

# MP4 WP1 Transnational Learning Final Evaluation Report

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Draft Report

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September 2012

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## Contents

I – INTRODUCTION .....	2
II – THE TRANSNATIONAL LEARNING STRATEGY AND ITS EVOLUTION .....	4
II.1 The proposed Transnational Learning Strategy .....	4
II.1.1 The framework.....	4
II.1.2 The web-environment.....	4
II.1.3 The process .....	5
II.2. Changes in the project management context and adaptations to the TL strategy.....	6
III – METHODOLOGY FOR THE FINAL EVALUATION OF TRANSNATIONAL LEARNING.....	9
IV – FINDINGS .....	10
IV.1 Content.....	10
IV.1.1 Initial learning expectations.....	10
IV.1.2 Lessons Learned.....	11
IV.1.3 Further learning expectations.....	13
IV.2 Process.....	14
IV.2.1 Face-to-face .....	14
IV.2.2 Online process .....	19
IV.2.3 General Process .....	22
IV.3 Dissemination .....	24
IV.3.1 Internal dissemination .....	24
IV.3.2 External dissemination.....	26
IV.4 Interviewees’ final reflections on the learning process .....	28
V – CONCLUSIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS.....	29

# MP4 Project – Transnational Learning Final Evaluation Report

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## *Draft Report*

Heriot-Watt University - Harry Smith

## I – INTRODUCTION

An important aspect of Interreg projects is their “transnationality” – the exchange of knowledge between partners from different countries, which are exposed to each others’ practices, understandings and contexts, in an interactive process. As a result, practitioners and academics should learn from each other, being able to: understand how “practices” and “values” co-exist within a specific context, reflect upon the similarities and differences to their own realities, and extract aspects or lessons about what could be applicable or should be avoided in their own contexts. This is what we call “transnational learning” (TL).

Within the MP4 project, the Heriot-Watt University (HWU) team was responsible for developing a transnational learning strategy.

This report explains what was proposed – activities, tools, and timetable, what took place during the project, and more specifically reports on the final evaluation of the implementation of this strategy, via interviews. A mid-term monitoring exercise was carried out in 2011 in order to identify possible improvements to the transnational learning strategy in practice, which were written up in a report.<sup>1</sup> To gain a full picture of the evolution and assessment of transnational learning during the project it is recommended that this final evaluation report be read in conjunction with the mid-term monitoring report.

Section II sets out the Transnational Learning Strategy that was proposed, which was based on: a critical socio-constructivist pedagogical model; a sequence of learning from the individual to organisations and networks; and a combination of face-to-face and online tools to facilitate reflection and exchange. This section also describes the practical issues that affected the implementation of this strategy, and how it was adapted.

Section III describes the interviewing process that was used to compile this report. Though the individuals who were identified for interview for this final evaluation exercise are identified in this

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<sup>1</sup> Pereira, M. and Smith, H. (2011) *MP4 WP1 Transnational Learning Mid-Term Monitoring Report*. October 2011, SBE, Heriot-Watt University

section, which shows the spread of ‘voices’ used across all partners in the project, their views are kept anonymous in the way the findings and conclusions are written up.

Section IV provides an account of the findings from the interviews. The first issue covered is the interviewees’ initial learning expectations. This section then goes on to the actual lessons project participants learnt, which fall within the following key categories: place-keeping, project management and process, and evaluation of practice. Remaining and new learning expectations are then addressed. Findings on the learning process are then presented, covering specific face-to-face and online activities, as well as the general learning process. This section then focuses on the dissemination activities carried out by partners, both internally within their organisations and externally, and suggestions for further improvement of such dissemination. Section IV ends with some final reflections on the learning process and the project from interviewees.

Finally, Section V provides conclusions and recommendations. Considerable learning has taken place during the project within the categories presented in Section III. As in the mid-term monitoring, the practicalities of place-keeping are a key focus for the interviewees, as well as reflection on project management and its scope to facilitate learning opportunities. Face-to-face and active learning are confirmed as the preferred learning methods, with site visits and focused meetings (such as pilot project evaluation meetings) being highly valued. Use of the online learning facilities, particularly of the interactive learning labs, grew in the last year of the project, ostensibly due to the concerted action that was taken to promote and facilitate its use as well as because of its connection to the production of project outputs. Uptake of these facilities was, however, still uneven across the partnership, and the recommendation to make such facilities available from early on in projects so as to ensure partner engagement was reiterated. Dissemination continued, with externally oriented dissemination growing through specific activities such as the final conference and local/regional workshops. Evidence of the impact of such external dissemination was also growing, as shown in the spread of the concept of place-keeping in meeting agendas and discussions outside the MP4 partnership. Finally, interviewees valued the learning process they had been through, and recognised it as an integral part of MP4.

## II – THE TRANSNATIONAL LEARNING STRATEGY AND ITS EVOLUTION

### II.1 The proposed Transnational Learning Strategy

#### II.1.1 The framework

In the MP4 project proposal, the Heriot-Watt University team took on the responsibility for the organisation of the Transnational Learning process. Therefore, in the first project meeting in Sheffield (Nov 2008), the HWU team presented an initial idea for a Transnational Learning Strategy<sup>2</sup>, which proposed a pedagogical approach and general framework, with the following basic elements:

- a critical socio-constructivist pedagogical model<sup>3</sup>, with a learner-centred approach, promoting individual cognition but also collaborative reflection, and emphasising the importance of context (local, national & transnational) in the production of knowledge;
- a learning process that should start with the individual, being enhanced via the collaboration within her/his internal MP4 team and within the overall MP4 partner team, and disseminated towards the individuals' organisations and beyond: to other individuals, organisations and networks locally, nationally and transnationally;
- and using a combination of face-to-face and online tools for:
  - individual reflection: learning logs (paper based and/or online);
  - collaborative reflection in internal teams: meetings, own discussion groups (e.g. wiki area) – collaborative synthesis formulation, knowledge re-contextualisation ;
  - collaborative reflection within the organisational context: organisations' communication strategies – e.g. internal e-newsletters and meetings;
  - collaborative reflection within the overall MP4 team: face-to-face meetings, online environment – e.g. online discussion groups in Learning Labs, e-newsletters – activities to develop common understanding and generalised & de-contextualised knowledge + re-contextualisation;
  - exchange among institutions & extension of the discussion to other regional networks and regional stakeholders: conferences, project newsletters, participation in local, regional & international events (dissemination).

#### II.1.2 The web-environment

Having international partners who would have limited opportunities to meet face-to-face due to distance and partners' other commitments, it was obvious that the use of an online environment for communication and exchange of ideas, experiences and resources to support the Transnational Learning process was essential. Therefore, in January 2009, the HWU team prepared a proposal for the design and use of a web environment for the project<sup>4</sup>. This document explained the rationale for

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<sup>2</sup> Pereira, M. and Smith, H. (2008) "Transnational Learning". Presentation at the MP4 project partner meeting in Sheffield, 26-27 November 2008.

<sup>3</sup> Based on Pereira, M. (2001, 2000): Pereira, M. (2001) 'Pedagogical principles in web-based learning'. Proceedings of the Telematica 2001 Web-Based Education Conference, St. Petersburg, Russia, June 18<sup>th</sup> –21<sup>st</sup> 2001; and Pereira, M.A. (2000) 'ArchCAL: a conceptual basis for the application of information technology into learning and teaching technical subjects in architectural education'. PhD Thesis. University of Sheffield, Department of Architectural Studies.

<sup>4</sup> Pereira, M. and Smith, H. (2009) *Proposal for "Web-based interactions to support Transnational Learning"*. March 2009, SBE, Heriot-Watt University.

the use of the web environment and suggested forms of access, structure, forms of interaction, tools and processes, which would be assessed and refined by an initial user survey, aiming to identify the project partners' needs and expectations as well as their time availability and IT resources and skills. The proposed web environment would have as main basic features a **Project Web Hub** – the main project website, translated into the different languages of project partners, with external access, but also providing a hub connecting to different resources:

- to the **internal web environment** where the project team could exchange knowledge and resources would be available, using different tools (online library, discussion fora or learning labs, learning logs for individual reflection, administrative tools);
- to **wiki pages**, in different languages, which could be used as instruments to promote user participation in different aspects of the project, allowing local communities as well as local partners and networks to discuss local issues and how to deal with them; the use of the wiki would be facilitated by the individual partner organisations.

On the 12<sup>th</sup> January 2009 this proposal was sent to the project lead partner, who had provided positive feedback. A meeting that was organised in Sheffield to discuss it with both the project manager and the potential web developer had to go ahead without the MP4 project manager due to her unavailability. The prospective web developer could not commit at the time to implementing the proposal because of the contracting party not being present. Development was postponed until MP4 project management was normalised. The website was made available for user registration in December 2009 (Copenhagen partner meeting) and the online Learning Labs and Learning Logs were made available in June 2010 (Emmen partner meeting). The web environment was developed later on using an already existing platform, without a previous survey of user needs and expectations, but incorporating some suggested features such as the online library and learning labs, although these were not exactly developed as initially planned.

### II.1.3 The process

In February 2009, a detailed draft of the Transnational Learning Strategy<sup>5</sup> was prepared to be presented and discussed in the Gothenburg Partner Meeting (May 09). The strategy proposed to develop the transnational learning process via different **stages** which would take place during the project and would be defined by each partner meeting, with each stage starting immediately after a partner meeting (see Figure 1). **Themes** would be used as a basis for the transnational learning strategy and would be explored at the different **stages** of the project. Tasks, outcomes and a timeframe were suggested for each stage until the end of the project. As **face-to-face meetings** were considered a fundamental part of the learning process, this strategy proposed the existence of **Transnational Learning workshops** in every **partner meeting**, where an evaluation and wrap-up of the Learning Labs previous experience would take place as well as the discussion and preparation for the next TL phase, with agreement on the proposed theme.

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<sup>5</sup> Pereira, M. and Smith, H. (2009) *MP4 Transnational Learning Strategy. Draft Proposal*. February 2009, SBE, Heriot-Watt University.

## II.2. Changes in the project management context and adaptations to the TL strategy

However, in April 2009 the new overall project management made last minute changes in the structure of the partner meeting in Gothenburg, where the TL Strategy was not given the prominence and time necessary to ensure it was prioritised and supported from the early stages of the project. The workshop for the presentation and discussion of the Transnational Learning Strategy was reduced to a fourth of what had been planned and this, added to the general climate of instability in the project due to discontinuity in project management, led to partners not being able to fully understand the proposal due to the limited time to explain it; and to an initial negative reaction from some practitioners, who felt they would not have time to get involved in online activities. In response to the loss of the initial rapport and support from the project leaders and to delays in the effective involvement of the web developers, the HWU team resorted to developing a simplified Transnational Learning Strategy<sup>6</sup>, which had to be adapted according to the circumstances along the way.

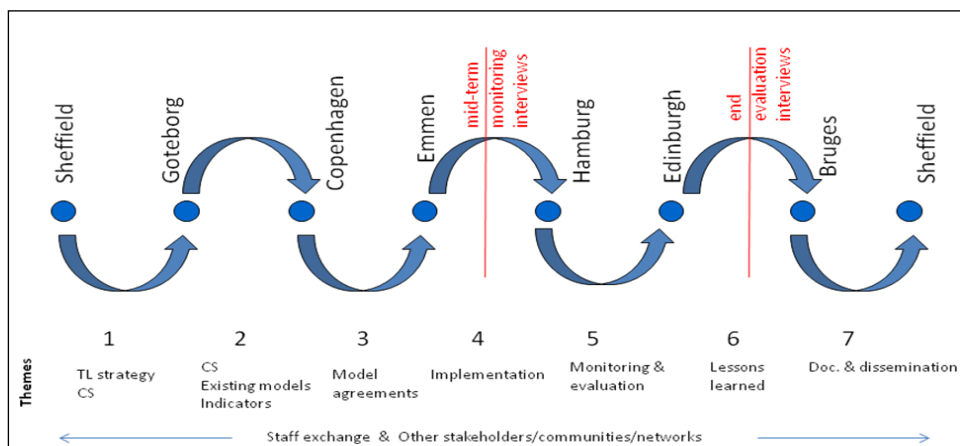


Figure 1: Phases of the originally proposed Transnational Learning Strategy (July 2009)

A further change in project management in mid-2010 led to renewed support for the TL strategy, and the HWU team further adapted the TL strategy to recover elements from the initial proposal insofar as was possible. In May 2011, during the Edinburgh partner meeting, a revision of these phases was proposed as shown in Figure 2 below:

<sup>6</sup> Pereira, M. and Smith, H. (2009) *MP4 Transnational Learning Strategy*. July 2009, SBE, Heriot-Watt University.

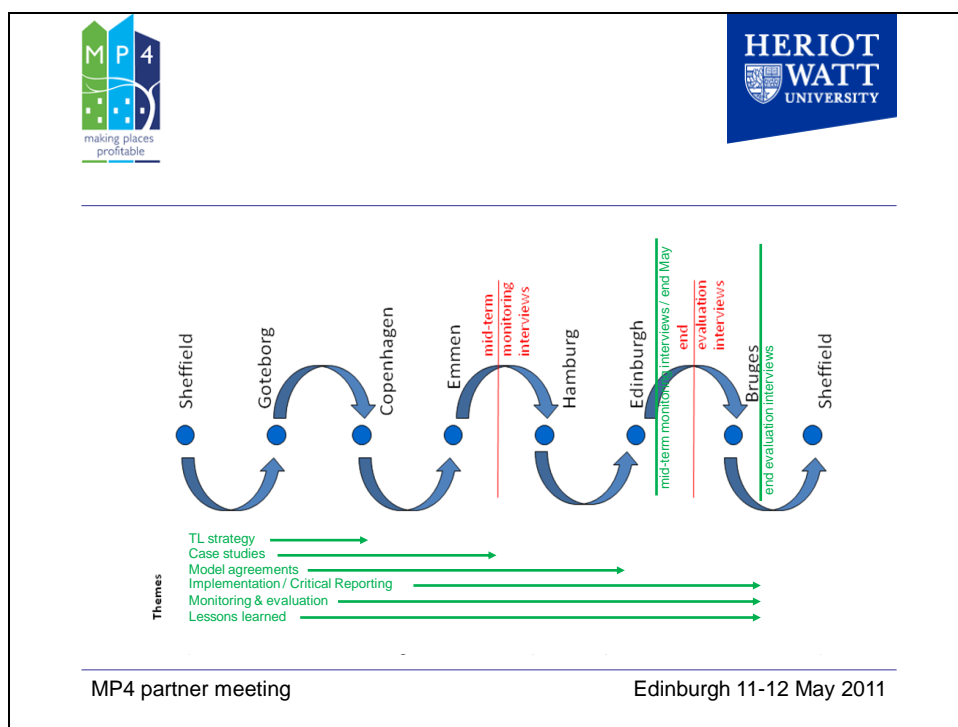


Figure 2: Revision of Transnational Learning Strategy phases (presented at the MP4 partner meeting in Edinburgh, May 2011).

Mid-term monitoring of the transnational learning – regarding the content, process and its dissemination – was undertaken through interviews with MP4 staff during May and June 2011. The objective was to have a picture of what has been working within the used approach, what has not been working and why, as well as what should be improved and how. This was written up in a mid-term monitoring report<sup>7</sup> which was circulated to partners and presented and discussed at the partner meeting in Bruges in November 2011.

Key recommendations in the mid-term monitoring report included: further exploration of synergies among pilot projects and use of these to provide good examples to illustrate place-keeping; continued use of face-to-face and active learning as preferred learning methods (including relevant site visits and related discussions and workshops, as well as by producing project-related documents); recognition of online interaction as needed in a transnational project and, therefore, of the usefulness of tools for collaboration such as the Learning Labs and other web resources, with specific suggestions for improvement of the web environment and its tools; more methodical expansion of this dissemination, not only externally but also through the development of clear internal dissemination strategies within each partner organisation.

At the time of the production of the mid-term monitoring report, for the remaining stages of the project a series of relevant face-to-face events was planned and held. These included Partner Meetings in Bruges (November 2011), Sheffield (May 2012 – linked to the Final Conference) and Hamburg (June 2012 – added to the originally planned meetings); a Stakeholder Workshop in Bruges

<sup>7</sup> Pereira, M. and Smith, H. (2011) *MP4 WP1 Transnational Learning Mid-Term Monitoring Report*. October 2011, SBE, Heriot-Watt University



(November 2011); the Final Conference in Sheffield (May 2012); and Evaluation Visits to the pilot projects (March – June 2012). These were expected to be rich opportunities for active learning, particularly in the case of the Evaluation Visits, as they were planned to involve site visits and pre- and post-discussions, collection of evidence via videos and photographs, beyond the written reports. A more intensive use of the web environment not only for discussion, preparation of and reflection on these events (Learning Labs), but also for uploading and exchanging visual material, was also being planned (Library and Learning Labs).

### III – METHODOLOGY FOR THE FINAL EVALUATION OF TRANSNATIONAL LEARNING

The final evaluation of the transnational learning – regarding the content, process and its dissemination – was undertaken through interviews with MP4 staff. The objective was to have a picture of what had worked within the used approach, what had not worked and why, as well as what recommendations could be made for management and fostering of transnational learning in future projects.

Individuals from each MP4 project partner team were chosen to take part according to their time working within the project. One objective was to interview those who had been in the project the longest time possible and, therefore, had experienced most of the project phases. However, during the implementation of the project there had been changes in staffing in some partner organisations, and this was recognised through including interviewees who had started to work on the project more recently, and whose experience of engagement with the learning in the project also holds valuable lessons, particularly related to continuity in processes within the project. A list of 19 potential interviewees was prepared (see Table 1 below), of which 12 were interviewed.

**Table1 - Interviewees:** MP4 partners

Partner Organisation	Interviewee
Emmen	Wobbe Kantoen, Paul Blaauwgeers, Wietse Hermann
Gothenburg	Jakob Andreasson, Helen Svenstam
Hafen City University	Stefan Kreutz
HWU	Marilyn Higgins, Scott Fernie, Angela Hull
Lawaetz Foundation	Ulrich Schenck, Beatrice Barelmann
SYFP	Sara Parratt-Halbert
University of Copenhagen	Christian Lindholst, Cecil Konijnendijk
University of Sheffield	Mel Burton, Alice Mathers
VLM	Pieter Vercammen, Sabine Gheysen, Thomas Allemeersch

Semi-structured interviews were carried out by a member of the HWU team (Harry Smith) via telephone, email or face-to-face meetings, during September 2012. The interviews were structured around the following themes: content, process and dissemination (these are explained in the sub-sections below). Within each of these themes there were open questions, which attempted to collect individuals' opinions and perceptions of their learning regarding content and process, how this learning has been disseminated, and how all these could be improved (see interview guide in appendix A). The interview guide closely followed that used in the mid-term monitoring to provide continuity and comparability in the monitoring and evaluation of transnational learning. The interviews focused on the period from when the mid-term monitoring interviews were carried out (mid-2011) until the end of the project (September 2012), though some overall reflection on their entire period of involvement in the project was also provided by interviewees. In order to gain full understanding of the evolution of transnational learning in the project it is therefore recommended that this report be read in conjunction with the mid-term monitoring report.

## IV – FINDINGS

### IV.1 Content

By content we mean the object of learning or “what” is learned. According to the transnational learning strategy, the learning content should be commonly generated within the project, consisting of (a) more formal content produced by collaboration between academics and practitioner partners such as literature review, case studies, model agreements analyses, reports, evaluations, presentations; and (b) more informal content generated by discussions face-to-face and online in the learning labs, site visits, workshops, telephone conversations, etc. The formal content tends to generate “passive learning” to those who read it (e.g. reading a case study written by someone else), but the process of producing that content can generate “active learning” (e.g. while producing a “case study” the author visits places and carries out interviews with stakeholders; or producing a “critical report”). There is more interaction in the production of “informal content” and thus “**active learning**” takes place in the process.

We asked people what they expected to learn during the project,<sup>8</sup> what they felt they have actually learned and what they still expect to be able to learn within the project. Having this information we hope to be able to not only find out where the learning was successful or not, but also to help focus more during the remainder of the project on what most people want to learn about.

#### IV.1.1 Initial learning expectations

Most people expected to **learn from each others’ approaches** and different practices, being able to exchange ideas, seeing different perspectives and benchmarking against them so as to be able to evaluate and improve their own practices, and making contacts. This is true for practitioners and academics, with the latter wanting also to learn more about how things work on the ground and how to produce project outputs which are relevant to practitioners.

Learning about **place-keeping** was the second most cited expectation: what it is; how has it been implemented (methods, practical solutions and the evaluation of these); how can it be integrated into planning and design processes; “is there an integral method” where the collaboration between residents and professionals has an important role?

Partners also wanted to learn more about other **forms of collaboration and partnerships**. Some responses were more focused on issues of **governance** and **participation**; others more specifically on the **collaboration between residents and professionals**, with some stressing “**community participation**”, while others wanted to learn more on the different types of **stakeholders** in general, with one specific mention of **private stakeholders**. There was also some expectation to learn about

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<sup>8</sup> This information had already been collected during the mid-term monitoring. In this final evaluation exercise only those interviewees who had not participated in the mid-term monitoring were asked about their initial expectations. Their answers have been added to those from the mid-term monitoring and the combined results for this question are presented here.

how collaboration within a European Union project works, and to be informed by the project's **cross-disciplinary** nature.

#### IV.1.2 Lessons Learned

An open question about what had been learned was asked. The wide range of responses fell within the same categories that were identified in the mid-term monitoring report, except for stakeholders' participation. It is possible that the lack of focus on this latter topic in the final evaluation interviews may reflect that the realisation of the importance of stakeholders' participation has become fully embedded among project participants, becoming a norm. In addition, there was a shift in the relative importance of the themes in terms of the number of interviewees who referred to them, with place-keeping rising to the top as most frequently referred to. The responses are summarised under appropriate subheadings as follows:

##### IV.1.2.1 Place-Keeping

Interviewees reported having learnt a lot about place-keeping, with the detailed examination of pilot projects provided by the evaluation visits having substantially contributed to this. From seeing the **concept of place-keeping** as very complex and not easy to grasp – as evidenced in the mid-term monitoring report – there appeared to have been a shift to recognising that **delivering place-keeping in practice** is complex because of its nature. In this regard interviewees noted the importance of seeing **place-keeping as a process** rather than just a set of techniques (which are also important), and of recognising the long timescale required for this process as well as the relevance of the five themes that have guided MP4 (policy, governance, partnerships, finance and evaluation). The importance of place-keeping in urban development was recognised, with different types of open space requiring different approaches, as well as the need to continue to learn more about place-keeping.

*The project was definitely successful in cementing the importance of long-term management of places and how you need to put it in place from the start, in a way that makes me see it more strongly and also makes me see it in other things I'm involved in. (Academic)*

##### IV.1.2.2 Project management and process

As was the case in the mid-term monitoring, clear lessons have been learnt regarding project management. Changes in the project management and process were taking place at the time of the mid-term monitoring and continued to take place during the final year of the project, reflecting the changing demands of the project cycle as well as its evolution. The final evaluation interviews provided views on what had been learnt during this period, but also looked back at the overall process. When referring to **project management** the interviewees did not only focus on formal management, but also on the **collective responsibility** for such management and on how participating individuals and partner organisations in the project team **contributed** to this.

Lessons learned about **project management** were:

- **building trust** among partners is essential but takes time, and such trust needs to be maintained in the face of changes in project staffing within the partner organisations – this requires not assuming prior knowledge when new staff join, as well as being clear and

transparent about prior work;

- **project partners engaged well** and rose to their responsibilities as team members even when their tasks were challenging;
- **people's engagement** in project tasks is not constant throughout the project however, perhaps reflecting responsibility for, and completion of, specific work packages and tasks;
- **production of tangible outputs** may act as a **motivation** to engage project partners;
- it is important to ensure **full engagement of pilot project officers** with the transnational part of Interreg projects as early as possible;
- having a **business plan** for the project lifetime with clear timetable and single proforma to track all pilot project performance may aid partner engagement by offering clarity on expectations and opportunity to plan ahead;
- **good project leadership** is essential to the success of the project, including the academic component – stronger leadership in the academic part may have provided more clarity and a more systematic approach to dealing with place-keeping, as well as more continuing commitment by all academics involved;
- **academic-practitioner pairings** have been useful and have worked well, and have benefitted by empirical work carried out by the academics;
- **sensitivity among partners** towards other partners' needs and cultural differences, and in working around difficulties, has been valuable;
- attention to **language and cultural assumptions** is important – this includes the difficulty of translating concepts that may have been developed in one EU language but not another, as well as the contextual and implicit meanings given to words by project participants depending on their place of origin, which may not be evident to other participants, thus requiring self-awareness and simplification in the use of language to ensure communication is clear;
- **combining different streams of funding** (EU and national or regional/local) is a challenging task on which successful initiation and completion of pilot projects depends;
- the **usefulness of Interreg project indicators** for the evaluation of pilot projects and of the actual individual Interreg-funded transnational projects is **questionable** given their focus on publicity levels.

#### IV.1.2.3 Evaluation of practice

As in the mid-term monitoring exercise, again interviewees reported that a lot was learned from looking at the way others do things, which encourages self-reflection on one's own **practice**, evaluating it from a different perspective, and learning new concepts. Examples of this include the following:

- different **ways of gathering information** and **working with different stakeholders** when preparing a plan (including masterplans);
- different ways of dealing with **maintenance**;
- **policies on managing finance**, ranging from annual budgets that are available only within annual cycles and not site-specific, through budgets that can be added to the following year's if not fully spent, to ring-fencing of site income for maintenance of that specific site;
- **types of community groups** involved in open space place-making and place-keeping, such as the 'Friends of...' groups in the UK, which do not exist in the same form in the other

countries participating in MP4, and whose experience was a source of learning for other partners;

- different municipal **planning regulations and competencies** in the countries of the participating partners.

#### IV.1.3 Further learning expectations

When asked what they would have liked to have learned more about, interviewees' responses focused mainly on issues of place-keeping practice and project management process. In relation to **place-keeping practice**, interviewees felt they would like to have learned more about the following:

- the potential to design for lower cost place-keeping at the place-making stage;
- how barriers are overcome in practice;
- in-depth understanding of what happened across all pilot projects – from the practitioners' perspective there was a wish to know more about how the pilot projects worked in practice (expressed mostly by those who had not had the opportunity to visit all pilots due to their late involvement in MP4), and from the academics' perspective, there was a wish to have understood the detail of other pilot projects to similar (if not identical) levels as that achieved for the pilots implemented by their paired practitioner;
- linked to the previous point, more practical learning through interaction with other practitioners including through site visits;
- more scientific discussion of place-keeping (expressed by two of the academic interviewees);
- private sector cooperation and partnerships, including housing companies and examples such as Burgerpark in Bremen;
- differences between policies, rules and regulations affecting the operation of cities and public bodies in the UK and on the Continent.

*It was pity that we didn't get more into place-keeping. We started to get into this more towards the end. We focused more on place-making at the beginning. Place-keeping is more the tricky point. If we had started with more of a focus on place-keeping it would have been a greater output for all of us. (Practitioner)*

In relation to **project management**, and more specifically in the context of EU-funded projects, interviewees would like to have learned more about:

- how to facilitate **ongoing dialogue** in between face-to-face meetings – perhaps based on a particular issue;
- how to facilitate easier communication among people from different backgrounds (geographic and practitioner/academic);
- how to do **research with many partners**;
- how to deal with key concepts (e.g. place-keeping) from a more research-based and questioning point of view that is not bound by the preconceptions and themes established at the project bid stage.

## IV.2 Process

In this section we look at the learning process, how it took place, where and when, the usefulness of the different methods and tools used, and how these could be improved in future projects.

### IV.2.1 Face-to-face

Face-to-face learning opportunities are those where partners meet physically in the same space, on occasions such as partner meetings (PMs), joint planning groups (JPGs) and other workshops, staff exchanges (SEs), and others such as internal meetings and conferences (in this evaluation the focus was on the Final Conference in Sheffield, held in May 2012).

Though the interview questions focused on specific types of face-to-face learning opportunities separately (see Appendix A), some interviewees offered general comments relevant to such events in general. These comments were strongly supportive of face-to-face meetings, identifying them as ‘incredibly useful’ or ‘the most useful’, because of the opportunity they give to spend time with other people involved in the project, and particularly in the pilot projects, and to have in-depth discussions which included a focus on practical issues.

*The face-to-face meetings, whatever form they take, have been incredibly useful, both in learning about place-making/keeping and in learning about each others' countries, cultures, ways of doing business, and managing the project processes. Much of what is shared cannot be easily done without meeting together. It's good to see people's body language and facial expressions, which helps to judge if people understand what is asked of them, or if they are happy. Some discussions we've had as far as workpackage tasks are concerned are too complicated to do via E-mail or Learning Labs, and it is impossible to have lengthy, involved discussions like those we have had in meetings, in any other way. (Practitioner)*

#### IV.2.1.1 Partner Meetings

Partner meetings (PMs) were highly valued all the interviewees. The mid-term monitoring report identified a series of suggestions to improve the partner meetings, which built on improvements that had already been made in 2010 with the creation of the Steering Group to deal with more administrative issues and the introduction of more focused discussions on pilot projects via the presentations of critical reports. Though only a few of these suggestions were implemented, interviewees noted and appreciated the improvement that partner meetings had undergone throughout the life of the project, with several positively valuing the separation of steering group business from partner meeting focus on the development of, and lessons from, the pilot projects. The key reasons given by interviewees for their positive evaluation of the partner meetings were:

- participants found a common language and built up a rapport – had the same goal and direction;
- they were a key opportunity for practitioners to exchange views and experiences and to communicate these to academics;

- there was time and opportunity in the latter partner meetings to focus on the pilot projects and have in-depth discussions around these, including on practical issues;
- they helped to keep up project partners' pace, motivation and energy;
- they provided reflections which contributed to the production of the policy documents.

Varying views were expressed on the nature of the discussions around pilot projects, with some considering that these had gone in depth, while others questioned the extent to which they allowed full understanding of what happened on the ground. One interviewee felt that Interreg projects face a structural problem in trying to further scientific knowledge through exchange between academics and practitioners, with barriers to understanding due to the different backgrounds, which are compounded by language barriers.

*What helped me learn anything, maybe because I am people-oriented, was that I liked meeting people and getting to know them – I built up a rapport. That is the foundation for any real learning to take place. The length of the project helped. I learn better if I am interacting with people. (Academic)*

#### **IV.2.1.2 Stakeholder workshops**

The interview guide contained a question about Joint Planning Groups, but given that none were held in the period since the mid-term monitoring exercise, this question was used to explore interviewees' perceptions of the stakeholder workshop held in Bruges in 2011.<sup>9</sup> The purpose of this workshop was to disseminate and showcase best practice in place-keeping, connecting to other EU programmes. The workshop was designed so that it would provide inputs from a wider range of stakeholders for the preparation of the five policy documents that are one of the outputs of MP4. Despite the partners' efforts to recruit participants in the workshop, and possibly for reasons related to the ongoing economic crisis and limitations in public resources for attendance to such events, only two external participants were involved, but the workshop went ahead with their participation and was still used by the project partners to help produce draft policy documents. The limited number of interviewees who had participated in the stakeholder workshop considered it had been useful, generating interesting ideas and identifying areas for further enquiry (such as the role of trusts). One interviewee suggested that this type of workshop offered a model for meetings including external participants which allowed more in-depth discussion than conferences – though for its functioning to be optimal a better balance between project participants and external stakeholders would be necessary.

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<sup>9</sup> Another workshop was held in Emmen in June 2011, focused on masterplanning, but only one interviewee referred to this – very positively – because it was held at the time of the mid-term monitoring.



#### **IV.2.1.3 Staff Exchanges**

As explained in the mid-term monitoring report, although “staff exchange” (SE) is mostly used to name the process whereby someone from one organisation goes to work at another organisation for a period of time, the term is used in a broader way in MP4 to designate events of shorter duration, when only certain partners get together to discuss a very specific issue. Since the mid-term evaluation this form of exchange had been made particular use of by the academics in the project in order to work jointly on the production of a book, which is expected to disseminate the MP4 lessons not only throughout the European Union but also globally. Staff exchange meetings to progress the book took place in January, March and June 2012, involving HWU, UoS, UoC and HCU. Most academic interviewees in this evaluation were involved in these. Interviewee perceptions of these meetings were unanimously positive, for the following key reasons:

- the specific focus of the meetings helped move the preparation of the book forward, including discussion of practical issues;
- they tested academics’ understanding of the different themes.

#### **IV.2.1.4 Final conference**

All respondents had taken part in the final project conference in Sheffield, which was shared with the VALUE project.<sup>10</sup> General feedback on this event was collected by SYFP at the time of the conference, both through a questionnaire and via a follow-up meeting with project partners. In this final evaluation, the interviews concentrated on interviewees’ evaluation of the conference as part of the learning strategy.

Interviewees’ evaluation of the Final Conference in Sheffield was generally positive, reasons for this including:

- it was a great ‘capstone’ to the project which helped bring together and showcase elements from MP4;
- it opened the project up to a wider audience;
- it widened the sights of project partners and helped realise connections to disciplines and issues such as planning, etc.;
- keynote speakers were good, with interesting ideas;
- workshops were good;
- site visits allowed learning about both successes and difficulties on site.

There were also some critical views, including the following:

- the conference was not really useful as a way to learn about place-making and place-keeping for project partners, though this may be expected given its external focus;
- sharing the conference and workshops with the VALUE project, which MP4 participants knew little about, was not helpful;

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<sup>10</sup> Another EU Interreg-funded project that was also led by SYFP, focusing on the value of place-making.

- there was little focus on the relation between place-making and place-keeping;
- it was the least useful of the face-to-face meetings, but still interesting;
- the university setting for the conference had a ‘closed-shop’ atmosphere (for one of the practitioner interviewees).

#### IV.2.1.5 Other face-to-face meetings

All respondents said they had taken part in another type of face-to-face project-related meeting, particularly in pilot project evaluation meetings and site visits, with some interviewees also reporting other local meetings.

##### IV.2.1.5.1 Pilot project evaluation meetings

Pilot project evaluation meetings and site visits were organised from March to June 2012. These were coordinated by VLM, with close support from their academic pair HWU as well as from particularly UoS and the other academic partners. Logistics on the ground were the responsibility of each practitioner partner whose pilot projects were being evaluated. The meetings and visits were designed so as to allow maximum opportunity for in-depth exploration of the process and product of the pilot project, including other local stakeholders in the process. The evaluation process for each pilot project was led by the relevant academic pair, with the participation of a visiting practitioner as well as of as many of the other academic partners as were available, thus ensuring both a wide range of questioning and comparability across the projects. Interviewees’ perception of these meetings and site visits was extremely positive, reported reasons for this being:

- the wide range of external participants who had not been directly involved in the pilot projects before raised new questions and provided a fresh outlook, making those responsible think very differently about their ‘normal’ practices;
- they allowed participants to get an overview of the whole project, as well as to discuss issues in depth on the site and gain understanding of the background and real pressures that various stakeholders had to work with;
- some interviewees found their participation in evaluation visits to other partners’ pilot projects inspiring.

The only negative comments were the low participation of other stakeholders in some of the meetings and site visits, and the potential for more in-depth evaluation.

In summary, practitioners valued both having external inputs from others on the pilot projects for which they were responsible and having an opportunity to understand other partners’ pilot projects in more depth than before; while academics valued the in-depth understanding of practical detail, which further contributed to reflection on the MP4 concepts and themes.

##### IV.2.1.5.2 Local meetings

Some partners reported other local meetings including between practitioner and academic pair, including the setting up of the Aarhus lab which was a spin-off from MP4, and wider local workshops

with other stakeholders to discuss the issues of place-keeping. Both types of meeting were valued by the interviewees reporting them, with practitioner-academic meetings being described as an opportunity to learn about content, and wider stakeholder workshops as raising huge interest and being focused on finding solutions for place-keeping.

#### **IV.2.1.6 Recommendations for face-to-face learning opportunities in future projects**

Interviewees were asked to reflect their learning experience via face-to-face opportunities in MP4 and to suggest how these could be improved in future projects. A wide range of suggestions was made, as follows:

- focus more on building a group from the beginning, including ice-breakers (though it was acknowledged that this was tried in MP4), to get people interacting and communicating, and getting to know each other and their reasons for involvement;
- more opportunities to meet, allowing time to develop a common understanding, the project partnership, and personal development;
- strong leadership and chairing from the beginning;
- fewer academic partners (suggested by a practitioner interviewee);
- more time and focus for face-to-face meetings, being clear about their specific purpose (it was acknowledged that this did happen in the latter part of MP4);
- as many site visits as possible, as this is the best way to exchange experiences on the ground;
- use other examples, beyond the pilot projects, and learn from both success and failure;
- planning groups, not only linked to pilot projects;
- long-term staff exchanges which would allow partners to follow and learn from how other partners' work, including their organisational structure and practices, methods, partnerships, etc;
- more issue- or theme-specific events (such as the workshop on masterplanning that took place in Emmen in June 2011), as opposed to focusing on individual pilot projects;
- more opportunities for other stakeholders to participate in meetings, as well as for more interaction between academics and practitioners;
- use the project more to bring other partners into the project (as in the Aarhus lab);
- limit overlaps between work packages;
- focus more on evaluation and highlight this more upfront in the project.

### **IV.2.2 Online process**

Online learning opportunities mostly take place on the MP4 web environment, be it via the Learning Labs (collaborative learning), Learning Logs (individual reflective learning) or through the exchange of information via other website tools, such as the Library; although it can also occur in a less structured way via exchange of emails. The mid-term monitoring exercise identified that the face-to-face meetings were found more useful than the online media as learning opportunities, but there was still a role for the latter. Use of the project's online facilities increased during the last year of the project, but in addition to answering the questions related to specific online facilities, some interviewees reiterated the view that they found face-to-face meetings to be the most useful, from reasons ranging from the opportunity for more direct interaction at meetings to general dislike of, and unfamiliarity with IT-based media. However, views were also expressed about the usefulness of online media to access documents and to allow ongoing debate on specific aspects of the project, though the latter seemed to be mainly among researchers.

#### **IV.2.2.1 Learning Logs**

Online levels of usage of the learning logs were low, with one third of interviewees reporting this, while using the paper version of the learning log at the end of partner meetings and other face-to-face events was much more widely reported. Reasons for non-usage of the online version mirrored those given in the mid-term monitoring, namely difficulty in finding the time to log in to the web environment to use it and not being 'grabbed' by the facility. However, those who did use the online version appeared to find them very useful, including to prepare for the final evaluation interview. Those who did not use them online but did complete paper learning logs in reflective sessions within partner meetings and other face-to-face meetings were all very positive about their usefulness.

Reasons why learning logs were considered useful were similar to those cited in the mid-term monitoring exercise:

- as instruments of self-reflection;
- to allow later reference;
- good starting point for reflective discussion (paper learning logs at end of meetings);
- reminders as a basis for discussion with internal team later on (paper learning logs at end of meetings).

#### IV.2.2.2 Learning Labs

Following the mid-term monitoring interviews, from June 2011 there was an initiative to directly involve practitioner partners in the learning labs by providing them respectively with a specific learning lab focused on issues arising in their pilot projects, and giving them the opportunity to ask questions to the other MP4 project partners via their learning lab and facilitate discussions. In addition, specific learning labs for each of the final outputs from the project were created, allowing ongoing discussion of each of these and upload and sharing of drafts. The final evaluation interviews found that 84% of the interviewees had used the learning labs, which is an improvement on the level of usage found by the mid-term monitoring (when around 22% said they used the learning labs a lot and 33% that they had never used them).

The majority of views on the learning labs were positive, with these responses highly valuing the labs. Reasons for this were reported as:

- they facilitate communication;
- really useful discussions when they do get going, which can then be tracked;
- can act as a repository of ideas or reference;
- a good means to obtain feedback on ideas and draft documents;
- have helped produce outputs such as the policy documents;
- a means of online engagement with the project that could be used regularly.

There were also some critical views and suggestions on the learning labs:

- scope for higher participation and level of response to questions;
- participation seems to be affected by perception of responsibilities by the project partners, with participation appearing to tail off towards the end of the project;
- they take time and commitment;
- perhaps fewer labs and shorter questions would elicit more participation;
- could have been designed better;
- not fond of online forums, and don't think an real online living community was achieved in MP4.

*Yes, very useful, but felt lonely as a practitioner. (Practitioner)*

#### IV.2.2.3 Online library

About half of the interviewees said that they had used the online library, which is a drop in comparison with the mid-term monitoring, where most interviewees had used it, though not very much. A couple of interviewees reported finding the online library useful, because of the information it contained and because it constituted a good store of material for a multinational and multiorganisational project of this nature. The majority of the interviewees, however, were critical of it because of the way it was organised internally, as well as in relation to other parts of the website, making it difficult to find things, and also because its content seemed to be incomplete. There was a suggestion that the website should have been organised more strategically, and that a review of it should have been carried out during the lifetime of the project. The criticism and suggestions for review – particularly those linking the library to the rest of the website – have been superseded to a

large extent by the complete reorganisation of the website at the end of the MP4 project, which make available the key outputs on its public interface.

#### **IV.2.2.4 Other website resources**

Usage of other parts of the website was also lower than that found by the mid-term monitoring exercise, with only just over half of the interviewees reporting their use. However, other forms of online resource had started to be used during the last 1.5 years of the project. One example is Dropbox, used by the academic partners to work jointly on the production of the book instead of the learning labs because of its higher capacity and clear system to store and access shared material. The MP4 website was used to access case study and pilot project information.

Again, as explained in the previous section, comments on the MP4 general website resources have been superseded to a large extent by the complete reorganisation of the website at the end of the MP4 project, which make available the key outputs on its public interface.

#### **IV.2.2.5 Recommendations for online learning opportunities in future projects**

Interviewees were asked to reflect their learning experience via online opportunities in MP4 and to suggest how these could be improved in future projects. A wide range of suggestions was made, as follows:

- design the website so that it supports continuity of discussion between face-to-face meetings, and revisit its functioning during the lifetime of the project to ensure that it is meeting partners' needs, with updating included in the contract with the website designers;
- make the website very accessible and legible;
- link downloadable documents to the webpages for particular places/partners they relate to, e.g. via an interactive map with partner logos;
- ensure that project partners take responsibility for engaging with the online facilities;
- have learning labs set up from the beginning as an integral part of the project, possibly even as the only form of communication among partners;
- fewer learning labs, with short questions and short answers;
- use reminders, including automated notification;
- a more interactive public-facing section, with higher orientation towards social media and use of external publications and sources of news, including links e.g. to YouTube.

Finally, one interviewee offered the view that it is very hard to establish an online learning community or resource. It was also noted that social media had developed during the lifetime of the project, making it outmoded very quickly.

### IV.2.3 General Process

Interviewees were asked about the general learning process during the project, where they felt they learned most and what recommendations they had regarding the learning process and learning opportunities in future projects.

As in the mid-term monitoring, respondents mostly felt they learned better during **face-to-face events** and more specifically when they were able to have **active learning**, as seen below. In descending order of frequency, they said they learned more in the following situations or events:

- on site visits;
- in partner meetings;
- meeting people;
- in MP4 meetings generally;
- at the local level with project stakeholders, as well as with MP4 partners;
- through building up rapport at meetings over time;
- in joint planning group meetings;
- in evaluation meetings and visits, linked to preparing evaluation reports;
- in general, situations related to project management;
- reading critical reports from the pilot projects;
- through academic papers; and
- in informal discussions over dinner, etc.

Advantages of the face-to-face interactions were cited as being the dialogue and immediacy, avoiding the potential for breaks in communication and misinterpretation that happen in online learning – via both formal and informal opportunities for discussion.

#### IV.2.3.1 Recommendations for general learning process and opportunities in future projects

When asked to make recommendations for the general learning process in future projects, the interviewees offered a range of recommendations:

- ensure that partners' motivations are understood from early on, to facilitate partners' 'buy-in' and commitment to the project;
- establish a clear link between research and practice with clear research goals, through joint setting of these by the various research partners;
- decide how to evaluate at the beginning of the project so as to allow before and after comparisons;<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> Suggestions such as this highlighted the difficulties in continuity created by changes in staffing of the project, as this shows the incomplete transmission of knowledge from former to new staff – in this instance it shows that later staff were unaware of the early work in the project that had taken place in relation to evaluation, whereby every practitioner partner had set objectives, targets, indicators and measures for their respective pilot projects to be used in monitoring and evaluation of these.

- longer face-to-face meetings with carefully structured agendas and programmes so as to allow in-depth discussion;
- focus on interactions between academics and practitioners, e.g. setting time aside in partner meetings for practitioner/academic pairs to work on specific tasks;
- capture recommendations and areas identified for development from partner meetings and make them available online via key points, rather long transcripts;
- more time for preparing meetings so as to avoid having to go over basic information at the beginning of each meeting;
- more active use of learning logs;
- regular site visits, as practical as possible;
- find ways to facilitate learning about the other organisations, including through site visits; and
- more field trips and staff exchanges.



### IV.3 Dissemination

The dissemination of what each individual and team learns during the project to their working organisation and to other organisations and networks, nationally and internationally, is an important aim of the MP4 project and of any Interreg project. Therefore, we asked interviewees if they felt this was happening; if so, how and what were the effects of this dissemination which could be perceived; as well as how they could help disseminate the learning further.

#### IV.3.1 Internal dissemination

All interviewees, with one exception, felt that what they had been learning is being spread into their own organisation, in one way or another. Practitioners appeared to have reached greater success in dissemination than at the time of the mid-term monitoring, mainly through increased outreach to external stakeholders, and aided by the completion of pilot projects and celebration of events such as the Final Conference and local/regional workshops. Academic partners continued to include lessons from the project in their teaching and/or supervision of student work, as well as spreading the lessons further within their organisations and beyond.

The main cited internal dissemination strategies are:

##### *Practitioners*

- spreading the lessons to colleagues within the organisation, including through involving them in MP4 meetings;
- building the concepts into regular meetings with stakeholder groups such as 'neighbourhood meetings';
- through the Final Conference in Sheffield, following which there has been greater involvement of other stakeholders and higher levels of management within the organisation in meetings focusing on how to take place-keeping forward; and
- through holding specific workshops with local/regional stakeholders on place-keeping.

##### *Academics*

- holding specific dissemination events which have contributed to the creation of a local/regional network;
- using project material as well as experience in teaching and tutorials;
- using innovative methods from the project such as rec-mapping and engaging with colleagues around this;
- through supervision of undergraduate and postgraduate students;
- presenting the project within the Department; and
- including items on the project in Department/University newsletters.

One practitioner felt that their organisation already had quite a good framework for place-keeping before MP4, and that although there were interesting lessons arising from MP4, these were not immediately convertible into practice in their organisation.

*Absolutely. I am really proud of how the team has managed to produce and disseminate. There has been active will, and they have been supportive within XXX to disseminate. Within the wider regional partnership there is real exchange and it is not the end of it – it has created a network. We held a specific dissemination event supported by XXX – with a knock-on to other strategic steering groups – into practice. (Academic)*

Cited examples of how effective the internal dissemination had been included:

#### *Practitioners*

- discussion within the organisation of the need for systematic evaluation of place-keeping;
- development of thinking within the organisation on how practices could be improved based on lessons on masterplanning elsewhere;
- growth in expertise;
- appetite for involvement in further projects of the same nature as MP4;
- huge impact of the pilot projects on the lives of local stakeholders; and
- widening of contacts and commencement of work with new colleagues elsewhere in the locality.

#### *Academics*

- increased appearance of the concept of place-keeping in meeting agendas and local government strategies;
- cross-sector event on place-keeping;
- new funding applications;
- new forms of planning and management of place-keeping among external stakeholders;
- increased dissemination towards students through teaching and dissertation supervision;
- higher level of interest in place-making and place-keeping of open space among students;
- development of a new MSc programme including place-keeping;
- better understanding of place-keeping and production guidelines on how to improve it.

One practitioner felt that, although MP4 produced interesting final recommendations set within a good framework – the 5 themes – this will not change the way people do things within the organisation. Another practitioner felt that time was still needed for lessons on place-making and place-keeping from the project to be taken on board by decision-makers, and that it was questionable whether politicians would act on these lessons given their other priorities.

*Yes, people talk about place-keeping – it is appearing on meeting agendas, council strategies. The fact that we held an event with a cross-section of groups of people looking at how we can deal with place-keeping strategically is evidence.*  
(Academic)

When asked how this internal dissemination could be further improved, the main answers were:

#### *Practitioners*

- using the opening events of the pilot projects;
- organising workshops;
- using the knowledge of MP4 that has already been spread within the organisation to feed into discussion every time a new projects gets started;
- as part of an overall evaluation of all the EU projects in which the organisation has been involved;
- spreading the information to other parts of the organisation elsewhere in the country; and
- as part of the physical move of the organisation to the local authority's landscape department, talking with staff there.

#### *Academics*

- as part of international scientific committees and the conferences they organise;
- through research networks;
- use the final outputs to publicise to colleagues via email;
- developing related projects;

- through academic writing, including publishing in the local language.

#### IV.3.2 External dissemination

The answers in the previous section suggest that many interviewees did not make a clear distinction between internal and external dissemination, with some overlaps between the two therefore emerging. Strategies used for external dissemination have therefore included many of the approaches mentioned above, as well as the following:

- holding regional/local workshops focused on delivery of open space strategies (e.g. Sheffield) and place-keeping (e.g. Hamburg);
- engagement with local partners and stakeholder groups such as trusts, ‘friends of’ groups, housing companies and ‘neighbourhood meetings’;
- through the Aarhus Lab, which helped communicate place-keeping ideas to a wider range of Danish planners and practitioners;
- through new EU Interreg-funded projects (SEEDS);
- by lobbying and influencing national advisory bodies such as Architecture + Design Scotland; and
- by creating a website dedicated to place-keeping.

Cited examples of how effective the external dissemination had been were:

*Practitioners* – these were quite guarded in their assessment of the impact of external dissemination, which included:

- it had brought together many stakeholders increasingly concerned by diminishing funding for place-keeping;
- time would be needed, but it was felt the ‘seeds had been sown’;
- there was potential for the development of new EU projects.

One practitioner had reservations about the impact the MP4 project might have at the level of local governments using information that had been pitched at quite high a level.

*Academics* – these were more positive in their assessment of the impact of external dissemination, including:

- new research funding applications;
- further work with existing partner organisations outside MP4;
- greater knowledge among local stakeholders (beyond MP4 project partners) of experiences elsewhere in Europe; and
- more awareness of the need for good place-keeping, and the right kind of governance, partnerships, agreements, etc.

*It was a good kick-off to start discussing place-keeping, because it will become a more important thing because of the lower funding available. The workshops were a kick-off to bring lots of people together to speak about the problem – a good door-opener. (Practitioner)*

When asked how the external dissemination could be further improved, again ways to do this were addressed by interviewees jointly with their answer on improvement of internal dissemination (see above). When pressed further on the issue of external dissemination the main answers were:

*Practitioners*

- through further projects focused on place-keeping;
- taking the information from MP4 to meetings with people who are external to the organisation, and talking about the subject at every opportunity;
- through communications related to the pilot projects, though it is sometimes hard to fit in information on both the pilot and MP4; and
- through publications and articles, including those focused on the pilot projects, as well as the forthcoming book, which is the best opportunity for influencing future planners through up-and-coming students.

*Academics*

- through presentations and teaching through;
- writing articles for professional journals;
- publishing in the national language;
- through new website (e.g. in Sheffield);
- focusing on similar projects; and
- through everything you do, if you have truly learnt.

## IV.4 Interviewees' final reflections on the learning process

Interviewees were given the opportunity to add any final comments on the learning process. Those who did comment offered varied and rich views, which are reproduced here verbatim to fully reflect their range and depth.

### *Practitioners' final comments*

*The only thing is that at the end it was really good to work together with partners. At the beginning it was confusing. It was really good to see outputs at the end: documents, book, basketball court. Good end.*

*A problem in MP4 was that the Belgian partners were working in a rural context while in Hamburg we were working in an urban context.*

*My experience with MP4 has been very rich, and I would like to maintain contact with as many of the partners as possible. You never know when you might have the opportunity to work together again, or have the chance to push forward the work we have done together. After such a good partnership it would be sad if it all had to stop on 30 September 2012.*

*I will always be grateful for the opportunities (learning and otherwise) MP4 gave me, and for the partners who accepted me heading the project halfway through. Never once did I get the feeling from people that here I was telling them what to do when they had been involved with MP4 for much longer than I. That sort of attitude is something I will take away with me, and apply to my working relationships myself should a similar situation arise.*

*At first I wasn't sure why learning was given so much project room, but it was entirely right that it was. People should always learn from their projects, and it is sad when they don't. It gave a good focus to the project, and hopefully our partners are more reflective as a result.*

*Just a big thanks to HWU for their energy.*

### *Academics' final comments*

*The MP4 website turning into a toolkit is important, it doesn't just disappear. Also through individual joint projects. The legacy needs considering in as many ways as possible - not just saying that it was an interesting exercise.*

*There have been lots of learning, personal and on various levels: professional, on how to manage relations. But it is hard to say what is transnational learning and what is simply from a project. I think a lot was learnt from what wasn't working well too – that had great value too.*

*I really enjoyed my involvement. When people are having fun they really learn more. I enjoyed the trips and it promoted my learning.*

*One issue is the way how these projects are set up and run. They are time-limited. There are different motivations for academics and practitioners. I'm not sure all practitioners are interested in learning and spreading this. There is an issue about how dissemination continues beyond MP4. Even the lead partner has moved on.*

*I appreciated the open and constructive atmosphere in the project.*

*I would like to thank HWU for all the efforts. In the beginning of the project I wasn't sure what transnational learning was about, but then realised that we were learning every day.*

## **V – CONCLUSIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS**

This report explained the proposed transnational learning strategy, the changes it underwent – initially due to project management issues and later as a response to results from the mid-term monitoring – and reported on the final evaluation of the implementation of this strategy. This evaluation process aimed to examine if, how and where learning took place, focusing mainly on the last year of the project but including some reflection on previous years – the findings in this report are therefore to be seen as complementary to the results presented in the mid-term monitoring report. In addition, this report aimed to offer suggestions for future transnational projects.

Considerable learning took place during the project in a variety of ways, those predominant in the latter stages of the project being encapsulated in the following themes:

1. **Place-keeping:** a lot has been learnt about place-keeping, with the detailed examination of pilot projects provided by the evaluation visits having substantially contributed to this. Understanding of the concept of place-keeping developed and improved during the project – as evidenced by comparing with the mid-term monitoring report. It is recognised that delivering place-keeping in practice is complex because of its nature. Place-keeping should be seen as a process rather than just a set of techniques (which are also important), which has a long timescale, and whose successful implementation entails responding to the five themes that have guided MP4 (policy, governance, partnerships, finance and evaluation). The importance of place-keeping in urban development was recognised, with different types of open space requiring different approaches, as well as the need to continue to learn more about place-keeping.
2. **Project management & development process:** the positive changes in project management that happened from the mid-point of the project and their beneficial impact on transnational learning – which had already been identified in the mid-term monitoring – were confirmed in this final evaluation. Lessons in this regard were wide ranging and included the importance of collective responsibility, leadership and individual engagement. Giving opportunities and time to build trust among partners, close working between practitioners and academics (as in practitioner/academic pairs), ensuring engagement of all individual participants and including project officers in this, close using tangible outputs as incentives for partner involvement were all identified as necessary to foster collective responsibility and engagement. Good project leadership was recognised as essential to the success of the project, and there were suggestions of instruments such as a business plan, clear timelines and clear and explicit expectations. And finally, awareness of cultural and language assumptions and barriers was identified as necessary to ensure that all individuals felt able and compelled to engage. In addition, lessons were learnt about the complexity of match-funded projects and the variable usefulness of indicators.

3. Evaluation of practice: as was already evidenced in the mid-term monitoring, participants learnt a lot from other partners' practice, which encouraged self-reflection on one's own practice. This covered a wide range of issues including ways of gathering information; ways of working with different stakeholders; maintenance arrangements; policies on financial management; types of community groups; and planning regulations and competencies.

This evaluation identified the scope for further learning around the practice of place-keeping through exploring the potential to design for lower cost place-keeping; examining how barriers to place-keeping are overcome in practice; gaining more in-depth understanding of processes in pilot projects and other examples; conducting further site visits; further scientific discussion of place-keeping; further exploration of private sector cooperation and partnerships; and fuller understanding of differences between policies, rules and regulations affecting the operation of cities and public bodies in different countries.

Regarding the learning process, face-to-face and active learning were again identified as the preferred means. Favourite learning methods were via relevant site visits, meeting people and having opportunities for discussion, and focused in-depth exercises such as the pilot project evaluation meetings and visits. Reflection on this formed the basis for a series of recommendations focused on maximising the effectiveness of face-to-face meetings through e.g. making these longer and with carefully structured agendas and programmes so as to allow time for in-depth discussion and other activities including joint practitioner/academic pair working, and simplifying the reporting on such meetings to make it more practical to use. In addition, the value of practical learning through staff exchanges of appropriate duration was highlighted.

Though views on the online learning facilities and process were more mixed, these had been used more intensively in the last year of the project – in particular the learning labs. The latter benefitted from more active promotion of practitioner facilitation and use of their own labs during a time-limited period focused on the issues in their own pilot projects, as well as the use of learning labs linked to the production of specific project outputs. Key recommendations that emerged in this regard were to establish the online means of communication from early on in the project so as to promote partner 'ownership' and engagement with them, and to take advantage of the development of social media to engage with the wider public, thus contributing to dissemination during the lifetime of the project.

Importantly, the findings of this report highlighted that effective use of both face-to-face and online learning opportunities rely on the creation of a strong team, which requires early understanding of each others' motivations among partners, partners' making a clear commitment to the project, establishing a clear link between research and practice with clear research goals, and deciding from early on in the project how its components (e.g. pilot projects) are going to be evaluated.

Dissemination of what has been learned during the project has continued to take place both internally in the partner organisations and also externally to other organisations, networks and key individuals. The largest boost over the last year of the project has been to external dissemination through a series of events ranging from the Final Conference in Sheffield to local/regional workshops organised by several partners. There is growing evidence of the spread and uptake of the concept of place-keeping in the agendas and discussions of bodies external to MP4, ranging from national design advisory bodies through local authorities and local stakeholders, to academic networks.

The overall evaluation of the transnational learning process in MP4 appears to be firmly positive, and is seen as having provided an opportunity to develop understanding and awareness of place-keeping, its importance, its practice and its challenges. Participants in MP4 have also benefitted from reflecting on how transnational learning is managed, and specific lessons and recommendations on how to improve this are provided in this report, as well as in the mid-term monitoring report. Building on the work of MP4, the interviewees – with only one exception – think there is further work to be done in understanding and disseminating place-keeping, highlighting its relevance in the current economic and public policy climate, and note both the potential and limitations in their capacity to further disseminate the lessons from the project beyond the lifetime of MP4. Finally, interviewees recognised that transnational learning was an important part of MP4, and this realisation had grown throughout the duration of the project.



**APPENDIX A - MP4 Transnational Learning final evaluation interview questions**

**Questions**

**1. Content<sup>12</sup>**

- 1.1. What were the key lessons learned?
- 1.2. What would you have liked to have learned more about?

**2. Process**

**2.1. Face-to-face meetings**

- 2.1.1. In which types of F2F meeting did you participate?
  - a) Partner meetings
  - b) Joint Planning Group
  - c) Staff exchange
  - d) Final conference
  - e) Others
- 2.1.2. Have you found these useful to learn about open space place-making & place-keeping? (yes/no, why?)
- 2.1.3. What would you improve in these if you were involved in a similar project in the future?

**2.2. Online learning resources**

- 2.2.1. What type of MP4 online learning resources have you used?
  - a) Learning Logs
  - b) Learning Labs
  - c) Online library
  - d) Other website resources
- 2.2.2. Have you found these useful to learn about open space place-making & place-keeping? (yes/no, why?)
- 2.2.3. What would you improve in these if you were involved in a similar project in the future?

**2.3. General process**

- 2.3.1. Where did you learn most?
- 2.3.2. What could be improved/added regarding the learning process and learning opportunities in future projects?

**3. Dissemination (organisation & elsewhere)**

- 3.1. Do you feel what you have been learning via MP4 is being spread to your team and/or organisation?
  - 3.1.1. If yes, how?
  - 3.1.2. Can you see any practical benefits or influence of the project?
  - 3.1.3. In which ways do you think you could help to spread the information further within your team and/or organisation?

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<sup>12</sup> Interviewees who had not participated in the mid-term monitoring were also asked 'What were your initial expectations?', which was a question that had been included in that exercise.

- 3.2. Do you feel what you have been learning via MP4 is being spread to elsewhere, beyond your organisation?
  - 3.2.1. If yes, how?
  - 3.2.2. Can you see any practical benefits or influence of the project?
  - 3.2.3. In which ways do you think you could help to spread the information further to people outside your organisation (external stakeholders)?

**4. Would you like to add any other comments regarding the learning process?**