Sustainable
URBAN FRINGES
S U R F

SWOT 1

Overall analysis SWOT SURF

Here is the first overall analysis of the SWOTs. It is done "quick and very dirty". All first SWOTs have been put together with an overview of first conclusions on the strengths, the weaknesses, the opportunities and the threats.
From each SWOT ideas have been collected to be used and to be elaborated later on in the SURF project.
One conclusion is that a better definition of strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats is needed. Maybe it is better to use pluses and minuses because the SWOT-terms have been interpreted differently, according to the answers of the partners.
Another conclusion is that there are many, maybe too many, ideas to be explored. For the Enschede conference it is necessary to propose a more focused approach. The most important conclusion is that all partners could learn a lot from each other and there might be already solutions for current problems.

Strengths

Economic competitiveness:
All partners see many economic strengths, varying from economic returns of attraction points to space for new companies. Attractive places, new recreational and tourist industry and accessibility will favour the economic strenght of the UF. It provides new jobs and new innovative SME's, but also a mix of farms, industries (manufacturing, regional food), retail and services.
Tradition and branding and the presence of water are interesting points. Space for water retention to avoid flooding is economically interesting

Governance and identifying stakeholders:
A strong point is that all partners do have lots of attention from different public and private stakeholders, so there is much commitment to the urban fringes. Though it will not be easy to have a good overview of all stakeholders, involved in the SURF project, it will give an opportunity to learn form each other how the organisation and the involvement on the urban fringes could be improved and could be made more simple.
A comparison of the governance in countries will make it easier to pick up new ideas. Some partners have specific small communities within the urban fringes and these communities could play an important role.

Spatial planning:
All partners have to cope with different forms of plans and strategies. So one might assume that urban fringes are planned well. However, in none of the countries there is a specific plan or strategy only on urban fringes. In the Netherlands the SURF partners will start to develop a regional vision, strategy and programme on urban fringes as a test.

Accessibility:
This is about access and linking. Access by linking between separate communities, between city centre and rural/natural area, between activities and companies within the UF and between districts.
It is also about paths and routes for cycling, walking and other kinds of recreation, but also networks for car roads and waterways networks.
Interesting are the stewardship agreements on private land, mentioned in the contribution of Norfolk and in my opinion other partners could also have these kind of arrangements, but they have not been mentioned.

Role and value of green space:

All partners share a great variety of mostly attractive landscapes. A strong point therefore. The green space has a big influence on the cities and is a basis for the spatial quality of cities. It is that quality that is attractive for citizens and for tourists.

Weaknesses

Economic competitiveness

The economical crisis has accentuated the economic weaknesses of all urban fringes. Most of the SURF partners have to deal with social deprived citizens living in or nearby the urban fringes and/or commuters, living in the fringe communities. For both groups the involvement with the development of urban fringes is marginal.
In the past farms were the main business in the urban fringes, but there has been a transformation in the farming industry: most merely small and medium farms will be closed down and most of the remaining farms do have to grow.
The urban fringes don't have an identity on their own, so there is a big chance for neglection of UF's in the local and regional policy.
Most urban fringes are not acessible very well, so combined with the lack of political attention and the economical crisis it gives a weak economic competitiveness.
Some partners stated that atraction points within the urban fringes are missing, e.g. hotels, services

Governance and identifying stakeholders:

Most common is the fragmented ownership/administartion, which lead to the question "Who's in charge?". Another aspect is also very evident, the lack of a collective identity. The different approaches (urban – rural) are also characteristic, especially because they struggle with eacht other and the battlefiled is within the urban fringes. One weakness which is quite obvious, but can't be forgotten is the misunderstanding that the authorities, and within the local authority, have the answer to all questions.

Spatial planning

Most partners have urban plans and rural plans but not a plan specifically for urban fringes. And when there is competition between urban plans and rural plans, the urban plans are in favour. Fragmentated plans are common.
For the UK partners the Green Belt restrictions are determined.

Accessibility (social and physical) and Services

For most of the partners the access to and within the urban fringes could be improved far more. Sometimes there are good facilities, but because of poor publicity there is a lack of public awareness. And sometimes only a good link between roads, routes etc will be sufficient enough.

Role and value of green space

Quite common is the lack of appreciation for green spaces. This is a problem and it could be caused by a lack of awareness.
Another weakness is the the fragmentation of the landscape and therefore the green space is not "massive"enough to play an important role within the spatial policy. Because of these two weaknesses the urban fringes tend to be neglected and, to proceed, this caused pollution, noise hindrance and cluttering (lack of spatial quality). Finally, the urban fringes have to suffer from urban pressure (housing, industries) and visitor pressure.

Opportunities

Economic competitiveness
Most partners see many opportunities for new SME's in the fields of innovation, hi-tech, tourism, sustainable energy, ecology and new farms. Some partners have other ideas, like culture, tree nursery, estates and waterways.
These opportunities could lead to more new jobs.

Governance and identifying stakeholders
Most partners underline the opportunity for more cooperation and networking between the different government administrations and stakeholders. The need to learn from others is evident.

Spatial planning
All partners state that the time is right for getting more focus on urban fringes within spatial planning and strategies. My conclusion is that it is worth doing a comparison study on the opportunities of planning.

Accessibility (social and physical) and services
Most partners see opportunities for smart ways of linking existing but separate infrastructure. But sometimes it could also be good to separate different traffic movements.
Social inclusion and raising environmental awareness are new fields of attention: the urban fringe as a social meeting place. And access to public space for all, also for the groups who tend to be forgotten, like the disabled but also new migrants.

Role and value of green space
From all partners I get the notion that there is a big opportunity to pay attention to almost forgotten or unknown valuable aspects like the chances for improving biodiversity, for climate change mitigation, for renewable energy and for water quality. But there are also opportunities to organize the functional and multifunctional use of the urban fringe in a better way.

Threats

Economic competitiveness
The economic threats are big: the state of the economy leads to more emphasis on economy and less attention to spatial and sustainable quality. This could cause the continuation of urban sprawl, which could be more threatful when you consider the demographic changes in different parts of Europe. It could even lead to an economic decline.
Other threats are ongoing.pollution and landscape erosion and the "luxury"image of urban fringes. But too much competition between different recreation zones within urban fringes could be also an effect.
One of the partners pointed on the over reliance on tourism. It could be an idea to do a study on the real economical effects of tourism.

Governance and identifying stakeholders
Main conclusion is that the cooperation of authorities and stakeholders on UF issues is very fragile and their attention to UF is not strong enough to withstand negative short term focused forces and competition between authorities.
Necessary is more evidence on the worth of urban fringes.

Spatial planning

One might conclude that the planning of the urban fringe is very complex. And because local and regional governments sometimes don't have the patience for complex decisionmaking they do often favour the want for housing, business areas and even the growth of agricultural business. This is a major threat to the quality of urban fringes. These governments tend to ignore even the effects of demographic changes.

Accessibility (socail and physical) and services

The financial crisis and the cutdown of public funds can cause a delay of investments. When there is a lack of public investments there will be also no improvement of infrastructure, and this could lead to a downward spiral with traffic congestion and social exclusion.

Role and value of green space

When you are not able to give an added value to the green space it might be overrun by the wants for new roads, housing, business areas, horsiculture and new agribusinesses. And there is a growing threat of more pollution, flytipping, vandalism, urban sprawl and also a high flood risk.

Ideas, interesting for SURF

The SWOT gave a lot of ideas to be used and to be explored in the SURF project. Here is a first attempt to collect these ideas, but it is far from complete.

- Ideas about the use of water (Aberdeen)
- New job potential in the urban fringes (Almelo)
- Economic interest of water retention to avoid flooding (Antwerpen)
- Ideas about a strong tourist industry (Bradford)
- Self contained leisure destination (Bradford)
- Strong business networks (Bradford)
- Healthy business start up rate (Bradford)
- Collective regional promotion (Bradford)
- Coordinate Tourist Trail (Bradford)
- Local purchasing scheme (Bradford)
- Strategic Agencies (Bradford)
- Space for new innovative SME's (Enschede, Hengelo)
- Large variety of SME and economic potentials (Hamburg)
- Regional think tank on suburban issues (Hamburg)
- Ideas on attractiveness of the natural environment for big city inhabitants (Härryda)
- Extraction of drinking water (Hengelo)
- Local/regional food production (Leeds, West Flanders)
- Tradition and image (West Flanders)
- Experiences on community planning (Aberdeen)
- Water Management Plan (Antwerpen)
- Green Stop Walks, combination of recreation and public transport (Antwerpen)
- Anti Tank Canal, combination of ecological and historical values (Antwerpen)
- Combinations of recreation, ecology and education (Antwerpen)
- The use of watercourses to bring water and nature deep into the urban area (Antwerpen)

- The use of social economy to take action regarding non-native invasive species (Antwerpen)
- Promotion of local food products (Antwerpen)
- Construction of parking on well-chosen places to prevent traffic problems due to recreants (Antwerpen)
- Founding a steering committee to develop a well carried vision for the area, based on a bottom-up process (Antwerpen)
- The realisation of quick-wins who will prevent local stakeholders and authorities pulling out during this long term process (Antwerpen)
- Restoration of "slow roads" (Antwerpen)
- Better communication on the advantages and values of the urban fringe, for example as a green and healthy environment for the urban population (Antwerpen)
- Examine missing links in the cycle paths and trying to solve them (Antwerpen)
- Better signs to guide people to the interesting places in the UF (Antwerpen)
- Community and identity pride (Bradford)
- Experiment to use regional regulation power by the local authority (Enschede)
- Experiences of the organisation of the Hamburg Metroplitan Region (Hamburg)
- Project of cooperation on Tourism (Härryda)
- Examples of private and social initiatives (Hengelo, Weusthag)
- The annual fee of the Borough Council for the maintenance of the Roydon Common site (Norfolk)
- The different cooperation platforms of West Flanders, how they function (West Flanders)
- High Level Stewardship (Norfolk)
- Community Infrastructure Levy (Norfolk)
- Regional vision and programme on urban fringes (Enschede, Hengelo, Almelo)
- Neighbourhood programme (Hengelo)
- The Countryside rights of Way Act (CroWAct, Leeds)
- Stewardship agreements on private land (Norfolk)
- The White Rose Forest partnership (Leeds)
- Westkans as advisory committee dealing with accessibility (West Flanders)
- Educational and recreational information points (West Flanders)
- Outreach ((Leeds City College)
- Possibilities for improvement of biodiversity and climate change mitigation (Aberdeen, Gent, Bradford, Norfolk)
- Regional parcs (Hamburg)
- Green Infrastructure strategy (Norfolk)
- Green Bridge (Norfolk)
- Green Gyms (Norfolk)
- Entrance money for recreation zones (Almelo)
- Place Urban Fringe Planning as part of the Master Planning process to reduce the perceived inequalities in spatial planning (Aberdeen)

Toolkit

The ideas mentioned above could also be the ingredients for the SURF toolkit. Here you have a first attempt for a toolkit. This attempt was made only by a quick desk study and it is useful as a start.

Economic competitiveness

New job potential in the urban fringes (Almelo)
Economic interest of water retention to avoid flooding (Antwerpen)
The use of social economy to take action regarding non-native invasive species (Antwerpen)
Ideas about a strong tourist industry (Bradford)
Self contained leisure destination (Bradford)
Strong business networks (Bradford)
Healthy business start up rate (Bradford)
Collective regional promotion (Bradford)
Coordinate Tourist Trail (Bradford)
Space for new innovative SME's (Enschede, Hengelo)
Large variety of SME and economic potentials (Hamburg)
Extraction of drinking water (Hengelo)
Local/regional food production (Leeds, West Flanders)
Tradition and image (West Flanders)
High Level Stewardship (Norfolk)
Green Gyms (Norfolk)

Governance
Founding of a steering committee to develop a well carried vision for the area, based on a bottom-up process (Antwerpen)
The realisation of quick-wins who will prevent local stakeholders and authorities pulling out during this long term process (Antwerpen)
Strategic Agencies (Bradford)
Regional think tank on suburban issues (Hamburg)
Experiences on community planning (Aberdeen)
Community and identity pride (Bradford)
Experiment to use regional regulation power by the local authority (Enschede)
Experiences of the organisation of the Hamburg Metroplitan Region (Hamburg)
Project of cooperation on Tourism (Härryda)
Examples of private and social initiatives (Hengelo, Weusthag)
Regional vision and programme on urban fringes (Enschede, Hengelo, Almelo)
Neighbourhood programme (Hengelo)
Stewardship agreements on private land (Norfolk)
The White Rose Forest partnership (Leeds)
Outreach ((Leeds City College)

Spatial planning
Local purchasing scheme (Bradford)
Regional parcs (Hamburg)
Place Urban Fringe Planning as part of the Master Planning process to reduce the perceived inequalities in spatial planning (Aberdeen)

Accessibility
Better signs to guide people to the interesting places in the UF (Antwerpen)
Construction of parking on well-chosen places to prevent traffic problems due to recreants (Antwerpen)
The Countryside rights of Way Act (CroWAct, Leeds)
Westkans as advisory committee dealing with accessibility (West Flanders)
Educational and recreational information points (West Flanders)
Green Infrastructure strategy (Norfolk)
Green Bridge (Norfolk)

Role and value of green space
Ideas about the use of water (Aberdeen)

Restoration of "slow roads" (Antwerpen)
Ideas on attractiveness of the natural environment for big city inhabitants (Härryda)
The annual fee of the Borough Council for the maintenance of the Roydon Common site (Norfolk)
Community Infrastructure Levy (Norfolk)
Possibilities for improvement of biodiversity and climate change mitigation (Aberdeen, Gent, Bradford, Norfolk)
Entrance money for recreation zones (Almelo)

SURF SWOT - Main Findings

Theme

1 Economic Competitiveness	2 Governance and identifying stakeholders	3 Spatial planning	4 Role and value of green spaces	5 Accessibility and services
This theme was a key part of the original bid: ".. the aim of the project is to review urban fringe policies and develop a common approach and a set of policy guidelines to influence regional, national and EU policies in .. exploring potential for economic growth in urban fringes and to contribute in a balanced way to city region competitiveness". Partners comments here focused on the potential economic contribution of the urban fringe with some specific ideas as to what could be developed. Challenges related to failure to 'sell' the fringe and erosion from urban encroachment and environmental degradation.	Some of the 'results' projected for the project in the bid document related specifically to governance. 'Hands on insights in and recommendations on the governance of UF as key component of city regions' was offered as was the 'drafting of a UF governance model for discussion' The main issues identifed by partners here concerned the fact that the interests of the urban fringe are frequently pulled between different factions. While a lot of attention was devoted to the urban fringe a, a lot of it was short-term and problems of identity were noted. Co-ordination and dedicated planning were the prelimainry recommendations	The SURF bid offered to "review urban fringe policies and develop a common approach and a set of policy guidelines to influence regional, national and EU policies in tackling issues of .. spatial planning .. in urban fringes". Again fragmentation and a lack of dedicated planning were observed with consideration of the urban fringe often an afterthought. The test case proposed for the Netherlands was proposed as a positive way of developing spatial planning thinking spefically for the urban fringe which could be replicated if successful.	In the bid, 'low green space value' was predicted to be a problem facing urban fringes. It would be interesting to see if this was validated by the responses to the first SWOT exercise. Indeed neglect and developmental pressure were shown to be conflicting issues impacting the green spaces of urban fringes. However considerable, yet often unexploited, potential was also recorded here. Clearly more thought and attention needs to be given to how green spaces can be enhanced.	Poor accessibility and social inequalities were mentioned as issues which needed to be addressed in the SURF bid document. In this theme small but positive developments were noted though it was acknowledged that there is still much scope for improvement. Although the potential exists to target particular user groups, such as the disadvantaged in urban areas, no existing examples of this were forthcoming.

Key points:

Strengths

Space. Attractive location.	Several public and private stakeholders with an interest in the UF.	Some evidence of local consultation. Prioritising of ecological emphasis in a few instances	A great variety of attractive green spaces within UF. Large influence on cities and potential for improving their spatial quality.	New access routes, such as cycle paths opened in some UFs. Various access/stewardship agreements with private owners.

Weaknesses

Lack of identity. Lack of key attraction points. Accessibility.	Fragmentation. Lack of dedicated governance. Lack of collective identity. Caught between urban	No specific, dedicated plans for UFs. Often plans fragmented. Urban plans tend to dominate.	Fragmentation and subject to either neglect and pollution or urban pressure. Lack of appreciation and awareness.	Much room for access improvement. Some poor publicity and awareness of what exists.

Opportunities

Sustaniable energy, ecology. Culture, tree nursuries, estates, waterways.	Communities within the UF. More coordination and networking.	Dutch test case of an UF regional vision, strategy and programme. Good time for UF focus.	Chance to improve biodiversity, climate change mitigation, water quality and renewable energy. Possibilities to organise functional/multi-functional	Possibilities for linking existing infrastructure. Social inclusion agenda, involvement of disadvantaged groups. The UF as a social

			use of UF in a better way.	meeting place.
Threats				
Urban sprawl. Pollution and erosion. Competition between UF zones.	Stakeholder and authorities attention to UF fragile and short-term.	Housing and business expansion often outweigh planning considerations. Local and regional government seems not to have the patience needed to deal with UF complexities.	Where value not made explicit, UF becomes subject of inappropriate demands. High flood risk.	Reduction in public expenditure. Poor maintenance of infrastructure.
Follow –up questions				
What is the composition of the UF? – retail, farm, industry percentage land use etc. What is the land composition of the UF? – water, land type etc. What branding already exists in the UF and what opportunities exist to develop this? How much tourism is there and is there any evidence of an over-reliance on the sector? How has the economic profile of the UF changed in recent years and what is the prognosis for the future?	What settlement patterns exist in the UF? Is there evidence of competition between authorities/other bodies which may adversely affect the UF? 'Who is in charge' of the UF? Who is primarily responsible for the UF? How are responsibilities divided? Where, apart from local authorities, can answers be found for UF problems? What value is placed on the UF?	What proportion of urban and rural plans are devoted to the UF? How and in what way does it feature? Is there an equivalent of the UK green belt restrictions elsewhere? How does planning differ across partner countries? What appear to be the priorities reflected in planning decisions for the UF?	Where value is given to green spaces in UF, how is it denoted and expressed? How could value be made more explicit? What aspects of green space are most valued and how could this be enhanced and awareness raised?	What forms of transport would be best suited to improving access to the UF? Which groups currently use the UF and which groups are excluded? Which areas could be linked and which routes developed?

Additional issues and examples raised by partners

| **Place marketing:** Collective regional promotion (Bradford); Tradition and image (West Flanders); Community and identity pride (Bradford).

Use of the UF: Ideas about the use of water (Aberdeen); New job potential in the urban fringes (Almelo); Strong business networks (Bradford); Healthy business start up rate (Bradford); Local purchasing scheme (Bradford); Space for new innovative SME's (Enschede, Hengelo); Large variety of SME and economic potentials (Hamburg); Extraction of drinking water (Hengelo); Possibilities of the uf in Kolding within the larger Triangle Area (Kolding); Local/regional food production (Leeds, West Flanders); Examples of private and social initiatives (Hengelo, Weusthag). | **Governance:** Strategic Agencies (Bradford); Regional think tank on suburban issues (Hamburg); Experiences on community planning (Aberdeen); New networks of stakeholders (Kolding); The White Rose Forest partnership (Leeds). | **Spatial planning – coordinating responses:** Experiment to use regional regulation power by the local authority (Enschede); Experiences of the organisation of the Hamburg Metroplitan Region (Hamburg); The different cooperation platforms of West Flanders, how they function (West Flanders); High Level Stewardship (Norfolk); Regional vision and programme on urban fringes (Enschede, Hengelo, Almelo); Wildland truse and annual fee of the Council to maintain the Roydon Common site (Norfolk); Place Urban Fringe Planning as part of the Master Planning process to reduce the perceived inequalities in spatial planning | **Green space:** Possibilities for improvement of biodiversity and climate change mitigation (Aberdeen, Gent, Bradford, Norfolk); Regional parcs (Hamburg); Green infrastructure strategy (Norfolk); Green Bridge (Norfolk); Green Gyms (Norfolk); Community Infrastructure Levy – potential to be used for green infrastructure (Norfolk); Educational and recreational information points (West Flanders); Outreach (Leeds City College); Entrance money for recreation zones (Almelo); Ideas on attractiveness of the natural environment for | **Green space and access:** Neighbourhood programme (Hengelo); The Countryside rights of Way Act (CroWAct, Leeds); Stewardship agreements on private land (Norfolk); Westkans as advisory committee dealing with accessibility (West Flanders). |

Leisure and tourism: Ideas about a strong tourist industry (Bradford); Self contained leisure destination (Bradford); Coordinate Tourist Trail (Bradford); Project of cooperation on Tourism (Härryda).		(Aberdeen).	big city inhabitants (Härryda).	
Theme-related issues for further discussion?			

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