

VITAL URBAN LANDSCAPES

THE VITAL ROLE OF
SUSTAINABLE AND ACCESSIBLE URBAN LANDSCAPES
IN EUROPE'S CITY REGIONS

saul 
sustainable & accessible urban landscapes



THE FINAL REPORT OF
THE SAUL PARTNERSHIP
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VITAL URBAN LANDSCAPES

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Messages for Europe

In Europe's economic heartland, new urban landscapes are now a reality with a vital impact on people's quality of life in city regions. Their unique challenges and opportunities need innovative approaches by drawing transnationally on examples of good practice.

Politicians should make new urban landscapes a key policy tool in urban and regional development strategies, to reflect the changing needs of society in all city regions.

Practitioners should respond to the changing functions of new urban landscapes by testing innovative ways of interpreting them, designing and creating environments fit for purpose.

Sustainable regions are ones where people want to live, now and in the future. Regional spatial strategies, based on visions widely shared, give people a stronger sense of belonging, locally and regionally.

Politicians should adopt regional spatial strategies that create new opportunities for improving quality of life in city regions, by joining up different geographical and stakeholder interests through region-wide landscape concepts, such as regional parks, in order to foster stronger regional identity.

Practitioners should embrace new spatial planning tools, such as the broad spatial vision approach, using consensus based methods in which all citizens can participate, and capturing larger scale opportunities to which a wide spectrum of society can relate.

The impacts of globalisation and social change mean that Europe's citizens increasingly demand to be in the driving seat of shaping their future environment. Partnerships with the people offer a new approach to planning and governance for Europe's urban landscapes.

Politicians should give political support and financial commitment to facilitate efficient, productive interaction between informal spatial planning processes, involving a wide range of partners, stakeholders and citizens, and the formal planning systems.

Practitioners should value and exploit the creativeness, openness and flexibility of informal planning methods and stakeholder networks, by setting up regional partnerships and capacity building processes, in order to link and embed participation into the formal systems of planning and governance.

Transnational partnerships can unlock learning, transferable knowledge and greater understanding. A strong transnational partnership is greater than the sum of its parts and can deliver shared objectives in Europe.

Politicians should use networks to build the capacity to sustain a 'learning region' culture, strengthening regional partnership structures in times of change to capitalise on spatial planning opportunities offered by new urban landscapes.

Practitioners should seize opportunities to promote transnational learning and exchange, using shared experience to guide change within and between institutions concerned with urban development.

Competitive city regions are ones that can attract and retain viable businesses and their employees by offering a good quality of life. New urban landscapes are an essential element in building Europe's future economic structures and social well-being.

Politicians should recognise and assert the high value of public spaces as a crucial development resource for city regions, and a major asset in building a region's economic success through enhanced quality of life.

Practitioners should incorporate into spatial planning strategies the full potential of new urban landscapes, including forestry and agriculture, inner city and peri-urban spaces, in order to promote their new potential for encouraging social cohesion.

The European Commission should ensure that future transnational funding programmes encourage co-operation between major city regions of Europe, east and west; and that the principles of spatial planning at the European level continue to underpin their direction.



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

These are the conclusions of the SAUL Partnership, a consortium of metropolitan regions in North West Europe (Amsterdam, Frankfurt Rhein-Main, London, Luxembourg, Rhein-Ruhr and Saarland) who have been working together for six years on a series of Interreg-funded projects.

The Report looks at issues of key significance to people's quality of life in Europe's city regions. Globalisation, post-industrial economic restructuring and social change are creating landscapes in transition. They offer challenges and opportunities for both growing and shrinking regions.

SAUL's transnational approach has tested innovative spatial planning and design solutions for a new era. In rapidly changing city regions, a new regional planning dimension is essential. Spatial visions created with stakeholders and citizens can capture the big picture and build a sense of identity.

SAUL has demonstrated the benefits of planning in partnership, bringing together co-operation and participation. Engaging a wide alliance of public and

private sector players with citizens, can generate social capital and test new attitudes to governance for open space environments.

We reveal what we have learnt from working together transnationally. Our *TransPlanLab* tools and innovative methods of continuous evaluation have demonstrated the value of a transnational 'learning region' approach. Finally, we emphasise the unique significance of new urban landscapes in developing liveable city regions at the heart of a competitive Europe's future economy.

For the past three years the projects SAUL (*Sustainable & Accessible Urban Landscapes*) and SAUL Plus, with a combined budget of €22 million, have carried out a series of transnational urban landscape projects. These range from investments within large regional parks to local engagement initiatives.

All these are described in *Regional Reports*, an annex to this Final Report. It shows how they helped to deliver regional strategies, with evaluations of their outcomes and impacts, and the lessons learned. The Final Report draws on those lessons for these *Messages for Europe*.



CHAPTER ONE

CHANGING CITY REGIONS - EUROPE'S NEW URBAN LANDSCAPES

"Decision makers need to recognise that open space in metropolitan areas is neither countryside nor 'land that is left over'. Policy responses should emphasise the importance of high quality accessible open spaces..."¹

SAUL - a partnership of metropolitan regions undergoing change



The composition of our Partnership is significant. These regions are at the heart of the North West Europe economic zone, and their spatial policies will have major impacts on the EU's future competitiveness. They also reflect different stages of economic and social change. The regions of Amsterdam, Frankfurt Rhein-Main, Greater London and Luxembourg have expanding populations and economies, while Rhein-Ruhr and Saarland are contracting.

London's population is expected to rise to over 8 million in the next decade, putting more pressure on open spaces. Frankfurt and the surrounding towns have

mushroomed out from their urban core to accommodate the employees of a global financial centre. Amsterdam and its neighbouring municipalities are seeking new solutions to deal with the pressure of business growth and population spread, which threatens to join up the traditionally rural spaces in between. The Grand Duchy of Luxembourg, with its capital city attracting growth from an international financial centre and EU institutions, needs to absorb those pressures by repositioning its southern region, a major urban area where the former iron ore and steel industries have left their mark.

But the corridor of the River Emscher in the Rhein-Ruhr region, the main drainage canal for industrial and domestic effluent for the Ruhr region since the 19th century, has an excess of brownfield land with insufficient demand from either business growth or new housing. And Saarland is now in the final years of a declining coal mining era. Shrinking and ageing populations (Saarland's is expected to reduce by 25% by 2050), create economic and social challenges that cannot be divorced from issues of regional image and quality of life.

New urban landscapes – challenge and opportunity

This group of city regions has been working together for several years on the theme of *New Urban Landscapes*. An earlier Interreg IIc project identified that the growing forces of economic globalisation, coupled with the increasing pace of social change in Europe, would have far-reaching implications for spatial planning. The impacts on traditional urban and peri-urban landscapes were clear. We proposed that new spatial planning solutions are needed for a new era.

Our regions are all responding to the consequences of both economic restructuring and changing social patterns. These are reflected in far-reaching changes to once familiar urban environments. There are obvious impacts where areas of brown field land are left by disappearing heavy industry, often not required by new service industries. But in addition, the whole balance of

¹ All quotations in the Report are taken from observations by members of the Steering Group, Joint Planning Groups and participants in SAUL Symposia throughout the project, unless otherwise stated.

the urban environment has been going through radical change in the last 20 years.

Traditional city areas have spread into peri-urban sprawl. Suburbia has developed for housing, new businesses and light industry. Out of town shopping malls, new focal points around airports, major transport corridors, the growth of dormitory villages and satellite towns have all changed our ideas of land use planning. Agriculture and forestry can no longer sustain their former economies in surrounding areas. The countryside has become part of the city. But at the same time, parts of cities have become new kinds of open space. These new urban landscapes no longer correspond to our previous understanding of the traditional form of the European city. They are often not yet the main focus of interest for spatial planners. But they are a reality, and offer opportunities for developing new living environments for Europe's changing populations.

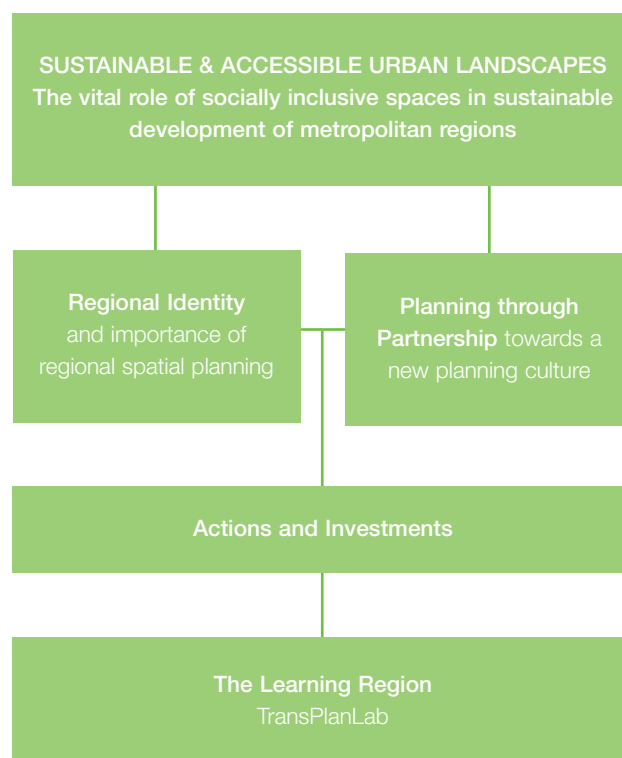
Alongside these physical changes, the globalisation of trade and greater international movement of people have brought rapid social change. Metropolitan societies are now multicultural. New residents' expectations and traditions can be very different from those of long standing communities. Generation gaps within all cultures now have more profound impacts on changing lifestyles, leisure and recreation activities. So these new and diverse communities also have different needs from their open spaces. Discovering what they are and how to respond to them, are significant tasks for spatial planners.

All our city regions share these overarching spatial challenges. The need to address them joins us together. But we also share a need to focus public attention on the significant role these new urban landscapes now play in social life, and the valuable opportunities they therefore present for a better quality of life in our city regions.

The key issues for SAUL

The current SAUL Partnership began work in 2003 on the transnational investment and action project Sustainable and Accessible Urban Landscapes. This has been part funded by Interreg IIIB. A later opportunity to apply for an additional project, SAUL Plus, created a combined programme of transnational activity with a total budget of €22 million. It concludes in the summer of 2006.

The SAUL Key Issue, ***the vital role of socially inclusive spaces in the sustainable development of metropolitan regions*** has driven all our work. Socially inclusive spaces are accessible, not just physically, but also in the sense of being perceived by citizens to belong to everyone. But to achieve that objective, we have to address two other issues. We describe these as *regional identity, with the importance of regional spatial planning*, and *planning through partnerships*.



Our earlier work had already demonstrated the value of sharing knowledge between partners, but we also realised we could go much further. SAUL offered an opportunity to promote a new culture of regional capacity building, based on shared learning. We called this theme *the learning region*, and used a learning platform *TransPlanLab*. The relationship between these issues (shown in this diagram) forms the framework of our project.

Strategies, investments and actions

The key issues have been explored through a portfolio of investment and action projects. These have been developed together transnationally, managed regionally by each partner, and designed and delivered locally with sub-partners and local stakeholders. They are described in



Regional Reports, an annex to this Final Report, (these are supported by an extensive collection of published project reports and visual materials, available from the partners).

All partners have adopted a current regional open space strategy as the framework for their investments and actions. These practical landscape projects are important to regions' own strategic planning objectives. They are also fundamental to the SAUL approach. They enable us to address the issues through a range of circumstances, using actions on the ground to test theory, demonstrate process, learn from good practice and contribute to policy development. We have drawn on their outcomes and lessons throughout this Report.

Case study: The London Plan (the Mayor's Spatial Development Strategy) has provided the context for the SAUL projects in London. Our earlier Ilc project had recommended that London needed a Parks and Green Spaces Forum to join together the many statutory, NGO and voluntary players concerned with open space issues. This was incorporated into the London Plan. The GLA has used this mechanism and its partnership to develop the Strategic Parks Project, an initiative to tackle London's deficiencies in regional and metropolitan parks for the future. SAUL has facilitated both the development of the Forum as an inclusive partnership, and the Strategic Parks Project.



CHAPTER TWO

CHANGING PLACES – NEW URBAN LANDSCAPES IN TRANSITION

Message for Europe

In Europe's economic heartland, new urban landscapes are now a reality with a vital impact on people's quality of life in city regions. Their unique challenges and opportunities need innovative approaches, by drawing transnationally on examples of good practice.

The vital role of socially inclusive spaces in sustainable development

"Although the classic dichotomy of city and landscape does not exist any more in most urban regions, the image of a clear separation of built-up areas and nature still dominates our understanding of spatial planning. As urban landscapes do not correspond any longer to the images we have of the traditional European city, they are often neglected by spatial planning.....but new urban landscapes are a fact now, and they are still expanding because many of our daily activities are taking place more and more in those areas."

Socially inclusive open spaces will increasingly play a vital role in the sustainable development of metropolitan regions. This chapter focuses on examples of the changing urban landscape, drawing on some spatial solutions SAUL has helped to develop.

We have identified two contrasting situations, expanding and shrinking regions. These are leading towards different spatial responses to urban open space. Expanding regions such as London, Frankfurt Rhein-Main and Amsterdam, face pressures on open space. New commercial buildings compete with housing growth and the many ancillary demands for services, roads, retail and social facilities. They need to protect remaining open land, including inner-city spaces and green belts around urban centres. Their success depends on different regulatory systems and planning controls. But a protectionist policy alone is no longer sufficient.

The quality of those spaces, and their capacity to fulfil a new range of social expectations, take on even greater significance with the pressures of increasing urban density. If today's population – and more crucially, tomorrow's – is to have a decent quality of life with access to good open space, the design and maintenance of individual spaces, and regional provision of spaces in their totality, are critical issues for these city regions. These new urban landscapes have the potential to become new kinds of regional or sub-regional parks, accessible to all.

Case study: Bonames is a former military airfield within Frankfurt. The area is becoming accessible to a new residential zone where up to 6000 homes are being built – a new satellite of the city. The SAUL project is creating new uses for a harsh concrete environment adjacent to ecologically sensitive water meadows. A new wilderness area is being encouraged within Frankfurt's Green Belt, with minimal structural change allowing wildlife to take its natural course. Imaginative re-use of old military buildings for social, creative and educational activities, and a new river footbridge to create greater access have brought the site to life. An employment skills training programme gave opportunities to unemployed young people.

Case study: Deep-rooted structural change and shrinking processes are fundamentally altering the Saarland. Despite early industrialisation and the scars of its former coal mining and steel industries, the Saar conurbation still has exceptionally high tree cover which takes up more than 40% of the core agglomeration. The withdrawal of mining and heavy industry is leaving many derelict sites in their wake. By using innovative approaches to creative design and spatial planning informed by the SAUL project, the natural potential and industrial heritage offer an opportunity to 'shape the city through landscape', in order to create a relaxed city region and face the challenges of a shrinking region. Through SAUL the Saarkohlenwald project has encouraged access to forest and wilderness areas, former mining landscapes and feudal gardens on the basis of a shared spatial vision, engaging citizens through local projects, events, installations and exhibitions.

By contrast, shrinking regions such as Saarland and the Emscher corridor of Rhein-Ruhr have no shortage of space, but no great demand for it. A contracting industrial base with consequent outward migration of population creates insufficient commercial growth to fuel rapid economic expansion. But it does not follow from this that open space is not being urbanised, or that there is an automatic recognition of the value of new urban landscapes.

A key objective is to reverse the negative external image of old industrial conurbations by finding new spatial planning solutions. Rediscovering, re-interpreting and celebrating the intrinsic values of the urban landscape can help to achieve that. Their focus is therefore on the region's natural and cultural heritage, on new uses for brownfield land, or on forestry or agriculture in transition. Sometimes solutions may be interim rather than permanent and may often involve minimal intervention. Again, the regional park concept can offer a solution.

Case study: The inner Thames Marshes is a large area of open space in South East London. The London Plan and the Strategic Parks Project identify it as a potential regional park. It is an ecologically sensitive area rich in natural habitats. It is also under threat from urban pressures, with the Thames Gateway expected to absorb much of the predicted growth in housing for South East England. The SAUL project has helped to identify and demonstrate acceptable ways to make the Marshes more accessible and better understood by the public, while respecting its important roles in biodiversity. Walking and cycling routes have been developed, habitats have been restored, and spatial planning has been improved with costed management plans.

The transnational approach

These broad generalisations of expansion or contraction can also be misleading. The Grand Duchy of Luxembourg, with a limited territory, combines the contrasts of a Capital city in expansion, a largely agricultural northern region, and a post-industrial southern region with some similar characteristics to Saarland. All SAUL metropolitan regions have seen similar consequences from radical industrial change and economic restructuring. Thirty years ago, the population of Greater London was also shrinking dramatically as heavy industry disappeared and commercial enterprises moved out, leaving large areas of brownfield land. The local economy contracted, with negative impacts on employment, social services and the maintenance of open spaces. Those effects are still clearly evident in parts of the UK Capital today.

Perhaps another way to view these regions is that they are all at different stages of dealing with similar challenges. But they must do so in the changing circumstances of global pressures. And because today's solutions to these landscape challenges must be very different from those of the past, we have all benefited by tackling the same issues together. We have not just observed other regions' examples, but worked together on projects, using the SAUL Joint Planning Groups or JPGs (described later). This has helped us to understand the historical context for our different spatial planning and regulatory systems. They reflect our underlying cultural traditions.

"Be wary of applying examples from one country to another without careful consideration of cultural differences...not as easy as just transferring experiences...the Netherlands is only across the North Sea, but geographical, social, historical and agricultural factors can make a situation that at face value seems similar, actually quite different."

New approaches to changing urban landscapes

The opportunities created by new urban landscapes demand both spatial and social responses. Their effectiveness will ultimately depend on finding spatial solutions fit for purpose. We have asked what citizens will need from urban landscapes and how they will use them in changing city regions, whether growing or contracting.

In a SAUL article on *Conditions for creating and sustaining socially inclusive spaces*, members of the Amsterdam team, drawing on their projects and the transnational work of their JPGs, proposed that *"socially inclusive spaces are accessible open spaces that are not only perceived to belong to everybody, but do in fact attract a high diversity of users.....the ultimate goal of creating socially inclusive urban landscapes is to make people proud of their public space as well as involved and interested in it...."* They proposed four conditions to achieve this: user participation, spatial factors, identity and management.

Social change is creating a new range of users. Public spaces must be accessible to them in a social as well as



physical sense. If residents are able to influence the design and content of accessible spaces, by getting involved in decisions about what they should be used for, they will feel a sense of co-ownership. Different users and age groups may have different priorities, so identifying these presents a new challenge for planners. SAUL has identified a number of common design factors that should generally be considered – even though the answers will be different in each specific case.

Among spatial factors recognised by the Amsterdam group are

- flexibility – spaces must serve various purposes, likely to be achieved by minimum design and seamless transitions between areas:
- multi-use – the larger the space, the greater range of activities it can accommodate, but the greater need for sensitive allocation of designated areas and management of functions:
- all weather use – provision for shelter, avoiding use

restricted to short periods:

- social interaction – allowing possibilities for unpredictable meetings and social contact in relaxed environments, as well as designated meeting spaces:
- safety – design and management to avoid safety fears, real or perceived:
- sustainability – designed for long term use, avoiding vandalism:
- accessibility.

Physical accessibility, by public transport, cycle, foot and vehicle, and for all users with different mobility factors, is primarily an issue for planning, design and land ownership. *Social accessibility* is essentially an issue of people's perceptions – whether they feel spaces are accessible to them, and are not deterred by low levels of attraction, fears of safety, dominant use by another group, or simply lack of recognition of what is there. And social accessibility is clearly enhanced if people get involved in their urban spaces.



Case study: Noorderpark is a new urban regional park for the north Amsterdam area. This district is characterised by a long-standing population of workers from the original harbour industry, interspersed with more recent immigrants from various ethnic groups. The planned construction of a new north-south metro line and station created the opportunity to join two deteriorating and underused parks by lowering the dividing road and bridging the canal. SAUL has boosted people's participation by engaging them in the park design competition, a photography exhibition of parks usage, and publications to communicate the design process. Specific groups were targeted including rowers and the visually impaired. Young people were engaged, and the Young Ambassadors project linked them to others in London's Burgess Park. SAUL has contributed to the first physical investments in the park, creating the necessary catalyst for making longer-term investment decisions over the next decade.

Citizen engagement is essential in this planning and design context. As we involve more citizens from different societies and age groups in planning their new

urban environments, it is important to harness the potential value of their creative ideas. Unlocking that potential (as we describe later) usually requires specific processes of engagement to facilitate interaction between participants. New ways of seeing the urban environment may need to be stimulated. But people are then likely to have innovative perceptions about ways of using and shaping these new landscapes. These can generate imaginative and sometimes experimental design solutions, and we should allow scope for those. Time will tell whether or not they are sustainable. But for landscapes in transition – particularly on brownfield land – interim uses may be entirely appropriate.

Another starting point for people's interest in their environment may be its historical roots, which can provide a backbone for today's planning and urban development. A landscape's origins in its industrial or cultural past can be rediscovered, perhaps from remaining industrial landmarks. Those symbols can be re-interpreted through the use of modern communication tools such as 3-dimensional computer visioning and graphics. Or traditional methods such as storytelling, artists' interpretation and natural signage can help to re-connect local communities to their cultural past. It can also explain the area to new residents in terms of its relevance for today.

Case study: Within the Frankfurt Regional Park, the Route of Industrial Culture Rhein-Main, a project to raise awareness of the region's industrial heritage, has identified 150 sites including factories to make them more accessible. The concentration along the rivers Rhine and Main, forming the spatial backbone of the region, has led to the definition of the route as a wide corridor and part of the cultural and leisure amenities of the region. SAUL has facilitated on-site information, excursions, sightseeing and guided tours, including an annual event weekend where the number of events has doubled to 130 and the participants have doubled to 7000. These have made the Route more tangible for local people, bringing new organisations into the partnership.

SAUL recognised that these processes of helping people to perceive the urban landscape differently are key tools in achieving accessibility, both in terms of practical uses and the impact on people's daily experience through their emotional responses. Seeing the changing urban environment through fresh eyes can unlock its potential for citizens. Spaces we thought we knew well may appear very different if we rediscover them through a new stimulus. And often that process of recognition needs all our senses. Our Symposium in Saarbrücken brought a transnational focus to these qualities of landscapes in transition.

Many new urban landscapes may present special challenges in this context. Where citizens have traditionally thought of cities and green spaces as distinct elements, the qualities of the new spatial structures may not be easily recognised, nor their hidden potential understood without help. SAUL projects tested different tools to reveal those opportunities. These developed more positive perceptions of urban landscapes in a variety of spatial circumstances.

Case study: Groundwork has worked on the development of a new large scale urban landscape, the Wandle Valley Country Park. Part of this is currently a waste landfill site, now approaching completion with subsequent restoration of the land

as a public amenity. These 485 hectares have the potential to become a significant public and environmental resource for the whole of the sub-region. But this opportunity has not so far been well understood by the local communities. SAUL projects concentrated on raising the Park's profile and engaging citizens in its planning and development. One method was to produce an innovative video that shows the past, present and future of the Park using animated characters, aerial photography, and interviews with a wide range of the local people including children and young people. The video also demonstrates the special characteristics of the Park through the eyes of its users. It has been widely distributed to local groups and organisations and a number of public screenings have taken place.

Our regions had different prior experience as starting points for using interventions such as installations, images and creative responses led by artists, interpretation of local history, or discovery of nature and wildlife. For some, landscape actions working with the grain of nature used relatively small interventions restricted to priority locations for the larger spatial strategy – for example, in the Saarkohlenwald project, where low cost actions were inserted at special locations, such as slag heaps and gateways. With minimal physical impact, these offered innovative solutions to situations where low investment and maintenance costs are important. For others, the focus was on established open spaces already recognised as part of the urban fabric, but where the quality of the public realm needs upgrading to improve its accessibility.

Recommendations

- **Politicians** should make new urban landscapes a key policy tool in urban and regional development strategies, to reflect the changing needs of society in all city regions.
- **Practitioners** should respond to the changing functions of new urban landscapes by testing innovative ways of interpreting them, designing and creating environments fit for purpose.



CHAPTER THREE

THE REGIONAL DIMENSION – PLANNING, VISION AND IDENTITY

Message for Europe

Sustainable regions are ones where people want to live, now and in the future. Regional spatial strategies, based on visions widely shared, give people a stronger sense of belonging, locally and regionally.

New regional approaches to spatial planning strategies

“SAUL shows how important it is to be proactive as a region. Waiting leads to nothing. And maybe it is time to opt for an even larger scale.....”

The changing shape of metropolitan life and the specific spatial structure of urban landscapes demand new approaches to spatial planning, with a greater emphasis on regional and sub regional plans and strategies. All the partners have been developing strategic approaches, and although these reflect different conditions, they come together through SAUL. Many spatial planning issues relate to areas beyond local boundaries, and this is especially true of urban landscapes. Citizens naturally focus primarily on local concerns. But if those issues are addressed only in terms of local solutions, opportunities for seeing the big picture, developing shared aspirations and avoiding the conflicts of local competition, may be missed.

Case study: The Regional Park Rhein-Main, a long term concept of the regional planning authority Planungsverband Ballungsraum Frankfurt/Rhein-Main (whose members are municipalities), has been developed incrementally over 10 years. The Regionalpark is the Frankfurt region’s main instrument to safeguard, enhance and develop open space through a network of routes and sites. It proactively promotes a range of measures to be implemented jointly by the Planungsverband and the municipalities, using public limited companies owned by them for construction and maintenance. In this way both planning and implementation are co-ordinated. Its success is visible in the projects, including those developed through SAUL.

Each partner has worked on a regional strategy project, many with the concept of new regional parks as their focus. They were discussed with transnational JPGs and provided the framework for their investments and action projects. These strategic plans have created a range of regional and sub regional examples. Some are already firmly established planning concepts, to which SAUL has added value by realising a key development

opportunity (the Frankfurt Rhein-Main Regional Park, the Emscher Urban Landscape 2020, the national and provincial spatial plans for the Amsterdam region). Others have evolved with the SAUL timescale (the Luxembourg South Region Partnership Strategy, the London Plan and Strategic Parks Project, and Regional Park Saar).

Case study: The Regional Park Saar has been adopted as a new spatial planning instrument of the Environment Ministry, on the basis that the quality of public open space is an essential urban development resource. The concept is not to create a ‘grand plan’ for the region, but to use an incremental project approach. The Regional Park is a platform for developing local initiatives pooled together in regional projects with a common purpose based on a shared vision. SAUL has enabled the Regional Park concept to be put into action through practical pilot projects in the Saarkohlenwald and the Warndt on the basis of a shared spatial vision, by developing a joint masterplan for the Regional Park, establishing the Regional Park Forum to improve partnership working and setting up a website.

Large-scale regional spatial concepts transcend the scope and jurisdiction of single authorities. By definition, they need co-operative methods. As a minimum, they require debate between statutory and other major stakeholders, leading to agreement on strategic objectives. But SAUL has demonstrated that they can also offer a valuable resource for much wider capacity building. They are a good basis for partners to pool intellectual and material resources. They also provide a framework to draw many more stakeholders and citizens into generating creative solutions, sharing experience and promoting learning.



Case study: Regional identity is an important issue for the Colne Valley Park on the western edge of London. Its future development and promotion as a regional park are impeded by its position, within the Heathrow corridor and cutting across three government regions and ten local authorities, both in and beyond London. A regional planning approach is therefore significant. SAUL has enabled the Groundwork Trust that manages the park to set up a virtual reality landscape design and visioning pilot project. This has contributed to a 3-D visualisation of the whole Park to assist in cross-boundary spatial planning, promotion and community participation.

Spatial visions as planning tools

We found that spatial visions can be effective tools when focusing on large-scale concepts. They are particularly valuable for broadly based partnerships of players who are not starting from a spatial planning background. A spatial vision is primarily a planning instrument led by experts. But if it is developed through open and inclusive processes to seek and facilitate participation from stakeholders and citizens, it can generate a productive fusion of specialist and informal ideas.

Citizens and non-governmental stakeholders have a major role to play in spatial planning, but their route into it is likely to be through involvement in concrete projects of real significance to places and people, not by theoretical discussion. Spatial visions can be invaluable tools to integrate local projects into a broad regional perspective. They can provide the essential link, both conceptual and practical, between local initiatives and regional plans.

A broad vision that captures people's imagination about how their region could develop has a good chance to secure widespread support. Their enthusiasm for

practical action can also sustain the vision long term; but only if they feel ownership of the results. To achieve that, it must be generated through inclusive processes to engage them as stakeholders. So a spatial vision also functions as communication between participants. It provides them with a necessary framework for understanding their contribution to the big picture.

Case study: The Emscher Urban Landscape 2020, as its name indicates, is a long-term project. SAUL has contributed to the development of the masterplan for the redevelopment of the Emscher Valley, which in future will be the backbone of the evolving larger Emscher Landscape Park. A broad partnership of stakeholders was involved in this process at a strategic level through the Emscher Dialogue. At the same time, a growing number of citizens, local action groups and nature conservation groups wanted to be involved in the physical projects. SAUL pilot projects used intensive public involvement processes to test participative ways of facilitating key actions, providing feedback into the planning process. In this way the strategy and the design guidelines began to be rooted in community priorities.

Identity – a sense of place

“A sense of regional identity is a pre-requisite for a regional approach to spatial planning.”

The forces that have formed our urban landscapes in a post-industrial era, both economic and social, have also led to a loss of traditional regional identity. The disappearance of former industries has created a loss of the strong community focus those localities used to enjoy. The spread of housing and industry beyond the inner cities, suburbanisation and the growth of conurbations mean that many people no longer relate to historic city centres. The development of new network hubs creates movement between many focal points. Dormitory settlements, such as the ring of towns around Frankfurt, with daily commuting, are now part of new lifestyles for many. And mobility on a global scale results in rapid turnover of population.

But we know that a sense of place is essential to quality of life. People identify with their locality, if not with their region. Satisfaction with where they live, work and relax contributes to its economic viability. People who have resources and mobility can choose where they live and relax. But another part of our society has no choice, so their immediate location is crucial to their quality of life. Citizens all need access to well-managed spaces that are clean, safe and fit for purpose in the 21st Century. Inevitably, they will judge their locality by these measures.

SAUL projects have demonstrated that as citizens become involved in helping to plan and prioritise changes to their environment, they begin to develop feelings of personal responsibility for that. Eventually a sense of pride in what has been achieved will increase their satisfaction with those localities. Moreover, a participative project itself can help to discover a new or overlooked identity for a locality, perhaps by exploring its industrial or social history, or revealing its wildlife or other natural attractions in new ways.

Case study: Dietzenbach began life as two villages that coalesced into a new town with commuters from Frankfurt and satellite industries. With no natural centre, creating a new identity is a challenge. The Waterworks Park project built a new partnership between the municipality, Planungsverband, the water company and local stakeholders, to agree how the traditional but little known water supply industry could be revealed and explained to citizens in a contemporary context. Education about water supply and its importance, locally and internationally, shaped the project. SAUL influenced regional and local approaches to the way the project could be designed through partnership building, and facilitated the inclusion of the Water Temple installation, a tree lined avenue and routemarker feature.

“Local matters often become regional matters. Local politicians have to re-navigate their [spatial] options.”

SAUL has questioned whether people’s local sense of place is also reflected in a sense of regional identity. Our first Symposium, in Dortmund in the Ruhr, addressed this issue. Citizens generally have stronger perceptions of the places where they live, work and relax, than of a region whose boundaries may be unclear. What we feel about our localities, whether pride or disappointment, and whether we would wish to continue to live there or somewhere else, are individual subjective judgements.

These may reflect quite different perspectives from the corporate images of a region devised objectively for marketing purposes. But our individual sense of place is still an essential factor in larger spatial planning strategy. If we - and many others - do not care much for where we live, it presents an identity challenge for the region as a whole. Conversely, our attraction to an area increases its economic strength.

We have to recognise that different citizens may perceive an area’s identity differently. The farmers and residents of Amstelland, for example, want future plans to retain its historic image as an agricultural community – even though the agricultural economy is no longer sustainable in its traditional form. But at the same time, Amstelland is part of the larger urban identity of Amsterdam, whose city residents see it as a valuable leisure resource.

A shared sense of place at a local level is likely to have a greater impact at regional level. Regional spatial planning strategy needs to respond to that. SAUL projects have demonstrated that new urban landscapes offer citizens ways to express their views and change their environment. It also offers them new or alternative ways of seeing their familiar landscapes. If those projects tackle larger spatial objectives and are designed to join up several localities (such as the South Luxembourg regional path network, the Wandle river path in London and the Hohe Strasse cycle route near Frankfurt), individual participants start to develop a sense of their regional relevance.





Case study: In Luxembourg, a long term strategic goal for spatial planning is to establish a more balanced and decentralised spatial framework between the City of Luxembourg, a financial centre of international importance and location of European institutions, and the South region shaped by the rise and decline of the steel industry. Achievement of this goal requires improvement of the South region's quality of life, image and identity; enhancement of this fragmented area's specific spatial qualities; and a strong partnership between central and local government with PROSUD representing the 12 municipalities, and other stakeholders. SAUL has enabled the Ministry to set up a partnership building process, bringing together formal and informal stakeholders, to promote the urban landscape as a major asset of future regional development. Based on a strategy of awareness-raising, a process of exploration, mapping, reflection and publication of results has illustrated how people's perceptions of their environment can change and evolve through fresh perspectives, creating a more positive attitude to urban landscapes.

Recommendations

- **Politicians** should adopt regional spatial strategies that create new opportunities for improving quality of life in city regions, by joining up different geographical and stakeholder interests through region-wide landscape concepts, such as regional and metropolitan parks, in order to foster stronger regional identity.
- **Practitioners** should embrace new spatial planning tools, such as the broad spatial vision approach, using consensus based methods in which all citizens can participate, and capturing larger scale opportunities to which a wide spectrum of society can relate.



CHAPTER FOUR

CHANGING LIVES - PLANNING THROUGH PARTNERSHIPS

Message for Europe

The impacts of globalisation and social change mean that Europe's citizens increasingly demand to be in the driving seat of shaping their future environment. Partnerships with the people offer a new approach to planning and governance for Europe's urban landscapes.

Globalisation, social change and spatial planning

“The traditional planning methods, formal planning procedures and existing networks of classic stakeholders of spatial planning are no longer sufficient to deal efficiently with the complexity of urban landscape development.....often the rigidity of the existing instruments and ways of working have inhibited creative and innovative processes, and the potential of the urban landscape remains undiscovered.”

Europe's evolving economies and the effects of globalisation have changed both our landscapes and our social patterns. New societies have different expectations of their environments, and new urban landscapes offer citizens an opportunity to become more involved in shaping a key ingredient for quality of life. From the EU's adoption of the European Spatial Development Perspective (ESDP) in 1999, many States have begun to reflect in their own systems its emphasis on integrated spatial planning, bringing economy, environment and social equity together. The Interreg programmes promote those concepts, and SAUL has addressed them.

At state level, the UK government has replaced its traditional planning system in England with new regional spatial strategies and integrated local development frameworks, with a strong emphasis on engaging local communities as stakeholders in the process. At regional level, the Greater London Authority has developed a spatial development strategy, the London Plan, with a wide partnership of statutory and voluntary players in a shared long-term vision, including open space objectives, and is now focusing on implementation through sub regional development frameworks.

In the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg, where no statutory regional planning level exists between the state and municipalities, the government's emphasis is on building informal partnerships of municipalities and other stakeholders to establish a mutual framework for future arrangements. The Netherlands has a long tradition of national spatial planning with extensive experience of formal public consultation on plans and stakeholder engagement, but less experience of proactive citizen engagement. Many German states have statutory

systems in which high level planning is primarily government led, imposing framework plans that rely on municipalities and landowners for implementation after public consultation.

Planning through partnerships

For any system of planning, predicting the future needs of citizens is fundamental; but those needs are constantly evolving. In a complex multicultural society, different social and age groups have different priorities, so identifying them becomes more difficult. To achieve effective integrated spatial planning requires a co-operative approach in which the voices of many stakeholders can be heard, not just to identify need but to shape policies, devise strategies, help to find opportunities and deliver solutions.

People want a say in things that concern them, but many also want to take an active part in bringing about change. SAUL has adopted the theme of *planning through partnerships* as a key issue for the development of sustainable and accessible urban landscapes, and our investment and action projects have all tested this principle in practice.

Case study: The Hohe Strasse is the historic high road between Leipzig and Frankfurt, so important to the City's trade in the middle ages. It had been neglected until this partnership project between the Planungsverband and six municipalities transformed a 20-kilometre section into a popular cycle route, with a series of rest areas revealing distant views of the modern city skyline. Although linked through a common design concept, each station is a unique installation. Local residents of the towns and rural areas proposed the themes based on local history or other ideas, and worked with artists to realise them. The project culminated in a high profile celebration where each locality acted as host for the rest. These municipalities had not worked together on a project before. Now through SAUL they have formed a joint company and can see they have the capacity to plan for future objectives. The regional planning authority's role as catalyst and co-ordinator was vital.

It is possible to have partnerships that involve no participation by anyone other than the formal partners themselves, such as one between a public authority and a development company. SAUL uses this term to mean spatial planning partnerships that are inclusive and broadly based, bringing together statutory and non-statutory, formal and informal players. These are partnerships that harness the roles of agencies from other aspects of public life as well as the private sector, and in which citizens can play a meaningful part – either directly as individuals, or indirectly through other stakeholders able to represent them.

Some partners had limited experience of this more co-operative approach to planning before they used these practical projects to test it. SAUL has been a major opportunity to re-assess their approach by sharing their experiences with others. Facing the need to find new solutions to spatial planning issues, traditional planning frameworks impose limitations. All regions are used to the statutory requirements of formal public consultation on land use plans and single project applications, but these rarely achieve effective participation or ‘buy-in’ from the wider population. Inclusive planning partnerships go much further than merely asking people what they think of a plan that has already been prepared by planners.

Engaging a partnership of active stakeholders

Spatial plans incorporating economic, social and environmental issues need the participation of agencies and players from a range of other disciplines. Partnerships between regional agencies and local municipalities are a basic starting point for regional spatial planning, and this has been reflected by the working arrangements for SAUL developed by Amsterdam with its neighbouring municipalities, Saarland with Saarbrücken, the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg with the municipalities of the southern region, and the GLA with the London boroughs.

Planungsverband Ballungsraum Frankfurt/Rhein-Main is itself a public authority based on membership from municipalities, while Emscher-Genossenschaft is a public-private partnership between local government and mining and steel companies. For Planungsverband, the Hohe Strasse project provided an opportunity to build a strong relationship with new partner municipalities. The SAUL projects enabled all partners to go much further than the requirements of formal agreements, building new understanding and developing shared objectives.

Saarland - Saarforst Forester guiding a tour at the Saarkohlenwald event week



Case study: For some city regions, forestry or agriculture can be major factors in regional spatial planning, and foresters and farmers therefore need to be engaged as key stakeholders in partnerships. In the Saarkohlenwald project, the concept of urban forestry developed through SAUL aims to combine the traditional business of timber production, historically a major industry, with new recreation and education services. In London, a different concept of urban forestry became a dimension of SAUL's focus on community engagement for areas of social deprivation. For both the Amsterdam and Frankfurt Rhein-Main regions, farmers are landowners with crucial roles in achieving urban landscape objectives and long term sustainable management.

Bringing other players into this mix of public authorities created added value for them all. The forestry and mining companies in Saarland, the water company in Dietzenbach, the employment training agency in Amsterdam, the housing developers in the Emscher River corridor and the Parks and Green Spaces Forum in London all contributed different dimensions to local and regional planning processes. If key stakeholders are included in the planning process from the beginning, they can help to shape the objectives from the outset. By developing a shared agenda, SAUL was able to engage a wider spectrum of local interest groups and individuals with experience and skills to offer, around specific project opportunities.

Some are already developing into long-term regional partnership structures (in London, Saarland and the Emscher corridor). Others are evolving more slowly. Lessons from the SAUL experience are that inclusive and community-based partnerships must grow organically. They need a carefully structured and managed process, with good leadership, guided by facilitators with the necessary experience of partnership building. Flexibility is essential since their composition will change. And they need on-going commitment from all partners. They are also a continuous learning process, and the willingness to experiment moves things on. The benefits of working in this way, with the necessary investment of time and skills, are potentially immense.

Empowering citizens through spatial planning

Citizens are also stakeholders, not just beneficiaries. Stakeholder partnerships based on these inclusive approaches provide a manageable route to engaging citizens themselves as active participants. First, stakeholder organisations recognised for their good relationships with the public, including those representing popular interests, can be helpful in communicating with them, acting as an acceptable interface. Some citizens are happy to have their voices heard in this way. This role as intermediary can also be played by agencies specialising in working with local people. We saw how creative artists and performers can be natural communicators.

Secondly, by providing opportunities for local communities to get involved in projects and enjoy the social experience directly, natural champions usually emerge. But it is also important to ensure that all citizens are included, not just those who belong to a particular group. We need to reach those who may feel excluded by language or social factors. We need to include young people. These capacity building processes take time and careful nurturing. And they may need long-term support.

SAUL projects have used a variety of methods to engage people in generating ideas, making choices and agreeing priorities. People usually focus first on their immediate environment and social conditions. They are most likely to get involved if they feel strongly about a particular issue that affects them personally. A common cause generates a sense of commitment, which is stronger if it is seen as urgent. Conversely, citizens are less likely to take a direct interest in regional planning issues if they seem remote. Regional objectives need to be expressed in terms of their local elements. Regional parks are also local parks. SAUL has demonstrated that long distance paths and cycle routes, river valleys and linear features can help to join up local with regional in the popular perception.

The challenge and benefits for planners and politicians

Our partnership projects have demonstrated that widening the perspective to include social factors can generate innovative solutions. It brings planning to life,



making it more relevant to others. And it is more enjoyable for planners themselves. They can start to use their latent creative abilities as communicators and facilitators in a climate of popular enthusiasm. Popular support for open space issues clearly raises them up the political agenda. Achieving widespread approval from citizens for public policies and programmes is a political prize worth striving for.

There is another important benefit for city regions. Planning through partnerships promotes active citizenship. It can unlock the potential of local communities, building valuable social capital. By promoting a sense of local ownership, citizens will also feel civic pride in their new urban landscapes and help to care for them as a community asset. In some cases, it may lead to new methods for community management of open spaces through partnerships.

Case study: Burgess Park, south London, a large inner city space created from post-war clearance, surrounded by high density social housing, is now being regenerated with strong involvement from local communities to create a new metropolitan park that can offer a wider diversity of attractions for different kinds of activity by many more people.

SAUL has enabled the project to develop new sport and recreation facilities with an energy-efficient, ecologically sound building. Local people have been key players in landscape improvement features. Led by Groundwork, a model has been prepared for a community trust – a consortium of NGOs and the local Friends of Burgess Park organisation - to take full responsibility for developing and managing the park in the future, in partnership with the Borough Council.

But the public's growing expectations of active participation in decision making also present new challenges for all those involved in spatial planning. New skills are needed in enabling and capacity building, sometimes directly with local people. These can be learned and developed. A greater challenge for some may be in accepting that untrained and unqualified citizens can be the source of knowledge and wisdom about what will work best in local conditions. Partnerships also mean that at regional level, a wide range of agencies including leisure and nature organisations have key parts to play in regional strategies. SAUL suggests this implies a fundamental change of attitude in the traditional culture of planning.

New approaches to governance for sustainable urban landscapes

The development of urban regions is built on a foundation of essential statutory planning provisions. But for some states, their legally binding instruments can be too rigid to allow for a flexible response to the needs of new urban landscapes. In the long term, statutory frameworks can change to accommodate new spatial planning conditions (as we have seen recently in the UK). In the medium term, additional tools are needed. These are not alternatives, but can be used in parallel to complement formal provisions.

SAUL projects have revealed how informal planning processes, using inclusive partnerships, can add value to existing formal systems. They deliver new perspectives on spatial development opportunities, with creative solutions. Co-operation between players from different sectors is helping to build capacity for regional governance on open space issues. Growing involvement from the general public is a vital ingredient. It adds a genuine ‘bottom up’ input to the debate, to balance the ‘top-down’ formal structures. It also helps to ensure that no single partner or alliance can exert excessive or disproportionate influence on the process.

Regional spatial visions can act as a link between formal and informal planning processes. We have seen they can bring people together around a shared perception of how a region’s landscapes can develop. They capture innovative ideas and local enthusiasm. To capitalise on their value, statutory planning frameworks should accommodate their informality. At the same time, informal planning needs clear objectives. It must also be underpinned with sufficient structure and continuing support, to ensure continuity and dependability. The essential parameters for regional development – demographic, social and economic – need to be understood by all.

Case study: In the Saarkohlenwald the advantages of an organic approach to spatial visioning, engaging many stakeholders and citizens, led the Saarland Environment Ministry and its partners to extend the focus to the Warndt area, where the impending

closure of one of the last coal mines will have far-reaching economic and social effects. Adjacent to the French mining area of Lorraine, a cross border regional partnership approach has been necessary. This drew up an overall development concept for the Warndt area, as well as focussing on individual locations. Local people were able to participate in the regional planning process right from the start through two citizens’ workshops, ‘Future Warndt’, which led to the development concept.

It is clear that both statutory and voluntary systems have strengths and weaknesses. But to allocate different functions to each would lead to fragmentation of the planning tasks. It is essential to work together in partnership to support one another. The integration of formal with informal spatial planning processes, if successful, is likely to reach a developed stage of fusion where the new plans must be formally endorsed by politicians, giving them democratic legitimacy. Over time, the results of partnership processes can be adopted by the statutory planning system.

SAUL is advocating a new culture of spatial planning in city regions. To move towards it, we need new partnerships between spatial planners, politicians and the people. And the methods we have described are essentially learning processes.

Recommendations

- **Politicians** should give political support and financial commitment to facilitate efficient, productive interaction between informal spatial planning processes, involving a wide range of partners, stakeholders and citizens, and the formal planning systems.
- **Practitioners** should value and exploit the creativeness, openness and flexibility of informal planning methods and stakeholder networks, by setting up regional partnerships and capacity building processes, in order to link and embed participation into the formal systems of planning and governance.



CHAPTER FIVE

LEARNING REGIONS - WORKING TOGETHER IN EUROPE

Message for Europe

Transnational partnerships can unlock learning, transferable knowledge and greater understanding. A strong transnational partnership is greater than the sum of its parts and can deliver shared objectives in Europe.

The value of transnational learning

"The members of SAUL grow closer; there is an open mind, and confidence in each other that makes work easier and most agreeable."

The SAUL Partnership has taken the concept of 'the learning region' as a foundation for all our work. It has informed our policy debates around the key issues, and underpinned the investment and action projects. By applying the principles of continuous enquiry and knowledge exchange to their initiatives, we have found that regions and localities can build social capital between stakeholders, and then use it to create wider influence. SAUL has encouraged regional learning, and has applied the same principles to the opportunities created by transnational working.

A significant part of SAUL's work programme has been invested in the value of transnational learning. It has been possible only because all those engaged in the SAUL project have been willing to make the necessary personal commitments to work with open minds and share experiences. In the process, they have become firm friends. But to make it work well has required innovative methods and clear structures, with good co-ordination.

TransPlanLab

TransPlanLab (the Transnational Planning Laboratory) has been at the heart of the SAUL project. We conceived it as a framework for knowledge exchange, locally, regionally and transnationally. All opportunities for theoretical discussion and practical projects have been used as a basis for enquiry and learning. It takes several forms.

A matrix of Joint Planning Groups (JPGs) was established to tackle the challenges of action and investment projects in all regions. JPGs were constructed from a range of expertise drawn from every region. They engaged professional practitioners as well as Steering Group members. There was considerable cross-over between memberships of JPGs and projects, with the Lead Partner's team as a constant ingredient. This transnational network enabled us to focus shared experience on identified problems within the common

framework of the SAUL key issues. It also helped us to understand the social and economic context for spatial objectives in different regions.

Terms of reference and a code of practice gave JPGs a common format, adapted to the needs of individual regions and projects. The emphasis was on site visits and contact with local practitioners, combined with group discussions. SAUL 'learning logs' encouraged all members to capture their individual learning, feeding back later their reflective responses to project development. These were then posted on the website.

Case study: At the first site visit for the Amstel Wedge project, JPG members learned that the earlier local Future of Amstelland debates had based ideas for future strategy primarily on its agricultural traditions and rural image. But members pointed out that from an external perspective the northern part of the Wedge is essentially an urban landscape. The city is visibly present in and around the area, yet it is a green, open and relatively quiet space. They questioned whether the existing plans could represent a sustainable future. Consequently, a more explicit route towards sustainability has been adopted with recognition that citizens of the city also have a part to play.

Evaluating SAUL's influence

"My key learning points are that it takes more time to understand national issues of other countries. It is necessary for the process of learning to co-operate..... When we take the time to really listen to each other's problems and issues then we can make progress."

Our emphasis on a 'learning region' approach required specific actions. We needed to facilitate its development, and to evaluate if it worked in practice. As part of an evaluation strategy we devised two substantial projects. The first, *Evaluating SAUL's Influence*, began at an early stage of the project and continued throughout. It concluded with a final report to the Steering Group in January 2006. A consultant experienced in transnational co-operation joined the Lead Partner's team to undertake it. The second, the

SAUL *Transnational Review project*, was carried out by a team of international reviewers in 2005 and concluded with a joint workshop with the steering Group in January 2006. Other related evaluation tools were a review of all JPG learning logs, and evaluations of each Symposium.

Evaluating SAUL's Influence was conceived as a continuous internal process of working with participants to guide and facilitate learning, not just to assess it. Initially it focused on individual learning. Later, it also looked at impact on organisational or institutional learning. Baseline interviews were conducted in the early phase with a sample of JPG and Steering Group members. These concentrated on whether the structure and ethos of SAUL helped to foster transnational learning. Follow-up interviews later in the project showed the extent of change perceived by participants.

Despite some people's familiarity with the issues from the earlier Interreg project, many initially struggled to see the relevance to local circumstances. They were daunted by the complexity of the project, including Interreg's administrative demands. But by working together through landscape projects, they applied practical analysis that revealed the interconnection of the issues and their direct application to regional needs. By the last round of JPG meetings, both the SAUL language and themes had become central to regional priorities.

JPGs were a key focus for both transnational learning and personal development. All participants felt able to make positive contributions and gained from the experience. They also saw them as an invaluable opportunity to think outside normal frames of reference in a relaxed atmosphere. But it was not axiomatic that JPG meetings gave rise to learning. Contents and conduct had to be structured to achieve it, and opportunities were taken to fine tune the process as it evolved. Practical work through site visits drew the best out of participants, exploiting their capacity as informal consultants. Budget limitations initially restricted the length of time together and the number of meetings, but this was later relaxed with additional informal arrangements for working together. These were useful lessons for the future. So was the need for continuity of membership.

The learning region

The portfolio of projects proved a good resource for regional learning. Beyond the structure of JPGs, comparable projects emerged with sufficient similarities across the transnational spectrum to promote natural joint learning and informal networks (Saarland with Luxembourg, Noorderpark with Burgess Park, for example). *The Regional Reports* set out the learning points identified by each region. It is clear from these that the focus of projects changed as transnational participation in SAUL evolved, with greater emphasis on the social inclusiveness of urban landscapes and new ways of achieving it. This Report's chapters on regional spatial planning and planning through partnerships reflect the growing significance those issues attracted. A crucial step was the realisation that all of these are fundamentally regional learning processes.

Case study: As well as a Launch Conference in London and a Final Conference in Amsterdam, SAUL held four smaller Symposia in Dortmund, Saarbrücken, Luxembourg and Frankfurt. Each of these addressed aspects of the SAUL key issues with members of JPGs and the Steering Group, and invited experts. New approaches to regional governance for spatial planning with formal and informal stakeholders is an important national issue for Luxembourg, and the Symposium there developed the SAUL theme of planning through partnerships.

The final Symposium in Frankfurt took the learning region as its theme. We asked ourselves what we now understood by that concept, and how far we had progressed. The ultimate SAUL objective is to contribute to a sea change in the culture of spatial planning. That depends on individual learning being transferred into institutional learning and adopted by organisations. But it is more difficult to pin down just when and to what extent institutional learning takes place. Change takes time, but we observed clear indications of it among our partner regions. It was most evident in the shift towards using inclusive partnerships and open governance for planning new urban landscapes, at the levels of ministries in Luxembourg and Saarland, and in formal



agencies such as EmscherGenossenschaft and Planungsverband.

The *Transnational Review* project used external assessors to evaluate the impact of six regional projects. Pairs of international evaluators in most cases carried out this peer review process. They took the SAUL issues as the basis for considering the quality, innovation and sustainability of projects, their success in engaging local stakeholders and their contribution to spatial planning, regionally or at EU level. Individually, these reviews now inform the future development of each regional project. Collectively, they present a very positive picture of strong and well-managed projects. These have used the SAUL opportunities to tackle and illuminate the themes. And they have made significant impacts on their regions.

All projects had scored highly on quality, judged in terms of the processes adopted, quality of physical investments and effects on places and organisations. Similarly, three levels of innovation were identified. The *Regional Reports* illustrate examples of innovative professional practice (direct involvement of citizens and new governance structures), innovation in the specific organisation itself (working in partnerships, finding new landscape solutions), and innovation in an international context (new trust models for park management).



Case study: The Youth Ambassadors project developed from Groundwork's long-standing involvement, through community engagement activities, with a group of teenagers who live in the area around Burgess Park. Through SAUL, a joint project with teenagers from Noorderpark in Amsterdam emerged. The project seeks to compare how young people are engaged in decision-making in relation to their neighbourhoods, estates and open spaces. The young people are at the heart of the project's design and development, which incorporates video-making and music events in order to attract and maintain commitment to the project.

The concluding workshop drew out overall impressions of how closely their various project experiences reflected the key messages in this Report. The value of regional spatial planning based on shared visions for urban landscapes, with their impact on regional sustainability, had featured strongly. A common feature of the projects was the way that these processes had helped to change people's minds about their regions by opening

areas to new uses. Helping people to perceive the urban landscape differently is a key measure of change.

Of even greater emphasis were the new partnership approaches to planning and governance. The previous chapter has explored the various potential models of stakeholder partnerships, ranging from the formal and narrow to the broad and inclusive, and their advantages. If we recognise citizens as stakeholders with shared ownership of the planning process, then their participation can enrich stakeholder partnerships. At this stage these new approaches can be seen as a fragile flower that needs careful nurturing. Mainstreaming the learning process should now be a key objective in each case.

Managing a transnational partnership

The TransPlanLab concept also needed a range of other tools. Budget restrictions limited the number and duration of JPG and other transnational meetings, so the website *saulproject.net* was designed as an interactive discussion forum as well as an information tool. It provides a location for discussion papers and

policy debates, a resource open to all. At another level, although visible only to the partners themselves, it has been designed as an on-line project management tool. It has enabled us to manage the complex budgets for all regions continuously, creating instant reports and claims. This is now recognised as a transnational model of good practice.

We also needed to find a method by which regional projects could be described in detail and managed as integral parts of the overall SAUL programme. The transnational input of JPG members also had to be captured, and they needed to be able to track progressive project development at a distance. We created the SAUL project Feasibility and Pre-appraisal system. This common framework for project planning and monitoring is accessible on the website.

With such a large and complex programme of work, SAUL needed effective communication strategies. Initially we tried to centralise communications in a single programme. We quickly realised that partners and their institutions must use their own different communications systems to manage information flow. They developed their own regional strategies. With the confidence of a strong partnership it was possible to communicate regionally but co-ordinate messages transnationally, centralising only management of essential information. The publication of an attractive quarterly newsletter, disseminated electronically and in print, proved to be an effective tool.

The Steering Group itself was the creative focus for policy debate. It has consisted of experienced professional officers, committed to the obligations of a transnational partnership. As well as fulfilling the operational and financial requirements of their regional projects, their key role has been to lead the policy discussions. They have hosted the four Symposia and the two Conferences, and led the debates on spatial planning.

SAUL has also demonstrated the value of a strong Lead Partner team. Their role has been to provide overall leadership by co-ordinating the policy development of a complex project, with accountability to the Interreg Secretariat for financial and technical transnational management. The Lead Partner was the author of this

Final Report. It has also been part of our collective learning, and marks a milestone in our policy debate. We hope to continue those discussions in future programmes.

Transnational partnerships – a force for change

For transnational partnerships to be capable of managing large and complex investment programmes, they must be built with partners who share a common understanding of the big issues, and who are determined to find answers together. They have to be organised and managed efficiently. And they must be prepared to work within the constraints of EU systems.

Given those conditions, SAUL has demonstrated the potential power of transnational partnerships in Europe. They can achieve large objectives, with high quality results. And what they deliver is much greater than merely the sum of their separate parts. We have shown that they really can be a force for change.

Recommendations

- **Politicians** should use networks to build the capacity to sustain a 'learning region' culture, strengthening regional partnership structures in times of change to capitalise on spatial planning opportunities offered by new urban landscapes.
- **Practitioners** should seize opportunities to promote transnational learning and exchange, using shared experience to guide change within and between institutions concerned with urban development.



CHAPTER SIX

CHANGING EUROPE – LIVEABLE CITY REGIONS

Message for Europe

Competitive city regions are ones that can attract and retain viable businesses and their employees by offering a good quality of life. New urban landscapes are an essential element in building Europe's future economic structures and social well-being.

The role of city regions in the new Lisbon Strategy

“Urban areas are at the heart of a successful cohesion policy. Mobilising the potential of our towns and cities is key to faster growth, more quality jobs, social inclusion and better environment.”²

City regions are the economic powerhouses of the European Union. They play a crucial part in Europe’s competitive position within the global economy. To maintain their position in competition to the rising economies of the Indian sub-continent, South East Asia, China and South America, metropolitan regions must plan and manage all their economic assets effectively. The challenges from those competitors on innovation, infrastructure investment, production output and low labour costs, will be formidable. In that marketplace, it is vital that Europe’s city regions capitalise on two key assets, which represent a global strength – their citizens, and their quality of life.

The re-launch of the Lisbon Strategy in July 2005 emphasised the principal tasks of delivering stronger, lasting growth and more and better jobs. To remain competitive, city regions need to generate new kinds of businesses. They must attract and retain the people whose skills and knowledge are essential to generate future wealth creation. The key to a region’s future prosperity is its ability to offer an attractive quality of life for all its citizens, and the role of spatial planning is to create the climate in which economic prosperity can grow.

In its Communication to the Council and European Parliament in January 2006, the EC stated *“Cities are where many environmental problems are concentrated, but they are also the economic drivers, the places where business is done and investments are made. Four out five European citizens live in urban areas, and their quality of life is directly influenced by the state of the urban environment”*. As we have seen, the SAUL partners offer an instructive range of both expanding and shrinking regions where these challenges and opportunities are being tested.

Case study: In the area of the Emscher River, regional partners reached a shared understanding that water management can be a strong driving force for environmental, social and economic development. EmscherGenossenschaft was invited to become more widely involved in sustainable storm water and disconnection projects. New projects were developed as part of SAUL, particularly with housing developers. When house-building companies renovate properties, they now share with EmscherGenossenschaft the task of re-designing the public green spaces around them. This facilitates the construction of attractive landscape features that also have the function of disconnecting storm water drainage from the public sewers. The result is to increase both the economic and ecological value of those developments, while making the environment more sustainable.

The role of new urban landscapes in regional competitiveness

“... ‘Make a virtue of necessity and become inventive’ might characterise the situation of the Saarforst institution. The world market for timber broke down and ours is too expensive, so we were forced to find new economic responses.... wilderness in combination with nature and a sensitive education programme becomes a recipe for success. Forest wardens are also entertainers on the subject of wood – they work with artists, restaurateurs, pupils and citizens...Sectoral work won’t have any future – integrated team work will.”

We have shown how new kinds of regional public spaces can be developed from inaccessible urban land, greenbelt corridors, agricultural land in transition and brownfield land. They can enhance the living environment city regions must offer to their residents, through regional and sub-regional planning approaches. Future transnational projects should also test the economic impact of these landscape policies on the overall viability of city regions. Building on studies already undertaken by some regions, we should

² Commissioner Danuta Hubner, Cohesion Policy and Cities, the Bristol Informal Meeting of Ministers 2005

evaluate the contribution green spaces are likely to make to their future economic sustainability. Pilot projects could provide a platform to evaluate businesses' and employers' views of the location factor as an attraction for future employment. They should assess the potential for creation of new jobs within and around the urban landscape construction and service industries, with 'training for work' initiatives for the unemployed. Citizens' and municipalities' changing perceptions of their areas should also be measured.

Case study: A transnational project on training, enterprise, management and sustainability (TEMS) has brought together experts from each SAUL region concerned with employment training programmes for unemployed people. Through a specific TEMS Joint Planning Group, they have shared experiences on different approaches and solutions to the challenges of helping citizens into work, including intermediate labour markets. Each region has used their investment projects as a test bed for engaging unemployed people in landscape construction and maintenance, with structured training programmes.

The role of new urban landscapes in liveable city regions

*"However, there are increasing concerns about the state of Europe's urban environment. The environmental challenges facing cities have significant consequences for human health, the quality of life of urban citizens and the economic performance of the cities themselves."*³

New urban landscapes have important roles to play in urban social life. This economic issue is therefore a social one requiring spatial solutions. Alongside physical changes, we have also seen that globalisation of trade and international mobility of workers has brought rapid social change. This speed of change is posing obvious threats to social cohesion, often creating tensions and dissent. Social and economic inequalities can lead to conflict. The consequences of lack of social cohesion have recently become painfully evident in many member states. Whatever circumstances create it, the results of social exclusion are inevitably economic. All our partner regions share a sense of urgency in the need to find answers.

For some citizens, globalisation offers opportunities to be exploited. Employment, disposable income, access to health and education services brings freedom of

Saarland - TEMS project at work on the Wilderness Camp



choice. Those with resources can work in one place, live in another, and drive to shops and leisure facilities. For others, lack of resources, mobility or age factors, confine them to one location. Their immediate environments – the space around their high rise estate, the local park where they can walk with a baby buggy, a patch of unused land where their children can play or they can grow vegetables – are crucial to their health and well-being. But for all, convenient and safe access to open space is always an essential ingredient. New urban landscapes have significant roles to play in meeting the needs of our new and diverse societies.

Case study: In an area of east London that suffers one of the highest deprivation rates in the UK, SAUL has enabled the Groundwork Trust and its partners to develop the Leamouth and Bow Creek Community Access project, engaging local people in the development of open spaces. The area is part of the massive regeneration programme for the Lower Lea Valley, the main site for the 2012 London Olympics. Originally formed by the loss of traditional manufacturing industries, in past decades it has seen the arrival of new immigrant communities, now living alongside employees of the new financial district of nearby Canary Wharf. The SAUL project seeks to tackle breakdowns in social cohesion by involving local people in community building events, focusing on engaging young people. A video made by them is shown at public events; and a photography competition, wildlife and art activities, and a schools visiting programme, form part.

The role of new urban landscapes in social cohesion

*"I AMsterdam is the motto of the city, because the citizens are the city."*⁴

The EU recognises that the Lisbon partnership "requires a long term communications strategy that not only keeps our citizen's informed, but engages them in the process". Citizens expect to exercise democratic influence on decisions that will affect their quality of life. This applies as much to land use as to political and economic

choices. We have already demonstrated that an inclusive approach to planning through partnerships can achieve remarkable results. Working together builds a sense of commitment and responsibility, with local ownership of the shared endeavour and pride in the outcomes.

SAUL's experience of planning through partnerships should be developed in future projects to test their potential for promoting active citizenship. We believe they can be a potent incubator for social cohesion. They can build understanding and tolerance between cultures, generations and social groups, by using new urban landscapes as the common platform to which all societies can relate. These initiatives must include a strong focus on young people. They will have crucial roles in shaping a spatial vision for the future environment they will inherit.

Tomorrow's Europe - the changing culture of spatial planning

*"Ministers agreed that, despite the diversity of geography, socio-economic performance and demography, all EU Member States share a similar set of challenges to building more attractive places – or 'sustainable communities' – where people want to live and work, both now and in the future."*⁵

SAUL's declared objective has been to contribute to evolutionary development of spatial planning culture. Coinciding with shifts in the practice of land use planning among all our member states, our project has provided a valuable platform for debate and a testbed for practical demonstration at a critical time. Our conclusions reinforce the principles of the European Spatial Development Perspective. They provide evidence for the proposition that spatial planning must reflect environmental quality and social trends in order to facilitate economic viability in a global economy.

These SAUL issues are relevant to all city regions. From the outset we wanted to share our TransPlanLab experiences more widely within Europe. The communication tools and the expert contributors to Symposia debates have all helped to broadcast the key issues across a wider sector. We also recognised the value of reaching out beyond North West Europe. We have begun to build partnerships with city regions in

⁴ Job Cohen, Mayor of Amsterdam

⁵ Sustainable Communities in Europe, conclusions of Bristol Informal Ministerial Meeting, December 2005

member states from the east of Europe, initially with Budapest, as a basis for working together transnationally in the future. Whatever administrative boundaries are adopted for EU transnational funding programmes after Interreg III, we believe they should not impede, but should positively encourage co-operation between the major city regions of Europe, east and west.

We also believe that the principles of spatial planning at the European level should continue to underpin the direction of EU transnational funding programmes. It is important to understand that the new imperatives of economic competitiveness and social cohesion present very real challenges to all involved in the spatial planning systems, whether as strategic planners or politicians. Our work has shown they require different ways of working, with new skills, leading us towards a change of planning culture.

Developing this understanding and sharing it within an enlarged Europe, create continuing opportunities for us all. We hope they will be part of our future work together.

Recommendations

- **Politicians** should recognise and assert the high value of public spaces as a crucial development resource for city regions, and a major asset in building a region's economic success through enhanced quality of life.
- **Practitioners** should incorporate into spatial planning strategies the full potential of new urban landscapes, including forestry and agriculture, inner city and peri-urban spaces, in order to promote their new potential for encouraging social cohesion.
- **The European Commission** should ensure that future transnational funding programmes encourage co-operation between major city regions of Europe, east and west; and that the principles of spatial planning at the European level continue to underpin their direction.

Training, Employment, Maintenance and Sustainability (TEMS) project in action - the Groundwork West London Green Team



Glossary

Action project: Definition of an Interreg IIIB project, which generally does not involve capital expenditure, as distinct from an Investment project.

Brownfield land: Land that has previously been used by industry, commerce or housing and is suitable to re-use for similar or different purposes.

City regions: Enlarged territories beyond single administrative boundaries from which core urban areas draw people for work, provide them with services, and drive economic growth.

Community: People who may be affiliated through shared interests, situation or geographical proximity.

Community/citizen engagement: A two way process between institutions and people involving the sharing of information and ideas, where people are able to influence decisions and take part in the implementation of those decisions.

European Spatial Development Perspective (ESDP): Indicative strategy drawn up and adopted by Member States in co-operation with the European Commission, promoting balanced and sustainable development of the European Union through spatial planning, incorporating the principles of sustainable development.

Green belt: A defined area of open land, usually separating urban from rural areas, where development is heavily restricted retaining it in a natural state or for agricultural use, in order to preserve its character and provide open space.

Investment project: Definition of an Interreg IIIB project, which generally involves capital expenditure, as distinct from an Action project.

Lisbon Strategy/Agenda/Process: Action and development plan for the EU, intended to deal with low productivity and the stagnation of economic growth through the formulation of various policy initiatives to be taken on by all EU Member States. Re-launched in 2005 with a new emphasis on competitiveness and employment measures.

Liveable/liveability: A concept covering all the things that improve the daily quality of life of communities and the areas where people live and work.

New Urban Landscapes: A term to describe patterns of land use that are the result of economic restructuring and changing social patterns in city regions, which generally no longer conform to traditional concepts of either city parks or countryside. Their environments are characterised by brownfield land and peri-urban and suburban sprawl with the growth of out of town shopping malls, new focal points around airports, major transport corridors, the growth of dormitory satellite settlements and surrounding areas of agriculture and forestry that longer sustain their former economies. They are often the focus for new and multicultural communities.

Partnership: A term that can be applied to different kinds of relationships, for example formal and informal, restricted or inclusive. SAUL uses it to mean partnerships that are inclusive and broadly based, bringing together statutory and non-statutory, formal and informal players, in which citizens can participate and play a meaningful part.

Peri-urban: Areas surrounding formal urban boundaries facing pressures of urbanisation and housing sprawl, often through rapid population growth and/or the changing patterns of commercial life, frequently resulting in environmental and sometimes social degradation.

Region/regional: A greater area than local boundary definitions, usually inclusive of several municipalities or parts of them. SAUL uses the term flexibly to include both whole regions by statutory definition, such as Greater London, and smaller areas without legal, institutional or structural status, but defined by characteristics, shared interests or common use.

Regional parks: Area of preserved open space representing a significant regional resource, likely to attract users from a wide distance, seeking environmental and recreational experiences not usually available elsewhere.

Spatial vision: Statement of the shared long term goals for the spatial structure of a region, which assists in the formulation and selection of spatial planning programmes and projects.

Sustainable community: A place where people want to live and work, now and in the future. They meet the diverse needs of existing and future residents, are sensitive to their environment, and contribute to a high quality of life. They are safe and inclusive, well planned, built and run, and offer equality of opportunity and good services for all.



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All the States and Regions together with their agencies participating in SAUL have been strongly committed to the work of the Partnership. At the time of producing this Report, it had not been possible for all of them to consider formally whether they wished to adopt all its recommendations as policy.

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