



Transnational Working Groups Conclusions

SEEDS Workpackage 4
Regio Groningen Assen



Regio Groningen-Assen 2030
nationaal stedelijk netwerk

The Interreg IVB
North Sea Region
Programme

*Investing in the future by working together
for a sustainable and competitive region*



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Report compiled by **Hero Havenga de Poel** and **Wian Stienstra**, RGA Groningen with contributions from SEEDS Partners

Introduction

With this document we would like to present the main findings of Workpackage 4 of the SEEDS project, aiming to deliver transnational spatial planning policy on land re-use, by developing, transferring and mainstreaming proven strategies.

For this Workpackage, it was decided to work in 'Task and Finish' groups, in total about 250 people of about 100 organisations were represented. Three sessions were organised, on the following topics:

1. People & Partnerships
2. Policy & Paradigms
3. Practice & Finance.

For each round, a set list of questions was circulated. We are going to discuss the main findings per working group now.

People and Partnerships: main findings

It was found that in thinking about People and Partnerships in temporary use, it is important to note that temporary use often happens spontaneously. Governments and other formal organisations cannot create temporary solutions or enforce them by law, they are dependent on other organisations and individuals to make it happen. However, the right conditions for temporary use to develop can be created. Another finding has been that all the topics are closely related, and often discussions also touched upon topics of other working groups.

It would seem that temporary use is a shift in thinking, seen not as a threat but as an opportunity. Also, temporary use is sometimes seen as a mistake in policy, rather as than a means to an end. Temporary use can be the first stepping stone to a larger development. In this case, the end destination may not be important, but the road leading to that destination, the travelling itself.

Looking back through the practical solutions and examples that have been documented through SEEDS, the general thread has been noted that focussing on a problem is often not productive, but that it much more productive to look at what is possible and to work from there.

Temporary use seems to be quite dependent on situations that governments would not have thought of creating. Such circumstances cannot be forcefully created by external forces. It will be very difficult to create a dream team for temporary use. However, it is possible to create the right conditions for such an ecosystem to develop. It is similar to the reintroduction of threatened species of wildlife. It is impossible to have these back by putting of number of such animals in an area and expecting them to survive. It is however possible to wean them back once you have created a suitable habitat.

The profile of people who can be involved in such processes can probably be categorised in one word as 'freethinkers'. People who are not afraid to challenge the status quo and people who can create enthusiasm and who will not stop when they encounter their first hurdle.

Paradigms and Policies: main findings

The main findings for the questions of policies are that policies themselves are heavily dependent on the governance structure of a particular country. For example regional policies are important in Flanders, whereas in the Dutch situation local policies are much more important. These are all indicative for the level at which both spatial planning and economic policy are run. It is also worth noting that national policies are often not well-suited for temporary use, and that relatively small amounts of money are dedicated to it. Potential benefits of temporary use are often not taken into account and there is a large cultural preference towards classic property development, whether or not this is rationally the best choice, too.

For paradigms, an important fact to note is that the use of language is important when discussing temporary use. It's similar to a discussion on whether a glass is half-full or half-empty. One man's problem may be another man's solution, for example discussing wasteland when another would refer to it as greenspace. It is also good to note that interim use has shifted from a niche phenomenon to something that is embraced by society at large. Another definite

shift in paradigms is that everybody is considered equally, all stakeholders who are at the roundtable have the same voice, and neither government nor a property developer is seen to be able overrule this. As a last point, we found that it is all about creating value. That's value of course as in financial value, but there are also massive gains to be had in considering the social value of a temporary development.

A typical insight that was grown through the SEEDS-project is the fact that during the project, more and more attention and also interest has grown for temporary use, by stakeholders at all levels. This includes all levels of government, real estate developers, owners of building and many other parties. Perhaps this has been the most important shift during the course of the project.



Practice and Finance: main findings

For the practice part, the main findings that emerged from the discussions is that there is not one single factor of success for temporary projects, but rather a whole range of factors, with probably communication and getting people involved and creativity in the top three. Just getting started is also an important element.

On top of that, being in tune with the local environment is an important factor for success too. The top-down approach simply does not work for temporary project, and links to grassroot organisations are needed for a project to be able to succeed. Such organisations cannot be involved without having an open (democratic) process, probably outside established and institutionalised organisations.

The variety of practices in the SEEDS project really came out in the Practice workshops. Everybody has been making his/her own plans how to approach an issue for temporary use, all reasoned from the local context and not to forget the local legislative framework, in addition to the stakeholders.

For finance, it is of interest to note that although finance and numbers are supposed to be the same all over the world, this is a place in SEEDS where we find many cultural differences. Lenders, property developers and banks in general are interested first and foremost in the bottom line, and they love securities. For temporary projects (by their very nature) such guarantees cannot be offered. Something may be a very large success or it may not be able to blossom, for many different reasons.

New inroads are being made in circumventing such finance structures. The Portland Works project in the UK was probably one of the first that featured crowdfunding, that made many local people stakeholders in a large utility building, and that may even mean financial benefits for those people who are involved. Such practices will need to be incorporated more often in temporary projects. This contributes to a further shift of thinking, also in local and regional government organisations, that now realise that they become much more a matchmaker between different parties rather than the big funder they have been in the past.

From such approaches, new manners of working follow by themselves. It is clear that for temporary use, new manners of working are needed, and working from institutionalised environment may not always be efficient, rather people should be on the ground and liaising where possible with local inhabitants, developers and entrepreneurs. It was very surprising that during the course of the project and particularly during these workshops, participants have uncovered (local) practices that they were unaware of previously, but were particularly inspiring.

The times are changing, and such changes become very visible in an environment that is traditionally considered to be resistant to change. In temporary use both government and the financial world (property developers, banks, and so on) are involved. It is important that their roles as facilitators rather than decision makers are clearly defined, and

that they do their utmost in making temporary projects possible, within the boundaries given to them.

Local stakeholders are of the utmost importance, because they have the largest feeling towards local projects and know best what could work and what wouldn't. For devolved governments incorporating such partners is going to be helpful in gaining traction and making certain that their role as a matchmaker is recognised. Through this process, contacts between all parties concerned will become easier, and more effective, decreasing the distance between them.

Lead partner: South Yorkshire Forest Partnership UK

Sheffield City Council
E: team@syforest.co.uk
T: +44 (0)114 257 1199

Emma Johansson

Goeteborg Stad SE
E: emma.johansson@ponf.goteborg.se
T: +46 (0)31 365 58 22

Project Manager: Sara Parratt-Halbert

South Yorkshire Forest Partnership UK
E: sara.parratt-halbert@syforest.co.uk
T: +44 (0)114 257 1199

Ulrich Schenck

Lawaetz Foundation DE
E: schenck@lawaetz.de
T: +49 (0)40 3999 360

Director: Tom Wild

South Yorkshire Forest Partnership UK
E: tom.wild@syforest.co.uk
T: +44 (0)114 257 1199

Bettina Lamm

University of Copenhagen DK
E: bela@life.ku.dk
T: +45 (0)3533 1796

Gerda Roeleveld

Deltares NL
E: gerda.roeleveld@deltares.nl
T: +31 (0)88 335 77 09

John Henneberry

University of Sheffield UK
E: j.henneberry@sheffield.ac.uk
T: +44 (0)114 222 6911

Hero Havenga de Poel

Regio Groningen Assen NL
E: havenga@regiogroningenassen.nl
T: +31 (0)50 316 4289

Sabine Gheysen

VLM BE
E: sabine.gheysen@vlm.be
T: +32(0)50 45 81 27



**City of
Göteborg**

Regio Groningen-Assen 2030
nationaal stedelijk netwerk



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COPENHAGEN**



**The
University
Of
Sheffield.**



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