Building up Land Use Management Skills

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1 ABSTRACT

Structural changes in society, particularly those that have rapidly occurred in the New Member States (NMS) over the past two decades, resulted in pressures on urban land use management, which ordinary planning procedures were unable to understand or address. This led to planning systems not being able to react to new forms of development pressures arising from new demand patterns. Consequently, it had resulted in a large amount of underused and dilapidated urban land, while at the same time ever increasing Greenfield developments caused a deterioration of land use sustainability and a reduction of local competitiveness.

This paper will discuss approaches of various EU-financed projects focused on building up urban land use management skills in the Central Europe area, especially in the NMS. Five projects from two different EU programs will be reviewed, all with a focus on upgrading urban land use management skills. These approaches, the spectrum of their beneficiaries and their outputs would be examined. The projects LEPOB, BRIBAST and BROWNTRANS from the programme Leonardo da Vinci would be discussed in detail and their local impact would be assessed. From the programme Central Europe, the projects CobraMan and CircUse would be considered and their reach and potential benefits to participants and to local stakeholders would be described.

2 BACKGROUND TO THE URBANISED LAND USE SITUATION IN CENTRAL AND EASTERN EUROPE

The societal and system changes of 1990 installed democracy and market economy to the Central and Eastern Europe states, but they have also put these states through a steep learning curve, which have necessitated an adaptation of their governance formats, changes to their legal frameworks, amendmends to their production or security patterns and reshaping of many of their societal processes and relationships. Furthermore, to attain EU accession prior to 2004, these countries also had to absorb a large amount of EU directives into their already rapidly changing legal frameworks. For a number of issues covering the accession agenda, the candidate states have received ample Technical Assistance from their EU peers. But there was no EU Technical Assistance channelled in the direction of spatial planning and urban development skills, because these fall under national responsibility. And at that time, having their hands full with the accession process, these candidate states failed to address their national, regional and local urban development issues correctly. The changes in society and economy, combined with an absence of spatial planning and urban development skills able to cope with free market situation, have caused a vast amount of an underused Brownfield land to emerge in the candidate states by the beginning of the third millennium, while Greenfield developments have sprung in ever increasing numbers. Upon joining the EU, these NMS were placed in a position where they had to compete on an even footing with much more sophisticated urban management processes in the "old" EU member states.

The lack of development knowhow combined with subsidarity governance principles and unmonitored local planning powers have rapidly worsened land use sustainability in many local communities. Often, local governments considered increases in urbanised land (in no way matched by population increases) for a symptom of local growth. This has caused a large loss of agricultural, natural and forest land to various development activities, produced unsustainable urbanised land use and increased costs of externalities. It has also lowered local, regional and national competitiveness. The societal loss of soil environmental services, which have occurred due to such urbanisation, was not and till today is still not, sufficiently valued or sufficiently compensated. Back in 2003, the EU candidate states had access to EU ISPA funding. But the ISPA funding priorities had no urban dimension and therefore sustainable urban land use – such as Brownfield redevelopment is - could not attract any of the EU funding support. Local support to Brownfield reuse was also problematic. This was mainly due to gaps in land use management skills and to the fact that Brownfields as such were not a "recognised" planning issue or national programs priority.

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3 CZECH NGO INTERVENTION

Faced with these difficulties a Czech NGO, the IURS – Institute pro urdžitelný rozvoj sídel o.s. has addressed this lack of Czech land use management knowhow, initially with the aid of an US grant funding. At beginning of its activities, IURS has concentrated on support for Brownfield reuse, as it was the least controversial and at that time the most pressing urban development issue. The First Czech Brownfield national and regional stakeholders seminars back in 2001 and the ensuing analyses have revealed the main causes for failings in the Czech Brownfield land reuse. These were:

- The Brownfield issue was not "labelled";
- Nobody was responsible for the issue (nationally, regionally, locally);
- No data was available to gauge the size of the issue;
- Multi-disciplinarity and complexity of solutions was not understood;
- Knowledge how to achieve successful solutions was absent;
- Training was nonexistent, Brownfields literature in local language did not exist;
- National priorities to deal with the issue were absent;
- Local authorities freely deregulated Greenfield land for development on a vast scale.

Back in 2003, IURS undertook four important actions aiming to improve urbanised land use practices and promote Brownfield regeneration. Firstly, IURS lobbied at the Ministry of Regional Development to make Brownfields into a "visible" issue and have forced the institution to allocate departmental responsibility for it. Secondly, it lobbied the preparation of the Czech National Plan 2004-2006 and achieved that urban Brownfield priorities were introduced, making Czech Brownfields eligible for EU ERDF funding 2004-2007. Thirdly, IURS lobbied the government to channel research funding and a research programme with a focus on Brownfield regeneration was opened up by 2004. And finally, IURS identified an EU funding source, which would on transnational bases finance the development of teaching materials focused on Brownfield issue. Brownfields training or knowhow resources in local language were then absolutely missing not only in the Czech Republic, but also in the other NMS. IURS first three actions have made changes to Brownfield regeneration in the Czech Republic. The fourth action has changed Brownfield regeneration chances in another 6 EU member states. It has also placed IURS in a position of participation on several other international project and have lead to a substantial enhancement of IURS´s own urbanised land use management expertise.

4 LEPOB PROJECT AND ITS IMPACT

Preparing Brownfield training products requires three preconditions:

- Skills and experience in Brownfield regeneration;
- Best Brownfield practise and global/EU knowledge;
- Suitable funding source(s).

The funding source identified at that time, which could support preparation of Brownfield training products, was the programme Leonardo da Vinci. This programme was focused on continuing professional education. Brownfields training aimed at practising professionals was a perfectly fitting subject. Furthermore, this programme also demanded an international partnership, which proved to be an ideal solution for the needed international knowhow transfer. A partnership of 9 partners from 5 countries was formed and the project LEBOB – Life long education project on Brownfields [1] was applied for and awarded. European best Brownfield practise and Brownfield regeneration expertise was contributed to the LEPOB project by its British and the German Partners, who were also the initiators of the then emerging European Brownfield network CABERNET [2]. The other partners were the Czech, Silesia and Slovakia Chambers of charted engineers and expert and educational bodies from Poland Slovakia and Czech Republic.

[1] http://fast10.vsb.cz/lepob, (Leonardo da Vinci program)
[2] http://www.cabernet.org.uk (5th RF program)

The key goal of the LEPOB project was to create straight-forward education materials in local languages. Then, the main educational objective was to improve local urban development practices and strengthen local construction professionals understanding of underused urban land – Brownfields. This was achieved by making available and disseminating (throug local professional chambers) transnationally prepared educational and training materials, which were adapted into "country specific" versions and translated into local languages. Materials were produced with a focus, and at a level, which would be accessible to various professions of local construction practitioners. Additionally, the university partners have reused LEPOB outputs for preparation of their first regular Brownfield regeneration courses [3]. The second LEPOB objective was to introduce Brownfields training materials to the other EU NMS. Two "innovation knowhow transfers" were intended in the original LEPOB application - one was for the Balkans and the other was for the Baltic countries.

The LEPOB project alone has reached around 25 000 chartered engineers in Slovakia and in Czech Republic. They were provided with a CD containing the LEPOB Brownfield handbook, in their national language. The professional chambers partners have mailed the CD to all their members. In the Czech Republic, the Brownfield skills development directed at such a large membership of construction professionals proved to be very useful in focussing the ERDF 2017-2013 funding priorities, and especially effective in responses, which the construction professionals were able to perform, while supporting the applicants for these priorities.

This and the other previously mentioned activities have resulted in the Czech Republic becoming the Brownfield knowhow leader amidst the NMS and the ERDF funding availability has substantially raised interests in Brownfield regeneration. In 2006, the new Czech Construction Law has acknowledged the Brownfield issue in spatial planning terms, setting up grounds for Brownfield inventorying and urbanised land use monitoring.

But a real change in land use practices, which would fully address land use sustainability, takes time. Hence, despite substantial improvements in regeneration knowhow increase, in Brownfield redevelopments take-up and in improvements to Brownfield development practices, today in the Czech Republic the agricultural land loss index is higher than in any other EU country. It takes very well focused policies, a suitable legal framework, integrated approaches (vertically and horizontally) supported by stakeholder participation and an efficient land use management system to address the "real" urbanised land use sustainability. Not only the individual Brownfield sites needs to be reused but the governance of the urbanised land as such needs to be improved and sustainable urbanised land management has to be intoduced and practised on local, regional and national level. But this type of knowhow is emerging only a decade later.

5 BRIBAST PROJECT

Building on the LEPOB project's success, the BRIBASTS [4] project (Transfer of innovation - Brownfields awareness in Baltic States) was submitted in 2008 to the same funding source. The partners to BRIBAST were regional educational institutions from Latvia and Lithuania and the project LEPOB Czech and Slovak partners. The focus of the BRIBAST project was to adapt the LEPOB original training materials for local use in local educational institutions in Baltic states. The LEPOB Brownfield handbook was expanded and included extended chapters relevant to the Latvian and Lithuanian realities. The training course was shortened and made more suitable for teaching local undergraduates. The teaching was demonstrated to local trainers. At this time the ex-LEPOB project Czech and Slovak partners have acted as the Brownfield knowhow transfer experts. BRIBAST project was evaluated by the programme to be the best "Inovation transfer project" of the year.

6 BROWNTRANS PROJECT

To fulfil the last part of the project LEPOB goals, a new knowhow transfer project BROWNTRANS (Brownfield Regeneration Know-How Transfer – Lifelong Educational Project) was prepared in 2O1O, focusing on Brownfield knowledge transfer to Bulgaria and Romania. The overall outcome of this project is yet again to accelerate local sustainable urban development skills. This will be achieved by delivering know-

[3] Project LEPOB lead partner, the VŠB Ostrava, teaches regular brownfields courses from 2007
[4] http://fast10.vsb.cz/bribast (Leonardo da Vinci program)

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how and experience in Brownfield regeneration to practising professionals, representatives of municipalities and regions and to students who may once play an important role in local Brownfield regeneration. The specific aim of this project is to facilitate information and experience in Brownfield regeneration to the representatives of Bulgarian and Romanian municipalities and regions. The project will deliver training materials in local language and would also educate local trainers, in other that they are capable to teach aspects of a multi-disciplinary subject like the Brownfield regeneration. In the medium to long-term, the project outcomes would support Romanian and Bulgarian economic, environmental and social development in various activity sectors, and produce benefits for their whole society.

Materials generated by BROWNTRANS Could also serve for self-study of the interested public. The Brownfields handbook is going to be adjusted to contain legislative links in Bulgaria and Romania and would be available in these languages. The Brownfield Handbook and the Brownfield training course are to be published at the project website and shall remain there for several years, even after the project has ended. The training materials will be prepared in a format of e-learning course, which will be modelled on teaching materials from the project BRIBAST, but more emphasis would be placed on urbanised land use management. This is in order to accommodate the newest trends in supporting Brownfield regeneration.

The BRIBAST project will provide a multi-disciplinary background in Brownfield related knowledge, which would enable the Romanian and Bulgarian practising professionals to grasp the breadth of the Brownfield issue. It would also enable them to consider well-founded and integrated solutions. On a personal level, BROWNTRANS training brings to the participants an added value of the acquired knowhow, which would help them in their Brownfield regeneration jobs. On the national or regional scale, increases in Brownfield knowhow would help to address Brownfield regeneration in a more strategic manner and would lead to more sustainable urbanised land use management. Enhanced Brownfield knowhow (similar to the Czech example) is expected to increase the take-up and speed of Brownfield regeneration. That will be profitable for the Bulgarian and Romanian local municipalities, whose urbanised land use would become more sustainable. It would also be profitable for both societies, as it would contribute to more sustainable urban development.

7 COBRAMAN PROJECT

A few years later, in 2008, when the "Brownfields issue" became a more recognised label, the Central Europe programme's project CobraMan [5] has addressed the rising need of local authorities for a competent local Brownfield management (one of the key issues identified by the CABERNET network). This project has pooled experience of 9 partners from 5 countries, jointly working on compiling Brownfield manager courses, on training of Brownfield managers and on Brownfield inventorying techniques. It also created various land management tools, which the Brownfield managers could use. Some, but not all of this project's products are produced in local languages. Brownfield managers training was however available only in English. But the final Brownfields manager´s manual would be translated into local languages.

8 CIRCUSE PROJECT

Later in 2010, the project CircUse [6] has progressed the urbanised land use management know-how even further. CircUse has addressed the urbanised land use management as a cyclical process and advocated the principles of circular land use management. This circular land use concept was a know-how transfer of findings arising from the German research program REFINA. The CircUse project approach has introduced much broader urban land use categories into the urban land management process, which also included Greenfield sites. It promoted integrated approaches, based on wide stakeholder participation. Surveying of land use tools across the project partners countries have shown that the similarities and differences in the applied instruments were not the only factor of an efficient and sustainable land uses. Public awareness also played an important role, as well as optimisation of responsibility distribution and the ability to use available instruments in a creative way, while reflecting the specifics of respective social and natural environment. The main beneficiaries of the CircUse project are again the local authorities (but also various other local stakeholders), for whom the project prepares training products and urban use land management tools.

[5] http://www.cobraman-ce.eu/ , funding source program Central Europe
[6] www.circuse.eu, funding source program Central Europe

9 CONCLUSION

Transnational projects have positively contributed to Brownfield training and learning in the Czech Republic and together with a suitable local intervention and the ERDF funding sources availability were able to speed up Czech Brownfield reuse. There are 5 projects included in this paper, but during the last 10 years, many other Brownfield regeneration focused projects were financed by different EU programs sources and also from various members´ states funding . Many partner organisations have benefited from sharing expertises and learning.

Also, over the last decade, perception of the Brownfield issue as such has developed and shifted from initial soil contamination and soil remediation techniques to Brownfield remediation management (2003). In around 2005, there could be seen a shift from single Brownfield regeneration efforts to more comprehensive and approaches of sustainable Brownfield regeneration (2007). And from 2007, the initial approaches of a thematic Brownfield regeneration have moved more towards the urban and the spatial planning dimension, Brownfield land management and Brownfield manager training. In 2009, integrated Brownfield redevelopment was emphasized and in 2011 the holistic approach to Brownfield reuse was expanded even further, towards urbanised land recycling principles and towards sustainable urbanised land use management.

At all these stages, transnational and also national projects have produced various training and learning materials, focused on different beneficiaries: from specialist remediation engineers to Brownfield owners, Brownfield managers and finally to local and regional governance actors and their stakeholders. The initial materials were prepared mostly in English and some of them were not really suitable for use in the NMS. Since 2004, when these states started to participate more actively in Brownfield and urbanised land use orientated projects, training and learning materials also appeared in local languages. In some cases, the NMS partners were able to steer the training materials development to a standard, which was accessible to and usable by their national audiences.

The transnational knowhow transfer from the CABERNET network partners proved instrumental to the development of Central & Eastern Europe Brownfield projects in period from 2004-2008. Since then, various other initiatives have sprung up (for example the impact of the Central Europe or URBACT programs) which had altered the partnership focus more on Central European neighbouring countries. There are apparent benefits - these countries systems, history and mentality are relatively similar, but there are also disadvantages – the spatial determination of such programmes limits knowhow transfer from the top performing EU regions located between London and Milan to the NMS.

The large impact of the LEPOB project, especially in the Czech Republic, was caused mainly by a right mix of Czech partners and also by the fact that the dissemination partner had a very large membership. This membership was also well motivated to improve its Brownfield knowhow, by the work remediation opportunities arising from the ERDF funding priorities. Such a project impact was not as yet achieved again by any other projects, which are mentioned here. But there may be opportunities in the CircUse project knowhow, directly influencing the revision of Czech National Spatial Policy and there also appears to be a chance of formulating the regional approach to sustainable urbanised land use management.

10 REFERENCES

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