

Connecting Urban and Rural

Final report of the Sustainable Urban Fringes (SURF) Project



Sustainable
URBAN FRINGES
SURF



The Interreg IVB
North Sea Region
Programme

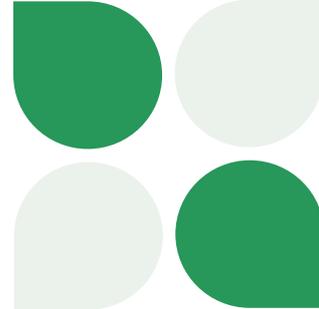
Identity in the future by working together
We're sustainable and competitive together

European Union



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The Workpackage Leaders

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SURF hopes this report has a legacy to inform and assist an array of individuals, networks and organisations wishing to make positive change on their environment and achieve greater recognition and increased management of the urban fringe.

Emma Watt

SURF Project Manager

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Executive Summary

Recognising the opportunity for the urban fringe to add value to Europe's city regions and play a vital role in their sustainability was the drive behind the work of the Sustainable Urban Fringes (SURF) transnational project.

The SURF project formed part of the Interreg IVB North Sea Region programme running from 2009 to 2013. The project involved 13 partners from five countries: the UK; the Netherlands; Belgium; Germany; and Sweden, who worked together and shared information to produce a robust and coherent set of outputs to benefit the future recognition, planning and management of the urban fringe.

This report on project findings outlines information on key commitments delivered under the SURF project, including new approaches to governance, policy recommendations and dynamic approaches to urban fringe planning, development and management.

SURF carried out a programme of urban fringe research and analysis which was outlined in the project 'Conceptual and Analytical Framework'. This document categorised the partners into four main theme groups, from which the project could focus. These were:

1. Economy, competitiveness and enterprise
2. Role and value of green spaces
3. Spatial planning and stakeholder engagement
4. Governance

In addition, the framework provided a programme to maximise contributions from the project partners sharing information on urban fringe projects in their own city regions. Wider knowledge of the urban fringe was drawn through exchanging best practice information with associated European projects and networks.

The project focused on the effective management and development of the urban fringe and the processes and practices used, revealing that the urban fringe can make a real contribution to the sustainable development of city regions. Opportunities include: health and lifestyle improvements; urban to rural connectivity; and areas for economic growth. Significant challenges acknowledged within the project included: poor connectivity; lack of legislative support for the urban fringe; and the need for funding for development and management of these areas.

Alongside this SURF examined governance approaches for the urban fringes, identifying the need for a 'soft governance' approach for these environments at a local and national level. Evidence from SURF partner projects illustrated the benefit and potential of working in collaboration with stakeholders and influencers for the urban fringe and aligning the needs of their city and/or region to the development of the urban fringe.

In addition, SURF identified an underlying holistic need within Europe to bridge the gap between urban and rural policy and address the interdependency of urban and rural interests. This could lead to more effective and sustainable management of the urban fringe for the benefit of the city region if European legislation was transferred down through national, regional and local government.

SURF created a toolkit to satisfy the need for increased knowledge of successful approaches and tools used in urban fringe development in Europe.

It is likely that urban fringe projects in Europe will continue to be developed sporadically until there is a greater European recognition of the economic, social and environmental role and value of the urban fringe. More importantly, the report findings highlight the need for formal government and governance practices to support urban fringe development and the opportunity in these areas to enhance the sustainability of city regions for generations to come.

Further information on the project can be found on the website www.sustainablefringes.eu

Introduction

Introduction to the Sustainable Urban Fringe (SURF) project

SURF is the acronym for Sustainable Urban Fringes.

SURF was one project that formed part of the Interreg IVB North Sea Region programme running from 2009 to 2013 under the area of intervention 'promoting sustainable growth solutions for expanding areas'.

SURF made a commitment to research, analyse and test the opportunities presented by the urban fringe, consider the barriers to the development of these environments and, through a structured research and analysis programme, deliver a number of project outputs including: suggesting new approaches to governance; creating specific policy recommendations; categorising useful methods for urban fringe planning and management; and creating a toolkit for practical urban fringe development.

The project partnership included 13 partners from five countries: the UK; The Netherlands; Belgium; Germany; and Sweden. Supplementary information on the project partners and their urban fringe environments can be found in Appendix 2.

The findings and conclusions from the work programme conducted throughout the project are summarised in this report.



Chapter 1

WHY SURF?

WHAT HAPPENS AT THE URBAN EDGE –
AND THE SURF ASPIRATION TO
INFLUENCE IT?



1.1 The urban fringe in a challenging world

The SURF project is a response to important challenges set by modern societal and natural environment trends which impact upon spaces and communities at the urban edge. SURF has provided an overarching instrument for addressing the imperative for urban fringes to contribute to competitive regions, but also regions that are geared up to deliver sustainable developments. The SURF rationale for intervening in urban fringes was the aspiration to make them more sustainable. The SURF belief is that this means developing policy and capacity to integrate different qualities. The four main quality issues identified in SURF are:

- social quality
- environmental quality
- spatial quality
- economic quality

The challenge is to combine the different qualities and to look for synergy between them. If qualities are actually conflicting then careful choices, or trade-offs, will have to be made between them relative to the particular locality and its needs and characteristics. Making the right choices is fundamental. Identifying and selecting the most appropriate processes of decision making, communication, and stakeholder involvement are central to the practice of sustainable development. It is also crucial to prevent the transfer of problems to other places or to future periods. Project partners have each sought to develop exemplar responses to particular aspects of the inescapable requirement to consider all future development and conservation within the context of sustainability.

The specific spatial context for the SURF project was the territory, or zone, at the 'soft' margins of urban areas which merges into rural areas – sometimes called the peri-urban, rurban or urban-rural, but referred to within this project as the urban fringe.

The SURF project application highlighted that recent research on the urban fringe had identified the high level of interdependency of urban and rural interests, with the respective functions of fringe and inner urban areas effectively merging. This perspective represents a challenge to the convention of treating the urban and the rural as independent entities when the interests of their residents are essentially converging in most of the North Sea Region.

Unfortunately, this urban fringe territory is too frequently forgotten. Being neither urban nor rural, it tends to often fall into a vacuum left between urban and rural policy and analysis. As a consequence it can become the scene of tension between issues of development and conservation, of a desire to attract visitors and to exclude them, and of a need to preserve a legible heritage landscape while adapting positively to necessary change. The urban fringe contains both significant potential to boost economic development of towns and cities and many valued environmental, social and cultural assets which require protection within sustainable models of development. However, what makes the urban fringe a territory requiring research, policy and action in its own right is that it can be both an area of very special characteristics and an area of unusual dynamism and transition (1) - and not always in a positive sense.

Sometimes the urban fringe will have legal status that provides protection, as with Green Belt designation. However, too often it is the recipient of a range of neglect and negative impacts which are the collateral damage



from the need to adapt to pressure of urban expansion, demand for urban and industrial resources and the requirement to accommodate infrastructure which urban and rural areas and economies are dependent upon but either cannot or will not entertain.

Negative consequences may include the urban fringe being prone to economic decline, urban fringe communities losing their identity or being disenfranchised, and degradation of environmental quality and cultural history. In other cases the urban fringe can be a privileged living space as in some commuter belts. It can also be said that urban fringes tend to under-achieve and be under-supported as contributors to the well-being of regional and sub-regional territories. The SURF project sought to interrogate responses to actual events in the urban fringe and to report on, by gleaning experience from a range of diverse projects, positive ways to resolve some of the more common challenges to be found there.

1.2 What characterises the urban fringe? The SURF analytical context

While the term “urban fringe” is part of a developing discourse about managing urban environments, there is no commonly agreed definition of the urban fringe. It was decided early on in the SURF project to side-step the definition arguments and to focus on dealing with the challenges and opportunities. What can be said as a generalisation is that the future of the urban fringe and the functions that it supports are closely tied to responses to the following:

- **Demographic change:**

North-west Europe is witnessing a period in which the population of some regions might be shrinking and others may be growing. Both scenarios have implications for the way the urban fringe is developed. On the one hand, there may be a need to change the way in which the economies of regions are developed, jobs created and resources allocated. On the other hand, there may be continuing urban flight to the fringes and expansion of cities outwards to accommodate more housing and other development. What is clear is that the urban fringe is no longer a temporary zone, simply waiting for the impact of the next wave of urban growth. It is an identifiable territory which should be developed in a manner appropriate to its special character. This should apply regardless of urban population expansion or retraction. In cases of demographic shrinkage, for example, the urban fringe might have a permanent character and function that enhances any proximate urban retrenchment or re-imagining.

- **Agriculture in relation to the landscape:**

The position of agriculture as the dominant industrial sector in urban fringe and rural areas is diminishing. Where farming has historically had a role in maintaining landscapes, the question now is how and by whom this function will be delivered? The Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) has been targeting resources to farmers to manage landscape for environmental and biodiversity advantage, but diversification by farmers into a variety of modes of supplementary income generation and the increasing profitability of land for food production has made the future of agriculture uncertain. At the same time recreational and nature conservation interests are increasingly having an impact on landscape and its functions. Policies about farming are rarely coordinated with recreation and other urban demands.

- **Climate change and the needs of cities:**

Adaptation to the expected impacts of climate change has led to an increased interest in the offer of rural areas and urban fringes as hosts to a multiplicity of ecosystem services. As examples, global warming may have an increasing impact on endangered habitats and species which can be afforded protection in the urban fringes. Flood relief and water retention, water quality management and water delivery are increasingly important functions, and urban fringes will increasingly be the habitat for renewable energy development and new forms of eco housing.

The SURF experience suggests that wherever they are situated, urban fringes tend to share certain characteristics. To a greater or lesser extent they can be described as:

- Areas in transition, impacted by the expansion of the city's needs (such as housing, infrastructure, and commercial development, which necessitates changing land use). The dynamism of the urban fringe environment often arises from land being converted and adapted for different uses over time. At the same time this may be in conflict with a function of urban fringes as a depository for historical and cultural heritage.
- A highly contested territory, as they fulfil numerous overlapping functions, serve a range of interests and offer a range of potential development or conservation options, including, acting as a source of profit for land owners and a location for new urban services. This tends to make it an untidy landscape wherein land can be variously traded or banked by a range of commercial, voluntary or public sector agencies, often with conflicting interests.
- Major contributors to the quality of the living environment, since the urban fringe offers the urban population a chance to enjoy natural/ green surroundings. Green space in the urban fringe is increasingly being promoted for its health benefits and as respite from unhealthy urban lifestyles.
- The recipients of housing and other, frequently low-density, development targets, that require more space and which are urban in nature, such as shopping malls, and infrastructure nodes. Such demand for urban fringe land tends to inflate property values, sometimes creating an arena for political disputes within planning systems.
- Under the influence of often vague and complex governance arrangements with different government and non-government structures at different levels having authority in a variety of contexts. This might include decisions made by statutory infrastructure delivery agents, arms-length development agencies, environmental quangos and voluntary conservation bodies and others, in addition to different tiers of formal government planning and regulation.
- The playing field for urban interests (rather than rural or regional). This might be in the form of playing fields, golf courses, bike trails and footpaths, allotments and garden centres, horticulture, parks and local nature reserves.

Reflecting this variety, the urban fringe can be seen as a kind of laboratory where new policy ideas, intervention tools and governance arrangements can be explored and tried out, which may prove useful in other spatial contexts or other types of region. One such idea to emerge in recent years from urban fringe studies is the notion of 'multifunctionality'. This term describes a diversity of activities occupying the same or adjoining space (e.g. networks of recreational footpaths may overlay agricultural land which may in turn host renewable energy installations). Multifunctionality "is getting increasing attention not only in the landscape sciences but in society in general, since it seems to be an important aspect of... sustainable development" (2). This new term also sets a challenge to policy makers to produce appropriate policies and interventions to capture and exploit its potential, applying concepts, such as 'green infrastructure,' and these responses can in turn create a demand for new governance structures to fully realise their potential in practice.

Multifunctionality, together with related ideas of interdependency of urban and rural interests and the possibilities of new governance arrangements around the city region scale of policy action, were important foundation concepts for SURF and were widely used in the analysis, as reflected in the remainder of this report.

1.3 What is the EU approach to urban fringes?

A range of EU interest and activity is relevant to the development of the UF and there is a discernible discourse. A range of EU interest and activity is relevant to the development of the urban fringe and there is a discernible discourse within policies which suggests that while the urban fringe is an important asset, there is no explicit policy which addresses the contribution, needs or development of it. Thus we have to build up an understanding of the role of the urban fringe in Europe from an interpretation of a range of EU policies and interventions. For example, the European Commission has a White Paper addressing climate change which does not explicitly mention the role of the urban fringe, but talks about the benefits of enhancing green infrastructure such that *“working with nature’s capacity to absorb or control impact in urban and rural areas can be a more efficient way of adapting than simply focusing on physical infrastructure”*. (3).



In another example, a European Parliament report on the future of the Common Agricultural Policy after 2013 draws attention to *“the particular role played by farmers in peri-urban areas, where there can be intensive pressures on rural and agricultural resources”* and *“stresses that this production of food and public goods near urban populations should be maintained”*. At the same time, the vulnerability of the urban fringe is recognised in the message *“that the CAP after 2013 must rebalance its support in favour of employment and of maintaining an agricultural presence in vulnerable areas, including peri-urban territories”*.

In recognising the urban fringe contribution to urban and regional sustainability and competitiveness, the plenary of the European Parliament in July 2011 agreed an amendment to the 5th Cohesion Report which *“stresses that larger urban centres face specific challenges because of the complexity of their social, economic and environmental tasks; (and) in this context, sees the endogenous potential of rural and peri-urban areas as offering an opportunity for development”*. This is a very generalised reference to the relationship of the urban with its hinterland. More explicit is the work emanating from the European Spatial Planning Observatory Network (ESPON) project EDORA (European Development Opportunities for Rural Areas). This suggests that the urban-rural relationship (and by implication the places in between) is very different in different parts of the EU. The new member states and the south tend to be more agrarian, while in the Nordic states there is more emphasis upon the hinterland delivering leisure, recreation, tourism and conservation amenities. This seems to be the case in most North Sea Region urban fringe areas.

Finally, there is pressure for the intrinsic needs and attributes of the urban fringe to be recognised directly in EU policy rather than as a peripheral concern for mainstream policy areas. In a speech to the European Parliament, during a conference to discuss the potential of Europe’s peri-urban space, the President of PURPLE (a campaigning group of EU authorities focusing on the urban fringe), stated: *“I’m confident, as Dacian Cioloş Commissioner for Agriculture and Rural development himself stated in a number of recent speeches, that tools that meet the needs of peri-urban regions are not necessarily the same as those suited for other territories.”* (4) She went on to argue for an increase in EU funding resources, including the ERDF, to be dedicated exclusively to the urban fringe.

1.4 What was known already? Capitalisation within SURF

The SURF project is part of an extensive body of work funded over time by Interreg and other EU programmes to look at aspects of the urban fringe. SURF has not therefore been progressed in isolation. Previous and on-going work has been sourced and contacts made to other relevant projects, a process referred to in SURF as 'capitalisation.'

Capitalisation has been important to assist with the baseline SURF inventory of urban fringe issues, policies and practices; to help avoid duplication of work already carried out under other projects; to enhance SURF learning; and to build relationships with other projects and networks to share knowledge and understanding. SURF was seen from the outset as being distinctive and adding value to urban fringe knowledge by aspiring to uncover different practices in different regions across particular SURF-defined themes and to share that knowledge through trans-border exchanges. In so doing, it was intended to both seek out best practice for supporting aspects of sustainable development in the urban fringe, and to take a longitudinal analytical approach to the work which could enable best practice to be compared and turned into policy recommendations and a toolkit for the development of the urban fringe. In an effort to help this aspiration to capitalise on other work, more than 40 relevant Interreg projects were identified, though not all were live or able to offer a meaningful contribution.

Examples of urban fringe-related Interreg projects that SURF found valuable in the above respects included:

- Sustainable Open Space, SOSi and SOSii. These projects were concerned with rationalising and developing landscape identity.
- RURBAN - The project sought to identify the impact of urban pressure on rural landscapes and the contribution of rural goods and services in enhancing sustainable territorial rural-urban relationships. It included suggestions to strengthen urban-rural solidarity. Conflicting urban and rural development policies defined at national and European levels complicated the organisation of territorial rural-urban relationships and got in the way of mutuality and cooperation
- SAUL - Sustainable and Accessible Urban Landscapes focused on city regions as representing 'new urban landscapes' - spaces that are neither countryside nor urban parks, but which need new approaches to partnership and stakeholder engagement to play a vital role in sustainable city region development
- VALUE - aimed to demonstrate the economic value of green infrastructure in cities and regions. Although it is not yet finished, it followed on from the findings of another project, 'Creating a Setting for Investment,' which sought to create a link between green space and land values, investment decisions, landscape quality and community engagement
- PeriUrban Parks - aimed to improve policies on management of natural suburban areas, focusing specifically on policy and management solutions to mitigate pressures on biodiversity. SURF engaged with this project to exchange on policy ambitions and progress

A non-Interreg (but under the 6th Framework Programme) project of particular relevance was:

- PLUREL - Peri-Urban Land Use Relationships argued that a more integrated EU level policy and funding system could enable and encourage integrated peri-urban (urban fringe) development at the local, regional and national levels. Reports quantify the trends, risks and opportunities for peri-urban areas, set out new concepts for urban-rural linkages, and provide recommendations for targeted policies for rural-urban regions across Europe

As well as projects, SURF has also had valuable connections to networks such as PURPLE, a campaigning network of local authorities seeking to raise awareness of the peri-urban agenda, and ESPON, the European Observation Network for Territorial Development and Cohesion, which has sought to describe and analyse urban fringe spatial planning in different European countries.

1.5 SURF – The core aspirations

The SURF project model was for partners to explore a range of issues central to the sustainability of the urban fringe individually and jointly contributing appropriately, as context and partner resources allowed, to analysis and transnational working and dissemination. Data was collated by the scientific partners, while knowledge was exchanged by a range of means, including partner conferences and intensive Implementation Labs where partners could meet face to face to discuss themes in detail.

- Although the regions of SURF partners varied in the extent to which they formally embraced city-region taxonomy, the SURF bid determined that there was a focus on ‘city regions’ as key spatial entities where sustainability challenges (including competitiveness) and policy responses to them are played out. In the SURF context, work was mainly to focus on sub-regional activity which employs spatial planning and integrated place and sector working (economic, environmental, social), to create ‘functional urban regions’ or ‘city-regions’. The partner projects are summarised in Appendix 2
- From an early stage the work accentuated four themes fundamental to the sustainability of the urban fringe. These were green space (including green infrastructure), governance, spatial planning and competitiveness, (discussed in chapter 3)
- The overarching rationale for SURF is that cities need their urban fringes and vice-versa, and that this has not been well recognised in the past. Indeed, the demands of the city have often been a cost to the surrounding fringe – hence suburban housing sprawl, out-of-town shopping and commercial facilities and unpopular functions such as power stations, waste incinerators and sewage treatment works. As an example, and in line with this, several SURF-partner projects sought to demonstrate how towns and cities increasingly depend on the ecological and other services of surrounding fringe areas. Such services go beyond traditional activities of providing land for urban development and growing food (though these remain highly significant). They increasingly include providing both ‘liveability’ factors - attractive, naturalistic landscapes with space for recreation, and affording cultural attachment. A key SURF objective was to produce a Toolkit for managing the urban fringe and to incorporate examples drawn from project partners’ experiences in dealing with their specific challenges in their quest for sustainability in the urban fringe. The Urban Fringe Toolkit may be found on the SURF website www.sustainablefringes.eu
- In the pressured and often conflict-strewn context of the urban fringe there is a need to recognise where conservation and protection is appropriate and where sometimes urban functions and resources have to be accommodated. However, too often, existing governance tools prove inadequate in ensuring that the best decisions are made. Some SURF projects explored governance models for the urban fringe, including in the context of city-regions, and SURF has sought to report on insights into urban fringe governance together with developing appropriate recommendations for urban fringe - specific governance (chapter 4)

The Lisbon & Gothenburg agendas prioritise economic competitiveness alongside interregional balance, social integration (cohesion) and environmental sustainability. However, it has been the SURF contention that economic competitiveness cannot be pursued simply by traditional economic development models which portray the urban fringe only as a hinterland of the cities, providing food, water and waste for urban dwellers. The urban fringe itself has resources and populations that need to be retained and served in keeping with sustainability principles, while still offering the city-enhanced status and a marketable quality spatial setting. A SURF objective was to present project learning and good practice within a set of integrated policy guidelines and considered approaches towards urban fringe planning and management (chapter 5).



Image: Gemma Clark, Norfolk County Council

THE PROJECT PARTNERS



2.1 Exploring ways to resolve urban fringe challenges

Chapter 1 rationalises the ambitions of the SURF project to recognise the opportunities and potential of the urban fringe and provides a background into the issues that these areas face, the barriers to their sustainability and the challenges in implementing positive change for these environments.

Combining the identified issues, challenges and barriers with the potential opportunities presented by the urban fringe; the practical methods that the SURF partnership chose to implement to effect positive change within their city regions was explored.

SURF noted that there were a number of synergies between approaches, that a number of the partners were showcasing successful methods of achieving their urban fringe ambitions in alignment with the ambitions of their city regions. Additionally the potential for exchange and guidance transfer between partners, coupled with the willingness to gain knowledge was evident amongst the partnership.

The challenge lay with aligning individual project ambitions with generating the required outputs for the SURF project as a whole.

2.2 The case study areas – SURF urban fringe projects

The make-up of the SURF partners varied from: the physical size of project areas; the ambitions of the projects; to the influences felt from the city regions with which they connected. The identification of each partner project area as an ‘urban fringe’ was unique to the city region partner projects connected with, their local definition of an urban fringe and the spatial landscape to which they belonged. Detailed information on the partner projects and supporting information on their city region and surrounding environment can be found in Appendix 2.

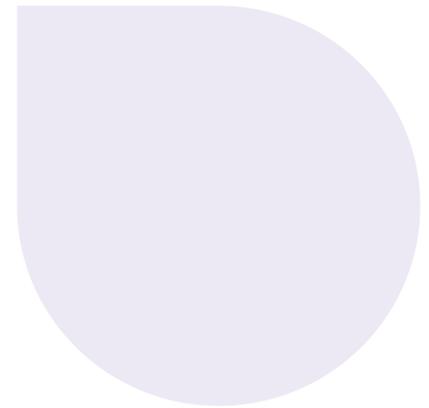
Although agreeing on a definition of the terminology ‘urban fringe’ within SURF was not crucial to the project development, understanding each partners’ interpretation of their project area as being part of their city’s urban fringe was simple to appreciate. This was rationalised to the encompassing information from these projects that assisted with understanding not only where their projects were located, in terms of vicinity to their cities and surrounding rural areas, but also the multiple factors that are deemed to be integral to what defines an urban fringe; as noted in chapter 1.

The ambitions of the project partners for their urban fringe areas varied, however, through SURF’s analytical framework, the main functions of each project area were collated. The most frequently reported functions of the urban fringe in SURF were providing the public with access to nature or recreation for health and well-being, and protecting nature, landscape and biodiversity. The next most frequent function was sighting new development. However, diverse functions were reported, though this was only discussed overtly in terms of multifunctionality in the English regions and the Netherlands. Moreover, in the case of Enschede, it was accepted but with functions in parallel rather than integrated. In Almelo too, different priorities were assigned for different urban fringe areas, each depicted with its own identity; thus the ‘eastern lung’ was ‘cherished for nature protection,’ while the focus for others was, for instance, sport and leisure or employment opportunities. By contrast, in Hamburg mono-functionality was actually a stated preference for the urban fringe, to be used for ‘safeguarding agriculture’, or nature, forestry etc.

More information categorising the differing functions of the partner urban fringe areas can be found in Table 1.

Table 1: Functions of the urban fringe identified through SURF

Function
Providing urban population with access to nature and recreation
Protecting nature and biodiversity
Providing space for urban expansion including housing and industry
Providing ecosystem services for towns and cities
A location for urban support services such as waste transfer, energy production, water supply, sewage treatment, recycling facilities and landfill sites
Providing food for the towns and cities
Location for more sustainable living
Sites for major transport infrastructure, airports motorways etc.
A source of health and wellbeing
A source of cultural identity and regional heritage
A source of enterprise and productivity



2.3 Developing the link between urban and rural

SURF noted a degree of interdependency between the urban fringe and the cities with which they connect. This was wholly apparent in the SURF project due to the governmental and governance issues raised from the start of the project. However, increasing the knowledge in city regions towards the opportunities that the urban fringe can present was an area which proved to be a major barrier to partners and had knock-on effects such as limiting access to funding, delaying project plans and diverting project strategies.

The challenge within SURF was therefore to try and alleviate these barriers and enable urban fringe projects to subsequently be viewed by the city regions as areas which can enable positive change and be integrated within city region plans and ambitions.

The SURF partners employed varying approaches towards urban fringe management and development, demonstrating a number of comparable techniques to achieving city region connectivity in every sense - from physical accessibility from a city to urban fringe areas; to aligning with city region plans and processes for their urban fringe project areas. Approaches often supported the ambitions of the city region and aligned with overarching strategies. Some of the SURF partner approaches are categorised below.

Connectivity

SURF noted that connecting the aspirations of the city region with those of the urban fringe can be an enabler for urban fringe projects. In practice this was achieved through understanding the ambitions of a city and a region and working creatively within formal structures, the end result often being that the urban fringe could act as a conduit to change and support city region ambitions such as:

- Increasing access to green spaces – the urban fringe can often provide positive health benefits through cleaner air quality and space for sports and leisure activities for city residents. Indeed this was the overarching use of the urban fringe environments within SURF
- Increasing economic development – the urban fringe can often be an area that harbours new business developments and services; increasing employment in the area and opportunities for economic growth
- Increasing biodiversity - the urban fringe can act as a neutral area of greenspace, allowing a city to cultivate plant species and directly impact air quality and nature reserves, thus building a more resilient natural environment

The SURF partnership noted the need to work with existing procedures and boundaries to enable urban fringe projects to materialise and progress. Considering the governmental and governance challenges recognised within the partnership, partners also noted the need to connect with colleagues in different departments internally and through associated partnerships with governmental links. Additionally, connecting with external influencers such as private landowners and business owners was also a balance that many partners sought to achieve to enable project development.

Antwerp acknowledged the importance of bridging the gap between different government levels through the founding of task focused steering groups encompassing a variety of public and private sector actors. Specifically Antwerp created two steering groups: one considering the urban fringe in the valley of the Laarse Beekbeek as a whole; and one considering fish migration due to a protected fish species inhabiting the project area.

The **Hamburg** Metropolitan Region integrated the issue of urban rural cooperation in its new strategic scheme as one of its priorities and considered the intermunicipal fora and other networks between Hamburg and its surrounding municipalities. To communicate the ambitions of this strategy, Hamburg employed a tool called the ‘colloquium series’ to raise awareness about the possibilities offered by the urban fringe area and the potential impact of neglecting the opportunities presented by these environments. This involved hosting information sharing events where residents could interact with public sector representatives and could be educated on the cause of the urban fringe and how to contribute to developing a sustainable future for these areas.



Bradford looked to support the development of the next parish plan for the area, with the addition of engaging with local communities, and incorporate not only local issues but also those of the wider city region. Within this, Bradford looked to incorporate sustainable practices that would provide the plan with a level of resilience for its longevity within the project area. This involved a high degree of collaboration and connectivity with local residents, business owners and visitors and aligning local needs with those of the wider city area.

The Municipality of **Härryda** recognised early on within their project that, due to the large number of private land owners which formed part of the project area boundaries; communicating and connecting with these individuals was integral to the project’s delivery. Through understanding the power players within their region, Härryda were able to demonstrate practices of connectivity ultimately enabling a walking track to be created through the project.



Collaboration

The SURF partners substantially engaged with a variety of actors and influencers interested in seeing positive change within their urban fringes. Forming steering groups or working groups by bringing together existing and new actors with an interest or influence in the project areas proved to be a successful approach to delivering change for the urban fringe.

The **West Flanders** foundation termed 'Stad-Land-schap 't West-Vlaamse hart' comprised of representatives from nine municipalities of mid-West Flanders and the Province itself. This inter-local cooperation of varying expertise allowed the West Flanders project to gain higher political recognition of the importance of the project area and allowed access to new funding streams, enabling different promotional activities to be developed to engage with the public. Additionally, the continuation of the foundation once SURF completed meant that West Flanders was able to build a sustainable future for the project area.



Aberdeen formed a steering group by bringing together the practitioners already working within the project area and new influencers so that varying activities could be delivered on the ground. The steering group was involved in the development of a plan for the area, in alignment with an external contractor consulting on the project area and developing a framework for the project. This allowed community networks to deliver different work streams and enabled planning for future ownership of a number of activities and responsibilities for the area to be community owned and governed.

The **East Flanders** Provincial Quality Chamber (PQC), although a useful example of a collaborative working group, is deemed to be a governmental instrument comprised of experts working in fields such as spatial planning, architecture and landscape management. The PQC tool was utilised as a practical sounding board for the built and green environment in East Flanders to strive towards sound spatial planning processes, while respecting the open space areas in which it effects and giving consideration to sustainable practices. For East Flanders, the use of the PQC stimulated exchange between different stakeholders and social groups and allowed current governmental practices to be carried out creatively, but also engineered to allow more attention to the urban fringe and its importance in the urban planning process for the city.

Almelo, Hengelo and Enschede demonstrated the benefit of collaboration through their joint efforts in the production of the 'Twente Vision,' realising the potential for city regions to connect with their citizens and create positive environments that are accessible and contribute to a quality urban lifestyle. Their collaborative approach also enabled higher recognition of the urban fringe areas generally within their city regions, resulting in more support to develop an implementation plan and focus on practical activities being delivered to see visible change within these environments.

Communication

All partners saw the need for and benefit of communication activities and the necessity to market urban fringe project areas and engage with a variety of actors and organisations. Many partners aimed to include local citizens in the delivery or ownership of their urban fringe projects once SURF completed. Communication and engagement with the local community, private business, stakeholders, influential networks and interested parties was essential from the start of the project to allow this to happen and to empower individuals to continue work planned out with the SURF lifespan. Varying degrees of marketing and branding were seen throughout SURF to engage with different sectors and maintain communication of activities delivered.

In some capacity all partners showcased examples of communication tools such as leaflets, flyers, brochures and project reports, illustrating the importance of connecting with actors associated with project areas. Some partners explored the use of social media and more intense programmes of marketing project areas were developed through SURF.

Aberdeen created a Facebook account to promote the work of the steering group, communicate with local residents and provide a forum for local ownership of the project area once SURF completes, while enabling the promotion of events and activities within the project area.

Norfolk employed a number of communication activities to engage with different sectors of the community, one being the regular use of Twitter to ‘tweet’ project updates and event information.

Enschede explored developing different ‘apps’ with Saxion students to offer new accessible ways for communities to engage with their environment and keep up-to-date with events and project progress.

In terms of wider marketing activities, the branding of projects proved to be an effective way of allowing project areas to create project names and identifiable characteristics which communities and residents could effortlessly recognise and engage with.

Activities developed through branding of project areas include; **West Flanders** and **Hengelo** creating interactive websites for information updates and promotional activities for events and project milestones.

2.4 Conclusion

The ambitions of the SURF partners, aligned with the development and management techniques employed varied. However, interestingly within SURF there were a number of areas where similar approaches were used in different ways, such as the use of marketing activities and collaborative steering groups.

This was accounted for by a number of factors, including the governance and governmental boundaries in which the urban fringe areas were influenced, the potential and capacity of the project teams to deliver change on the ground, and the resources available to allow urban fringe projects to be developed and maintained in that area.

What was clear within SURF was that not only does the urban fringe offer multifunctional opportunities for city regions, a range of approaches and techniques need to be employed to enable positive change to be seen.

It seemed that there were a number of factors that had a direct influence on the urban fringe, often dictated by the city region they connected with. However, the SURF partners demonstrated that by working within and in some cases challenging these boundaries and testing new approaches to urban fringe development, positive change can be delivered.

Supporting information on the project partners can be found in Appendix 2.



Image: Gemma Clark, Norfolk County Council

Chapter 3

THE SURF THEMES



3.1 Introduction to theme working

The SURF project was undertaken as a transnational learning project into the sustainability and competitiveness of urban fringes. As noted in the project application, this would be a complex undertaking partly because the elements being dealt with, sustainability and competitiveness, are intrinsically multifaceted and difficult to define, and partly because these concepts have not been applied systematically to urban fringes before. This was to be a voyage of discovery, so the project had to develop new ways to understand the elements of the urban fringes being tackled and a way to analyse evidence about urban fringes that could be used to produce helpful outputs for policy in these areas. In the project application document it was agreed to pursue a number of key objectives:

- to undertake a problem analysis of urban fringe regions
- to undertake a review of existing approaches in the urban fringe
- to enable transnational networking on these issues and approaches
- to find ways to integrate policies and programmes for urban fringes

To do this the scientific partners developed a two-fold approach called the Conceptual and Analytical Framework (C&AP). The conceptual element involved defining key aspects of urban fringes that required attention within the project to produce useful learning. The analytical framework element described the process for getting there. The conceptual elements were initially defined in the stages leading up to the successful funding bid, based on the existing knowledge and preliminary research of the scientific partners. The analytical framework had to be constructed to enable optimum learning during the SURF project and formed a key foundation for the way the programme of SURF activities was designed.

The framework started by outlining the main characteristics of urban fringes in the North Sea Region and the key policy challenges they were thought to face. These are outlined in 1.2 and range from demographic changes to climate change. These issues are often policy challenges too with important contradictions and tensions seen in urban fringe areas. As stated in 1.2, the urban fringe has become a kind of laboratory both for improved understanding of how urban systems function and for how new policy approaches and tools are evolving in response. The C&AP document is available on the SURF website: www.sustainablefringe.eu however the key conceptual headings can be summarised as:

- general focus on the sustainability and competitiveness of urban fringes within city regions and networks of towns and cities
- specific focus on (lead scientific partner):
 - economy, competitiveness and enterprise (Saxion University)
 - role and value of green spaces (Leeds Metropolitan University)
 - spatial planning and stakeholder engagement (Saxion University)
 - governance (Leeds Metropolitan University)

The analytical framework addressed these headings in two main ways: firstly by continuing to research into emerging knowledge about urban fringes (especially learning emerging from EU-funded programmes) to feed into the SURF project, which the project called capitalisation; and secondly by designing a schedule of learning activities embedded into the six-monthly cycle of partner conferences in different regions. The four specific-focus headings were adopted as SURF themes, Sub-sets of partners were allocated to themes and learning tasks were set asking partners for information and suggesting theme-related activities. Conference meetings were held to discuss the progress made and to log learning.

The theme work was divided into five phases: preparing/scoping/comparing/ researching and planning/delivering which reflected an evolutionary work package of learning to engage the partners in the analytical process. This structure was adaptable not fixed, for instance it was decided to prioritise the production of a toolkit as a key output of phase 4 in the analytical process, when it became clear this would be feasible, valuable and welcomed by the partners.

The C&AF proved useful in focusing partners on key learning outcomes, in achieving some consistency throughout the project and in helping coordinate efforts towards delivering outputs. Lessons learned from applying the C&AP approach in SURF relate mainly to: issues of engaging practitioner partners in joint discussions about difficult concepts throughout a lengthy project, the wide variety of perspectives and experiences of different partners, as well as varying levels of resources to engage in policy abstractions or to network with regional policy makers.



Despite these challenges the theme work produced a number of valuable outcomes. Given the centrality of the theme work as an organising strand, most of the SURF outcomes can be claimed as C&AF results. For example, the governance model (chapter 4) depends on the case studies of policy networking in the SURF partner regions produced from presentations by, documents provided by, and discussions with partners. This kind of foundation was also necessary to underpin the external academic outputs flowing from SURF. In addition the toolkit relies on material channelled by partners to the scientific partners as part of the C&AF.

The rest of this chapter presents key elements of learning flowing from the theme work, based on summaries produced by the lead scientific partners. The material is organised under common headings for ease of absorption. Firstly, there is evidence that the theme is important for the urban fringe. All four chosen themes proved to be at least as important as anticipated in the bid. Secondly, the project looked at phenomena reflecting the presence of the theme in actuality in North Sea Region areas. Once more examples were found from outside and from within SURF, which showed the theme to be a pressing reality for policy makers. Thirdly, it was considered which urban fringe stakeholders were trying to tackle the theme issues and making clear impacts. Fourthly, evidence was sought of the impacts of policy measures and whether they represented clear lessons for other areas. SURF is not a research programme; the focus was on secondary assessments of impacts, where they exist, and on perceptions of partners and their stakeholders. Finally, broad conclusions were drawn for the themes.



3.2 Theme Reports

3.2.1 Economy, competitiveness and enterprise

3.2.1a Evidence that the theme is significant for the urban fringe

The competitiveness theme is central to the overall challenge of SURF in the quest for both sustainable and competitive urban fringes. From the start SURF adopted a city-region perspective that enabled the interdependencies of urban and rural elements to be looked at in a comprehensive way and the project started to look at development concepts being used for the urban fringes. Increasing the effective functionality and attractiveness of the fringe area around the city contributes to economic sustainability of cities, creating favourable conditions for new industries and residents. In this way the spatial quality of the urban fringe endorses the competitiveness of the city and region as a whole.

Despite the diversity in contexts and economic drivers in the different urban fringe areas of the Interreg partnership, the incubator role of this type of urban fringe area for economic development presented itself as a concrete feature when the competitiveness theme was considered. More affordable land prices and prices for real estate in comparison to the more urbanised areas can make the urban fringe a rather favourable area for starting up new businesses and the urban overspill of small enterprises and institutions like universities formerly operating in the city core.

Conditioning these developments in such a way that they are not harmful to the other qualities that are unique to the urban fringes - like recreation and green function - is a priority that carries some weight. If incubating new businesses adhere from the outset to the conditions of sustainability and the economic development can be embedded in the context of the variety of functions that the urban fringes offer, it would also in the longer term, to sustainable urban fringes. The challenge is to create a balance in conditions in such a way that sustainable economic development is not a contradiction in terms but an inherent condition of urban fringe development.

3.2.1b What is actually happening in the urban fringe relating to this theme?

What are effective sustainable economic development concepts that add or create new economic perspectives for enterprises in the urban fringes, capitalising both on the vicinity of the city and the rural characteristics of the urban fringe? Focusing on the promotion of sustainable development in the urban fringes, many initiatives that seek to create economic development that appeal to green living, including making the labelling of their products and services as being “green” into a competitive advantage, become visible.

Economic development concepts that give new perspectives to the rural enterprises – mainly, but not exclusively farms or agribusinesses are being introduced. A growing number of farmers situated in expansion areas around the cities go out of business, notably those farms that have their enterprise. Once these farmers are gone, the urban fringe transforms when the region is under pressure of the nearby city; or it becomes derelict when situated in a shrinking region. When these landscape maintaining farmers fade away, so would the landscape and its green character. This development contrasts sharply with the appreciation the citizens have for the rural setting of a city for the obvious recreational purposes.

On the other hand, SURF also witnessed agribusiness developments that turn the green urban fringes into industrial landscapes with warehouses and glasshouses (e.g. West and East Flanders) that are difficult to distinguish from mono-functional industrial landscapes. Here the economic competitiveness is not an issue and needs no other support than reduction of the spatial and environmental planning barriers which limit their expansion. This could be seen as being questionable from a sustainability point of view.

The business (survival) strategy being adopted by the rural enterprises in need of new sources of income is to broaden their spectrum of activities and add activities that not only generate additional income for

the farmers, but also have what is called a social surplus. This old strategy has shown to be an effective survival strategy adopted by French farmers with their regional produce in cheeses when confronted with diminishing farming returns.

Enlarged/broadened farmers' business concepts which have shown to be economically viable, in the Netherlands, England and other parts of Europe like Italy (slow food movement), have been copied in many other regions of the EU, and include:

- regional food production farms in combination with farm shops, farmers markets, web shops and home delivery
- social care farms where farming activities are offered as day programme for small children or disadvantaged people
- recreational farms where farm functions are combined with overnight hotel stay (bed and breakfast), accommodation often labelled thematically (e.g. Middle Ages), or combined with tea gardens
- cultural farms offering creative classes, often combined with educational activities
- nature-related farming contributing to nature conservation and upkeep of the landscape, farms that diversify their products in protein production often in combination with energy production (biogas, wind, or solar energy)

These developments capitalise on existing agricultural businesses and link their core business to activities that can be easily combined in the programme of running a farm and provide additional income for the farmer.

Other developments that help make these new combinations economically viable, or even trigger them, are initiated by the municipality or regional authority. These include:

- investments in slow traffic infrastructure like footpaths, biking track and horse tracks such as those that Enschede, Almelo, West Flanders, Hamburg, Norfolk, Leeds are doing
- flexible interpretation of spatial plan ruling by the responsible planning authorities in the fringe areas, when it comes to introduction of new activities
- development - and planning processes involving the stakeholders
- offering of co-financing arrangements for nature conservation and upkeep of the landscape, like the green and blue services of farmers combined with the landscape funding in the Twente and Enschede regions
- facilitation of entrepreneurs to the subsidy and co-financing arrangements of regional and national authorities

The following example can be considered to be representative for similar governance initiatives: An important strategy of Enschede for working at the fringe was to facilitate and to stimulate entrepreneurs to initiate businesses in the fringe. Enschede developed an attractive cycling tour (including new infrastructure) in the fringe around the town (42 km). The existence of this cycling tour was a good stimulus for entrepreneurs to invest, but this process of generating new economic activity had to be accelerated. It is important that entrepreneurs are informed about the potential for individual and collective projects. Saxion University proposed that Enschede organise an informing and inspiring meeting for entrepreneurs in the fringe and representatives of urban organisations. The intention was to develop innovative projects related to the now declined textile-industry. The idea of putting a theme forward was not generally supported, but the entrepreneurs wanted to have a catchy title for their area. The themes textile and or flax were received with skepticism, but some months later all recommendations were implemented.



It must also be noted that, although agriculture and tourism-related businesses were studied throughout SURF, there were other significant economic uses for the urban fringe that are either occurring or heading towards usage of these areas. Specifically noted in Hamburg were uses such as retail sites and logistic hubs.

3.2.1c Who are the key stakeholders and organisations impacting on the evolution of this theme in the urban fringe?

Key stakeholders are: those who own the land, mostly the farmers and related agricultural businesses; but also the nature conservation organisations which own protected conservation areas in - or near the urban fringes; the actors with the legitimate authority and powers to rule and regulate; the local and regional government institutions; and future stakeholders; the actors who need to invest their capital in enterprises and/or area development and while doing so generate jobs and additional value and profits that in turn will have to be invested.

3.2.1d What evidence is there of impact of measures taken?

There are activities that are initiated or boosted in the framework of our SURF project such as:

- **Infrastructure development**
Cycle paths renewed and improved by the regional authority of West Flanders and in the urban fringes of Almelo, Hengelo and Enschede. And for Hamburg the interconnection of horse tracks
- **Improved, more coherent policy implementation**
The launch of an integrated approach in the urban fringe of Enschede, to stimulate new economic activity in the fringe, based on influencing, inspiring and facilitating. No new instruments were developed but the existing instruments were used in a more coordinated way
- **Enterprise coaching**
In Almelo this meant empowering the small initiatives that want to seize the opportunities created by the municipal infrastructure investments
- **Regional branding**
As a government body of West Flanders wanting to create a bottom up process, it started the mission with no clear vision on the area. This approach appeared to be quite successful due to the lack of constraints experienced.

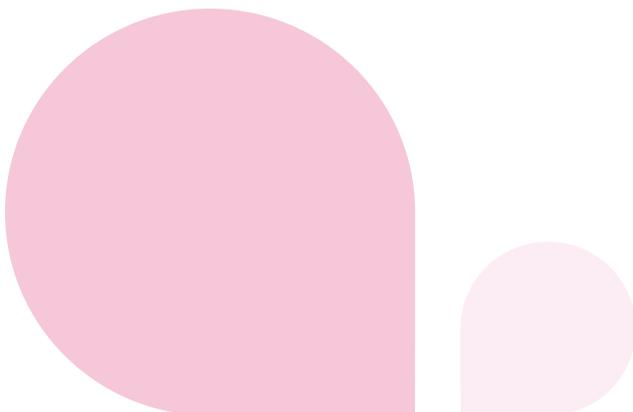
It started with a concrete and small-scale activity with the urban fringe stakeholders who build on and contribute to the regional branding of their region and at the same time built cohesion and communities. Once these communities were established and gained sufficient mutual trust, a broader vision on the identity and development strategy of the region/fringe was developed, allowing the circle of stakeholders to grow, with an attractive narrative that embraced the vision. In this way the government institutions facilitated the visioning process and developed a coherent and focused community at the same time

3.2.1e Concluding remarks

All of the activities embarked on during the SURF project generated generally positive effects: regarding the attitude of policymakers to support these initiatives in cash and in kind; and considering public opinion on the process leading up to an endorsed vision on the preferred developments of the urban fringe. Although the SURF project did not seek to generate statistical evidence about competitiveness changes, many of the partners in the SURF projects reported that their initiatives contributed to more entrepreneurship and community involvement in their urban fringes. Competitiveness gains can cause tension with other aspects of sustainability, for instance impacts on the quality of green spaces. For example, SURF witnessed agribusiness developments that turn the green urban fringes into industrial landscapes with warehouses and glasshouses (Belgium and West Flanders) that are difficult to distinguish from mono-functional industrial landscapes.



If it can be accomplished that from the outset new businesses adhere to the conditions of sustainability; and that economic development can be embedded in the context of the variety of functions that the urban fringes offer, it would contribute also in the longer term, to sustainable urban fringes. This is after all what the SURF project aimed to do.



3.2.2a Evidence that the theme is significant for the urban fringe

Green spaces, depicted variously as green belt, lungs, ribbons, fingers, axes and zones, comprise a significant part of the urban fringe in all partner areas, from HÄrryda where almost the entire urban fringe area could be described as green space, to others where green spaces cross-cut the fringe such as Antwerp, where green fingers extend in a radial way from the city into rural areas. They vary also in their composition, use and assigned value/level of recognition.

These green space areas are especially significant for the urban fringe not only because they make up a sizable element of it, but because apart from protected designations for nature and recreation they tend not to be protected legally and are often subject to neglect and/or developmental pressure, mainly from housing, transport and industrial expansion. They are seen variously as both the key opportunity in and the most threatened element of, urban fringe areas. The perception of what role these spaces should fulfil is perceived differently, most crucially according to the interests of those who either own or have the land in their sights. Thus an opportunity for developers is considered a threat to those concerned about biodiversity, climate change mitigation, or access to green spaces for recreation. Thus green spaces in urban fringe areas constitute the primary focus of tension about what the role of the urban fringe should be.



During the project SURF partners were asked to rate the main functions of their urban fringe areas. The two functions that appeared most frequently were 'providing the urban population with access to nature and recreation' and 'protecting nature and biodiversity'. The green space functions of the urban fringe are recognised as having particular significance. However what the work also revealed was that detailed land assessments about what has happened to green spaces in the urban fringe over time is lacking, although there are instances where potential exists for this to be redressed (e.g. the Flanders 'spatial account'). Much, however, relied on anecdotal interpretations. The potential to erode green spaces may be easier due to the invisibility or lack of transparency of the process.

3.2.2b What is actually happening in the urban fringe relating to this theme?

One widespread view which emerged through the SURF theme work is that urban fringes and the green spaces in them are often perceived as extensions of neighbouring conurbations with the result they are the target of encroachment. In some areas they are explicitly designated as potential growth points, in others valuable forest land has already become housing, and the associated development measures have eroded their environmental functionality. Degradation and fragmentation are indeed widely reported, indicating a low level of value associated with much green space urban fringe land, making it more susceptible to pressure where it is seen as lacking in any useful function. On the other hand instances of mitigation efforts (e.g. in Antwerp) and activity to protect land from, for instance new road infrastructure in HÄrryda, showed a concern about despoliation, and of course, there are cases of natural habitats of exceptional quality as well. The general public in Almelo showed a pride in parts of their green lungs for example.

Diverging trends make generalisation difficult. In some instances urban fringes hold unique qualities in an ecological sense with interesting landscapes and developments aiming to strengthen these. Yet the natural quality in the urban fringe is also under pressure in many places due to the variety of functions fighting for space. Reconciling these is a challenge. This is particularly difficult given that the condition and use of much urban fringe green space is inevitably constrained by the ownership, management and maintenance of the land which is often divided between a multiplicity of sometimes overlapping stakeholders and bodies.

Despite some positive trends, a key factor in understanding why fragmentation and encroachment occur, in addition to this lack of authority and control, is the absence of a coherent approach to the management of urban fringe green space areas (excluding those focused on particular sites of interest). With the exception of Härryda and Enschede, Hengelo and Almelo (5) collectively and the Leeds City Region green infrastructure informal strategy, which have strategies with some interest in protecting the green aspects of the urban fringe, there is a dearth of specific strategies or policies. Furthermore, the urban fringe is allocated in several areas for urban expansion, although complementary measures for connecting and improving open spaces and enhancing trees and woodland are sometimes also in place. Broadly speaking deliberative efforts to improve the spatial quality and enhance the potential of green spaces within urban fringes are patchy. They do exist though; both in fairly rudimentary and more comprehensive form such as the Regional Vision for Twente. The initiatives of interest that have emerged in recent years are largely a reaction to the situation described earlier within this report. Those that are project-led will be covered separately.

3.2.2c Who are the key stakeholders and organisations impacting the evolution of this theme in the urban fringe?

The situation is often complex with many organisations, including many voluntary associations committed to green space protection, as important stakeholders. Inevitably there are conflicts of interests and intentions for the use of land. It frequently appears to be the landowners, business entrepreneurs and government agencies which exert most power and dominate. Jurisdiction is not straightforward, however. Some spaces fall under different levels of governance, overlapping agency control, or between any formal controls. According to one partner there is “no uniformity of approach ... management is scattered,” for another, “green spaces are owned by several services and sections at different levels. This has led to a scattered policy on green spaces. There is no strong vision yet on how to deal with existing open space. New constructions are built, scarce open space is disappearing.”

Limitations of democratic accountability also seem to be an issue with people living in or near the vicinity often (being) unheard and the interests of the city and urban authorities dominating (though arguably the power of ‘NIMBYs’ can also be a powerful counter-force in fringe areas). The predominant consequence of the multiplicity of stakeholders and dispersal of management is the variation in green space quality. Often this is largely dependent on the knowledge and expertise of the municipality and on whether the green space is in private or public hands. Typically about two-thirds of such land is in private hands which can create a conflict between the private character of these green areas and the possible service they could deliver to the broad society. In the UK, a contrast was noted between land under the administration of bodies such as the Woodland Trust where it is easy to see whether the area is being effectively managed as reports are prepared and there is a good level of access and privately owned land where it is more difficult to see whether (it) is being effectively protected or administered as access is limited in areas and objectives and targets are not publicised to the general public. Private landowners themselves vary widely in their aspirations for the land and the objectives set out for it in the public interest are more or less determined by their ambition and goodwill, rather than the deliberations of public policy makers.

3.2.2d What evidence is there of impact of measures taken?



A significant part of SURF partner work focused on the practical enhancement of green connectivity through specific pathways, with attention also given to involving the public in varying ways in landscape enhancement and access. In Almelo this involved “connect(ing) two large green areas (green lungs) and using the potential of an unused canal through which the connection could gain substantially in attractiveness.” Unlocking recreational and accessibility potential “from and to the city fringes for present and future inhabitants,” summarises the green space objectives of their input. Similarly in Antwerp, the concentration was on “bring(ing) open space through the urban fringe into the urban area.” The Laarse Beek case study stream valley, one of the green fingers located in a forested but built-up area, was also selected as an area for the realisation of ecological corridors. In Hårryda attention was particularly given to the restoration of a 38km long “Vildmarksleden,” or track.

The Norfolk project gave broad consideration to green infrastructure in strategic plans for urban areas and the potential to create links and establish a good network of sites in the Gaywood Valley. In all cases, piloting green connections through urban fringe areas has demonstrated the potential and difficulties implicit in improving both the quality and subsequently the use of such spaces.

3.2.2e Concluding remarks

Although it is obvious that the green spaces in urban fringe areas are key to the sustainability of these spatially substantial areas, their value has not been widely appreciated. In small part, through practical case studies, the SURF project partners have attempted to demonstrate how that value can be realised. Fulfilling the potential of green spaces on a wider scale faces substantial challenges associated with the problematic governance, management and control of urban fringe areas.

3.2.3 Spatial planning and stakeholder engagement

3.2.3a Evidence that the theme is significant for the urban fringe

Spatial planning refers to the methods used by the public sector to influence the distribution of people and activities in spaces of various scales. Spatial planning refers both to the planning process itself (communication, stakeholder involvement, decision making) and to the result of the planning process (decisions about land use and division of functions, presented in a map and a planning document and brought into practice by both public and private stakeholders).



Spatial Planning and Stakeholder Involvement was one of the key themes in the SURF project. Due to the position of the urban fringe between urban and rural areas, planning responsibilities are frequently divided, uncoordinated and unclear, and therefore often lead to inadequate decisions, poor amenity and unsustainable practices. This theme was therefore concerned with the means by which management and change is planned, coordinated and brought about in a sustainable way. It included mechanisms which influence the distribution of people and activities connected to infrastructures, business, recreation and nature management in the urban fringe. As part of this theme, there was an emphasis on how to engage interested parties, including local people and businesses, in visioning and planning the urban fringes.

Because the scope of the theme was so broad, it was crucial for all governments working on their urban fringe. Four SURF partners took an active role in this theme group Spatial Planning and Stakeholder Involvement - Aberdeen (UK), Hengelo (NL), East Flanders (Belgium) and Norfolk (UK).

3.2.3b What is actually happening in the urban fringe relating to this theme?

Developments in the urban fringe with regard to spatial planning show divergent patterns. In some regions, the open space in the urban fringes is still under pressure because of plans for development of new residential areas. This seemed to be the case in some of the British SURF partners, e.g. Aberdeen. The Aberdeen City and Shire Structure Plan (6) aims to realise a population growth of 9% (40,000 inhabitants) between 2009 and 2031, and anticipates more than 56,000 new houses will be required in this period for the population (Aberdeen City and Shire SDPA, 2009). Other regions are now experiencing, or anticipate in the near future, a shrinking population and/or a shrinking need for houses and facilities, which leads to opposite developments, for instance in the Netherlands. The region of Twente anticipates a shrinking population around 2025, and recent research on demographic change and spatial development concludes that the municipalities in Twente have 160–320 % more plans for new houses than they need in the coming years (7). In all situations, the function of the urban fringe is changing, from an area mainly for the production of food, to a multifunctional area important for recreation, nature conservation, water management and a broader set of job opportunities.

Spatial planning itself has developed quite rapidly in the last decades, partly as a result of shifting positions of public and private actors. The existing practice of top-down decision making by public authorities is gradually shifting towards a more governance, bottom-up oriented approach. The following trends can be identified with regard to spatial planning in general, and especially with regard to spatial planning in the urban fringes. The exact situation regarding these trends differs per location. Some trends are clearly visible in many locations; others are only visible at a limited number of locations, or are expected trends for the near future. The evidence for these trends and the consequences for government involvement in planning issues in the urban fringe are further elaborated in the Toolkit for Sustainable Urban Fringes.

The tools that have been developed to deal with the new challenges in spatial planning mark the shifts. Many tools aim at building networks, both public and private. A few examples: The Green Knowledge Portal is a collaborative initiative of the region of Twente (consisting of 14 municipalities), the national government, and educational and research institutes. GKP created a place where entrepreneurs, governments, educational and research institutes can jointly work on innovative and regional issues. Another example is the intermunicipal neighbourhood forum in Hamburg, a governance tool to engage several levels of regional and local public administration of Hamburg and its neighbouring municipalities in a regular exchange on development issues. The forum aimed to exchange information on development plans before formal planning processes are started. The Provincial Quality Chamber (PQC) of the province of East Flanders brought together local actors with experts from various disciplines. It aimed to strengthen the aspect of spatial quality in projects in the urban fringe and rural areas. In Aberdeen a Design Review Panel was set up. The panel is a joint venture between Aberdeen City Council and Aberdeenshire Council. It aimed to offer constructive and objective advice at an early stage in the process, which should lead to a better output and a stronger working relationship between all those involved. Friends of Weusthag - Hengelo, a foundation established by the direct stakeholders of the park area. In essence, the tool was a structured way of organising bottom-up initiatives of stakeholders that have a direct interest in the project area. The city of Hengelo facilitates this development. In Norfolk, the project acted as a facilitator for a range of community events and tools which enabled people to value the areas more and encourage community participation and engagement in development plans for the project area.

These and other tools marked the challenge in the urban fringe: stakeholder management and creating effective governance arrangements are key to creating sustainable qualities in the urban fringe.

3.2.3c Who are the key stakeholders and organisations impacting the evolution of this theme in the urban fringe?

There are many key stakeholders. Real estate developers, land owners and other private investors have a substantial influence on developments. As stated previously, the instruments used by local and regional authorities very much aim to engage with a wide group of stakeholders. Nevertheless, governments still play a key role. The planning process still gives, in many cases, exclusive responsibilities to governments. Some partners in SURF were aiming specifically to get private actors in a proactive role. A few examples: West Flanders worked on regional branding in the region, a very important region for the cultivation and processing of vegetables. They also worked on the development of new business models for urban agriculture. The City of Bradford worked closely across a number of sectors and actors in the Worth Valley in a collaborative approach for the development of a future local economic plan with the parish council. This cooperative approach had the potential to improve business opportunities, give more involvement to local communities, gain greater understanding of the issues in the area and develop a shared vision towards a sustainable future for the Worth Valley. The city of Enschede used the concept of Rondje Enschede (Enschede round) as a vehicle to stimulate recreation and tourism in the urban fringe and to create extra opportunities for entrepreneurs in the urban fringe area. In Almelo, a nature NGO (Landschap Overijssel) worked with businesses to improve the quality of biodiversity and green space on the business sites. The local government only facilitates and brings the parties together, since the stakeholders were convinced about the mutual benefit of their work for themselves and the community as a whole. In Norfolk the project worked with a variety of audiences including politicians, landowners, local communities and nature conservation organisations to enable a consistent and clear dialogue between them.



Image: Scott Perkins, Norfolk Biodiversity Partnership

3.2.3d What evidence is there of impact of measures taken?

Many of the results of the SURF projects were not yet visible in physical changes (at the time of print) in the areas in charge, since the period to realise changes in physical planning is usually longer than the SURF project will last. This implies that most of the evidence will be seen on the process level: new ways of cooperation and communication between stakeholders; and a growing awareness of the quality and attractiveness of the urban fringe area among citizens and businesses. This becomes visible in visitor numbers at events organised in the project areas (hundreds of people visiting the Weustday event in the Weusthag area in Hengelo in June 2011 and the opening event of the Enschede round in March 2012), in the work of new coalitions (chapter 2), and in the response to stakeholder consultation activities in the projects like the interactive SWOT in Antwerp.

Physical changes were expected in many SURF project areas, but in most cases on a longer term. Examples are: improvements in the accessibility and the quality of the green space of the Weusthag park in Hengelo; improvement of slow roads (tracks for cyclists and walkers) in West Flanders; transition of a derelict railway track into a track for cyclists, walkers and other touristic traffic (already partially realised at the time of print); improvement of accessibility to the River Don valley for residents in the surrounding neighbourhoods in Aberdeen; and in Norfolk, improving linkages from the Gaywood Valley project area to strategic routes in the wider area of King's Lynn provide a lasting legacy for this urban fringe accessibility.

3.2.3e Concluding remarks

Spatial planning and stakeholder management are key themes in the urban fringe. Sustainable qualities cannot be delivered by governments only. Interaction with and engagement of others, business, NGOs, citizens, education and research, are necessary means. While this holds true in many areas of the city, this is especially salient in the urban fringe. Multifunctionality, fragmented authorities and many involved stakeholders create a need for a much more interactive planning system.

While SURF showed interesting examples of tools that local and regional governments have implemented to cope with this challenge, many more examples will likely be developed over the coming years.

Most of the SURF projects focused on issues like spatial quality, accessibility, job opportunities and recreation. This links to many of the dimensions of sustainability that the project identified especially spatial quality, social quality, economic quality and process quality. The ecological quality dimension of sustainability gets attention in the improvement of biodiversity and green space and in the improvement of the accessibility of the urban fringe for cyclists and walkers. Many other environmental issues do not get substantial attention in the SURF project, although they are very often seen as promising for urban fringe areas. This refers, for example to the use of the urban fringe for production of sustainable energy or the use of the urban fringe for local food production and closing nutrient cycles.



This implies that after SURF there will be many new opportunities to work on sustainable urban fringes, meaning future-oriented integrated quality. The prospects of SURF are promising, but the work will be far from finished.

3.2.4a Evidence that governance is significant for the urban fringe

The interdependencies of cities and their fringes, the recognition of multifunctionality in urban fringes and concepts such as green infrastructure and ecosystem services all represent powerful ideas in the context of SURF. A number of current EU supported research and dissemination programmes suggest that new governance approaches are required to address these ideas and capitalise on them effectively in urban fringes.

There is no consensus about what shape any improved governance should take and very little research completed into possible models. Some argue that formal structures are needed to face up to the challenges ahead; structures that have powers sufficient to make things happen when faced with resistance by traditional government bodies. Others take a more reflexive approach, arguing that the barriers to creating substantial new government structures, together with a history of failed attempts to create long-term city region and region structures, mean it is probably more appropriate to pursue more consensual, voluntary and bottom-up methods of cooperation (8). Less formal governance for the urban fringe is also a more realistic approach in current recessionary times when extra resources for government will be hard to find. However some degree of longevity, mutual commitment and formalised reward for cooperation and some sanctions for failure to cooperate do seem to be needed to sustain collaborative governance in city regions and city networks.

This more collaborative approach to governance has been described as 'soft governance', dependent more on informal stakeholder relationships than on democratic forums and is more action-oriented than strategically-oriented, most often not replacing but running in parallel with formal regional and sub-regional administrations, while harnessing the power of new ideas and acting flexibly and quickly to define problems and design new policy solutions. The role of individuals in these soft governance structures requires attention, when considering their role, power and capacity to make change and influence. It must also be recognised that when certain individuals move on from poignant roles within such structures, the dynamic of soft governance approaches and groups changes, therefore consideration to potential possibilities needs to be considered.

3.2.4b What is actually happening in the urban fringe relating to governance?

Interreg and other EU-supported projects (such as METREX, RURBAN, URMA, PLUREL etc.) have explored and continue to explore possibilities for urban fringe governance. Some of the findings so far are mentioned in the Governance Model chapter of this report. This chapter will focus on what can be observed in SURF areas, which often reflects the wider lessons from other projects.

As expected at the time of the SURF bid, the city region scale of thinking about urban fringes became important. Urban fringe issues and opportunities are widely seen in the parts of the SURF networks that are located in city-regions (sometimes also designated as metropolitan region or polycentric city network) as integral to the governance structure needed to respond to the threats and opportunities of conurbations in the North Sea Region. SURF projects located in Härryda (the Gothenburg city region), Aberdeen (the Aberdeen city region), Bradford (the Leeds city region) and Hamburg (the Hamburg metropolitan region) are all located in regions with some formal structures that recognise and include urban fringe interests. On a similar scale the Network City Twente (including Enschede, Hengelo and Almelo) and much more localised SLS network of West Flanders, also share key elements of the joined-up governance that urban fringes are widely agreed to need.

3.2.4c Who are the key stakeholders and organisations impacting the evolution of this theme in the urban fringe?

There is no common approach to governance found across these areas. Sectoral priorities vary, with a widespread commitment to environmental sustainability, enterprise promotion, recreation and tourism development. These are the topics which tend to dominate SURF partner activities, with many partners focused on very local initiatives to promote those topics. The topics do not determine the style of governance found; rather the governance approach is influenced by the acceptance of the multifunctional characteristics of the challenges facing urban fringe and the complex established layers of government with overlapping geographic boundaries, functional responsibilities and funding mechanisms. Pressure for joined-up thinking and action comes both from above (from a strategic level it seems obvious that different metropolitan functions have to coordinate) and from below (when implementing projects the multiplicity of stakeholders needed to make things happen on the ground becomes clear). Acceptance of multifunctionality really demands joined-up collaborative governance responses and emerging policy concepts such as green infrastructure can only work well in collaborative governance structures such as those at city region level.

Urban fringe governance is never simple. The business of the urban fringe tends to be multi-sectoral (reflecting urban fringe multifunctionality), multi-level and engages many stakeholders. The management of the complex levels, functions and memberships of urban fringe decision-making and project delivery reflects the overall complexity and can be very time-consuming for the usually small agencies trying to effect change in the urban fringe. Adding to the complexity can be the different backgrounds of the stakeholders, with politicians, business people, residents and activists having urban fringe governance.

There are varying levels of top-down encouragement by national and regional governments for cooperation by municipalities within sub-regional governance structures. This can include encouragement to make regional spatial plans, unified public transport strategies, shared economic growth policies, etc. which can benefit regional and national economies. This is done in different ways in different countries and can vary over time, with the most effective arrangements being where top-down national encouragement coincides with city-region level self-interest, e.g. in Leeds, Hamburg and Gothenburg little interest in how sub-regional governance connects with the local scale varies greatly, but this level was very important for some SURF partners. For example, Stad-Land-Schap in West Flanders was an important bridge for local businesses gaining access to regional environmental grants, and in Bradford the SURF project took steps to connect local urban fringe neighbourhoods with the city region level of policy-making.



3.2.4d What evidence is there of impact of measures taken?

Measures of success in governance in the urban fringe are hard to obtain. The outcomes tend to be long-term and SURF had only just 'got into its stride', the available measures are mainly those of changing perceptions and of engagement with emerging governance measures. Perception of the logic for better governance was raised through SURF partner activities and transnational comparisons, both between SURF regions and some regions outside SURF. Impacts in terms of raised levels of engagement of stakeholders with SURF activities can be quantified. Examples of lively stakeholder engagement include: the large turnout for the Leeds City Region conference on urban fringes in April 2011; the Hamburg series of suburbia colloquia has involved many key stakeholders in urban fringe discourses in that region; the Hamburg Neighbourhood Forums attract key people from government and business; in East Flanders civil servants come together with experts and project initiators in the context of the Provincial Quality Chamber to discuss and strengthen specific development; in Enschede dialogue between stakeholders has enabled the Urban fringes: Network City Twente study to be commissioned and published, which has helped consolidate stakeholder network development there.

3.2.4e Concluding remarks

The emerging governance arrangements described above and in the Governance Model chapter point towards a growing realisation that better networking of stakeholders in 'soft governance' settings needs to emerge to complement existing 'hard government' structures which often fail to serve the interests of the urban fringe.

It is important that improved governance is adopted if the emerging challenges and opportunities of the urban fringe are to be effectively addressed. There is no avoiding the complexity of urban fringe challenges and the difficulties of changing existing outmoded structures, but such change is necessary if the potential for improved competitiveness and sustainability of the urban fringe is to be realised.



URBAN FRINGES GOVERNANCE



4.1 Background

Little is known about how urban fringes are governed or how they could be better governed. However, there has been much work done on metropolitan and city-region governance as its importance is recognised for improving the competitiveness and sustainability of city regions (8). As this work has progressed, the need to include peri-urban areas in any planned metropolitan changes has been acknowledged to complement and reinforce city-region success and resilience (9). In the SURF project application the partnership committed to working across urban/rural boundaries in the search for competitiveness and sustainability. The Governance theme report in chapter 3 provides more discussion of government and governance in urban fringes.

SURF looked first at what has emerged out of city-region scale governance work, from the SURF capitalisation analysis, to see what lessons might be drawn for urban fringes. Metropolitan scale analysis flows from debates that continue to engage leading EU politicians e.g. the Rotterdam Acquis, the Bristol Accord, and the Leipzig Charter, so it is important that those operating in urban fringes, which tend to have a lower political profile, are aware of those discourses and link them to their own interests. Lessons from SURF partner areas were studied and recommendations based on a synthesis of the two sources of information were produced.

SURF cannot suggest a single overriding model of successful urban fringe governance, and this reflects the emerging nature of urban fringe governance. Too little is known about what works in metropolitan or lower-scale collaborative governance; it is contingent on particular regional and temporal circumstances. The closest SURF got to a model was to identify important dimensions of urban fringe governance approaches that seem to offer the most potentially useful learning opportunities for the most regions. These are referred to in the SURF recommendations.



4.2 Governance at the city-region scale

A current driver of debates about metropolitanised governance is the emerging post-2013 EU cohesion policy picture which many want to influence in favour of metropolitan and other urban areas (10). However, despite growing recognition of urban fringe spaces for EU policies, there has been little engagement in EU policy-making circles with city regions (11). At some national and regional levels there have been interesting governance developments. European networks such as METREX describe examples of polycentric city networks working together across political, urban and rural boundaries to gain competitiveness. This has obvious significance for urban fringe areas and SURF has taken notice of their findings (8).

Emerging common features of metropolitan level governance

After a review of metropolitan level governance projects and literature, the following governance features emerged as useful context for the search for an urban fringe governance model:

Key policy challenges for metropolitan governance:

- promoting and retaining economic competitiveness of the city and region
- providing a high quality of life for residents, immigrants and investors
- promoting environmental sustainability
- securing joined-up governance of complex administrative areas with both 'rural' and 'urban' characteristics

Key policy interventions:

- coordinated major public infrastructure projects
- various economy measures including collaborative industrial sector and business cluster strategies, and tourism promotion
- green interventions including green (or green/blue) infrastructure, nature and flood plain protection, regional food production and branding
- liveability and quality-of-life measures - recreational spaces and access, sustainable travel
- top-down encouragement by national and regional governments for cooperation by municipalities in sub-regional governance structures
 - to make regional spatial plans, unified public transport strategies, shared economic growth policies, etc.

Key governance structure features:

- voluntary associations of municipalities cooperating on a variety of policy measures
- varying degrees of inclusiveness of non-elected officials, but often including business, community and special interest stakeholders;
- different levels of structure, multi-level, for different tasks ranging from localised to regional co-operations
- seeking integration of urban and rural organisations and programmes;
- a wide variety of ways to encourage bottom-up engagement in decision making by local residents and communities
- predominance of soft governance forms which co-exist with elected government bodies
- often short-term, narrow purpose and task-oriented bodies dependent on fixed-term funding

4.3 What was learned from the SURF partner regions about governance?

Three contrasting examples of city-region/city-network policy collaboration provide interesting insights into different perspectives and experiences.

Leeds City Region represents an attempt to comprehend and respond to a polycentric arrangement of economically mutually-related major towns and cities in a largely post industrial context; albeit recent resource cuts have complicated the task. Hamburg has a dynamic relationship with surrounding areas that exists at different spatial levels and with varying political priority levels. Stad-Land-schap 't West-Vlaamse hart (SLS) is a project for a small-scale network of towns in West Flanders with a bottom-up remit to promote mutual understanding and interventions on urban fringe priority issues. It is a short-term funded agency which has had to adapt to rapidly shifting resource pressures, of a type often found in urban fringe situations, and is currently going through something of a reinvention/adaptation to survive.

Leeds City Region (LCR)

The Leeds City Region (LCR) is one of eight in the north of England designated by national government. It is a relatively informal governance structure to address multi-sector policy concerns through an association of 10 district councils. It has limited staff and financial resources, but has access to central government funds through bidding processes and attempts to influence emerging concerns through persuasion and strategic logic. The key goal of the LCR is promoting the city region economy and its global competitiveness, but there are policies to support this which promote environmental sustainability, such as a Green Infrastructure Strategy. A low carbon city region project has recently been launched to reduce CO2 emissions at the same time as boosting the economy.

The key sectoral goals are promoted through sectoral committees/working groups and key decisions are made by the main LCR Board which has equal voting rights for each of the constituent districts. The chief executives and civic leaders of all the districts are represented equally in decision making, an important way to avoid the big cities dominating strategy-making and avoiding political tensions. Business leaders are involved at a high level, notably through an enterprise partnership led by a businessman. Some sector policy groups are also business-led.

At the more local level, where the SURF project is particularly linked with the LCR, practitioners in some areas are working out how best to engage residents, councillors and businesses in the emerging 'localism agenda' of UK central government as it affects small towns in the urban fringe, distilled out in the formal spatial plan making process. In doing so, the SURF project sought to bridge the political gap that parallels the large geographic gap between LCR and its urban fringe localities. A number of initiatives, from city-region level conferences of urban fringe representatives to local engagement of rural policy officers with stakeholders, are being tried out. A key challenge is to engage local people in broader strategic city-region thinking, avoiding NIMBY responses to development proposals, and engender formal and informal inter-community cooperation that can promote mutual interests and shared knowledge and resources.

Free and Hanseatic City of Hamburg

Hamburg as a federal city-state has a long tradition of cross-border cooperation with its neighbouring federal states Schleswig-Holstein and Lower Saxony. The city has been encouraged by the federal government's policy for city networks in metropolitan regions and the Concepts and Strategies for Spatial Development in Germany (partly in response to the EU Lisbon and Gothenburg strategy and the new territorial agenda for 2020 (11) to form large-scale alliances with surrounding federal states (Laender). Since 1996 there has been a Hamburg Metropolitan Region (MRH) voluntary cooperation forum working on economic, energy and mobility strategies and the international competitiveness of the region. There are a number of initiatives being pursued on the large scale of regional cooperation with the number and type of partners varying with the initiatives. For example, the Fehmarnbelt tunnel, part of MORO Nord, is a major infrastructure project to link Hamburg with the Oresund region where economic collaboration extends to all surrounding rural areas. In another example, HafenCity University Hamburg is a lead partner in an Interreg IVC project on urban-rural partnerships in metropolitan areas (URMA) which aims to identify new models for cooperation and governance by 2015.



Whereas Hamburg metropolitan region is growing bigger and some fields of cooperation even reach out beyond the region, Hamburg's SURF project focuses on the narrower core of the city region - a part of the metropolitan region that has been overlooked in recent years. The project is trying to improve cooperation across the urban fringe and suburban areas through a programme of colloquia, with invited experts and workshops to promote common understandings. There is an initiative on inter-municipal neighbourhood forums to facilitate political engagement across municipal boundaries to help anticipate and deal with potential policy conflict points.

The project defines itself as focused on suburbia rather than urban fringes, in other words on the more built-up inner parts of the urban fringe where growth and development dialogues are especially vigorous and politically charged. The inter-municipal neighbourhood forums are a series of arrangements covering quadrants of the urban fringe where dialogue about development is most pressing and the stakeholders are primarily municipal officials and politicians, rather than the broader make-up of stakeholders found in similarly named forums in other city regions – notably those in the Leeds City Region SURF project. The inter-municipal neighbourhood forums will help to identify the most urgent and promising topics of future cross-border cooperation.

West Flanders

West Flanders and the Stad-Land-schap 't West-Vlaamse Hart (SLS) localised collaborative governance network project represents an attempt by a collection of small towns, in a largely agricultural area under strong urban development pressures, to advance a coherent response to related issues of economy, natural feature protection, tourist promotion, etc. It is in contrast to the city-region scale structures described elsewhere and represents what is possible in smaller networks of towns with limited resources but shared issues in an urban fringe area.

It is a fixed-term voluntary cooperation of nine small municipalities funded by a small local tax supplement and it works alongside a number of similarly modestly resourced common projects addressing social welfare, job creation and training and rural development. The SLS project focuses on promoting landscape identity and value across urban-rural boundaries through working out a green/blue recreational network, linking nature sites, producing a landscape vision integrated with slow ways (paths). SLS operates from the sub-provincial level regional house in Roeselare.



From a governance perspective SLS is of interest because:

- stakeholders involved in SLS reflect a strong networking ethos, including experts and residents in a soft governance approach
- although small, SLS deals with multifunctional domains of landscape/nature/recreation/education/heritage and works to influence governance and policy through forums, networks and lobbying
- it works with local university researchers and students to help produce new ideas and designs at low cost to SLS
- strong working links with local farmers and landowners on landscape business plans
- building public awareness, recognition and community involvement by using branding and developing a website, newsletters, festivals and public events

Although largely successful, the SLS as a fixed-term project has had to reinvent itself in order to continue with its most important work. Like many other sub-regional associations, it has had to adapt to resource constraints creatively and move away from a soft governance model to secure continuity and resources as a regional landscape in the Flanders regional government system. It may be seen as a successful experiment in urban fringe governance which attracted enough political kudos during its initial phase to be adopted in mainstream regional governance structures, adding innovative elements to existing practices. The nature protection aspects of SLS will be reinforced, but at the expense to some extent of its distinct bottom-up locally-embedded approach.

4.4 Conclusion: Progress towards an urban fringe governance model

Any model for urban fringe governance needs to be effective at cognitive level (compelling arguments in favour, credible policy goals, etc.), at organisational level (stakeholder network, democratic position, financing packages, roles and responsibilities, etc.) and at a spatial level (the geography and boundaries of the urban fringe, land uses, nature and other designations, development forms).

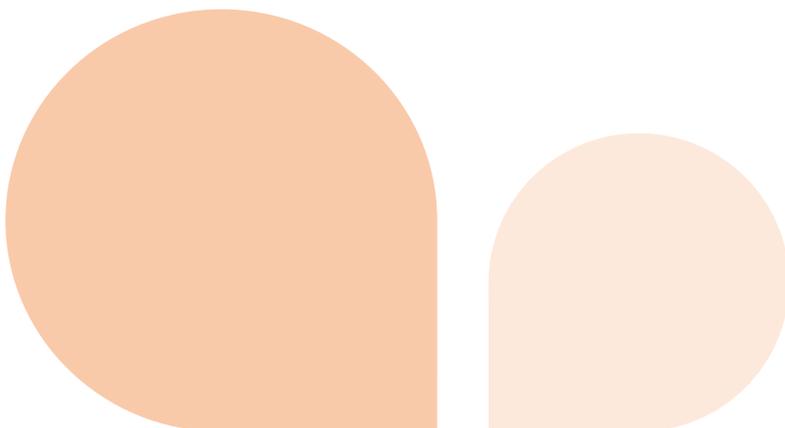
The spatial boundaries, scales and designations are discussed in relation to the spatial planning theme, so attention will be focused here on the cognitive and organisation levels of urban fringe governance.

In relation to the cognitive level, the arguments have been made above, elsewhere in this report and by an increasing number of EU-funded and other policy projects. In the SURF partner areas some key motivations for engaging in urban fringe governance were noticed:

- the motivations identified by SURF, including better quality of life for residents, desire to protect nature, promote the local economy, and seek sustainability were all important policy drivers
- working across the urban-rural boundary was sometimes difficult, especially if urban interests were seen as a threat by more rural communities
- these motivations attracted quite high levels of political support and politicians were attracted by SURF interventions which were quick wins and helped to justify urban fringe projects
- more joined-up approaches and sharing officers across municipal boundaries was attractive and allowed higher levels of expertise about urban fringe issues to be employed
- green/blue infrastructure interventions were popular and encouraged cooperation between authorities and sectors

At the organisational level, a number of responses were observed:

- cooperative actions in respect of multifunctional urban fringe did not require large organisations or large staffs – quite small organisations were doing sophisticated joined-up policy thinking and running inclusive stakeholder networks
- stakeholder networks which included both hard government and soft governance elements (e.g. including politicians, third sector and businesses) were a widespread feature
- hard government remains critical to coordinating, staffing and financing urban fringe organisation, even for soft governance networks
- urban fringe organisations can work at several levels in the same area, e.g. regional, provincial, city and community levels, which can be challenging for joined-up governance and political coordination
- urban fringe agencies can work effectively despite limited resources and short lifespans, but resource limits can be disruptive
- small supplements of local taxes to pay for urban fringe organisations have had some success
- business stakeholders can be encouraged by promoting economy-focused initiatives such as tourism and local food production and marketing
- many stakeholders have narrow interests in the urban fringe so government leadership is normally required to produce and maintain strategic policy interventions and to ensure that important elements of strategy are not overlooked
- the role, power and influence of individuals as part of soft governance structures need to be taken into consideration when planning urban fringe developments. Contingencies need to be considered for when individuals move on from such partnerships/groups



Chapter 5

INTEGRATED POLICY GUIDELINES AND APPROACHES TOWARDS URBAN FRINGE PLANNING AND MANAGEMENT



5.1 Introduction

SURF started with a belief in the potential of the urban fringe. With the right management and development of these areas they can function as a catalyst to sustain a city's economic, social and environmental potential.

The aim of SURF was to review existing policies on urban fringes and build up a common approach towards these areas. This approach has led to a set of guidelines to influence local, regional, national and EU policies to achieve sustainable economic development and competitiveness of urban fringes.

Through the partner projects and the themes used to analyse these projects, several guidelines have been determined for a successful approach to sustaining the urban fringe. These guidelines are formulated by recommendations for the different government levels within Europe.



Image:
Gemma Clark,
Norfolk County Council

5.2 Local level recommendations

The local level is the point in which most contacts between government, citizens and stakeholders, including the private sector, take place. The recommendations for this level are more concrete than for more strategic levels. However, the impact of the local level recommendations will be multiplied when they are applied on the regional level. They are:

<p>Recognise and promote the opportunities for multifunctionality presented by urban fringes:</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - by being open to the variety of uses for these areas, they can strengthen a city's offering, add to a city's competitiveness and offer sustainable solutions to city region level challenges - by regarding the urban fringe as an incubator zone for new types of enterprises that contribute to sustainable development
<p>Recognise that an attractive urban fringe gives cities a positive and stronger identity:</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - this can lead to more opportunities for a city such as increased tourism, health benefits and opportunities for business
<p>Build up a recreational infrastructure in and around the urban fringe:</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - this improves the context and opportunities for entrepreneurs and communities to enhance the economic and recreational functions of the urban fringe
<p>Engage citizens and other stakeholders to recognise and relate to the urban fringe environment and make use of collaborative thinking and actions in the acceptance of multifunctionality:</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - collaboration can be an enabler to urban fringe development and sustainability
<p>Build up an informal network next to the formal structures:</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - by making use of these informal and practical approaches than strategically orientated, stakeholder's networks can be developed to develop projects

Recognise the value of urban fringe-specific enterprises, rooted in identifiable urban fringe space, communities and opportunities:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - interaction between rooted enterprises and citizens and other stakeholders enlarges the resilience of urban fringes - enterprise coaching can be of great value for these specific entrepreneurs
Recommend the use of the SURF toolkit for project development activities in the urban fringe:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - this unique toolkit for the urban fringe can offer practical guidance of successful methods for urban fringe development

5.3 Regional recommendations

For urban fringes the regional (or city region) level is of great importance. Certainly the zones of urban fringes of cities overlap each other. Coordination between cities is necessary and for this to be achieved, a city region level of governance, decision making and spatial planning should be recommended.

Recommend to develop a regional strategy on urban fringes with attention to green infrastructure, competitiveness and spatial planning:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - specific attention should be given to the connections between the urban and rural areas in regions, in order to unlock the recreational, tourism and accessibility potentials - regional branding can support regional activities to strengthen the urban fringes identity
Recognise that spatial planning for urban fringes is an iterative planning process instead of an imposed procedure:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - by doing this more space is provided for stakeholder engagement and subsequently the results of the process benefit the acceptance by stakeholders

5.4 National/ European recommendations

Although in most countries the national level is not really involved in the development of urban fringes, they must be aware of the importance of these areas for city economies. The role of national governments is growing to be more supportive of the development of urban fringes by cities. They also have an important position on a European level to ensure that Europe pays more attention to urban fringes.

Urban fringes tend to be under pressure and lacking cohesion in Europe. The balance between urban and rural areas and between economic, social need and nature must be restored by developing in a sustainable way. If this development is implemented informally and sympathetically it can add value to quality of life and sustainable development in urban and rural areas, even in situations of demographic changes. However, in Europe there is little discourse and less policy attention paid in respect of these opportunities. Because so many Europeans live in these relatively inchoate areas SURF pleads for more European awareness of the opportunities to coherently and sustainably develop urban fringes.

To reinforce this, activity is needed to:

<p>Formally identify the urban fringe and document the uses of urban fringe areas within each European city region so that accessible knowledge of the opportunities presented by these areas are available:</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - by communicating the multifunctional and sustainable opportunities presented by the urban fringe, understanding of the possibilities is increased and action is easier to take
<p>Formulate long term visions for urban fringes within Europe:</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - a combined European-wide urban fringe vision could Europe more competitive and contribute to the quality of life for citizens and opportunities available for businesses
<p>Develop and maintain dedicated soft governance architecture to complement and, where necessary, replace existing hard government structures which often fail to serve the interests of the urban fringe:</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - European acknowledgement that flexible approaches are needed in the absence of generalised, one-size-fits-all urban fringe policy to enable development and management of the urban fringe appropriate to circumstance - understanding the city/cities to which the urban fringe connects, how it operates, where and how power is distributed and how partnership and collaboration between all levels can be enhanced
<p>Create policy that recognises the identity and explicit needs of the urban fringe:</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - bridge the gap between existing urban and rural policy with specific policy for the urban fringe. Create connective policy that complements and enhances urban and rural policy to strengthen a city's and a region's offering and offer sustainable opportunities for generations to come - adapt urban and rural policy to accommodate the urban fringe area and formally note specifics for the sustainable management and development of these areas

5.5 Policy in practice

What is needed now to make positive change within the urban fringe? SURF identified that collaboration is a key element to influencing and seeing change. For change to occur, managers working on urban fringe projects need to not only focus on the activities required to physically enhance the urban fringe, they also need to lobby for change at a local and national level and where possible, engage with organisations and projects looking to deliver change at the European level.

SURF has aimed to achieve a balance at these three levels; local, regional and national, to demonstrate that a range of agencies, individuals or groups can influence change and make a positive impact on the future of the urban fringe, irrelevant of position or authority within ones organisation or city. In the longer term, the SURF partners are committed to continuing to share experience, ideas and best practice with each other and with other regions in Europe.



Image: Scott Perkins, Norfolk Biodiversity Partnership

CONCLUSION

THE FUTURE FOR THE URBAN FRINGE



Opportunities for the urban rural connection

The SURF Project brought together 13 partners from five countries to work transnationally while balancing the pursuit of individual project ambitions.

Within this report, SURF has categorised the main influencing factors that bear on the urban fringe (within the project European sample), which enabled the analysis of the potential opportunities offered by these areas to be revealed.

SURF identified that to strengthen the urban rural connection there remains a number of factors which need to be addressed. If the future competitiveness and sustainability of city regions are to combine recognition of the opportunities presented by the urban fringe as an enabler and asset to future development, the barriers acknowledged within the SURF project need to be formally addressed and practical approaches adopted to facilitate positive and most importantly sustainable change.

There is an overarching need to create specific urban fringe policy at a national and regional level; policy that is not limited to either urban or rural policy, but is able to flex with the needs of the multifunctional urban fringe area. Such policy then needs to be filtered down to local practices and built into local policy and governance methods to enable urban fringe projects to be efficiently integrated into the greater ambitions of city regions.

SURF would argue that:

- urban fringe joined-up policy thinking is desirable and necessary for certain purposes
- this can be achieved in different ways by different agencies and at different levels (although a city-region/city network level makes most sense)
- EU encouragement through policy guidance and funding would be beneficial and speed up national/regional level adoption of SURF ideas in more places

Aligned with the increasing need for appropriate policy, SURF revealed effective approaches and practices which allow urban fringe areas to be developed and efficiently managed. In the implementation projects SURF revealed a number of circumstances where the urban fringe was effectively managed and where wider benefit and good practice examples emerged. Additionally, SURF provided a pragmatic view on the challenges that remain for the urban fringe and suggested methods that, if adopted, at city region level, could alleviate specific barriers.

Soft governance approaches have proved to be successful enablers for urban fringe projects and allow delivery of ambitions that connect with the needs of the city region and offer opportunities for the future of the city region. However, traditional elected hard government remains important and has potential to be more effectively focused on urban fringes alongside emerging soft approaches.

Spatial planning and stakeholder management are key elements in urban fringe development and management. SURF noted that sustainable qualities cannot be delivered by governments alone. Interaction and engagement of both internal and external agents is necessary to enable development of the urban fringe. Multifunctionality, fragmented authorities and many involved stakeholders create a need for a planning system that is much more interactive, and there were positive signs that a range of agencies and communities were engaging with these issues in different ways and at different levels of policy and delivery.

Appreciating the value of green spaces within the urban fringe remains a challenge. Future scope remains for city regions to realise the potential of greenspace opportunities within the urban fringe as an asset to city region competitiveness and quality of life. New policy concepts such as ecosystem services and green infrastructure provide opportunities for policymakers to intervene more strategically and dynamically in green space management.

The opportunities for enterprise in the urban fringe are supported by benefits such as more affordable land prices and prices for real estate in comparison to the more urbanised areas. This can make the urban fringe a favourable area for starting up new businesses. Additionally, the urban fringe can provide areas to facilitate urban overspill of small enterprises and institutions like universities formerly operating in the city core. However, competitiveness gains can cause tension with other aspects of sustainability, for instance impacts on the quality of green spaces. If new enterprise developments adhere to the conditions of sustainability from the outset, the opportunities presented by the urban fringe as an enabler for competitiveness and enterprise can be achieved.

The many urban fringe interventions observed at local and city region levels would be greatly assisted if there were more substantial policy guidance and supportive measures in place at EU level.

Exploring possibilities – the SURF case studies

The challenge for many SURF partners was to determine the legacy of their projects and to ensure that the future ambitions of these areas were financially sustainable and that the necessary additional resources to ensure delivery of future ambitions and ownership were planned.

All SURF partners have considered the future of their project areas and explored a range of possibilities for continuing the development, maintenance and long-term management of these unique areas. For example, partners who formed collaborative steering groups from the project outset and planned for legacy activities and passing on ownership have placed themselves in an advantageous position to secure the future of their urban fringe developments.

The SURF partners have influenced, guided, and learned from each other and shared a common approach towards the development of the urban fringe. The collaborative and transnational activities developed within the partnership remain following the SURF project conclusion as there was awareness and project agreement that this knowledge should be shared with others in Europe.

The SURF partners aligned to maintain a transnational approach and continue to share and gain expertise transnationally, as well as to build case study legacy plans into their own city projects.

In **Aberdeen** progress was made in SURF on the development of The River Don Corridor Framework, which was designed to deliver a legacy for the vision of this urban fringe and provide a level of protection for the area from future development by external parties. Combined with the development of Aberdeen City Council's Geographical Information System (GIS), the city's open spaces, including the project area, will now be integrated with city spatial planning.

The City of **Bradford** Worth Valley Project sought to put in place a sustainable community engagement process which allowed those at the urban fringe to connect both horizontally and vertically in decision making processes affecting their future, through collaboration on the area's new parish plan. It is hoped that the legacy of SURF will be long-term confidence in the effectiveness of community engagement in city region planning for the urban fringe.

The **Norfolk** County Council Gaywood Valley Project leaves a legacy of practical methods to enable the future development of the project area, such as signage and interpretation panels, the development of a website forum, and the planning of community engagement events. The innovative GIS-based virtual-reality film showing landscape, cultural and historical interpretation of the site commissioned by the project also allows for future activities to be planned and managed. An environmental baseline report for the valley and a community wildlife toolkit will also enable local communities to value the area and become more proactively involved in its management.

The City of **Enschede** Rondje Enschede Project saw the creation of a regional vision and urban fringe strategy for the Twente region in collaboration with the cities surrounding Enschede and a number of other authorities

where their urban fringes overlap. The development of an implementation strategy aligned to the Twente Region vision will provide a legacy of activities to further develop this urban fringe area.

The City of **Almelo** Northern Park Project exceeded its project ambitions during the SURF project life through the development of an additional accessible route connecting the urban fringe to the city of Almelo. The increased connectivity and accessibility to this project area will draw more people into the urban fringe and encourage more use of this area.

Through the creation of the Friends of Weusthag group, the City of **Hengelo** positively engaged with the community, empowering residents to deliver activities and take ownership of future plans for the project area and it is hoped that this group will continue with this process.

Through the use of the Provincial Quality Chamber, the Province of **East Flanders** developed methods to work within current governmental practices, but also for creativity to be engineered to allow more attention to the urban fringe and its importance in the urban planning process, providing a positive legacy for future urban fringe development within the city region.

The creation and success of the Stad-Land-Schap provided an integral factor in the legacy plans for the Province of **West Flanders**. The agreement to continue this cooperation beyond the conclusion of the SURF project will, it is hoped, be an enabler for future development, ownership and protection of the urban fringe areas within West Flanders.

The province of **Antwerp** laid the foundations for a long-term process towards an improved quality of open space in the urban fringe in the north east of the city of Antwerp, structured around the watercourse Laarse Beek. To maintain the enthusiasm and keep people engaged in a long-term process, the realisation of a quick-win proved crucial. The cooperation built with varying government personnel and the creation of specific task-focused groups within the project provided a framework and supporting methods that will be replicated post SURF. Additionally, the interactive website which was developed should keep local people and visitors connected to the urban fringe.

The implementation of the Suburbia Project in **Hamburg** ensured that recognition of the importance of the urban fringe to a metropolitan area the size of Hamburg, with so many different political and governmental boundaries, increased. The creation of a spatial analysis/monitoring structure is still in development and will result in increasing the information on the urban fringe zone. It will include the collation of information such as statistical features, current developments, plans, policies and programs that directly concern the urban fringe. The final product from this analysis will be a number of maps that can visualize and present developments in Hamburg's urban fringe areas and, it is hoped, inform future development for the city region.

The Municipality of **Härryda** successfully showcased the importance of collaboration with different power players involved with the urban fringe. Notably within Härryda, the number of private landowners and farmers who crossed the walking track boundaries proved to be an initial barrier to project development, however the remaining task is now the maintenance and development of the walking track to ensure this urban fringe project continues to offer residents a green recreational environment.

The examples noted above illustrate the potential for many types of policy intervention and different governance approaches in urban fringes, all of which provide useful lessons for other parts of the North Sea Region. These local initiatives, together with more generic suggestions included in other parts of this Final Report and in the Toolkit show how dynamic and complex a place the urban fringe is. They also show there is no magic key which fits all circumstances in all regions, so how these lessons are applied will need to be contingent on local and regional circumstances. A key remaining challenge for policy makers will be to take on board the lessons provided through the SURF project and apply them effectively to their own circumstances and localities.

MANAGING THE URBAN FRINGE - ACCESSIBLE LEARNING

The Sustainable Urban Fringes (SURF) project made a commitment *“to create a web- based long-term sustainable network of experts, practitioners, businesses, institutions, community development organisations and linking it to (those) existing.”*(12)

The aim was to ensure the longevity of work by developing a long-term accessible legacy of learning. This was done by:

- capitalising on existing knowledge by gathering information from previous and existing projects and relevant organisations
- building awareness and strengthening process by establishing network links with related project groups
- developing future orientated processes to ensure that project learning and work produced during SURF is retained and available in years to come

At an early stage in the project, SURF started work on a capitalisation exercise, researching information, reporting and findings from previous related EU projects and related subjects of study. Despite a wide range of previous relevant projects, SURF found that in many cases information on project findings was no longer available.

By focusing on existing information or information in development through current projects, SURF started to build links with projects and organisations lobbying for the recognition of the need for urban fringe/peri-urban policy in Europe.

Collaborative working on policy and practice

Exchanging information and research with related projects and networks enhanced understanding; helped to avoid duplication and build collaborations to take forward the pursuit of higher recognition in Europe of the value of urban fringe/peri-urban areas.

This collaborative working added value through cooperation on the development of the SURF position paper and policy recommendations. SURF shared information with the following projects, networks and organisations:

PURPLE

www.purple-eu.org

The PURPLE Network was set up in 2004 and represents peri-urban territories, where urban and rural features co-exist.

Plurel

www.plurel.net

The Peri-urban Land Use Relationships project was completed in 2010. The project brought together 31 partner organisations from 14 European Countries and China to develop strategies and sustainability assessment tools for urban rural linkages.

Periurban Parks

www.periurbanparks.eu

Periurban is a regional initiative project, which uses the exchange of experiences to improve policies on management of natural suburban areas.

RELU

www.relu.ac.uk

The Rural Economy and Land Use Programme (RELU) aims to advance understanding of the challenges rural areas face, using interdisciplinary research to inform future policy and practice.

METREX

www.eurometrex.org

METREX contributes the metropolitan dimension to policies, programmes and projects from European institutions, the research community, governmental organisations and other networks.

Eurocities

www.eurocities.eu

Eurocities brings together the local governments of more than 140 large cities in over 30 European countries. Working with the EU institutions, they aim to shape the opinions of Brussels stakeholders and shift the focus of EU legislation to allow city governments to tackle strategic challenges at local level.

Developing a lasting legacy

SURF partners contributed to the development of a Dissemination Plan for the project outputs. This was to ensure all documents of transferable learning were retained and readily available after the project completed.

Documents Include:

- Sustainable Urban Fringes (SURF) Final Report
- Sustainable Urban Fringes (SURF) Toolkit
- Analytical Framework
- SWOT 1 Report
- Implementation Lab Reports
- SURF Newsletters
- SURF Annual Reports
- Project Partner Reflective Reports
- Academic Papers
- Presentations

Where can I find SURF-related information?

- The Sustainable Urban Fringes (SURF) official website www.sustainablefringes.eu has been an information hub for documents produced during the course of the project. This website will be maintained for several years beyond the end of the project
- Relevant documents available on SURF project pages on partners' own websites
- SURF established a LinkedIn discussion group to enable discussion on the work being done and the potential for peri-urban and urban fringe areas. This group had a growing membership beyond the SURF partnership and will be maintained beyond the project, to allow the network to continue to share news and information
- Print and digital versions of the SURF Final Report and Toolkit will be distributed to key stakeholders and made available on a data stick. Partners will assist in this information dissemination process by making the information available at local and regional events and conferences
- Documents will be posted on information websites including:
 - KEEP (Knowledge and Expertise in European Programmes) - www.territorialcooperation.eu/frontpage/keepdetail
 - European Urban Knowledge Network (EUKN) – www.eukn.org

SUSTAINABLE URBAN FRINGES (SURF) PROJECT PARTNERS

Bradford Metropolitan District Council Worth Valley Project

Population:

Bradford District covers an area of approximately 400sq km with a population of just over half a million. About 140,000 of the population live in the urban fringe and rural areas.

Area:

The Worth Valley joins Airedale at Keighley and runs in a south westerly direction to the River Aire. It is a mixture of high moorland, valleys, small settlements and villages.

Background:

Airedale was identified as a key growth area in the Leeds City Region as well as in Bradford. The settlements included in this urban fringe area are those that link directly to and feed the core area of Airedale. Its main towns, as well as the cities of Bradford and Leeds, are essential to supporting the economic and social regeneration of the area.

Since the inception of the Airedale masterplan in 2005, extensive networks and relationships have been established at a strategic level and with different organisations.

The project focused on the Worth Valley working with the Haworth, Cross Roads and Stanbury Parish Council in developing a new plan which would engage with people and connect them locally, strategically and with the city region.

The project aimed to:

Engage communities in the urban/rural fringe of Airedale, in particular the Worth Valley, so that they understand and develop their contribution to the competitiveness of the Leeds City Region and the Yorkshire Region through local action.

This was done by:

- developing a sustainable community engagement process that allowed those at the urban fringe to connect both horizontally and vertically in the decision making processes
- identifying strategies, policies and programmes that have an influence on the future of local urban fringe settlements
- understanding and testing how to prioritise strategy, policies and resource issues for the urban fringe
- better targeting of funds for urban fringe maintenance
- use of the above to inform local community settlement plans that will influence strategies and activities and seek to enable communities to contribute and add value and resources

Website: www.airedalepartnership.org



Free and Hanseatic City of Hamburg Suburbia Project

The City of Hamburg is home to 1.7million people and at the core of a metropolitan region with more than 5.5million inhabitants. This consists of three federal states and a large number of counties and communities responsible for urban planning.

The urban rural fringe (suburbia) has a population of 2.3million. Administratively the urban fringe is highly fragmented, with more than 40 local and regional authorities.

Although Hamburg is still a growing city, the urban fringes are affected by suburbanisation. This has changed dramatically during the last decade and is expected to change again in forthcoming years. A trend of re-urbanisation has emerged with suburbia facing economic, social, demographic and spatial pressure as the disadvantages of an old, mostly family-driven housing stock and urban environment with a growing number of elderly residents becomes obvious.

The project aimed to:

With a broad set of activities, Hamburg and its region sought to streamline policies for the administratively-fragmented urban rural fringe and offer a discussion forum for its challenges and potentials. Through joined forces instead of piecemeal planning, suburbia's contribution to regional competitiveness and quality of life should be improved.

This was done by:

- raising awareness of the challenges of the urban rural fringe through communicative measures, including organising a colloquium series called Approaches to Suburbia
- facilitating workshops to develop a common understanding on required policies and joint action
- implementing cross-border intermunicipal fora between Hamburg and adjacent communities to discuss development proposals and plans for the urban fringe
- supporting existing and new cross-border projects and initiatives to improve co-operation
- further developing the instrument of regional parks to improve the quality of life in the urban fringe

Website: www.hamburg.de/regionalentwicklung and www.hamburg.de/suburbia



Province of West Flanders Stad-Land-schap Project

The city region 't West-Vlaamse hart, consists of the city Roeselare and eight surrounding municipalities. This has formed a typical urbanscape (stad-land-schap) with high spatial dynamics in open areas and less intensive dynamics in the centres - 60% of firms are situated outside industrial and business centres and 45% of the housing outside city centres.

Regional governance on spatial planning for this typical urbanscape was non-existent. There were policy plans for urban development and for rural development, but until the founding of a new regional organisation, the Stad-Land-schap, there was no regional governance dealing with spatial quality in the urban, peri-urban and rural areas, with attention for the interaction/link between those areas of this urbanscape.

The founding of the Stad-Land-schap, (the province and nine municipalities) brought a unified approach to rural and urban areas. Stad-Land-schap partners wanted to bring this issue to a higher political level and draw attention to sustainable investment in urbanscapes.

Previously there was a policy for urban development and for rural development, but now there is regional governance dealing with spatial quality in the urban, peri-urban and rural areas – with attention to the links and interactions between these areas.

The project aimed to:

Increase the overall spatial quality of the landscape in the urban area of the city Roeselare, in connection with the surrounding municipalities, leading to better interaction and links between urban areas and countryside.

The municipalities, the province and several organisations planned to investigate how they could work together on enhancing the attractiveness, recreational potential and landscape nature of the region.

This was done by:

- creating a platform for cooperation and networking in Stad-Land-schap 't West-Vlaamse hart
- working out a green-blue recreational network
- converting an old railway track into a safe, green recreational track
- implementing innovative green management techniques
- realising business plans on landscape, especially targeting farmers
- creating a website, landscape journal and regional brand
- holding a transnational Implementation Lab to develop ideas and solutions for the project area
- improving access to green space

Website: www.west-vlaanderen.be

Project Website: www.westvlaamsehart.be



The City of Aberdeen River Don Project

Aberdeen is a compact city of approximately 189 sq kilometres and population of 220,420. It is flanked by two major waterways which originate out with the city:

- The River Dee to the south of the city, which is a Special Area of Conservation and through a catchment management approach is a good example of collaborative working to improve the urban fringes which are influenced by the River Dee. In the city there is excellent access along the River Dee for salmon fishing, walking and recreation. The urban fringe in this area of the city is well used and is famed for its beauty and royal connections.
- The River Don to the north of the city, which is known for trout fishing. In the city the River Don cuts through varying areas including those of industry, some deprived communities and developed areas. While the river is an important area to the city, access to the river is in need of improvement. However, there are areas of cultural and historic importance, such as the Brig o' Balgownie and Seaton Park.



Through SURF there was an opportunity to bring the community, landowners and stakeholder groups together in order to improve the city's urban fringes. In addition to this, Aberdeen completed an Open Space Audit providing information for citizens to understand the quality of the city's public and private open spaces.



The physical scope of the project was:

- The River Don Corridor, Aberdeen – an urban fringe area made up of the River Don and surrounding open spaces, from the coast to the countryside. It is an area under pressure of development and likely to undergo significant change in the years ahead

The project aimed to:

Develop and promote new methods for assessing and managing open spaces along the River Don corridor for the benefit of the local economy, environment and communities. The aim was to bring people and organisations together with information, tools and techniques to develop a more collective approach to the planning and management of open spaces along the River Don corridor.

This was done by:

- forming a project stakeholder group to oversee and direct the project
- developing an accessible GIS tool to assist with spatial planning of open space
- conducting a participative programme of community engagement activities, using GIS, to improve local decision making
- producing a spatial plan, in collaboration with the community, to guide development and direct improvements to open space. The River Don Corridor Framework has been approved as council guidance to support Aberdeen's Local Development Plan
- accessing funding and working with communities to implement several improvements to open spaces in line with the spatial plan

Website: www.aberdeencity.gov.uk

Norfolk County Council

The Gaywood Valley Project

View of Osier Marsh

The Gaywood Valley SURF project sought to unlock the potential of the Gaywood Valley to the east of King's Lynn in Norfolk as a natural environmental amenity.

The project presented opportunities for: social cohesion; environmental education; training and volunteering; the local economy; and leisure and recreation. Further benefits were associated with the management of wildlife habitats connected with the Gaywood Valley project, improved flood-risk management and opportunities for wildlife through habitat creation and enhancement. Through an integrated approach to the management of land, water and living resources – an ecosystems services approach – the project has left a sustainable legacy for the people of King's Lynn.



The King's Lynn Urban Fringe

The urban and rural fringe of King's Lynn has a poor relationship with the town's historic central core and with the broader countryside which surrounds it. North Lynn and Fairstead wards of King's Lynn are in the top 10 most deprived areas of Norfolk. The area's urban fringe suffers from limited educational opportunities, poor health, social exclusion and declining investment. By 2020 11,000 new homes will be built in King's Lynn. The focus for this expansion will be in the urban and rural fringe of the town.

The River Gaywood

The River Gaywood is short chalk river some 13km in length which rises from springs near Derby Fen to the east of King's Lynn and runs into the Great Ouse at Boal Quay. The river discharges into the Great Ouse at King's Lynn through a tidal flap, where it experiences tidal influences, and then into the North Sea through the Wash Estuary. Its mid-to-lower reaches run through urban areas.



Project delivery:

With community involvement and ownership at its heart, the project was delivered through five work areas under the direction of a Joint Advisory Panel (JAP) and with the engagement of an advisory group and wider stakeholder forum.

Work areas:

- project development and ecosystems services evaluation
- communication
- land and river catchment management
- community engagement
- learning and skills

This was done by:

- following stakeholder engagement, a Vision and Delivery Plan for the Gaywood Valley was developed, taking into account: the King's Lynn Green Infrastructure Masterplan; opportunities to link valuable wildlife habitats; the Local Development Framework growth strategy for the town; and the aspirations of the local neighbourhoods and farming communities
- seeking opportunities for communication across the project, including mechanisms such as signage and interpretation and community events
- developing an innovative map-based GIS virtual-reality flythrough, showing landscape, cultural and historical interpretation of the site
- land and river catchment management sought to improve access to the Gaywood Valley, creating enhanced trails and directional way marking
- community engagement focusing on connecting local urban communities with their local countryside. Local people of all age groups were involved in creating and enhancing green space. Opportunities for economic regeneration were sought
- formal and informal educational opportunities were developed for local learning. Curriculum examples such as understanding and managing local climate change impacts; the importance of ecological networks for the welfare of local biodiversity; and valuing the green environment for healthy recreation, were developed

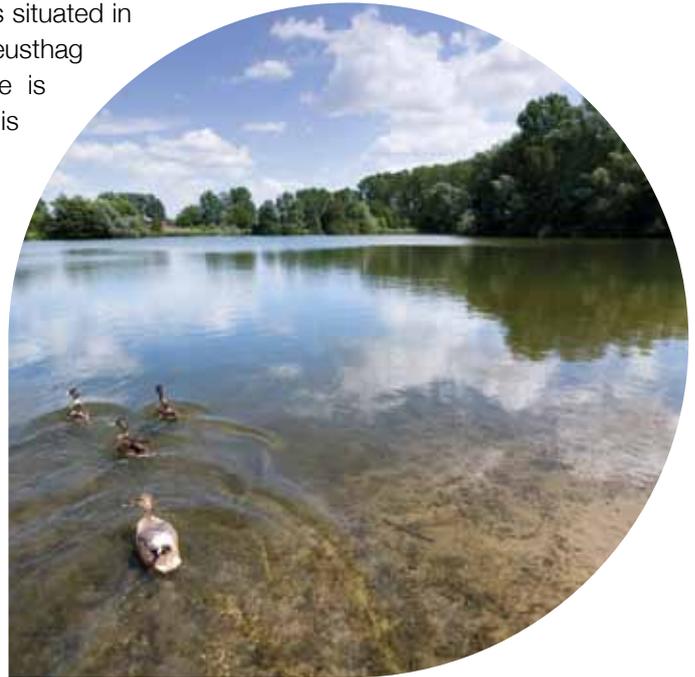
Website: www.norfolk.gov.uk

City of Hengelo Weusthag Project

Hengelo, which has a population of more than 80,000, is situated in the eastern Netherlands. The project is looking at the Weusthag area (200 hectares). This sizable piece of countryside is situated beside a dense built neighbourhood. The park is used for sports and recreation and has specific status as a water protection area. The aim of developing the Weusthag Park, as the Park of Connection was to build a connecting space between city neighbourhoods, rather than the area being a dividing space to local communities.

The project aimed to:

Improve the social value of the Weusthag area and make better use of opportunities presented by the urban fringe to increase the quality of life for those living close by. Specifically, the project wanted to deliver a landscape park, which would be well maintained and used by a diverse range of people for different purposes, such as nature, sports, culture and education. Increased social importance for this urban fringe will help protect its future role in the city.



This was done by:

- improving recognition, attractiveness, awareness and engagement with the project area
- branding for the Weusthag as the Park of Connection
- bringing partners together to improve access and implement physical improvements
- raising awareness through events. An annual Weusthag Day has been established to encourage local people to make better use of this space
- communication measures including a website, social media and welcome signage to engage local residents and visitors to the park and its facilities
- Setting up the Friends of Het Weusthag Foundation to involve local people in the park's future
- dredging the Houtmaatvijver pond in the park and redeveloping natural islands

Website: www.hengelo.nl



The City of Enschede

Rondje Enschede Project

Enschede, which has about 160,000 inhabitants, is the main city in Twente in the eastern region of the Netherlands. Its economy was traditionally characterised by the textile industry, but following the decline of this sector in the early 1970s, the city and its region faced substantial unemployment.

After a significant period of transition, the region has developed itself as a technology valley, founded on the presence of the university and a growing number of high-tech industries.

Private and public sector organisations, including the university and educational institutions, have developed a regional Innovation Roadmap that should contribute to strengthening of the regional economy, in line with the Lisbon objectives.

The relationship between the economy and Enschede's surrounding landscape has always been important. Numerous parks in and around the city were established in the previous century by wealthy textile industry owners.

Today, the green quality of the city and its region is invaluable for attracting businesses and inhabitants. However, economic growth and urban expansion has put this green asset under pressure.

Enschede, together with its neighbouring cities Hengelo and Almelo, wanted to optimise the use and value of the urban fringe, establishing a clearly recognisable and sustainable zone in which a positive link between economy and landscape could be created.

The project aimed to:

Create a distinct and sustainable urban fringe around the city of Enschede and design an attractive recreational route along the official border between the rural and urban area; with activities focused on the south, north and west of the city. Nature development and water were important elements in the reconstruction of the zone.

This was done by:

- developing policies and investment schemes for the urban fringe in Enschede and the surrounding area
- working with partner Saxion University in the production of a study on the financial benefits of investments in urban fringes in Enschede
- creating a regional strategy on urban fringes with neighbouring cities in the Twente Region and establishing a common vision and implementation programme
- participating in a pilot project for the city government to take over rural control from the provincial government, bringing more control on urban fringe matters
- using art, sport and cultural engagement activities to build awareness and use of new route Rondje Enschede (Round Enschede), a recreational route around the outskirts of the city

Website: www.enschede.nl



City of Almelo

Northern Park Project

With 72,000 residents, Almelo is a medium-sized municipality in the Twente region, the most eastern part of the Netherlands, near the German border. Neighbouring towns are Hengelo and Enschede.

As Almelo has expanded it has retained four green space areas known as green lungs, which form a connection between the urban fringes, rural areas and the city centre. The Northern Park is one of the four green lungs in the inner city area.

Almelo has a large number of industrial sites and considers biodiversity an important issue to the development of these sites. This allows businesses and their workers to benefit from a cleaner, greener environment and in turn attracts new businesses making these areas more sustainable.

The project aimed to:

Develop walking and cycling connecting routes to local green space areas to increase tourism and recreational potential and reduce car traffic to and from the city fringes. The connecting route would create recreational focal points and increase the attractiveness of the area. It would also increase accessibility from the city centre to urban fringes and two of the city's green lungs.

This was done by:

- working on preparing the vision for the connection of Almelo's northern green lung, Noorderpark, with the green lungs in the eastern part of the city
- working with SURF partners Hengelo and Enschede, to produce a regional vision and management of the urban fringes in the Twente Region
- producing a report on slow moving traffic connections through the Noorderpark
- involving an external organisation Landschap Overijssel, looking at combining natural areas with business areas in the city
- hosting a regional urban fringe workshop to discuss the future potential of Almelo's urban fringe areas
- exploring the potential of an art route as an engagement tool to encourage people to use the connecting route from urban fringe to city centre

Website: www.almelo.nl



Municipality of Härryda

Walking Tracks Project

The municipality of Härryda, with 34,000 inhabitants, belongs to the western region in Sweden and is a close neighbour of Gothenburg. Härryda is situated along Route 40 between the cities Gothenburg and Borås. Stretching almost 15 km from north to south and 30 km from west to east, it has an area totalling 268 square km. Forests cover about half the area and lakes about one twelfth.



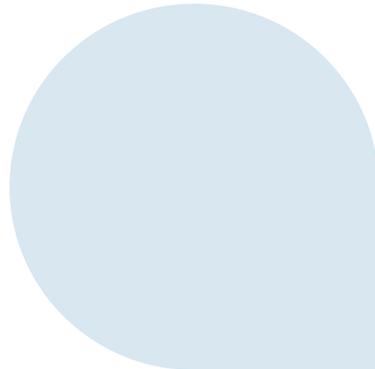
The project aimed to:

Investigate the conditions for restoring walking tracks to make them more convenient and attractive both for people living in Härryda but also to increase the value of tourism for people living in Gothenburg as well as for people living in neighbouring municipalities.

This was done by:

- preparing and engaging in negotiations with multiple landowners and holding information meetings with more than 100 landowners along the walking trail
- analysing the use of land with respect to regulations at local, regional and national level, resulting in a compilation of knowledge of the Swedish legislative process
- creating additional value and a platform for future work, with the refurbishment and development of existing walking routes
- producing the Green Corridors in the Gothenburg Region report
- increasing cooperation with Gothenburg planning colleagues
- participating in the SURF project has stimulated further funding opportunities to develop recreational routes in the area. Four new projects recently received a funding commitment of 800,000 Euros, with half of this coming from the EU Rural Fund

Website: www.Härryda.se



Province of East Flanders – Ghent Spatial Quality Project

The Province of East Flanders has 1.445million inhabitants with 247.486 of them living in the capital Ghent. The peri-urban surrounding municipalities of Ghent total another 166,606 people. Ghent has an inland sea harbour and the Leie and Scheldt rivers. Two of Europe's major motorways, the E40 and E17, are situated near Ghent with Sint-Niklaas and Aalst also forming two major cities for the province.

The provincial authorities have a ground-tied responsibility in the spatial planning process. The Spatial Structure Plan of East Flanders makes a distinction in the context between urban and rural. There is an explicit preference for functional zoning of open space/countryside, especially safeguarding space for the economic growth of agriculture, nature and forestry; with a limitation in development of other economic activities in the countryside.

The Department of Agriculture and Rural Development is actively involved in the Provincial Spatial Plan, landscape planning and integration, co-operation, advice and financing projects.



The project aimed to:

Develop an integrated view for the project urban fringe area; testing and implementing transnational approaches on planning and public policy making.

Increase the use of the Provincial Quality Chamber for peri-urban areas. The Provincial Quality Chamber is a method which brings together a variety of experts, such as spatial planners, architects and landscape architects, to discuss and plan future approaches on building and landscape integration projects.

This was done by:

- discussing about and experimenting on methodologies for the involvement of stakeholders in the planning process
- transnational learning: methodology for 3D visualisation in stakeholder participation and communication is tested in the spatial structure planning process of the greenhouse area Beveren (peri-urban area of Antwerp) and in the eastern peri-urban area of Ghent
- consulting with vegetable growers on the future development plans for the area
- producing articles on the urban fringe for provincial publications
- building interest and commitment from relevant stakeholders
- making use of workshops, forums, information points and the Provincial Quality Chamber. This group was involved in spatial planning, architecture and landscape integration and met to advise on the environmental building quality of projects

Website: www.oost-vlaanderen.be



The Province of Antwerp

Laarse Beek Project

The urban fringe in the north east of the city of Antwerp is considered as “an area where green space is important, on a level exceeding the local level, and with a concentration of activities that are linked to the presence of the urban area” (Provincial Spatial Structure Plan).

Although the area is relatively forest-rich, the urbanisation degree is 35%. The urban fringe contains a network of watercourses, with the Laarse Beek stream flowing centrally. The area is characterised by a high degree of private ownership and a transport network to and from Antwerp and its port. This creates several problems:

- a limited amount of area which suffers from a very high recreational demand
- large distances between local concentrated residential areas and accessible green spaces
- open space close to concentrated residential areas which is strongly influenced by the inhabitants of these areas - gardens, space for horses etc
- pressure on the biodiversity of the urban fringe
- negative perception of parts of the area



The complex government structure and the multifunctional character of the urban fringe further increase the complexity.

The steering committee of the Water Board Het Schijn, the wider area to which the watercourse Laarse Beek belongs, officially expressed interest in implementing an integrated project in the valley system of the Laarse Beek. This steering committee consists of delegates of the province of Antwerp, local authorities and water managers.

The project aimed to:

The Province of Antwerp aims to create accessible green spaces around the major cities. Because of the typical characteristics of the urban fringe surrounding these cities, the provincial government has needed to develop integrated and interactive processes with relevant authorities, residents and stakeholders. The project is working to establish a multifunctional project in the urban fringe in order to improve the open space in the area.



This was done by:

- forming a steering group of local authorities and stakeholders, in order to bridge the existing gap between government and governance
- determining landscape quality objectives together with relevant stakeholders through questionnaires, SWOT and an interactive communication tool
- starting a learning process to translate these objectives into spatial planning
- Making a groundwater model and designing fish stairs to solve existing fish migration problems. These fish stairs serve as a quick win to keep people engaged during this long-term process
- increasing the accessibility of green space
- using best practice models from a former project in the river Koude Beek and best practices that can be obtained through regional and transnational learning

Website: www.provant.be

Scientific Partners

School of the Built Environment at Leeds Metropolitan University CUDEM (Centre for Urban Development and Environmental Management)

The Urban Fringe Study Group (URBAN FRINGESG) within CUDEM at Leeds Metropolitan University undertakes research and analysis of peri-urban spaces. This has included studies of green infrastructure in the UK and earlier Interreg projects on urban fringe space, most notably SOS I and II.

The Urban Fringe Study Group coordinated the research and analysis elements of SURF and contributed to a range of overarching SURF outputs.

In addition, the team undertook a study of urban fringe governance in the Leeds City Region, which was one of the SURF case study localities for comparison against other selected EU city regions. As part of this study it was intended to develop a network in the region to explore the issues and strategies around the core SURF themes of urban fringe sustainability and competitiveness. The aim was that the lessons from this network would be shared with city regions internationally to develop ideas for future strategies.

Finally, the study group provided support to the Aire Valley of Bradford City Council in looking at engaging communities in the urban/rural fringe of Airedale in contributing to the competitiveness the Leeds City Region.

Project aims:

Beyond the city region study and support to Bradford Council, CUDEM's work under Workpackage 3 (reviewing and analysing) aimed to provide a body of knowledge containing the present state of academic and practical knowledge concerning the planning and development of urban fringes. This would be used to construct a conceptual framework which would steer the project and show the relevant themes, issues, processes and their relationship.

This was done by:

- providing a template for 'theme' analysis for testing and implementation within SURF. The 4 SURF themes were:
 - Greenspaces
 - Economy and Competitiveness
 - Governance
 - Spatial Planning
- forming thematic groups and enabling networking across themes
- reviewing and disseminating a baseline inventory of previous Interreg and other relevant projects
- organising an expert network that was consulted throughout the duration of the project
- identifying urban fringe policy networks
- giving a broader research context to the work, including producing reports and papers reflecting the findings of SURF

Website: www.lmu.ac.uk/as/cudem/

Saxion University of Applied Sciences

Saxion University of Applied Sciences has more than 22,000 students based at three campuses in the east of the Netherlands in Deventer, Enschede and Apeldoorn.

Saxion provided SURF with an academic arm to the project to assist with the delivery of the project's conceptual and analytical framework. Saxion contributed expertise in the field of practically assessing the urban fringe and engaged the SURF partners in a series of Implementation Labs. Due to the practical approach from Saxion and the expertise in the development and management of the urban fringe, Saxion led the creation of the SURF Toolkit.

Saxion also facilitated exchange and guidance with a number of the SURF partners to support and assist their project development. Students from Saxion also participated in a number of the SURF projects and offered differing approaches to urban fringe development and management techniques – such as offering innovative ideas on the use of technology.

Website: www.saxion.edu/



GLOSSARY

City Region

The area around a city which serves and is served by the city (not just the administrative area of a city/conurbation, but also the urban and rural fringes/hinterland hence usually far larger).

(Scott, A. (2001) Global City-Regions, Oxford University Press.)

Civil Society

The arena of uncoerced collective action around shared interests, purposes and values. Activity involving the voluntary, civic and social organisations that form the basis of a functioning society as opposed to state or market institutions. *(LSE Centre for Civil Society)*

Conurbation

An aggregation or continuous network of urban communities which have physically merged through population growth and expansion. It is a polycentric form of agglomeration.

(CEMAT (European Conference of Ministers responsible for spatial/regional planning) (2006) glossary of key expressions used in spatial development policies in Europe, Lisbon.)

Ecosystem Services

Ecosystems Services are described as a strategy for the integrated management of land, water and living resources that promotes conservation and sustainable use in an equitable way, and which recognises that people with their cultural and varied social needs, are an integral part of ecosystems.

(Haines-Young, R. and Potschin, M. (2007): The Ecosystem Concept and the Identification of Ecosystem Goods and Services in the English Policy Context. Review Paper to Defra, Project Code NR0107, 21pp)

Governance

The process whereby elements in society wield power and authority, and influence and enact policies and decisions concerning public life, and economic and social development. It is a broader notion than government involving interaction between formal institutions and those of civil society.

(The Governance Working Group of the International Institute of Administrative Sciences 1996)

Green Infrastructure

A strategically planned and delivered network of high quality green spaces and other environmental features. It should be designed and managed as a multifunctional resource capable of delivering a wide range of environmental and quality of life benefits for local communities. GI includes parks, open spaces, playing fields, woodlands, allotments and gardens. *(Natural England)*

Green Lungs

An area of greenspace in a town or city considered in terms of the healthier environment it provides.

Green Space

A plot of vegetated land separating or surrounding areas of intensive residential or industrial use and devoted primarily to recreational or park uses. *(EEA Glossary of key terms)*

Infrastructure

The basic network or foundation of capital facilities or community investments which are necessary to support economic and community activities. *(EEA)*

Implementation Labs

The Implementation Lab (IL) is an interactive session in which host partners work together on the spot with project partners and topical experts. The Implementation Lab is meant to give momentum to local/regional projects by implementing concepts like Multifunctional and Intensive Land Use (MILU), combining local knowledge with external expertise and ultimately gaining a fresh perspective and potentially generate new ideas and/or approaches. (*International Federation of Housing and Planning - <http://www.ifhp.org/content/implementation-labs>*)

Land-use Plans

Land-use planning creates policies at the local/municipal level that guide how the land (inside the administrative borders of a municipality) and its resources will be used. The main instrument of land-use planning is zoning or zoning ordinances, respectively. Land-use planning is situated below the regional planning level. (*ESPON Glossary of key terms*)

Land-use planning is a branch of public policy which encompasses various disciplines seeking to order and regulate the use of land in an efficient ways. It means the scientific, aesthetic and orderly disposition of land, resources, facilities and services with a view to securing the physical, economic, social and environmental efficiency, health and well-being of urban and rural communities. (*CEMAT Glossary*)

Mono-functionality

Functioning with one focus, purpose or goal.

Multifunctional

Describes a diversity of activities occupying the same or adjoining space.

NGO

A non-governmental organization is a legally constituted organization created by natural or legal persons that operates independently from any form of government.

NIMBY

Term referring to the statement 'not in my backyard' where someone or an organisation may support a proposal in principal, but not if they are to sacrifice on their part.

Peri-Urban Areas

Areas in some form of transition from strictly rural to urban. These areas often form the immediate urban-rural interface and may eventually evolve into being fully urban. Peri-urban areas are places where people are key components: they are lived-in environments. The majority of peri-urban areas are on the fringe of established urban areas, but they may also be clusters of residential development within rural landscapes. Peri-urban areas are most frequently an output of the process of sub-urbanisation or urban sprawl. (*CEMAT*)

Real Estate

Property consisting of land and/or buildings.

Rurban

Describing the rural and urban – where rural and urban meet but it is hard to define if the space is solely urban or if it is rural.

Rural-Urban Fringe

Transitional zones between distinctly urban and unambiguously rural areas. (*Simon, D., 'Urban Environments; Issues on the peri-urban fringe', Annual Review of Environment and Resources, Vol 33*)

SME

Small or medium sized enterprises usually defined by workforce, turnover and independence. When defined by workforce, small businesses employ less than 50 and medium less than 250 employees. (*Europa Glossary*)

Spatial Planning

Spatial planning goes beyond traditional land use planning to bring together and integrate policies for the development and use of land with other amenities and infrastructure and includes the methods used by the public sector to influence the distribution of people and activities in spaces at various scales as well as the location of the various infrastructures, recreation and nature areas. Spatial planning activities are carried out at different administrative or governmental levels (local, regional, national), while activities of cooperation in this field are also implemented in cross-border, transnational and European contexts. (CEMAT)

“Regional/spatial planning gives geographical expression to the economic, social, cultural and ecological policies of society. It is at the same time a scientific discipline, an administrative technique and a policy developed as an interdisciplinary and comprehensive approach directed towards a balanced regional development and the physical organisation of space according to an overall strategy.” ‘Torremolinos Charter,’ 1983 (CEMAT)

The systematic assessment of land and water potential, alternative patterns of land use and other physical, social and economic conditions for the purpose of selecting and adopting land-use options which are most beneficial to land users without degrading the resources or environment.

Stakeholder

An institution, organisation or group that has some interest in a particular sector or system. (EEA)

Suburbia

Used as the terminology to define the urban fringe/peri-urban environment within the Free and Hanseatic City of Hamburg.

Sustainable Development

Development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. (World Commission on Environment and Development, 1987)

SWOT

A strategic planning method used to evaluate Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats

Urban Fringe

An urban fringe is an area in between rural and urban with multifunctional spaces and complex structures. The urban fringe can sometimes be referred to as the outskirts of a town or city or as an urban hinterland. An urban fringe is predominantly open land on the edge of a settlement.

The zone of transition and interface between town and country where a broad variety of land uses and activities come together and where development pressure is often intense. (Gallent, N. et al., 2004)

[Some official definitions are more minimalist e.g. a residential district situated on the outskirts of a city or town. (15b) e.g. predominantly open land on the edge of an existing urban area (UK Planning Portal Glossary of Planning Terms)]

Urbanscape

The traits, patterns and structure of a city's specific geographic area, including its biological composition, its physical environment and its social patterns. (TOE)

Urban Overspill

Elements of the urban environment stretching into the surrounding urban fringe/peri-urban area.

Urban Sprawl

The uncontrolled or unplanned extension of urban areas into the countryside. (EEA)

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