relevant projects along with site assessments and community engagement carried out in 2009 and 2010. The quantity, quality and accessibility of Aberdeen's open spaces have been established through the following assessments:

Greenspace Characterisation & Mapping Study 2007 – Funding was provided by Greenspace Scotland to develop a comprehensive digital map of all of Aberdeen's greenspace. The project involved analysing aerial photographs and identifying the land use category, or type of all of the urban land in Aberdeen plus a 500 metre buffer around the built up areas.

Greenspace Audit 2007 – As a recommendation of Aberdeen's Parks and Open Space Strategy 2005 an audit of the city's parks and greenspaces was undertaken. The 2007 audit provided an assessment of publicly managed greenspace, at least 0.4 hectares in size.

Open Space Audit 2009/10 – Site assessments, community engagement and a review of existing information took place in order to expand the 2007 data to fulfil the requirements of national guidance on Open Space Audits. This meant adding to the assessment the types of open space that are defined in Planning Advice Note (PAN) 65 that had not been part of the 2007 audit, such as churchyards, school grounds and private grounds, as well as incorporating the views of local communities. The biodiversity value of open spaces was another factor that was included in the 2010 assessment that had not previously been taken into account. In order to ensure that best use was made of information that was already available through other related studies and projects, a review was undertaken of relevant documents, such as Neighbourhood Community Action Plans and relevant local strategies and plans.

Site assessments were mainly done by staff from Aberdeen City Council. In total, ten staff members were involved. In order to find the necessary resources as well as encourage a broader awareness of city staff in this process, the staff came from the Local Development Plan team as well as Environment Policy. This implied that the site assessments were not only done by experts in the field of ecology and green space, but by a broader group of people representing both users and planners / decision makers

Community engagement was undertaken as part of this project from December 2009 to January 2010. This was mainly done through a questionnaire available in hard copy and online.

Results:

Project results:

The open space audit provided an overview of the amount and the quality of open space in the city. The main categories identified were Woodlands, semi-natural areas and open water (48%), Amenity open space (19%), Golf Courses (18%), public parks and gardens (6%), Playing fields (5%) and institutional and school grounds (6%). The most important conclusions regarding the quality of the open space were as follows:

- Open spaces across the city are not evenly distributed
- The poorest quality parks and open spaces tend to be found within the more deprived communities.
- There are very many small, often poor quality play spaces
- The audit identified some areas of the city that have very little open space, and what they do have is poor quality
- The more recent residential developments in suburban areas have the highest quantities of open space but much of this takes the form of low quality, expensive to maintain amenity grounds

Process results (Results regarding community involvement and awareness):

In December 2009 a questionnaire was launched, which aimed to capture the public's views on open space provision, quality and accessibility. Copies of the questionnaire were distributed to all of the city's public libraries and The Point, and posters advertising it were put up at public events and in park notice boards. An online version was promoted on the Council's website. The survey ran for seven weeks and a total of 125 responses were received. 110 of the completed questionnaires were submitted online and fifteen hard copies were completed. Although this is a very small number in relation to the population of the city, the response rate is reasonable in comparison to other local public consultations. The questionnaire responses did however provide useful results and have helped to give some indication of public opinion. The review of relevant documents also provided useful information on local people's views, as did public information collected by GreenStat – an online, UK-wide database that the public can use to comment on their local open spaces.

This fairly small sample size does present a limitation to the interpretation of the results, however the responses are useful and do give some indication of public opinion.

C. Reflection

Why did it work?

A critical success factor in the delivery of Aberdeen's Open Space Audit was that it was a legal requirement, through Scottish Planning Policy.

The most important success factor was being able to use the findings from the Audit to inform and support policy changes, which should lead to real improvements in the quality and distribution of open space in Aberdeen. The tool continues to be in regular use, for informing developers and planners of the necessary standards for open space in new developments.

What could be improved?

Spending more time earlier in the process planning the use of Geographical Information Systems; the identification of sites for audit, and the methods for capturing and storing the information. Options to create more community involvement in this process: the community involvement was relatively limited at the time of the audit due to constraints on time and resources. By utilising more participative and ongoing communication methods, such as social media in future, the City of Aberdeen hopes to achieve more community input and buy-in, providing a stronger evidence base and greater success in delivery.

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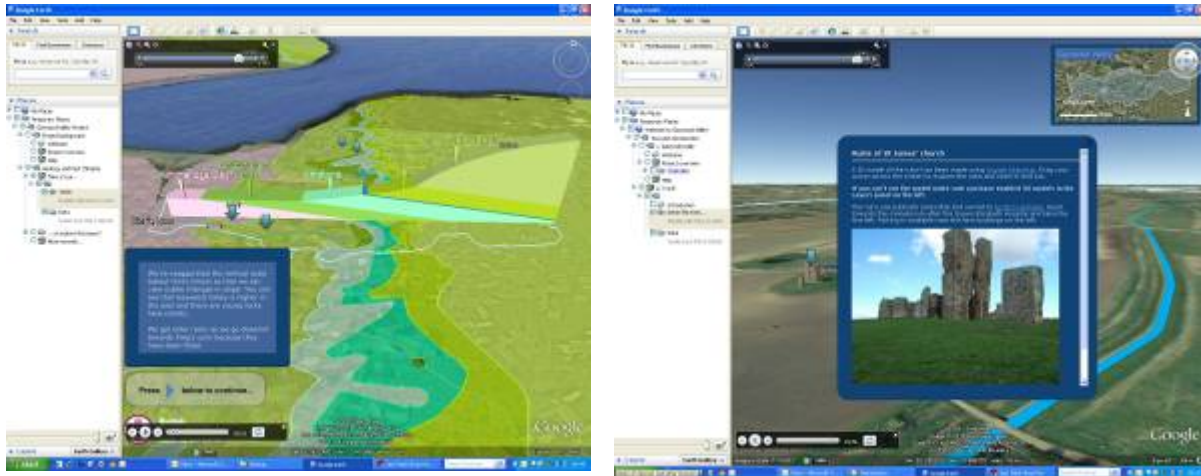
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Virtual Flythrough, Google Earth (Norfolk, England)

A. The tool

Short description of the tool

The Virtual Flythrough tool is a unique platform for managing complex and varied electronic datasets for the special environment of the Gaywood Valley catchment. (See pictures below). It also provides new opportunities for engaging with different audiences by making the data more visual and enabling people to explore the Gaywood Valley from the comfort of their home. It has also had a surprising benefit in terms of engaging with schools and has been tested by two local primary school classes that want to develop their IT skills with a good degree of success.



Relevant tool characteristics

- Planning and design
- Communication
- Digital and on line tools

B. The context

The King's Lynn and West Norfolk area has a diverse flora and fauna as well as a complex and fascinating history. In the past consultation with local people has been difficult to achieve for varying reasons. Partly apathy with the local Council, the size of the Borough being an obstacle, 552 sq miles (1,429 km²). Also many of the outlying villages (over 100 parishes) are quite isolated and therefore difficult to engage with. The population is quite old as many retire to the Norfolk Coast and therefore engaging with younger residents is important as their needs can be overlooked when providing for the long term stability of the Borough.

Engaging with different audiences in a different way was seen as important to the project in terms of effectively communicating the high quality environment of the Gaywood Valley area. Therefore using information technology in an innovative way would enable a new method of communication and consultation to be tested.

Area and context:

King's Lynn is the northernmost settlement on the River Great Ouse. The population of the town is 42,800. The town lies about 5 miles (8 km) south of the Wash, an estuary on the northwest margin of East Anglia. The Great Ouse at Lynn is the outfall for much of the drainage system of the Fens. The much smaller Gaywood River also flows through the town, joining the Great Ouse at the southern end of South Quay close to the town centre. The Gaywood is a short chalk river some 13km in length that rises from springs near Derby Fen to the east of King's Lynn. The river discharges into the Great Ouse at King's Lynn through a tidal flap, and then into the North Sea through The Wash estuary. The SURF project area follows the catchment of the River Gaywood and spans approximately 5,700 ha.

The Gaywood River Valley Project will provide local communities with opportunities for education, recreation, enjoyment and understanding of the urban fringe around the town of King's Lynn.

Project Objective:

To meet the huge challenges posed by climate change and the rapid pace of development in and around King's Lynn, the importance and true value of natural assets need to be reassessed. The project tries to combine diverse areas of interest, like improvement of biodiversity, geodiversity and cultural history, flood alleviation, improvement of physical health, learning and education and community engagement.

Specific aims:

- Protection of habitats and species from the impacts of climate change and a growing population.
- Improved access to the countryside and better understanding and valuing of its importance by local people.
- Bring local communities and partner organisations together, work on a shared vision for the future of the Gaywood Valley.

Activities:

The Flythrough Tool was publicised and the website link launched in the two local papers and the Gaywood Valley Project newsletter. The University of East Anglia who developed the tool also installed a portable 'pod' where the virtual flythrough tool could be displayed to good effect at the public launch event for the project in May 2011. (See picture below on left). The flythrough was also shown to project stakeholders on two occasions at the technology suite at the University of East Anglia, (see picture below right) to get ideas and feedback as the tool was developing. Around 15 project stakeholders attended the sessions

The virtual flythrough was shown to elected members at a Gaywood Valley conference in September 2011 and was very positively received with some of the elected members asking whether the tool could be transposed into the planning department of the Council. Around 15 elected members attended the Masterclass



On the 6th February 2012 the team from the University of East Anglia who developed the tool and the Gaywood Valley Project Officer went to two local primary schools to run a morning and afternoon session to test the tool. There was a quiz which asked questions about the tour and meant that you had to complete two tours to get the necessary information. There was a session mapping routes in the playgrounds using GPS handheld devices and introducing the concept of GPS and Geographical Information Systems to a young audience and a session looking at rocks and fossils from the Gaywood Valley under microscopes. Altogether the tool was shown to 60 school children. From the 24th of October 2011 (website launch) until the 30th of April 2012, the website had 448 visitors. Of these, 358 were unique page views.

Results:

Usage of the tool requires a fairly good knowledge of working on an internet platform. Clicking layers on and off for example, pausing the tour by clicking on the relevant text, using hyperlinks and zooming out. This has been undertaken with far more confidence and ease by school children than with an adult audience, no doubt because most schools are using the internet and computers as part of the daily class activities. The children easily moved around the tour and even used other parts of the site to see what would happen, taking an experimental approach to using the tool. They thought the session was 'fun' and 'interesting'. They understood the concept of GPS and the need to value the Gaywood Valley environment. Little supervision was in fact needed to demonstrate the tool, the children picked it up straight away.

Experiences with adult audiences have been mixed. For those who are confident using the internet and Google Earth the tool has been a success and has been used as a way of finding more out about the area and the pro-

ject. However some people have struggled with the software as their own software is out of date and therefore the tool loses functionality. Some people have also not read the on screen instructions properly and therefore have not been able to turn the right layers on and off and some have had difficulty installing the free Google Earth Software in order to run the tool.

C. Success factors

Why did it work?

The strength of the tool has been its level of data but also its simplicity. Access, biodiversity, geology, hydrology, heritage, climate change, topography, population data and green infrastructure can appeal to quite a broad audience for a range of different needs. Planning a walk for example or undertaking a school geography project. The simplicity has made the tool more accessible and meaningful.

The idea to trial it out on local primary school children was a good one and the two schools have a very good working relationship to the University of East Anglia as a result.

Another strength is that it is a different way of obtaining information in the comfort of your own home and also of consulting the public. The tried and tested PowerPoint presentations in village halls are not inspiring people. This new concept therefore is moving away from this method and encouraging people to be a bit more proactive about finding things out about their local environment and attracting younger audiences who are traditionally very hard to engage with.

What could be improved?

The tool could have benefitted from more publicity and maybe some more workshops with local communities. This was constrained by resources as the University staff are extremely busy.

There were also some technical difficulties in that the County Council's Information Technology Department would not allow officers to install Google Earth on their work computers, even though the software is free. This means that many of the officers can't access the tool in work time, at least without permission from the IT department. This caused setbacks in terms of the tools development and in the end the relevant officers had to use home computers to access the tool and provide feedback to the University.

Perhaps the biggest constraint for the tool at this moment is, that the tool is hosted by the University of East Anglia and therefore is quite hidden. A specific Gaywood Valley website would be of great use to showcasing the tool and would be a centralised place for people to add information, photos, stories and to find out more about the Gaywood Valley and other project tools. It is hoped that a simple website with a few pages can be set up quickly by the end of the project to park information and reports including the flythrough link.

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Integrating traditional and modern communication methods, Norfolk, UK

The tool

Short description of the tool

In order for the urban fringe projects of Norfolk to be successful stakeholders need to understand why we need to have access to high quality greenspace, the importance of the Gaywood Valley in terms of its high quality environment, the importance of the benefits we derive from the Valley and how this area can help us adapt to the changing climate by providing flood storage. For communicating these messages effectively a number of communication methods were used during the life of the Gaywood Valley Project. These included a **project logo** the use of social media site **Twitter**, the production of 4 quarterly **newsletters**, the production of two project **pop up displays**, **Masterclasses**, **community events**, a **virtual flythrough tour** of the valley, a **database of contacts**, a **Joint Advisory** and a **Advisory Group**, a **community wildlife toolkit** and **engagement with schools**.

Relevant tool characteristics

- Communication
- Digital and on line tools

The context

The King's Lynn and West Norfolk area is large and in places very isolated. The Gaywood Valley as an area was unknown to even local people and many didn't know the route of the Gaywood River. It was crucial that the message of SURF and the identity of the Gaywood Valley were recognised early on to enable active community participation.

Area and context:

The King's Lynn and West Norfolk area has a diverse flora and fauna as well as a complex and fascinating history. In the past consultation with local people has been difficult to achieve for varying reasons. Partly apathy with the local Council, the size of the Borough being an obstacle, 552 sq miles (1,429 km²). Also many of the outlying villages (over 100 parishes) are quite isolated and therefore difficult to engage with. The population is quite old as many retire to the Norfolk Coast and therefore engaging with younger residents is important as their needs can be overlooked when providing for the long term stability of the Borough.

The Gaywood is a short chalk river some 13km in length that rises from springs near Derby Fen to the east of King's Lynn. The river discharges into the Great Ouse at King's Lynn through a tidal flap, and then into the North Sea through The Wash estuary. The SURF project area follows the catchment of the River Gaywood and spans approximately 5,700 ha. The Gaywood River Valley Project will provide local communities with opportunities for education, recreation, enjoyment and understanding of the urban fringe around the town of King's Lynn.

Project Objective:

To meet the huge challenges posed by climate change and the rapid pace of development in and around King's Lynn, the importance and true value of natural assets need to be reassessed. The project tries to combine diverse areas of interest, like improvement of biodiversity, geodiversity and cultural history, flood alleviation, improvement of physical health, learning and education and community engagement.

Specific aims:

- Protection of habitats and species from the impacts of climate change and a growing population.
- Improved access to the countryside and better understanding and valuing of its importance by local people.
- Bring local communities and partner organisations together, work on a shared vision for the future of the Gaywood Valley.

Activities:

An Engagement Plan for the project was firstly drawn up. This looked at the type of communication we should explore and the types of audiences involved. The plan then broke the engagement down to the specific needs of each audience and when the engagement activities would take place. The first activity was to organise a schools competition to design a logo for the project. The guidelines were sent out to primary and secondary schools in the project area and we received a staggering 188 replies. This large number of replies probably can be explained by the fact the schools were already engaged in class room activities regarding the design of logos. The finalists were selected by the project Advisory Group and the winner decided by the Joint Advisory Panel (see above left). The logo has been an important tool for the project by providing a recognisable brand and also by forging close links with the local schools that contributed.

A selection of community events ran in conjunction with the Norfolk Wildlife Trust were ran in the first year and these were walks, talks and family events based around local wildlife in the Gaywood Valley area. This enabled people to get out into the Gaywood Valley if they had not before and to learn more about their local environment and biodiversity.

Other heritage events have been held with the North End Trust, St Nicholas Chapel and West Norfolk Archaeological Society.

The Project Officer has also given PowerPoint presentations at a number of events and venues. This has enabled communities and officers outside of the project area to become involved.

Twitter is used to advertise up and coming events and also to relay messages to partners and stakeholders and is an effective tool to engage with younger audiences. Mainly through recommendations of followers themselves this has resulted in 380 followers.

The Project Officer produces a quarterly newsletter and distributes in hard copy and email format to parish councils, schools, landowners, local elected members, special interest groups, officers and members of the public who have chosen to be on the Gaywood Valley publication circulation list.

Two pop up displays are set up and displayed in the front of the Borough Council offices and in a local café/tourist attraction called the Green Quay. This has enabled the project to be seen by a large number of tourists and local people visiting the buildings.

Two Masterclasses were held one for officers and one for elected members. This was to look primarily at the subject of Ecosystem Services and its delivery in the project. For the elected members event a series of formal presentations was held in a local museum with a buffet lunch and tour of the museum after (see below left). For the officers masterclass there was a mixture of presentations and a workshop session (see below right).



A community wildlife toolkit entitled 'Discover, Explore, Take Action' was produced for the project by the Norfolk Wildlife Trust. This enables people to discover more about the valley area and its distinctive wildlife, send in sightings and join conservation groups local to the area. The toolkit tells you about the Gaywood Valley provid-

ing info on species, landscape, geology, heritage and access. It then provides information on how to get to places of interest and what you might see. Lastly it gives people advice on how to conduct their own wildlife surveys, get involved in local groups that have an environmental remit and play their part in protecting the Gaywood Valley.

Engagement with schools has involved local meetings with teachers to talk about ways in which the project can help them to deliver sessions outside in the valley, the development of an Education Pond Area in one of the schools, two sessions with the University of East Anglia looking at GPS and geology and a programme of teaching sessions with a local secondary school. Resource packs have also been developed for teachers by the University of East Anglia.

The project relies on its Advisory Group and Joint Advisory Group to feed in their ideas and help to disseminate information. These are a range of stakeholders with an interest in the project and area.

Results:

It is clear that no one specific type of engagement fits all the requirements. Effective communication and network building involves a variety of engagement methods, to different audiences over a period of time. In fact it is only really now that the engagement work is starting to pay off and more people are finding out about the project.

C. Success factors

Why did it work?

The project has taken an experimental approach to engagement and network building trying a variety of approaches. The use of Twitter and the Virtual Flythrough tool has enabled the project to access younger and more IT illiterate audiences. For some the newsletter although very basic was seen as a very effective, simple method of communication. The wildlife events were slow to start off with as people were not used to the type of events on offer but these are now attracting on average 40 people per event. As word spread the numbers slowly increased. We also worked very closely with the West Norfolk Archaeological Society and a local museum which has engaged more people through their interests. The project team has worked hard to ensure that the needs of the audiences are being heard so this year the project ran more heritage related events as this was seen as something the community wanted to learn more about in the valley area.

What could be improved?

The business sector has not been represented in the network building of the project and it has been difficult to find a way into this sector. Schools also have been particularly difficult to engage with although we have tried to be persistent with this group. Most teachers simply don't have the time to meet outside of school hours and it has been a struggle to fit the requirement of our educational engagement into the secondary schools curriculum. Engaging with the public has been a slow drip drip process but the work is finally starting to be recognised and more contact is being made. The general public are slightly cautious about getting involved with things they are not familiar with so this was always going to take time.

The local newspaper could have done much more to promote the project. Numerous press articles were sent out but as this is essentially a positive project and the paper in question is more concerned with highlighting the negatives of the area, it has been a bit of a stumbling block to getting the message out there.

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Inter municipal Neighbourhood Forum (Free and Hanseatic City of Hamburg, Germany)

A The Tool

Short description of the tool

The inter-municipal neighbourhood forum is a governance tool, to engage several levels of regional and local public administration of Hamburg and its neighbouring municipalities in a regular exchange on development issues. The forum aims at exchanging information on development plans before formal planning processes are started. Building of trust and confidence is another major aim of the tool. The forum is informal, non-political and members take part voluntarily.

The very first inter-municipal neighbourhood forum was initiated in 2012 with a launching session in April 2012. It is intended to meet twice a year. It involves municipalities of the federal state of Schleswig Holstein and the regional district South of Hamburg as well as the respective District of Hamburg and the urban development ministry of Hamburg.

Relevant tool characteristics

- Planning and design
- Communication

B. The context

Region and country:

The Free and Hanseatic City of Hamburg (Freie und Hansestadt Hamburg), represented by the department for urban and regional planning within the Ministry of urban development and environment (Behörde für Stadtentwicklung und Umwelt, Amt für Landes- und Landschaftsplanung, Referat Raumordnung und Regionalentwicklung) and Hamburgian City-districts (Bezirke); neighbouring municipalities and districts formally belonging to another federal state like Schleswig Holstein.

Area and context:

The format of a neighbourhood forum has to be seen in the context of the structure - and the strict formal culture - of the civil service in Germany and in the context of the specific situation of the Free and Hanseatic City of Hamburg. Hamburg is at the same time federal state and local municipality. In hierarchical terms it equals the status of the bordering state Schleswig Holstein in the North - and Lower Saxony (Niedersachsen), south of Hamburg as much as it equals a small local municipality across its borders. This specific characteristic causes difficulties because eye levels and perspectives differ.

On the municipal planning level the municipalities in Schleswig-Holstein and Lower Saxony have to address their issues to the federal state level in Hamburg. They are not in direct contact to the city-district authorities of Hamburg, although those deal with local planning issues. Different eye levels and perspectives often cause lengthy communication lines and misunderstandings and have sometimes even lead to unnecessary conflicts and lost opportunities of synergies.

Given the formal culture of the civil service it is a tremendous breakthrough that the communication on grass-roots level is initiated with this neighbourhood forum. It is an exchange platform of the non-political planning officials, of the local and regional planning authorities.

The concept of the neighbourhood forum was first introduced in Berlin and its neighbouring federal state Brandenburg after the fall of the Wall that divided former West Germany from former East Germany. After the reunification of Germany, Berlin suddenly had neighbouring municipalities with whom Berlin had severe and ardent planning issues to deliberate and discuss. And the planning officials had never met!

So here the neighbourhood forum served as an informal institution enabling the planning experts and officials to get to know each other and to build trust. This had a great impact on the coordination and programming in the region.

In the case of Hamburg (like Berlin and Bremen a Free City State) this format of the neighbourhood forum was introduced to work towards the same objectives of building trust and to deliberate on planning issues of mutual concern in an early stage.

Project Objective:

The inter municipal neighbourhood forum aims at conceptualizing an informal process, which helps to increase planning efficiency and the coordination of spatial development in the urban fringe.

Activities:

Arrangement of a neighbourhood forum meeting twice a year to deliberate pending planning issues.

Results:

The results until now can mainly be considered as *process results*; the approach lead to improved information exchange and coordination of spatial development in the urban fringe. Planners of the different authorities know in an earlier stage the plans and ideas of neighbouring authorities. This creates better opportunities for cooperation and coordination. On the longer term, this will hopefully lead to *physical results*, being more coherence in the spatial quality of the urban fringe zone around the city of Hamburg. At this moment, it is too early to state if this will really be realised.

C Reflection

Why did it work?

Based upon the experiences until now, the following success factors were mentioned, formulated as suggestions to project managers and participants in such a type of project.

- The most important success factor is to make sure that the municipality is involved with all relevant sectors like the municipal planning department etc.
- The trap to avoid is to involve too many stakeholders or to tackle too many issues at once.
- Start with consensus prone issues, and bring in the difficult ones when trust has been built.
- Acquire a political 'go' on the main lines avoiding political involvement in the details.
- Observe the right balance in status of the officials to be involved in the neighborhood forum between the Central City and the municipalities in the fringe.
- As the next step, consider the up scaling to a higher official or political level for funding or other types of support.
- Know what makes the politician tick and arrange a certain political maneuverability to favor wishes to diversify and combine spatial functions in the urban fringe.

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Regional vision development (Region of Twente, The Netherlands)

A. The tool

Short description of the tool

Government agencies, at different governmental levels, have jointly developed and integrated vision and implementation plan for peri-urban zone in the Twente Region. The following governments were involved:

- Municipalities: Almelo, Borne, Enschede, Hengelo, Oldenzaal
- Regional authorities: Province of Overijssel, Region Twente
- Waterboard Regge & Dinkel (2 rivers)
- Ministries: Ministry of Housing (now Infrastructure & Environment) and Ministry of Agriculture & Nature (now Economy, Agriculture and Innovation)

Joining forces had two main motivations. Internally, the governments saw the need to coordinate their actions. Moreover, the idea was that jointly they could apply more easily for external funding. The regional vision consists of the vision itself and an implementation plan.

Relevant tool characteristics

- Regulation and legal conditions
- Communicative instruments
- Planning and design

B. The context

The urban fringes of the Network City Twente form special and dynamic transition zones with both urban and rural characteristics. They are at the centre of political and administrative interest because they offer opportunities for housing, recreation and tourism, new forms of economy on the edge of the city to replace agriculture, and as a recreational area for the city. During the last few years the municipalities in the Network City Twente – Almelo, Borne, Hengelo, Enschede and Oldenzaal – have made all kinds of plans for the urban fringes. Jointly with the Ministry of Infrastructure and the Environment, the province of Overijssel, the Twente region and the Regge and Dinkel Water Board, these five cooperating municipalities have merged the different subsidiary visions into an integral and collective vision for the urban fringes of the whole Network City .

All involved governments had plans and initiatives for their urban fringes that ranged from concrete measures to abstract plans. There was little coherence at the regional level, although there was a clear interdependence as the different cities are quite close to each other. Next, there was also a strong feeling that citizens do not understand different governments competing towards the same goal. Their interest is to have strong and effective governance arrangements and to create more coherence in the complete urban fringe area of the region, with respect to issues like infrastructure planning and the realization of recreational facilities. Therefore it was decided to develop:

1. An integrated vision on urban fringes in the urban zone of the Region Twente (“Network City Twente”), building upon all existing individual plans and visions;
2. A common implementation programme.
3. A study on the added value of an indication of urban fringes as a State Buffer Zone.

Area and context:

The region of Twente has a two-sided face. On the one hand it is one of the most densely populated areas of the Netherlands with a well-developed knowledge infrastructure consisting among others of two universities and many high-tech spin-offs. At the same time it has a rural atmosphere, in between the major cities and in the smaller towns. The alternation of urban qualities with high quality landscapes is one of the main assets of the region. Urban-rural relationships, therefore, play a main role in the region. Twente has a long history and is a ‘real’ region and not only a governmental construct. Networks are many and tight.

What was originally a row of separate cities in Twente – Almelo, Borne, Hengelo, Enschede, and a little further away Oldenzaal – has grown within the space of a century to become a large urban agglomeration in which the cities have virtually merged with one another. They developed along major lines of infrastructure. There is a high likelihood that unless drastic spatial policy is forthcoming, these cities will grow even closer together in the future. Based upon the present and expected demographic development in the region, this growth is expected to come to an end in the next few decades. That is what makes it all the more interesting to devote attention to the urban fringes that are being created today, since they may well become the definitive boundary (for the time being).

The spatial vision of the fringes of the Network City has three components:

- Relatively non-dynamic zones on the urban fringes that are interwoven with the landscape
- Dynamic and enclosed zones with an identity of their own
- A cohesive slow traffic network

Also included in the vision is a toolkit consisting of six instruments, or policy principles.

1. Green lobes to be secured against the urban pressure;
2. Green wedges that provide green routes from the city to the surrounding countryside;
3. Improvement of the city-countryside transition;
4. City-nature interweaving zones where the ambition is to create soft transitions from the city to the countryside with recreational possibilities close to the city that are linked to water and nature;
5. Recreational network: circular routes;
6. Recreational network: radial routes.

Project Objective:

The goals were twofold:

- 1 tuning and coordinating the plans and activities of the individual governments;
- 2 finding external funding for joined challenges.

The idea is that by joining forces the partnering governments can make a stronger voice towards potential funders (often provincial and national governments). Instead of competing with each other the aim is to have more coordination and therefore more/better results.

Activities:

The development of the regional vision took a rather elaborate policy development process that nevertheless was completed within a year:

The project started in August 2010. On the 17th May of 2011 the executive boards of the municipalities agreed on the vision and program. The start of the implementation was on the 6th of October in Hengelo. The official start of the project was in June 2012.

Some concrete activities include improving nature and the recreational use of the green lobes and the green wedges, the construction of the circular recreational routes around the separate urban areas and connecting these routes into a recreational network.

Results:

The process has resulted in a joined vision on urban fringes and an implementation plan. The Regional Vision is not meant to be an abstract note. It makes the approach towards urban fringes tangible. One of the elements in the vision is for instance Enschede Round (also included in this toolbox).

A concrete result is a subsidy of half a million Euros that the province of Overijssel has granted for implementing the Regional Vision.

C. Reflection

Why did it work?

A main success factor is the concrete approach taken. Instead of an abstract policy paper, the Regional Vision approaches urban fringes in a concrete manner. It became also a success because the different governments saw the opportunities in aiming at a common attractive goal instead of competing within a limited area; now they are cooperating in a wider area.

What could be improved?

Until now (spring 2012), the regional vision is mostly a product of governments. The aim is to involve citizens, educational institutes and companies as well, and make it into a program of all the parties in the region where things are happening on the ground that contribute to the quality of the urban fringe area and are supported (or initiated) by other stakeholders. An important success factor to facilitate this, is the budget for execution of projects in the urban fringe in the Twente region. In June 2012, this programme and budget (500.000 Euros) was officially launched by one of the deputies of the Province of Overijssel and a member of the council of the Region of Twente.

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Through this link, the complete regional vision can be downloaded (In Dutch)

An English summary of the regional vision is available as a PDF document.

Green Knowledge Portal (Region of Twente, the Netherlands)

A. The tool

Short description of the tool

The Green Knowledge Portal (GKP) is a collaborative initiative of the region of Twente (consisting of 14 municipalities), the national government, and educational and research institutes. GKP creates a place where entrepreneurs, governments, educational and research institutes can jointly work on innovative and regional issues. It is a network organization through which these parties meet regularly with regard to both research needs and research implementation. In GKP the questions that arise in the daily practice of rural development and urban fringes are thus connected to the expertise of the knowledge / educational institutes. The basis is formed by a research agenda that has been developed. This research agenda focuses on five themes:

- 1 Living and working in rural areas
- 2 Green and blue infrastructures
- 3 Entrepreneurship
- 4 Food and health
- 5 Green education

Projects are mainly carried out by students who both learn from regional practices and rural issues as well as deliver innovative knowledge to the region. As educational programs always are looking for real-life projects, GKP is a smart way of giving direction to these projects by articulating the research needs of a region. GKP thus is a way of smart organizing connections between the various parties involved. The motto is: “working together, learning together”.

Relevant tool characteristics

- Financial instruments
- Communicative instruments
- Planning and design

B. The context

For some time plans existed to create a knowledge arrangement in the Twente region, that would bring together research, education, policy and practice in order to address the regional challenges in rural development. In two municipalities initiatives were taken to come to a knowledge arrangement at the local level. GKP brings both initiatives together and connects it to the other municipalities in the region. GKP builds on existing networks within the Twente region and adds the knowledge dimension. It is a voluntary collaborative structure. The operational structure of GKP consists of a Steering Group and a Management Team in which a manager, regional coordinator, the expert education and the business coordinator cooperate. Jointly they implement a business plan that is translated yearly into a research agenda. The management team holds the contacts with all relevant partners.

For governments the main interests lie in stimulating more innovation in rural areas and urban fringes through the implementation of new knowledge. Entrepreneurs can benefit from the new knowledge that can lead to innovations in their business operations. Educational institutes get the opportunity to create real-life learning situations for students that address authentic and complex assignments. Research institutes can implement meaningful research projects leading to valorization of research.

Area and context:

The region of Twente has a two-sided face. On the one hand it is one of the most densely populated areas of the Netherlands with a well-developed knowledge infrastructure consisting among others of two universities and many high-tech spin-offs. At the same time it has a rural atmosphere, in between the major cities and in the smaller towns. The alternation of urban qualities with high quality landscapes is one of the main assets of the region. Urban-rural relationships, therefore, play a main role in the region.

Project Objective:

The main objectives of GKP are to contribute to:

- revitalizing the rural area;
- the development of innovative knowledge in the region
- further development of the the so-called top-sectors of the Dutch Ministry of Agriculture, Economic Affairs and Innovation through addressing the human capital agenda.

Next to those main objectives, GKP also wants to be an area where researchers and students can implement their knowledge and experiment with new concepts. GKP, therefore, holds goals on many different levels, from strategic ones to operational ones.

Activities:

GKP has implemented its own activities, next to the projects that have run within GKP (see below). The management team of GKP has worked on the following:

- Developing a business plan
- Building a research agenda
- Manifestations
- Publicity

One of the very interesting characteristics of this network is the involvement of many different levels of education, each addressing different types of questions. Universities work on the most complex issues and develop new theories, models and approaches; the university of applied science in the region helps with more applied questions and issues, and the vocational educational institutes deal with questions on a more practical level.

Results:

GKP results in new knowledge, and makes it transparent. It actively matches research needs and research projects. The knowledge infrastructure is, therefore, strengthened. Through GKP the region invests in the education of young people. On a yearly basis almost 20.000 student-hours are available. This has led so far to more than a dozen projects. A few examples:

- Vision development for a new industrial estate in a rural area
- Ethnic and cultural diversity in the urban fringe of a major city
- Vision development for the rural area of a small village
- An inventory of authentic plants
- Urban fringes in the Twente region
- Creating an overview of farmyards.

C. Reflection

Why did it work?

- GKP was developed bottom-up, by two creative people and got the opportunity to slowly grow into the structure it currently is. It is not a top-down invented structure! At the same time, GKP is well connected to a regional program on rural quality, developed by all regional authorities.
- GKP is an informal structure, consisting of people who know and trust each other.
- Twente has a long history and is a 'real' region and not only a governmental construct. Networks are many and tight. The fact that the region already has this long history of collaborating and networks makes joining forces in GKP a natural step. The scale of the region, not too large, is helpful in that respect. It is important that people can actually meet in person on a regular basis.
- GKP is a smart way of connecting different goals. Educational institutes are looking for real-life cases for their students. Entrepreneurs have questions that can be answered by students. Governments are able to stimulate innovation in the region through these knowledge arrangements.

What could be improved?

The organizational structure between the governmental agencies, all educational institutes and entrepreneurs proves to be difficult. All partners have their own rationality. It takes time to find common ground. The step from business plan to research plan to actual projects, therefore, is quite long.

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Cooperation between authorities and higher education (Province of West Flanders, Belgium)

A. The tool

Short description of the tool

The Stad-Land-schap unites several municipalities, each with their own core business in nature, landscape, heritage, education and recreation. It is a supra-municipal structure which will have to improve regional and local values by working together on certain issues. In this context, the province and municipalities recognize the Stad-Land-schap 't West Vlaamse hart as a platform for coordination of the provincial, municipal and local initiatives. The Stad-Land-schap signed a cooperation agreement with Katho Expertise Centre for Green Management of Roulers for optimizing green management. Through workshops, dissertations, student-projects, reflection groups on specific cases of the region, innovative green management is introduced to civil servants responsible for public green areas. Focusing on public spaces delivers a good quality of urban spaces, urban edges and green networks.

Relevant tool characteristics

Communicative instruments
Planning and design

B. The context

Area and context:

The city region 't West-Vlaamse hart consists of the city Roeselare and its eight surrounding municipalities (30.000 hectare / 153.000 inhabitants).

This has formed a typical urbanscape (Stad-Land-schap) with high spatial dynamics in open areas and less intensive dynamics in the town centres. Sixty per cent of firms are situated outside industrial and business centres and 45% of the housing outside city centres.

Currently, regional governance on spatial planning for this typical urbanscape is non-existent. There are policy plans for urban development and for rural development, but until the founding of urbanscape, there was no regional governance dealing with spatial quality in the urban, peri-urban and rural areas, with attention for the interaction between those areas of this urbanscape.

By setting up the Stad-Land-schap, the province and the nine municipalities bring a unified approach to rural and urban areas. Stad-Land-schap partners want to bring this issue to a higher political level and to draw attention towards sustainable investment in urbanscapes with its city centres and fringes.

Project objective:

The project aims to:

- Create a platform for cooperation and networking in Stad-Land-schap 't West-Vlaamse hart in order to increase the overall spatial quality of the landscape in the urban area of the city Roeselare in connection with the surrounding municipalities.
- Bring higher education and the professional practice together, in order to create a platform for practical working experience for students and university staff, and to bring new knowledge and approaches from the university to the practitioners.

Activities:

- Networking with potential partners
- Assisting the municipality with financial, design and green management issues.
- Organize workshops for city officials, professionals and interested parties.
- Search, in cooperation with municipalities, for new projects that can be used for students' research, internships

etc.

Educational Projects:

- Workshops green structure, where students develop ideas to improve the green structure in places in the region
- A project to redesign the city hall site
- Project weeks for students, where they work in a pressure cooker situation on challenging green space issues in the region, with input from both residents and representatives of local governments

Physical projects:

- Student and university staff involvement in working out a green-blue recreational network for the region
- Student and university staff involvement in the design and implementation of the reconversion of an old railway track into a safe, green cycle track
- Student and university staff involvement in implementing innovative green management techniques in areas in the region.

Process:

On a regular basis, about three times a year, formal meetings between higher education and province are scheduled. During these meetings, the research agenda is formulated and agreed upon, the results of completed projects are evaluated and the progress in ongoing projects is discussed. Besides that, informal meetings are scheduled as well, to identify project opportunities.

Results:

- A good functioning platform for green management projects.
- A green network in the urban fringe(s).

Higher education:

- Participation in existing projects. This is good for the students' resume and the image of the school.
- This tool offers (higher education) institutions to have influence with government decision makers.

Province:

- Being able to have students, tutors, research to work on their projects.
- Execution of projects based on research

C. Reflection

Why did it work?

- This platform is an interesting link between the practice and education, clearly beneficial for both parties.
- The cooperation between higher education and the province makes it easier to invite external parties to let them participate in the projects.

What could be improved?

The platform is a tool which keeps developing.

The implementation and the follow up of the projects has sometimes limitations:

- The cooperation is between higher education and provincial civil servants, however the politics may decide

otherwise.

- It is challenging to find budget for all the work linked to the project
- Dissemination of the findings is sometimes hard.

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Friends of Weusthag Foundation (Hengelo, the Netherlands)

A. The tool

Short description of the tool

Friends of Weusthag is a foundation that has been established by the direct stakeholders of the park area. In essence, the tool is a structured way of organizing bottom-up initiatives of stakeholders that have a direct interest in the project area. The local government facilitates this development.

The city of Hengelo has bought some pieces of land in the project area ten years ago. Since then nothing had happened with the area for a long time and no one was interested in developing the area. New inspiration was found after officials of the city visited the Bürgerpark in Bremen (Germany) and the Sonsbeek park in Arnhem (the Netherlands). The project objective is to create a citizens park which will function as a transition area from urban to rural.

Relevant tool characteristics

Regulation and legal conditions

Communicative instruments

Planning and design

B. The context

Area and context:

Hengelo with a population of over 80,000 is situated in the eastern Netherlands. The project is looking at the Weusthag park (200 ha). Through urban development the park has become an enclave within the city, bordered by residential areas and divided into segments by a highway. Through the years recreational functions have become dominant. However, the area still has a substantial amount of farm land as well, mainly dairy farming (grassland, corn) and horses. This park nowadays is used by citizens for walking and sports and is home for some other functions as well (pet zoo, pub / restaurant). The Weusthag Park gives the city of Hengelo a new green heart that is attractive for citizens to recreate.

Project objective:

Regulation and legal conditions

- The tool ensures that the Friends of Weusthag get the responsibility of the area and that they can develop new ideas into plans. Due to the bottom-up principle citizens will feel involved in the development of the Weusthag.

Communicative instruments

- The project aims to create a Park of Connection which is a landscape park, well used and maintained by a diversity of people for nature, sports, culture and education.

Planning and design

- To improve the social value, recognition, attractiveness, awareness and engagement of het Weusthag.

Activities:

Regulation and legal conditions

- Create a strong connection with the neighbourhood, especially with the poor regions. (task of working groups*)

- Transfer the chairing of the steering group from the local government to an independent inhabitant of Hengelo. This was realised recently.
- Involve other stakeholders in constructive action and cooperation in the area.

Communicative instruments

- Promote this project by using the website and Facebook.
- Social work projects for unemployment citizens.

Planning and design

- Collect the ideas, plans and dreams of stakeholders, and bring them into practice when budget is available. (task of working groups*)

* The following working groups were set up in the foundation:

- 1) design and realization
- 2) management and maintenance
- 3) activities (throughout the year; sports, culture, recreation and nature)
- 4) funding
- 5) organisation of the group Friends of Weusthag.

Each group has at least one city official as a linking pin between the inhabitants and the local authority. It turned out that most of the working groups had planning specialist(s) under the representatives of the citizens. Roles authority: stimulate wide representation of people in foundation. Facilitate and cooperate as well. Other members of the working groups: work from a perspective of constructive action and cooperation; represent all inhabitants and stakeholders in planning and decision making in the Weusthag area.

Results:

Regulation and legal conditions

- Draft statutes for the Friends of the Weusthag organisation are formulated
- Setting up the Friends of the Weusthag organisation has changed the level of trust between the municipality and the stakeholders around the park. The partners started in a situation with a limited amount of trust, as a result of a long period of limited or no activity in the Weusthag area. As a result of setting up the foundation and the working groups, the level of mutual trust has increased and stakeholders have a lot of enthusiasm to improve the quality of the area and set up activities for people living around the area.
- An important result is the change in the legal status of the organisation. At first, it was supposed to be a Foundation (Dutch: Stichting), now it will be set up as an association (Dutch: Vereniging). The fundamental difference between a foundation and an association in the Dutch legislation is the level of democracy in decision making. In a foundation, decisions are made by a small board. A foundation has no members, just (financial) sponsors or supporters. In an association, everyone is a member and has influence on decisions made. The board of an association can only take decisions if the majority of the members agrees. This shift from a foundation to an association fits better to the ambition to turn the Weusthag into a public park with broad involvement of stakeholders using the area.

Communicative instruments

- Start meeting
- Big participation of civil servants and local politicians in an excursion to Sonsbeek (Arnhem, the Netherlands), enthusiasm and interest in this project has increased since then.
- Weustdag (Weust'day'); a big public event in the Weusthag area with cultural activities and environmental education activities
- Meetings for the different working groups, to set up the organisation and develop ideas for the improvement of the park area

C. Reflection

Why did it work?

The tool is in an early stage but both the City of Hengelo and the citizens active in the working groups consider it as a success. The process as a whole should be considered as a 'growing' model, where both the roles and responsibilities of the working groups and the ideas for improvement of the park area are under construction and continue to be elaborated.

The most important success factor was building on a bottom-up process. It is not the initiative of the local government. Rather, the municipality builds on the activities by the concerned citizens. By making sure that this bottom-up process is well organized and structured, the municipality has a good partner in the development process.

Instead of just working together with a group of unorganized stakeholders, this tool enables the municipality to collaborate with the most involved people in a structured way. They have the skills and the motivation to organise themselves properly and to serve as a good representation of the people living around the park and other important stakeholders in the area.

One of the role of governments in such processes is to stimulate balance: create a good and complete overview of all the needs and interests in the area, and try to facilitate that these needs are met, as long as they fit into the overall vision and the future perspective of the municipality.

An important success factor is to make sure that things really happen and that people not only talk. Quick wins and easy to realise physical improvements in the area make clear that the municipality is also interested in improving the park area and is willing to listen to the stakeholders. This helps in creating a situation of trust and cooperation. Through such a way of working, previous opponents can become important supporters.

"Working together is more important than the way of working together" – Harry Huitema (interim chair of the working groups of the Weusthag, city of Hengelo)

What could be improved?

The project is still in an early stage. The suggestions for improvement are mainly suggestions for next steps in the future.

- Formulate a mission statement for the next 15-20 years: develop a long term perspective for the area.
- Let people reintegrate in society through social projects. This is already part of the activities in the park, but this has the potential to grow.
- Stimulate local merchandising, however the city is afraid of competition with existing initiatives.
- Communication: the website is now only a one way source of information for visitors; it could be transformed into a two-way communication platform for all types of stakeholders, including business initiatives. Combine with other social media like Facebook.
- Elaborate and improve the organisation and communication of the working groups of the Weusthag Foundation.
- Combine communication and stakeholder engagement with getting practical things done in the park, e.g. improve accessibility, improve quality of green space and create entrance gates for the park.

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Provincial Quality Chamber (Province of East Flanders, Belgium)

A. The tool

Short description of the tool

The Provincial Quality Chamber (PQC) of the province of East Flanders aims at strengthening the aspect of spatial quality in projects in the urban fringe and rural areas. It gives advice on spatial quality and works closely with project initiators to strengthen the aspect of spatial quality of projects. The PQC brings together local actors with experts from various disciplines as well as civil servants. The Quality Chamber has a fixed set-up with additional experts being consulted if needed. All necessary perspectives are thus included in the advice the PQC gives.

Using the PQC is mandatory for projects that apply for funding based upon the Program for Rural Development. All other project initiators can use the advice of the PQC on a voluntary basis. To support project initiators a 'stepping stone book' has been published. This publication contains practical examples during each step in the planning process of a project.

The PQC consists of a group of civil servants with different disciplines from the province itself, supplemented by external experts. The following parties are involved:

- Province of East Flanders, the following departments:
 - Department of agriculture and rural development (director, coordinator rural development, 2 landscape architects)
 - Technical department: spatial planning and mobility
 - Culture and heritage
 - Environment
- Flemish Government Architect Team: Architect / spatial planner
- External experts, by invitation, according to the expertise needed
- Architect board

The composition of the PQC can vary from meeting to meeting, depending on the dossiers at hand.

Relevant tool characteristics

- Communicative instruments
- Planning and design

B. The context

Spatial quality is not a given fact in many projects. Yet, by investing in the reconstruction of streets and squares, the re-tuning of (historical) public buildings and in the development of recreational hiking and biking paths, the spatial quality in rural areas can improve and this can offer more opportunities for economic activity while also encouraging interaction between different social groups. In many areas, divergent views and expectations exist on topics as road safety, environment friendliness, economic viability. The PQC offers an opportunity to coordinate this diversity as it brings together the necessary stakeholders.

It is essential that sufficient attention is given to the amenity of public space and the landscape. The PQC boosts peri-urban and rural projects (private and public initiatives-investments) in the pursuit of such good quality. The guidance from members of the PQC, with various skills and expertise, is seen as an important added value and an inspiring illustration for other partners.

Area and context:

East Flanders is one of the five provinces in Flanders and holds almost 1.5 million inhabitants. It is a mixture of agriculture, industry, harbour and other economic activities. Ghent is the major city in the province. In the eastern and southern part of Ghent, situated between 10km and 20km away from the city centre, a housing and culture/leisure area is being planned. This involves several municipalities and overlapping responsibilities. The Provincial Authorities have the responsibility for all the interests and quality aspects of an area, and the different departments have their responsibility in the spatial planning process. For the rural and peri-urban area, the de-

partment of agriculture and rural development actively is involved in the Provincial Spatial Plan, landscape planning and integration, providing expert knowledge, co-operation and financing projects. So from this responsibility the project aim is an integrated environmental building quality of the public space.

Project Objective:

- Develop an integrated view for the part of the urban fringe as described above; testing and implementing transnational approaches on planning and public policy making.
- Lead to a good working partnership in the area with the development of an integrated view, ready for policy integration with possible actions.

Activities:

Until now, the PQC has given advice in a number of dossiers, see below. Next to that, workshops, conferences and forums have been organised. The PQC has also experimented with stakeholder involvement by using different methods. A so-called stepping stone book was published. This book describes the four main phases in project development, identifies crucial elements of spatial quality for each phase and gives concrete examples that may help inspiring project initiators.

Spatial quality is about the process rather than the final outcome. During the planning process sustainability and spatial quality are operationalised in constant dialogue with the stakeholders. Experiences of the PQC show that working alongside concrete visualisations makes the exchange of values and wishes more efficient and effective. The planning process of the PQC consists of several stages:

- Stage I is focused on getting the right project definition. A SWOT is carried out and the project is situated into its larger context. Also, the goals and ambitions are articulated.
- Stage II focuses on the design challenge and the designer.
- The actual design is done in stage III and covers the architectural approach, the participation, the sustainability, the accessibility of the project.
- Stage IV, finally, is about the physical realisation, and the maintenance of the infrastructure.

Results:

The PQC has helped in raising awareness for spatial quality in project plans. It resulted in integrated visions on sustainability in projects. Several dossiers were advised upon. Some interesting examples are described here below.

In the centre of Munte (municipal district of Merelbeke), the link between the Scheldemeersen in Merelbeke and the Flemish Ardennes, the old Rectory has found a new destination. The PQC offered advice on the planning of the building's sustainable renovation into a place of meeting and enjoyment, as well as the arrangement/restoration of the rectory garden.

Art village along the stream Machelen (municipal district of Zulte). – Along an old picturesque branch of the Leie river that is now no longer connected to the river, the village of Machelen is located; a compact village centre with terraced houses along a grid of narrow streets. In the first phase of the more spacious development project, the heart of the village was made into a pedestrian-friendly public space.

The PQC offered advice on the road map for the project “Kollebloem bloeit” in Heusden (municipal district of Destelbergen). The area of about four hectares is located in the periphery of the regional spatial execution plan ‘Ghent Metropolitan Area’ and serves as a green lung. The starting points for the development are respect for the significant ecological value of the area, the quality of the development for the area and the exemplary role it plays in the field of sustainable construction. The domain is developed for soft recreation (walking, jogging, pétanque, natural recreational yard, ...). The pavilion was constructed in accordance with the principles of passive houses and will serve as a multifunctional space, in tune with the characteristics of its surroundings.

For the urban administration of Oudenaarde the PQC advised on the image quality plan of the permanent cycling and walking route in combination with a boat tour in and on the Scheldt river valley. The central objective is to link the historic town centres as well as the natural and rural areas along the Scheldt and to put them in their historical perspective. The added value of this course is the clear connection that is established between the different town centres, both the villages and the surrounding landscape.

In Gavere an old carriage house was renovated into a regional tourist junction point and reception area, as well as a multifunctional meeting and exhibition space. The PQC offered advice on the modifications and more specifically on the safety adaptations of the adjacent pedestrian path, the accessibility, the covered bicycle stalls and the public rest rooms.

C. Reflection

Why did it work?

The PQC enables the exchange of ideas between project initiators, citizens and experts. A major success factor is that making use of the PQC or implementing the suggestions made by the PQC is not mandatory. It is an instrument that adds (spatial) quality to projects. By moving away from regulation and mandatory action, it stimulates creativity. Since it is not about approval but about inspiration the PQC enables the discussion with project initiators in an early stage of project development.

The strengths of the PQC are the multifunctionality and flexibility in the composition and the knowledge of the experts. Project initiators are enthusiastic about the results, thus promoting the PQC.

When project initiators use the PQC, they learn to situate their project at the larger scale. At the start of a project the project initiator often is very enthusiastic but is less aware of all the stakeholders and can't put his project in the wider context. The PQC helps the initiator to look at the broader context, to work on stakeholder engagement and to make his project fit into the design of the surrounding structures.

What could be improved?

Getting involved as early as possible in the process is vital for good results. The PQC is looking for options to get in contact with project initiators even earlier.

Also, the PQC could be used more often.

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A copy of the document 'Stepping stones to spatial quality' can be downloaded at the following link

http://www.oost-vlaanderen.be/public/economie_landbouw/landbouw/ruimtel_kwal_buitengebied/index.cfm#.UC0E76nN9AM

Tool category: create synergy between different qualities

Introduction

Although sustainable development is very often seen as a development towards more environmentally friendly solutions, our approach is to focus on the synergy between the different qualities in our model, see the introduction of this document. Within SURF and within Europe as a whole, economic competitiveness in the urban fringe zone is considered as a very important issue, for many different reasons. An important reason is the process of changes in agricultural practice going on in the urban fringes. The rural area around cities is in many cases less suitable for intensive world market agriculture, leading to a stronger focus on multifunctional agriculture and food production for local and regional markets (urban agriculture). Also degradation of the 'urban' part of the urban fringe area (housing areas, industrial sites) can lead to loss of employment in the urban fringe area and the need for initiatives to stimulate competitiveness and job creation.

Sustainable development deals with combining different qualities and realising synergy. This implies that the search for competitiveness should always go hand in hand with stimulating spatial, environmental and social quality. The tools in this section were used to stimulate competitiveness and combine it with improvement of spatial and environmental quality. Which in turn are important conditions when a company is looking for a place to establish a new business.

The *Regional Park* in Hamburg is a park at the edge of urban and rural areas, focusing on combining different qualities and interests: recreation, biodiversity and local economy. The *Gids Buitenkans* is a document that presents guidelines for the design of buildings in the urban fringe area, both housing and business facilities. It aims at attracting new businesses and prosperous house owners, to bring in new economic activity in the urban fringe zone. The guidelines presented make sure that the new initiatives also contribute to spatial quality in the area. The municipality of Almelo supports new business ideas in the urban fringe area by working with enterprise coaches. They also facilitate the improvement of green space on business areas in the urban fringe areas. The business network on a business site in the urban fringe area works together with ecological experts to improve green space on the business areas, in such a way that the area becomes more attractive for the workers and also provides opportunities for biodiversity. This initiative can also help to improve the corporate image of the involved businesses. West Flanders works on *Regional Branding* in the region, a very important region for the cultivation and processing of deep frozen vegetables. The city of Bradford worked closely together with businesses in the development of *parish plans*. This collaboration leads to improved business opportunities and more involvement of local communities. The city of Enschede uses the concept of *Rondje Enschede* (Enschede round) as a vehicle to stimulate recreation and tourism in the urban fringe and to create additional opportunities for entrepreneurs in the urban fringe area.

- (1) Gids Buitenkans, Enschede
- (2) Support new business ideas, Almelo
- (3) Improve green space on business areas, Almelo
- (4) Regional Branding, West Flanders
- (5) Business involvement in parish plans, Bradford
- (6) Enschede Round, Enschede

Regional Park (Free and Hanseatic City of Hamburg, Germany)

A The Tool

Short description of the tool

A regional park is a voluntary cooperation between different municipalities to develop the open space in-between in a sustainable way.

Relevant tool characteristics

- Planning and design
- Communication

B. The context

Region and country:

The Free and Hanseatic City of Hamburg (Freie und Hansestadt Hamburg), represented by the department for urban and regional planning within the Ministry of urban development and environment (Behörde für Stadtentwicklung und Umwelt, Amt für Landes- und Landschaftsplanung, Referat Raumordnung und Regionalentwicklung) and Hamburgian City-districts (Bezirke); neighbouring municipalities and districts formally belonging to another federal state like Schleswig Holstein.

Area and context:

A regional park is not a legally defined nature reserve but a voluntary cooperation across two federal states. The idea of regional parks as “bridge” between urban and rural is based on the conception of the axial and density model of Fritz Schumacher (1972), which defines urban development along several axes stretching from the urban core of the city of Hamburg towards the rural hinterland in Schleswig-Holstein and Lower Saxony. In-between those axis, open spaces function as green fingers, offering a lot of recreational potentials. The aim of regional parks is to develop this potential. Joint projects combine interests of nature, local recreation and the economy and support an overall regional sustainable development.

Up to now two regional parks were established. They cover a cross border area in Hamburg and Lower Saxony and Hamburg and Schleswig-Holstein respectively.

Project Objective:

Strengthen cooperation between municipalities

Offer forum for the dialogue with residents and other associations

Protect the natural environment and open landscapes

Improve offers for local recreation and environmental education

Realise a better connection of existing green space areas.

Increase quality of life and living standards

Contribute to a sustainable development of the local economy

Support economic activities in the area in harmony with other functions like recreation.

Enable different uses next to another like agriculture, recreation, nature protection.

Activities:

- Developing recreational services for different target groups (children, families, elderly persons), e.g. hiking tracks
- Improving recreational infrastructure

- Cooperation with schools, associations to improve connection to nature and the local identity.
- Activities with media involvement
- Shuttle bus to improve the accessibility
- Cooperation with local businesses to foster regional economic chains

Results:

C Reflection

Why did it work?

Aims and targets of the regional parks were commonly agreed upon by different stakeholders; two regional park managements have been set up taking care of day-to-day business; funding comes from different sources

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An English brochure of the regional park Wedeler Au is available at the following link.

http://www.regionalpark-wedeler-au.de/tl_files/regionalpark_wedeler_au/Regionalpark/pdf/regionalpark_flyer_engl.pdf

Gids Buitenkans (Enschede, the Netherlands)

A. The tool

Short description of the tool

The Gids Buitenkans is a guide for the rural area of Enschede, that serves to facilitate initiatives in the urban fringe of Enschede while maintaining and improving the quality of landscape and biodiversity. In that sense, it serves to facilitate multifunctionality in the urban fringe zone: farming, biodiversity, housing and living, recreation and other functions. It provides the rules and opportunities to citizens and entrepreneurs and to the staff of the City of Enschede. It was set up to create coherence and spatial quality in the urban fringe from a positive and inspiring perspective. If this is done in the right way, economic development in the urban fringe can be combined with improvement of the quality of green space.

Relevant tool characteristics

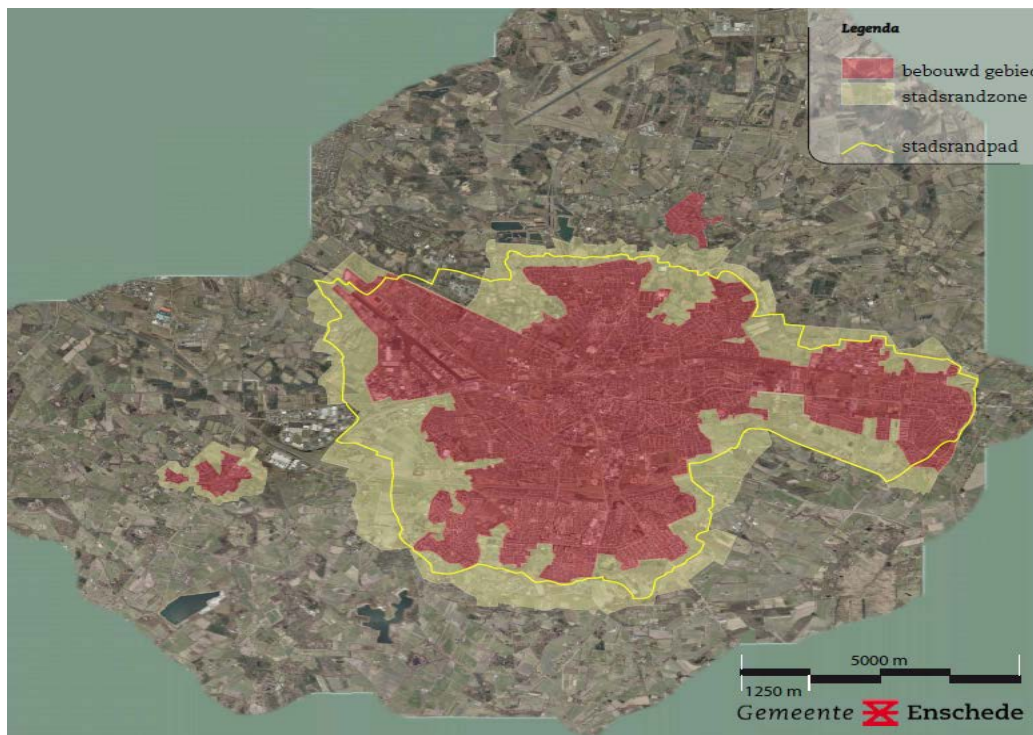
Regulation and legal conditions

Communicative instruments

B. The context

Area and context:

Enschede is a city in the region of Twente, Province of Overijssel in the eastern part of the Netherlands. The city has around 160.000 inhabitants, the Twente city region in total over 600.000 inhabitants. The rural area around the cities in this part of the country is characterized by a high landscape quality. It is a mixture of farmland, hedges, rows of trees, woodlands, brooks and canals. The scale of farms in the region (and in the Netherlands as a whole) is gradually increasing, which implies that more and more farm houses become available for other functions. The City of Enschede has also the desire to provide room to 'green' housing development in the urban fringe of Enschede, contributing to economic competitiveness of the region. This implies a more multifunctional use of the rural area in the vicinity of Enschede. Recreation and tourism is potentially a very important and promising business sector in the urban fringe. The existing procedures for land use planning do not provide enough opportunities for this type of developments. The Gids Buitenkans aims at facilitating initiatives in such a way that they contribute to economic development and spatial and environmental quality at the same moment.



Urban fringe Enschede (source: <http://ris.enschede.nl/stukken/08266/>)

Project objective:

The project aims to:

Regulation and legal conditions

- Facilitate and coordinate development of business initiatives and housing in the rural area of Enschede.
- Create coherence in the design of buildings and plots in the rural area and in the urban fringe zone.

Communicative instruments

- Combine economic and social development with improvement of environmental and spatial quality.
- Cooperate closely with stakeholders.

The Gids Buitenkans aims to create a rural area which has a high quality, rural identity and diversity, culture for recreation purposes and ecological values, is vital and offers perspectives for agriculture and other economic developments and is accessible for the citizens of Enschede and visitors from elsewhere.

Activities:

Regulation and legal conditions

- The guide itself is a document that explains and motivates the procedures, gives background information on landscape, cultural history and spatial quality in the region, and shows visualizations of desired and undesired designs of buildings, estates, water courses and other landscape elements.

Communicative instruments

- The guide and the procedure were developed in close consultation with stakeholders, in different ways, e.g. presentations, discussion sessions, tests of the procedure in three areas, photo contests for citizens of Enschede and other ways. A first edition was launched in 2007 and evaluated in 2009. This led to an update presented in 2010. Specific conditions for the urban fringe were added in 2011. For this procedure, the City of Enschede considers a zone of 500 meters around the built up area of the city as the urban Fringe. That is in fact only a minor portion of the rural land of the municipality as a whole.

- Development of 'loket buitengebied'. One desk where entrepreneurs and inhabitants can come with all their questions, ideas and procedures regarding the rural area. One frontdesk simplifies procedures for citizens and can help in realizing an integrated approach.
- Launch website, where information on the procedures is available for interested people.

Results:

Regulation and legal conditions

The Gids Buitenkans consists of two parts: the guide itself and a procedure for initiatives.

The procedure for individuals or organizations preparing an initiative consists of three steps:

- Intake and orientation (1)
- In depth investigation (2)
- Assessment and recommendation (3)

1) In the intake and orientation phase, the representative of the City of Enschede visits the person or organization and acquires a general idea of the initiative and the procedure needed.

2) In the phase of in depth investigation, the expected effects of the initiative are explored in 8 themes:

- Cultural history
- Nature and biodiversity
- Options for use by urban residents (e.g. recreational use)
- Landscape
- Economy
- Agriculture
- Social quality
- Sectorial policy

The expected impacts of the initiative are described, together with the expected benefits for the initiator, the community as a whole and different stakeholders. Important issues in this stage are the scale of the impacts and the link of the expected impacts with other policies of the municipality of Enschede. In this phase, not only the municipality and the initiator are involved, but if relevant also other stakeholders, experts and interest groups.

3) In the final phase, assessment and recommendations, an advice is made for the initiative. Initiatives are only allowed if they contribute to benefits for the area as a whole. If they are allowed, conditions and requirements for the initiative are formulated.

This procedure does not replace the formal legal procedure, but helps to speed up legal procedures and to create a constructive dialogue between the City of Enschede, the initiator and possibly other stakeholders that could be affected by, or benefit from, the initiative.

C. Success factors

Why did it work?

The guide as a method to attract new business initiatives in the rural area is experimental. The slogan 'Minder regels meer ruimtelijke kwaliteit' (Fewer rules, more spatial quality) was the starting point for this guide. In the first evaluation of the project, it was concluded that the Gids Buitenkans and the procedures described here helped to attract some business initiatives and helped to make the design better fit within the desired quality framework. A systematic quantitative evaluation is not available. The advantage of the guide is the positive and flexible approach and the attention given to visualisation in the guide and the related documentation. Also the intensive process of stakeholder consultation before the final version of the guide was launched, is seen as an important success factor.

What could be improved?

However having fewer rules is not as easy as it sounds like. People are in need of a framework and defining regulation. Customizing, being flexible and setting boundaries compared to rules, principles and quality lead to a lot of discussion.

Meanwhile the dilemmas faced, especially during the treatment of private initiatives, have been analysed and have been adapted in the note. Several points lead to adaptation and modification for the guide. The guide is more strict now than it was at first hand, and more attention is given to the motivation of choices, by describing the problem or dilemma at charge. With these adaptations, it seems to be more easy to work with the guide. It is too early to conclude if this way of working really leads to more business initiatives. This is complicated by the fact that many other factors influence the interest in setting up business initiatives in the urban fringe. The impact of the Gids Buitenkans cannot be isolated from other factors within or outside the influence of local or regional authorities.

Contact information:

Website

www.enschede.nl

https://kennispleinmooinederland.vrom.nl/themas/ruimtelijke_kwaliteit/buitenkans_een_gids_voor_het_buitengebied

Enterprise coaching (Almelo, the Netherlands)

A. The tool

Short description of the tool

The City of Almelo invests in improvement of the physical infrastructure in the urban fringe zone. Good infrastructure means better access to the fringe area which boils down to more cyclists and tourists, etc. and potentially more consumers. A good entrepreneur is triggered by the new opportunities this offers. These new initiatives are facilitated by the account managers, who will help to facilitate initiatives for a new suburban economy. Almelo employs account managers who are visiting the existing businesses and coach and advice the starting up of businesses.

Relevant tool characteristics

Regulation and legal conditions
Communicative instruments

B. The context

Region and country

Almelo, the Netherlands

Area and context:

Almelo is a city in the region of Twente, Province of Overijssel in the eastern part of the Netherlands. The city has around 73.000 inhabitants, the Twente city region in total over 600.000 inhabitants. In the case of Almelo, the delineation of the area of urban fringe is first and foremost a zone that is marked as such in the structural spatial plan as the Butterfly concept of the spatial development plan. It shows green wigs that are penetrating deeply into the urban build up area. These green areas are drawn in such a way that the majority of the inhabitants can reach these areas by bike within 10 minutes. These are the green areas that are referred to when one speaks of the urban fringes of the City of Almelo. So the urban fringe is a specific type of a planning zone. An area with green free useable spaces like regional parks, implying the concentration of built up areas and development zones and the zones along infrastructural axes and a development policy that takes into account the demographic changes that lay ahead.

Project objective:

The project aims are:

Regulation and legal conditions

- Empower the small initiatives in the urban fringe area that want to seize the opportunities created by the municipal infrastructure investments.
- Create a new suburban economy

Communicative instruments

- Generate publicity among entrepreneurs in the Twente region.

Activities:

Regulation and legal conditions

- The main element of the tool is the Enterprise Coach. This person advises the starting up of entrepreneurs in the urban fringe. The initiative to educate entrepreneurs is acquired by businesses, a housing corporation and a bank. The intention is to shift the usual role of the municipality as the negative and critical role towards initiatives (as the authority responsible for providing legal permits for activities) into a more cooperative role. Permits still are necessary, but the intention is to use no more rules towards business activities than strictly necessary.

Communicative instruments

- Set up a website that serves as a knowledge platform among entrepreneurs. This website is founded by entrepreneurs and has entrepreneurs as the main audience (project group Duurzaam Netwerk Almelo).
- Almelo employs account managers who are visiting the existing businesses and coach and advice the starting up of entrepreneurs.

Results:

The website was launched and in Spring 2012, two initiatives were developed in the urban fringe. It is too early to conclude if the procedure really worked. The first experiences are positive.

C. Success factors

Why did it work?

- The City of Almelo considers it important to start up a new approach without too much paper work beforehand. 'Just do it', and see if it works. The idea is to observe the balance of a gradual transition from old sources of income for agribusiness entrepreneurs to the new types of income. Agro entrepreneurs are recommended to start small with an initiative that can be overseen. When it has grown bigger to the extent that it has gained sufficient earning capacity, then the moment can come for the farmer to switch occupation.

- The City of Almelo has the intention to work flexibly and not apply a blueprint approach. The initiative of the entrepreneur should be leading instead of the vision of the municipality. This is seen as an important possible success factor.

What could be improved?

The procedure is only working for a short period, and only two initiatives were set up. Therefore, it is still too early for a thorough evaluation of the procedure as a whole.

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www.almelo.nl

Green space on business areas (Almelo, the Netherlands)

A. The tool

Short description of the tool

The project that has been set up offers companies several options for enhancing the biodiversity in their industrial site; e.g. bird boxes, beehives and frogs pool etc. It proved positive since most companies see this aspect added to their business image as beneficial. Companies consider this aspect as an advantage because they see and understand that incorporating biodiversity on business sites adds to a better working environment which could improve the employees' health and also promote their corporate image. Each of which are aims in their own interest.

Relevant tool characteristics

Financial instruments
Communicative instruments
Planning and design

B. The context

Area and context

Almelo is a city in the region of Twente, Province of Overijssel in the eastern part of the Netherlands. The city has around 73.000 inhabitants, the Twente city region in total over 600.000 inhabitants. In the Netherlands, the city of Almelo is amongst the cities with the largest number of industrial sites in place. As a Municipality, Almelo considers biodiversity to an important issue that is strongly related to development of business sites. The Municipality collaborates with the Foundation Landscape Overijssel to implement a biodiversity project at several industrial sites in the city. Business areas are quiet and peaceful places after office hours and offer opportunities for the development of nature. All the business sites are situated in the urban fringe zone of Almelo. Therefore, activities to enhance the quality of the green space on these sites contribute to improved ecological connections between urban and rural areas.

The innovative manufacturing industries can gain a cleaner character and benefit from the green qualities of the western green corridor.

The Municipality of Almelo and Foundation Landscape Overijssel agreed to start a pilot on a site in the south of Almelo.

Project Objective:

The project aims to:

Financial aims: make business areas in Almelo more attractive for entrepreneurs and employees, and thereby influencing location choices of businesses and their employees.

Communicative aims: initiate solidarity towards sustainable development among the businesses.

Planning and design aims: enhance biodiversity at business sites by physical improvement of the design and the maintenance of green and open space.

Activities:

Communicative instruments

- The project was set up in cooperation with BELW, a consultancy agency specialised in design and management of urban green space, and Dr. Robbert Snep from the University of Wageningen. The implementation process is being executed by the Foundation Landschap Overijssel in collaboration with the Municipality of Almelo and the Province of Overijssel.
- Personal approach towards the businesses. However this is in an early stage.
- Change the role of the Municipality towards the business from obstructive to cooperative.
- In the project framework of the project, several options for enhancing biodiversity on business sites were pre-

sented to the companies.

Planning and design

- Landscape architect hired by Foundation Landscape Overijssel.

Financial instruments

- Municipality together with enterprises are strategizing on raising budget for the modernization of the selected industrial sites in Almelo into more biodiversity conservation business sites.

Results:

The initiators of the project do not yet systematically monitor and measure the results of the project. Possible indicators to measure the success are the numbers of cooperating businesses, the realised improvements in the biodiversity or the recorded attractiveness of the business sites by visitors or employees. Since the project is still in an initial phase, it is not yet possible to measure these effects at the moment. The initiators of the project receive very positive comments on the initiative by the businesses on the site, and experience willingness to cooperate. Some signs of evidence are described here below.

Communicative instruments

- According the City of Almelo, more and more businesses are willing to integrate biodiversity on their business sites. A substantial part of the business community is in favour of this nature and biodiversity project and already joins or is interested to join the project. This is one of the ways the business work on Corporate Social Responsibility.
- Project initiators perceive more appreciation and awareness of the rural area amongst entrepreneurs in the region. They become aware of the qualities and benefits and of the vicinity of the area.
- Some real estate developers became enthusiastic about this development and have come to the agreement with the Municipality of Almelo to take biodiversity into account in future plans.

Planning and design

- There were also some entrepreneurs that identified practical barriers regarding some of the options offered by the project. For instance, entrepreneurs foresaw that the frogs might get run-over by cars, trucks and lorries leading on their business site, to a considerable number of overrun frogs in the pairing season which in turn could lead to a counterproductive outcome. Instead of increased appreciation of their company image it could lead to the opposite a bad - nature killing - reputation of the company
- The landscape architect has come up with sketches for several business sites.

C. Reflection

Why did it work?

In a short period of time the Municipality of Almelo detected a moral change from the businesses. Nature and biodiversity used to be a threat for the businesses, but nowadays more and more businesses see the opportunities that it can offer.

- Businesses are willing to invest in the development of nature.
- The approach from the Municipality towards the businesses is cooperative.
- Approach the businesses as they want to be approached; talk about opportunities instead of threats.
- Let the businesses feel the site is theirs.
- No pressure. There is no timeline.
- Communication with the Count of Almelo, who owns a lot of land.

What could be improved?

No specific information available yet; this will become clear in the coming years.

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(other examples of cooperation between businesses and NGO; in Dutch)

Regional branding (Province of West Flanders, Belgium)

A. The tool

Short description of the tool

In a charter the labour unions, employers confederations and politicians of the Roulers-region in the Province of West Flanders, agreed that investment in economy and job-creation should stay the main goal to maintain the leading position of the region in Flanders, as the supplier of high quality food products, especially vegetables.

Pursuing the status of an important economic region implies a raised attention for the quality of life in the region: the region should be considered as attractive to live and work and attractive for recreation and tourism as well. Therefore 'advancing quality of life in the urban, peri-urban and rural areas' has been integrated as well in the vision on landscape and recreation, developing recreational supplies, sustainable green management and sensitization for landscape quality and attractive public locations.

Besides these regional ambitions there is also a growing aspiration at the local level for sustainability, for recreational investment, for strengthening the landscape, for spatial quality and for image building and regional branding.

Creating interaction between city and rural area, increasing attractiveness, promoting recreational possibilities, information about initiatives for landscape and nature development: all these efforts need a well thought-out communication support. Therefore a magazine and website were launched. These initiatives inform and sensitize about the efforts of the Stad-Land-schap (town-land-scape) in matters of a sustainable urban Roeselare fringe and West-Vlaamse hart. These instruments also contribute substantially to the creation of a regional identity.

The website is not only a communication tool for keeping inhabitants informed about the SURF and Stad-Land-schap project. The website also functions as an interactive forum for the inhabitants, visitors and businesses: for example by the delivery of photographs, blogs, polls and reports.

Relevant tool characteristics

Communicative instruments

Planning and design

B. The context

Area and context:

The city region 't West-Vlaamse hart consists of the city Roeselare and its eight surrounding municipalities. The total size of the region is around 30.000 hectare and the region has 153.000 inhabitants.

This has formed a typical urbanscape (Stad-Land-schap) with high spatial dynamics in open areas and less intensive dynamics in the centres. Sixty per cent of firms are situated outside industrial and business centres and 45% of the housing outside city centres.

Following the severe criteria that are usually used to define and value green space and nature areas, the urban fringe region of Roulers seems to have no kind of valuable green spaces or specific cultural heritage elements that are considered to be valuable enough to recover and/or upgrade. That's why Flemish funds for landscape, nature and heritage development hardly find their way to this region. The absence of value does not necessarily mean a weakness. It encourages the region and its stakeholders to go and look for their own valuable elements and to explore new ways of creating landscape, nature, regional and cultural identity and recreational supplies. Regional branding plays an very important role in this aspect.

Project objective:

The project aims to:

- Strengthen the image and identity of the region as a high quality 'food industry region', in the mind of inhabitants, entrepreneurs, visitors and politicians.
- Improve the attractiveness and readability of the landscape and green space in the region, in order to stimulate recreation and tourism
- Improve traffic security, by separating business traffic and recreational traffic
- Gather thoughts, ideas, needs and wishes of the inhabitants and businesses about food industry and landscape improvement

Activities:

- Cooperation with Vlaamse Landmaatschappij to promote the region.
- Creation of a questionnaire about the needs and wishes of the inhabitants and businesses.
- Interview (by Vlaamse Landmaatschappij) with above groups during public events in the region.
- Inhabitants, stakeholders and businesses were invited to participate on their questionnaire on the website (www.westvlaamsehart.be/mijnlandschap).
- People were triggered to participate by giving out rewards: baskets filled with regional products.
- Participants were shown how their response will help the region grow. By testing several scenarios on two locations.
- Two future landscape scenarios for the region were developed and used to stimulate discussion on the future of the area and collect ideas from inhabitants.
- A substantial number of social and cultural events for different target groups was organized under the name of 'stad-landschap West Vlaamse Hart' (town-landscape Heart of West Flanders): cycle tours, walking tours, environmental education activities, village fairs etcetera.
- Campaign in the press and media: website and photo gallery, filled by inhabitants of the region; magazines about the nice spots in the region and activities for inhabitants

Results:

The partners did not yet execute systematic monitoring activities or evaluations of the results, which implies that the notions about results are mainly qualitative. Nevertheless, the overall impression is that the branding activities contribute significantly to the appreciation of the region by inhabitants.

- Many hundreds of people participated to interviews and other stakeholder participation activities, or attended educational activities, fairs etcetera.
- Many people know the name 'stadlandschap West Vlaamse Hart'; though not yet quantified, there is a lot of evidence that the branding activities help in creating more appreciation of the qualities of the region by inhabitants.
- Opening in May 2012 of the 'Vlaams huis van de voeding' (Flemish house of the food industry)

C. Reflection

Why did it work?

- Intensive communication by many different media (website, magazines, events)
- Strong focus on two-sided communication(photo gallery, blogs etc all provided by inhabitants)
- Combining communication with physical improvements on the ground, e.g. turning a derelict railway track into a cycle route. (stroroute)

What could be improved?

- The further implementation of the landscape vision of the region. At this moment, the vision is available on paper but decision making still has to take place.
- More connection between the Flemish house of the food industry and the regional branding project.

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Website

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(Overall website)

http://www.westvlaamsehart.be/media/documenten/Brochure_T4F_Agrovoedingenomgevingskwaliteit.pdf

(brochure with new landscape visions)

Business engagement in Parish planning (Bradford, Worth Valley, UK)

Short description

Planning should be undertaken in such a way that it contributes to community development and development of coherence in societies if it is to be a working plan. In order to realize this, plan making should be seen as a tool to engage people. This demands that the planning processes start at the lowest level of scale of plan making, which is the Parish Plan in the UK.

The Parish plan is a policy document of the Parish Council. The Council is part of good governance at a local level and the Parish Plan has a key role in the sense that it sets out local aspirations. In the Bradford project work was undertaken with the Haworth, Stanbury and Cross Roads Parish Council to improve the quality of the next Parish Plan and in particular involved the local business community.

Several activities were carried out to engage with local businesses in the development of a new community led plan (Parish Plan). By working with an existing local business network, the project was able to get direct access to the networks timetable of events and build in some workshop activity, questionnaires were also sent to the larger employers and sector specific workshops around tourism and farming were facilitated.

Relevant tool characteristics

- Planning and design
- Communication

Partner Project title:

Business engagement in Parish Planning

Website: not available

Region and country:

City of Bradford and communities in the urban/ rural fringe of Airedale, more specific the Worth Valley, as part of the Leeds City Region and the Yorkshire Region in the UK

Area and context:

Bradford District has 31 geographically isolated rural settlements with populations from 45 to 7753 and three principal towns with populations between 15 and 60,000. The rural settlements grew up around textile mills with a high number of terraced houses. The populations have increased in size during the last 30 years and are being transformed in commuter settlements. Relative wealth has in some cases hidden local deprivation and other social issues. Consultation and participation in decisions regarding services has been historically difficult and expensive for the Council due to the small populations, lack of public transport and more importantly reluctance within the community to participate in processes that did not seem to deliver the services they needed.

The urban/rural fringe is mainly determined by the topography of the area. It is the zone between the bigger settlements often in the valley bottom and the smaller ones situated on the valley sides or upland areas. It is an area where the spatial development processes are aimed at integrating and balancing the often conflicting development aims and interests of the communities, but always to take into account the need for preservation of the landscape that gives identity to the area.

Other key impacts on the area have been the election of the Central Coalition Government nationally in 2010. The dissolution of the Regional Development Agency (RDA), Yorkshire Forward who acted as a key partner with the project working at the wider regional level.

At the same time The Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS) was also abolished by the Central Coalition Government. The RSS was the overarching spatial plan which set the context within which Local and Parish Plans were supposed to sit.

The Localism Bill was introduced by the new Coalition Government to provide new direction to the way that planning is delivered with much more emphasis upon community and neighbourhood planning.

The RDAs have subsequently been replaced by a structure of sub-regional or city region governance called the Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) who has responsibility to oversee economic development in the Leeds City Region in partnership with Local Authorities and businesses, together with a possibility of also taking on some strategic planning functions.

Project Objective:

‘To engage communities in the urban/rural fringe of Airedale, in particular the Worth Valley so that they understand and develop their contribution to the competitiveness of the Leeds City Region and the Yorkshire Region through local action’.

Activities:

There were two particular influences on decisions as to which type of tools to use in the study area of the Worth Valley for the Sustainable Urban Fringes (SURF) project.

Firstly, the tight time constraints between acceptance and start of delivery of the project would not have given much time to begin to introduce and explain what the project was about in the study area and consequently design specific engagement tools.

Secondly, where funding is more about creating physical infrastructure on the ground, it is easier to get people involved as it is clear to see what the investment is. With projects that are based on research and analysis the benefits are not so easy to define, sell and for people to see.

Therefore after discussions with key stakeholders, steering group members, the Ward Officer and the SURF research partners, a range of tools and processes were agreed, that would be most effective for the project. It was agreed that it would be better to look at ways of establishing the project quickly, the two key elements to this being, to initially involve people who were already key players in the area and to ‘piggy back’ on to existing activities in the area.

Use of networks, questionnaires and workshops

A local business network with a membership of around 30 local businesses was having an event, this gave the project the opportunity to hold a workshop as part of their existing programme of events and to ask a number of questions, to begin to get them engaged in the development of the Parish Plan. Following a brief introduction to the project, four questions were asked based on perceptions and issues faced by business:

- 1 What is it about the Worth Valley that made you set up your business here?
- 2 What difficulties does being in the Worth Valley create for you as a business?
- 3 What is the best way for you to learn about and influence strategies that affect you?
- 4 Describe the economy in the Worth Valley in 10 years time?

With 70 people attending the responses received showed the emergence of key themes and common areas of interest, these would form the basis for future work. A report was written and sent out to businesses via the local business network.

Key themes were:

Q1 The quality of the location, quality of life, low rental costs, less competition, gaps in the market and opportunities for growth.

Q2 Poor mobile phone signals, broadband connectivity, planning issues, lack of business facilities such as conference venues and limited funding availability as it is not described as a deprived area.

Q3 Regular networking, building relationships, using support agencies and social networking.

Q4 Rural business growth, more developed tourism economy, growth in home working, small specialist business growth and a more sustainable business community.

A follow up economy workshop was held again through the existing network events programme. Feedback was given from the first workshop and a further four questions were asked looking at barriers and opportunities for growth and how business could be involved in economic development.

- 1 What are the barriers to business growth?
- 2 What are the opportunities for growth?
- 3 What would you like to do about developing business in the Worth Valley?
- 4 Who would like to be involved in developing this plan?

A short report was written summarising the workshop process and outcomes and then circulated through the network as before.

Concurrently to the business workshops, a number of the larger local businesses were contacted by telephone (by targeting key decision makers), briefed and sent the same questions, this was done to increase the number of businesses included as it was recognised that not all businesses can attend a workshop situation and would be omitted from this process.

Further sector specific workshops were held with tourism and farming businesses using the workshop and questionnaire format as before.

There was further opportunity for business engagement through a research study that was commissioned to review the current Parish Plan and design a framework for the next plan that would work with the Parish Council, key stakeholders and the community. One innovative method used in the research was to employ an 'ambassador' who would be located in the community for a week. Although the main emphasis was on 'community' engagement opportunities arose to discuss issues with business representatives.

Results:

What have been the gains?

Workshops with businesses are effective in generating much discussion, enthusiasm and interest in how things could develop in the area and hearing others opinions and experiences.

By using existing business networks the project has been able to engage with approx 60 businesses in the work as part of the SURF project in the Worth Valley with a minimum of explanation and background information to the project.

The project team involved, already had a good reputation in the area and this has enhanced the level of engagement and acceptance received.

The project has been able to engage a wider range of contacts by using existing networks and also tapping into new ones.

Using the ambassador week (a tool in the research study) has enabled the project to get feedback from over 100 people who would not have otherwise been contacted including businesses.

The period of time meant that a level of trust was achieved and people got to know the ambassador and meetings could be arranged at any time during that period. As a tool for community engagement the ambassador week certainly worked.

The network of contacts has been extended by at least 20 different organisations.

More people have become interested in this piece of work because of the activities that have taken place and the project has been able to motivate some key people as highlighted in the figure above.

Using an independent research company has given additional weight to the development of a new Parish Plan and the methodology used is available for others to use.

Have they been effective (doing the right thing)?

Using an existing business network to 'piggy back' on to, was effective.

Using the workshop format was successful allowing opportunity for discussion and questions to gain clarity. Ensuring questions were targeted, helped remove confusion whilst keeping them to a minimum.

Holding the workshops where people were already for other reasons, rather than unfamiliar locations proved beneficial. It is important to follow up on progress and to give feedback to attendees.

A disadvantage is that there are still 50% of the larger businesses missing as we were unable to get responses from them. This is easier to quantify as local economic figures do not count businesses with less than 10 employees.

In the whole of the Worth Valley there are approx 330 registered businesses with approx 30% of those in our study area still to contact.

The research study carried out for the Parish Council into developing their new plan suggests, to make use of a decision tree to decide on how much effort to put into any one aspect of the work; either minimal and pragmatic or substantive and more detailed.

Linkages

The methodology followed in the Bradford project has been interesting in that it has elements of the two different categories described in the SURF toolkit namely that of building networks between stakeholders and in doing so, create synergies between different qualities in the area. The project's aim was about linking community engagement and economic development through the development of a new Parish Plan. It is through this process that the different elements of economic, spatial and environmental development can come together alongside working with local people (Social qualities)

What could be improved?

The activities undertaken within the project all worked well and will continue to do so. One of the most difficult problems however has been the changes in circumstances of key partners such as the Parish Council and the Business Network, as they have had to deal with changes in their own organizations. However because the project has influenced individuals, it will continue to develop after the SURF Project lifetime.

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Rondje Enschede (Enschede, the Netherlands)

A. The tool

Short description of the tool

The Rondje Enschede (Enschede round) is a cycling and walking track in the urban fringe of Enschede. The track has a total length of around 42 km (marathon) and is published on a map and on a website. It has signs all along the track, so walkers and cyclists can also follow the track by checking the signs and arrows. The map also provides a list of entrepreneurs near the track that cyclists or walkers can visit during their activities. In this way, Rondje Enschede promotes the use of the urban fringe and connects entrepreneurs and visitors of the urban fringe.

Relevant tool characteristics

Financial instruments

Communicative instruments

Planning and design

B. The context

Area and context:

Enschede is a city in the region of Twente, Province of Overijssel in the eastern part of the Netherlands. The city has around 160.000 inhabitants, the Twente city region in total over 600.000 inhabitants. The rural area around the cities in this part of the country is characterized by a high landscape quality. It is a mixture of farmland, hedges, rows of trees, woodlands, brooks and canals. The scale of farms in the region (and in the Netherlands as a whole) is gradually increasing, which implies that more and more farm houses become available for other functions. The City of Enschede has also the desire to provide room to 'green' housing development in the urban fringe of Enschede, contributing to economic competitiveness of the region. This implies a more multifunctional use of the rural area in the vicinity of Enschede. Recreation and tourism are considered as potentially a very important and promising business sectors in the urban fringe. The Enschede round presents an attractive

cycling or walking track in combination with the location of businesses in the recreation and tourism sector.



Project objective:

Communicative aims:

- Stimulate environmental friendly recreation and tourism in the urban fringe of Enschede.
- Respond to the changing needs of the inhabitants and visitors with respect to recreation and tourism.

Financial and economic aims: Stimulate business opportunities within the recreation and tourism sector in the urban fringe of Enschede.

Planning and design aims: Improve the attractiveness of the urban fringe in order to stimulate appreciation and use of the urban fringe of Enschede by inhabitants and visitors.

Activities:

Communicative instruments

- Promotion; release of Rondje Enschede map
- Website. At this moment (spring 2012), the website is initiated by the municipality. Some stakeholders/business are working on a new, more extensive website combining information on touristic opportunities and businesses. This is their own initiative to promote businesses around the track.
- Civil servants are very active in mentioning the urban fringe projects in planning policy and raising awareness for the specific situation in urban fringe areas with respect to planning and development.

Financial instruments

- Small subsidies are available to facilitate business initiatives in and around the urban fringe. Personal approach towards entrepreneurs is used to identify opportunities and take away practical and procedural barriers to set up business initiatives.

Planning and design

- Small physical changes/improvements to the track (definitely not using expropriating land).
- Involvement of stakeholders, especially from the rural area, in the planning process.

Results:

Communicative instruments

- Map Rondje Enschede is available; a lot of positive response by users. The starting event of the Enschede Round attracted hundreds of interested people. Many people acquired a copy of the map and walked or cycled part of the Enschede Round. Specific quantitative information on the use of the track is not yet available.

The Enschede Round appears to be a trigger for entrepreneurs and NGOs to organise activities or to link their existing activities to this track. It helps to create continuity in communication and a good relationship between authorities and businesses.

Financial instruments

- Small budgets are available for working groups. Groups such as roads; water; nature; subsidies; volunteers; landowners; recreation.
- Some existing businesses joined the project.
- New businesses have shown to be interested participating into this project

Planning and design

- The track is completely available on a map; signage is available on most of the track; physical improvements were realised on some parts of the track, to improve comfort, safety and accessibility. Further improvements are possible and will be realised if budgets are available. Businesses are willing to invest (little) money into improvements local with the result of getting better access and improving attractiveness.

- Involvement of citizens during the design phase, by different means: information evenings; input by mail; excursions.

Until now, no specific monitoring programme has been set up, but many citizens and businesses have shown their appreciation towards the city regarding Rondje Enschede.

C. Reflection

Why did it work?

According to the City of Enschede, this project will need approximately 20 years to develop, therefore it is not appropriate nor possible yet to determine the exact impact of the project at this moment. However some factors are considered as very important in explaining the success of the process until now:

- Enthusiasm of the City of Enschede towards this project; a positive message and pointing out the advantages instead of the disadvantages
- Possibilities rise because of 'good will' of both the local authorities and the small businesses. Positive climate of cooperation, strong feeling of shared goals and responsibilities.
- Continuous communication through many different media:
 - political agenda: local, regional, national and Europe
 - public attention: media, new awards, TV, papers

What could be improved?

At this moment, the round has just been finished but there is a desire for further physical improvements of the track. For example: improve the signage of the track; improve comfort and safety of the track (more separate tracks for cyclists or walkers, not accessible for motorised traffic; improve quality of the pavement). Due to budget limitations, this is a long term process.

Further development of recreation: the final aim is to offer a more complete set of facilities for recreation and tourism, for different ages and different interest groups.

Search for more connections with local entrepreneurs and businesses, and keep on attracting new urban fringe businesses

- try organize groups / people to share responsibility
- find new ways of financial development
- business development in the field of energy landscapes (biomass, sun power, mills, earth warmth)
- business development in the field of urban agriculture: sustainable farming production for local and regional markets

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Part 3: Reflection

This toolkit has showcased tools that were applied by the SURF partners and that showed signs of evidence of success. In some cases the tool itself is new and innovative. In other cases it is a new use for an existing tool, made fit for the challenges in the urban fringe. In trying to learn from the tools we should bear in mind that it is not only the tool itself that creates success. The nature of the challenge and the context in which it is used is very important, as well as the motivation and skills of the people in charge. A tool that is aiming at facilitating a dialogue between public and private partners, for instance, is likely to be more effective when the various partners already are accustomed to talking to each other. Also, when the dialogue is accompanied by supporting instruments, like for instance an investment fund to sponsor innovative ideas that arise in the conversation, that makes the dialogue tool much more effective. In short: the fit between a tool and its context is as important for effectiveness as the tool itself. In the tool descriptions we have tried to identify these more contextual factors, but the readers should be aware that a tool only gets meaning within a specific context.

We started this toolkit by describing our perspective on sustainable urban fringes. Central elements in that approach are:

- a strong focus on quality in various dimensions;
- the interconnectedness of these quality dimensions;
- the connection between quality here and now, and elsewhere and later;
- a strong focus on process: connecting all relevant actors.

Do these projects work on all these elements and do the tools help to realise this broad concept of sustainable development in the urban fringe areas? In reviewing the tools in this toolkit in that respect, we observe the following:

Overall a strong focus on interactive processes and network management can be noticed. This emphasizes the complex governance challenge that urban fringes are posing. Engaging partners in the necessary transition is obviously at the top of the agenda for many governments. Within this toolkit tools are available for connecting to the business world. Innovative, ICT-oriented tools for interacting with citizens are also part of the toolkit. As it is often necessary to translate abstract notions into something more concrete and understandable, visualizations are important means in this respect.

With regard to substantive issues we notice that not all quality dimensions carry the same weight in the projects and tools described here. This doesn't mean that for instance environmental qualities are less important, but it just did not play a crucial role in most of the SURF projects so far. A lot of attention is paid to (environmentally friendly) recreation and protection of traditional landscapes and valuable ecosystems. Opportunities for specific planet options (production of sustainable energy, energy landscapes, recovery of nutrients, local food production) are mentioned regularly by partners as possible opportunities, but not brought into practice yet on relevant scale levels. Ecological quality is, therefore, mostly translated into local issues such as (green) space. Little attention is paid to more global aspects as energy and resources.

The notion that sustainable development means integral quality can be recognized in the various tools. In many of the tools, there is a focus on integrating spatial, economic and social qualities. Often, this proves to be the key for engaging stakeholders. By connecting various quality dimensions win-win opportunities arise. This means, however, that the interpretation of the various qualities connects mostly to the direct interests of the parties involved. Relatively little attention is given to the future and to effects elsewhere. Most of the tools do not address specifically the possible effects at other scales either. This should be kept in mind in applying the toolkit: the tools do not cover the complete notion of sustainable urban fringes yet.

We end by emphasizing three perspectives in working on the urban fringe, whatever tool is used:

Connecting to specific needs and visions

Sustainable development is not an abstract concept but one that should be clearly grounded in the needs of people. Planning in the urban fringe area should not start from scratch, it should take the present situation and the history of the area into account in an integrated way. This refers both to the physical features of an area and to the stakeholders and their needs and interests. Several tools are available for doing so. Methods for network- and stakeholder analysis can help in the process of getting to know the stakeholders and interest groups and their needs and interests.

Capitalise on the future value now

One of the most difficult elements of sustainable decision making is the consideration of future values and 'soft' values and benefits, as we have seen also in the tools in this toolkit. Future values and soft benefits have very limited attention in the tools usually applied in area development. This leads to a focus on values and benefits for the short term, that can easily be quantified and monetarised and that directly benefit the decision makers. In order to overcome this, it is important to make all the possible expected benefits visible, also the soft benefits like ecosystem services and social benefits. Where possible and relevant, methods like Social Cost Benefit Analysis can be applied to quantify and monetarise benefits. In addition to this, it is important to explore new financial constructions / business cases and agreements that can prevent situations with split incentives, where some stakeholders invest (real estate developers, municipalities) while others benefit (e.g. the citizens).

Design closed material loops

Sustainable development goes beyond local problems and local solutions only. It should also address global issues. Closing material loops is a main concern in this respect. In order to limit the process of exhaustion of natural resources and the production of waste, it is crucial to close material loops and to stimulate high quality re-use and recycling. The Cradle to Cradle philosophy distinguishes between the technical cycle and the biological cycle. The technical cycle is relevant for products like plastics, metals, concrete and other materials that do not degrade naturally. They should be recovered to use again in the same products or in other products, in order to save raw materials and prevent waste.

The biological cycle is relevant for organic materials that decompose naturally. When they decompose, they can add value to the soil, in terms of fertility, carbon capturing fixation and hydrological characteristics of the soil. In order to be able to distinguish between the technical and biological cycle, it is important that products are designed in such a way that technical and biological components can easily be separated. Preferably a product should be made entirely of technical components or biological and biodegradable components.

Urban fringes can play a key role in designing closed loops as often an exchange with urban processes can be made. In urban fringes, space is available for facilities in this respect, and resources for recycling and nutrient recovery are widely available, for example in waste water, organic waste flows, manure and other agricultural nutrient flows.

Synergy and added value!

Finally: sustainable development often is translated into a limiting perspective. This is not a perspective that will motivate people. The challenge is to add quality, to create added value, preferably in different dimensions. For example: a well designed housing or business site in the urban fringe can produce energy instead of using less energy than the standards, e.g. by having enough photovoltaics or use geothermy. It can improve the water quality instead of polluting less than allowed, e.g. by having a green roofs or water purification in constructed wetlands. It can add biodiversity instead of destroying less biodiversity than formally allowed, when intensive grassland or maize cropland is replaced by a well landscaped green business site or public green space.

The search for synergy usually leads to more creative and unexpected solutions, compared with the search for balance, as a result of a different mindset.

How to continue?

The SURF project started three years ago with a diverse set of ideas and initiatives to work on sustainable development in urban fringe areas. A lot of work has been done to elaborate these ideas, involve stakeholders, organise decision making, find budgets for realisation and start the implementation process.

Throughout the SURF projects, positive results of all the work were observed by the practitioners involved. They observed improvements in relationships between local authorities and stakeholders, as a result of intensifying contacts between stakeholders and more attention for network building. They observed more awareness of mutual benefit in projects, between the different stakeholders. This contributed in many areas to a transfer of responsibilities for the quality of the public space to private stakeholders, because they recognise the benefit it has for themselves.

In most of the projects, some physical changes can already be seen, but the realisation is usually still in an early stage. In most cases, the partners experience evidence of success but they seldom set up systematic monitoring of project results and changes. Given the fact that so many things are changing in the urban fringes and in the work of local and regional authorities in general, it is difficult to identify exact causal factors that could explain the success of projects. The challenge will be to combine intuition and enthusiasm among stakeholders with more firm evidence, as the result of monitoring programmes. Therefore, it will be very interesting to follow the projects in the coming years and to broaden up the set of tools based upon experiences in other areas. Working on sustainable development in urban fringes happens in many places in Europe, and all these experiences can contribute to better insight in what works in which context.

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