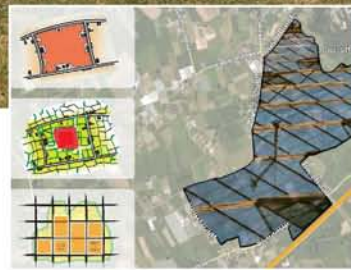
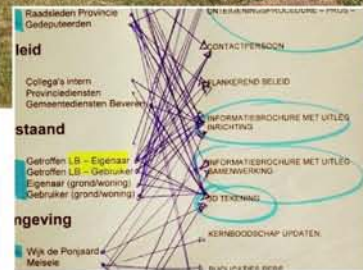




Sustainable
URBAN FRINGES
SURF

Province of East Flanders Reflection Report



1. Introduction

The Provincial Authorities have a ground-tied responsibility and within this the different departments have their responsibility in the spatial planning process. The rural and peri-urban area is covered by the Department of Agriculture and Rural Development which is actively involved in the Provincial Spatial Plan, landscape planning and integration, advice, co-operation and financing projects. From this responsibility the project aim is to look at integrated environmental building quality of the public space. One part is the involvement in the Leie – Schelde project area in the south-west fringe of Gent. And the second part is to stimulate the use of Provincial Quality Chamber for the other peri-urban areas.

The goal of the Leie-Schelde project was the development of an integrated policy view carried out by the project manager (Flemish Land Agency), the steering committee (8 Local Communities, Province of East Flanders, Flemish Land Agency) and the 4 theme groups (communication, slow roads, tourism and recreation, cultural heritage).

Proposed instruments were testing and implementing the transnational approaches on planning and public policy making. Also making use of: stakeholders workshops, theme group sessions, info point and the implementation of the Provincial Quality Chamber (meetings of experts involved in spatial planning, architecture and landscape integration to advise on building and landscape integration projects).

The SURF project enabled transnational learning in the use of instruments from the spatial planning and stakeholder engagement theme group. Partner methodology for 3D visualisation (Aberdeen, Norfolk) for stakeholder participation and communication was tested in the spatial structure planning process in the Beveren greenhouse area (peri-urban area of Antwerp).

2. The opportunity for change

Threats

Finding the balance in good spatial quality, places to work (agriculture and non agriculture) and to live.

Early involvement of the Provincial Quality Chamber in the design and planning process in case of constructions.

Financial crisis: co-finance and involvement of private stakeholders, investigators, banks etc

The result of the Provincial and Local elections in October 2012: will there be the "political will".

Opportunities

Some initiatives in intergovernmental co-operation in culture, tourism and recreation and slow roads. Quick-Win projects financed by the Flemish Government.

Creating a regional identity for Leie-Schelde area with logo.

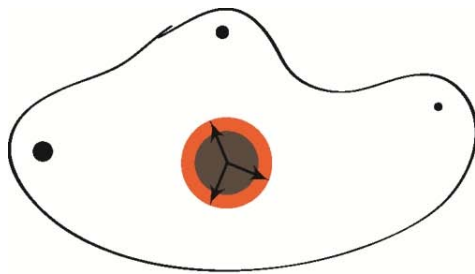
Making use of advice of the Provincial Quality Chamber: advising several stakeholder projects.

The result of the Provincial and Local elections in October 2012: Yes we can ;-)

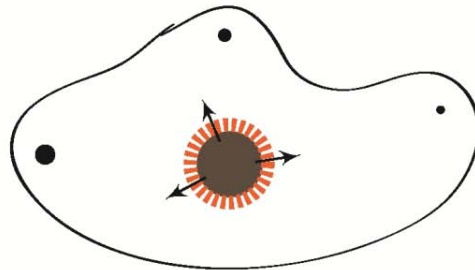
Weaknesses

The typical Belgium structural Planning Process: Urban-Rural?

The current spatial structure plan aims to be "open and urban"(slogan structure plan). That implies the formation of a compact city (60% of the new houses should be



Concept LT: current model of spatial structure Flanders :



Concept LT: Model with implementation of urban fringes

planned in the urban areas) and an open rural area. The delineation of the urban areas in spatial implementation plans is the spatial instrument that is used to achieve this strategy. In a way, it is the continuous spatial model of the medieval, concentrically grown, city.

Strengths

Cooperation between different administrations (policy) and the Provincial Development Agency Coordination of the greenhouse project by the Provincial Department of Agriculture and Rural Development.

The Quality Chamber enables the exchange of ideas between project initiators, citizens and experts.

Making use of the Quality Chamber is obligatory for projects co-financed by the Provincial and Flemish and European Governments. By moving away from regulation and mandatory actions in the planning regulation process, it stimulates creativity.

Methods and instruments from the transnational learning process in the team group spatial planning were adapted and translated in the step stone publication of the Provincial Quality Chamber.

3. Unlocking the potential of the urban fringe

Participation as process

Due to the installation of the 3 level government agreement in the Leie - Schelde area (Flemish Land Agency and Provincial government and 8 municipalities) the SWOT analysis was produced. The 4 theme groups developed stakeholder organised workshops, info sessions and the SWOT analysis. The integrated masterplan is not there yet but the cultural-heritage, tourist and recreational plans were produced. Several quick win projects were started up, budgeted by the Flemish Government. An additional opportunity has appeared for the implementation of the "masterplan slow-roads" through the Interreg IVB project BALANCE. At present the project is focussed on the BALANCE project.

Provincial Quality Chamber as a governmental instrument

Public space in rural areas becomes more attractive through the reconstruction of streets and squares, the re-tuning of (historical) public buildings, the development of recreational hiking and biking paths and thus encourages exchange between different social groups. Divergent expectations as road safety, environment friendliness, economic viability etc should also be coordinated. It is also essential that sufficient attention is granted to the amenity of public space and the landscape. The Provincial Quality Chamber (PQC) boosts peri-urban and rural projects (private and public initiatives-investments) in the pursuit of such good quality. The guidance from members of the PQC, with various skills and expertise, is seen as an important added value and an inspiring illustration for other partners.

The working process, the function profile and specific communication of the PQC was further developed within the project and the methodology and results were presented to the project partners during the Harryda Conference.

The PQC is an instrument, not an aim and the quality advice is the result of the process, with different stages and stepping stones in it.

The PQC fits in 3 of the 4 theme groups in the SURF-project. A governmental instrument, that through advice, strives towards good spatial quality in the planning process. All this with an eye for sustainability and respect for the open space.

The strengths of the PQC is the multifunctionality and flexibility in the composition and the knowledge of the experts.



Source Province of East Flanders

Provincial Quality Chamber planning process in the step stone publication:

The process is important for the result. Spatial quality is not just the graphic result. It is during the planning process that the sustainability and spatial qualities appear and are discussed with the stakeholders. The experience of the PQC is that concrete pictures produced in the developing stage the more efficient and effective the process is. In the planning process several stages and stepping stones exists.

Stage I - is the larger context with the description of the area, the responsibilities and the SWOT.

Stage II - brings the conditions and the stakeholder analysis.

Stage III - is the physical, mental and social translation and the implementation of the several policy aims into the design.

Stage IV - (excluded from the publication) is even important: the physical realisation, the continuation and the maintenance of the infrastructure.

Several stakeholder projects were advised by the PQC: in the case "de Poort Gavere", the advice for multifunctionality was seen in local pedestrian security and a place for cultural heritage activities. The other goal was creating a tourist infopoint and gate for urban visitors to the Vlaamse Ardennen (southern region of the Province).



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In the northeast a former priest house in Munte (Merelbeke) was advised as a local meeting point and multifunctional place but also tourist gate towards the region.



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Another advised case, Machelen (Zulte), was about integrating water into the centre and creating/ integrating the art of the "Flemish school" into the streets.



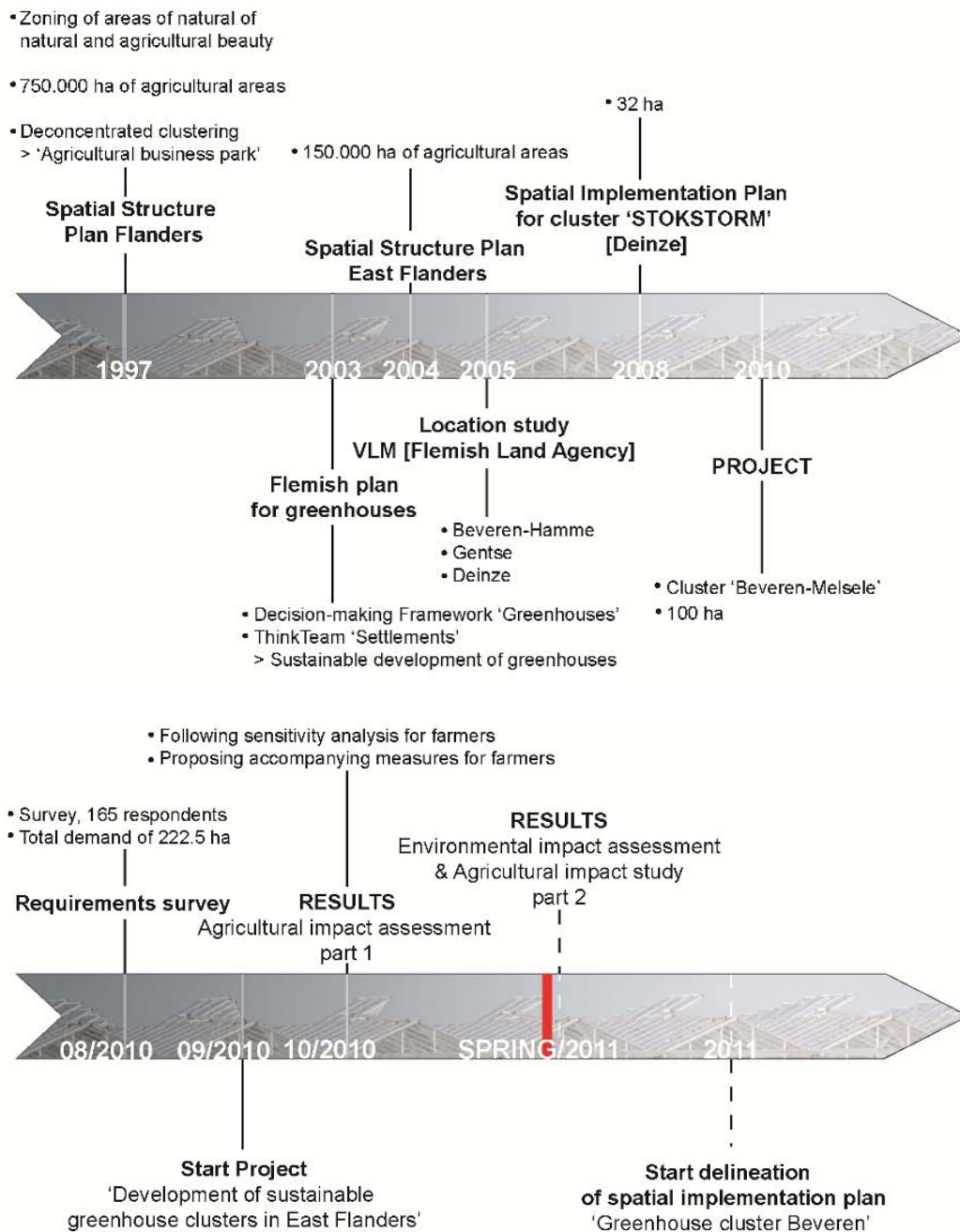
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In Heusden (Destelbergen), the build of a small sustainable and multifunctional place was advised. It will be used as a demo in sustainable building, nature education, natural play garden and other small sporting activities such as petanque, jogging etc



© Atelier Bernaert

Transnational learning 3D visualisation in greenhouse area Beveren for stakeholder participation and communication:



Source Province of East Flanders

In the municipality of Beveren, district of Melsele, the agricultural area up to the industrial site Schaerbeek, was selected as the most suitable location for an 'up-local significance' horticulture area. For this area, the Province of East Flanders has made a Provincial Spatial Implementation Plan (PRUP). In a first phase, the Flemish Land Agency (VLM) made a thorough agricultural impact study in order to highlight the possible effects of the greenhouse project in respect of the existing agriculture. It also examined how those effects can be limited as much as possible. In parallel, an environmental impact assessment was drafted, this study presented the effects on people and the environment and proposed a few measures to limit, as far as

possible, the impact on the surrounding area. An additional landscape study was already drafted into a concept. But in a later stage, when the development plan of the cluster receives its final filling, the study will examine how the greenhouse project can be better integrated into the landscape. To this end, the Province of East Flanders, along with the East Flanders Provincial Development Agency (POM), has the ERDF-project 'sustainable greenhouse clusters' in East Flanders.

The achievement of a major greenhouse area has a significant impact on living and working in the concerned region. Therefore there was a lot of attention to involving all stakeholders, individuals, companies and authorities in the region. The participatory process was monitored and supported by SURF along with the expertise of foreign partners. During the partner visit to Aberdeen the project was discussed within the Spatial Planning & Stakeholder Engagement theme. This allowed us to compare with and learn from other projects. The preparation of the Aberdeen and Bradford visits (e.g. Comparing Phases) has ensured that we're questioning ourselves about the approach of the stakeholders and their engagement (how are they acting, where are they positioned in the project, which information do they want/ need). With the knowledge gained from these moments, we set up a quarterly informal meeting with the some vegetable growers (we prefer to call them "the greenhouse experts").

There was an information meeting in preparation of the "public inquiry" for the spatial implementation plan. This moment gave the residents, farmers, growers and other organisations the opportunity to express comments and concerns regarding the "spatial implementation plan of the greenhouse cluster". To inform the stakeholders correctly about this "public inquiry", we revised our communication plan and partially extended it. We've developed a range of actions that can be used for the various stakeholders. This gave us the opportunity to inform each stakeholder, as well as possible, about future spatial changes.





Source Province of East Flanders

During the information meeting, 2D-future-views and inspiring images of spatial qualitative "greenhouse scapes" were presented, partly inspired by projects seen in Aberdeen. During the visit to Aberdeen, 2 examples were presented that East Flanders gained information on ways to develop the 3D story.

The merit of the Norfolk (Gaywood Valley) tool is that it gives more than the usual information about a whole area. The virtual flythrough tour teaches the viewer some really interesting things about the project: the history, the geology, the impact of climate change etc is an added value for the interested digital visitor. The merit of the James Hutton Institute (Aberdeen) tool, is that the participants are introduced into the virtual landscape theatre. An innovative piece of technology which allows the public to 'fly/walk' through a virtual landscape – and how it can be used to seek people's views about how they would like to see areas near them develop. With this additional

gained knowledge, we are able to elaborate the participatory content and associate the proper techniques.

By using contemporary techniques (e.g. 3D visualization, Mobile Augmented Reality), software programs (e.g. Google Maps, GIS) and tools (e.g. 3D Cave, Smartphone, YouTube,...) in a combination with a huge amount of already gained knowledge about the project area, it is possible to set up a valuable digital document that shows the information on a easy approachable way. The visual approach also allows us to explain the (in Flanders) relatively unknown idea of "sustainable greenhouse clusters" to the different stakeholders and other interested people. It gives, as such, the right information to base any opinion on, so a constructive dialog and a wide supported spatial plan could be the result of the whole process.

When the spatial implementation plan goes through (September 2012), the greenhouse cluster can be established concretely. The 3D model will be integrated as a tool in the design research e.g. in the design of the buffer (cfr. James Hutton Institute): examine how the greenhouse cluster is best integrated within the environment, so the spatial quality of the urban fringe is also guaranteed in the future.

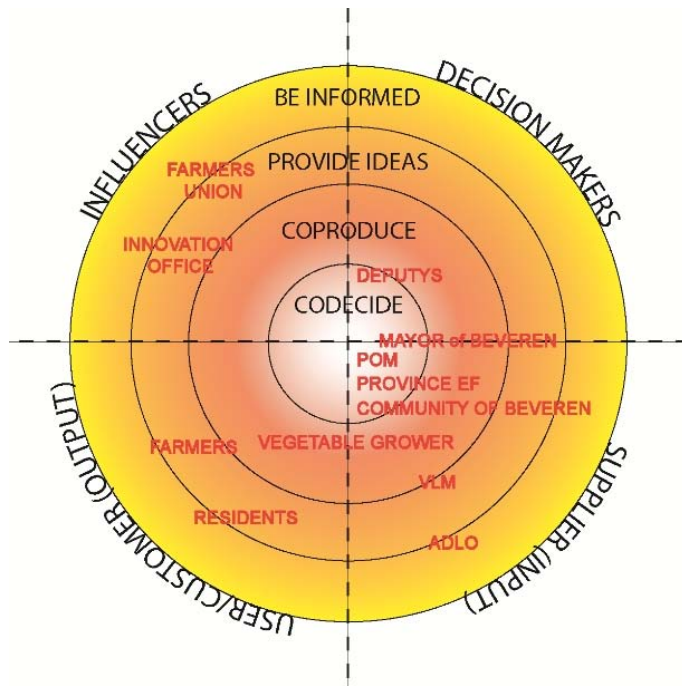
Transnational Learning

During the SURF project, the spatial planning theme group, discussed and learned about several methods and instruments e.g. the **Design Review Panel** of lead partner Aberdeen and the academic partner Saxion University was president in the **quality commission "Room for the River"** the Ijssel in Deventer.

Theme leader Drs. Ir. Bauke De Vries, introduced extra methods for the integrated analysis of the physical and social situation in an area: **Layer approach and methods for stakeholder analysis**. These were immediately integrated in the step stone publication of the PQC. The first in the step stone: situation and context and secondly the stakeholder analysis by **Power and interest grid** and the **Circles of interest** in the step stones stakeholders and participators.

Methods and instruments used by other partners from the Netherlands are mentioned in the publication : **Omgevingsvisie Overijssel, Atelier Overijssel and Gids Buitenkans Enschede**.

For the greenhouse cluster of Beveren there was the use of the **circles of influence-tool**. It was an interesting exercise to give all the stakeholders a place in the circles. The enumeration gave a total view. It will benefit in the further (communication) process of the project. Currently there is the planning of the further participation process with residents, local farmers and vegetable growers.



Source Province of East Flanders

4. The Project Teams View

Advised dossiers by the Provincial Quality Chamber. We have learnt that the project responsible often are very enthusiastic but in the first stage have forgotten the importance of knowing all the stakeholders and can't see the building project in this surrounding space. Lack of analysing the broader context (historical, social, economic etc). Lack of stakeholder management. And often architectural idea's that doesn't fit in the surrounding.

Also important is the final stage of the planning process: the realisation/ implementation (the building or renovation), the use and the management of the building. They have a big influence on the eventual spatial quality. All those elements are in direct correlation with the design and the realisation. The use, maintenance and management of the construction must be foreseen in the design stage, so the developed and produced step stones in the publication will be a good help for potential building projects. "Integrated vision creates sustainable projects." Rise in the perception of the value of the public space and landscape.

An extra opportunity appears thanks to the transnational learning in the theme group spatial planning. The role of the area that is not typical countryside and not typical city is together with the urban and rural area on the public agenda. Hopefully the result of the Provincial and Local elections in October 2012 will create the political will to go on with the started sustainable process.